

Does social media matter? The influence of COVID-19's uncertainty-fear in destination revisit intent post-COVID-19

Abstract

Despite the growing body of research on destination image (DI) during COVID-19, the moderating role social media usage in the relationships between COVID-19-induced uncertainty-fear, DI, and revisit intent has received little attention. This study uses partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) to test five hypotheses with a sample of 410 international visitors. The results show that COVID-19's uncertainty-fear negatively affects both DI and revisit intent. However, social media usage can mitigate these negative effects. The paper concludes by discussing its theoretical and practical implications for tourism recovery and destination management.

Keywords: COVID-19; destination image; social media; and revisit intent.

Introduction

COVID-19 has impacted individuals' behaviours, intensifying their sense of fear, anxiety, and perceived risk while diminishing the enjoyment obtained from outdoor activities (Hamdy and Zhang, 2023). In this context, Hassan and Soliman (2021) observed that the coronavirus affects consumer buying behaviours, highlighting the necessity to comprehend how fear influences consumer decision-making and destination perceptions (Hassan and Soliman, 2021; Zenker and Kock, 2020). Likewise, Nazir *et al.* (2021) noted that factors such as terrorism, political unrest, pandemics, psychological distress, lack of knowledge, and language barriers negatively influence the viewpoints of a destination's image (DI). Consequently, Hamdy *et al.* (2023) pointed out that the perceived DI significantly influences tourists' choices, as they make decisions based on their perceptions of the destination rather than its actual characteristics (Hamdy *et al.*, 2023a). In summary, both natural and human-induced hazards, like deadly diseases and extreme events, pose risks to hospitality and tourism industries. Without proper management, these issues can degrade a destination's image (Li *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, with the advent of the pandemic, destination images were among the first to be negatively portrayed in the media, leading to increased public apprehension (Hunter, 2022).

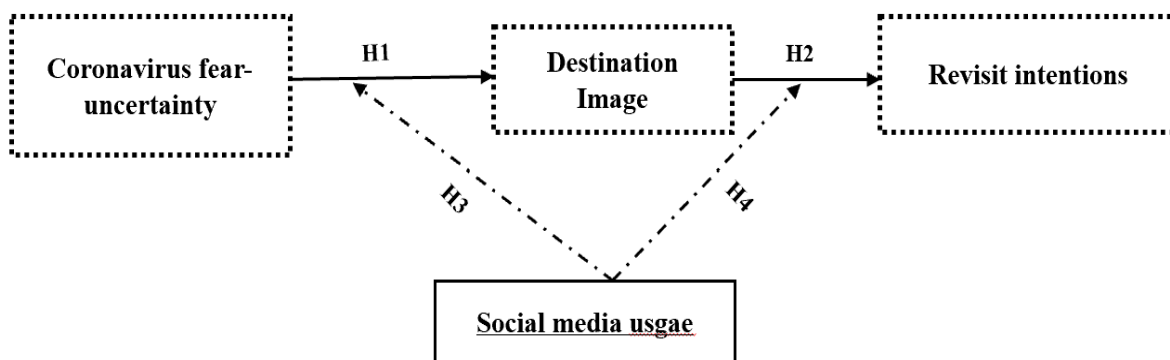
Meanwhile, regaining tourists is essential for recovery from a global pandemic (Cambrà-Fierro *et al.*, 2022; Mensah and Boakye, 2023). Tourism marketing serves as a critical tool enabling destinations to rebound from disasters (Afaq *et al.*, 2023; Singh *et al.*, 2022). Moreover, Singh *et al.* (2022) argue that communication after a pandemic extends beyond just managing and repairing an image; it emphasizes ensuring visitors' safety. Thus, governmental measures and messaging significantly shape tourists' perceptions, necessitating refined communication strategies (Liu-Lastres *et al.*, 2020), which social media can effectively enhance. However, the effectiveness

of social media in facilitating tourism recovery post-COVID-19 has received limited focus (Sedalo *et al.*, 2022). Likewise, Rasoolimanesh *et al.* (2021) maintain that both businesses and consumers require access to traditional and digital information to stay updated with social media trends. In this context, the significance of social media for tourist destinations has been amplified by COVID-19 (Bailey *et al.*, 2022; Pachucki *et al.*, 2022). Additionally, media coverage showcasing varied national responses to the COVID-19 pandemic could alter their attractiveness as tourist spots (Gössling *et al.*, 2020). Remarkably, there has been a scarcity of empirical research to deepen our understanding of factors influencing travel decisions post-pandemic (Tran and Rudolf, 2022). Hence, it is critical to comprehend how different communication strategies affect tourists' feelings and choices. Accordingly, our study employs the information richness theory, suggesting that data from both external and internal sources (such as social media) can reduce the fear and anxiety caused by the worldwide rise of natural catastrophes and diseases (e.g., COVID-19) (Cambrà-Fierro *et al.*, 2022; Daft and Lengel, 1986). To our knowledge, no empirical studies have explored the moderating influence of social media communications (e.g., content created by destinations and by visitors) on the adverse impacts of CUF on the perceived image of a destination and the travel intentions of visitors post-COVID-19.

Overall, this investigation aims to explore the moderating role of social media usage in the adverse impacts of CUF on destination image and travellers' intentions post-pandemic. The following section examines the development of the conceptual framework and the research hypotheses. The analysis and findings are presented after the discussion of the study's methodology. The conceptual model is specifically assessed by structural equation modelling with PLS-SEM. The implications, together with their limits and possible areas for further research, are highlighted.

Theoretical foundations and Hypotheses development

The current study employs Cognitive Appraisal Theory (Arnold, 1960; Kim *et al.*, 2022) to elucidate the influence of CUF on the destination image and travel intentions of visitors, this serves as the foundation for the theoretical model presented (refer to Figure 1). The subsequent section provides detailed explanations of the connections within the framework and the related hypotheses.



CUF and DRI

Fear is a normal and intense emotion that arises when an individual anticipates a terrible event and assesses its potential danger (Moyle *et al.*, 2019). During the COVID-19 epidemic, fear and anxiety have been shown to alter people's perception of risk (Yıldırım and Güler, 2022). The pandemic has led to widespread anxiety and sadness, with illness and death creating fear, uncertainty, and instability (Ahorsu *et al.*, 2022; Qiu *et al.*, 2020). Crowley *et al.* (2021) state that CUF is an understandable response to the pandemic. Additionally, the global health crisis has been exacerbated by communicable diseases, a lack of medical care, and the increasing numbers of sick and deceased individuals, rendering the environment hazardous and uncertain (Yang *et al.*, 2022). Understanding how tourists perceive the safety of a destination is crucial for promoting tourism development (San, 2022). Besides, Lu and Atadil. (2021) and Neuburger and Egger (2021) note that

safety risks impact travel intentions. Subsequently, it can be concluded that increased perceived hazards from COVID-19 will negatively affect travel behaviours (Meng *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, comprehending people's travel plans during a pandemic, amidst significant uncertainty and necessary risk management, is essential for formulating strategies for destination recovery (Golets *et al.*, 2021). Thus, the subsequent hypothesis was established:

H1. CUF negatively impacts on destination revisit intent.

H2. CUF negatively impacts the perceived DI.

Perceived DI and DRI

Consumers can indirectly perceive events through visual elements, which alleviate concerns about transmitting authentic experiences. Visuals might be crucial for the recovery of COVID-19 affected tourism destinations (Susanti *et al.*, 2023). An object or place's image consists of mental representations (beliefs), concepts, attitudes, and overall perceptions (Kovačić *et al.*, 2022). It was initially thought that visuals of destinations influenced travel decisions. Numerous studies have utilized images of destinations to assess travel intentions (Singh *et al.*, 2022). Research indicates that a destination's image has a considerable impact on visitors' intents to visit (Şengel *et al.*, 2023; Yang *et al.*, 2020). The goal of a consumer behavior study is to select products or services. With increasing competition, destinations must establish a distinctive image (Neuburger and Egger, 2021). Likewise, the decision to visit a place should be impacted by its image, making the place's image crucial (Yang *et al.*, 2020). In conclusion, a positive image of a location can improve the likelihood or desire of someone visiting. Therefore, the following hypothesis was developed:

H3. Perceived DI significantly influences destination revisit intent.

Social media as a moderator

The theory of information richness posits that various communication methods convey differing levels of information. The information's depth aids recipients in comprehending and interpreting the message. Additionally, the detail and timeliness are crucial elements of information richness (Cambra-Fierro *et al.*, 2022). Daft and Lengel (1986) noted that the choice of information and medium can lead to richer content, essential for effective customer communication, and for reducing confusion and uncertainty (Zhao *et al.*, 2023). This approach has been applied to evaluate the trustworthiness of data sources (Cambra-Fierro *et al.*, 2022; Daft and Lengel, 1986). In this context, tourists seek information to lessen uncertainty about their destinations (Khan *et al.*, 2022). According to Rather (2021) and Seyfi *et al.* (2023) communications via social media enable companies to enhance interactions with customers, foster trust, promote the image of the destination, and encourage loyalty. Consequently, when tourists trust the sources of information about a destination, it can significantly influence their perceptions of the destination's image. Visitor-generated content, being highly credible, assists tourists and travelers in forming an impression of a destination. Access to detailed accounts of other tourists' experiences, emotions, and opinions can then influence their perception of the location. In line with this, Ye *et al.* (2023) found that external information sources, such as feedback from other tourists, significantly affect individuals' sentiments towards a place (Meng *et al.*, 2023; Sicilia, 2021). Cambra-Fierro *et al.*, (2022); and Daft and Lengel (1986) argue that ample information is crucial in shaping visitor attitudes and dispelling uncertainties. Thus, considering that the destination image comprises cognitive and affective dimensions, it is proposed that access to visitor-generated content could improve the destination image, subsequently positively affecting their behavioral intentions. Consequently, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H5a. Visitor-generated content moderates the negative influences of CUF on the perceived DI.

H5b. Visitor-generated content moderates the negative influences of CUF on destination revisit intent.

H5c. Destination-generated content moderates the adverse influences of CUF on DI.

H5d. Destination-generated content moderates the negative influences of CUF on destination revisit intent.

Research Methods

The Study Sample and Questionnaire Procedures

Participants for the study were chosen based on factors such as age, gender, educational level, nationality, and income to prevent sampling bias and to ensure the sample represented the population accurately. The survey targeted travelers from Europe, the U.S., Arab countries, Africa, and Asia, thereby creating a global visitors' database. Tourism companies, travel agents, and hotels were approached to gather data on international tourists visiting Egypt, with assurances that the databases would only be available to the research team and that responses would remain confidential. Through random sampling, 1,100 international visitors over the age of 18 were selected. Initially, respondents received the survey questionnaire via email, along with links to the online poll distributed through email, Facebook, and WhatsApp. Additionally, various travel companies, hotels, and travel agencies promoted the poll on their social media platforms, including WeChat, WhatsApp, and Facebook, which helped to increase the sample size. Data collection occurred from September 10, 2021, to January 25, 2022. The study utilized the Cochran formula to determine the sample size.

$$n_0 = \frac{z^2 * p * q}{e^2}, \dots\dots\dots (1)$$

In this sentence, "p" represents the expected proportion of an attribute in the population, "q" equals 1 minus "p," "e" denotes the required accuracy, "n0" stands for the initial sample size, and "z2" refers to the zone of acceptability in a normal distribution. For achieving a 5% margin of error and a 95 percent confidence interval with a 1.96 t-statistic, 385 participants are needed. Our survey received 443 completed questionnaires, resulting in a response rate of 46.36%; however, 33 were discarded due to incomplete information. Therefore, our study's 410 participants meet all the necessary criteria. Moreover, this study applies PLS-SEM using Smart PLS 4, a method within Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) focusing heavily on prediction for constructing statistical models for designed structures, as indicated by Hair et al. (2013); and Hamdy and Zhang (2023). To assess the spread, shape, and bias of the population's sampling distribution, the bootstrapping method with 5000 replications was used (Chin, 1998). Given the study's aim to develop and validate a theoretical model, PLS-SEM is preferred over traditional covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM) due to its efficiency in addressing issues related to factor ambiguity, multivariate normality, model complexity, measurement levels, and sample size (Hair et al. 2013, 2019).

Research Measures

In this study, we exclusively utilized metrics developed in previous research. Initially, CUF was evaluated using 4-items adapted from (Kholaf and Ming, 2022). Additionally, perceived DI was assessed through eight items adapted from Eid *et al.* (2019) and Hamdy, Zhang, and Eid (2023d). Moreover, the intention to visit a destination was determined using 3-items from Yoo *et al.* (2022). Lastly, social media communications, specifically destination-generated content (DGC)

and visitor-generated content (VGC), were analyzed using nine elements adapted from Cambra-Fierro *et al.* (2022), employing a 5-point Likert scale that ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The study's findings

Socio-demographic information:

The survey included 410 international tourists, with 48.4% being men and 51.6% women. Most of the respondents (59.2%) visited Egypt once, while approximately 40.8% have visited multiple times. In terms of age, 45.7% of the respondents were aged 25 to 34, 22.5% were aged 35 to 44, 14.9% were aged 45 to 54, 9.4% were over 55, and 7.5% were aged 14 to 24. Lastly, the data were collected from individuals across five racial and ethnic groups: 52.8% from Europe, 26.5% from the United States, 12.9% from the Arab world, 5.3% from Asia, and 2.5% from other regions.

Table 1. Measurement model

Items	loadings	alpha	CR	AVE	Inner VIF	Items	loadings	alpha	CR	AVE	Inner VIF
COVID-19's uncertainty-fear						Destination-generated content					
CUF.1	0.879	0.916	0.941	0.798	1.689	DGC.1	0.902	0.930	0.955	0.826	1.080
CUF.2	0.914					DGC.2	0.901				
CUF.3	0.880					DGC.3	0.923				
CUF.4	0.900					DGC.4	0.908				
Visitor-generated content						Destination Image					
VGC.1	0.847	0.902	0.927	0.719	1.174	DI.1	0.849	0.948	0.956	0.733	1.776
VGC.2	0.855					DI.2	0.834				
VGC.3	0.876					DI.3	0.863				
VGC.4	0.865					DI.4	0.884				
VGC.5	0.794					DI.5	0.873				
Destination revisit intent						DI.6	0.875				
DRI .1	0.948	0.930	0.955	0.877	1.607	DI.7	0.841				
DRI .2	0.939					DI.8	0.830				
DRI .3	0.922										

Note CUF = COVID-19's uncertainty-fear; VGC = visitor-generated content; DGC = destination-generated content; DI = destination Image; DRI = destination revisit intent

Measurement Model

This study scrutinizes all elements within the conceptual framework to assess their nomological validity. Specifically, Smart PLS-4 is utilized for data evaluation in two phases, as outlined by Hair *et al.* (2016). Initially, the measurement framework is analyzed to establish the study's reliability, including discriminant, convergent validity, and factor loadings. Subsequently, a structure is developed to test hypotheses and their correlation with empirical data. Accordingly, the study's constructs were verified for coherence using alpha reliability, revealing that all measurement items are dependable, with scores ranging from 0.916 to 0.948, surpassing the basic research threshold of 0.70 (Hair *et al.*, 2016). Furthermore, composite reliability (CR) was determined, showcasing high consistency across all variables (values ranged from 0.927 to 0.956). Additionally, the measurement framework's fit was evaluated; as per Hair *et al.* (2010), all measurement tools demonstrated construct loadings above 0.70 with statistically significant predictor effects. The results indicated that AVE values span from 0.719 to 0.733, exceeding the 50% benchmark, indicating achieved convergent validity, as detailed in Table 1. On another note, cross-loadings were employed as a relaxed method for assessing discriminant validity

In a similar manner, we assessed the validity of the discriminant factor employing the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) technique and Fornell & Larcker measures (FLM) (Fornell and Larcker., 1981). The FLM involves comparing the AVE for each construct with the squared correlations among all constructs in the model, thus evaluating the shared variance among variables. Furthermore, according to Hair *et al.* (2016), for a construct to satisfy the standards, its AVE value must always be bigger than the squared association with any other concept, as shown in Table 3a. As well, discriminant validity is established when the HTMT ratio is lower than (.85) for theoretically distinct constructs and lower than (.90) for related constructs (Hair *et al.*, 2019),

as proved in Table 3b. Ultimately, the analysis confirms that these scores demonstrate both discriminant and convergent validity.

Table 2. Discriminant Validity (Fornell & Larcker, HTMT)

	(a) Fornell & Larcker					
	Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1	CUF	0.893				
2	DGC	0.083	0.909			
3	DI	-0.532	0.109	0.856		
4	VGC	-0.023	0.179	0.315	0.848	
5	DRI	-0.542	-0.101	0.510	0.153	0.936
	(b) HTMT					
1	CUF	1				
2	DGC	0.091	1			
3	DI	0.570	0.115	1		
4	VGC	0.037	0.197	0.338	1	
5	DRI	0.587	0.108	0.543	0.164	1

Structural Model

In this phase, we assessed the study's five hypotheses and the study model using PLS-SEM via Smart PLS 4. Our analysis indicates that 40.5% of the destination image and 38.5% of the travel intentions of visitors are predicted, demonstrating that the model possesses adequate predictive power. Additionally, Table 4 display the PLS-SEM evaluation of our five model hypotheses, as well as the predicted path coefficients for each element. In particular, the findings reveal that the uncertainty and fear associated with COVID-19 negatively impact the destination image ($\beta = -0.481$, $t = 13.204$, S.g.p. = 0.00) and destination revisit intent ($\beta = -0.363$, $t = 7.973$, S.g.p. = 0.00), while the destination image positively influences destination revisit intent ($\beta = 0.294$, $t = 5.880$, S.g.p. = 0.00). These outcomes support hypotheses H1, H2, and H3.

Table 3. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	S. coefficient	T statistics	95%CI LL	95%CI UL	Decision
H1	CUF -> DI	-0.481	13.204	-0.549	-0.408	Supported
H2	CUF -> DRI	-0.363	7.973	-0.454	-0.277	Supported
H3	DI -> DRI	0.294	5.880	0.193	0.390	Supported
H4	CUF -> DI -> DRI	-0.141	5.335	-0.196	-0.093	Supported
H5a	VGC x CUF -> DI	0.086	2.982	0.030	0.142	Supported

H5b	VGC x CUF -> DRI	0.083	2.979	0.031	0.141	Supported
H5c	DGC x CUF -> DI	0.123	3.253	0.053	0.201	Supported
H5d	DGC x CUF -> DRI	-0.015	0.398	-0.088	0.056	Not Supported

Moderating analysis

This investigation observes the moderating influences (H5a, H5b, H5c, and H5d) of social media communications—specifically, destination-generated content (DGC) and visitor-generated content (VGC)—on the adverse influences of CUF on the destination image and the post-COVID-19 travel intentions of visitors, utilizing a bootstrapping approach (5000 samples) via Smart PLS. According to Table 4, VGC reduces the adverse influence of CUF on the destination image ($\beta = .086$; $t = 2.982$; 95% CI: LL = .030; UL = .142). Furthermore, VGC moderates the influence of CUF on destination revisit intent ($\beta = .083$; $t = 2.979$; 95% CI: LL = .031; UL = .141). The study also employed the 'pick-a-point' method to assess the conditional effects of CUF on the destination image and destination revisit intent, providing a deeper insight into these relationships. Conversely, as indicated in Table 4, DGC decreases the negative impact of CUF on the destination image ($\beta = 0.123$; $t = 3.253$; 95% CI: LL = 0.053; UL = 0.201). However, DGC does not alleviate the negative effects of CUF on destination revisit intent ($\beta = -.015$; $t = 0.398$; 95% CI: LL = -.088; UL = 0.056), supporting H5c but not H5d. Additionally, the 'pick-a-point' method was utilized to analyze the conditional effects of CUF on the destination image and destination revisit intent more comprehensively.

Discussion

Key findings

This article developed and evaluated a model demonstrating how social media communications, including destination-generated and visitor-generated content, moderate the negative influence of CUF on the DI and tourists' intentions to travel post pandemic in an emerging

market such as Egypt. Drawing on data from 510 international tourists from various countries, our results endorse the proposed framework. They reveal that CUF adversely influences the perceived DI and tourists' travel intentions. This suggests that media reports on coronavirus infection and death percentages can create misleading impressions for potential tourists by fostering uncertainty and fear concerning their safety, which negatively affects their perception of the DI and their willingness to travel. These outcomes are constant with prior investigations (e.g., Hunter, 2022; Lu and Atadil, 2021; Yang *et al.*, 2022), which found that CUF damages the perceived DI and tourists' travel intentions. Additionally, our findings display that the DI significantly boosts tourists' intentions to travel, aligning with the conclusions of earlier research (e.g., Hamdy, Zhang, and Eid, 2023b; Singh *et al.*, 2022; Yang *et al.*, 2020), indicating the significant influence of DI on tourists' travel intentions.

Moreover, the findings indicate that Visitor-Generated Content (VGC) reduces the adverse effects of CUF on the destination's image and tourists' travel intentions. This suggests that travelers' comments, posts, and opinions shared on social media can help reduce other tourists' fear, anxiety, and confusion regarding the virus while enhancing awareness of protective measures implemented at the destination. Consequently, this enhances the destination's reputation and increases tourists' willingness to visit after the pandemic. These results align with the research by Cambra-Fierro *et al.* (2022), and Sicilia (2021), which demonstrated that content generated by visitors on social media platforms can alleviate doubts and uncertainty, thereby improving behavioral intentions.

Meanwhile, the results indicate that Destination-Generated Content (DGC) reduces the negative impact of Consumer-Generated Feedback (CUF) on the image of the destination. This suggests that if DMOs consistently provide detailed information about their health safety

measures, coronavirus protection practices, and compliance with international COVID-19 protocols, they can enhance their destination image and mitigate the adverse effects of COVID-19. These outcomes align with prior investigations by Cambra-Fierro *et al.* (2022); Daft and Lengel. (1986); and De Moya and Jain. (2013), which showed that content generated by destinations on social media can alleviate negative emotions and doubts, thereby restoring the destination's reputation. However, the data also reveal that DGC does not moderate the negative effects of CUF on destination revisit intent. This may be due to customers' skepticism towards the company's self-promotional claims. This aligns with Cambra-Fierro *et al.* (2022), who found that Visitor-Generated Content (VGC) is deemed more credible than information from the destination itself, which could be subject to bias or constraints.

Theoretical contributions

This investigation contributes to travel literature and the study of destination image recovery in several ways. Initially, travelers seek information to diminish fear and uncertainty about their destinations, as indicated by Khan *et al.* (2022). In this regard, Rather (2021) and Seyfi *et al.* (2023) suggest that social media communications can enhance consumer interactions, foster trust, enhance the destination's image, and strengthen loyalty for companies. By applying the principles of information richness theory, this study expands the travel research knowledge base by examining how social media communications, specifically destination-generated content (DGC) and visitor-generated content (VGC), can mitigate the adverse effects of COVID-19 uncertainty-fear (CUF) on destination image and the travel intentions of visitors post-COVID-19. Particularly, this study highlights the role of VGC in lessening COVID-19's negative impact on destination image and travel intentions. It argues that VGC offers experiential knowledge and social proof, which may help reduce the negative impact of COVID-19 uncertainty-fear on the destination image. This

suggests that potential tourists look for validation from peers or previous visitors when faced with negative perceptions or feelings due to global crises, thereby making VGC a reliable and significant factor in their decision-making process. Thus, authentic and positive VGC can forge a favorable destination image and shape potential tourists' willingness to travel during uncertain times, as supported by Cambra-Fierro *et al.*, (2022); and Gupta *et al.*, (2023). Furthermore, our research indicates that DGC primarily moderates the relationship between CUF and destination image (DI), highlighting how destinations can use DGC strategies to preserve a positive image during crises. However, altering behavioral intentions involves addressing the potential traveler's deeper, more entrenched fears and concerns. Overall, our analysis underscores the critical role of social media during crises for achieving destination image recovery.

Secondly, the absence of definitive and substantial findings regarding the impact of COVID-19 on destination image and visitation intentions in non-Western contexts suggests ongoing debates and a need for more empirical research (Lu and Atadil, 2021; Savadori *et al.*, 2023). Consequently, this study enhances understanding of the interplay between CUF, destination image, and travelers' intentions in the post-COVID-19 era within a non-Western framework. The findings corroborate the hypotheses posited by cognitive appraisal theory concerning the adverse influences of coronavirus on the travel sector.

Practical implications

The results of this investigation hold many managerial implications for destination policymakers and managers. They could aid destination policymakers in handling COVID-19 infections and other natural disasters associated with uncertainty and fear. Initially, our findings indicate that destination-generated content (DGC) mitigates the adverse impacts of CUF on the destination's image. Consequently, destination managers and policymakers ought to acknowledge

the significance of content generated by the destination on social media and focus on creating and spreading authentic, reassuring, and informative content about their initiatives, such as measures for health safety, practices for coronavirus protection, and compliance with international COVID-19 protocols. Nonetheless, it is crucial to understand that while such content positively affects the destination's image, it does not automatically lead to an immediate intention to visit.

Meanwhile, the results indicate that visitor-generated content (VGC) mitigates the negative impact of crisis-generated uncertainty (CUF) on destination image and destination revisit intent post-COVID-19. Practical observations suggest that testimonials, reviews, images, and videos shared by visitors offer real-time and relatable insights into the actual situation on the ground, often dispelling exaggerated fears and concerns. For example, while news reports may emphasize lockdowns or outbreaks, a traveler's blog post or vlog can portray a calm, well-managed environment, rebuilding trust and positivity towards the destination. This grassroots-level content serves as an effective counter-narrative, typically reducing the impact of negative publicity and assisting prospective tourists in making informed decisions. For destination marketers and tourism boards, promoting VGC and strategically incorporating it into their social media communications can help alleviate the negative effects of crisis-induced perceptions and actively aid in the recovery of the tourism sector in the post-pandemic period, encouraging more tourists to visit.

Limitations and Future Research:

Even though, this study adds to the existing body of knowledge, it has significant limitations that necessitate further studies. For example, it employs a cross-sectional design, which means the data were collected at one point in time. Therefore, longitudinal studies could yield more generalizable findings and could offer deeper insights into the dynamics between customer utility function (CUF), destination image, travel intentions, direct government contribution (DGC), and

visitor-generated content (VGC). Additionally, while there is evidence that COVID-19 affects tourists' sustainable behaviors (Hamdy and Zhang, 2023), the influence of COVID-19 on the sustainable image of destinations in developing countries remains underexplored. Future research should delve into this relationship within developing nations. Lastly, it would be beneficial for upcoming studies to apply our proposed model from the perspective of residents. In this context,, Hassan and Soliman. (2021) have noted that domestic tourists are increasingly significant for travel and tourism, especially as international travel faces restrictions in some places. Local authorities in areas affected by COVID-19 have been encouraging domestic travel as a response.

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