

## The Impact of Online Consumer Reviews on Online Hotel Booking Intention

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Keywords:</b> Online Consumer Reviews Online Hotel Booking Booking Intention Online Consumer Behavior</p> <p>Received 15 July 2021 Revised 15 August 2021 Accepted 20 August 2021</p> <p><b>Article Classification:</b> Research Article</p>	<p><b>Purpose</b> – The aim of this research is to investigate the impact of Online Consumer Reviews (OCRs) on consumers' online hotel booking intention in the hospitality sector in Turkey.</p> <p><b>Design / Methodology / Approach</b> - This study utilizes quantitative research techniques. A self-administrated, 5 point Likert scale type online questionnaire was conducted in order to collect data. A total of 204 volunteer participants who were interested in online shopping, have participated in the survey. The research model consists of 7 independent and 2 dependent variables. While Review Source, Review Quality, Review Consistency, Review Volume, Review Recency, Negative Reviews and Positive Reviews are independent variables; Perceived Credibility of Online Consumer Reviews and Online Hotel Booking Intention are dependent variables. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Model (SEM) were utilized while analyzing the research model of the study.</p> <p><b>Findings</b> – According to findings of the research, both positive and negative OCRs affect the perceived credibility of OCRs. However, there is no statistically significant impact found that review source, review recency, review consistency and review quality affect perceived credibility of OCRs. In addition, as per findings of the research, review volume and perceived credibility of OCRs have statistically significant impact on consumers' online hotel booking intention.</p> <p><b>Discussion</b> – People take into account other individuals' opinions and comments when shopping online. This is particularly prominent in service sectors such as hotels that do not sell a tangible product. This study has investigated that the characteristics of OCRs influencing perceived credibility of OCRs and consumers' online hotel booking intention. Perceived credibility was found to have a mediator role between characteristics of the OCR and online hotel booking intention. Findings of the study can be implemented by hotel brands in order to enhance customers' online booking experience.</p>

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In today's world, where we can do almost everything on the Internet, online consumer reviews (OCRs) have become an indispensable element for many various online platforms. Many online business establishments provides a functionality on their online platforms to leave comments and reviews about the products/services. Unlike traditional communication channels, online platforms do not allow consumers to look directly at the product or service. Instead, customers obtain information about a product or service either from information provided by vendors or service providers, or from the experiences and opinions of other consumers (Dhakak & Huseynov, 2020). These platforms enable individuals to share and express their ideas and experiences about the products/services through virtual environment (Dash, Zhang, & Zhou, 2021).

In the tourism industry, consumption takes place differently in terms of time and space. In addition, tourism products show abstract features. OCRs on hotels are considered an important source of travel information for customers, because OCRs increase potential customers' knowledge and improve their perceptions of travel products and they are considered and seen as an essential source of information (Memarzadeh & Chang, 2015). People tend to rely on information provided by OCRs in service sectors like hotels and restaurants, since it is not possible to visit and try these kind of products beforehand (Fang, Ye, Kucukusta, & Law, 2016). In order to reduce the risk, people need the opinions of others. In this context, the information they can obtain from their surroundings is insufficient and they try to make the right decision with more information that can be obtained through a more detailed search. Since OCRs give people more confidence than commercial websites,

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more and more people are reading these review websites and considering the information there in their decisions. Due to this intangibility of tourism products, the importance of OCRs are of great importance in consumers' decisions (Kim & Hollingshead, 2015).

The main objective of this paper is to analyze the impacts of OCRs characteristics (Review source, review quality, review consistency, review volume, review recency, positivity, and negativity of reviews) on perceived credibility and validate the relationship between the credibility of OCRs and the online hotel booking intention. While there are few studies in the literature that have addressed and analyzed the credibility of online consumer reviews and its effects on consumers' decisions, it was implemented in this study as an influencing factor on consumers.

If the impact were largely determined, it would be helpful to hotel businesses in Turkey, to re-evaluate their strategies, marketing activities and to improve their service quality, especially for those that have not yet discovered the importance of OCRs. OCRs might help hotel brands create a more professional and effective marketing plan by increasing consumers' contribution to the business development process. It might also be beneficial for consumers to better understand OCRs and facilitate their decision-making about a hotel.

The research questions of this paper are formulated based on the discussion above and generated as below:

Do online consumer reviews (OCRs) have any impact on online booking intention of online consumers? If yes, which characteristics of OCRs have a significant impact on booking intention?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Traditionally, word of mouth (WOM) has been the main source for consumers to share their opinions about a product or service with others. With the inclusion of the Internet and social media in all areas of life, the traditional WOM has been replaced by electronic word of mouth (EWOM). It is an expansion of WOM, which is no longer just a verbal, mutual and simultaneous form of communication between the sender and the receiver (Lopez & Sicilia, 2014; Chan & Ngai, 2011). EWOM is a positive or negative opinion of potential, current or former customers about a product, service or company, which enables available to many people and organizations to perform information exchange online. (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004; Wu & Wang, 2011). The widespread use of EWOM communication among consumers has paved the way for the formation of electronic word of mouth communication systems (EWOMs). EWOMs are those places on the internet where electronic sellers provide interactive services to consumers, which based on technological channels. EWOMs enable interpersonal EWOM communications (Hashmi & Khan, 2016). Reviews in EWOMs usually consist of both personal experiences, opinions and a formalized rating scale. In this way, readers have ability to measure quality and reliability of the reviews in conjunction with their ratings (Hennig-Thurau & Walsh, 2003).

Online consumer reviews (OCRs), are one type of EWOM, enables consumers to propagate an idea that includes their experiences, evaluations and opinions (Yen & Tang, 2019). People facilitate from OCRs, while making their purchasing decisions of various categories like, hotels, restaurants, movies and online games (Sharifi, 2019). 74% percent of the consumers consider others' opinions and are influenced by them in terms of trust and credibility (De Pelsmacker, Van Tilburg, & Holthorf, 2018; Lo & Yao, 2019).

Online advice is an important determinant in purchasing decisions in almost every sector, from tourism to travel, entertainment, technological devices, electrical devices and other consumer products (Gavilan, Avello, & Martinez-Navarro, 2018). Researchers have noted that an important reason consumer use online reviews is to find quality information to reduce risk, since perceived risk negatively affects the purchasing decision of consumers (Xie, Zhang, & Zhang, 2014). Yogesh and Yesha (2014) stated that social media and internet are the most widely used sources of information for perceived convenience, effectiveness, and perceived credibility. Torun (2017), in his research investigated how consumers benefit from the internet in the purchasing decision process, and concluded that the first place where the consumers are searching to reach information about a product is, internet.

People looking for information on any subject on the internet are bombarded with the thoughts and experiences of other individuals. Redundancy in review resources makes it difficult for people to seek information about a product or service (Hlee, Lee, Yang, & Koo, 2018). For this reason, people examine the

source of information in terms of reliability and expertise in order to reach the targeted information (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Shan, 2016). Lo and Yao (2019), found that the source of the review, greatly influences the perceived credibility of the review. Another trust building aspect of a review, its quality (Dedeoğlu, 2019). According to Chakraborty (2019), consumers are looking for reviews, which are based on logical justifications and rational thoughts and find those more credible. In addition, opinions consistent with the others will be considered as more accurate in terms of objectivity and credible (Zhao, Stylianou, & Zheng, 2018; Chakraborty, 2019). Karen, Xie, Chihchien, and Shinyi (2016), concluded that consumers are likely to be influenced by the recently posted reviews since they get more attention and they are found to be more useful. Also high volume of OCRs either positive or negative, are more likely to attract potential customers and increase awareness (Davis & Khazanchi, 2008). Kwon, Bae, & Phelan (2011), found that consumers are affected by both positive and negative comments while making a purchasing decision. Positive OCRs can help the user to have a positive attitude and thus have a positive effect on the sale of the product (Clare, 2009). Özbay (2013) concluded that negative comments are significantly effective as positive comments in consumers' purchasing decisions. When consumers book a hotel online, they consider the reviews that provide reliable information about the hotel, and this affects their booking intention (Kim, Kim, & Heo, 2016; Chakraborty, 2019).

### 3. RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

The research model of the study is illustrated in Figure 1. The model visually defines the structure of the variables to be examined. Characteristics of OCRs are as follows: Review source, review quality, review consistency, review volume, review recency positive reviews and negative reviews; and the other variables, which are perceived credibility of OCRs and online hotel booking intention. The relationship between the variables will be tested in order to understand how much they affect each other.

In this model, characteristics of OCRs are independent variable, while the rest of the variables are dependent.

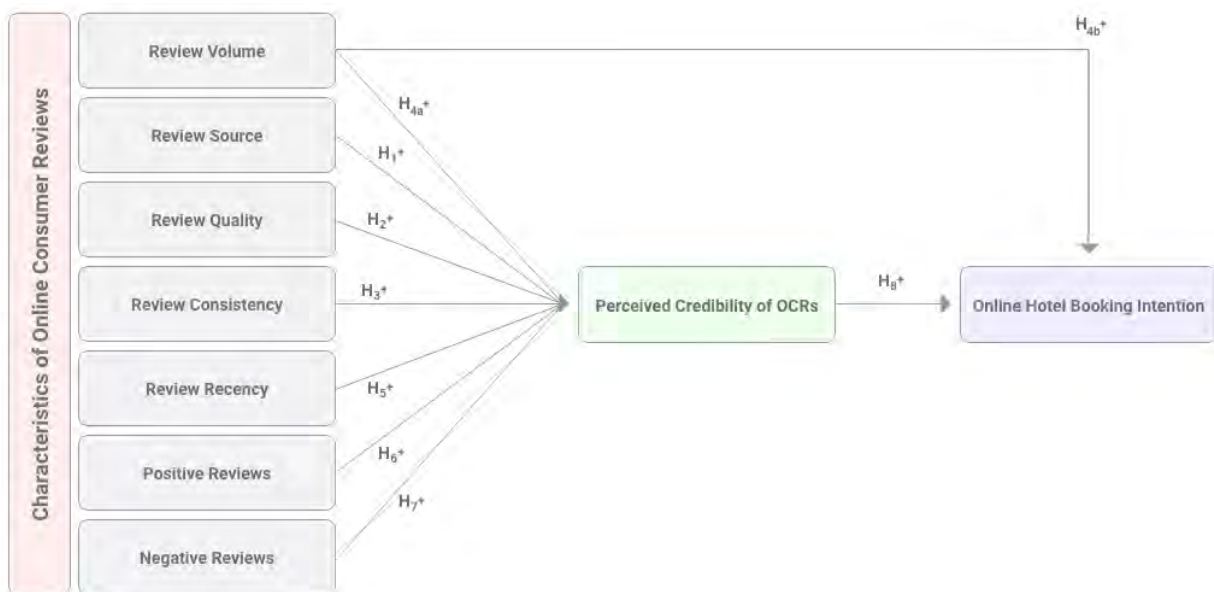


Figure 1: Research Model

#### A. Review Source

Review source is a factor that affects the originality and competence of the source of the message. Consumers are more likely to trust the information that they get from credible review sources. Expertise and trustworthiness are generally found to be remarkable, which are significant indicators of the communicator's credibility (Shan, 2016). Expertise refers to the review provider's perceived knowledge, experience, skills and the ability to provide accurate information to people seeking for information (Ohanian, 1990). An information originated by a credible review source usually has an impact on the decision-making process of the consumers, that influences consumer's actions in the end (Hayes & Carr, 2015). The more knowledge and reliability of the source from which the message is received, the greater the impact it has on other people (Reimer &

Benkenstein, 2016). As a consequence of the above-mentioned discussion following hypothesis has been proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Review source has a positive impact on the perceived credibility of online consumer reviews (OCRs).

#### *B. Review Quality*

Review quality has frequently been described as a persuasive aspect of OCRs and mostly measured from the point of its relevance, accuracy, information content and comprehensiveness (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). Consumers generally do not consider the subjective judgments in reviews. They interrogates the logical factors that have driven the reviewer to write that statement. When consumers believe that the reviews have logical reasons behind the writings, then they mark such reviews as credible and act in a positive manner towards them (Huang, Chen, Yen, & Tran, 2015).

According to Park, Lee, & Han (2007), OCRs with the high-quality characteristics, have greater impact on consumers' purchase intention than the OCRs, which pose low-quality aspect. When the review quality is greater, consumers' confidence level increases when purchasing the product (Ratnasingham, 1998). Because previous positive statement written by former reviewers soothes the uncertainty risks and decreases, the potential risks related with the purchase, and empowers the decision-making process, just as the decisions former reviewers have made (Xie et al., 2014).

Therefore, based on the discussion above, the following hypothesis has been proposed:

Hypothesis 2: Review quality has a positive impact on the perceived credibility of online consumer reviews (OCRs).

#### *C. Review Consistency*

Review consistency refers up to what extent a reviewer's recommendation is in line with other reviewers' opinions, associated with the same product/service (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). In an online context, wide range of OCRs do exist. For this reason, it is impossible for an individual consumer to pursue one specific review and determine the true quality of the product/service. Therefore, consumers seek for more frequent, highly voted and similar recommendations that supports one another for the sake of lowering the uncertainty risk. The series of OCRs that have high variation among itself carries great risk, while the series of OCRs with low variation provides certainty (Zhu & Zhang, 2010). Consumers pay attention to consistency in OCRs and perceive any online review as credible if it is in harmony with others (Zhao et al., 2018).

Based on the discussion above, the following hypothesis has been proposed:

Hypothesis 3: Review consistency has a positive impact on the perceived credibility of online consumer reviews (OCRs).

#### *D. Review Volume*

Review volume is related to the number of posted OCRs (Liu, 2006). The volume of OCRs can be considered as a pointer, which indicates the performance of a product or service in the market (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006). From this point of view, consumers can make inferences about the quality of the product (Lopez & Sicilia, 2014). The volume of OCRs has an informative role, since it increases product awareness. In the online communities, higher review volumes regardless of their negative or positive characteristics, more likely to lure information seeking consumers and afterward enhance the product awareness (Davis & Khazanchi, 2008). Since more people have experienced a product and shared their opinions, it is probable that high review volume can give the consumer a more credible signal about that product (Van Birgelen, Robben, & Henseler, 2010). Also, higher volume can provide consumers more information, reducing their uncertainty, and strengthening their purchase intention towards a product or service.

When consumers see higher volume of OCRs about a product, they think that many people have purchased that product, and they would like to realize their purchase intentions on this conviction (Park et al., 2007). Also, higher volume can provide consumers with more information, reducing their uncertainty, and strengthening their purchase intention towards a product or service (Brynjolfsson & Smith, 2000).

Based on the above-mentioned discussion, following hypotheses has been proposed:

Hypothesis 4a: Review volume has a positive impact on the perceived credibility of online consumer reviews (OCRs).

Hypothesis 4b: Review volume will positively influence the online hotel booking intention.

#### *E. Review Recency*

Many platforms on the Internet (social media platforms, shopping platforms etc.) has a system that lists OCRs by time. Recency of the OCRs indicate that whether the OCRs are recent, timely and newsworthy (Cheung, Lee, & Rabjohn, 2008). In accordance with the serial position effect, consumers are inclined to recall or mostly consider the last unit in a list or sequence preferably to previous ones (Colman, 2015). As time goes on, the benefits, which consumers obtain from OCRs, decrease at the same rate (Liu, 2006). Specially, the order of emergence of OCRs has been found to influence consumers' purchasing decisions and perceived usefulness (Hu & Li, 2011). Additionally, Jindal and Liu (2008) concluded that more recent online reviews about a product/service would attract more attention. Therefore, another hypothesis has been proposed:

Hypothesis 5: Review recency has a positive impact on the perceived credibility of online consumer reviews (OCRs).

#### *F. Positive and Negative Reviews*

OCRs differ from each other not only in content, but also in the valence they carry. Review valence refers to the aspect of the statements in the message, in terms of positivity or negativity (Buttle, 1998). Generally, the given information in OCRs can be graded as positive or negative (Lee, Rodgers, & Kim, 2009). While the positive OCRs contain delightful, pleasant and satisfied experiences and sometimes recommendations to others, negative OCRs are in the shape of complaint that consumers express their unpleasant experiences, grievances and troubles related to a product/service (Anderson, 1998). Some researches in the literature argue that positive comments are more effective than negative comments, while others claim the opposite. From this point of view, it would be more reasonable to examine the effects of positive and negative OCRs, respectively, by mentioning the literature.

Consumers' positive opinions and recommendations can be more impactful than negative ones in terms of persuasiveness (Zhao, Wang, Guo, & Law, 2015). According to Sparks and Browning (2011), positive OCRs increase the consumers' trust toward a hotel. Kwon et al. (2011) found in his research that positive comments are effective in terms of the sales process in hotel management.

On the other hand, if we talk about the impressions of negative OCRs we should also mention the negativity effect. According to negativity effect consumers place more emphasis on negative information than positive information when making evaluative decisions (Herr, Kardes, & Kim, 1991). Consumers take more into consideration the negative information than positive, since they find negative one is more diagnostic and informative in the decision-making process (Fiske, 1980; Maheswaran & Meyers-Levy, 1990). According to Eslami, Ghasemaghaei, and Hassanein (2018), consumers consider negative reviews to be reliable because they believe that the manufacturer or seller of products or services cannot spread such information, therefore negative reviews can be acknowledged as actual thoughts of the sender (Folse, Porter III, Godbole, & Reynolds, 2016). Drawing on the negativity effect, we propose that OCRs with negative valence will be perceived as more useful and credible compared to OCRs with positive valence. According to Weinberger and Dillion (1980), negative OCRs are more influential than the same amount of positive OCRs on the online purchasing intention of consumers.

Based on the discussion and the findings mentioned above the following hypotheses have been proposed:

Hypothesis 6: Positive online consumer reviews have a positive impact on the perceived credibility of online consumer reviews (OCRs).

Hypothesis 7: Negative online consumer reviews have a positive impact on the perceived credibility of online consumer reviews (OCRs).

### G. *Perceived Credibility of Online Consumer Reviews*

The perceived credibility of OCRs can be describable as an assessment of the authenticity of reviews based on the consumer's perception (Zha, Li, & Yan, 2015). It refers to extent to which the review is perceived as true, reliable, rational and trustworthy (Cheung, Luo, Sia, & Chen, 2009; Lee & Shin, 2014). When consumers need opinions of others, they are more likely to consider reviews which contain credible, informative notions (Wathen & Burkell, 2002). When individuals sense that the OCRs are reflecting the truth and credible source of hotel related information, they are more likely to make their hotel booking decisions based on them (Kim et al., 2016). Since OCRs are treated as one of the crucial factors that influences consumers' purchase decision, particularly in the hospitality industry, based on the prior studies and findings another hypothesis has been proposed:

Hypothesis 8: Perceived credibility of online consumer reviews has positive impact on the online hotel booking intention.

## 4. RESEARCH METHOD

### A. *Research Design and Instrument Development*

The research model of the study was formulated based on the previous empirical researches from the relevant literature. This study utilizes quantitative research techniques. Quantitative research focuses on collecting numerical data and generalizing them among groups of people or explaining a particular phenomenon. The online questionnaire used in this research consists of multiple-choice questions, open-ended questions and category questions in order to collect data for demographic information. To measure the validity of the proposed hypotheses 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree was used which was adapted from previous studies. The scale items for Review Source were adapted from Mahapatra and Mishra (2017), Dou et al. (2012), Todd and Melancon (2018) and Cheung and Thadani, (2012). The scale items for Review Quality were taken from Lee (2018), Xu and Yao (2015) and Zhang, Zhao, Cheung, & Lee, (2014). Review Consistency items were derived from Cheung et al. (2009), Luo, Luo, Xu, Warkentin, and Sia, (2015) and Viglia, Minazzi, & Muhalis, (2016). Review Volume items were adapted from Duan, Gu, & Whinston, (2008). The scale items for Review Recency were derived from Bailey and Pearson (1983). Positive Review and Negative Review items were taken from Chiou, Hsiao, & Chiu, (2018), Zhao et al. (2015), Sparks and Browning (2011) and Vermeulen and Seegers (2009). The scale items for Perceived Credibility of Online Consumer Reviews were adapted from Zha et al. (2015) and Luo et al. (2015). Lastly, the scale items of Online Hotel Booking Intention were derived from Li et al. (2017), Viglia et al. (2016), Zhao et al. (2015) and Zhang et al. (2014).

### B. *Data Collection and Sample Size*

This research was conducted in the form of fieldwork by applying a self-administrated online questionnaire empowered by Google forms. The study questionnaires were made available to the participants in English and Turkish language as 2 different versions. The surveys were distributed via WhatsApp, Discord, Instagram, and Facebook. The online questionnaire was preferred for reasons such as providing convenience in terms of cost, time, and being easily accessible to the participants. In addition, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this data collection tool was preferred since it would be healthier way.

For the collection of data, a method of convenience sampling was used in this research which is known to be a non-probability sampling technique. As per Smith and Albaum (2005), this method is based on the researcher's judgments and does not involve any probabilities techniques. For the multiple regression techniques which require a large sample size for generalization purposes Pallant (2011) has recommended using the following formula generated by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007):  $N > 50 + 8m$ . Where: N = sample size, m = the number of independent variables. According to this formula, the sample size required for this research should be  $N > 106$  (Number of independent variables equals seven). Besides, as indicated by Hoelter's index, the SEM method should exceed 200 for a sufficient size because it represents the data inadequate way (Byrne, 2010). Thus, this study tried to reach a minimum of 200 responses to meet the above-mentioned requirements. A total of 204 participants filled out the questionnaires. Data were collected from people at various ages and different nationalities for the sake of generalization.

### C. Statistical Techniques

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equational Model (SEM) were applied to current research as statistical techniques. With the help of CFA, relationships between factors and their observed variables can be measured (Byrne, 2010). In the meantime, CFA is able to evaluate the validity of the measures while SEM allows theories to be tested quantitatively and it depends on the error factor.

The main difference between CFA and SEM is that CFA focuses on the relationship between latent and observed variables, while SEM covers the structural path between focused (latent) variables. As per Harrington (2009), CFA can stand out as a unique analysis and can be considered as part of SEM. In the analysis of this study, IBM SPSS version 25 and IBM SPSS AMOS version 21 have been used as statistical software.

## 5. FINDINGS

### A. Demographics of the Participants

The sample size of the current paper consists of 204 fully answered questionnaires. Before distributing the study questionnaire, necessary permissions were obtained from Istanbul Aydin University ethics committee (25.11.2020 – 2020/10). %50.98 of respondents were female and %49.02 of respondents were male. The age of survey participants ranged between 18 and 55 years. Most of the participants were single and the majority of them earn 3000 TL or below monthly. The majority of the responders were students and employed people (in private or public sector). Although the education levels were varied, they were mostly people with a master's degree, and they were people of various nationalities. (Turkish 57.84%, Azerbaijani 9.80%, Afghan 8.82%, and other nationalities 23.54%). The time that respondents spend daily on the Internet was mostly more than 5 hours or more. The participants have stated that they make use of many different online booking sites such as: Trivago, Agoda, Booking, Hotels, Priceline, and TripAdvisor etc. The huge portion (96.5%) of participants have answered "Yes" to paying attention OCRs while booking a hotel online. Tabulated form of the demographic data is shown below (Table 1).

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents**

DEMOGRAPHICS PROFILE	ELEMENTS	FREQUENCIES	PERCENTAGE (%)
Gender	Male	100	49,02
	Female	104	50,98
Age Range	18 to 25	111	54,41
	26 to 35	68	33,33
	36 to 45	23	11,27
	46 to 55	2	0,98
Marital Status	Single	157	76,96
	Married	40	19,61
	Widow	7	3,43
Educational Background	High School or Below	9	4,41
	Associate degree	23	11,27
	Bachelor's Degree	76	37,25
	Master's Degree	90	44,12
	Doctor's Degree	6	2,94
Occupation	Student	92	45,1
	Public Sector Employee	8	3,92

	Private Sector Employee	71	34,8
	Self-Employment	17	8,33
	Retired	1	0,49
	Unemployed	15	7,35
<b>Monthly Income (TL)</b>	3000 or below	92	45,1
	3001 to 3500	34	16,67
	3501 to 4000	38	18,63
	4001 to 5000	29	14,22
	5001 or above	11	5,39
<b>Daily Internet Usage</b>	1 Hour or less	7	3,43
	2-3 Hours	64	31,37
	4-5 Hours	60	29,41
	5 Hours or more	73	35,78
<b>Number of Online Bookings</b>	Once	68	33,33
	Twice	41	20,1
	3 Times	28	13,73
	4 Times or more	67	32,84

Note: Percentages may not sum up to 100% due to missing data

### B. Normality Assessment

One of the main assumptions of SEM analysis is multivariate normality. In this study, kurtosis and skewness were considered when analyzing the normality of the data. Skewness means lack of symmetry in statistics. It shows the shape of the distribution of data (Kline, 2011). Kurtosis, on the other part, expresses the pointedness of a peak in the distribution curve (Kline, 2011). When the distribution peaks higher than the normal distribution, it is called positive kurtosis (leptokurtic), while it peaks less than the normal distribution, it is called negative kurtosis (platykurtic) (Kline, 2011). Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, (2009) and Bryne (2010) argued that data is normal if kurtosis is between -7 to +7. Since kurtosis values of all items were found to be within the recommended thresholds of (George & Mallery, 2016; Hair et al., 2009; Bryne, 2010), it can be concluded that normality assumption of this paper was not violated.

### C. Validity and Reliability Assessment

Validity and reliability are among the important elements of a quantitative research. In addition, in order to conduct confirmatory factor analysis, it is significant to provide reliability and convergent validity. Validity checks whether variables are measured correctly. Reliability assessment refers to how consistently a method measure something. If the same result can be consistently achieved by using the same measure methods under the same circumstances, the measurement is considered reliable. Reliability, investigates the consistency of the same element, measured among respondents and stability of the features in each time (Smith & Albaum, 2005).

Hair et al. (2009) proposed the thresholds of validity and reliability assessments as follows: To provide validity, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) should be greater than 0.5, and to procure reliability, Composite Reliability (CR) should be greater than 0.7.

Table 2 below represents the outcome of validity and reliability assessments conducted for current research. The table were obtained based on Correlations and Standardized Regression Weights tables with the help of IBM SPSS AMOS software. Convergent validity has been established and found and proven by an average variance extracted (AVE) greater than 0.5 except for the Positive Reviews (PR). Since it has a value of 0.486, which is very close to 0.5 and it is acceptable. If a larger sample size were included in the study, it would



probably be within the normal range of value. Composite reliability has also been established and resulted to be greater than 0.7.

**Table 2: Validity and Reliability Assessments**

	CR	AVE
PC	0.905	0.656
RS	0.891	0.622
RQ	0.877	0.589
RC	0.878	0.591
RV	0.916	0.687
RR	0.932	0.775
PR	0.821	0.486
NR	0.856	0.601
INT	0.936	0.745

The CR of all variables of the study are above the suggested threshold of 0.7. This concludes that CR of all the variables of the current study are admissible.

Only the AVE of PR is slightly lower than the determined threshold value of 0.5. However, it is acceptable, since it has a value of 0.486 that is very close to 0.5 and it should not be considered as a major problem. Therefore, convergent validity of all variables of the current research is at acceptable levels.

#### *D. Confirmatory Factory Analysis (CFA)*

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is a kind of factor analysis, which is mostly used in social researches (Kline, 2011). It is used to test whether the measurements of a structure are consistent with a researcher's understanding of the nature of the factor. The aim of the CFA is to examine the data fit of the hypothesized model. The result of CFA analysis (Figure 2), showed that factor loading of all items were found to be highly significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). Only two items were removed from further analysis due to their negative standardized regression weight. These two items were RR5 (Review Recency) and NR3 (Negative Reviews). In order to assess multivariate assumption of CFA, kurtosis values were obtained from SPSS AMOS version 21 and analyzed. There are specific measures that can be calculated to determine goodness of fit. The measures with their acceptable thresholds are shown below (Table 3).

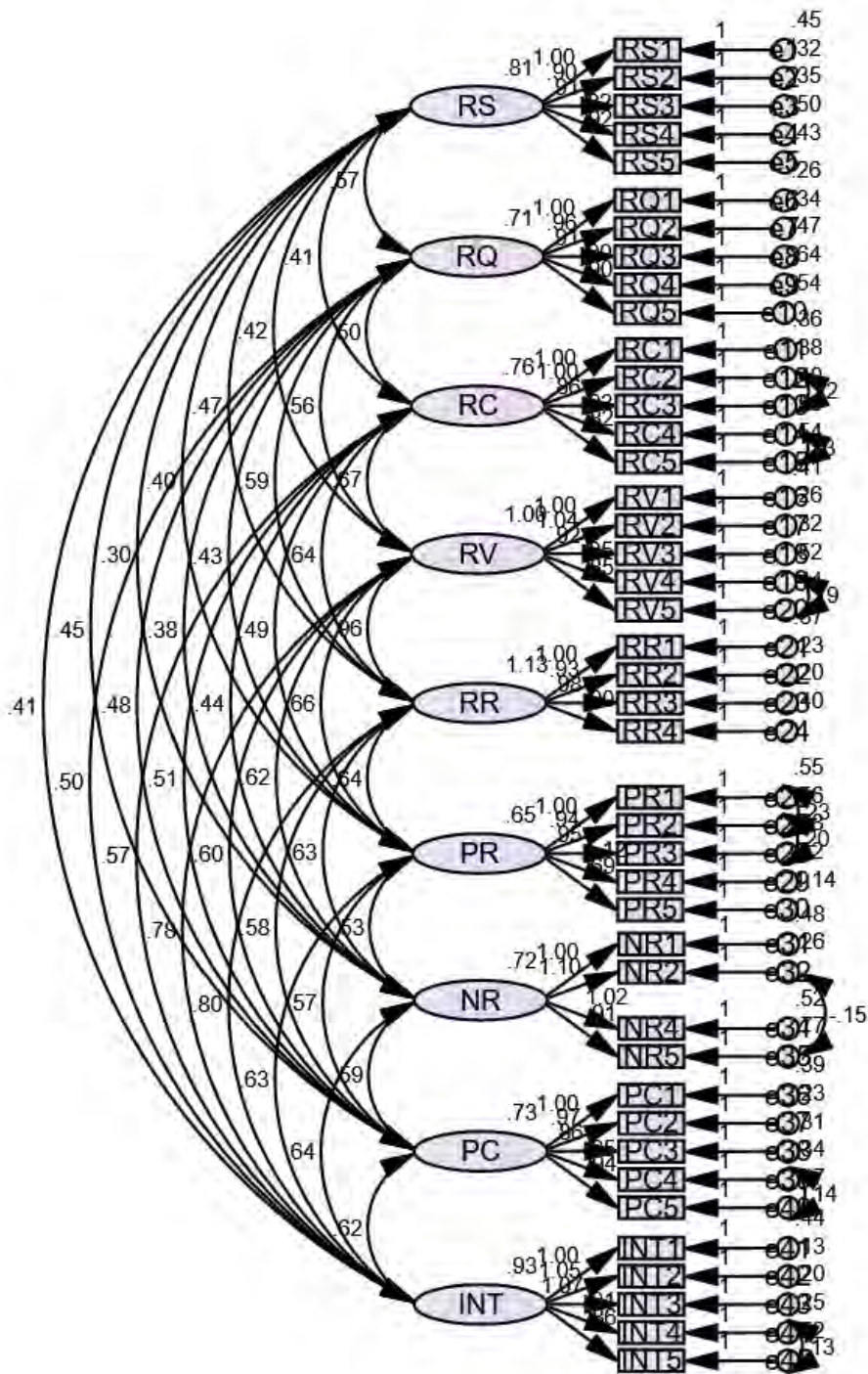


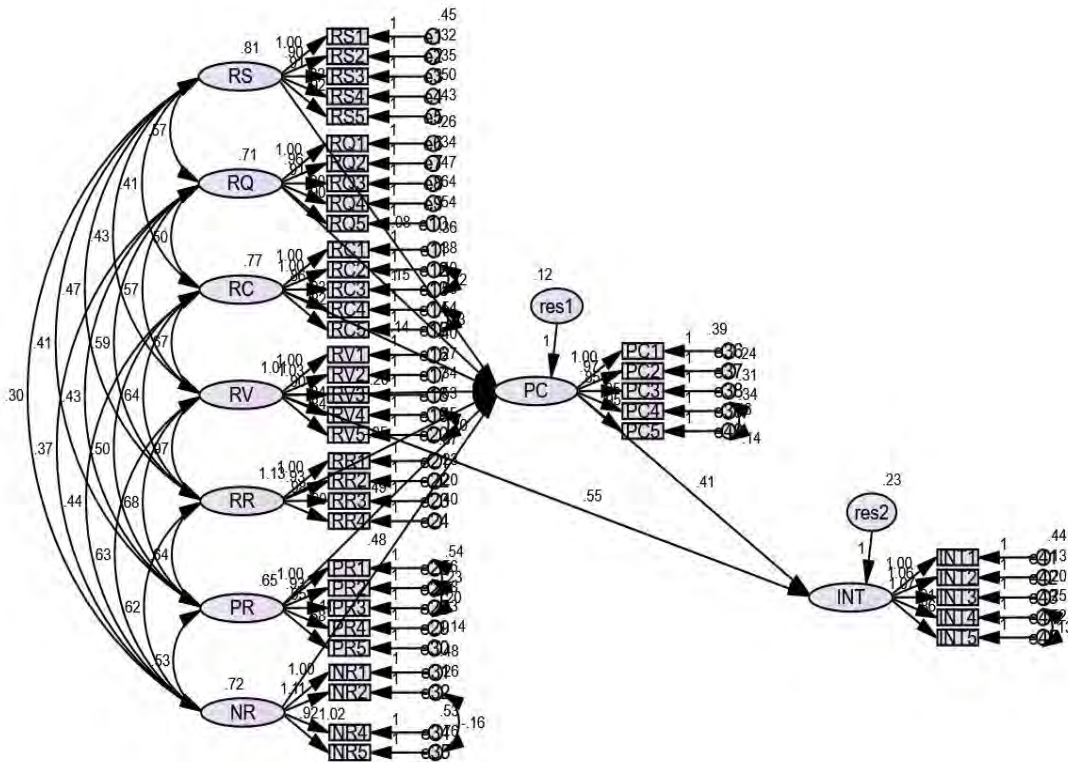
Figure 2 : Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

**Table 3: Model Fit Analysis for CFA**

<u>Measure</u>	<u>Thresholds</u> (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Schreiber et al., 2006; Hooper et al., 2008)	<u>Proposed Model Results</u>
<b>CMIN / DF</b>	< 3 good; < 5 permissible	2.413
<b>CFI</b>	> 0.95 great; > 0.90 traditional; > 0.80 sometimes permissible	0.854
<b>RMSEA</b>	< 0.05 good; between 0.05 - 0.10 moderate; > 0.10 bad	0.083
<b>SRMR</b>	<0.08 good; <0.05 excellent	0.062
<b>TLI</b>	< 0.95 excellent	0.839
<b>IFI</b>	< 0.90 excellent	0.856

The results of the measurement, namely, minimum discrepancy per degree of freedom (CMIN / DF) =2.413, comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.854, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.083, standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = 0.062, Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) = 0.839 and incremental fit index (IFI) = 0.856. All results were within the acceptable level (Table 3) according to Hu and Bentler (1999), Schreiber, Nora, Stage, Barlow, and King (2006), and Hooper, Coughlan, and Mullen (2008), and refers to goodness of fit. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) is the expansion of CFA, which is the measurement part of the SEM that focuses on relationships among latent variables and their indicators. The other part is the structural component, which shows how the latent variables of the proposed research are related.

In order to examine hypotheses, path analysis has been conducted through Structural Equation Modelling (Figure 3). In this model, there are 7 independent variables (RS, RQ, RC, RV, RR, PR and NR) and 2 dependent variables (PC and INT).



**Figure 3: Structural Equation Model**

As per Byrne (2010), Squared Multiple Correlations (SMC) or R-squared is an indicator of the degree of variance that represents the proportion of the variance for a predicted variable that is explained by a predictor variable. SMC values of the predicted variables of PC and INT were 0.832 and 0.754 respectively.

The results of hypotheses testing are summarized below with unstandardized regression weights ( $\beta$ ), standard error (S.E.) and p-values.

- Review Source (RS), was not found to have any statistically significant impact on the Perceived Credibility of OCRs (PC) (H1:  $\beta = 0.084$ , S.E. = 0.082 and p-value = 0.307).

**H1:** Review source has a positive impact on the perceived credibility of online consumer reviews. = **Not Supported**

- Review Quality (RQ), was not found to have any statistically significant impact on the Perceived Credibility of OCRs (PC) (H2:  $\beta = 0.151$ , S.E. = 0.099 and p-value = 0.126).

**H2:** Review quality has a positive impact on the perceived credibility of online consumer reviews. = **Not Supported**

- Review Consistency (RC), was not found to have any statistically significant impact on the Perceived Credibility of OCRs (PC) (H3:  $\beta = 0.144$ , S.E. = 0.087 and p-value = 0.095).

**H3:** Review consistency has a positive impact on the perceived credibility of online consumer reviews. = **Not Supported**

- Review Volume (RV), was not found to have any statistically significant impact on the Perceived Credibility of OCRs (PC) (H4a:  $\beta = -0.205$ , S.E. = 0.167 and p-value = 0.219).

**H4a:** Review volume has a positive impact on the perceived credibility of online consumer reviews. = **Not Supported**

- Review Volume (RV), was found to have statistically highly significant impact on the Online Hotel Booking Intention (INT) (H4b:  $\beta = 0.546$ , S.E. = 0.070 and p-value =  $p < 0.001$ ).

**H4b:** Review volume will positively influence the online hotel booking intention. = **Supported**

- Review Recency (RR), was not found to have any statistically significant impact on the Perceived Credibility of OCRs (PC) (H5:  $\beta = -0.046$ , S.E. = 0.110 and p-value = 0.676).

**H5:** Review recency has a positive impact on the perceived credibility of online consumer reviews. = **Not Supported**

- Positive Reviews (PR), was found to have statistically significant impact on the Perceived Credibility of OCRs (PC) (H6:  $\beta = 0.494$ , S.E. = 0.154 and p-value = 0.001).

**H6:** Positive online consumer reviews have a positive impact on the perceived credibility of online consumer reviews. = **Supported**

- Negative Reviews (NR), was found to have statistically highly significant impact on the Perceived Credibility of OCRs (PC) (H7:  $\beta = 0.481$ , S.E. = 0.095 and p-value =  $p < 0.001$ ).

**H7:** Negative online consumer reviews have a positive impact on the perceived credibility of online consumer reviews. = **Supported**

- Perceived Credibility of OCRs (PC), was found to have statistically highly significant impact on the Online Hotel Booking Intention (INT) (H8:  $\beta = 0.412$ , S.E. = 0.078 and p-value =  $p < 0.001$ ).

**H8:** Perceived credibility of online consumer reviews has positive impact on the online hotel booking intention. = **Supported**

The summary of the hypotheses testing is provided in Table 4 below.

**Table 4:** Results of Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses	Relationships	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Status
H1	PC ← RS	.084	.082	1.023	.307	Not Supported
H2	PC ← RQ	.151	.099	1.528	.126	Not Supported
H3	PC ← RC	.144	.087	1.667	.095	Not Supported
H4a	PC ← RV	-.205	.167	-1.228	.219	Not Supported
H4b	INT ← RV	.546	.070	7.769	***	Supported
H5	PC ← RR	-.046	.110	-.418	.676	Not Supported
H6	PC ← PR	.494	.154	3.215	.001	Supported
H7	PC ← NR	.481	.095	5.063	***	Supported
H8	INT ← PC	.412	.078	5.244	***	Supported

Note: \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

## 6. DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

### A. Theoretical Contributions

Theoretical implications part compares and contrast findings of this study with the findings of other researchers. The results of the study concluded that positive reviews (PR) had a significant positive impact on the perceived credibility (PC). PR can break down the prejudices of consumers and increase the consumers' trust toward a hotel (Ladhari & Michaud, 2015; Sparks & Browning, 2011). Negative reviews (NR) had a significant positive impact the on the PC. Consumers consider negative reviews reliable because they believe that the manufacturer or seller of products or services cannot spread such information, therefore negative reviews can be acknowledged as actual thoughts of the reviewer (Folse et al., 2016; Eslami et al., 2018). The results reached; show that people in Turkey consider both NR and PR in terms of credibility. People take into consideration not only the positive information but also the negative information while booking a hotel online, since they find NR diagnostic and informative in the decision-making process (Fiske, 1980; Maheswaran & Meyers-Levy, 1990; Herr et al., 1991; Özbay, 2013; Erdil, 2014).

Contrary to the hypothesis, it was concluded that the review source (RS) had no statistically significant effect on PC. Therefore, people in Turkey do not consider RS as a factor of credibility. Nevertheless, this finding is consistent with the study of Cheung et al. (2008) and Chakraborty (2019). Nevertheless, the findings were inconsistent with Van Der Heide and Lim (2015), Filieri, Hofacker, and Alguezaury (2018) and Lo and Yao (2019). These studies concluded that RS has a significant positive impact on the PC. The reached conclusion may be due to the difference in the research designs used in the studies.

Opposite to the hypothesis proposed no significant positive effects of the reviews quality (RQ) has found on the PC. Consumers in Turkey seems to do not care much about the justifications of the reviews. Park et al. (2007) concluded that consumers care more about non-subjective high-quality reviews. In addition, Chakraborty (2019) found that people in India do not look just for any review. However, the current study showed the opposite. People in Turkey do not perceive more credible, if OCRs include more realistic judgments than the subjective ones. The opposite conclusion may be due to cultural, sample size, or knowledge level related reasons.

In contrast to the hypothesis formulated, review consistency (RC) found to be statistically insignificant in determining the PC. The result is inconsistent with the studies of Zhao et al. (2018), Zhu and Zhang (2010) and

Mannes (2009). One of the possible reasons might be the consumers in Turkey pay more attention to the reviews themselves, than to the consistency between them.

Contrary to the hypothesis suggested, no statistically significant positive impact has found of review volume (RV) on PC. The result is inconsistent with the studies of Davis and Khazanchi (2008) and Van Birgelen et al. (2010). One of the possible reasons might be consumers in Turkey believe that the reviews themselves are more important than the overall volume of the reviews in terms of credibility. However, RV also had a positive impact on the INT. This implies that consumers in Turkey thinks that higher RV can provide more information, reduce the uncertainty, and strengthen the purchase intention (Brynjolfsson & Smith, 2000). In addition, they believe that RV is a pointer, which indicates the performance of a product or service in the market (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006).

Opposite to the studies of Hu and Li (2011) and Xie et al. (2016), review recency (RR) also had found to be statistically insignificant in determining the PC. The opposite conclusion may be due to sample size or consumers in Turkey simply do not find a connection between the RR and PC. One of the possible reasons might be consumers in Turkey believe that the reviews themselves are more important than the recency of the reviews in terms of credibility.

Further, the current study has found that PC had statistically significant positive impact on INT. Proving this hypothesis was the targeted aim of the research, and it is concluded to be consistent with the findings of Chakraborty (2019). When consumers sense that the OCRs are reflecting the truth and credible source of hotel related information, they are more likely to make their hotel booking decisions based on them (Kim et al., 2016). The result implies that consumers in Turkey look for credible reviews while making their online hotel booking decisions.

### *B. Practical Implications*

Current research contributes to the literature by addressing OCRs on hotels in terms of credibility, which have a strong impact on consumers' INT. The findings in the study could provide guidance to the hotel brands in reviewing and changing their online strategies and promoting themselves as a more reliable brand. Peer-rating system can be implemented in order to evaluate the PC. Marketers and hotel brands should pay special attention to both PR and NR. These variables had found to have a significant influence in determining the PC. Therefore, it would be better for hotel brands and marketers to consider OCRs regardless of the positive or negative value they carry. In this way, they can plan more effectively in responding to customers' requests. In addition, marketers and hotel brands could provide a better structured review format, that can facilitate customers to express opinions in a more understandable and categorizable manner (such as cleanliness, food quality, internet, staff etc.).

Further, current research indicates that RV has a significant positive influence on INT. When consumers are exposed more OCRs on a hotel, their decision-making processes are affected in this direction. Therefore, hotel brands and marketers could devote more efforts to increase RV. It might be achieved by providing new campaigns, special offers or providing unique information to consumers to foster them spread the word via Internet. Thus, the number of OCRs will increase, and the impact of RV will be higher.

### *C. Limitations and Future Research*

This study tried to depict an understanding of the effects of OCR features on perceived credibility (PC) and online hotel booking intention (INT). Firstly, current study considers OCRs on hotels. In addition, the data that was used for analysis has been obtained by online survey from the people who lives in Turkey. Therefore, the generalizability of the study is limited. Same theoretical framework can be implemented to determine the factors that affects consumers' PC and INT in the other marketing areas such as restaurant, fashion and electronics. It will be beneficial for concerning companies to better understand their consumer group and help them improving their lacks. Secondly, only seven of the characteristics of OCRs have been considered and analyzed in the current study. There might be other important characteristics of OCRs that affects PC and INT of the consumers in Turkey. Since cultural aspects and purchase behaviors differ amongst countries, it would be better to implement same theoretical framework in other countries. Thirdly, although detailed objectives and information were given to the participants in the questionnaires prior to the filling process, they carried self-reporting nature. Fourthly, further researchers could add or change some elements in theoretical

framework with different theoretical context. Fifthly, due to Covid-19 pandemic, the researcher had difficulty finding enough samples and the sample size was limited. If a larger sample size could be reached, perhaps different results would have been obtained. Finally, the limited research time was another challenging factor for the researcher. It would be better to do further analysis to see different outcomes that will include consumers and hotel brands in business perspectives. In this way, the existing gaps in the literature can be filled in a more efficient manner. The importance of OCRs amongst consumers is increasing whether to look for information or purchase decision process. Companies that do not support consumers to share their ideas will fall behind the companies that provide this in terms of competition, regardless of the sector they entity.

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