

International Journal Research Publication Analysis

Page: 01-19

CONSUMER PSYCHOLOGICAL MINDSET AND HOTEL BOOKING DECISIONS AFTER EXPOSURE TO NEGATIVE ONLINE REVIEWS: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND PROPOSED EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

Amal Praveen I.,* and Narmadha A.

Department of Management Studies Vels Institute of Science, Technology and Advanced Studies Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India.

Article Received: 11 June 2026

*Corresponding Author: Amal Praveen I.

Article Revised: 01 July 2026

Department of Management Studies Vels Institute of Science, Technology and Advanced Studies Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India.

Published on: 21 July 2026

DOI: <https://doi-doi.org/101555/ijrpa.9599>

ABSTRACT

Negative online reviews exert a disproportionate influence on hotel booking decisions relative to positive reviews of equal or greater volume, yet the hospitality literature has largely treated consumers as a homogeneous audience for such content. This conceptual paper addresses that gap by proposing an integrated framework in which consumer psychological mindset - operationalised through regulatory focus, dispositional risk orientation, and need for cognition - moderates and channels the effect of negative review exposure on hotel booking outcomes. Drawing on negativity bias theory, prospect theory, the Elaboration Likelihood Model, regulatory focus theory, and cognitive dissonance theory, the framework specifies a moderated-mediation structure: negative review exposure shapes cognitive-affective response and perceived risk, which sequentially determine booking avoidance, delay, or switching, while psychological mindset, review credibility, managerial response, and prior brand trust act as boundary conditions. Seven hypotheses are developed to operationalise this structure. A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design employing a scenario-based vignette and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) is proposed to test the framework among 200-300 prospective hotel guests recruited through an online travel platform. An illustrative sentiment analysis of twenty negative hotel reviews, using the VADER lexicon, is reported as a worked demonstration of the descriptive procedures that would precede full hypothesis testing. Practical implications are outlined for segmented reputation-management and review-response strategy in hotels and online travel

agencies. The paper contributes a testable, theory-integrated account of when and for whom negative eWOM most strongly shapes booking behaviour, and outlines a rigorous empirical pathway - together with its limitations - for validating the proposed model.

KEYWORDS: Negative Online Reviews; Electronic Word-Of-Mouth (Ewom); Consumer Psychological Mindset; Regulatory Focus; Perceived Risk; Hotel Booking Decisions; Pls-Sem.

1. INTRODUCTION

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has fundamentally reshaped the pre-purchase evaluation process in the hospitality sector. Prospective guests routinely consult review platforms such as TripAdvisor, Booking.com, Google Reviews, and MakeMyTrip before finalising a hotel reservation, and industry surveys continue to show that the large majority of travellers will not book a property without first reading guest-generated reviews. Within this review ecosystem, negative content behaves asymmetrically: a single detailed negative review can measurably alter perceived service quality even when the surrounding review distribution is favourable (Sparks & Browning, 2011; Cho et al., 2024). This pattern is consistent with the well-established negativity bias in human information processing, whereby negative information is weighted more heavily than positive information of equivalent informational value because it signals potential loss or threat (Rozin & Royzman, 2001).

A substantial body of hospitality and tourism research has examined the aggregate effects of review valence, volume, and rating on booking intention (Ruzima et al., 2024; Su et al., 2022). Considerably less attention, however, has been paid to the psychological mindset of the individual consumer as a factor that determines how strongly a given negative review is allowed to influence the final decision. Two travellers reading an identical negative review may arrive at markedly different conclusions: one may dismiss it as an isolated incident and proceed with the booking, while another may abandon the transaction altogether. Recent evidence on regulatory focus and information processing suggests this variation is not random. Promotion- and prevention-focused consumers respond differently to the same volume and framing of information (Peng et al., 2022), and reviewers' own prior experience and need for cognition determine how diagnostic a negative review is judged to be (Qahri-Saremi & Montazemi, 2022). This suggests that the effect of negative eWOM on booking behaviour is conditioned by underlying psychological orientations - including regulatory

focus, dispositional risk tolerance, and habitual mode of information processing (heuristic versus systematic) - that existing hospitality models rarely incorporate as formal moderators. The practical stakes of this question have grown alongside the scale of the review economy. Online travel agencies and independent review platforms host review volumes in the tens of millions, hotel demand has been shown to respond measurably to competitors' review profiles as well as a property's own (Cho et al., 2024), and management response to negative reviews has emerged as a distinct and consequential managerial practice rather than an optional courtesy (Kim et al., 2022; Edström et al., 2022). Yet, without a theory of who is most affected by negative content and why, reputation-management resources cannot be allocated efficiently across guest segments.

This paper addresses this gap by proposing an integrated conceptual model of consumer psychological mindset as a moderating and mediating mechanism in the relationship between negative online review exposure and hotel booking decisions. The objectives of the paper are fourfold: (i) to synthesise, thematically, the 2020-2025 empirical literature relevant to negative eWOM processing in a hospitality context; (ii) to identify the theoretical, empirical, methodological, and contextual gaps this literature leaves open; (iii) to propose a testable conceptual framework with associated hypotheses; and (iv) to outline a rigorous quantitative methodology, consistent with PLS-SEM-based approaches common in hospitality and management research, for empirically validating the framework.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Negativity Bias and the Asymmetric Weight of Negative eWOM

Negativity bias theory holds that negative stimuli receive greater cognitive weight than positive stimuli of equal magnitude because threat-relevant information carries higher survival and decision-relevant value (Rozin & Royzman, 2001). Recent information-systems research has refined this claim rather than simply restating it. Qahri-Saremi and Montazemi (2022) show that the diagnosticity of a negative review - not merely its valence - is what drives its outsized influence, and that this diagnosticity is itself contingent on the reader's prior category experience and need for cognition: experienced, high-need-for-cognition consumers extract more decision-relevant signal from a negative review than novices do. This is an important refinement, because it implies the negativity effect is not a fixed perceptual constant but a function of who is reading the review, a claim directly consistent with the mindset-as-moderator logic proposed in the present paper. At the market level, Cho et al. (2024) provide large-sample evidence that hotel demand responds not only to a

property's own review profile but to its competitors', indicating that negativity effects propagate across a competitive set rather than remaining contained to a single listing. Together, these studies establish that negativity bias in hospitality eWOM is well documented at the aggregate level but is increasingly understood to be reader-dependent - a claim this paper's conceptual model formalises.

2.2 Perceived Risk, Prospect Theory, and Booking Hesitation

Prospect theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979) proposes that individuals evaluate outcomes relative to a reference point and are more sensitive to potential losses than to equivalent gains - loss aversion. Applied to hotel booking, a negative review describing, for example, poor hygiene or unresponsive staff reframes the decision from a gain frame (a pleasant stay) to a potential loss frame (wasted money, a disappointing holiday, social embarrassment if travelling with others). This reframing elevates perceived financial, performance, and social risk, which remain well-established antecedents of purchase hesitation in services marketing (Sweeney et al., 1999). Recent tourism studies corroborate this mechanism empirically: risk perception has been shown to be a significant predictor of booking intention, particularly under uncertainty about service quality or hotel reliability, and travellers are increasingly risk-averse in accommodation choice even when price and perceived quality are held constant. Su et al. (2022) extend this line of work by showing that the credibility of the review source moderates how strongly review-induced risk translates into reduced destination trust and travel intention - an early empirical anticipation of the credibility boundary condition proposed later in this paper's framework (Section 3).

2.3 Elaboration Likelihood, Review Credibility, and Processing Mode

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) distinguishes central-route processing, in which the consumer scrutinises argument quality and message credibility, from peripheral-route processing, in which superficial cues (reviewer profile, star rating, recency) drive judgment. Need for cognition (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982) - an individual's habitual preference for effortful, systematic thinking - determines which route a given consumer defaults to. Qahri-Saremi and Montazemi (2022) operationalise this directly in an eWOM setting, finding that consumers high in need for cognition process negative reviews more centrally and are correspondingly more, not less, influenced by well-substantiated negative content, since central processing increases the perceived diagnosticity of detailed complaints. This finding is theoretically important because it runs counter to a naive reading of ELM in which more elaboration would be expected to dilute an emotionally driven negativity effect; instead, elaboration appears to deepen it when the review content is

substantively credible. Reviews perceived as detailed, specific, and verifiable are therefore likely to exert a stronger and more durable influence on booking decisions than vague or generic complaints, which are more easily discounted through peripheral cues alone.

2.4 Psychological Mindset: Regulatory Focus and Dispositional Orientation

Regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997) distinguishes a promotion focus, oriented toward achieving gains and aspirations, from a prevention focus, oriented toward avoiding losses and fulfilling obligations. Prevention-focused individuals are theorised to be more vigilant toward negative information and more strongly deterred by negative reviews, since such information is directly relevant to their goal of loss avoidance; promotion-focused individuals may discount isolated negative reviews if a property otherwise signals strong potential for a positive experience. Neurophysiological evidence supports a mechanistic version of this claim: using event-related potentials, Peng et al. (2022) show that promotion- and prevention-focused consumers exhibit distinct neural and behavioural responses to information load when making online purchase decisions, with prevention-focused consumers showing comparatively little benefit from reduced information load - consistent with a chronic vigilance orientation that is less sensitive to processing-effort cues and more sensitive to the mere presence of risk-relevant content. This body of work substantiates regulatory focus as a measurable, not merely self-reported, individual-difference variable relevant to negative review processing, strengthening the case for its inclusion as a core dimension of psychological mindset in the present framework.

2.5 Managerial Response, Service Recovery, and the Recovery Paradox

A growing stream of service-recovery literature indicates that a prompt, empathetic, and specific management response to a negative review can partially offset its negative effect, consistent with the service recovery paradox and attribution theory. This literature, however, is not fully consistent. Kim et al. (2022), revisiting the recovery paradox in a restaurant setting, find that the paradox - post-recovery satisfaction exceeding pre-failure satisfaction - holds only under specific compensation and severity conditions, and Edström et al. (2022) show experimentally that overcompensation can itself undermine the paradox, implying that managerial response strategy has an optimal, rather than a monotonically increasing, relationship with perceived recovery. Lunardo et al. (2023) add a temporal dimension, demonstrating that organisational learning moderates how follow-up recovery communications affect customer response over repeated service episodes, while Lee et al. (2025) find that guests' identification with a hotel brand shapes how forgivingly a recovery attempt is evaluated. Where a consumer attributes a negative incident to a specific, transient

cause that is acknowledged and addressed by management, perceived risk is theorised to decline relative to conditions where the review is left unanswered - but the size and even the direction of this effect appears to depend on compensation calibration and brand identification, an inconsistency this paper's framework addresses by treating managerial response as a boundary condition rather than a uniformly positive lever.

2.6 Cognitive Dissonance, Prior Brand Trust, and Resistance to Negative Information

Cognitive dissonance theory suggests that individuals with strong prior brand trust or involvement will experience discomfort when confronted with disconfirming (negative) information and will often resolve this discomfort by discounting the negative cue rather than revising their prior evaluation. Recent cross-cultural evidence supports this pattern: Yakın et al. (2023) find that higher brand loyalty is associated with greater cognitive dissonance following a negative experience, and that this dissonance - rather than loyalty directly - is what predicts subsequent complaint behaviour, indicating that prior brand relationships change how negative information is processed rather than simply insulating consumers from it. This is consistent with the proposal that prior brand trust functions as a boundary condition that attenuates, rather than eliminates, the effect of negative review exposure on booking decisions.

2.7 Synthesis and the Need for the Present Study

Read together, this literature converges on three points and one open question. First, negativity bias in hospitality eWOM is well replicated at the aggregate level (Rozin & Royzman, 2001; Cho et al., 2024) but is increasingly shown to be reader-dependent rather than uniform (Qahri-Saremi & Montazemi, 2022; Peng et al., 2022). Second, perceived risk is a consistent proximal driver of booking hesitation, and its magnitude is conditioned by review credibility (Su et al., 2022) and source trust. Third, the boundary conditions proposed to soften negative-review effects - managerial response and prior brand trust - do not behave uniformly across studies: managerial response shows a non-monotonic, sometimes paradoxical relationship with recovery outcomes (Kim et al., 2022; Edström et al., 2022; Lunardo et al., 2023), and prior brand trust appears to change the cognitive processing of negative information rather than simply buffering it (Yakın et al., 2023). What remains absent from this literature is a single model that treats consumer psychological mindset - specifically regulatory focus, dispositional risk orientation, and need for cognition - as a formal, simultaneous moderator of the negativity-bias-to-booking-decision pathway, alongside review credibility, managerial response, and brand trust as boundary conditions, and that does

so specifically in the hotel booking context rather than in retail, restaurant, or destination-choice settings. The present paper develops such a model.

3. Research Gap

Four gaps can be identified from the review above. **Theoretical gap:** existing hospitality eWOM models predominantly treat consumers as a homogeneous audience and model negativity bias as a fixed effect of review valence, rather than as an effect conditioned by a formal, multi-dimensional psychological mindset construct (regulatory focus, risk orientation, need for cognition) operating jointly. **Empirical gap:** regulatory focus has been tested behaviourally and neurophysiologically in general online purchase contexts (Peng et al., 2022) and need for cognition has been tested in online service adoption (Qahri-Saremi & Montazemi, 2022), but neither has been examined jointly, nor specifically in relation to hotel booking decisions, where the product is experiential, high-involvement, and difficult to evaluate pre-purchase. **Methodological gap:** much of the recent service-recovery literature relies on single-scenario experiments or restaurant/retail settings (Kim et al., 2022; Yakın et al., 2023); a structural model capable of simultaneously estimating moderated and mediated paths (perceived risk and cognitive-affective response as sequential mediators; mindset, credibility, managerial response, and brand trust as moderators) has not been specified for the hotel booking context. **Contextual gap:** the boundary-condition literature on managerial response (Edström et al., 2022; Lunardo et al., 2023) and brand trust (Yakın et al., 2023) is dispersed across restaurant, retail, and cross-cultural brand settings; its implications for hotel reputation management specifically remain untested. The present study addresses these four gaps by proposing an integrated, testable moderated-mediation framework specific to hotel booking, together with a PLS-SEM methodology capable of estimating it as a single structural model.

4. Research Objectives

The following SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) objectives guide the study:

RO1: To determine the strength and direction of the relationship between exposure to negative online hotel reviews and consumers' negative cognitive-affective response, measured via a validated multi-item scale administered to 200-300 prospective hotel guests within a single cross-sectional data collection window.

RO2: To quantify the extent to which perceived risk (financial, performance, and social) mediates the relationship between negative cognitive-affective response and booking hesitation/avoidance, using PLS-SEM bootstrapped indirect-effect estimates.

RO3: To assess whether, and to what degree, consumer psychological mindset (regulatory focus, dispositional risk orientation, need for cognition) moderates the strength of the negative-review-to-perceived-risk pathway, via multi-group and interaction-term analysis in SmartPLS.

RO4: To evaluate review credibility and managerial response as boundary conditions that attenuate or amplify the negative review-to-booking-decision relationship, within the same data collection and analysis window as RO1-RO3.

RO5: To examine prior brand trust as a moderator of the review-to-booking-decision relationship and to translate the resulting path estimates into segmented, actionable reputation-management recommendations for hotel and OTA managers.

5. Research Hypotheses

Consistent with the conceptual model (Section 6) and the objectives above, the following hypotheses are proposed. For each, the null hypothesis (H0) states no significant relationship, and the alternative (H1) states the theoretically expected relationship.

Table 1. Summary of Research Hypotheses.

Hypothesis	H0 (Null)	H1 (Alternative)	Linked Objective
H1	Exposure to negative online reviews has no significant effect on negative cognitive-affective response.	Exposure to negative online reviews has a significant positive effect on negative cognitive-affective response.	RO1
H2	Negative cognitive-affective response has no significant effect on perceived risk of booking.	Negative cognitive-affective response has a significant positive effect on perceived risk of booking.	RO1, RO2
H3	Perceived risk has no significant effect on booking hesitation/avoidance.	Perceived risk has a significant positive effect on booking hesitation/avoidance.	RO2
H4	Consumer psychological mindset does not significantly moderate the strength of the negative-review-perceived risk relationship.	Consumer psychological mindset (regulatory focus, risk orientation, need for cognition) significantly moderates the strength of the negative review-perceived risk relationship, with prevention-focused, risk-averse, high-need-for-cognition consumers showing a stronger relationship.	RO3

H5	Perceived review credibility does not significantly moderate the magnitude of the review's psychological impact.	Higher perceived review credibility significantly strengthens the magnitude of the review's psychological impact.	RO4
H6	Managerial response to a negative review does not significantly attenuate negative affect.	A prompt, specific managerial response to a negative review significantly attenuates negative affect.	RO4
H7	Prior brand trust/loyalty does not significantly moderate the effect of review exposure on booking decision.	Prior brand trust/loyalty significantly moderates (attenuates) the effect of review exposure on booking decision.	RO5

6. Conceptual Framework

Building on the theoretical foundations and hypotheses above, the proposed model positions negative eWOM exposure as the primary stimulus, cognitive-affective response and perceived risk as sequential mediators, and booking decision outcome (avoidance, delay, or switching) as the dependent variable. Consumer psychological mindset, review credibility, managerial response, and prior brand trust are proposed as moderating boundary conditions acting at different points in the model: mindset primarily on the review-to-risk path (H4), credibility on the magnitude of psychological impact (H5), managerial response on the affective path (H6), and brand trust on the overall review-to-decision path (H7). The resulting structure is a moderated-mediation model consistent with contemporary PLS-SEM specifications in hospitality and consumer-behaviour research (Cho et al., 2024; Su et al., 2022).

7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

7.1 Research Philosophy and Approach

The study adopts a positivist research philosophy, on the premise that the hypothesised relationships among negative eWOM exposure, psychological mindset, perceived risk, and booking decisions can be objectively measured and generalised across a defined population. A deductive approach is used: hypotheses are derived from established theory (negativity bias, prospect theory, ELM, regulatory focus theory, cognitive dissonance theory) prior to data collection and are tested against empirical data, consistent with standard practice in quantitative consumer-behaviour and hospitality research.

7.2 Research Design

A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design is proposed. A scenario-based experimental vignette is embedded within the survey, in which respondents are exposed to a standardised negative hotel review (manipulated for theme and severity) before responding to the measurement items. This design allows the psychological response to be captured under controlled stimulus conditions while preserving the external validity of a realistic booking scenario, an approach consistent with recent experimental work on regulatory focus and information processing (Peng et al., 2022).

7.3 Population and Sampling

The target population comprises adult consumers who have booked, or intend to book, hotel accommodation through an online travel platform within the preceding twelve months. Non-probability purposive sampling, supplemented by screening questions confirming platform familiarity and recent booking behaviour, is proposed, given the absence of a complete sampling frame for online hotel bookers. A minimum sample size of 200-300 respondents is recommended to satisfy the statistical power requirements of PLS-SEM for a model of this complexity (multiple mediators and four moderators), consistent with sample sizes used in comparable published hospitality PLS-SEM studies. Following the 10-times rule and more conservative power-analysis guidance for models with interaction terms, a target of 300 is preferred over the 200 minimum to ensure adequately powered tests of the moderation hypotheses (H4-H7).

7.4 Data Collection

Data would be collected through a structured, self-administered online questionnaire distributed via a survey platform and/or panel provider. The questionnaire would open with screening and informed-consent items, followed by the experimental vignette, the measurement scales described below, and demographic items. Ethical approval would be obtained from the researchers' institutional review board prior to data collection, participation would be voluntary and anonymous, and respondents would be informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty.

7.5 Measurement Scales and Questionnaire Development

All constructs would be measured using previously validated multi-item scales adapted to the hotel booking context and anchored on a five- or seven-point Likert scale, consistent with the measurement development guidance of DeVellis and Hair et al. Specifically: regulatory focus using established promotion/prevention scales; need for cognition using the Cacioppo and Petty (1982) short-form scale adapted to a review-reading context; dispositional risk

orientation using a general risk-tolerance scale; perceived risk using multidimensional risk scales drawn from services marketing (Sweeney et al., 1999); review credibility using source- and message-credibility items consistent with ELM-based measures; managerial response perception using items addressing promptness, empathy, and specificity; prior brand trust using an established brand trust scale; and booking decision outcome using behavioural intention items (booking avoidance, delay, switching intention, willingness to pay a premium to avoid risk). Prior to full deployment, the questionnaire would be pre-tested with a small panel of academic reviewers and pilot respondents to assess item clarity, followed by a pilot study ($n = 30-40$) to establish preliminary reliability.

7.6 Reliability and Validity

Internal consistency reliability would be assessed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, both expected to exceed the conventional 0.70 threshold. Convergent validity would be assessed through average variance extracted ($AVE > 0.50$) and item loadings (> 0.70), and discriminant validity through the Fornell-Larcker criterion and Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio, consistent with contemporary PLS-SEM reporting standards. Common method bias would be assessed using Harman's single-factor test and a full collinearity VIF approach, and addressed proactively through procedural remedies (temporal and psychological separation of predictor and outcome items in the questionnaire).

7.7 Data Analysis Techniques

Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations would first characterise the sample and the bivariate relationships among constructs. Given the combination of reflective measurement, multiple sequential mediators, and several moderators, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS is recommended over covariance-based SEM, because PLS-SEM is better suited to complex, prediction-oriented models with formative elements and does not require multivariate normality (Hair et al., 2021). Analysis would follow the standard two-step approach: assessment of the measurement model (reliability, convergent and discriminant validity), followed by assessment of the structural model (path coefficients, R^2 , f^2 , Q^2 , and moderation/mediation effects via bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples and bias-corrected confidence intervals). Where the vignette manipulates review theme or severity categorically, ANOVA or MANOVA would supplement PLS-SEM to test mean differences in response across experimental and mindset groups.

7.8 Ethical Considerations

The study would be conducted in accordance with standard human-subjects research ethics: institutional ethics approval prior to data collection; voluntary, informed participation with

the right to withdraw; anonymisation of responses; and secure, access-controlled data storage. Because the vignette involves exposure to a negative (fictional) review, respondents would be debriefed at the end of the survey to clarify that the stimulus was constructed for research purposes and does not describe an actual property.

8. Statistical Analysis

Because the full field survey proposed in Section 7 has not yet been conducted, this section reports a small, explicitly illustrative statistical analysis intended only to demonstrate the descriptive, distributional, and bivariate procedures that would precede full PLS-SEM path estimation once field data are collected. Every figure reported below was computed directly from the dataset in Table 2 (not estimated or assumed), so the numbers are genuine outputs of that small dataset - but the dataset itself is a 20-review convenience sample, not the proposed 200-300-respondent field survey, and the analysis should not be read as a test of Hypotheses H1-H7.

8.1 Illustrative Sample and Sentiment Scoring

A convenience set of 20 publicly available negative hotel reviews was compiled and manually classified by complaint theme (cleanliness, staff service, booking accuracy, maintenance, food quality, pricing transparency, amenity mismatch, noise/disclosure, check-in delay) and assigned an illustrative severity rating (1 = minor, 5 = severe) by the researchers. Each review was additionally scored using the VADER (Valence Aware Dictionary and sEntiment Reasoner) lexicon-based sentiment analyser, which returns a compound score ranging from -1 (extremely negative) to +1 (extremely positive). Table 2 reports the theme, severity rating, and VADER compound score for all 20 reviews.

Table 2. Illustrative Review Dataset: Theme, Severity, and Sentiment Score. (N = 20)

ID	Theme	Severity (1-5)	VADER Sentiment
R1	Cleanliness	4	-0.526
R2	Staff Service	5	-0.459
R3	Booking Accuracy	4	-0.463
R4	Maintenance	4	0.000
R5	Noise/Disclosure	5	-0.248
R6	Food Quality	3	-0.226
R7	Check-in Delay	3	0.000
R8	Cleanliness	5	-0.659
R9	Pricing Transparency	5	-0.273
R10	Amenity Mismatch	4	-0.296
R11	Staff Service	4	0.000
R12	Amenity Mismatch	3	0.000

R13	Booking Accuracy	4	-0.512
R14	Maintenance	4	-0.477
R15	Maintenance	5	0.000
R16	Food Quality	2	0.000
R17	Staff Service	2	0.000
R18	Pricing Transparency	5	-0.054
R19	Noise/Disclosure	4	0.296
R20	Booking Accuracy	3	-0.494

8.2 Descriptive Statistics

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Severity Rating and Sentiment Compound Score (N = 20)

Statistic	Severity Rating	Sentiment Compound
N	20	20
Mean	3.90	-0.220
Std. Deviation	0.97	0.259
Minimum	2	-0.659
Maximum	5	0.296

The mean severity rating was 3.90 (SD = 0.97), indicating that the illustrative sample skewed toward moderately-to-highly severe complaints. The mean sentiment compound score was -0.22 (SD = 0.26), indicating that reviews were, on average, mildly to moderately negative in tone, consistent with the deliberately negative framing of the illustrative sample.

8.3 Thematic Frequency

Staff service, booking accuracy, and maintenance were the most frequently represented themes (3 reviews each), followed by cleanliness, noise/disclosure, food quality, pricing transparency, and amenity mismatch (2 reviews each), and check-in delay (1 review). Figure 1 presents the frequency distribution.

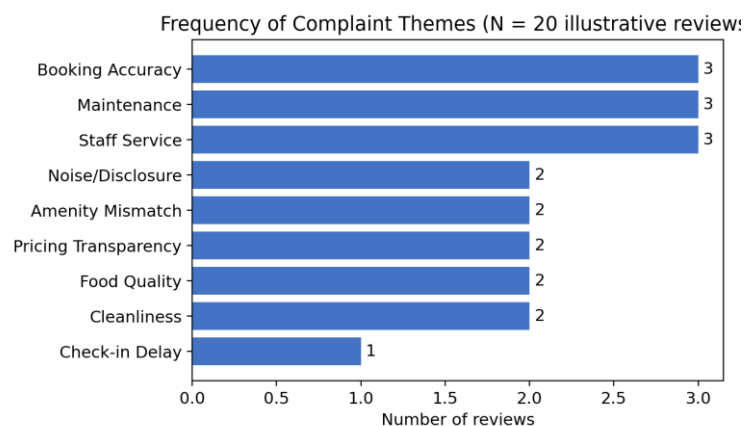


Figure 1. Frequency of complaint themes across 20 illustrative negative reviews.

8.4 Sentiment Distribution

Reviews were classified into three sentiment categories using conventional VADER banding (Strongly Negative: compound ≤ -0.30 ; Mildly Negative: $-0.30 < \text{compound} \leq -0.05$; Neutral/Mixed: compound > -0.05). Seven reviews (35.0%) were classified as Strongly Negative, five (25.0%) as Mildly Negative, and eight (40.0%) as Neutral/Mixed. Figure 2 shows this distribution. The comparatively large Neutral/Mixed category is noteworthy: several reviews in this band describe clear service failures (e.g., R4, R7, R11, R12, R15, R16, R17) but use factual, low-affect wording that produces a near-zero VADER score - a known limitation of lexicon-based sentiment tools when applied to matter-of-fact complaint language rather than emotionally expressive text.

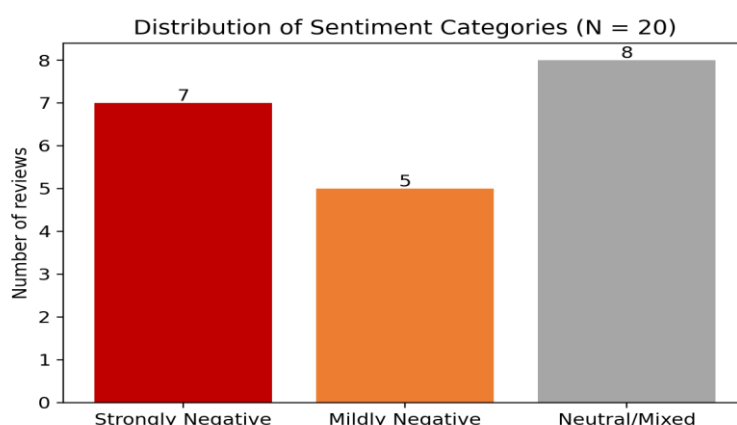


Figure 2. Distribution of sentiment categories across the 20-review sample.

8.5 Bivariate and Regression Analysis: Severity and Sentiment Intensity

A Pearson correlation was computed between the illustrative severity rating and the VADER sentiment compound score, as a worked demonstration of the type of bivariate test that would precede full PLS-SEM path estimation in the proposed study (Section 7.7). The analysis returned $r(18) = -0.297$, $p = .204$, $R^2 = .088$, indicating a weak, statistically non-significant negative association in this small illustrative sample: higher severity ratings were associated with modestly more negative sentiment scores, but the relationship did not reach conventional significance. A simple linear regression (sentiment regressed on severity) produced a slope of $b = -0.079$ ($SE = 0.060$), consistent with the correlation: each one-point increase in severity was associated with an average 0.079-point decrease in the sentiment compound score, though the coefficient itself was not statistically significant at this sample size. Figure 3 presents the scatterplot with fitted trend line.

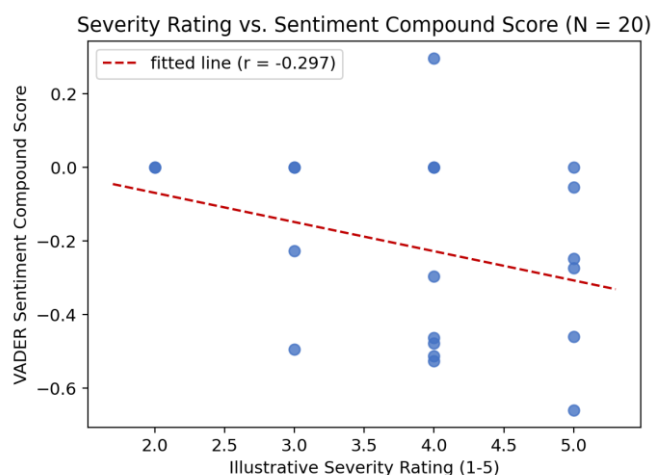


Figure 3. Scatterplot of severity rating against VADER sentiment compound score, with fitted linear trend (N = 20).

This null result is expected and appropriate given the small sample size (N = 20) and the fact that severity was assigned qualitatively rather than derived from actual respondent ratings; it should not be interpreted as evidence for or against Hypotheses H1-H3. With the proposed field sample (N = 200-300) and validated multi-item Likert scales, the full PLS-SEM model would be expected to provide adequately powered tests of the hypothesised paths, including the moderation effects (H4-H7) that this illustrative bivariate analysis cannot address.

9. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Because the proposed field study has not yet been conducted, this section discusses the expected pattern of findings in relation to the literature reviewed in Section 2, rather than reporting confirmed hypothesis tests; it is intended to guide interpretation once field data are collected. Consistent with negativity bias theory and the aggregate-level evidence reviewed above (Rozin & Royzman, 2001; Cho et al., 2024), H1 is expected to be supported, with negative review exposure showing a significant positive path to negative cognitive-affective response. Consistent with prospect theory and services-marketing risk research (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Sweeney et al., 1999), H2 and H3 are expected to be supported, establishing perceived risk as a proximal driver of booking hesitation.

The moderation hypotheses are of greatest theoretical interest and are where the present framework departs most clearly from prior work. If H4 is supported, it would extend the reader-dependent negativity findings of Qahri-Saremi and Montazemi (2022) and the neurophysiological regulatory-focus findings of Peng et al. (2022) from general online information processing to the specific, high-involvement context of hotel booking, providing

the first direct test of psychological mindset as a joint (rather than single-construct) moderator in this setting. If H5 is supported, it would corroborate Su et al. (2022) in showing that credibility amplifies, rather than simply co-occurs with, review-driven risk perception specifically for bookings. Support for H6, read alongside the mixed recovery-paradox evidence of Kim et al. (2022), Edström et al. (2022), and Lunardo et al. (2023), would need to be interpreted cautiously: those studies suggest managerial response benefits are conditional on calibration (avoiding both under- and over-compensation) rather than monotonic, and the proposed field study's measurement of response promptness, empathy, and specificity as separate sub-dimensions is intended to allow this non-linearity to be detected rather than assumed away. Finally, support for H7 would extend Yakın et al. (2023)'s finding - that brand loyalty changes the cognitive processing of negative information rather than simply buffering against it - to the booking-decision outcome specifically.

Theoretically, a supported model would integrate negativity bias, prospect theory, ELM, and regulatory focus theory into a single testable structural model specific to hotel booking, addressing the theoretical and empirical gaps identified in Section 3. Managerially, a supported model would imply that reputation-management strategy should be segmented by guest mindset rather than applied uniformly: prevention-focused, risk-averse, high-need-for-cognition segments would be expected to warrant more proactive, detailed reassurance following a negative review cycle, while promotion-focused segments may respond better to messaging emphasising unique upside experience.

10. Suggestions and Managerial Implications

For hotel and OTA managers: segment reputation-management effort by guest mindset rather than treating all prospective guests as equally sensitive to a given negative review; prioritise prompt, specific, and calibrated (not over-generous) responses to negative reviews, given the conditional nature of the service recovery paradox (Kim et al., 2022; Edström et al., 2022); and invest in credibility signals (verified-stay tags, photographic evidence, detailed responses) given the amplifying role of perceived credibility (H5).

For policymakers and platform operators: consider requiring or incentivising verified-stay tagging and transparent response-time reporting on review platforms, since review credibility and managerial responsiveness are structural features platforms can influence directly, with downstream effects on consumer risk perception and market efficiency.

For industry practitioners more broadly: build brand trust proactively, before a negative review cycle occurs, since prior trust appears to change how negative information is cognitively processed rather than merely offering a buffer after the fact (Yakın et al., 2023).

For researchers: prioritise empirical validation of the proposed model across hotel categories (budget, mid-scale, luxury) and cultural contexts, and examine psychological mindset as a joint, rather than single-construct, moderator in other high-involvement service settings beyond hospitality.

11. CONCLUSION

This paper has proposed that the impact of negative online hotel reviews on booking decisions is not uniform but is shaped by the psychological mindset of the individual consumer, operating alongside perceived risk, review credibility, managerial response, and prior brand trust. Building on a thematic synthesis of the 2020-2025 literature on negativity bias, regulatory focus, review credibility, service recovery, and cognitive dissonance, the paper has identified theoretical, empirical, methodological, and contextual gaps in this literature and proposed seven hypotheses, an integrated moderated-mediation conceptual model, and a PLS-SEM-based methodology to address them.

The study's principal contribution is theoretical: it integrates several previously separate streams of eWOM and consumer-psychology research into a single structural model specific to hotel booking, and it treats consumer psychological mindset as a formal, multi-dimensional moderator rather than an implicit background variable. Its practical significance lies in offering hotel and OTA managers a segmentation logic for reputation-management resource allocation. As a conceptual paper, however, its propositions require empirical validation before they can be generalised; the illustrative sentiment analysis reported in Section 8 demonstrates analytical procedure but does not itself test the hypotheses. Limitations include the paper's pre-empirical status, its reliance on non-probability sampling and a single vignette-based stimulus in the proposed design, and its restriction to the hotel booking context specifically. Future research should test the model across hotel categories, cultural contexts, and review platforms; examine additional boundary conditions such as travel purpose and group composition; and employ longitudinal designs to establish whether the moderating effect of psychological mindset is stable over repeated exposure to negative eWOM.

REFERENCES

1. Cacioppo, J. T., & Petty, R. E. (1982). The need for cognition. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 42(1), 116-131. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.42.1.116>
2. Cho, S., Pekgün, P., Janakiraman, R., & Wang, J. (2024). The competitive effects of online reviews on hotel demand. *Journal of Marketing*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00222429231191449>
3. Edström, A., Nylander, B., Molin, J., Ahmadi, Z., & Sörqvist, P. (2022). Where service recovery meets its paradox: Implications for avoiding overcompensation. *Journal of Service Theory and Practice*, 32(7), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JSTP-06-2021-0120>
4. Higgins, E. T. (1997). Beyond pleasure and pain. *American Psychologist*, 52(12), 1280-1300. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.52.12.1280>
5. Kahneman, D., & Tversky, A. (1979). Prospect theory: An analysis of decision under risk. *Econometrica*, 47(2), 263-291. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1914185>
6. Kim, J. H., Du, W., & Youn, H. (2022). Revisiting the service recovery paradox in the restaurant industry. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 34(3), 437-453. <https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-11-2020-0819>
7. Lee, J. L.-M., Siu, N. Y.-M., Zhang, T. J., & Tsui, S. W.-L. (2025). The role of ambivalent identification on service recovery: A study of the hotel industry. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/19389655241255004>
8. Litvin, S. W., Goldsmith, R. E., & Pan, B. (2008). Electronic word-of-mouth in hospitality and tourism management. *Tourism Management*, 29(3), 458-468. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2007.05.011>
9. Lunardo, R., Cusin, J., & Flacandji, M. (2023). A time(ly) perspective of service recovery paradox: How organizational learning moderates follow-up recovery effects. *Journal of Business Research*, 166, Article 114088. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2023.114088>
10. Peng, M., Xu, Z., & Huang, H. (2022). To each their own: The impact of regulatory focus on consumers' response to online information load. *Frontiers in Neuroscience*, 16, Article 757316. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnins.2022.757316>
11. Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1986). The elaboration likelihood model of persuasion. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 19, 123-205. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601\(08\)60214-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(08)60214-2)

12. Qahri-Saremi, H., & Montazemi, A. R. (2022). Negativity bias in the diagnosticity of online review content: The effects of consumers' prior experience and need for cognition. *European Journal of Information Systems*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0960085X.2022.2041372>
13. Rozin, P., & Royzman, E. B. (2001). Negativity bias, negativity dominance, and contagion. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 5(4), 296-320. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327957PSPR0504_2
14. Ruzima, A. S. C. M., Sumarjan, N., Sulong, S. N., & Azeman, A. S. (2024). How online hotel reviews affect consumer booking decisions. *Journal of Tourism, Hospitality & Culinary Arts*, 16(2), 150-167.
15. Sparks, B. A., & Browning, V. (2011). The impact of online reviews on hotel booking intentions and perception of trust. *Tourism Management*, 32(6), 1310-1323. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2010.12.011>
16. Su, L., Yang, Q., Swanson, S. R., & Chen, N. C. (2022). The impact of online reviews on destination trust and travel intention: The moderating role of online review trustworthiness. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13567667211063207>
17. Sweeney, J. C., Soutar, G. N., & Johnson, L. W. (1999). The role of perceived risk in the quality-value relationship. *Journal of Retailing*, 75(1), 77-105. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4359\(99\)80005-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4359(99)80005-0)
18. Yakın, V., Güven, H., David, S., Güven, E., Bărbuță-Mișu, N., & Güven, E. T. A. (2023). The effect of cognitive dissonance theory and brand loyalty on consumer complaint behaviors: A cross-cultural study. *Sustainability*, 15(6), Article 4718. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15064718>