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ABSTRACT
Increasingly, travellers are using online review platforms to post reviews about hotels. The responses to negative reviews need to be managed in a way to recover service failures. The main aim of this study was to examine the strategies used by hotel managers in responding to negative reviews on TripAdvisor. An integrated framework for analysing response strategies is developed. Content analysis of TripAdvisor reviews and interviews with hotel managers show a range of response strategies are used. We uncover two additional dimensions: values and culture. Hotels are aware of the advantages that can be gained from using appropriate responses.

Introduction

The past decade has seen immense growth in internet-related technologies, providing travellers with new and convenient ways to research travel information and plan trips (Mendes-Filho, Mills, Tan, & Milne, 2018). Ayeh, Au, and Law (2013) point out that, with these new emerging technologies, there has been remarkable interest in the application of social media to the hospitality and tourism domain. Much of this interest has been generated by the emergence of user-generated content (UGC) websites such as social networking, online travel communities and review sites. These sites allow people to electronically "meet" and "talk" to others with similar interests. User-generated content on these sites can be viewed as a form of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) (Cox, Burgess, Sellitto, & Buultjens, 2009). The internet has changed "word-of-mouth" into a massive form of communication with predefined groups, friends or thousands of strangers connected in online communities (O'Connor, 2010).

User-generated information has become part of trip planning, influencing consumers in the decision-making process (Wilson, Murphy, & Fierro, 2012) because people are more trusting of this information as it comes directly from other consumers (Simms, 2012). As a result, more and more travellers are resorting to review sites for travel-related content, posted by other travellers rather than by service providers (Gretzel, Yoo, & Purifoy, 2007).

Hotels need to actively embrace the concept of social networks and user-generated content by monitoring reviews of their businesses and managing their online reputation (O'Connor, 2010). Owing to the sense of anonymity offered by social networking sites, travellers often feel empowered to voice their frustrations in an online public forum when they experience service failures. Therefore, it is important that organisations have the necessary strategies in place for successful service recovery. Ineffective strategies and the failure to respond to negative evaluations can potentially harm the success and reputation of an organisation (Horster & Gottschalk, 2012).

Customers want to be able to understand what went wrong, why it went wrong and what is being done about it. This is particularly important in travel and tourism contexts, because of the unfamiliarity and consequent unpredictability of many such contexts. Therefore, a growing challenge for businesses is to offer appropriate responses to online reviews, especially the negative ones (Sparks & Bradley, 2014). While there has been increasing attention by academics on the use of review sites and social media sites by consumers with specific focus on consumer behaviours and expectations, the majority of these studies have been conducted from customers' perspective (Hudson & Thal, 2013; Xie, Zhang, Zhang, Singh, & Lee, 2016). The perspective of the service provider, particularly the accommodation sector, has received less attention. Only lately, has there been a shift in focus to examine the impacts of negative eWOM on hotels and

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other hospitality service providers (Mauri & Minazzi, 2013). How an organisation responds to a complaint can have a major impact on customers' post-complaint behaviour, such as repurchase intentions and the likelihood to engage in negative word-of-mouth. Existing scholarship distinguishes between accommodative and defensive approaches in response to negative feedback (Coombs, 1999) or non-recovery strategies (denial and avoidance) and recovery strategies (apologise, rectify, explain, invite customer input and offer compensation) (Sparks, 2001). Building on previous research, Sparks and Bradley (2017) develop an integrated model to scope the range of likely recovery strategies businesses use to address consumer complaints. Their model comprises three main components (acknowledgements, accounts and actions). This research uses Sparks and Bradley's framework to examine hotels' responses to negative comments in the context of a Pacific Islands destination, the Cook Islands, which is characterised by a high dependency on tourism (Mellor, 2003). Cook Islands hoteliers are becoming more aware of customer needs and are making every effort to satisfy their customers.

Limitations of previous studies examining managerial responses to negative UGC include the reliance of a single methodological approach, i.e. TripAdvisor or other social media reviews (O'Connor, 2010; Zhang & Vaquez, 2014). Therefore, this study involves collecting and analysing customer reviews and management responses from TripAdvisor accounts of selected Cook Island hotels, in conjunction with semi-structured interviews with the hotel managers of Cook Island hotel properties.

The main aim of this study is to examine how hotels respond to negative reviews on their social media accounts, in particular, TripAdvisor. The research objectives of this study are: (1) to assess the range of online response strategies that hotel managers follow in response to negative online reviews; (2) to develop a framework for managing the responses to negative online reviews, and (3) to explain how managers' respond to negative online reviews.

This study contributes towards a theoretical understanding of service recovery and reputation management in an online context from a Pacific Islands perspective. An updated framework of management responses to negative online reviews is developed.

The Cook Islands context

The Cook Islands is made up of 15 islands with a total land area of 240 square kilometres scattered across 2.2 million square kilometres of the Pacific Ocean between the Kingdom of Tonga to the west and French Polynesia to the east and about halfway between New Zealand and Hawaii (Figure 1). As with many neighbouring Pacific Island countries, tourism has become the leading industry for the Cook Islands providing a high proportion of employment and making an important contribution to the country's foreign exchange. The Cook Islands economy is primarily dependent on tourism with the sector now
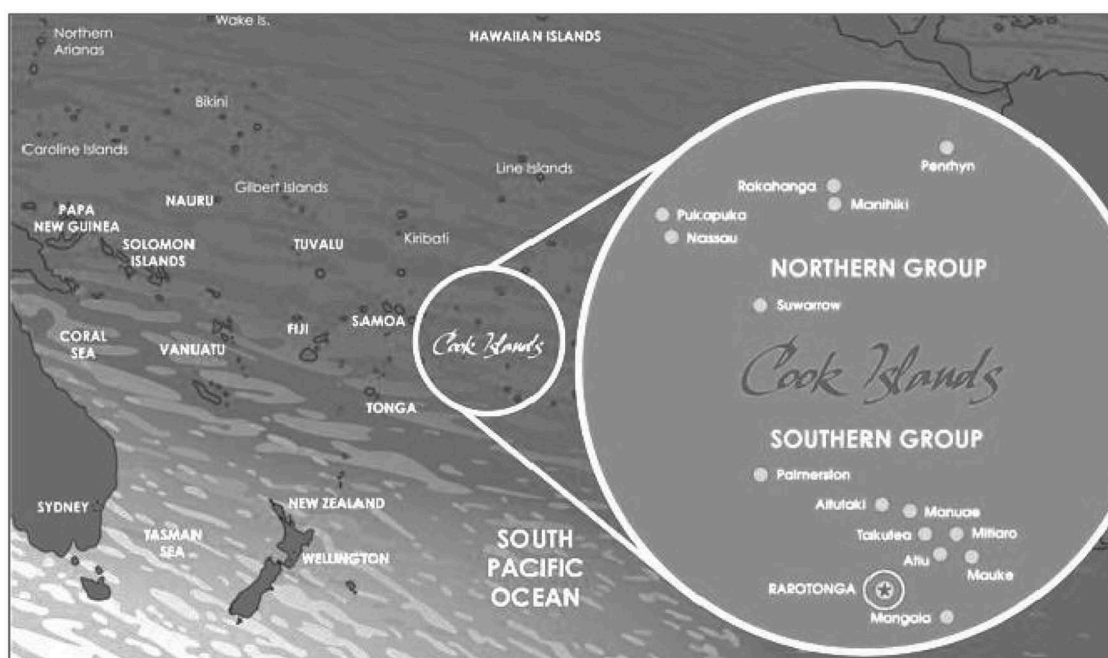

Figure 1. Map of the Cook Islands.
Source: (Cook Islands Tourism Corporation, 2015)

accounting for around 60% of GDP (ADB, 2016). Furthermore, tourism is responsible for driving the demand and activity of over 90% of the Cook Islands economy (Government of the Cook Islands, 2011).

The Cook Islands tourism industry has experienced considerable growth since the 1990s, and development has taken place in a largely deregulated environment. The total international visitor arrivals increased from 48,629 in 1998 to 161,362 recorded in 2017 (Cook Islands Statistics Office, 2018).

Resorts, hotels and motels are the preferred accommodation type for the majority of visitors however there has been a noticeable shift as the number of private holiday homes increases, in part, due to the sharing economy.

The focus of this study is the island of Aitutaki. Aitutaki is one of the 15 islands of the Cook Islands and is located about 264 km north of the main island Rarotonga. Statistics from the Cook Islands Tourism Corporation reveal that about 25% of the total tourist arrivals arriving into the country head to Aitutaki to spend their holidays. The Aitutaki Tourism Task Force (1994) report cautioned that the growth of the industry must take into account the fragile ecosystem of Aitutaki and limited resource base, limiting this within a capacity that the island can sustain. Therefore, understanding tourist decision-making behaviours and effectively managing this is critical for the future of the industry in both Aitutaki and the Cook Islands as a whole.

Apart from the few larger hotels on Aitutaki, the majority of properties are not actively involved in mass traditional marketing campaigns carried out by Cook Islands Tourism Corporation due to the high costs involved. Many of these properties currently rely on Online Travel Agents (OTA) such as booking.com, Agoda and Expedia to conduct their limited marketing activities. While a number of them carry out small marketing campaigns on some social media platforms, all of the properties on Aitutaki have a presence on TripAdvisor.

This online presence can be seen as an advantage for Aitutaki properties as TripAdvisor is one of the most popular and regularly used review sites within the tourism sector. The site acts as a search engine for hotels, restaurants, transportation and activities globally. It helps customers to plan their holidays and book hotels or activities online. Therefore, having a presence on TripAdvisor gives the hotels greater market coverage.

Literature review and conceptual framework

The literature review is organised into three main subsections: (1) electronic Word-of-Mouth and User-Generated Content, (2) Impacts of negative reviews on hotels, and (3) Online response strategies.

Electronic word-of-mouth and online reviews

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) is considered a new form of word-of-mouth (WOM), in which consumers express their opinions and views about a product using online review sites and social networking websites (Gonzalez, Gidumal, & Valcarcel, 2013). Like traditional WOM, eWOM is an "informal, person-to-person communication between a perceived non-commercial communicator and a receiver regarding a brand, a product, an organization, or a service" (Harrison-Walker, 2001, p. 63). eWOM has given businesses the ability to reach, listen to, interact and communicate with their customers in order to better understand and meet their needs (Chan & Ngai, 2011).

Past studies have examined both the positive and negative dimensions of eWOM communication. While positive eWOM is seen as an outcome of satisfactory experiences, negative eWOM can result from the customer's needs and intentions not being met (Hornik, Satchi, Cesareo, & Pastore, 2015). When service failure occurs, customers have the choice to seek redress (Michel, 2001). One option is to refrain from reusing the services of the company. A second option is to directly voice their complaint with the company at the time of the service failure. A third option is to complain about the service failure indirectly, either through telephone or email. Lastly, customers can also share their dissatisfaction on review sites or social media platforms.

Online reviews have the power to make or break a business, with customers now trusting the word of their peers above all else when making purchases. According to a study on the state of social media (Nielsen, 2013), 70% of interviewed consumers indicated that they trust online consumer reviews. In view of opportunities offered by emerging technologies, travellers have become more independent, searching for information and making more informed decisions about destinations and services on their own. As the type and importance of information sources change over time, consumer-generated online travel reviews have become a widely used critical information resource (Chung & Buhalis, 2008). According to Zheng, Youn, and Kincaid (2009), approximately 55% of readers consult online comments during their decision-making process.

Several studies have examined the perceived usefulness of consumer reviews. Gretzel et al. (2007) find that online travel reviews are mostly favourable when they maintain a balance of negative and positive views. However, Cheng, Lam, and Hsu (2006) and Laczniak, DeCarlo, and Ramaswami (2001) discover that negative reviews have the strongest effect on consumer attitudes and evaluations.

TripAdvisor has become one of the world leaders in travel information, containing more user-generated content than other travel websites and bringing people together in discussion forums (Huang, Basu, & Hsu, 2010). Gonzalez et al. (2013, p. 276) show that TripAdvisor enjoys a reputation as one of the successful websites dedicated to travel (Zhang & Vaquez, 2014) and represents the largest travel community in the world, with more than 35 million visitors per month and contains more than 45 million reviews and opinions on more than 1.3 million hotels, restaurants and attractions. Its primary function is collecting and disseminating user-generated content about travel, including comments, ratings, photos and video. Its most prominent value-adding features are its user-generated reviews and ratings (Law, 2006; Xie et al., 2016). When adding their own reviews, users are asked to rate criteria such as overall satisfaction, value for money, location, sleep quality, rooms, cleanliness and service on a 5-point scale where 1 is terrible and 5 is excellent. In addition to ratings, the website encourages elaboration through comments so that other users get the most information possible (Limberger, Anjos, Meira, & Anjos, 2014). Reviewers are also asked if they would recommend the property to a friend, whether they were travelling alone, as a couple or with family and whether they feel that the experience is suitable for different types of trips (e.g., a romantic getaway, a family trip with children.). Lastly, reviewers are offered the opportunity to upload candid photos and videos to support their review.

Impacts of negative reviews on hotels

While positive reviews represent great opportunity for increased business for the service providers, negative reviews are often perceived as a threat. In fact, it is believed that negative customer reviews (negative eWOM) written by dissatisfied customers can be damaging for a hotel's image, income and reputation (Chang & Hsiao, 2008; Lee, Park, & Han, 2008). The hotel industry is particularly vulnerable to the rise of social media and user-generated content because of the rise in internet reservations which are influenced by other guests' comments (Sparks & Browning, 2010; Zheng et al., 2009). It is imperative that hotel managers monitor online customer reviews to understand where they are exceeding or failing and determine the level of service the customers expect to receive (Mauri & Minazzi, 2013).

Failure to address eWOM may portray the business as not being interested in improving or rectifying issues raised by the customers (Xie et al., 2016). Managing eWOM impacts appropriately allows for improvement in the quality of service offered, the recognition of customer needs and the development and adoption of new strategies (Malthouse, Haenlein, Skiera, Wege, & Zhang, 2013).

Gonzalez et al. (2013) point out that online reviews have a greater impact within the hotel industry, where many potential guests may check reviews posted by previous guests before making their booking decisions. Tourists increasingly share their experiences and recommendations on websites dedicated to travel (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014). Reviews are commonly found on online public platforms such as Facebook or TripAdvisor accounts of businesses, which are easily accessible to customers seeking information (Bickart & Schindler, 2001; Miguéns, Baggio, & Costa, 2008). With an increasing number of customers who prefer to complain online, there is urgency for hotels to adapt existing offline compliant management strategies into an online context to address these (Maurer & Schaich, 2011).

Online response strategies

Managerial responses are responses posted directly by the management of the hotel replying to online customer reviews of their hotel. The response is not only visible to consumers who wrote the reviews but also to all consumers who visit the review site afterwards. According to Ye, Gu, Chen, and Law (2008), the objective of a managerial response is two-fold. First, it establishes a positive image of customer service and second, it addresses particular concerns or criticisms raised in the online customer reviews.

Service failure does not necessarily lead to customer dissatisfaction, as many customers accept that mistakes can happen in service delivery, but an incorrect response, or a lack of response to a failure, does make customers unhappy (del Rio-Lanza, Vazquez-Casielles, & Diaz-Martin, 2013). Failure to properly recover a service failure can lead to unhappy customers negatively evaluating the business providing the product or service. Schaefers and Schamari (2016) emphasise that prompt and positive response to negative online reviews is important in order to avoid unwanted reaction from other customers. Proactive action such as accepting responsibility for the service failure, offering an apology or some kind of compensation, can help the company to maintain a positive image. Therefore, the use of the correct response strategy in addressing complaints is crucial to minimise the impact of the complaint or even improve the reputation of the business (Spreng, Harrell, & Mackoy, 1995). However, according to Barsky and Frame (2009), results from a survey conducted by Market Metrix and TripAdvisor found that 85% of hotels

have no guidelines for monitoring and responding to online reviews.

Several scholars have developed frameworks within which to analyse online response strategies. Coombs (1999) refers to two approaches that are commonly used by companies to respond to complaints. These are accommodative and defensive strategies. Lee and Song (2010) later incorporated a "no action" strategy into the existing defensive-accommodative strategies.

The defensive approach involves actions such as denying responsibility for the service failure, criticising the complainant and shifting blame on others. Some researchers argue that the defensive strategy is best used when it is difficult to identify the source of the complaint (Lee & Song, 2010).

The accommodative approach involves taking responsibility by offering an apology, taking corrective action or offering compensation. By using this strategy, businesses are showing that they are willing to accept responsibility for the service failure and most importantly take action to prevent that problem from recurring in future (Lee & Song, 2010). The accommodative approach reduces the feeling of aggression which in turn can lead to favourable evaluation of the business (Carnevale & Isen, 1986; Coombs, 1999) and can further lead to increased trust of the business among customers, which can in turn positively affect their evaluation of the business as well as their purchase intention.

Lastly, the strategy of no action when companies do not offer comment or take any action towards a complaint. This strategy poses a risk that negative reviews are left unchallenged can harm the image and reputation of the company (Lee & Song, 2010).

Sparks (2001) proposed a service failure and recovery process framework, as shown in Figure 2.

Sparks highlights the context in which the failure occurred and the factors that influenced the failure. There are crucial to a successful recovery process. In tourism and hospitality settings, the majority of failures are related to the quality of service received. The largest proportion of failures occurs when a service is delivered but does not meet the customer's expectations (Sparks, 2001). The key to a successful recovery process lies within the action taken by the service provider, such as demonstrating effort to fix the problem, showing sincerity about the problem and being receptive to the customer's needs (Sparks, 2001). For service recovery to take place, it is necessary for the service provider to recognise that a problem has occurred. Service providers largely depend on customers to bring any problem to their attention.

One response option that is available to the service provider is to avoid or deny the failure. Sparks (2001) categorised this option as a non-recovery strategy. On the other hand, service providers can choose to take action aimed at restoring customer satisfaction. Such recovery techniques involve providing customers with an apology, solutions to fixing the problem, providing an explanation for the failure, inviting further feedback from the customer or offering some type of compensation for the failure (Sparks, 2001).

Davidow (2003) states that apart from simply responding to complaints, the level of a customer's satisfaction is determined by the type of organisational
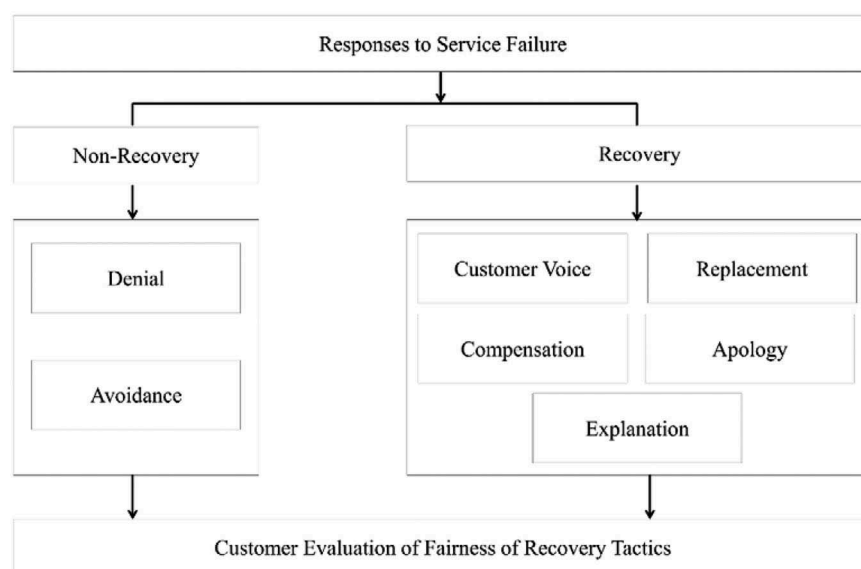

Figure 2. Sparks' service failure and recovery process framework.
Source: (Adapted from Sparks, 2001, p. 215)

Table 1. Davidow's dimensions of organisational responses to complaints.

(i) Timeliness: The perceived speed with which an organisation responds to or handles a complaint
(ii) Facilitation: The policies, procedures and structures that a company has in place to support customers engaging in complaints and communications
(iii) Redress: The benefits or response outcome that a customer receives from the organisation in response to the
(iv) Apology: An acknowledgement by the organisation of the complainant's distress
(v) Credibility: The organisation's willingness to present an explanation or account for the problem
(vi) Attentiveness: The interpersonal communication and interaction between the organisational representative and the customer

Source: Adapted from Davidow (2003, p. 232).

response. He identifies six dimensions of organisational responses to complaints (see Table 1). In addition to the initial failure that caused the complaint, an inappropriate response can increase the customers' dissatisfaction and turn the issue into a much bigger one (Einwiller & Steilen, 2015).

Sparks and Bradley (2017) build on previous work in defining a typology that specifically relates to responding to negative user-generated online reviews, as shown in Figure 3. Their typology comprises three main components that capture the content of the response: acknowledge, account and action.

In this framework, the first component, acknowledgement, refers to statements of recognition, acceptance and confirmation of the failure. This includes action such as thanking a customer for giving feedback, expressing appreciation for comments given, recognising that an event or act occurred, accepting responsibility for the outcome of this event and offering an apology for the adverse outcome of the event.

The second component relates to the type of explanation, or account, put forward to clarify the failure that has caused the customer's dissatisfaction. The five main types of explanation are excuses, justifications, reframing, penitential and denial.

The third component refers to action taken to rectify the problem. This action may include statements that suggest: (a) that an investigation into the matter is being undertaken; (b) the issue has been referred to the relevant department for improvement; (c) modifications or some kind of change have been done to improve the product or service; (d) a policy or process review has been undertaken; (e) staff training and development is implemented; (f) an invitation for the complainant to contact the business directly to resolve the issue; (g) an offer of compensation such as a refund or a discount, a free upgrade and other forms of incentive that encourages the customer to return.

Sparks and Bradley (2017) also consider the nature of the response content (honest, thorough, adequate) along with style, structure and source of response. Additionally, Zhang and Vaquez's (2014) study on generic structure of hotel responses to customer complaints on TripAdvisor was used as a basis for analysing response structure. These aspects of communication are seen as critical to the success of management responses.

Integrated framework for analysing response strategies

Drawing from the above literature and previous frameworks, we propose an integrated framework, as shown in Figure 4.

Firstly, the "Accommodative" and "Defensive" response strategies identified by Coombs (1999) are used as the starting point to organise various response actions into two categories. Lee and Song's (2010) "no action" strategy is placed in a separate category labelled "No Response" outside of the response action segment. Next, Sparks (2001) non-recovery actions (denial, avoidance) are categorised as "Defensive Approach" while recovery actions (explanation, apology, customer input, compensation) are placed in the "Accommodative approach" category. The
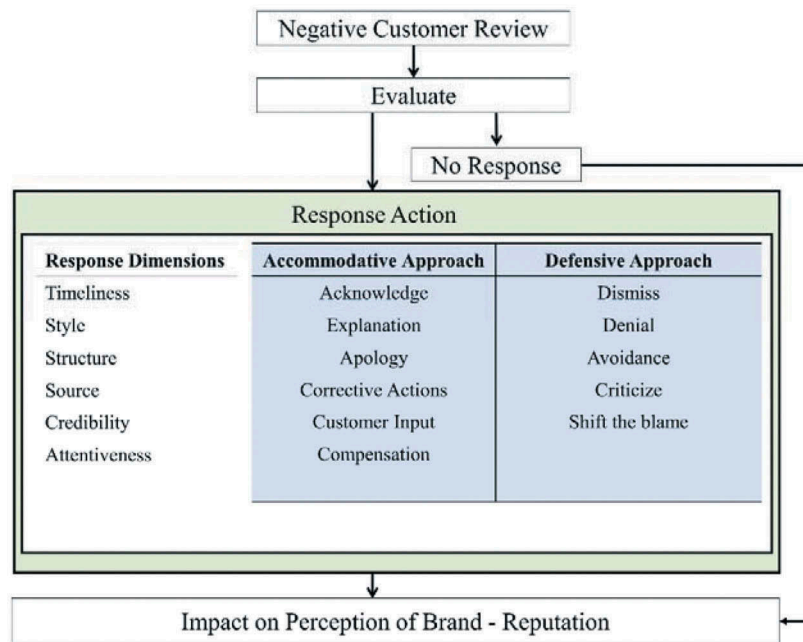
Acknowledge	Account	Action
Thank	Excuse	Investigate
Appreciate	Justify	Referral
Apologise	Reframe	Rectify
Recognise	Penitential	Policy
Admit	Denial	Training
Accept		Direct contact
Dismiss		Compensate

Figure 3. Sparks and Bradley's "Triple A" typology of responding.
Source: (Sparks & Bradley, 2017, p. 5)

Figure 4. Integrated framework for analysing response strategies.
Adapted from Coombs (1999), Davidow (2003), Lee and Song (2010), Sparks and Bradley (2017) and Sparks (2001).

"Replacement" recovery action is grouped as "Corrective Actions" to clarify that other recovery actions are available as identified by Sparks and Bradley (2017). A further two defensive approaches (Criticise, Shift the Blame) from Sparks and Bradley (2017) work are incorporated to complete this category. "Acknowledgement", from Sparks and Bradley's framework, is also incorporated under "Accommodative" response. Lastly, within the response action segment, a "Response Dimension" classification is created encompassing both the Accommodative and Defensive approach categories. The response dimension classification uses four dimensions (timeliness, facilitation, credibility, attentiveness) from Davidow's (2003) framework. Three additional dimensions (style, structure, source) are derived from Sparks and Bradley's (2017) framework and Zhang and Vaquez (2014). Two other dimensions (Redress, Apology) from Davidow's framework are incorporated into the Accommodative approach category in line with the other frameworks. The flow on from the "Response" or "No Response" strategies signifies that the action taken by the organisation has an impact on the reputation of the organisation.

The above review of literature shows that eWOM can significantly impact companies. Online customer reviews, especially negative eWOM, has the potential to negatively influence the consumers' perception of a company's image and reputation. However, negative eWOM can be effectively managed with appropriate response strategies. By integrating the past frameworks, we contribute to this area through the development of a holistic framework that encapsulates the decision of whether to respond or not, the response dimension and the response approach.

Research methods

To answer the research objectives, the most appropriate methods of data collection are netnography and personal interviews with hotel managers of mid to high-end hotels on the island of Aitutaki in the Cook Islands.

Sample

All accommodation property listings on TripAdvisor are initially categorised as hotels and then further sub-categorised into (a) hotels, (b) bed and breakfast and (c) speciality lodging (TripAdvisor, 2017). TripAdvisor listing of the 28 accommodation properties on Aitutaki are divided into these three categories: ten are listed as "Hotels", five as "B&B and Inns" and the remaining 13 are "Specialty Lodging".

Accommodation properties listed as "Hotels" represent mid to high-end properties on Aitutaki. All eight Aitutaki properties listed under the "Hotels" sub-category on TripAdvisor are in operation and agreed to take part in the study.

TripAdvisor reviews for the eight properties for the period of March 2016 to February 2017 were downloaded

and saved. To further narrow the sample, reviews with "terrible" (1 star), "poor" (2 star) and "average" (3 star) were selected using the TripAdvisor automated sorting system. Only reviews in English were collected for analysis to keep language consistent across texts. Collection of TripAdvisor customer review data over a 12-month period takes into account the seasonality nature of the tourism industry.

Netnography

According to Kozinets (2002), netnography is a qualitative research method dedicated to investigating computer-mediated consumer behaviour of online cultures and communities. Netnography is a widely accepted form of research within the field of consumer and marketing research (Kozinets, 2010). TripAdvisor is an active review platform with a constant flow of communication between reviewers and respondents. The data available through this medium is always changing and current. Therefore, the use of TripAdvisor customer reviews and management responses offered rich, detailed and descriptive data. A total of 57 TripAdvisor customer reviews along with 41 management responses were collated and imported into NVivo for analysis.

In-depth interviews

Semi-structured in-depth personal interviews with managers were also conducted to obtain information on the response to negative eWOM. The interviews were guided by a set of questions, and interview length ranged from 29 to 64 min with an average length of 42 min. The semi-structured interview process gave a flexible approach to questioning. The interviewer could ask additional questions, rephrase certain questions or redirect the line of questioning as the situation requires (Bryman, 2012).

The interview guide was emailed to the hotel managers along with a request to participate in the study. A total of nine interviews was conducted, all within the participant's hotel premises.

Of the nine interview participants, two were identified as Resort Managers, two as General Managers, two as Managers, one as Marketing Manager, one as the Public Relations Manager and one as a Managing Director. All the participants are responsible for the hotels' social media activities and respond to TripAdvisor reviews.

Content analysis of reviews and interviews

The coding of data for this study utilised the NVivo software and started as soon as the process of collecting TripAdvisor customer reviews and management responses began. Data coding refers to the use of unique labels to organise words or parts of the message into specific categories of information (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). The two main approaches to coding in thematic analysis are theory driven and data-driven approaches (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). The theory-driven approach (a priori) starts off with codes derived from the literature or conceptual framework, while the data-driven approach means that the codes are drawn from the interpretation of the data (Bryman, 2012). In the case of this study, analysis started with an a priori set of codes drawn from literature but at the same time seeking additional data codes as they emerge, using a combination of deductive and inductive approaches.

The respondents' personal information such as age, gender, position within the organisation was also coded. Next, the interview questions and responses were coded into categories as follows: (a) social media usage for the hotels, (b) opportunities and challenges faced by the hotels with use of social media, (c) management strategies of negative eWOM, (d) expectations and future direction of the use of social media. This process, referred to as open coding, is regarded as an important step in a two-level approach of coding interview data (DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall, & McCulloch, 2011). As ideas and concepts emerged from the data these were further broken down into themes and concepts such as guest management, guests' reviews, online media, TripAdvisor and management responses. The second level of the analysis of the interview data involved identifying the relationships between the codes.

Trustworthiness of data

The notion of trustworthiness is used to describe the accuracy and credibility of the collected qualitative data (Krefting, 1991). In order to ensure trustworthiness, authors deployed triangulation before, during, and after the data collection (Decrop, 1999). Triangulation in this research relates to the process of corroborating evidence from different methods of data collection (netnography and semi-structured in-depth interviews) and different types of data (online responses on Tripadvisor and interview transcripts). By examining and comparing multiple sources of information, researchers ensure the accuracy of the collected data. Moreover, data analysis was validated through "triangulation of investigators" (Kreftnig, 1991, p. 219) which means that rather than a single researcher, team members (the authors of this paper) contributed to the development of analytical categories. While the first

author of this paper worked in the hotel industry in Aitutaki for an extended period of time (and so had the networks to carry out interviews with hotel managers), the other two authors complemented the diversity of approach with their backgrounds in tourism geographies and tourism economics. Finally, the researchers have explicitly disclosed their biases and backgrounds that could influence the interpretations they make and therefore embraced the notion of reflexivity as an additional strategy towards trustworthiness of data (Feighery, 2006).

Findings

TripAdvisor reviews and responses

The online presence of Aitutaki hotels is primarily maintained through hotel websites and listings on TripAdvisor. From the 57 TripAdvisor reviews analysed, 50 were written in the same or previous month of travel. This indicates that reviewers share their experiences and comments within a short time of undertaking a trip. This indication is supported by the hotel managers who recognise that most negative comments are received while guests are still "hot under the collar". Of the 57 TripAdvisor reviews, 9 reviews (16%) were of a 1-star rating (terrible), 19 reviews (28%) with 2-star rating (poor) and 32 reviews (56%) with a 3-star rating (average). The Aitutaki hotel managers see review ratings as an important factor that influences the customers travel decision-making process.

> People now place a lot more emphasis on your rating. They look at three things, one is the rating, the star rating; two is the guests' comments and three what is the reply from the General Manager (Interview 7, Resort Manager)

With the high number of travellers consulting review sites such as TripAdvisor to plan their holidays, management responses to online reviews are seen as an important part of managing the hotels online presence.

Reasons for non-responses

While four of the hotels responded to TripAdvisor customer reviews, three of the hotels did not respond to any of the TripAdvisor customer reviews that were collected. The reasons for the lack of management responses were identified as lack of technical knowledge to respond to a post; no response due to a change in hotel management (no one took responsibility); and one hotel did not respond because they believed a 3-star rating was not negative.

Dimensions of management responses

Using the integrated framework shown in Figure 4 to analyse management responses to TripAdvisor and the personal interviews, in addition to (a) timeliness, (b) style, (c) structure, (d) source, (e) credibility and (f) attentiveness, two dimensions that influence the response action of the hotel managers were noted from the analysis. The additional dimensions are (a) values and (b) culture. Both of these dimensions potentially influence the way in which managers respond to customer reviews.

Timeliness of responses is defined by Davidow (2003) as the perceived speed with which an organisation responds to a complaint. For this study, the timeliness of management responses on TripAdvisor was determined by comparing the date the customer review was posted against the date the of the management response. This information is automatically generated by TripAdvisor. The majority of the customer reviews were responded to within four days of being received. The longest time it took for management to respond to customer reviews was five months (see Figure 5).

> We aim to respond in a timely professional manner to any reviews we receive, negative or positive. However, we refrain from replying to negative online reviews the moment it is received. We find it is best to allow time to properly investigate the issues raised and to allow the customer cool-off time (Interview 2, Marketing Manager)
>
> As with TripAdvisor comments, I try to check these at least every second day and reply to them as soon as I can otherwise I reply within a week of the comment being received (Interview 5, General Manager)

The issue of responding to TripAdvisor customer reviews in a timely manner was widely acknowledged as an important step in effectively minimising the damage that can be caused by a negative review; however, the interview respondents are also cautious of rushing responses without due consideration. The general consensus amongst the hotel managers is that responding to customer reviews within a week of receipt is an acceptable time frame.

Additionally, hotel managers find it more important that the responses, especially to negative reviews, are supported by facts rather than keeping to a strict timeline. They found that collecting evidence and facts pertaining to a negative review afford the respondent clarity in the situation and provide the opportunity to construct a well-balanced response. As pointed out by one of the managers, rushing to respond to a customer review can lead to misinterpreting the review and providing an incorrect response which could worsen the situation.
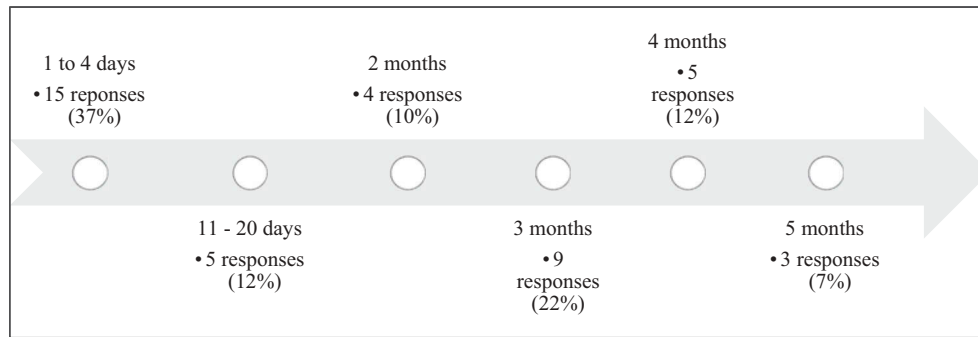
Figure 5. Timeline for management responses to TripAdvisor customer reviews.
(Source: Own fieldwork)

Figure 6. Example of a TripAdvisor management response identifying response structure.
(Source: Manager response on TripAdvisor, structure captions inserted by authors)

Sparks and Bradley (2017) advise that the style of response is determined by examining the words used and considering the tone in which the management response was delivered. The analysis of management responses using these parameters showed that the majority of the responses were delivered in a professional manner. Firstly, a professional response to a complaint should respond specifically to the issues raised by the reviewer and provide a specific apology that acknowledges any mistakes that occurred. This is then followed by a statement or explanation of what the organisation intends to correct the mistake with a proposal of how this will improve customer experience in the future (Figure 6). The quote inserted below illustrates the example of a professionally styled TripAdvisor management response:

Kia Orana Ryan and Jacklyn!

Thank you so much for reviewing your visit to the beautiful Private Island Resort of Aitutaki Lagoon – it is in an unrivalled location as you say! We are delighted that you enjoyed your comfortable, well-appointed Beachfront bungalow and that you appreciated all your special flowers!

I am sorry that the Activity Hut was closed when you returned from your lagoon cruise and we would have been pleased to assist you with any of the water sports equipment had we known at the time. We can always help you with snorkelling gear and paddles for the

kayaks. Scooters are available from a couple of rental places and of course we also offer complimentary bicycles for you to get around the "mainland"!

We are striving to continually improve all aspects of the Resort, whilst keeping a balance with nature and the true Cook Islands traditions.

We hope to welcome you back to Aitutaki Lagoon Resort & Spa, for you to experience the best of our private island's hospitality.

Yours sincerely, Jean-Francois, Nicola & all the team – Kia Manuia! (Manager response on TripAdvisor)

Secondly, a casual response classification refers to management responses that are written in a personal and friendly fashion. Responses with a friendly tone, often referred to specific interactions between the reviewer and the respondent. These interactions were usually positive and likely to invoke happy memories for the reviewer. Lastly, as defined by Sparks and Bradley (2017) a defensive style of response attempts to conceal aspects of the business that is at fault and may appear unwilling to accept criticism.

Hi there,

Thank you for your review.

It is unfortunate that you were not happy with your stay in Aitutaki (and us) and the "overpriced" island etc etc.

I am sorry that we did not reach you enough to accommodate or alleviate any issues you have on hand especially all these "nightmares" that you allege.

If the pacific islands are generally bad, then I cannot help you or do more to help.

It is not our spirit that we let our guests return with "bad" spirits. However, I hope this late apology message, on behalf of management and the rest of the Cook Islands, we make this unreserved apology for any cause that we may have afflicted in making your holiday "stressful" and unpleasant in anyway, is regretted.

Our best wishes to you.

Will keep trying to make our customers happy. (Manager response on TripAdvisor)

Structure refers to the layout of text in a management response. The structure provides clarity in which each section of text is constructed to serve a particular communicative function. The large majority of responses clearly indicated opening pleasantries (salutation), an introductory paragraph expressing gratitude and an apology, a body text, a closing statement with an invitation for a second visit, closing pleasantries (valediction) and the signature

line. Businesses responses to online reviews generally resemble the structure of a formal traditional business letter (Zhang & Vaquez, 2014).

The commonly used salutation for management responses is the phrase *Kia Orana* which is the Cook Islands Maori word for greeting. The phrase *Kia Orana* was referenced 39 times in the 41 management responses analysed. The expressions of appreciation statements such as "*Thank you for your review*" or "*We truly appreciate your feedback*" used by managerial responses in this study reinforce the knowledge that customer feedback is highly important to the hotels. Table 2 presents examples of opening statements taken from the hotels TripAdvisor management responses.

It is within the opening statement that the reader is able to identify what type of approach the respondent intends to take. The two approaches as discussed in the literature are accommodative and defensive.

The closing statements of the management responses as shown in Table 3 can be classified as encouraging. The statements aim to regain the faith of the reviewers in the hotel.

The use of the formal valediction of *Yours Sincerely* is used by several hotel managers. This was often accompanied by the Cook Islands Maori expression of *Kia Manuia* which roughly translates to wishing the reviewer good fortune.

The source of the management response identifies the author of the response and/or the person who

Table 2. Examples of opening statements used in TripAdvisor management responses.

Opening statements	References	Examples
Apologise for the negative event	24	*We are very sorry to hear of your disappointment with your stay*
Appreciate feedback	22	*We truly appreciate your feedback*
Thank for review	19	*Thank you so much to take the time to write a review of your visit*
Reinforce the welcome	7	*We were delighted to welcome you on the 2nd January*
Dismiss the issues raised	4	*Many of the statements made in this review are simply untrue*
Accept responsibility	3	*… unfortunately the room wasn't checked before you were shown to it, prematurely – that clearly shouldn't have happened*
Admit to the mistake	3	*I appreciate that the housekeeping team should have picked up on this in any event*
Thank for choosing the hotel	3	*Thank you for choosing the beautiful Private Island Resort of Aitutaki Lagoon for your Honeymoon*
Information on hotel	2	*Our in-house guests choose the resort for its laid back luxury with very comfortable bungalows, full services and privacy in the most idyllic location*
Recognise an event occurred	1	*I am very sorry if some flowers were not removed in a timely manner*

(Source: own fieldwork)

Table 3. Examples of closing statements used in TripAdvisor management responses.

Closing statements	References	Examples
Extend an invitation to return	30	We hope very much to welcome you back
Thank for review	26	Thank you again for your review and feedback
Appreciate feedback	1	We value your positive comments
Extend further apologies	1	Once again, apologies for not meeting your expectations and we are all sorry that you left disappointed
Offer best wishes	1	Our best wishes to you

(Source: own fieldwork)

posts this onto TripAdvisor. TripAdvisor's reply feature in the header section of the response easily identifies that the respondent is a representative of the hotel. During the interviews it was the view of hotel managers that they are in the best possible position to address complaints.

> I believe; strongly believe the best people to run it are the people with their boots on the ground. It's as simple as that, you're there you know exactly what's happening; sometimes if they have to answer the question, why get a third person involved (Interview 6, Resort Manager)

The involvement of staff in responding to complaints is acknowledged, as stated in the closing pleasantries section above, by the inclusion of the phrase *all the team* as respondents.

The credibility of management responses is assessed by determining the organisation's willingness to present an explanation for the problem raised in the complaint (Davidow, 2003). Analysis shows that a high number of responses lacked credibility and quality. There appeared a general unwillingness on the part of the hotel representative to provide a clear explanation for the issues raised or how the hotel intends to resolve this issue. Both these lead to low credibility assessment.

Davidow (2003) explains attentiveness as the level of care and attention that a customer gets from an organisation. Accordingly, Aitutaki hotel managers indicated that qualities such as respect play a significant role in responding to traveller reviews.

> I have to be positive because it's respect, even though they might not show respect to the company or to us we are showing respect back accordingly. I respect people for writing reviews and I expect for myself to give them a reply as soon as I can (Interview 6, Resort Manager)

All of the hotel managers maintain that responding to guest reviews, both positive and negative, are given the same treatment and importance. However, there is

indication that more effort is placed on responding to the negative reviews. This genuine concern shows customers that the managers understand and share their feelings when a negative event has occurred. All of the managers indicated that customers feedback is encouraged demonstrating a willingness to listen to the customer and to use customer feedback as a tool to improve their product and services.

Displaying a high level of attentiveness through their response actions reflects the intentions of the Aitutaki hotel managers in ensuring that service failure incidents are successfully recovered.

Additional dimensions

Apart from the six existing dimensions to responses derived from the literature, the analysis has presented two additional dimensions of management responses. These additional dimensions are values and culture. Values refer to the fundamental beliefs held by the managers as respondents. The values they possess influence their attitudes and behaviour in their interaction with customers. The majority of the hotels on Aitutaki are family owned and operated businesses therefore most of the managers feel a personal connection to the business. According to one hotel manager, it can be difficult not to be affected by negative feedback. The values held by the hotel managers help them in removing their emotional attachment to the business and guide their decision-making processes. As pointed out by Trevino (1986), managers frequently engage in discretionary decision-making behaviour that affects the lives and well-being of others. Thus, they are required to be ethical in their decision-making. A number of moral values arising from the interviews that are perceived as important by the Aitutaki hotel managers are honesty, self-respect and maintaining personal standards.

The value of being honest was seen by the interview respondents as something that extends right across the board with regards to the management of social media including management responses.

> I think importantly, your posts have to be honest and truthful, especially when there is room for you to give a false impression of your product (Interview 3, General Manager)

Having self-respect is seen as maintaining the ability to preserve one's standards. As one hotel manager pointed out, maintaining a high professional standard is largely a self-regulatory process.

> …there are times when you just want to say you bloody idiot but you can't because you're lowering yourself and

I have standards and I won't let my standards be tampered with in any way by someone else whose standards don't actually reflect what really they writing (Interview 6, Resort Manager)

Therefore, staying true to personal values and maintaining a high level of personal standard is identified as an important strategy when responding to negative customer reviews on TripAdvisor.

The second dimension of culture looks at the way local culture and tradition influences the response strategies of managers in a Pacific Island context. Culture was defined by McDermott and O'Dell (2001) as the shared values, beliefs and practises of people within an organisation. It is embedded in the way people act, what they expect of each other and how they make sense of each other's actions. According to Saffu (2003), the motives and actions of business owners in the South Pacific Islands are deeply rooted in their relationship with their culture and the local community. It is clear from this study that the Cook Islands culture and traditions play an important role in the way hotel managers on Aitutaki respond to customer reviews.

We want to ensure our culture and mannerism of the company is portrayed in the way we convey messages to our audience, so we use the Cook Islands language and phrases where possible, such as Kia Orana and Meitaki (Interview 2, Marketing Manager)

The frequent use of Cook Islands Maori words and phrases in management responses indicate that local culture is an integral component of tourism in the Cook Islands. The incorporation of Cook Islands culture and traditions into everyday tourism business operations was initiated and encouraged by the Cook Islands Tourism Corporation, the National Tourism Office through its *Kia Orana* Values Project. All of the interview respondents spoke highly of the *Kia Orana* Values Project and the initiatives of the Cook Islands Tourism Corporation. The main aim of the *Kia Orana* Values Project was to encourage the tourism industry and the community to ensure that all visitors have a consistent, authentic and positive experience.

Management response approaches

Responding to online customer reviews can either be accommodative or defensive. Accommodative approach strategies involve taking responsibility for the service failure identified in a complaint or a customer review (see Table 4).

In summary, the act of apologising is seen as representing a caring attitude and shows compassion for the negative event experienced by the customer.

Table 4. Examples of acknowledgement and apology statements in TripAdvisor management responses.

Recognise an event occurred	*I am very sorry if some flowers were not removed in a timely manner*
Accept responsibility	*… unfortunately the room wasn't checked before you were shown to it, prematurely – that clearly shouldn't have happened*
Admit to the mistake	*I appreciate that the housekeeping team should have picked up on this in any event*
Apologise for the negative event	*We are very sorry to hear of your disappointment with your stay*
Express regret	*We love to share the beauty of Aitutaki with all of our guests and in this case, we seem to of fallen short*

Source: (own fieldwork)

Offering an explanation for the service failure highlighted in the customer review is seen as an important factor in diminishing the level of disappointment experienced by the customer. The most frequently used explanation from responses analysed was the fact that there was a management change at one of the hotels. While this is not really a valid explanation for the service failure that was experienced by the reviewers, it can be seen as a statement assuring future guests that such failures should not happen again. Other forms of explanations commonly used to explain the service failure are to provide a comparison, advise customers of existing hotel policies and procedures or to highlight other alternatives that are available within the hotel.

Corrective action refers to the steps taken by the hotel to remedy the service failure as identified in the customers' reviews. Some of the common actions that were stated by hotel managers in their responses are shown in Table 5.

Inviting customers to contact the hotel is a strategy used when there is a lack of clarity with the complaint raised by the customer. In the analysis of TripAdvisor management responses, this particular strategy appeared only once.

While the act of offering compensation is highlighted in the literature as an important step in achieving customer satisfaction there was only one instance identified in TripAdvisor management responses. While the majority of management responses to TripAdvisor customer reviews

Table 5. Examples of actions taken by hotels.

Accommodative actions taken	Examples
Renovations	*We will soon be re-thatching the roofs of the shaded deck areas*
Referred to relevant department	*I have followed up with housekeeping to ensure rooms are well stocked with toiletries*
Replacement	*We will be changing the lunch and dinner menus*
Staff training	*We are also providing on-going training to assist our local staff understand better the requirements of our international visitors*
Staff recruitment	*We are also in the process of recruiting new Spa staff*

Source: (own fieldwork)

Table 6. Defensive forms of explanations in TripAdvisor management responses.

Defensive forms of explanations	Examples
Reframe the issue	We do not use coconut milk for coffee and tea, although we do of course have the lovely fresh drinking coconut water available separately, as well as fresh coconut to eat
Make excuses	It has been a busy time for everyone over this festive period
Criticise for not raising issue earlier	We would of course have dealt with this immediately had you mentioned it at the time
Repeat resolution	Paul did show you the manual override button under the main panel in order to use the unit in your room
Shift the blame	The only reason that the car hire took us so long was the deliberation on your part with regards to hiring a scooter or a car
Discredit the complaint	I checked their receipts, the wine they ordered is the wine they received on the Island Night

Source: (own fieldwork)

displayed accommodative behaviours, there were a few instances where a defensive approach was taken.

Defensive strategies as identified from the literature involve the acts of dismissing or denying responsibility for the service failure identified in a customer review. The decision to take a defensive strategy is not only evident in the opening statement but can also be identified in the body text of the management response through the types of explanations offered by the respondents. Table 6 presents some examples of defensive explanations used by the hotel managers on Aitutaki in their TripAdvisor management responses.

Having the opportunity to correct such a statement is seen as important for future guests to make more informed decisions. It is clear from the findings of this study that while some of the strategies are categorised as defensive according to literature, the hotel managers may not perceive them as such but see them as an essential component in protecting the reputation of the business.

Discussion and conclusions

The advances in technology have allowed for communication and exchange of information to happen in a bidirectional fashion. As evident from the findings of the study, hoteliers on Aitutaki are well aware of the influence of social media information on consumers. For many hotel managers, social media have increased the effectiveness and efficiency of their marketing activities which can be particularly relevant for remote island destinations.

When an online review is received, the service provider can choose whether to respond to the review or ignore it. As presented in the findings, three out of the seven hotels on Aitutaki with TripAdvisor customer reviews chose not to respond. The managers of two of the hotels with no management responses indicated their lack of knowledge as a major factor in the non-response strategy being adopted. As explained by Lee and Song (2010), leaving negative reviews unchallenged can harm the image and reputation of the company. As for the remaining four hotels which responded to TripAdvisor reviews, a mixture of established accommodative and defensive approaches was used to address the customer complaints.

Accommodative approach strategies are defined as those that indicate that the organisation is willing to take responsibility for the service failure and work on regaining the customers' confidence. The accommodative approach was apparent in the management responses of the Aitutaki hotels with consistent statements acknowledging the negative event and accepting responsibility. Davidow (2003) explains that the act of apologising can assist in recovering a customer's confidence in the business. The majority of management responses analysed shows that the managers also use explanations to inform customers of the causes for the service failures and how the issues have been resolved. Lastly, one of the important strategies outlined in the accommodative approach is compensation. Sparks and Bradley (2017) identified the act of extending compensation to customers who have experienced service failure as an important service recovery tool. However, the strategy of offering compensation is not one that is regularly practised by the hotels on Aitutaki as seen from the management responses.

According to Sparks (2001), the defensive approach includes actions such as avoidance and denial. Management responses that reflect the defensive approach are defined as responses that ignore service failure and do not directly address it, or responses that contain statements discounting the seriousness of the complaint. Phrases like "many of the statements made in this review are simply untrue" lend a defensive tone to the management response. Furthermore, while the management response may start off with an accommodative approach, actions such as making excuses, criticising customers, shifting the blame and reframing the complaint in the explanation can be interpreted as defensive. According to the hotel managers of this study, correcting an inaccurate statement contained in a customer review is important to clarify the issue for future customers. However, the accommodative and defensive approaches are not the only ways in which the effectiveness of management responses can be measured. The dimension in which an organisation responds to a complaint also needs to be considered.

Six existing dimensions that affect the way in which managers respond to complaints were adapted from

Davidow (2003) and Sparks and Bradley (2017) and applied to this study. These dimensions looked at the timeliness of responses, the style and structure of the response, the source of the management response, its credibility and the level of attentiveness afforded to the customer. These dimensions are all found in the responses by hotels on Aitutaki. Some time is taken to gain facts about the service failure and remove some of the emotion from the negative situation. This would have allowed the managers' time to investigate the issue and construct a reply.

However, the findings indicate a high number of responses as lacking credibility and quality. Davidow (2003) defined credibility as the willingness of an organisation to present and explanation for the problem raised. An explanation for the problems raised in the customer review was not always forthcoming in the management responses analysed. Similarly, the quality of response determined by the level of thoroughness was also lacking.

The final dimension to assess management responses from the literature was attentiveness. This dimension describes the level of care and attention afforded to the customer by the organisation. The responses in this study portrayed care and attention, encouraged all types of feedback, recognised of the importance of customer feedback and showed genuine concern and empathy towards the customer.

Theoretical implications

Two of the important dimensions that arose from the interviews with the managers and analysis of TripAdvisor management responses were those of values and culture. Many of the hotels on Aitutaki are small family owned and operated businesses, and one hotel manager indicated that negative feedback may be taken personally by managers. The values held by the hotel managers on Aitutaki play a major role in the way in which they interpret and respond to these negative reviews. According to Trevino (1986) it is likely that managerial performance in resolving ethical problems is heavily influenced by moral judgement. The hotel managers on Aitutaki specified values such as being honest and truthful, having self-respect and keeping a high level of personal standard help them in responding to customer reviews in an unbiased and professional manner. Some of these values are reflective of those identified by Nonis and Swift (2001) such as self-respect, self-fulfilment, sense of belonging, sense of accomplishment among others.

As indicated by Saffu (2003), the motives of indigenous business owners in the South Pacific islands were influenced by their relationships with their culture. Culture is

perceived as a big part of the appeal for visitors to travel to the Cook Islands. The incorporation of culture and traditions into the Cook Islands tourism industry has been revived and encouraged by a destination management campaign. The effect that this campaign has on the management response styles of the hotels on Aitutaki can be seen in their use of Cook Islands Maori greetings and farewells. The incorporation of local culture and traditions into the everyday operation of the hotels was perceived to play an important role by the managers. According to the Director of Destination Development, the project not only encourages the use of the Cook Islands language within the industry but also contributes as a unique selling point for its tourism products (Wilson, 2015). Launched in 2015, the Kia Orana Values Project was an initiative of the Cook Islands Tourism Corporation to align the Cook Islands tourism industry with the core values of its people (Cook Islands Tourism Corporation, 2015).

These two additional dimensions of values and culture play a major role in the response strategies of hotel managers in the Cook Islands to online reviews. Expanding on the integrated framework that was developed for this study adapted from the previous work, the two additional dimensions of Values and Culture. These two dimensions have been added to response dimension to reflect the Cook Islands setting of the study and also the South Pacific context. Furthermore, an additional accommodative approach labelled Corrective Statements to indicate the importance of providing a clarifying statement to an inaccurate statement that may be contained in a customer review has been suggested by the authors (Figure 7).

Managerial implications

The findings from this study indicate that there is still the need for hotels on Aitutaki to further develop effective strategies to respond to negative reviews on TripAdvisor and other social media platforms. Some hotels do not have appropriate policies in place that can be enforced when negative comments arise. While some of the hotels actively use social media for promotional activities they do not respond to negative comments on these platforms in the same manner, losing out on the opportunity to recover service failure and defend the reputation of their business. Hotel managers on Aitutaki and other island destinations can benefit from the findings of this study by creating an improved strategy to respond to negative comments and improve service recovery. The following are some recommendations and observations: (a) monitor daily for reviews and comments on all social media platforms and respond in a timely manner, (b) respond with a thank you and engage with the reviewer, (d) offer an apology and explain
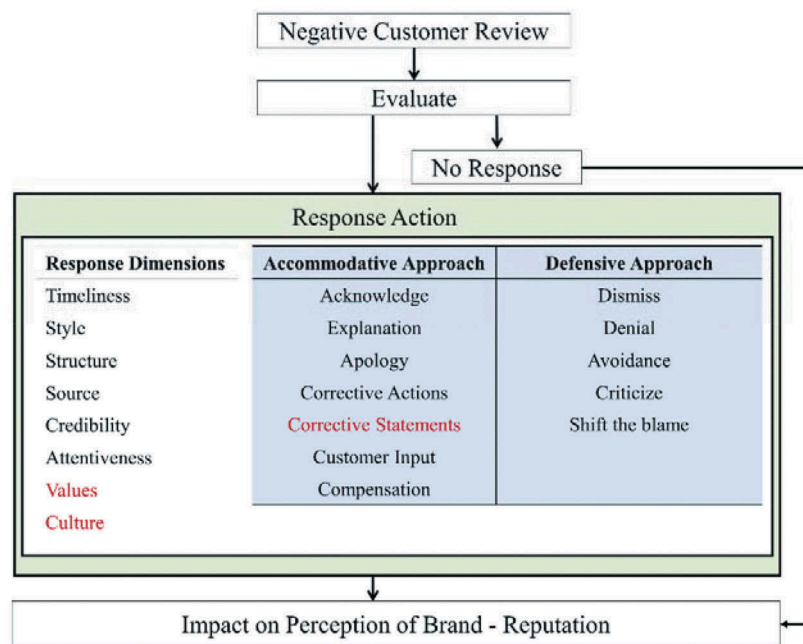
Figure 7. Modified framework for analysing management response strategies.
Source: (own fieldwork)

the reason for any service failures identified, (e) ensure that the response is accurate and appropriate and (f) build and maintain relationships with customers through the use of social media. Tourism has become the main economic activity for many small Pacific Island countries creating much needed job opportunities and bringing important income and foreign exchange earnings. Therefore, this study and the additions to the response framework can be a useful tool for small island states in improving the way they interact with visitors and manage negative evaluations about their tourism products.

Limitations and future research

Some of the limitations identified from the study included: (a) participants may not have voiced all the techniques they use to manage negative reviews, (b) participants may have had different levels of use for social media, and (c) the techniques used to respond to TripAdvisor reviews may be different to those gathered from the interviews due to changes in management for some of the hotels. Further, the level of usage and interaction managers have on the hotels social media platforms varied. Some of the managers were fully engaged in the management of social media accounts and provided valuable insight into the practices of the company, while some basically overlooked the process but were not actively engaged. An interview with specific employees who manage social media accounts would have provided a clearer indication of the various activities and approaches used.

Another limitation arose from the properties that have had a change in management just prior to the interviews being conducted. This meant that the managers interviewed provided a different perspective on useful response strategies compared to the actual response strategies used on TripAdvisor. Nevertheless, this allowed for a greater understanding of the various management response strategies that are being used.

Future studies could look at taking the same or similar approach with a larger sample size in order for the finding to be more generalised. This could be extended to examine response strategies used by hotels in other island destinations. This would add to the current body of knowledge by providing a wider, more comprehensive view from a broader spectrum of hotel properties. As this particular research was focused purely on response strategies employed by hotel managers to respond to negative reviews on TripAdvisor, future research could expand to include other social media platforms such as Facebook and examine how response strategies on these platforms may differ to that currently employed by Cook Island hoteliers.

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