

User Roles and Sought Gratifications in Online Travel Communities: An Analysis of Tripadvisor Comments on Three Districts in Lima, Peru

Kathia Huayana¹, Yoshimasa (Nancy) Kageyama^{2*}, Fabiola Peralta¹

¹Tourism Administration Program, Universidad San Ignacio de Loyola, Lima, Peru

²School of Hospitality and Agricultural Leadership, Missouri State University, Missouri, USA

Email: *YKageyama@missouristate.edu

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Abstract

The goal of the present article is to identify user roles and their link with the theory of uses and gratifications based on the study of [Mkono and Tribe \(2016\)](#). A thematic categorical content analysis was applied by using a software for coding, interpretation, and theory construction. The extracted sample is from TripAdvisor users' reviews pertaining to three tourist districts in Lima, Peru. Three new roles were identified: "Data Provider", "Narrator", and "Product/Service Critic". With a focus on online communities, the characteristics of users when issuing a comment and what they expect when publishing it are revealed. The present study shows that the place where the user is and the activity carried out influence the way of transmitting their emotions, opinions, and/or recommendations when shared on TripAdvisor. This determines that it is possible to acquire new knowledge that allows designing key marketing strategies and excellent service/product development.

Keywords

User Roles, Gratifications, Social Media, Content Analysis, TripAdvisor, Online Travel Communities

1. Introduction

The way that information on tourist experiences is shared through comments or opinions has evolved on social networking platforms and websites that enable connectivity among users ([Alaimo et al., 2020](#)). This is part of Web 2.0, which offers "peer-to-peer" interaction ([Patel, 2013](#)) and provides opportunities for new

online communities to develop, thus allowing developers and consumers to contribute to the content of a website (Tavakoli & Wijesinghe, 2019). The content is based on actual situations. It does not come from people who are interested in selling but from those who are willing to share in order to help their peers, and as Kamboj and Rahamn (2016) mentioned, these communities help the traveler search for the opinion of others on the facilities offered in services (restaurants, hotels, etc.) and on tourist attractions, providing them with more value than that offered by a travel company. This trust relationship among people who provide this information is an incentive for analysis and research. Authors like Tavakoli and Wijesinghe (2019) indicated the importance of analyzing “cybercultures”. Online behavior patterns have been found as a result of studying these communities. Supporting this idea, Filieri et al. (2021) affirmed that research on the tourism sector focuses on studying the consumer, which then becomes a factor that influences the content to be generated for mobile applications. While related studies have been carried out to understand the development of online communities (focused on the user who shares the information as in the study of Mkono and Tribe, 2016), it is essential to continue researching. Therefore, user roles, together with user theory and gratifications, are reviewed to provide deeper analysis and nuanced understanding of the online user experience in the area of tourism social networks (Mkono & Tribe, 2016). The authors Amaral et al. (2014) in their study on “user-generated content” (UGC), identified consumer behavior patterns on social networks and verified their application in online evaluation theories on service quality of the 10 best restaurants in Hawaii and the Azores archipelagos. In the results, they affirmed that tourists tend to buy experiences and minimize their cognitive cost when reading the comments and reviews of colleagues on digital social networks. The analysis identified three types of reviewers based on their level of experience: *novices*, *beginners*, and *specialists*. *Novices* tend to rely on existing recommendations, *beginners* prefer restaurants with fewer reviews, and *specialists* are the ones who actively share their opinions. The study concluded that user-generated content (UGC) plays a crucial role in promoting destinations and reducing uncertainty in travelers’ decision-making when selecting restaurants (Amaral et al., 2014). Consequently, new contributions appeared pointing out the influence of the consumer in social networks, performing analysis, projections, and reflections. For example, authors like Sánchez-Amboage (2011) in his article on tourism 2.0, proposed a model of tourism promotion, where they analyzed whether companies in the tourism sector are adapting to the new type of customer through promotion and influence. With this, the new term “Adprosumer” appears, which refers to the web 2.0 client, the one who recommends, participates in the promotion, and finally consumes the product. For its part, Llantada (2013) provided a more developed and complete concept, defining the “Adprosumer” as a “permanent social communicator who generates, produces, and consumes content through phones, tablets or social networks.” With this, it was determined that the distribution in the following years would be more complex since it should be

taken into account that this generates the effect of intelligent recommendations (label, evaluate, recommend) and that due to the ease and usefulness they provide, travelers will be increasingly influenced by social networks. Considering the importance of user-generated content on social networks, existing studies have focused on evaluation features of online reviews such as the level of customer satisfaction and product evaluation (Kwok et al., 2017). However, there is a lack of existing literature in understanding the types of user roles on social networks and the gratifications behind posting online reviews. Building on Mkono & Tribe's study that applies Uses and Gratifications theory, this study extends the theory into a different destination users visited. Despite the application of the U&G theory to Internet studies, most research has been conducted within American or European contexts. Notably, there remains a significant gap in understanding how this theory applies to a different context and location (Lim & Ting, 2012).

The aim of this study is to identify the roles that users have in a tourist social network and to determine the relationship between uses and gratifications in comments regarding the following three tourist districts of Lima (Peru): Centro de Lima, Barranco, and Miraflores. As indicated by Mkono & Tribe (2016), users of social network websites can elect different roles to play at various times. Although it is indicated that one user can play multiple roles in their reviews, it is not clear about the situational factors that can affect the role users choose to play. In the current study, the authors considered a different destination visited to examine if the types of roles identified previously still hold true when data from three tourist districts in Lima, Peru was analyzed. Each of these three districts differ from the other, such as, for example, in the attractions, the architecture of the streets, the distances in time and kilometers, among others. The research questions for the study are: *What are the roles users of social networks play in their online interactions when they post comments about the three tourist districts of Lima, Peru? What are the gratifications behind users' decisions to post comments on social network websites in the case of Lima, Peru?* The contribution of the study is to investigate new roles users can play when a different destination is considered. In addition, the study examines the gratifications behind those roles on social network websites. The study extends the theory of Uses and Gratifications and examines if the characteristic of destination can be a situational factor, which can have an impact on the roles users choose to play on social network websites.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Travel Forum and Online Travel Communities

To understand what a travel forum is, it is essential to understand the meaning of social media. It is a set of stakeholders and relationships established between one another (Luo & Zhong, 2015), and its aim is to allow users to communicate, share content, and create communities. It is a tool for the "democratization of information that transforms people into recipients and into producers of content" (Ureña et al., 2011: p. 62). The key component, thus, is the link/relationship gen-

erated between people on a virtual site. Some of the most popular virtual communities are travel-related platforms that foster a high degree of collaborative interactions among travelers, a phenomenon also referred to as “Travel 2.0” (Nusair et al., 2019). Among the reasons for the successful use of social media platforms in tourism, Gretzel (2018) pointed out that: (1) the tourism sector is information-intensive, and e-commerce was already extensively used when social media emerged, and (2) recording, recalling and sharing travel experiences are perceived as enjoyable and socially important, given the hedonic and social nature of tourism. An example of an online travel community is the “TripAdvisor.com” platform, a tourism website founded in 2000, which offers opinions and information to help plan holidays and it is also the biggest virtual community, with more than 887 million opinions and reviews from almost 8 million companies (TripAdvisor, 2021). TripAdvisor created a strategy whereby frequent friendly residents and/or visitors who offer good advice and respond to many topics different from the usual are awarded the status of “Expert in Destinations” (Edwards et al., 2017).

Research on Online Travel Communities (OTCs) has generally focused on several key areas: 1) user participation trends such as engagement, information sharing, and content creation—factors crucial to community success (e.g., Xu, Wang, & Kim, 2025), 2) attitudes and perceptions toward OTCs emphasizing how OTC features influence satisfaction and loyalty (e.g., Wang, Wu, Wang, Xu, & Yuan, 2024), 3) characteristics of recommenders and their recommendations, and management strategies addressing managerial strategies, including eWOM management, brand building, destination marketing, and co-innovation from an organizational perspective (e.g., Hung & Khoa, 2022). While these areas are crucial for understanding how such communities function, they require further exploration to enhance and refine organizational management practices.

2.2. Electronic-Word-of-Mouth (EWOM) and Shared Knowledge

Litvin et al. (2008) suggest that EWOM can be defined as “all informal communications aimed at consumers through technology based on the Internet that is related to the use or characteristics of particular goods and services, or sellers.” This definition includes communication between companies and consumers, as well as among consumers themselves. The influence of EWOM is directly applicable to tourism and hospitality, as Pan et al. (2007) declare, online reviews generated by users are a source of important information to travelers.

Shared knowledge or knowledge exchange occurs when an individual is willing to help others, as well as learn from them, to develop new skills (Yang, 2007). In this process, they can be classified into two groups: with the first one including people simply seeking information and others wishing to share their knowledge (Qu & Lee, 2011). On the importance of the user who provides the information, Edwards et al. (2017) focused on analyzing those who called “Ambassadors of shared knowledge” to people from the same country who, when they know the place, can provide more information, and are considered as experts.

As Edwards et al. (2017) indicate, shared knowledge can be addressed as being tacit or totally explicit. Groff and Jones (2012) defined tacit knowledge as hidden information perceived as difficult to transmit because it is in the mind of individuals, having been acquired through their experience. Hence, another user is necessary to communicate it, for example, through daily dialog and face-to-face meetings. In contrast, explicit knowledge is articulated by formal practices directly seen, captured, transferred, and communicated to others (Kim, 2011), as for example, all written and visual material. In addition, Edwards et al. (2017) highlighted the work done by Nonaka (1994), who created the model that represents four dimensions of knowledge creation and transfer to better explore the relationship between these two types of knowledge: *socialization*, *externalization*, *combination*, and *internalization*. “Socialization” refers to a process whereby tacit knowledge is created and then transferred from one to another through practice, orientation, imitation, or observation. The process of socialization is particularly relevant for Web 2.0 because social media facilitates and ultimately creates a new exchange platform of tacit knowledge through an interactive and collaborative “virtual” (Ma & Chan, 2014; Panahi et al., 2012).

2.3. Social Media User Roles

Social media user roles can be understood as established characteristics of communication between network members. Each role is a combination of behaviors, that is, significant attributes that shape structured online social relations (Welser et al., 2007). For Bechmann and Lomborg (2012), user roles generate value because users are active stakeholders that become the generators of meaning and reason, by showing the realities of their everyday life (making them part of their day-to-day realities), they, in turn, create economic value for companies, who are provided with a tool.

Several studies have focused only on generic site users of social media such as Facebook and Twitter (Mkono & Tribe 2016). For example, Bechmann and Lomborg (2012) identified user types in their research about Facebook: *data search engine*, *personal presenter*, and *content creator*. However, Mkono and Tribe (2016) developed a study about the TripAdvisor virtual platform and classified the roles that individual users of tourism social networks play in their online interactions, as well as the gratifications that they seek, beyond the basic role of supplying information by assessing tourism and hospitality products. Those roles are: 1) The *troll*, whose comments are not serious and seeks gratification from manipulating and deceiving other users; 2) The *activist*, asks other users to take action in supporting a cause, and get satisfaction in obtaining power by influencing people; 3) The *socialite*, whose interest lies in showing their status providing useful cues about tourism consumption fads and trends; 4) The *social critic*, who engages with other users discursively and reflexively about sociocultural and political issues, dilemmas, and ambiguities. Obtain a gratification by expressing their critical thinking and deep opinions; 5) The *information seeker*, who looks for content

from other users about destinations, services, etc.

Recent research emphasizes that online communities are shaped predominantly by constructive contributors who share information, offer guidance, and provide experiential insights, rather than by disruptive actors. Studies highlight the presence of *altruistic helpers* who voluntarily support others (Ma & Chan, 2014) and *experts* who contribute specialized knowledge and credible evaluations (Lorenzo-Romero & Constantinides, 2010). In digital tourism settings, users frequently act as informants and experience sharers, motivated by reciprocity and community belonging (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008; Chavez, Ruiz, Curras, & Hernandez, 2020; Hu & Yang, 2021). These perspectives align closely with the constructive roles identified in this study—“Data Provider,” “Narrator,” and “Product/Service Critic”, and highlight the predominance of information-centric behaviors in online travel review communities.

2.4. Uses and Gratification Theory (U & G)

The uses and gratifications theory originates from communication studies and can be traced back to the functionalist approach to media communication, which was first developed in 1940 through research on the effectiveness of radio (Luo, 2002). The uses and gratifications theory emerged in an attempt to understand how the relationships between media and their respective audiences develop (Choi, Fowler, Goh, & Yuan, 2016). The primary goal of the U&G theory is to identify the psychological needs that influence why individuals use media, while also explaining the positive and negative outcomes of their media consumption (Rubin, 1994). Katz et al. (1974) indicated that individuals choose communication channels that fulfill their desires and needs. The U&G theory is considered the most effective framework for studying the Internet medium (Hanjun, 2000). Ruggiero (2000) also suggested that the rapid expansion of the Internet has enhanced the relevance of the U&G theory, as the Internet demands a higher level of interactivity from users compared to traditional media. The U&G theory explains the psychological reasons and motivations of people for using certain media and how this gratification satisfies their intrinsic needs (Ko, Cho, & Roberts, 2005). Tripadvisor is one of the Internet medias travelers can use to communicate with other travelers so the U & G theory can be the key theory to understand and explain the relationship between the uses and the gratifications of posting on Tripadvisor.

Several studies have applied this theory to examine consumer experiences with websites (Chen & Wells, 1999). The key dimensions of consumer gratification in these online experiences identified in prior research, include entertainment gratification and informativeness gratification (Korgaonkar & Wolin, 1999; Rubin, 1994; Luo, 2002; Ko et al., 2005). Luo (2002) suggests that entertainment satisfaction plays a key role in driving social media usage. Consumers seek enjoyment while shopping online, prompting social media platforms to create various entertainment opportunities to encourage frequent engagement. As Kim and Forsythe (2007) note, providing these opportunities helps motivate users to interact with

social media more often. [Chen and Wells \(1999\)](#) define the informativeness construct as the extent to which online media delivers valuable information to users, which is also a key motivator for using the Internet and media ([Maddox, 1998](#)). [Bauer and Grayser \(1968\)](#) suggest that the media's ability to provide the appropriate information is the primary reason for its acceptance by users. However, TripAdvisor users who post reviews may not necessarily make purchases on the same platform, meaning the context of TripAdvisor differs from that of online shopping sites. Also, the current study aims to study the gratifications and uses of TripAdvisor users to post online reviews rather than only visiting the website.

3. Methodology

A thematic categorical content analysis research was carried out, i.e., “a text interpretation technique” ([Marradi et al., 2007: p. 290](#)). The study adopted the qualitative nature, wherein the perspective of text interpretation is highlighted, helping explore more in depth the content of the context of experience occurrence. [Andréu \(2000\)](#) emphasizes that qualitative content analysis involves semantic techniques to interpret the hidden meaning of texts. There are two orientations: inductive category development, which creates definition criteria systematically, and deductive category application, which is theory-based and generates a coding book. In categorization analysis, conceptual categories define the meanings of words beyond their literal sense ([Bardin, 2002](#)). Content analysis through categorization investigates communication by classifying elements into categories ([Aigner, 1999](#)). Various types of content analysis exist, depending on research objectives and methodology, including thematic, semantic, and network analysis ([Arbeláez Gómez, & Onrubia Goñi, 2014](#)). In the current research, deductive categories were applied, which are developed on the basis of theory, generating a coding book wherein they connect to each other ([Andréu, 2000](#)). In the analysis by categorization, the content, by way of conceptual categories from the named families, is essential. These conceptual categories determine the concepts of words going beyond the words themselves, and they are directed to the specific meaning of the concept ([Bardin, 2002](#)). Netnography, adapted from ethnographic research methods for online contexts, was used to understand the cultures generated in these environments. This method analyzes user communications, such as discussion forums, chats, tweets, digital images, and publications ([Mkono & Tribe, 2016](#)).

Netnography does not specify sample size or data quantity requirements; useful conclusions can be drawn from a small number of individual publications ([Kozinets, 2002](#)). Data collection and analysis occur simultaneously. ATLAS.ti (version 7), a research data analysis program, was used for coding comments. This software allows for sequential data incorporation and supports theory-building analysis.

The main categories are network user roles, which refer to the role that users fulfill in the chosen districts, based on the opinions expressed, and uses and grat-

ifications, which refer to user behavior and expecting gratifications when sharing their experience/opinion about a tourist place for other users, who are these commentators' public. Gratification is not about monetary payment but rather an incentive or emotional retribution.

It is a qualitative methodology study with a netnographic approach. As the purpose of the study is to identify the roles that users choose to play in a tourist social network and to determine the relationship between uses and gratifications in comments, the use of a thematic categorical content analysis allows the authors to review online comments posted by users and code the comments into categories of users and connect the types of users to their uses/gratifications based on the content of online comments.

3.1. Data Collection Process

The comments were extracted from the TripAdvisor platform, selecting "Lima" as the destination in the search engine. The districts were selected by popularity on the website and because they usually are included in tours to be visited by the inbound tourist. For the three cases, the following filter was considered: comments in English from tourists (thus ensuring the relationship with the inbound sector) whose trip was taken as a couple and with friends and family, visiting the cities with the calendar year January to December considered for 2018. The following filters were applied:

Traveler Rating: "Very good," "fair," and "bad" ratings to ensure a balanced perspective.

Type of Traveler: Couples, families, and friends.

Time of Year: All months of the year 2018.

Language: English.

Comments were selected by navigating the page bar. These comments were copied without any modifications and entered into a document to be added to the ATLAS.ti 7 tool as a "primary document." The number of users per district analyzed was the following: Miraflores (147), Barranco (56), and Centro de Lima (39). With 242 users, the comments were transcribed literally into an Excel file, to be inserted into the Atlas.ti software. The sample analyzed shows an uneven distribution of comments among the districts studied, with a higher concentration in Miraflores (n = 147) compared to Barranco (n = 56) and Centro de Lima (n = 39). This disparity reflects the different dynamics of tourist influx and digital participation in each district, particularly the greater visibility and tourist centrality of Miraflores. From a qualitative perspective, the validity criterion of the analysis is not based on the numerical equivalence of cases, but on the identification of recurring patterns and the theoretical saturation of analytical categories. In the case of downtown Lima and Barranco, although the volume of comments was lower, the coding process revealed the repetition of themes and meanings, which allowed us to consider data saturation to have been achieved. However, it is recognized that the lower density of information in some districts may limit the depth of in-

terpretation and affect the scope of contrasts between territories. Therefore, the comparative results should be understood as an exploratory approach to tourist perceptions, rather than as generalizable statements.

3.2. Data Analysis

Data analysis with ATLAS.ti is systematic and transparent (Lubke, Britt, Paulus, & Atkins, 2017). The program facilitates categorization, conceptualization, recording reflections, and diagramming to build theories. The first and second-order procedures enable the coding and linking of categories, helping achieve the study's objectives.

In the first phase, each comment was analyzed to identify its uses and gratifications, and then, a role was attributed (Schettini & Cortazzo, 2015). Only the comment content was considered important, but not the title, date, or other features. The decision to input codes as user roles was made on the basis according to Mkono and Tribe and, motivational factors, according to Bakshi et al. (2019) which apparently could accurately denote the gratifications. However, as the coding stage began to be carried out, no close relationship was seen between with the main theoretical framework (specially user roles according to Mkono and Tribe 2016) in characteristics shown in the comments, the proposed roles were found to be few or almost null. It is important to highlight that although the essence of the meaning from the uses and gratifications from Mkono and Tribe (2016) was based on roles, in many cases, it was adapted such that it applied to the comments that were being examined.

Therefore, it was imperative to start a second phase and new codes were implemented. Three different roles were found: "Data provider, narrator, and critic of products/services", according to the most frequent characteristics. Hence, the final definition from the list of subcategories of uses and gratifications was made so that at the time of encoding, each sentence could be attributed to an appropriate term as 1) *Uses*: denote an activity carried out, denote an event, share specific information, share general information, prevent, express a desire to improve the service, cause interest, highlight the service/product, provide recommendations and tips, recommend visiting the tourist district; 2) *Gratifications*: express their feelings about an experience, influence, credibility, feeling needed, obtain reciprocity, express satisfaction, express criticism. With the new list, the uses and gratifications were found and examined carefully to check whether both were in each sentence. This set of elements revealed the role to which each comment belonged. After the comments of the three districts were coded, the subcategories were divided into families so that the relationship between them could be identified. Thereafter, the table of codes was extracted to analyze the total number of times each subcategory was encoded, and then, the criteria of saturation was identified.

To further clarify the distinction between the "Data Provider" and "Narrator" roles, representative excerpts from the online comments were provided. *Data Providers* contribute concise, factual, and emotionally neutral information intended

to guide other users' decision-making.

For example: *“A historic center similar to those of other cities that were Spanish colonies, with iconic buildings and carved wooden balconies. A colorful change of the guard ceremony at noon at the government palace.”*

“Miraflores is full of tourists (...) It has a lively nightlife, casinos, bars, parks. I recommend taking a stroll down Pizza Street, where there are always good discounts for tourists.”

This style focuses on verifiable details with minimal personal expression. The analysis shows that these comments provide information about places and activities without expressing personal experiences, fulfilling the function of the data provider. In contrast, *Narrators* employ a more expressive and affective tone, emphasizing personal experience and emotional reactions.

A typical example is: *“We took a tour of the city of Lima, visiting several iconic places, from the cathedral to various museums and convents. The tour lasts approximately 4 hours and takes you around the whole city. I **loved** the Historic Center of Lima and learning more about this culture.”*

“When we arrived in Barranco (at the central square), we looked for a tourist information booth (it exists on the internet) and found it next to the library, to ask for a map of things to see. After getting the map, we went to the Bridge of Sighs, which says that if you cross the bridge while holding your breath and make a wish before crossing, it will come true, provided you don't have any health problems. Then you see the four things there are to see in less than five minutes, and the recommended craft shops have things 'made in China'. That was the only one that was open because it was 11 a.m. and the others weren't open yet.”

Such narrative phrasing highlights sensory impressions and subjective evaluations. These direct textual contrasts demonstrate how emotional tone and experiential depth differentiate the two roles, reinforcing the analytical categories identified in the thematic coding. The emotional tone, first person narrative, and sequence of events clearly define this function, differentiating it from that of a data provider. The emphasis is on sharing experiences and conveying subjective feelings, including satisfaction and meaningful moments.

Frequency of categories, theoretical density, and hierarchy (Miles et al., 2013) would allow the categories that are derived for each user role to be filtered and examined. With this, the process of schematization was started, relating the subcategories and showing the hierarchies that existed between them. For the frequency criterion, the average was calculated on the basis of the total number of encodings, which was recorded in the three districts. The hierarchy criteria were obtained from the categories (“roles,” “uses,” and “gratifications” codes, respectively), and for density, the co-occurrences table was analyzed (how many times the subcategories are related/linked) that allowed the many crossovers among subcategories to be verified, which meant that the exercise of linking them to one another could be done. To this end, at first, the categories were considered as frequently (≥ 76), hierarchical superiority (≥ 1), and density (≥ 2). However, after ex-

aming, and in accordance with the aim of this study, it was established that the most important criterion was “density” because it showed a direct significant relationship between the codes.

It was considered that the criteria for analytical saturation had been met, given that, during successive reviews of the coding in Atlas.ti, the incorporation of new comments did not generate new subcategories or modify the previously established relationships between user functions, their uses, and the associated rewards in the different tourist districts analyzed. Saturation was evident when additional citations reinforced already identified patterns without contributing to new relevant conceptual nuances. At this point, user roles (data provider, narrator, and service/product critic) presented a high density of citations, distributed transversally throughout the body of text, which allowed for the consolidation of their discursive characteristics and respective uses. Subcategories that did not reach sufficient levels of density—understood as a combination of coding frequency and contextual diversity—were hidden or excluded from the final model in Atlas.ti. This methodological decision did not compromise the validity of the analysis, as these subcategories did not alter the conceptual structure of the identified functions, but rather represented infrequent or isolated variations. Consequently, the exclusion of these subcategories helped refine the analytical model, strengthening the internal coherence between functions, uses, and gratifications, without losing interpretive depth or the central discursive nuances of user roles.

The table of criteria was analyzed together with the table of co-occurrences to find which of the uses and gratifications were linked to the proposed roles. However, the subcategories of uses and gratifications that did not meet the criteria were hidden in the program to avoid confusion. With this, the final semantic network was obtained, from which, through interpretation, the result could be understood and consequently the theorization could be developed. Content analysis, as [Marradi, Archenti and Piovani \(2007\)](#) describe, is a technique for interpreting texts. [Bardin \(2002\)](#) further defines it as a set of techniques for analyzing communication content to infer knowledge related to the conditions of message production and reception. While this study is qualitative in nature, content analysis can be both quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative analysis involves data quantification through frequencies and correlations, whereas qualitative analysis focuses on the presence of themes, words, or concepts and their meanings ([Arbeláez Gómez, & Onrubia Goñi, 2014](#)).

4. Results

Among the elements identified, there were three roles (*data provider, narrator, and service/product critic*); six uses (*cause interest, share general information, denote activity carried out, highlight the product/service, prevent, and share specific information*); and five gratifications (*influence, express experience, express satisfaction, express criticism, and credibility*).

To identify the user roles after the analysis of the second phase, the first role “*data provider*,” the subcategory of “uses” comprises sharing information, which, in turn, is associated with “causing interest.” Moreover, this last subcategory is a cause of express satisfaction. In addition, “share information” is a cause of “influence.” Then, when the user complies with this role, it shows interest as being to transmit exclusively true and useful information, with the will to cause curiosity in the reader.

The next role, “*narrator*,” was shown as “uses” to “denote the activity carried out” and “highlight the product/service,” which are associated with each other. For the subcategory “denote the activity carried out,” it was observed that the reason is to “express your experience (moment).” On the other hand, the use of “highlight product/service” is a cause of “express satisfaction.” However, the user who fulfills this role wants to capture a series of moments in detail, wherein they felt their expectations have been fulfilled or perhaps they were pleasantly surprised. The third subcategory is identified as the role of “*critic of service/product*,” the prevalent use of which is to prevent/share specific information, and those of its “gratifications” are to “express criticism” and “credibility,” a cause of each use, respectively. The comments of these users showed that they were not seen as complaints, explained clearly how they expected the service to develop, and showed where their high expectations came from (either because they read it on other platforms or because they had a recommendation by other tourists). Users with this role do not seek to minimize the quality of the service/product; however, they are basing their opinions on broad pre-knowledge of tourist destinations, and they expect a standard of care. This is because they want people who, in the future, may visit this destination not to be disappointed or even to warn them and/or prevent them from having a bad experience. **Figure 1** below summarizes the result of the analysis regarding the TripAdvisor reviews showing the three roles proposed by this research study, which were linked to their respective uses and gratifications in the second phase of coding.

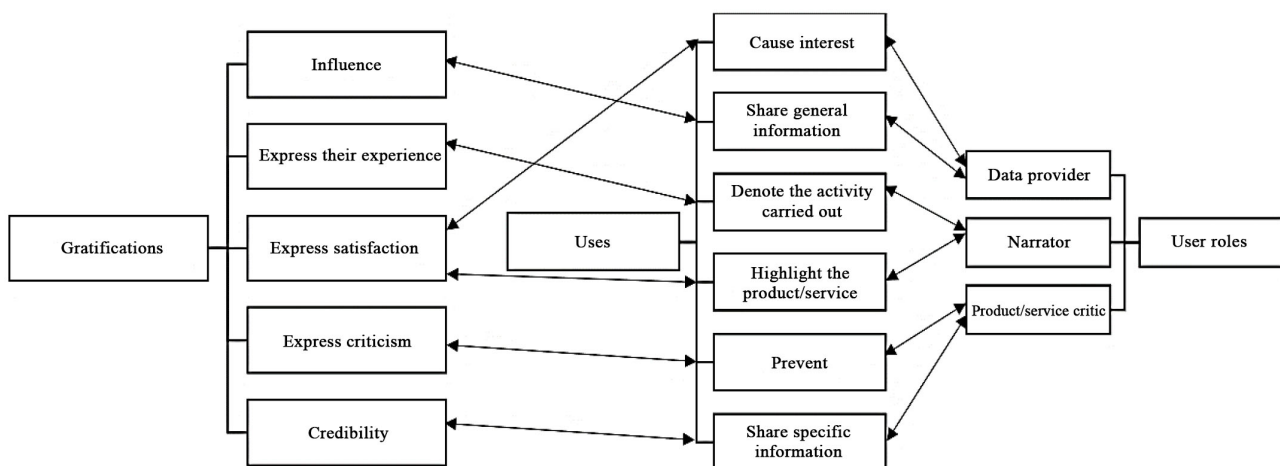


Figure 1. Semantic network of roles and uses & gratifications.

As mentioned above, the subcategories not complying with the saturation criteria are excluded not because they are less important for the study but because, in accordance with the goals, it was sought to obtain more accurate and real results in the context. In addition, the subcategory of “express satisfaction” was found twice as a use, i.e., this subcategory is not only governed by a role, but depending on the context, it relates to several roles. Therefore, the goals were understood to have been achieved because the link of each user role with their respective uses and gratifications was determined on the total of the tourist districts. The goals were achieved as regards the roles, uses, and gratifications—with this, the stage where the roles, their respective features, and their uses are defined as observed below (**Table 1**).

Table 1. User roles in relation to their uses and gratifications in Centro de Lima, Miraflores and Barranco according to comments on TripAdvisor.

User Roles	Characteristics	Uses and Gratifications
Data provider	Users who share data briefly and concisely to provide an overview of the place visited. They do not comment on the details regarding their feelings and/or experiences. They seek to awaken the reader’s interest as they mostly use positive words to describe tourist attractions. They usually write in the third person.	They seek to express their satisfaction in a few words. They also wish to influence, encourage tacitly, and they always provide real and relevant data, thus creating high expectations in the place.
Narrator	Users who, through a story or sequence of facts, denote the activities they have done, highlighting the products or services they consumed in the place of visit. They explain situations broadly but from an emotional viewpoint. They do not settle for showing pleasure about the place. Several events constitute this opinion as well as a need to share it. They usually write in the first person (I did, we did, we went, etc.)	They seek to provide more than just expressing their experience and giving information, they give a better idea of why they liked their journey, so in return, they are able to express their feelings based on everything that the experience meant. Furthermore, they can show their writing skills by narrating a story.
Critic of product/ services	Their purpose is to inform in detail how they received the services or products in the place visited. They highlight, in some way, that they have had a “greater experience” than that had by other users. They specify the events that were not pleasant and how it contrasts with the expectations they had prior to the visit. They do not intend to damage the service/product image but express their discomfort, hoping that others know what may happen to them when visiting the place and what they should avoid. They also provide reflective opinions about whether certain districts should be a tourist place.	Critics provide timely information about what was not good in the visit, seeking to help by warning. In turn, they can express their discomfort and/or disappointment based on an expectation created by the comments on the places they received from prior visitors, whether local or from far-off places. Specifically, they are seeking credit for their opinions.

5. Discussion

The present study was based on **Mkono and Tribe (2016)**, who showed an interesting procedure to find the relationship between the user roles and the gratifications received, something that was not found in previous literature. However, the result revealed other characteristics, making it impossible for the roles proposed

by these authors to be found because of the following: 1) The districts analyzed in this investigation do not show very different characteristics from each other, and 2) The volume of comments is lower because it was seen as convenient to assess the opinion section. However, carrying out this study with this approach served as a guideline for the local scope to be reviewed, and it helped understand more fully why electronic-word-of-mouth (EWOM) occurs, thereby expanding the knowledge provided by the aforementioned authors, who, in many cases, focused only on the person receiving the information (Litvin et al., 2008; Lee et al., 2011). These studies did not review the motivations of users who published the comments, an aspect that is considered important because it is with these that the information exchange process begins. Furthermore, it is essential to know why a person invests their time in sharing an experience, without obtaining any monetary reward (altruism), a key aspect in the analysis of this study. In addition, it was possible to identify and verify the essential characteristics of those who publish their opinion (credibility and reliability). It was observed when analyzing the way a commentator could influence and give credibility to their information, identify the fragments where they share accurate data, describe their experience, highlight aspects, and provide a basis for their opinion (whether favorable or not) (Edwards et al., 2017).

The current study extends the theory of Uses and Gratifications to the three tourist districts of Lima, Peru to examine if user roles identified previously still hold true when a different destination was analyzed. The findings indicated that the roles identified in the case of Lima were different from the ones in Mkono & Tribe's study (2016). The roles found in the study are: Data provider, Narrator, and Service/Product Critic. The study also explored the uses behind those roles and the relationships between uses and gratifications. Six uses (cause interest, share general information, denote activity carried out, highlight the product/service, prevent, and share specific information; and five gratifications (influence, express experience, express satisfaction, express criticism, and credibility) were found in the study.

On the other hand, it was observed that with the use of codes (categories and subcategories), it is viable to detect more clearly the words linked with the uses and gratifications (Mkono & Tribe, 2016). Although no exact relationship was seen between the theoretical framework and what was being found in the comments, it did not affect the progress of the study since the method of content analysis, while it is based on the theory (Andréu, 2000), is not strict and more about an interpretation technique (Marradi et al., 2007). Consequently, it was possible to reach the goal of identifying user roles and their link with the theory of uses and gratifications according to TripAdvisor reviews, in the case of three tourist districts in Lima, where three user roles were determined: a) *Data provider*, which is the role that shares most information in a specific manner, without expressing a lot of emotion in its writing. This can more effectively help a reader who wants practical information; b) *The narrator*, who shows an emotional, high-level de-

scriptive element that is useful for a user who wants broad information from an experience; c) *Critic of product/service*, which uses its information role to warn or ensure that another person does not experience an unfortunate situation on their trip. Therefore, in the three roles, the user informs about the place visited but with different approaches: the level of emotion, the events they want to share from their visit (to a greater or lesser extent), and the desire to express and/or go deep into some discomfort or complement something that they omitted to do at the time. Thus, various ways are engendered to communicate their experiences, which will be useful to different readers.

Furthermore, another point mentioned by [Mkono and Tribe \(2016\)](#) has been verified: Roles should not be understood as typologies because they are not general and/or predetermined characteristics. Previously, a typology was seen on the basis of the level of experience in user trips and the number of followers, which gave greater indication of credibility ([Amaral et al., 2014](#)), a criterion that was not considered adequate to define the roles. Subsequently, what was expressed by the commentator was sought to be analyzed, whether this was a popular user or not, to understand its characteristics and intensity. It is worth mentioning that, to this end, it has been found that the roles are different in different contexts, so they cannot be generalized but rather analyzed according to the content found on each destination. That is to say, it depends on what information is gathered, what moments are experienced, the characteristics of the place, season of the year, condition of services, etc.

Another aspect to consider is that the roles found are the result of opinions that reflected, mostly, a high level of satisfaction, observing the promotion of the position as “Adprosumer” ([Sánchez-Amboage, 2011](#); [Llantada, 2013](#)), they build up their own trip, they consume it, and they promote it actively on social networks through their comments. At this point, there is a clear difference between the activist and social critical roles ([Mkono & Tribe, 2016](#)), which report non-ethical tourism activity and so cannot be pinned down to any one user type as they were not found in the comments about the negative practices in Barranco, Miraflores, and Centro de Lima. For example, if negative opinions were given, as would be in the case of how cats are treated at Kennedy Park (part of the tourist attraction of Miraflores), there would have been reactions like those of activists. However, all the comments that mentioned this theme listing the presence of felines did not mention situations of abuse or neglect toward them. Finally, there was no representation found of an example of Socialite (the user shows a high economic level) and Troll (non-serious comments), except for one comment of each, and both belonged to the Miraflores opinions.

Based on the user roles and uses/gratifications identified, Destination Management Organizations in Lima can utilize those findings to better manage online reviews posted on Tripadvisor. The findings suggest that Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) should adopt differentiated engagement strategies that recognize the distinct roles visitors assume in destination-related content genera-

tion. By understanding the uses and gratifications of social network users, destinations can respond to online reviews which would strengthen the gratifications resulting in more reviews generated to comment on the destination. For Data Providers who share the data in a concise manner without expressing emotions, they serve an important role to provide objective information about the destination. Therefore, DMO can encourage this type of users by suggesting the comments they provided are informative and useful. To encourage continued participation, DMOs should reward Data Providers through mechanisms that emphasize recognition, validation, and functional reciprocity rather than creative exposure. For example, DMOs can visibly integrate aggregated visitor evaluations into official communication materials and implicate this integration of online reviews on the platform. Explicitly acknowledging Data Provider's influence on destination reputation can reward the gratification of influence. In addition, communicating how such feedback informs destination improvements reinforces the instrumental value of participation. For Narrators who tend to show their emotional perspective in the stories or sequences they describe, they will be satisfied if their emotions are re-emphasized in response to their comments. By focusing on the emotions Narrators are experiencing, the responses to their comments can serve to enhance the gratifications Narrators expect from posting the comments. To encourage the continued participation of Narrators, Destination Marketing Organizations should implement rewards that recognize both storytelling effort and emotional depth. Effective rewards include featuring Narrators' stories on official websites or social media channels, assigning visible "storyteller" badges, and offering access to exclusive experiences such as invitation-only events or familiarization trips. These visibility- and experience-based rewards reinforce Narrators' identity as valued contributors and motivate ongoing content creation. Lastly, Product/Service Critic will need to be handled with care to avoid negative impact on the reputation of the destination. As this type of users are interested in "warning" other travelers about the discomfort Critic experienced, DMO needs to provide a solution to the issue mentioned and guarantee that other travelers would not have the same experiences. By offering a solution in response to the comments, DMO can assure other online users that the destination is aware of the issue and will improve the experience for future travelers. The discussions above would be helpful for online community engagement strategies and responses.

6. Conclusions and Limitations

Through the applied content analysis, the goals set could be achieved because the roles of TripAdvisor users were identified in the districts of Miraflores, Barranco and Centro de Lima, in 2018, and a link with the theory of uses and gratifications was established. The following roles were determined. 1) Data provider is the user who uses the comments section to share information and cause interest; their gratification is their ability to influence readers and express their satisfaction. 2) Narrator is the user who uses the comments section to denote the activity carried out

on the trip and highlight the consumed product/service, hoping to receive as gratification the expression of their moment/experience. 3) Critics of product/service are users that used the comments section to warn about events they experienced on their visit and to share specific information, with the aim of being able to express their criticism, and at the same time, gain credibility. It should be noted that the Data provider was identified as the role that was the most predominant in the comments and which had features that brought attention because, in the first users, there was real and timely information provided about specific tourist spots. That is to say, users were found who were willing to provide data that were different from the usual and more specific.

A key limitation of this study is the temporal context of the data, which were collected in 2018 and therefore reflect pre-pandemic travel behaviors and online engagement patterns. As a result, the replicability of the findings in today's tourism environment may be affected, given that post-pandemic travelers often rely more heavily on digital information, exhibit heightened risk perceptions, and may express different expectations in their reviews. These shifts could influence the prevalence or expression of the identified user roles. Nevertheless, the 2018 dataset remains relevant, because it provides a valuable baseline for understanding core reviewer motivations and communicative functions before major global disruptions. This foundation enables future research to assess how user roles have evolved in the post-pandemic context and to determine whether new patterns of online reviewer behavior have emerged.

With the classification proposed in this research study, it is possible to confirm the ideas of *Mkono and Tribe (2016)*, who stated that user roles go beyond only commenting and giving information, apparently without any reason in particular, so each destination needs a special evaluation. Therefore, the five roles proposed by the authors, although important, were not found to be within the geographic framework of this investigation. The comments that were analyzed showed other particular features wherein new roles were identified, verified by online interactions in which there were nuances. Additionally, the emotional factor can be noted, identified in the comments, which also determines the roles, an aspect that was not seen in *Mkono and Tribe's* research (the Data provider shows little emotion, and the narrator demonstrates greater emotion).

Moreover, it was observed that there is little participation on TripAdvisor by users who visited the three districts mentioned above in 2018. Even Peru, as a country, has a small volume of reviews as compared to the other international tourist destinations, and it is inferred that it is caused by the few incentives that come from the stakeholders (tourist companies, municipalities, and cultural centers, among others), which does not encourage participation on these types of platforms.

Consequently, the importance of this investigation can be seen as it determines the roles and the application of the theory of uses and gratifications in the case of the districts analyzed, making clear the different characteristics that can be used

as a reference in future investigations. It should be mentioned that the limitations of this investigation consisted of the low amount of (specifically qualitative) research addressing the issue of user roles, mainly in Peru, which would have served as a more precise reference. On the other hand, the demanding level of skill and application required for the use of the software extended the time taken to obtain the results. Furthermore, the difference in the number of comments from the year 2018 on Barranco and Centro de Lima when compared to that of Miraflores (which had a greater volume) was not ideal. However, it did not decisively affect the achievement of the goals set.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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