AAM. Accepted for publication in *Tourism Management*. Cite as:
Binst, B., Michiels, L. & Smets, A. Beyond rational choice: a typology of urban discovery. *Tourism Management.*

Beyond rational choice: A typology of urban discovery

Brett Binst, Lien Michiels & Annelien Smets
imec-SMIT, Vrije Universiteit Brussel

Abstract

As the internet, smartphones, and review platforms transform how travelers discover urban attractions, understanding this process is critical for harnessing a sustainable urban attraction space. Yet urban discovery remains poorly understood and existing research is fragmented. To address this gap, we adapt Leiper's tourist attraction systems framework to study urban discovery. Our grounded theory analysis on 126 interviews resulted in five distinct discovery modes: instrumental-rational, go-with-the-flow, social, flaneur, and habitual. Besides richly describing these modes, we identify personal, social, contextual, demographic, and affective factors influencing them. We illustrate how playful discovery modes—go-with-the-flow, social, and flaneur—are compatible, leading to mixed discovery modes, while the remaining modes are incompatible. These findings challenge the dominance of rational choice models by revealing a broader spectrum of discovery behaviors. They also provide a foundation for designing a more inclusive urban attraction content space and offer strategic implications for urban attraction management.

Keywords

Urban Discovery, Rational Choice, Hospitality, Consumer Behavior, Information Behavior, User Generated Content, Peer-review platforms

1. Introduction

The tourism and hospitality landscape has been transformed by digitalization. Just two decades ago, travelers in Europe seldom used the internet for trip planning (Gursoy & McCleary, 2004). In stark contrast, recent studies find that today's travelers rely almost exclusively on digital tools (Gursoy et al., 2017; H. Kim et al., 2015; Xiang et al., 2015). The primary source of information has shifted from guidebooks and flyers to platforms like TripAdvisor and Google, fundamentally changing how travel content is created and consumed (Navío-Marco et al., 2018).

These platforms centralize user-generated content, such as reviews and ratings, revolutionizing how consumers discover hotels, restaurants, and attractions (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Xiang & Fesenmaier, 2020). As powerful actors, they direct tourist attention, shape expectations, and ultimately influence choices (Sparks et al., 2013; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). This power compels managers to adopt new strategies, from crafting "Instagrammable" décor to offering incentives for five-star reviews (Gössling et al., 2018; Sotiriadis, 2017).

Despite this profound transformation, significant gaps remain in our understanding. Little is known about how this new digital environment has reshaped the process of urban discovery, nor what constitutes effective marketing strategy within it (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). This study addresses these questions by focusing on urban attractions—defined here as shops, hospitality venues, and other city-based activities. We focus on these sites because they are central to urban life, shaping decisions to visit or reside in a city while also determining the socio-economic outcomes for local communities. Furthermore, the city provides an interesting context to study the discovery of attractions because they suffer choice overload (Ashworth & Page, 2011; Edwards et al., 2008; Page & Duignan, 2023).

To study urban discovery, we build on Leiper's (1990) conceptual framework about tourist attraction systems. Leiper (1990) theorized that an attraction is not merely a physical "nucleus" (such as a restaurant or museum) but instead arises from the connection of three elements: a person with leisure needs (the tourist), the nucleus itself, and a marker that links the two.

In our study, we refer to Leiper's "marker" as "content," as this term better reflects its modern function. A marker would merely mark the location of an attraction, while content about the attraction can serve many more functions. For example, online ratings and reviews can reassure people of an attraction's quality, while a magazine article can provide the context needed to understand it.

We further adapt Leiper's framework by not focusing exclusively on tourists. As Leiper himself noted (Leiper, 1979, 1997, 2008; Page & Duignan, 2023), many attractions also depend on other customers, a point especially true in urban settings (Leiper et al., 2008). Because our research examines how digitalization impacts discovery across the entire urban ecosystem, our study focuses on the discovery behaviors of people in general.

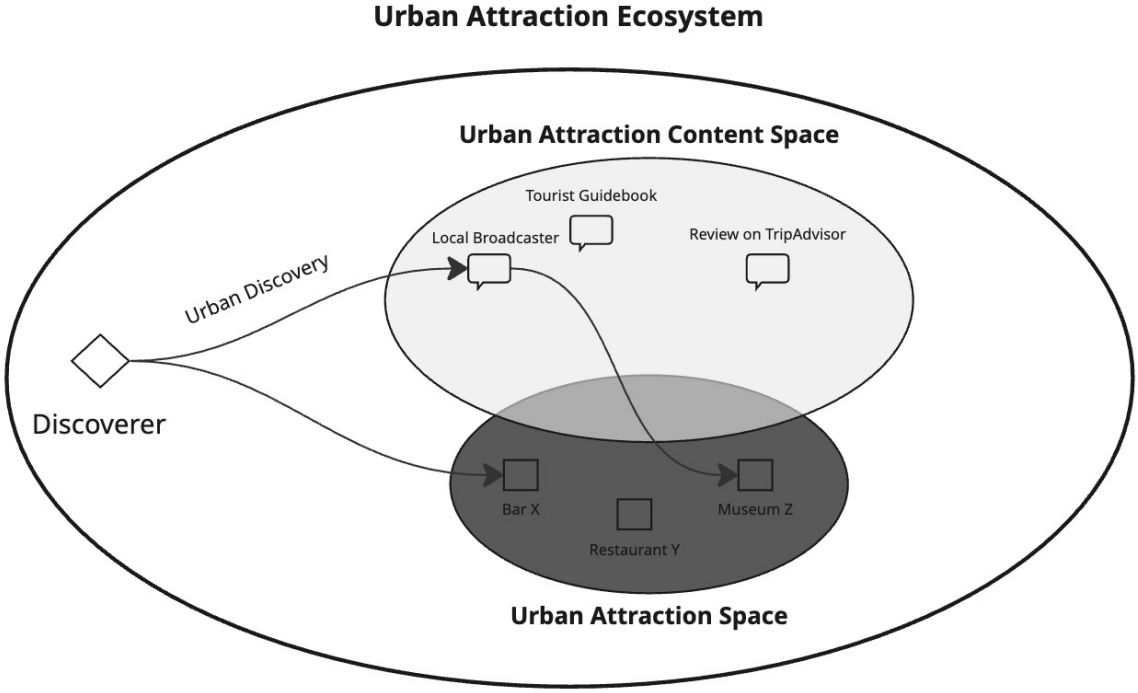
Our conceptual framework is illustrated in Figure 1. We define "urban discovery" as a process that begins with information behavior about urban attractions not yet visited, extends into decision-making about visiting an urban attraction, and ripples into the experience of visiting that urban attraction. The discoverer in our framework is similar to what Leiper calls the person with touristic needs (Leiper, 1990).

A key adaptation of Leiper's work is our focus on collective spaces rather than individual elements. We term the complete set of a city's attractions the "urban attraction space." People frequently discover these attractions through the "urban attraction content space"—the full body of digital and physical information available about them. This divergence is necessary because, since Leiper's time, digital content marketing has drastically changed the way consumers discover urban attractions (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). The emergence of platforms centralizing content about the urban attractions in an urban attraction ecosystem opens the vast number of options to customers. Therefore, instead of looking at individual markers and attractions, as in Leiper's original framework (Leiper, 1990, 1997), we adapt his framework to focus on the spaces constituting the urban ecosystem, namely the urban attraction space and its content space. This perspective gives us a

broader view on information and discovery behavior, uncovering discovery patterns that would otherwise remain hidden.

Like Richards (2002) points out, Leiper's framework holds untapped potential for studying and explaining discovery patterns through variables like familiarity, distance traveled, length of stay, and cultural capital. Our adapted model allows for different expressions of urban discovery, as shown in Figure 1. For instance, a person might learn of a new museum from a local broadcaster (a 'generating marker' in Leiper's terms) and decide to visit. In contrast, another person might stumble upon a charming bar and impulsively decide to have a drink (prompted by a 'contiguous marker').

Figure 1 *Conceptual framework of urban discovery within an urban attraction ecosystem.*



Note. Two examples of urban discovery in our conceptual framework. This framework is inspired on (Leiper, 1990).

As previously stated, to navigate the abundance of urban attractions, people increasingly rely on digital platforms (Gursoy et al., 2017; H. Kim et al., 2015; Xiang et al., 2015). However, we know little about how these platforms impact the process of discovering urban attractions, or what constitute good practices for digital content marketing (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). What is known is

that the rise of these platforms presents both promises and perils for the urban attraction ecosystem.

First is the paradox of online reviews. In theory, user-generated content should bridge the knowledge gap between consumers and providers, helping travelers make better decisions and avoid "tourist traps"—establishments that seem authentic but offer poor quality (Polus et al., 2025). In practice, however, research suggests that online reviews can strengthen the tourist trap phenomenon (Ganzaroli, De Noni, & Van Baalen, 2017). Furthermore, while reviews may satisfy a desire for certainty, they can also frustrate the search for authenticity, serendipity, and new experiences (Ritzer, 2019).

Second, the application of recommender systems on these platforms helps consumers in discovering urban attractions they are likely to appreciate (Massimo & Ricci, 2022; Rabanser & Ricci, 2005). However, these recommender systems have also been associated with creating overtourism (Merinov, 2024). For example, there is evidence for hotspots of restaurants in Belgian cities on TripAdvisor, supporting the hypothesis that tourism attracts tourism (Van Der Zee et al., 2020; Van der Zee & Bertocchi, 2018). Another danger of recommender systems in the urban attraction ecosystem is the creation of urban filter bubbles, i.e., people are, because of algorithmic personalization, only exposed to a specific part of the city that differs from what others, with a different user profile, are exposed to (Smets et al., 2019).

In summary, ratings, reviews, and personalized recommendations are associated with problems in the urban attraction ecosystem such as overtourism, urban filter bubbles, and reinforcing tourist traps. Understanding how people discover urban attractions is a vital first step in addressing these issues.

To the best of our knowledge, no prior work has developed a theoretical framework that explains how urban attractions are discovered. Most existing studies focus on destination decision-making (Moore et al., 2012; Smallman & Moore, 2010), which represents a different level of analysis with distinct characteristics. Destination decisions typically involve higher costs and less immersion

and are often made before the trip begins. In contrast, urban discovery unfolds within the city itself, allowing travelers to stumble upon attractions spontaneously and serendipitously. While destination-focused theories offer valuable insights, they do not fully capture the dynamics of on-the-ground discovery. Other research concentrates on visitor attractions (Leask, 2016), using a narrower definition centered on man-made or natural sites designed to entertain or educate—such as monuments like the Sagrada Familia or landmarks like the Grand Canyon. Our approach adopts a broader perspective, since we also focus on shops, activities, bars, and restaurants. Neither lens fully captures the dynamics of urban discovery.

To address this gap, we conducted a grounded theory study involving 126 semi-structured interviews, an approach well-suited for developing nuanced, process-oriented theories in tourism and hospitality research (Decrop & Snelders, 2005; Moore et al., 2012; Woodside et al., 2004). Our analysis resulted in a typology of five distinct discovery modes: instrumental-rational, go-with-the-flow, social, flaneur, and habitual. In addition to describing each mode in depth, we link these discovery modes to their predictors, and to each other.

2. Related literature

In the context of grounded theory, sensitizing concepts, i.e., concepts that guide the researcher in their study (Bowen, 2006), serve as a bridge between prior research and the new theoretical framework being developed. These concepts help direct the initial stages of the grounded theory process by offering a lens through which relevant patterns and themes can be identified (Bowen, 2006). In this section, we intend to discuss the concepts and models that have sensitized our grounded theory analysis.

In this study, we conceptualize urban discovery as a process that begins with information behavior about urban attractions not yet visited, that extends into decision-making on visiting an urban attraction, and that ripples into the experience of urban attractions. Given this conceptualization, we structure our review of the related literature into three key areas: (2.1.)

decision-making models, which examines the cognitive and behavioral mechanisms involved in choosing to visit an attraction; (2.2.) information behavior, which explores how individuals seek and process information about urban attractions; and (2.3.) factors that influence information behavior and decision-making.

2.1. Decision-making in tourism and hospitality

Decision-making within the context of tourism and hospitality refers to the process by which individuals determine whether to visit a particular location or engage with a specific attraction. Research on this subject has predominantly employed two analytical approaches: the variance-analysis approach and the process approach (Smallman & Moore, 2010).

2.1.1. Variance analysis vs process approach

The variance-analysis approach has been the most commonly used framework in studies of tourism and hospitality decision-making (Cohen et al., 2014; Smallman & Moore, 2010). In this framework, the variation in outcomes—such as the decision to visit a particular destination—is explained by a set of theoretically significant inputs that are primarily chosen by researchers (Cohen et al., 2014; McCabe et al., 2016; Smallman & Moore, 2010). Methodologically, this approach is often paired with statistical techniques, including Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and regression analyses, which serve to validate the relationships between the selected variables (Smallman & Moore, 2010). While the variance-analysis approach is effective in identifying the key variables that influence decision-making, it has been critiqued for providing only a superficial account of the processes involved and failing to elucidate how and why these decisions unfold (Decrop, 2014; Smallman & Moore, 2010).

In contrast, the process approach aims to capture the narrative of how a decision unfolds over time and in a specific context (Smallman & Moore, 2010), for example on-site tourist decision-making (Moore et al., 2012). It focuses on the socio-psychological processes involved in decision-making, including factors such as motivation, mood, and individual decision-making style (Decrop & Snelders, 2005). Several prominent scholars have argued that research should complement the

variance-analysis approach with studies adopting a process perspective since this perspective focuses on how individuals in practice make decisions, which is a complicated process (Cohen et al., 2014; Decrop, 2014; Smallman & Moore, 2010). The process perspective recognizes this complexity, and therefore should lead to more accurate theories of decision-making (Decrop, 2014; Smallman & Moore, 2010). Although this perspective remains rare in the tourism and hospitality field, some previous studies have illustrated its potential for generating insightful and comprehensive theories of decision-making in specific contexts (Decrop & Snelders, 2005; Dunne et al., 2011; Moore et al., 2012).

Often, the process approach is combined with grounded theory, a methodological paradigm that allows researchers to explore nuanced and richly detailed theories of the phenomenon studied (Decrop & Snelders, 2005; Y. G. Kim et al., 2009; Moore et al., 2012; Woodside et al., 2004). Although its strength lies in untangling the complex interplay of factors that shape the decision-making process in a specific context, the process approach is frequently criticized for its limited generalizability to other contexts (Woodside et al., 2004). In this work, we adopt a process approach, as our goal is to explore how urban discovery unfolds across various contexts and among diverse individuals.

2.1.2. Theoretical Paradigms

In addition to these methodological approaches, several theoretical paradigms have been used to understand decision-making in hospitality and tourism. Here, we discuss three of the most influential theories.

Rational choice theory assumes that individuals make decisions that maximize their utility (Decrop, 2014; Smallman & Moore, 2010). An example is the theory of planned behavior applied to the tourism and hospitality context (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005), which posits that tourists' decisions are determined by their attitudes toward a destination, the influence of subjective norms as reflected by their social network's perceptions, and their perceived behavioral control, such as financial capacity to travel (Ulker-Demirel & Ciftci, 2020; Yuzhanin & Fisher, 2016).

Choice set theories conceptualize decision-making as a funneling process whereby individuals move from a total set of options to an awareness set, then a consideration set, and ultimately to a final choice (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). Both rational choice and choice set theories assume a rational actor model (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005); however, critics argue that these models describe how tourists *should* act according to micro-economic theory, which may not accurately reflect how tourists—in reality—act (Decrop, 2014). Consistent with their theoretical underpinnings, these rational actor models are most frequently examined using the variance-analysis approach (Smallman & Moore, 2010; Ulker-Demirel & Ciftci, 2020).

Other paradigms challenge the assumption of complete rationality. The concept of bounded rationality, for instance, acknowledges that practical constraints—such as limited time and choice overload—often lead individuals to settle for satisfactory rather than optimal outcomes (Smallman & Moore, 2010). An example is the dual-system theory of tourism decision-making, in which variables like level of involvement and cognitive overload predict complex or heuristic-based decision-making (McCabe et al., 2016).

Lastly, naturalistic theories offer an alternative perspective by deconstructing real-world decision-making through detailed analyses of discourse, narrative, or observational data (Decrop, 2014; Smallman & Moore, 2010). Conversely to the theoretical perspectives discussed above, naturalistic theories are not grand, all encompassing, theories; they are delimited by a specific setting (Gore et al., 2006), for example, city break travel (Dunne et al., 2011) or on-site decision-making (Moore et al., 2012). These theories are often combined with a process-approach. We will adopt this theoretical framework in order to get a rich understanding of the process of discovering urban attractions.

2.2 Information behavior

Although information behavior is often considered part of the decision-making process (Buhalis & Law, 2008; McCabe et al., 2016; Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005), this perspective assumes a functional information need—one that individuals seek to fulfill through information behavior. However,

information behavior is not always goal-driven. It can also be motivated by the pleasure of, for example, dreaming about vacations, without necessarily leading to a decision (Decrop & Snelders, 2005; Xiang & Fesenmaier, 2020). In many cases, travelers actually prefer serendipitous experiences, where they encounter information about an interesting urban attraction by accident, resulting in an impulsive decision to visit it (Huang et al., 2014). Thus, research on information behavior offers a different lens on decision-making. In this section, we discuss the information behavior concepts and models that have shaped our grounded theory.

2.1.3. The discovery process

One of the most dominant perspectives on information behavior is the linear perspective which conceptualizes it as initiated by a functional information need (i.e., focused on solving a specific task) that triggers a process meant to solve this functional information need (Cohen et al., 2014; Xiang & Fesenmaier, 2020). The traveler destination choice model by Woodside and Lysonski (1989) provides a good example of this perspective. The model suggests that travelers follow a selection process that filters urban attractions from an awareness set to a set of preferences and finally towards a final choice. Seen from this perspective, information behavior is indeed part of the decision-making process.

The linear perspective aligns with the sequential perspective that is common in tourism and hospitality studies (Cohen et al., 2014; Xiang & Fesenmaier, 2020), and makes a distinction between the pre-purchase and ongoing information search stage (Xiang & Fesenmaier, 2020). The pre-purchase stage consists of planning the trip in advance while the ongoing information search stage consists of information behavior during the trip. A considerable amount of research emphasizes the pre-purchase stage, assuming that trips are meticulously planned (Cohen et al., 2014; Xiang & Fesenmaier, 2020). However, other research debunks this assumption, showing that many decisions are made spontaneously during the trip (Hyde & Lawson, 2003; Zach & Gretzel, 2011), or based on habits (Bargeman & van der Poel, 2006). More recent studies have pivoted to acknowledge the significance of ongoing discovery during the trip itself, facilitated by the widespread adoption of

smartphones, the ubiquity of internet access, and the digital marketplace for apps (X. Liu et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2012; Xiang et al., 2015).

The 'travel network perspective' (Xiang & Fesenmaier, 2020) also stresses the spontaneity of urban discovery. It views travel not just as a destination but as a collection of experiences, activities, and places, interwoven with one's daily life (Wang et al., 2012; Zach & Gretzel, 2011). An example is the *hedonic vacationer,* a type of vacationer in Decrop and Snelders' (2005) grounded typology about vacation decision-making who likes to dream and talk about their vacation plans.

In this context, the concept of 'information encountering' becomes relevant, reflecting that people often acquire information by encountering it rather than actively seeking it (Erdelez & Makri, 2020). Here the relationship between information behavior and decision making is turned upside down; decision-making is part of information behavior. One browses content for fun, and this impulsively leads to a decision when something attractive is found (Huang et al., 2014). Research does suggest that everyday information behavior often entails information encountering and serendipity (Björneborn, 2017; Foster & Ford, 2003). Non-linear information models put more emphasis on information encountering. An example is the berrypicking model by Bates (1989) which proposes that users "pick" bits of information from various content over time, adjusting their search path and behavior as their understanding and needs evolve.

Although researchers differ in their perspectives on how information behavior develops, they generally agree on its inherent duality—distinguishing between goal-oriented, convergent activities like searching for specific information and exploratory, divergent activities such as browsing (Björneborn, 2010a). Dörk and colleagues (2011) recognize this inherent duality of information behavior but criticize the exclusive focus on functional information behavior. To promote a more human-centered view of information behavior they introduce the notion of the information *flaneur* (Dörk et al., 2011). This figure is motivated by curiosity and discovers information in a *playful* yet critical manner through horizontal exploration—where they navigate the content landscape spontaneously motivated by their curiosity (Dörk et al., 2011). Upon encountering captivating

content, they transition into vertical immersion, delving deeply into the subject, which sparks a sense of wonder (Dörk et al., 2011).

Information behavior can indeed be distinguished based on the motivation underlying it. This viewpoint is closely linked to the popular but contested concept of information needs (Case & Given, 2016). Reflecting information behavior literature in general, the tension between instrumental and playful motivations of information behavior is also present in tourism and hospitality studies. For instance, Gursoy (2019a) interprets travel information behavior as primarily driven by a desire to reduce uncertainty, because the intangible and often costly nature of some urban attractions. This view aligns with a 'functional need' for utility, certainty, and efficiency (Vogt & Fesenmaier, 1998). However, Vogt and Fesenmaier (1998a) show that beyond functional information needs, four other information needs are relevant: hedonic, innovation, aesthetic and sign (i.e., social) information needs.

2.1.4. The emergence of user generated content and review platforms

Lastly, information behavior can also be characterized by the content that communicates the information (Xiang & Fesenmaier, 2020). The advent and widespread accessibility of the internet have not only increased the frequency and spontaneity of information searches but have also enabled consumers to connect with one another and share their experiences through User Generated Content (UGC). This phenomenon has become a cornerstone for the success of social media and review platforms—such as TripAdvisor and Booking.com—which now serve as some of the most influential actors in the hospitality and tourism sector (Gössling et al., 2018; Horner & Swarbrooke, 2020).

Empirical studies indicate that peer-to-peer review platforms are among the most frequently consulted sources of information by consumers (Dickinger, 2011; Gursoy et al., 2017). The aggregated ratings provided by these platforms offer a straightforward metric for evaluating and selecting urban attractions (Pourfakhimi et al., 2020). Moreover, the positive relationship between higher ratings and increased sales (Ye et al., 2011) as well as larger booking transactions (Torres et al.,

2015) suggests that consumers actively incorporate these metrics into their decision-making processes.

The mechanisms underlying the influence of ratings and reviews are complex (Pourfakhimi et al., 2020). Trust has been found to play a major role (Pop et al., 2022; Pourfakhimi et al., 2020; Serra Cantallops & Salvi, 2014). Trust in user generated content, in general, is shaped by multiple antecedents, including perceived credibility, information quality, and website quality (Filieri et al., 2015). Focusing more specifically on reviews, research has demonstrated that while both positive and negative reviews increase consumer awareness of hotels, they particularly influence consumer attitudes toward lesser-known hotels (Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009). Users interpret these reviews through heuristic processes, relying on cues such as the perceived richness and factuality of the information presented (Papathanassis & Knolle, 2011). Moreover, affective factors play a critical role in this interpretive process. For example, the degree of homophily—the extent to which a reviewer is perceived to resemble the reader—can enhance trust, which in turn positively influences attitudes toward and the intention to visit urban attractions (Ayeh et al., 2013). Additionally, a pronounced negativity bias often leads consumers to give disproportionate weight to negative reviews, further impacting their decision-making (Papathanassis & Knolle, 2011; Pourfakhimi et al., 2020).

The proliferation of user-generated content (UGC) has expanded the availability of content on hospitality and tourism services to the point of creating information overload (Xiang & Fesenmaier, 2020). Consequently, the role of recommender systems and the perceived trustworthiness of UGC has become increasingly important in helping consumers navigate this abundance of content (Xiang & Fesenmaier, 2020). In our study, we aim to examine the extent to which individuals rely on UGC, and to explore how this reliance varies across different contexts.

2.2. Factors influencing decision-making and information behavior

To fully understand how people discover urban attractions, we argue that we need to combine insights from information behavior and decision-making theory. Furthermore, we claim that *how*

travelers discover urban attractions is dependent on personal characteristics as well as social and affective factors. Below, we provide an overview of the factors we consider in this study.

2.2.1. Personal factors

Familiarity: Returning tourists often seek more novel and unique experiences than less familiar travelers (Vogt & Fesenmaier, 1998). Tse and Crotts (2005) also find that familiarity is linked to novelty seeking, expressed by experimentation with Hong Kong's diverse culinary traditions. Familiarity also affects information behavior; experienced visitors tend to focus on practical aspects of a visit, whereas novice travelers engage in a more extensive search for information (Lehto et al., 2006).

Personality: Individuals with a higher need for achievement tend to prefer adventurous vacations, while those with a stronger need for affiliation are more inclined toward cultural experiences (Tran & Ralston, 2006). Also Lepp and Gibson (2008) find that personality traits influence travel style, reporting that sensation seekers prefer a more independent style of travel and pursue novel activities.

2.2.2. Social factors

Travel party composition: Research indicates that the composition of a travel party significantly influences engagement with urban attractions. For instance, Thornton and colleagues (1997) observed that younger children notably influence the distribution of time across activities, leading to more time spent in child-friendly locations, such as beaches, and less on traveling or relaxing. Generally, as interpersonal constraints grow, so does the complexity of decision-making within travel groups (Kozak, 2010).

Cultural distance: While travelers are generally more likely to enjoy culturally similar services, they are more tolerant towards culturally different services because these are perceived as authentic (Weiermair, 2000). However, cultural openness of visitors is an important precursor in the participation in authentic cultural activities (Lin et al., 2021).

2.2.3. Contextual factors

Motivation: When a city serves as a main destination, visitors often seek relaxation, an escape from routine, or opportunities to reconnect with family and friends (McKercher & Wong, 2004). These primary visitors are typically drawn to dining and shopping experiences, while secondary visitors show more interest in architecture, specific tourist sites, and local residents (McKercher & Wong, 2004). However, Huang and colleagues (2014) reveal no significant difference in independent travel styles between travelers at main destinations and those on stopovers; both groups exhibit a preference for serendipitous travel.

Length of stay: Research indicates that the length of stay significantly influences travel behavior. Moore et al. (2012) found that shorter stays are typically characterized by extensively planned itineraries, whereas longer stays often involve more spontaneous, on-site decision making. Additionally, Tse and Crotts (2005) find that extended stays are associated with a greater propensity for novelty-seeking and a willingness to experiment with local culture.

2.2.4. Demographic factors

Age: Kim et al. (2015) highlight generational differences in online information behavior. They observe that older generations prefer direct contact with suppliers of hospitality products while younger generations prefer intermediaries such as TripAdvisor or Google. Furthermore, younger generations also more frequently use social networking sites and UGC, while older generations use online content that can be printed because they prefer tacit information sources (H. Kim et al., 2015).

Gender: Men and women tend to play different roles in the decision-making process within tourism and hospitality. Women are less involved in financing trips yet play a greater role in planning them (Zalatan, 1998) and take the initiative in decision-making (Mottiar & Quinn, 2004). Research on information behavior further reveals gender differences: women rely more often on word-of-mouth recommendations during travel planning (Murphy et al., 2007), and rely more often on landmarks for navigation during wayfinding compared to men (Xia et al., 2008).

2.2.5. Affective factors

Destination image: A fun and friendly destination image is an important pull factor for city break vacations (Dunne et al., 2011). A destination's image is shaped by both cognitive and affective factors; however, affective factors not only mediate the influence of cognitive factors but also serves as a stronger predictor of the overall image among tourists (Stylidis et al., 2017). This overall destination image significantly influences key outcomes such as destination satisfaction, revisit intentions (Kani et al., 2017), and intention to recommend the destination (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020; Stylidis et al., 2017).

Emotions: emotions also play an important role in information behavior and decision making. For example, emotional titles of UGC attract more attention than informational titles (Fu et al., 2024). Similarly, Liu et al's (2023) found that celebrity endorsements stimulate intentions to visit a destination only when they evoke emotional arousal. Furthermore, Scarpi et al. (2019) find that involvement with an event particularly increases place attachment when the event feels authentic.

The preceding review highlights the complex nature of decision-making in tourism but also reveals a fragmented body of literature. This fragmentation shows the need for a more integrated understanding, prompting our central research question: How do people discover urban attractions in the contemporary digital age? The following section details the methodology we employed to develop a holistic typology that addresses this question by integrating and extending the insights discussed above.

3. Methodology

To understand how users discover urban attractions, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 126 participants in Belgium. Subsequently, we used the grounded theory framework to analyze this data (Strauss & Corbin, 2015). Below, we describe our Sampling approach (Section 3.1), Interview protocol (Section 3.2), and Grounded theory (Section 3.3).

3.1. Sampling approach

Our study employed a two-phase sampling strategy, combining convenience and purposive sampling that resulted in a diverse sample of inhabitants of the Brussels and Flemish region of Belgium. In the first phase (October–December 2019), we relied on a **convenience sampling approach**, where 119 university students conducted each one interview, with a participant outside their class, as part of a methodology course. Prior to conducting the interviews, we introduced the students to the research context and research aim by guiding them through the topic guide provided by the researchers (see Appendix and Table 2). This ensured that the students understood the aim of the study, and that their interviews were comparable.

Upon analyzing the demographic composition of this initial sample, we identified an **age bias**; we were missing the perspective of participants over 50. To address this, we (the researchers) conducted a second phase of **purposive sampling** (July–August 2024), purposively selecting seven participants over 50. We applied two selection criteria during this phase: age, to ensure representation across different life stages, and gender, to ensure that each age category included at least one man and one woman. We do this because, as discussed in Section 2.3.4, both demographic variables are related to tourism and hospitality behavior.

This sampling approach deviates from the typical purposive sampling approach in grounded theory. However, due to the explorative nature of this study, it is especially important to have a diverse sample. As Table 1 illustrates, our sampling approach indeed resulted in a diverse sample.

Table 1
Summary statistics of sample

	Frequency
Age	
18-24	36
25-30	27
31-35	7
36-40	11
41-45	14
46-50	20
51-55	6
56-60	2
61-67	3
Gender	
Man	50
Woman	76
Living situation	
Missing	9
Single parent	11
Single without children	21
Married or living together with partner and children	36
Married or living together with partner without children	16
Cohousing with others	33
Total	126

Note: all participants are inhabitants of the Flemish or Brussels region of Belgium

3.2. Interview protocol

Participants received an informed consent document outlining the study's purpose, data handling practices, and privacy safeguards, following our institute's template and data protection guidelines. Consent was obtained before recording began. Next, the interviewers started the recording and went through the topic guide questions (see Appendix). We outline the general themes mentioned in the topic guide in Table 2. These topics relate to our central question of how the rise of digital platforms, specifically, UGC review and rating platform have impacted the discovery of urban attractions. Interviews typically lasted between 40-70 minutes.

Table 2

Summary of topic guide

Theme	Explanation	Example of questions
Relationship with city	City is defined as a location where there is a high concentration of inhabitants and provisions.	How would you describe the distance between your home and the nearest city centre? For which purposes do you mainly visit the city?
Discovering urban attractions	Urban attractions are: shops, hospitality, and activities. We are interested in urban attractions in Belgium as well as abroad.	For each category, can you give some examples that you have discovered? How? In which kind of situations do you look for digital information sources for recommendations? Are there differences between recommendations that you encounter in Belgium and abroad?
Attitude regarding personalized recommendations	We present a number of statements to the interviewees and ask their opinion about these statements	What do you know about personalized recommendations by computer algorithms? To what degree do you think that these systems must challenge users to discover places outside their comfort zone?
Google maps	Explain what Google maps is if unfamiliar. Present some examples expressing personalization on Google maps to illustrate urban filter bubbles	Have you already used Google Maps? In case yes, for which purposes?

3.3. Grounded theory

We use grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 2015) to develop a theory of urban discovery. This approach suits our focus on urban attractions, an understudied concept in need of fresh theoretical development. Because grounded theory is inductive, it provides the originality necessary to explore this topic (Strauss & Corbin, 2015). Furthermore, it allows for a rich and nuanced description (Matteucci & Gnoth, 2017; Woodside et al., 2004). As explained in Section 2.1.1, the process approach and grounded theory create an effective combination (Decrop & Snelders, 2005;

Moore et al., 2012; Woodside et al., 2004). Lastly, grounded theory seeks to explain phenomena, offering insight into why urban discovery unfolds as it does (Strauss & Corbin, 2015).

The grounded theory analysis started by immersing ourselves in the data by reading a random sample of interviews without coding (Mehmetoglu & Altinay, 2006). Subsequently, we started open coding of interviews utilizing MAXQDA software. This open coding facilitates the identification and description of various concepts, as well as the meticulous documentation of analytical insights via memos. Such detailed documentation is essential as it aids in refining the codes—whether by discarding, modifying, or merging them as necessary—thus enabling the identification of higher-level concepts and their respective properties (Strauss & Corbin, 2015). Subsequently, axial coding was employed to connect the different identified concepts during open coding. This process was further enhanced by comparative analysis, which involves contrasting incidents to discern similarities and differences (Strauss & Corbin, 2015).

We also followed Strauss and Corbin's (2015) guidelines to determine when theoretical saturation had been achieved. Their main criterion is the theory's internal consistency and logical coherence. In our case, this means that the different discovery modes must be clearly distinguished, their elements thoroughly conceptualized, and their processual development free of gaps. Based on our theoretical framework, summarized in Table 3, we believe this criterion has been met.

We further tested theoretical saturation during the final five interviews, which were conducted by the lead author. At the end of each interview, we presented our theoretical model (see Table 3) and asked participants if it resonated with their experiences. Participants often recognized themselves in the different discovery modes and recalled how they had discovered urban attractions through various discovery modes.

4. Discovery modes

Our grounded theory analysis revealed five distinct discovery modes: instrumental-rational, go-with-the-flow, social, flaneur, and habitual. Section 4.1 offers a detailed description of each mode, which are summarized in Table 3.

It is important to note that our theoretical framework does not prescribe a value hierarchy; the value and adoption of the five discovery modes are highly situational, and an individual may adopt different modes depending on the context. To build on our initial descriptions, we therefore analyze the factors influencing the adoption of a particular discovery mode (Section 4.2) and then explore the relationships between the discovery modes themselves (Section 4.3).

Table 3

Summary of our grounded theory

	Instrumental-rational	Go-with-the-flow	Social	Flaneur	Habitual
Key values	Price-quality ratio, certainty, predictability	Serendipity, ease, spontaneity	Social contact	Resonance, distinction, authenticity	Traditions, feeling at ease, predictability, certainty
Motivation of discovery process	Functional information need	Inspirational information need, interesting encounter	Social interaction, sign/social information need, relationship building	Aesthetic information need, romantic relationship with the city, want to distinguish themselves	Need for familiarity/comfort zone
Attitude	Instrumental	Receptive, hedonic, flexible	Interested	Receptive, respectful, critical	Conservative
Horizontal exploration and vertical immersion	Exploration through filters and ranking, immersion through comparing ratings and inspecting reviews	Haphazard exploration and impulsive immersion	Exploration through stream of social interactions, immersion through asking and conversation	Extensive exploration and immersion through multiple information sources	
Interface	Review platforms and search engines	Immediate surroundings	Social network	The city understood broadly	Memory
Information sources	Reviews and ratings, digital recommendations, remote access affordances	Immediate perceptions e.g., the aroma in a restaurant, the crowd size, and the overall ambiance	Social information sources e.g., word-of-mouth, social media feed, influencers	Content which triggers high telepresence, feels authentic, and resonates	Memories, habits
Practices	Extensive planning, ratings and reviews as heuristic, comparing, following digital recommendations	Discovering the city yourself, getting lost, leaving room for spontaneity, trying out new things	Talking, asking, following social recommendations, checking social media	Discovering the city yourself, using many information sources, staying informed about city life, communicating with locals, extensive planning	Rituals, brand loyalty, booking an all-in
Decision-making	Rational	Impulsive	Social	Affective	Habitual
Personal factors	High need for cognitive closure	High openness to experience	High social trust and need for social contact	High cultural capital about city	Low openness to experience
Social factors	Heterogeneous travel party	Homogeneous travel party	Taste of other person	Homogeneous travel party	Heterogeneous travel party, cultural distance
Contextual factors	High stakes, unfamiliar, choice overload, time constraints	Low stakes, a lot of time	Vibe of product is important		Unfamiliar, presence of familiar brands, bad weather, time constraints
Demographic factors	Younger people	Younger people		Older people	
Affective factors	Depleted mood	Good mood, curiosity, charm	Affection towards other person	Curiosity, charm	Depleted mood, need for comfort zone

4.1. The five discovery modes

4.1.1. Instrumental-rational discovery mode

In instrumental-rational discovery mode, individuals primarily value predictability and price-quality in their search for urban attractions. These discoverers try to ensure their limited time and money is invested wisely in worthwhile hospitality experiences, aiming to avoid disappointment.

The exploration process in this mode is motivated by a 'functional information need' (Vogt & Fesenmaier, 1998). Typical situations are for example finding a restaurant for a romantic date or planning an important event as Participant 21 illustrates *"If I want to go somewhere special to eat with someone, say for a birthday or for Christmas, I do want it to stand out, that it's special. That's why I will look for a place with good reviews."*

Functional information needs are intertwined with an instrumental view on information and discovery. Instrumental-rational discoverers are solely focused on identifying the best places to visit and hence driven by extrinsic motivation. Their primary concern is that the discovery process be efficient and effective. For example, when asked which kind of recommendation is preferred, by a friend or by an algorithm, Participant 50 answers pragmatically: *"I think the algorithm, because it knows more,"* which is in stark contrast to the intrinsically motivated information behavior in playful discovery modes, as is discussed later.

This instrumental attitude manifests in their discovery practices. They primarily leverage review platforms and search engines as their interface to discover the city. In particular ratings, reviews, and filters are deemed indispensable as they allow a thorough comparison of the urban attraction space through the urban attraction content space. Instrumental-rational discoverers use filters to distil a relevant set of urban attractions and subsequently thoroughly compare them before deciding on the highest-rated and best-reviewed options. Participant 6 provides an apt example of this exploration and immersion process: *"when I have something in my mind, let's say a restaurant, then I try to look at one site; see what people are saying about it; I also try at another site; again see*

what the reactions are. Then I try to make a synthesis of whether it's 'YES' or 'NO' and what the opinion of the majority is."

Furthermore, instrumental-rational discoverers meticulously plan their trips to optimize their time-spending and to ensure the success of their travels. Participant 23 underlines the benefits of this approach*: "it's easier to figure out everything in advance so that you get the most out of your visit."* Once rational-instrumental discoverers settle on a plan, they stick to it, valuing predictability and certainty above spontaneous decisions: *"yes, I really do follow the recommendation strictly. Then I'm sure I won't be disappointed by going somewhere else."* (Participant 10). Their quest for predictability leads them to leverage remote access affordances extensively, for instance making reservations and buying tickets online beforehand.

Playful discovery modes

We use the label playful discovery modes to refer to the go-with-the-flow, social, and flaneur discovery modes, since all these modes describe a discovery process driven by intrinsic motivation. In these modes enjoying urban discovery is as important as the quality of the outcome. The inherent pleasure associated with the discovery process often transforms it into a story worth sharing, as Participant 121 expresses: *"It's satisfying when you can say that you did a good job discovering a hidden gem. If you tell others about it—a nice discovery by chance—that makes you a bit proud."*

4.1.2. Go-with-the-flow discovery mode

Individuals discovering the city in go-with-the-flow mode prefer spontaneity over predictability, often eschewing certainty in favor of serendipity. As Participant 12 reflects: *"serendipity is the fact that in a city, you let yourself be led by the unexpected and actually end up by chance in streets or neighborhoods that you don't know, but that always gives me a very positive feeling. I like it very much 'serendipity'. It often leads to the best experiences because you don't have any expectations beforehand."*

Discoverers who adopt a go-with-the-flow mode are motivated by inspirational information needs. Unlike the meticulous scouting of flaneurs or the systematic searching of instrumental-

rational discoverers, they engage with their environment spontaneously and impulsively. Consequently, their exploration unfolds haphazardly as they inspect their immediate surroundings, immersing themselves instantly when something intriguing is encountered.

Dai et al. (2022) observe that inspiration can shortcut the decision-making process. Rather than meticulously evaluating urban attractions, an engaging encounter may prompt an impulsive decision to visit a location. Participant 11 illustrates this phenomenon, stating: *"Yes, I am someone who goes with the flow. So, I don't have a schedule, I put the days when I work in my agenda, but the rest is really on the spot. When I'm on vacation too, it's usually 'ah I see something here, a little restaurant, let's look on google to see what they say about it', and that can also just be without looking and just going into the experience; just doing it. Just go with the flow, not too much stress."*

This all expresses itself in their discovery practices. They prefer to lead their own exploration rather than depending on recommendations, ratings, or reviews. Their laid-back approach has them meandering through the city—typically by foot—open to the allure of aesthetic details that may draw them impulsively into a restaurant, even if it deviates from their original itinerary.

Interestingly, the rise of online reservations means that activities often require advanced planning. Weijts (2023) captures this loss of spontaneity well, criticizing the growing challenge of, for example, dining in a good restaurant without prior reservations. This loss clearly reverberates in our interviews. For example, Participant 120 mentions: *"It is annoying for example when I want to do a trip, I have to make reservations for everything well in advance … I do miss some flexibility on vacation."* This clashes with the go-with-the-flow ethos, which thrives on unscripted discovery.

4.1.3. Social discovery mode

Social interactions lie at the heart of the social discovery mode. Social discoverers leverage their social network as an interface to discover the city. However, the value placed on social interactions transcends mere information gathering; it is a conduit for nurturing relationships, offering a base for future conversations as Participant 30 encapsulates when explaining why he prefers

recommendations by friends over digital recommendations: *"because I want to know more about this friend of course. What does he like, then we can chat about that, do I like this?"*

Social discoverers engage with urban attractions through a continuous stream of social interactions, ranging from direct encounters—such as conversations with colleagues—to more indirect touchpoints, like scrolling through social media feeds. What distinguishes these individuals is their drive to be both inspired and informed by their social network. They are motivated by a social information need, or what Vogt and Fesenmaier (1998) refer to as a "sign need"—the reliance on the opinions and experiences of their social contacts regarding urban attractions.

Beside exploring the urban attraction space through their social network, they also immerse themselves in specific urban attractions by consulting their social network. Participant 27 describes this reliance on her social network for discovering and deciding what is worthwhile to visit: *"In both cases, both domestic and foreign, I am more likely to rely on people I know. For example, before the trip to Norway, I talked about it with a friend who had taken a very long trip there, and with whom I looked at her itineraries, the places they had been and even went through photo albums. I listened to what they recommended; people rather than digital recommendations."*

Social discoverers rely on social information sources because they trust them over other sources. They believe their network understands their preferences better than any algorithm could. The intimate understanding of their preferences by their social network is seen as the expression of true friendship. Additionally, feelings of affection towards individuals who make recommendations also constitutes an important explanation in the preference for social information sources. When asked which kind of recommendations are preferred—by a friend or an algorithm—Participant 97's response is telling: *"A friend because they love you, it's that simple. That goes far beyond pleasing me, it is about enriching each other and sharing."*

On the other hand, we also observe that digitalization and the internet might facilitate social connection. While not the UGC platforms that were the focus of our interview topics, other digital platforms, such as social media, can foster the social connections valued by social discoverers.

Indeed, our smartphones give us easy access to interact with our social networks at all times. A different example of how technology can support social discoverers is the app "ManyGuide", mentioned by Participant 50. These tools connect visitors of Brussels and Amsterdam with locals providing "*a combination of what technology is good at and what people are better at.*"

4.1.4. Flaneur mode

At the heart of the urban flaneur is a romantic attitude towards the city. This romantic attitude drives the urban flaneur to discover their big love, expressing itself in unbridled curiosity. Their quest is to find resonance within the city—a concept championed by Rosa (2019) to describe a touching connection with the world.

Urban attractions that are perceived as authentic typically resonate with the flaneur. This is illustrated by Participant 37's preference for Brussels over Geneva: *"The shops are really nice. It is much better than Geneva. Geneva, it's mostly brands and it's quite expensive. And the shops are not that interesting in Geneva. They spark my interest in Brussels actually. You have a lot of small shops, boutiques, much smaller, with a soul,"* illustrating the urban flaneur's attraction to places that resonate through character and vibe.

The flaneur is particularly enthusiastic to discover the city's hidden gems, like Participant 12: *"I look for hidden spots where most tourists don't come, but where for example locals or young people often write about on their blog: 'ah I discovered that park over there,' and actually, in that way I find cool, artistic, different things than in the average guidebooks."* As illustrated above, they aspire to distinguish themselves from regular tourists by leveraging information sources beyond what regular tourists use. As outlined in Bourdieu's Distinction (1984), the pursuit of distinction—the desire to differentiate oneself from others—is deeply embedded in social practices and identities. Bourdieu argues that individuals leverage various forms of capital, such as social, economic, and cultural capital, to establish and maintain their distinctiveness. For example, someone with extensive social capital might utilize their connections to access exclusive venues, setting themselves apart from those with a less prestigious social network. Similarly, individuals with significant economic

resources purchase premium hospitality services to assert their distinction over those with more modest financial backgrounds (Ahmad, 2014; T. Liu & Li, 2020). Being a flaneur is also part of one's identity and follows a similar pursuit of distinction but by harnessing their cultural capital—knowledge and familiarity with the city and its background—to differentiate themselves explicitly from tourists or others unfamiliar with the city's hidden charms, as is also supported by the findings in (Ahmad, 2014).

Furthermore, flaneurs are characterized by their receptivity to and respect for their surroundings. Their receptivity is expressed by practices that enable them to fully absorb their environment, like Participant 97: *"Yes, my eyes. I wander of course. I explore, hence the wandering. I try out a lot."* Dörk and colleagues' (2011) describe the urban flaneur as someone who wanders without a specific goal, with the primary purpose of immersing themselves in the vibrancy of city life. Therefore, they are particularly fond of content which stimulates the senses and triggers telepresence (Steuer, 1995), aligning with their desire for resonance and 'aesthetic information need' (Vogt & Fesenmaier, 1998).

Their respect is a logical consequence of their romantic relationship with the city. This respect is expressed by Participant 123: *"We try to learn some basics of the language. To travel with respect for the city. With respect for the climate and environment. I also consciously avoid visiting international chains that are known for tax fraud … We want to contribute to the local economy."*

The flaneur explores and immerses themself in the city by using a rich plethora of information practices such as talking to locals or experts about the city, reading books about the city, and wandering through the city. Similarly to instrumental-rational discovery mode, this might result in rigorously planning a trip. However, in this case the planning process is not instrumental for guaranteeing a worthwhile trip, but inherently pleasant. Indeed, it is a pathway to get hyped about a trip as Participant 121 states: *"Witness our roadbook. But for me, that contributes to the success of the vacation. You also have the pleasure of planning the trip, of getting excited in anticipation of it."*

Lastly, their discovery practices are characterized by a desire for agency because they desire to forge a unique bond with the city.

Their romantic relationship with the city and extensive information behavior results in affective decision-making. They follow their refined and informed taste as a guide through the city, deciding what to visit depending on how strongly it resonates: *"It does happen on vacation that we spontaneously enter a store, preferably not a touristic one, but for example, a glassblower. Sure, it's pricey, but we will take a look because the artistry is exceptional."*

At the same time, they are critical observers of the city. Because of their intimate relationship with the city, they have strong opinions about its evolution. Participant 97, for example, criticizes popularity bias in recommender systems: "*that aggressive dynamic of apps, of something where a lot of people go, ... You only have a subgroup that gives ratings, that system is not right at all. It's conceptually flawed, you certainly notice that with restaurants and tourists, they visit en masse the same places."* The flaneur, in pursuit of authenticity and resonance, often feels alienated in these overly touristic locations.

4.1.5. Habitual discovery mode

Habitual discovery mode is characterized by a preference for the familiar, offering ease, predictability, and certainty. Although discovery typically implies venturing into the unknown, these travelers deliberately seek out familiar urban attractions—even within unfamiliar settings. By anchoring their experiences with recognizable elements, such as global franchises, they balance the thrill of new experiences with the comfort of the familiar.

Habitual discovery mode resembles instrumental-rational discovery mode in its desire for predictability and certainty. Yet, habitual discoverers do not care to find the best urban attraction for their money; they desire to feel at ease. In this sense, they are similar to go-with-the-flow mode. However, while people in go-with-the-flow mode are open and receptive for new experiences, people in habitual discovery mode are looking for anchors of familiarity. Participant 97 aptly

expresses this desire for familiarity: *"Sometimes you seek the familiar, but that depends very much on your emotional state, sometimes you just want the familiar because you want to 'come home'."*

These familiar places engender one's comfort zone, which is created through rituals, i.e., repeated scripts of actions in a certain situation. An example of a ritual is visiting the Hard Rock Café on each city trip. Indeed, the Hard Rock Café company smartly taps into this discovery mode. In his book *Interaction ritual chains,* Collins (2004) lays out a theory on how rituals can lead to strong emotional and moral associations to symbols through the effervescence created during these rituals. This theory helps us understand why in habitual mode, we can have such desire to visit the same places and why this has positive psychological effects (Singh et al., 2020). Research shows that rituals can increase enjoyment of consumption (Vohs et al., 2013).

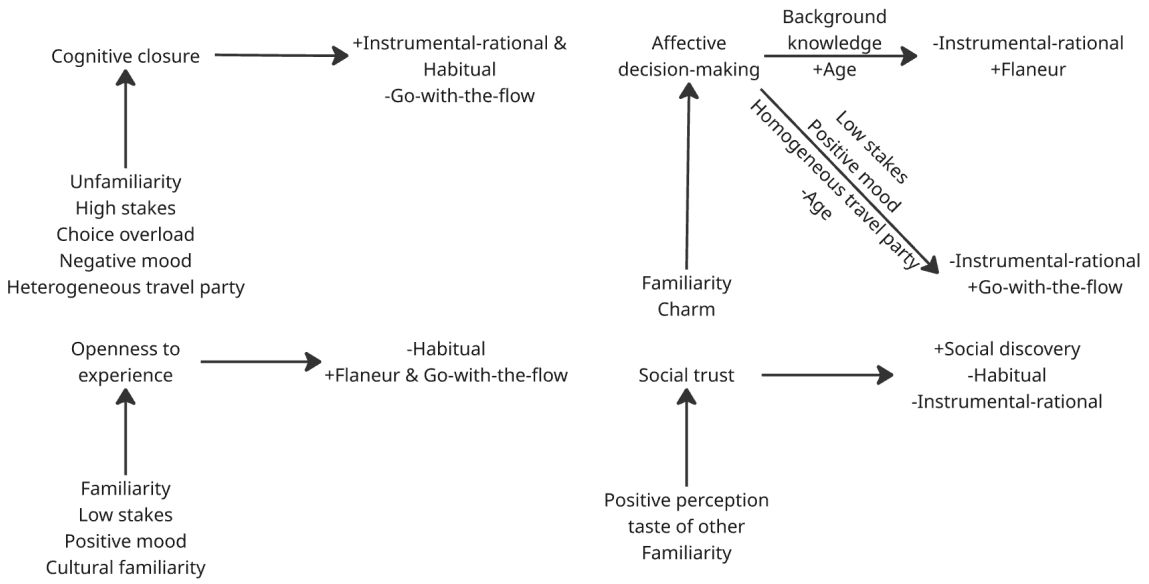
4.2. Linking the discovery modes to their determinants and moderators

In Section 4.1., we thoroughly described the five discovery modes. In this section, we delve deeper into how personal, social, contextual, demographic, and affective factors guide individuals toward one mode or another, as illustrated in Figure 2.

Our interviews suggest that **personality**, particularly openness to experience and need for cognitive closure, are important predictors. People high in openness to experience— characterized by curiosity, sensitivity to aesthetics, and attentiveness to internal feelings (Costa Jr & McCrae, 2000; McCrae & Costa, 1997)—are more likely to discover in go-with-the-flow or flaneur mode. Conversely, those lower in openness typically gravitate toward habitual discovery.

In contrast, a pronounced need for cognitive closure—discomfort with ambiguity and preference for clear outcomes (Roets & Van Hiel, 2011)—discourages go-with-the-flow discovery. Participant 10 illustrates how this need instead favors instrumental-rational discovery: "*I am the kind of person who likes to have control over situations, so I want an activity to be planned quite a while in advance. According to me, that ensures that I never or at least rarely experience any surprises."* The desire for spontaneity, characteristic in go-with-the-flow mode, contrasts sharply with the need for cognitive closure.

Figure 2: *Theoretical framework of the five discovery modes*



Note. Arrows indicates "influences", + and – signs indicate direction of the influence.

While some people consistently seek cognitive closure and others are always open to new experiences, for most individuals, this need is situational. The need for cognitive closure often increases in **high-stakes contexts**, whether the stakes are monetary, personal, or social. Participant 53 illustrated this well when explaining her use of reviews: she relies on them "when it is important how you come across."

Time constraints are another crucial contextual factor. With ample time, travelers can afford to explore in go-with-the-flow or flaneur mode, wandering freely even at the risk of getting lost. In contrast—limited time makes people prioritize certainty in finding good dining options and timely service to stay on schedule and avoid missing planned activities—hence triggering a need for cognitive closure like Participant 59 illustrate: *If I only go somewhere for two days, I try to have a good preparation. While if I go for a longer period, I'm more open to surprises*.'

Also the **context of choice overload** stimulates the need for cognitive closure. An abundance of urban attractions can overwhelm travelers, prompting instrumental-rational decisions based on ratings and reviews. Participant 125 illustrates this: *"If there are a lot of options—like in that city in*

Italy which was packed with bars and restaurants—I start using TripAdvisor because the choices are just overwhelming."

Familiarity on the other hand fosters spontaneity, openness to experience, and playful discovery more in general. People are more comfortable wandering around by foot and going with the flow; people have more background knowledge and are better nested in the urban attraction content space of familiar cities, favoring flaneur mode; and familiar cities tend to be familiar to your social network as well, favoring social discovery mode. This is nicely illustrated by Participant 46: *"I know the city, so I don't have to check if everything is good online, because I already know it or heard about it. Or like I said, I've seen it on Instagram… But also, I like to walk around, and if I encounter something lovely, I keep it on a list on my phone*."

Conversely, **unfamiliarity** enhances the desire for cognitive closure, making instrumental-rational discovery more appealing: *"If you go to a new city and something is popular and scores really well on TripAdvisor and if you go and look on Instagram it also looks really nice, even if it's popular I'll go there. Then I make a reservation if necessary. If it's in my own city I'm more likely to look for a place that's really new and less popular."* Moreover, **cultural unfamiliarity** promotes habitual discovery, as Participant 126 explains: *"Certainly if you go to a country that is very unfamiliar, let's say Vietnam or Thailand, after a while you had enough, and you just want comfort food. You want to go to a McDonalds, KFC or Burger King."*

While a **positive mood** encourages openness to experience and affective decision-making, a **negative mood** discourages openness to experience and instead encourages cognitive closure, as Participant 37 explains: *"If I am starving; it is raining; I am soaked; yeah, maybe I will be happy that Google will suggest me anything. Why not? You don't have fuel anymore; it's raining, whatever. But otherwise, I still make my own decisions."*

In **heterogeneous travel parties,** people are also more likely to desire cognitive closure since there are varied interests and physical constraints which make it more difficult to spontaneously encounter something satisfying, hence favoring instrumental-rational discovery. For example,

Participant 120 shares that, when she is on vacation with her mother, she looks on the internet for a place that fits the following criteria: *"something that is accessible for a person with mobility problems, with a parking place nearby, and with a nice view so it feels different than sitting in her own house."* A heterogeneous travel party also favors habitual discovery mode; particularly kids enjoy the familiarity of international fast-food chains, and it often becomes a tradition to visit these places during vacations. On the other hand, **homogeneous travel parties** are more likely to discover in a spontaneous way and make affective decisions since their taste and intuition guiding them through the city is similar. For example, Participant 121 explains how she discovers places more spontaneously with her younger daughter compared with her older daughter because: *"We are very similar. We can discover and decide where to go based on intuition."*

Also **charm** is an important trigger for affective decision-making, stimulating go-with-the-flow and flaneur discovery. As Participant 27 describes: *"Recently, we were in Paris and wanted to go to Musée Bourdelle, to a fashion exposition. But on our way, we like to enjoy Paris, discover some new places; and when we stumbled upon a charming café, we said: 'Oh, this looks lovely; let's stop for a coffee!'"* In flaneur mode, charm is often tied to authenticity, shaped by one's cultural understanding of the city. In contrast, those in go-with-the-flow mode follow personal taste without considering authenticity, making them more prone to tourist traps.

Regarding social discovery mode, here mainly **taste of the other** person giving the recommendation is important. Some people's recommendations are trusted more than others. While certain recommendations are blindly followed, others are verified through sources like TripAdvisor, resulting in an instrumental-rational way of discovering. As Participant 37 explains: *"I think you need to know the people. Recently, we have been recommended a restaurant by our neighbors, and it was not great for us… If some of my friends recommend me a place, I will go; without checking the internet, because I know their taste and I know it will get along with mine. For other people, it's a bit difficult; I will always crosscheck on the internet, like TripAdvisor."*

Lastly, we note that **age** is also related with the adopted discovery mode. Younger individuals tend to favor go-with-the-flow and instrumental-rational discovery for their ease and efficiency. Older individuals, with more accumulated knowledge, life experience, and available time, are more likely to explore in flaneur mode.

4.3. Linking the discovery modes to each other

Not all discovery modes are equally compatible. While playful modes can blend to create mixed types, the instrumental-rational and habitual modes are incompatible with others. The following section explores these compatibilities in detail.

4.3.1. Compatible modes

The playful discovery modes are mutually compatible, each characterized by an inherently enjoyable process of exploration. Although they do not always occur simultaneously—otherwise, they would not be conceptualized as distinct modes—they sometimes overlap. Indeed, our participants gave some anecdotes that can be both characterized as **flaneur and social discovery mode.** Flaneurs enjoy gathering diverse content about the city and particularly value suggestions from locals since they often result in authentic experiences. Participant 126 recalls an anecdote illustrating the discovery of a viewpoint that embodies both discovery modes:

"We were in Josselin, sitting in our car, ready to leave for our next accommodation. First, we stopped at a local bakery. As we chatted with the baker, he asked, 'Have you been up the basilica tower?'

'No, we walked all over the city and saw everything—but go up the tower—no, that we didn't do yet. You can't do it all, can you?'

'But you can't leave without going up! You'll thank me later—the view is magnificent.''

So we decided to go, messaging our next host that we'd be late. And the baker was right—the view was incredible. We took photos, saw the city and castle from above, and afterward, we returned to the bakery to tell him, 'You were right. It was absolutely worth it.'"

Our participants also shared discoveries that could be characterized by both **social and go-with-the-flow** mode. Social discovery mode emphasizes the role of social interactions, while go-with-the-flow mode highlights the ease and tranquility of unplanned exploration. Participant 120 recalled serendipitously encountering friends she had not seen in years and how their suggestions inspired her plans during the trip: *"We encountered friends that we hadn't seen for at least fifteen years. They gave us a couple of tips for things to do with the kids. In that way, we have discovered many things to do. I like that, to discover attractions at the destination itself."*

Lastly, also **go-with-the-flow and flaneur** mode sometimes occur together. While flaneur mode is characterized by thorough information behavior, it also involves exploring the city on foot—a behavior that naturally leads to the spontaneous encounters characteristic of go-with-the-flow mode. Participant 37 gives an example of a combination of both: "*At the beginning I used digital sources for everything. I went on internet and then you end up at websites about Brussels, like the official one, but also other websites and blogs. You find what to do in the city, also through books about the city. And then you walk and discover; I discovered actually most of the shops by walking around."*

4.3.2. Incompatible modes

While playful discovery modes seamlessly blend into one another, they remain distinct from instrumental-rational and habitual discovery modes. These modes are shaped by fundamentally opposing values, attitudes, and information practices.

For example, **social and instrumental-rational** discovery mode contrast sharply in information behavior. Social discoverers rely on personal networks for recommendations, while instrumental-rational discoverers place greater trust in online ratings and reviews, as illustrated by Participant 22: *"If I receive a recommendation from someone, and I'm not familiar with the place, I'll usually google it. I check what kind of restaurant it is, what descriptions are available, what comments it gets, and what rating it has. I wouldn't easily walk into a place I know nothing about and have no background information on."*

Conversely, social discoverers prioritize human connection and personal interaction in their discovery process, as illustrated by Participant 18: *"I trust my friends' recommendations more—someone who has actually been there makes it feel more personal. Just because the internet says something is good doesn't mean you should go—it lacks the human touch."*

Flaneur and instrumental-rational mode are also incompatible. While instrumental-rational discoverers seek objective metrics to ensure they receive value for money, flaneurs pursue a more subjective and romantic relationship with the city. They seek out hidden gems known only to true connoisseurs. As Participant 21 puts it: *"I don't brainlessly follow reviews or the whole crowd. When everybody says that a restaurant is really good, everybody will go eat there, and this is not what I want. I want to find something special."*

Although both **Instrumental-rational and go-with-the-flow** are more common among younger travelers, they also are incompatible. Go-with-the-flow discoverers embrace spontaneity and serendipitous encounters, whereas instrumental-rational discoverers seek certainty and predictability. Participant 24 illustrates this contrast: *"If a recommendation has a very good rating, by a lot of people, we will definitely follow it,"* When asked whether they would stick to their plan—even if they encountered something particularly attractive, they firmly replied: *"Yes, we would, because looks can be deceiving."*

Habitual discovery mode is incompatible with all other discovery modes. It is seldomly one's first choice like Participant 123 explains: *"If we really have no clue, then we just go to something Italian"* but a bit later in the interview, she adds: *"Italian food for us, it is not our first choice. Definitely not. We eat Italian if we really don't know where to go; if we are tired; if we have to catch a train."* This mode often leads travelers back to their comfort zones, particularly after an unexpected setback. Participant 126 recounts such an experience: *"My daughter's train had stood still in a field for hours. We had planned to eat Indian, because a colleague who had lived in Paris had recommended a place. But when she arrived, it was already super late, so we decided to go for a hamburger."*

5. Discussion

5.1. Theoretical contribution

5.1.1. Ontological contribution

This study shows that Leiper's (1990) framework, even 35 years after its publication, remains a productive tool for generating new insights. Inspired by his work, we developed a conceptual framework for urban discovery (see Figure 1), adapting his original theory in two key ways. First, we shifted the focus from traditional tourist sites to all urban attractions. Second, we zoomed out from individual "markers" to analyze a collective "urban attraction content space." These adaptations were necessary to suit the modern context, where digital platforms expose people to entire ecosystems of attractions and where "pull" marketing strategies are as important as traditional "push" methods (Godin, 1999; Hollebeek & Macky, 2019).

To answer our research question—How do people discover urban attractions today?—we conceptualized urban discovery as a dynamic process, responding to calls for a process-oriented ontology in tourism research (Decrop, 2014; Smallman & Moore, 2010). This ontology allowed us to develop a rich and nuanced typology of urban discovery modes, and to associate these different discovery modes to personal, social, contextual, demographic, and affective factors (Decrop, 2014; Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005).

Finally, our conceptual framework helps interpret pressing challenges in the urban attraction ecosystem. For instance, critical consumer culture (Gössling et al., 2018) can be understood as the influence of ratings and reviews in the urban attraction content space on urban discovery and consequently on the success of urban attractions. Urban filter bubbles—i.e., people might only see a particular part of the city, which is different from what other people are exposed to, because of algorithmic personalization (Smets et al., 2019)—can be understood as a consequence of too much personalization in the urban attraction content space. And lastly, tourist traps (Ganzaroli, De Noni, & van Baalen, 2017) can be understood as a lack of information about the authenticity and quality of

urban attractions during urban discovery. By contextualizing these challenges within our framework, we offer fresh theoretical and practical perspectives to address them.

5.1.2. Mechanistic contribution

5.1.2.1. The five discovery modes

Our conceptual framework, inspired by Leiper's tourist attractions systems, tourist attraction system, defines the universe in which urban discovery occurs. Our typology of discovery modes, in turn, adds flesh to the bone by describing the distinct patterns and forms urban discovery can take. Metaphorically speaking, our conceptual framework provides the hardware on which our five discovery modes, the software, runs. By developing this typology, our study taps into the potential that Richards (2002) identified in Leiper's work to explain how people interact with information in different contexts.

We identified five distinct discovery modes: instrumental-rational, go-with-the-flow, social, flaneur, and habitual. Beyond richly describing these modes, we examined the personal, social, contextual, demographic, and affective factors that influence their likelihood. We also analyzed their relationships, demonstrating that the playful discovery modes—go-with-the-flow, social, and flaneur—are compatible because they all three capture an inherently enjoyable discovery process, leading to mixed modes of discovery. In contrast, the remaining modes are incompatible, shaped by opposing values, attitudes, and motivations—which cannot co-occur. In the next paragraphs, we connect the five discovery modes to existing literature, illustrating how our typology integrates and synthesizes a lot of previously more fragmented research.

Instrumental-rational discovery aligns with the dominant perspective of consumer behavior in the field of tourism and hospitality (Cohen et al., 2014; Xiang & Fesenmaier, 2020). It can be described by linear information behavior models (Woodside & Lysonski, 1989; Xiang & Fesenmaier, 2020) driven by functional information needs, where individuals seek goal-directed solutions (Björneborn, 2010b; Vogt & Fesenmaier, 1998). Decision-making in this mode follows rational choice and choice-set theory (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005) and review platforms play a crucial role in this

process (Dickinger, 2011; Gursoy, 2019; Pourfakhimi et al., 2020). This mode aligns closely with Decrop and Snelders' (2005) concept of the "rational vacationer," who meticulously plans and researches their trip.

Go-with-the-flow discovery, in contrast, aligns with non-linear models of information behavior, particularly the notion of information encountering (Erdelez & Makri, 2020). Unlike instrumental-rational discoverers, who rely on comparisons of ratings on platforms, these travelers engage directly with their surroundings, embracing serendipity over systematized evaluation (Huang et al., 2014). Decisions are made on the spot, guided less by calculated trade-offs and more by immediate impressions, intuition, and charm. When something in the environment sparks a strong emotional response—such as the appeal of a cozy café or a picturesque alley—it can prompt a spontaneous decision to visit, bypassing deliberation entirely (Dai et al., 2022). This reflects the *affect heuristic*, in which choices are driven by positive or negative feelings rather than by analytical reasoning (Slovic et al., 2006). This discovery mode fits Hyde's (2008) description of the independent traveler, who feels the need to discover the unplanned and takes advantage of serendipitous opportunities. Smartphones and review platforms both support and hinder this discovery style. While they allow travelers to quickly look up places that satisfy impromptu desires (X. Liu et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2012; Xiang et al., 2015), the widespread practice of advance reservations can frustrate flexibility, often leaving no availability for last-minute discoveries.

Social discovery's main contribution to the literature is that habitual word-of-mouth remains highly influential in discovering urban attractions (Gildin, 2022). Despite the growing reliance on digital platforms, personal recommendations from friends, family, and acquaintances continue to shape urban exploration. It also illustrates that, beyond peer-review platforms, social media plays a crucial role in urban discovery, offering a dynamic and visually driven way for travelers to explore urban attractions in a social way. Therefore, “Instagrammability” of urban attractions is important for attracting social discoverers browsing their social media (Yu et al., 2020; Yu & Sun, 2019). Social media influencers also play an important role in this process, as their recommendations often guide

travel decisions (Pop et al., 2022; Xu et al., 2021). Regarding decision-making, we find evidence for the homophily effect described by Ayeh et al. (2013), not only on digital platforms but also in the context of recommendations received through one's social network more broadly. Furthermore, affection towards the person recommending something is also an important factor influencing the decision to follow recommendations, implying that especially the engagement of the fanbase of social influencers is important for their "influence."

Flaneur mode involves broad information behavior, mirroring Xiang and Fesenmaier's (2020) travel network perspective, which views tourism as an extension of daily life. In this sense, our findings resemble Decrop and Snelders (2005) depiction of the hedonic vacationer, who enjoys dreaming, thinking, and talking about their journey. Our findings also support Dörk et al.'s (2011) notion of the "information flaneur," whose pursuit of knowledge is guided by aesthetic and hedonic information needs (Vogt & Fesenmaier, 1998), rather than purely functional ones. Regarding information sources, the flaneur focuses on alternative channels such as travel blogs, habitual guidebooks, and direct interaction with locals, rather than the peer-review platforms common in other modes. In terms of decision-making, flaneurs are also guided by the affect heuristic (Slovic et al., 2006), like people in go-with-the-flow mode, but the affective evaluation is here based on the criterium of authenticity. This mode of visiting urban attractions is intertwined with the discoverers identity which is highlighted by distinguishing oneself by leveraging one's knowledge of the city (Bourdieu, 1984; Yolal, 2016).

Lastly, **habitual discovery** aligns strongly with Decrop and Snelders' (2005) "habitual vacationer," who revisits the same places to feel at home. Reflecting Bargeman and van der Poel's 2006) observations, decision-making in this mode is more routinized and less extensive than rational choice models suggest. Rather than seeking new experiences, travelers in this mode gravitate toward the familiar, preferring a comfortable environment over exhaustive research or exploration. Here, decision-making is significantly shaped by rituals—repeated scripts of actions performed consistently across situations, such as always visiting the Hard Rock Café when traveling to new cities. Companies

like Hard Rock Café strategically leverage habitual discovery by creating symbolic emotional connections through these rituals. Drawing from Collins' (2004) theory of interaction ritual chains, these habitual practices create strong emotional and moral associations with particular symbols due to the effervescence experienced during the ritual itself. This theoretical insight helps explain why travelers in habitual mode repeatedly revisit familiar places, deriving positive psychological benefits from such rituals (Singh et al., 2020). Indeed, existing research supports the idea that rituals enhance the enjoyment derived from consumption (Vohs et al., 2013). Recognizing these ritualistic decision-making processes has clear implications for tourism and hospitality management, suggesting that fostering symbolic and ritualistic associations with hospitality brands can effectively increase customer loyalty and overall satisfaction.

The initial goal of this exploratory interview study was to understand the impact of peer-review platforms and UGC on urban discovery. While we observed that they can play an important role, we find that travelers still turn to a wide range of content and practices beyond comparing online reviews. UGC platforms most strongly influence instrumental-rational discoverers who want to be sure they get the best value for their money and time. However, this study also emphasizes the importance of alternative information sources such as word-of-mouth or simply wandering the city. In contrast, those in go-with-the-flow mode seek serendipity and flexibility, while people in flaneur mode are looking for enchantment, authenticity, and taste broadening. Future research can investigate how to capture the attention of people in these latter modes. For example, through alternative features and affordances, such as maintaining mystery through non-standardized ratings or removing the option to make reservations.

5.1.2.2. Implications for the urban attraction ecosystem

These five discovery modes have important implications for contemporary challenges within the urban attraction ecosystem. For instance, the self-propelling effect of UGC observed by Van Der Zee and colleagues (2018, 2020) appears to stem primarily from instrumental-rational discovery.

Travelers in this mode are most likely to select attractions with the largest number of highly rated reviews, thus reinforcing a cycle in which popular attractions attract still more attention.

However, flaneur and go-with-the-flow mode hold potential to break these hotspot-effects by their desire for serendipity and discovering hidden gems. Flaneurs actively seek out less-traveled routes and unique experiences. They prioritize exploring local culture and contribute positively to the local economy. Based on our research findings, we argue that such attitudes foster sustainable interactions with urban environments, encouraging respect for local culture and heritage, supporting local businesses, and mitigating the ecological impacts associated with travel.

People discovering in go-with-the-flow mode do not necessarily seek these less-traveled routes but like to casually wander through cities, spontaneously deciding where to go based on immediate surroundings and personal impulses. Unlike flaneurs, who possess cultural capital that allows them to appreciate historically or culturally rich but visually less appealing areas, go-with-the-flow travelers might lack such background knowledge. Consequently, they might gravitate toward easily accessible, attractive, and often tourist-heavy areas. However, as noted previously, these two playful modes can blend, meaning a go-with-the-flow discoverer might also possess the cultural capital needed to avoid tourist traps.

Despite this potential for blending, our research suggests that tourismification—the proliferation of inauthentic or low-quality establishments—arises predominantly from purely go-with-the-flow or habitual discovery. Iconic sites like Barcelona's Sagrada Familia or Brussels' Grand Place are typically surrounded by global fast-food chains and businesses that masquerade as authentic local experiences (Ganzaroli, De Noni, & Van Baalen, 2017). Discoverers in habitual or go-with-the-flow modes, who often prefer an unplanned approach, can be easily lured by these convenient options that cater to high foot traffic and brand recognition.

5.1.2.3. Multiple factors influence which discovery mode is adopted

This study emphasizes that—while various models and theories of information behavior and decision-making shed valuable light on urban discovery—no single approach fully captures the

complexity of how individuals discover a city. Consistent with Lepp and Gibson (2008), and Tran and Ralston (2006), our study confirms the important role of **personality**, particularly openness to experience and need for cognitive closure, in shaping discovery behavior. However, our findings show that the expression of these traits depends on the situation.

In line with previous research (Lehto et al., 2006; Tse & Crotts, 2005; Vogt & Fesenmaier, 1998), we observe that **familiarity** with a city stimulates novelty seeking, as captured by the go-with-the-flow mode. Our findings extend this literature by revealing that familiarity not only encourages spontaneous exploration but also enhances social and flaneur discovery, since travelers possess richer background knowledge and stronger social connections within familiar environments. Conversely, unfamiliarity amplifies a traveler's desire for cognitive closure, resulting in more reliance on instrumental-rational decision-making, while significant cultural unfamiliarity triggers habitual discovery, exemplified by travelers seeking out familiar comfort foods from global chains.

Furthermore, our findings support Kozak's (2010) claim that interpersonal constraints increase decision-making complexity in travel groups. **Heterogeneous groups**, facing diverse interests and physical constraints, typically favor instrumental-rational decision-making. For example, one participant described carefully researching locations to accommodate mobility constraints. Habitual discovery also arises in these groups due to preferences for predictable environments, especially among families with children who value familiar, comforting experiences. In contrast, **homogeneous travel parties** rely more on shared tastes and intuitions, enabling spontaneous affective decision-making typical of go-with-the-flow or flaneur discovery.

Consistent with Moore et al. (2012) and Tse and Crotts (2005), our findings highlight **time constraints** as influential contextual factors. Limited time and unforeseen changes in planning leads travelers to seek predictable experiences, hence adopting habitual discovery mode. Conversely, **ample time** stimulates spontaneous exploration, consistent with go-with-the-flow mode.

Age also emerged as a significant factor influencing discovery modes, paralleling findings by Kim et al. (2015). Younger travelers, seeking efficiency and convenience, often prefer instrumental-

rational modes, leveraging intermediaries like TripAdvisor or Instagram. Simultaneously, younger travelers also embrace go-with-the-flow discovery more readily than older individuals. Older travelers, leveraging cultural capital and experience, are more inclined toward flaneur discovery, consistent with Kim et al. (2009), reflecting their desire for authentic urban exploration.

Moreover, our study breaks new ground by explicitly highlighting affective factors—particularly **mood** and **charm**—as pivotal elements shaping discovery behaviors. A positive mood fosters openness to experience and encourages spontaneous, affective decision-making. Conversely, negative moods such as discomfort or fatigue elevate cognitive closure, steering travelers toward instrumental-rational or habitual modes. Charm, as noted by participants, significantly enhances affective decision-making and prompts spontaneous exploration.

By integrating these personal, social, contextual, demographic, and affective dimensions, our grounded typology of discovery modes deepens existing theoretical understandings of tourism decision-making. It reveals how travelers fluidly shift between modes based on internal predispositions and external conditions, underscoring the complexity and context-dependency of urban exploration behaviors.

5.2. Practical implications

Besides theoretical contributions, our research offers valuable guidance to platform providers about how to design platforms that meet a variety of user needs and how hospitality service providers best present themselves on these platforms.

5.2.1. Practical implications for industrialization and business strategy

Following Leiper (2008, We understand tourism not as a single industry but as a collection of industries). Leiper conceptualizes industrialization as the combination of collaboration and specific targeting to the same customer group (Leiper et al., 2008). The rise of digital platforms has introduced new industrialization strategies, from collaborating with influencers to managing online ratings. In this context, our findings suggest that industrialization is most effective when targeted not

just to customers, but to their specific discovery modes. Different discovery modes can be swayed by different industrialization strategies, leading to different urban attraction industries.

Instrumental-rational discoverers will be most effectively attracted by a high volume of positive ratings on review platforms. Strategies to achieve this include offering incentives for positive reviews or, as some have noted, even posting fake ones (Filieri, 2016). An alternative strategy could be to develop an independent review organization to build trust with this discerning group.

Go-with-the-flow discoverers, on the other hand, are more effectively attracted by eye-catching markers that trigger their impulsivity. This requires collaboration through thoughtful urban planning and nudging people to discover different parts of the city.

The social discovery mode is best targeted by stimulating people to talk about the urban attraction. This can be done, for example, by cultivating positive word-of-mouth, collaborating with social media influencers to make and distribute content about the urban attraction, and by creating an instagrammable décor.

Flaneurs, on the other hand, are best swayed by an interesting story behind the urban attraction. This can be done by integrating the history of the location into the service provided and by collaborating with historians, writers, or documentary makers.

Lastly, people in habitual mode are best swayed by familiarity, brand recognition, and customer loyalty programs.

5.2.2. Practical implications for platform providers

Our findings show that the discovery mode influences which platform features and content are utilized and valued. For instance, when users explore in instrumental-rational mode, filter functionalities and access to reviews and ratings are important. In this mode, individuals are looking for high afforded diagnosticity, i.e., how well a platform affords to "systematically and effectively search and compare relevant alternatives until reaching a final choice" (Yi et al., 2010, p. 4).

Conversely, for individuals in flaneur mode, reviews and ratings hold little value. Instead, they are drawn to detailed background information and resources that allow a deeper exploration of

urban attractions' history, authenticity, and an aesthetic presentation on the platform. We discuss the practical implications of our findings more extensively in the attached impact statement.

5.3. Limitations and future studies

Although our data was primarily collected pre-COVID-19, we observe that our findings remain relevant today. The abstraction of our discovery modes allows to incorporate new emerging discovery practices (e.g., the role of TikTok in urban discovery). Furthermore, our most recent interviews corroborate our earlier results. Specifically, we identified few new codes, and those we did find did not challenge our typology. Instead, they added additional nuance, enriching the framework.

While our qualitative methodology was well-suited for this exploratory study, it imposes limits on the generalizability of the results. Although we identify five discovery modes, we cannot estimate their prevalence. To address this, future research could employ diary studies, where participants log discovered urban attractions and their discovery process. These could be coupled with interviews to gain insights into decision-making and the experience of visiting these sites.

Future studies could expand upon our findings using quantitative methods to further explore and validate these discovery modes and their contextual relationships. For instance, experimental designs could simulate specific scenarios—such as planning a birthday dinner—to investigate preferred content and the primary motivations behind urban attraction selection in such contexts. Additionally, our findings can potentially be generalized to other domains. While our focus has been on hospitality and tourism, the discovery modes we propose may have broader relevance and could be adapted to markets such as e-commerce or video-on-demand.

6. Conclusion

This article adapts and extends Leiper's tourist attraction systems framework to the context of modern urban discovery. Using a grounded theory approach, we developed an exploratory typology of five distinct discovery modes. Instrumental-rational discoverers seek certainty and systematically compare attractions, while habitual discoverers favor familiarity over the optimal

choice. In contrast, playful discoverers value the journey more than the destination. This group encompasses go-with-the-flow travelers, who explore spontaneously; social discoverers, guided by social interactions; and flaneurs, who cultivate a romantic relationship with the city.

Our typology's main contribution is its demonstration that urban discovery is not a single behavior but a spectrum, shaped by a nuanced interplay of personal, social, and contextual factors. We identified key psychological determinants—such as openness to experience, need for cognitive closure, and social trust—that predict which discovery mode a person will adopt in a given situation.

Furthermore, while acknowledging the importance of peer-review platforms, our findings challenge the narrative of digital dominance. We show that travelers continue to rely on a diverse range of information practices, from talking with locals and reading guidebooks to simply wandering through the city. By identifying and detailing these varied modes, particularly underexplored behaviors like the flaneur, this study integrates fragmented research and offers a more holistic foundation for understanding how people discover the contemporary city.

7. Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

During the preparation of this work the authors used GPT-4o by OpenAI to improve language. The tool has only been used to correct spelling and improve language usage. After using this tool, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

8. Bibliography

Afshardoost, M., & Eshaghi, M. S. (2020). Destination image and tourist behavioural intentions: A meta-analysis. *Tourism Management*, *81*, 104154. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2020.104154

Ahmad, R. (2014). Habitus, Capital, and Patterns of Taste in Tourism Consumption: A Study of Western Tourism Consumers in India. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, *38*(4), 487–505. https://doi.org/10.1177/1096348012461550

Argin, G., Pak, B., & Turkoglu, H. (2020). Between post-flâneur and smartphone zombie: Smartphone users' altering visual attention and walking behavior in public space. *ISPRS International Journal of Geo-Information*, *9*(12), 700.

Ayeh, J. K., Au, N., & Law, R. (2013). "Do we believe in TripAdvisor?" Examining credibility perceptions and online travelers' attitude toward using user-generated content. *Journal of Travel Research*, *52*(4), 437–452.

Bargeman, B., & van der Poel, H. (2006). The role of routines in the vacation decision-making process of Dutch vacationers. *Tourism Management*, *27*(4), 707–720.

Bates, M. J. (1989). The design of browsing and berrypicking techniques for the online search interface. *Online Review*, *13*(5), 407–424.

Björneborn, L. (2010a). Design dimensions enabling divergent behaviour across physical, digital, and social library interfaces. *Persuasive Technology: 5th International Conference, PERSUASIVE 2010, Copenhagen, Denmark, June 7-10, 2010. Proceedings 5*, 143–149.

Björneborn, L. (2010b). *Design dimensions enabling divergent behaviour across physical, digital, and social library interfaces*. 143–149.

Björneborn, L. (2017). Three key affordances for serendipity: Toward a framework connecting environmental and personal factors in serendipitous encounters. *Journal of Documentation*.

Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Routledge.

Bowen, G. A. (2006). Grounded Theory and Sensitizing Concepts. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *5*(3), 12–23. https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690600500304

Buhalis, D., & Law, R. (2008). Progress in information technology and tourism management: 20 years on and 10 years after the Internet—The state of eTourism research. *Tourism Management*, *29*(4), 609–623.

Case, D. O., & Given, L. M. (2016). *Looking for information: A survey of research on information seeking, needs, and behavior*. Emerald Group Publishing.

Cohen, S. A., Prayag, G., & Moital, M. (2014). Consumer behaviour in tourism: Concepts, influences and opportunities. *Current Issues in Tourism*, *17*(10), 872–909.

Collins, R. (2004). *Interaction ritual chains*. Princeton university press.

Costa Jr, P. T., & McCrae, R. R. (2000). *Neo Personality Inventory.* American Psychological Association.

Dai, F., Wang, D., & Kirillova, K. (2022). Travel inspiration in tourist decision making. *Tourism Management*, *90*, 104484.

Decrop, A. (2014). Theorizing tourist behaviour. In *The Routledge handbook of tourism marketing* (pp. 251–267). Routledge. https://api.taylorfrancis.com/content/chapters/edit/download?identifierName=doi&identifierValue=10.4324/9781315858265-24&type=chapterpdf

Decrop, A., & Snelders, D. (2005). A grounded typology of vacation decision-making. *Tourism Management*, *26*(2), 121–132. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2003.11.011

Dickinger, A. (2011). The trustworthiness of online channels for experience-and goal-directed search tasks. *Journal of Travel Research*, *50*(4), 378–391.

Dörk, M., Carpendale, S., & Williamson, C. (2011). The information flaneur: A fresh look at information seeking. *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 1215–1224.

Dunne, G., Flanagan, S., & Buckley, J. (2011). Towards a decision making model for city break travel. *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research*, *5*(2), 158–172.

Erdelez, S., & Makri, S. (2020). Information encountering re-encountered: A conceptual re-examination of serendipity in the context of information acquisition. *Journal of Documentation*, *76*(3), 731–751.

Filieri, R. (2016). What makes an online consumer review trustworthy? *Annals of Tourism Research*, *58*, 46–64.

Filieri, R., Alguezaui, S., & McLeay, F. (2015). Why do travelers trust TripAdvisor? Antecedents of trust towards consumer-generated media and its influence on recommendation adoption and word of mouth. *Tourism Management*, *51*, 174–185. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2015.05.007

Foster, A., & Ford, N. (2003). Serendipity and information seeking: An empirical study. *Journal of Documentation*, *59*(3), 321–340.

Fu, X., Liu, X., & Li, Z. (2024). Catching eyes of social media wanderers: How pictorial and textual cues in visitor-generated content shape users' cognitive-affective psychology. *Tourism Management*, *100*, 104815. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2023.104815

Ganzaroli, A., De Noni, I., & Van Baalen, P. (2017). Vicious advice: Analyzing the impact of TripAdvisor on the quality of restaurants as part of the cultural heritage of Venice. *Tourism Management*, *61*, 501–510. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2017.03.019

Ganzaroli, A., De Noni, I., & van Baalen, P. (2017). Vicious advice: Analyzing the impact of TripAdvisor on the quality of restaurants as part of the cultural heritage of Venice. *Tourism Management*, *61*, 501–510.

Gildin, S. Z. (2022). Understanding the power of word-of-mouth. *RAM. Revista de Administração Mackenzie*, *4*, 92–106.

Godin, S. (1999). *Permission marketing: Turning strangers into friends and friends into customers*. Simon and Schuster.

Gore, J., Banks, A., Millward, L., & Kyriakidou, O. (2006). Naturalistic Decision Making and Organizations: Reviewing Pragmatic Science. *Organization Studies*, *27*(7), 925–942. https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840606065701

Gössling, S., Hall, C. M., & Andersson, A.-C. (2018). The manager's dilemma: A conceptualization of online review manipulation strategies. *Current Issues in Tourism*, *21*(5), 484–503.

Gursoy, D. (2019). A critical review of determinants of information search behavior and utilization of online reviews in decision making process (invited paper for 'luminaries' special issue of International Journal of Hospitality Management). *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *76*, 53–60.

Gursoy, D., Del Chiappa, G., & Zhang, Y. (2017). Preferences regarding external information sources: A conjoint analysis of visitors to Sardinia, Italy. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, *34*(6), 806–820.

Gursoy, D., & McCleary, K. W. (2004). An Integrative Model of Tourists' Information Search Behaviour. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *31*(2), 353–373.

Hollebeek, L. D., & Macky, K. (2019). Digital Content Marketing's Role in Fostering Consumer Engagement, Trust, and Value: Framework, Fundamental Propositions, and

Implications. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *45*(1), 27–41. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2018.07.003

Horner, S., & Swarbrooke, J. (2020). *Consumer behaviour in tourism*. Routledge.

Huang, W.-J., Norman, W. C., Hallo, J. C., Mcgehee, N. G., Mcgee, J., & Goetcheus, C. L. (2014). Serendipity and Independent Travel. *Tourism Recreation Research*, *39*(2), 169–183. https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2014.11081765

Hyde, K. F. (2008). Independent traveler decision-making. In *Advances in culture, tourism and hospitality research* (pp. 43–151). Emerald Group Publishing Limited. https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1016/S1871-3173(08)02003-X/full/html

Hyde, K. F., & Lawson, R. (2003). The nature of independent travel. *Journal of Travel Research*, *42*(1), 13–23.

Kani, Y., Aziz, Y. A., Sambasivan, M., & Bojei, J. (2017). Antecedents and outcomes of destination image of Malaysia. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, *32*, 89–98. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2017.05.001

Kim, H., Xiang, Z., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (2015). Use of the internet for trip planning: A generational analysis. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, *32*(3), 276–289.

Kim, Y. G., Eves, A., & Scarles, C. (2009). Building a model of local food consumption on trips and holidays: A grounded theory approach. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *28*(3), 423–431.

Kozak, M. (2010). Holiday taking decisions – The role of spouses. *Tourism Management*, *31*(4), 489–494. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2010.01.014

Leask, A. (2016). Visitor attraction management: A critical review of research 2009–2014. *Tourism Management*, *57*, 334–361. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2016.06.015

Lehto, X. Y., Kim, D.-Y., & Morrison, A. M. (2006). The effect of prior destination experience on online information search behaviour. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, *6*(2), 160–178.

Leiper, N. (1979). The framework of tourism: Towards a definition of tourism, tourist, and the tourist industry. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *6*(4), 390–407.

Leiper, N. (1990). Tourist attraction systems. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *17*(3), 367–384. https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(90)90004-B

Leiper, N. (1997). Big Success, Big Mistake, at Big Banana: Marketing Strategies in Road-Side Attractions and Theme Parks. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, *6*(3–4), 103–121. https://doi.org/10.1300/j073v06n03_07

Leiper, N. (2008). Why 'the tourism industry' is misleading as a generic expression: The case for the plural variation, 'tourism industries.' *Tourism Management*, *29*(2), 237–251. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2007.03.015

Leiper, N., Stear, L., Hing, N., & Firth, T. (2008). Partial Industrialisation in Tourism: A New Model. *Current Issues in Tourism*, *11*(3), 207–235. https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500802140299

Lepp, A., & Gibson, H. (2008). Sensation seeking and tourism: Tourist role, perception of risk and destination choice. *Tourism Management*, *29*(4), 740–750. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2007.08.002

Lin, J.-H., Fan, D. X. F., Tsaur, S.-H., & Tsai, Y.-R. (2021). Tourists' cultural competence: A cosmopolitan perspective among Asian tourists. *Tourism Management*, *83*, 104207. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2020.104207

Liu, B., Moyle, B., Kralj, A., & Li, Y. (2023). Celebrity endorsement in tourism: Attention, emotional arousal and familiarity. *Tourism Management*, *98*, 104750. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2023.104750

Liu, T., & Li, M. (2020). Leisure & travel as class signifier: Distinction practices of China's new rich. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, *33*, 100627. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2019.100627

Liu, X., Wang, D., & Gretzel, U. (2022). On-site decision-making in smartphone-mediated contexts. *Tourism Management*, *88*, 104424.

Massimo, D., & Ricci, F. (2022). Building Effective Recommender Systems for Tourists. *AI Magazine*, *43*(2), Article 2. https://doi.org/10.1002/aaai.12057

Matteucci, X., & Gnoth, J. (2017). Elaborating on grounded theory in tourism research. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *65*, 49–59.

McCabe, S., Li, C. (Spring), & Chen, Z. (2016). Time for a Radical Reappraisal of Tourist Decision Making? Toward a New Conceptual Model. *Journal of Travel Research*, *55*(1), 3–15. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287515592973

McCrae, R. R., & Costa, P. T. (1997). Conceptions and Correlates of Openness to Experience. In *Handbook of Personality Psychology* (pp. 825–847). Elsevier. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-012134645-4/50032-9

Mehmetoglu, M., & Altinay, L. (2006). Examination of grounded theory analysis with an application to hospitality research. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *25*(1), 12–33.

Merinov, P. (2024). Towards Sustainable Recommendations in Urban Tourism. *18th ACM Conference on Recommender Systems*, 1330–1334. https://doi.org/10.1145/3640457.3688016

Moore, K., Smallman, C., Wilson, J., & Simmons, D. (2012). Dynamic in-destination decision-making: An adjustment model. *Tourism Management*, *33*(3), 635–645. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2011.07.005

Mottiar, Z., & Quinn, D. (2004). Couple dynamics in household tourism decision making: Women as the gatekeepers? *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, *10*(2), 149–160. https://doi.org/10.1177/135676670401000205

Murphy, L., Mascardo, G., & Benckendorff, P. (2007). Exploring word-of-mouth influences on travel decisions: Friends and relatives vs. other travellers. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, *31*(5), 517–527. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1470-6431.2007.00608.x

Navío-Marco, J., Ruiz-Gómez, L. M., & Sevilla-Sevilla, C. (2018). Progress in information technology and tourism management: 30 years on and 20 years after the internet-Revisiting Buhalis & Law's landmark study about eTourism. *Tourism Management*, *69*, 460–470.

Page, S. J., & Duignan, M. (2023). Progress in Tourism Management: Is urban tourism a paradoxical research domain? Progress since 2011 and prospects for the future. *Tourism Management*, *98*, 104737. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2023.104737

Papathanassis, A., & Knolle, F. (2011). Exploring the adoption and processing of online holiday reviews: A grounded theory approach. *Tourism Management*, *32*(2), 215–224.

Polus, R., Nautiyal, R., & Nautiyal, A. (2025). Caught in the maze: Exploration of the 'tourist trap' phenomenon. *Tourism Management*, *106*, 105009. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2024.105009

Pop, R.-A., Săplăcan, Z., Dabija, D.-C., & Alt, M.-A. (2022). The impact of social media influencers on travel decisions: The role of trust in consumer decision journey. *Current Issues in Tourism*, *25*(5), 823–843.

Pourfakhimi, S., Duncan, T., & Coetzee, W. J. (2020). Electronic word of mouth in tourism and hospitality consumer behaviour: State of the art. *Tourism Review*, *75*(4), 637–661.

Rabanser, U., & Ricci, F. (2005). Recommender systems: Do they have a viable business model in e-tourism? In *Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism 2005* (pp. 160–171). Springer.

Richards, G. (2002). Tourism attraction systems. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *29*(4), 1048–1064. https://doi.org/10.1016/s0160-7383(02)00026-9

Ritzer, G. (2019). *The McDonaldization of society: Into the digital age* (Vol. 9). SAGE Publishing.

Roets, A., & Van Hiel, A. (2011). Item selection and validation of a brief, 15-item version of the Need for Closure Scale. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *50*(1), 90–94. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2010.09.004

Rosa, H. (2019). *Resonance: A sociology of our relationship to the world*. John Wiley & Sons.

Scarpi, D., Mason, M., & Raggiotto, F. (2019). To Rome with love: A moderated mediation model in Roman heritage consumption. *Tourism Management*, *71*, 389–401. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2018.10.030

Serra Cantallops, A., & Salvi, F. (2014). New consumer behavior: A review of research on eWOM and hotels. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *36*, 41–51. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2013.08.007

Singh, P., Tewari, S., Kesberg, R., Karl, J. A., Bulbulia, J., & Fischer, R. (2020). Time investments in rituals are associated with social bonding, affect and subjective health: A

longitudinal study of Diwali in two Indian communities. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B*, *375*(1805), 20190430.

Sirakaya, E., & Woodside, A. G. (2005). Building and testing theories of decision making by travellers. *Tourism Management*, *26*(6), 815–832. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2004.05.004

Slovic, P., Finucane, M. L., Peters, E., & MacGregor, D. G. (2006). The affect heuristic. *European Journal of Operational Research*, *177*(3), 1333–1352. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejor.2005.04.006

Smallman, C., & Moore, K. (2010). PROCESS STUDIES OF TOURISTS' DECISION-MAKING. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *37*(2), 397–422. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2009.10.014

Smets, A., Montero, E., & Ballon, P. (2019). *Does the bubble go beyond?: An exploration of the urban filter bubble*. 3.

Sotiriadis, M. D. (2017). Sharing tourism experiences in social media: A literature review and a set of suggested business strategies. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *29*(1), 179–225. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-05-2016-0300

Sparks, B. A., Perkins, H. E., & Buckley, R. (2013). Online travel reviews as persuasive communication: The effects of content type, source, and certification logos on consumer behavior. *Tourism Management*, *39*, 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2013.03.007

Steuer, J. (1995). Defining virtual reality: Dimensions determining telepresence. *Communication in the Age of Virtual Reality*, *33*, 37–39.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (2015). *Basics of qualitative research techniques* (4th ed.). Sage publications.

Stylidis, D., Shani, A., & Belhassen, Y. (2017). Testing an integrated destination image model across residents and tourists. *Tourism Management*, *58*, 184–195. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2016.10.014

Thornton, P. R., Shaw, G., & Williams, A. M. (1997). Tourist group holiday decision-making and behaviour: The influence of children. *Tourism Management*, *18*(5), 287–297. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177(97)00017-4

Torres, E. N., Singh, D., & Robertson-Ring, A. (2015). Consumer reviews and the creation of booking transaction value: Lessons from the hotel industry. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *50*, 77–83.

Tran, X., & Ralston, L. (2006). Tourist preferences influence of unconscious needs. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *33*(2), 424–441. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2005.10.014

Tse, P., & Crotts, J. C. (2005). Antecedents of novelty seeking: International visitors' propensity to experiment across Hong Kong's culinary traditions. *Tourism Management*, *26*(6), 965–968.

Ulker-Demirel, E., & Ciftci, G. (2020). A systematic literature review of the theory of planned behavior in tourism, leisure and hospitality management research. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, *43*, 209–219. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2020.04.003

Van der Zee, E., & Bertocchi, D. (2018). Finding patterns in urban tourist behaviour: A social network analysis approach based on TripAdvisor reviews. *Information Technology & Tourism*, *20*(1), 153–180. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40558-018-0128-5

Van Der Zee, E., Bertocchi, D., & Vanneste, D. (2020). Distribution of tourists within urban heritage destinations: A hot spot/cold spot analysis of TripAdvisor data as support for destination management. *Current Issues in Tourism*, *23*(2), 175–196. https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2018.1491955

Vermeulen, I. E., & Seegers, D. (2009). Tried and tested: The impact of online hotel reviews on consumer consideration. *Tourism Management*, *30*(1), 123–127.

Vogt, C. A., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (1998). Expanding the functional information search model. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *25*(3), 551–578.

Vohs, K. D., Wang, Y., Gino, F., & Norton, M. I. (2013). Rituals enhance consumption. *Psychological Science*, *24*(9), 1714–1721.

Wang, D., Park, S., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (2012). The role of smartphones in mediating the touristic experience. *Journal of Travel Research*, *51*(4), 371–387.

Weiermair, K. (2000). Tourists' perceptions towards and satisfaction with service quality in the cross-cultural service encounter: Implications for hospitality and tourism management. *Managing Service Quality*, *10*(6).

Woodside, A. G., & Lysonski, S. (1989). A general model of traveler destination choice. *Journal of Travel Research*, *27*(4), 8–14.

Woodside, A. G., MacDonald, R., & Burford, M. (2004). Grounded theory of leisure travel. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, *17*(1), 7–39.

Xia, J. (Cecilia), Arrowsmith, C., Jackson, M., & Cartwright, W. (2008). The wayfinding process relationships between decision-making and landmark utility. *Tourism Management*, *29*(3), 445–457. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2007.05.010

Xiang, Z., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (2020). Travel information search. *Handbook of E-Tourism*, 1–20.

Xiang, Z., & Gretzel, U. (2010). Role of social media in online travel information search. *Tourism Management*, *31*(2), 179–188. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2009.02.016

Xiang, Z., Magnini, V. P., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (2015). Information technology and consumer behavior in travel and tourism: Insights from travel planning using the internet. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *22*, 244–249.

Xu, D., Chen, T., Pearce, J., Mohammadi, Z., & Pearce, P. L. (2021). Reaching audiences through travel vlogs: The perspective of involvement. *Tourism Management*, *86*, 104326. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2021.104326

Ye, Q., Law, R., Gu, B., & Chen, W. (2011). The influence of user-generated content on traveler behavior: An empirical investigation on the effects of e-word-of-mouth to hotel online bookings. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *27*(2), 634–639.

Yi, C., Jiang, Z., & Benbasat, I. (2010). *Towards organized search and unexpected discoveries: The impacts of product tags and featured users on online product search*. https://aisel.aisnet.org/icis2010_submissions/189/

Yolal, M. (2016). Authenticity, commodification, and McDonaldization of tourism experiences in the context of cultural tourism. In *The handbook of managing and marketing tourism experiences* (pp. 217–233). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Yu, C.-E., & Sun, R. (2019). The role of Instagram in the UNESCO's creative city of gastronomy: A case study of Macau. *Tourism Management*, *75*, 257–268. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2019.05.011

Yu, C.-E., Xie, S. Y., & Wen, J. (2020). Coloring the destination: The role of color psychology on Instagram. *Tourism Management*, *80*, 104110. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2020.104110

Yuzhanin, S., & Fisher, D. (2016). The efficacy of the theory of planned behavior for predicting intentions to choose a travel destination: A review. *Tourism Review*, *71*(2), 135–147. https://doi.org/10.1108/TR-11-2015-0055

Zach, F., & Gretzel, U. (2011). Tourist-activated networks: Implications for dynamic bundling and en route recommendations. *Information Technology & Tourism*, *13*(3), 229–238.

Zalatan, A. (1998). Wives involvement in tourism decision processes. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *25*(4), 890–903.