


# CO CREATING TRAVEL EXPERIENCES IN A DESTINATION IN CRISIS ON YOUTUBE VLOGGS

## Abstract

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*Purpose* – The purposes of this study were to explore the aspects of crisis destinations that tourists described in their YouTube vlogs, and their co-creation motives.

*Methodology/Design/Approach* – A purposive sampling was drawn to select ten videos uploaded to YouTube during the crisis in Sri Lanka based on keyword searches. A thematic analysis was employed to analyse the verbatim content of the videos using QDA Miner Lite software.

*Findings* – The findings revealed that tourists who share their experiences in YouTube vlogs tend to provide information about the crisis, tourist safety, and their self-reflection as vloggers. They co-create cognitive information and share empathetic content about incidents they have encountered at the destinations. Further, tourists co-create content for different motives: to receive rewards, for entertainment purposes, to help other tourists, and to support affected locals in destinations in crisis areas with their contributions in YouTube travel vlogs.

*Originality of the research* – Vlogging on social media is becoming a popular trend, and tourists' co-creations on travel vlogs are attracting the attention of many stakeholders in the tourism industry. However, co-creating tourist travel experiences in developing destinations during a crisis through YouTube travel vlogs is still an under-researched area.

**Keywords** Co-creation, Travel Experiences, YouTube Vlogs, Destinations in Crisis, Sri Lanka.

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## INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the most vulnerable industries in times of crises (Coombs, 2015; Nasir & Yilmaz, 2017; Khalid et al., 2020; Pongsakornrungsilp et al., 2022; Zaman et al., 2022) such as SARs, economic recessions, terrorist attacks, natural disasters, and, more recently, COVID-19, impacted global tourism adversely (Pongsakornrungsilp et al., 2022). In this background, several tourism-related studies have identified social media as an effective communication tool during crisis situations (Freberg et al., 2013; Kim & Fesenmaier, 2015; Pappas & Glyptou, 2021); for example, Twitter users' use of tourism hashtags during the COVID-19 pandemic (Carvache-Franco et al., 2022), Facebook use during the ash cloud of 2010 (Hvass, 2013), and Instagram posts being used to communicate on the health crisis before and during the COVID-19 pandemic (Mele et al., 2023). This shows that the existing literature has explored the use of social media as a strategic communication tool by DMOs (Pongsakornrungsilp et al., 2022; Carvache-Franco et al., 2022; Mele et al., 2023) and provide a limited scope on crisis management and potential opportunities resulting from the pandemic to direct and expand contributions to future tourism research and the tourism industry (Sigala, 2020).

Against this backdrop, social media influences the experience co creation process of individual travellers by allowing them to share, promote and discuss the travel experiences which finally result in stored memories and past experiences on travel journeys and create fashions, modes, and meanings on social media (Sigala, 2016). Co-creation is a particular kind of experience, resulting from active participation and interactive experience (Pralhad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo & Lusch, 2004; 2008; Fuller et al., 2011). Individuals engage in experience co-creation when they are in an environment allowing broader experiences, when they interact in a particular event and integrate the experience outcomes (Ramaswamy, 2006). Previous research studies evidence that tourists who visit destinations undergoing crisis also co create their experiences at the destination on social media (Glyptou, 2021; Pappas & Glyptou, 2021). These experiences, of course, are personal. Such experiences provide implications on levels of involvement at different touch points and at different levels such as rational, emotional, sensorial, physical, and spiritual (Gentile et al., 2007). For example, shared images or videos work as non-personal mediators for tourists' experiences in two ways; they are anticipatory and are reflections of destinations for viewers and virtually enable others to experience such places, while at the post-visit stage, they involve recollection processes, and remembering and recalling past experiences (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009). Thus, co-creating such travel experiences on social media works as an effective communication tool enabling indirect marketing for the affected destinations (Glyptou, 2021; Pappas & Glyptou, 2021). It is particularly powerful if integrated to destination branding strategy (Oliveira & Panyik, 2015; Xu et al., 2022) since irrespective of the distance and time, tourists interact with other people including family, friends, colleagues, service providers, and even strangers via various social media platforms while undergoing their travel experiences (Fan et al., 2019).

On these lines, in terms of social media, travel vlogging provides a rich perspective exploring tourists' co creating experiences at destinations on social media. Vlogging is a consequent phenomenon of co-creating experience value with the rapid development of social media (Peralta, 2019; Briciu & Briciu, 2020; Silaban et al., 2022). Vlogs refer to video blogs or video logs (Griffith &

Papacharissi, 2010) and are comprised of videos of narratives and images of tourists' travel experiences (Peralta, 2019; Silaban et al., 2022) which are publicly available for viewing online—most often on social media sites (Xu et al., 2021). According to Peralta (2019), vloggers create videos on their own travel experiences based on the destinations, food, people, culture, transportation, and lifestyles. Hence, travel vloggers are, in a manner of speaking, influencers. Their intentions of vlogging can be varied: promoting destinations, promoting their popularity as vloggers, encouraging people to visit places, earning income from broadcasting videos or simply narrating a story. Another important feature is the difference between destination promotion videos (made by DMOs) and travel vlogs, where destination promotion videos focus on the people who are interested in a destination, while travel vlogs make videos that become viral among prospective travellers and among the fan community—or fandom—of the vlogger on different social networking platforms (Xu et al., 2021). However, tourists' co-created travel experiences on vlogs related to aspects of destinations in crisis remain undetermined as yet and need to be explored further.

In this context, YouTube is one of the most popular social media platforms which broadcast travel vlogs (Ladhari et al., 2020) which enables users to upload, view, share and comment on videos (Arora & Lata, 2020). YouTube is the second most used social media platform after Facebook, with more than 2.5 billion active users (Statista, 2023). With its popularity, YouTube vlogging is becoming increasingly influential. Travelers prefer YouTube vlogs as they are more convincing and attractive due to visual presentation (Zhang et al., 2018; Silaban et al., 2022). Moreover, videos of travel destinations on YouTube enhance the stature of the destination and increase tourist arrivals (Tsai et al., 2017; Arora & Lata, 2020). This shows that travel vlogs on YouTube are a significant source of destination promotion that have been underutilized and underexplored as a strategy of marketing destinations in crisis. Thus, there is a dearth of studies on YouTube travel vlogs—describing travel experiences during a crisis from the tourists' perspective—which can be used as destination marketing tools (Peralta, 2019). Accordingly, this study addresses two research objectives:

- To explore the aspects of destinations that travel vloggers who travel in crisis destinations co-create on YouTube vlogs.
- To gain an understanding on what motivates travel vloggers to co-create their experiences at a crisis destination on YouTube vlogs.

## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1.1. Tourists' experience value co-creation

Service-dominant logic (SDL) with value-in-use explains how value is created by the customer rather than value creation for the customer. Value does not actually exist, but to generate it, a customer must co-create his or her experiences (Neuhofer & Buhalis, 2014). The literature suggests that myriad possibilities exist for value co-creation through interactions between consumers and the firm as well as among consumers themselves (Pralhad & Ramaswamy, 2000). Thus, value emerges during consumption or experience (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). From the tourists' psychological perspective on co-creation, the tourism experience is defined as “the sum of the psychological events that a tourist goes through when contributing actively through physical and/or mental participation in activities and interacting with other subjects in the experience environment” (Campos et al., 2018) while online platform based co-creation is identified as the experience of value co-creation generates via the destination related information and the technology which results the interactions between user to user (Lam et al., 2020). Accordingly, this implies that consumer experiences have extended towards more consumer-centric and empowered pathways to shape the co-creation of consumer personal experiences and value via technology (Pralhad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Compared to tangible products, tourism is an ideal example of an experiential value co-creation context (Zhang et al., 2018).

Based on SDL Payne et al. (2008) developed a conceptual framework to understand and manage value co-creation, which synthesizes concepts on services, customer value and relationship marketing and is rooted in principle 6 of Service dominant logic, namely, that “The customer is always a co-creator of value: There is no value until an offering is used experience and perception are essential to value determination”. Further, the authors argue that customers can be considered as ‘feelers’ and ‘doers’, as well as ‘thinkers’ and the resulting behaviour may not always be goal directed. Within the customer process component of the co-creation framework, three elements of the relationship experience were identified as cognition, emotion, and behavior. According to Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) definition, Payne et al. (2008) explain that cognition needs to be viewed from the information-processing perspective, which focuses on memory-based activities and on processes that are “more sub-conscious and private in nature.” Therefore, emotions and feelings are more than ‘affect’ which emphasizes attitudes and preferences. Finally, behavior is identified as a set of actions that emerge and result in experiences. Most often, a holiday trip is a voluntary act and tourists willingly perform these acts to meet their personal and hedonic needs, since they want to do so. Tourists participate in their travel journey before, during, and after the trip and spend time, effort, and money throughout the trip because they are valued by themselves and others. Hence, from the tourists' perspective, co-creation encompasses the behaviour and psychology involved throughout the experience in all stages of the travel cycle (Campos et al., 2018). However, tourists' shared experiences are not just personal experiences; they are the outcome of what they see from their broader social perspectives (Campos et al., 2018; Sigala, 2016; Lam et al., 2020). Payne et al. (2008) highlighted that customers' active and empowered roles influence their benefits, activities, and abilities. In a study by Xu et al. (2022) on Chinese bloggers, Chinese tourists recorded their memorable experiences in Gulangyu in terms of their preferred activities and cognitive perceptions by comparing different destination attributes and emotional experiences at the destination after their visits to their blogs or online

travel communities. These further provide insight into how and what satisfies and motivates them to write about a destination in their travel communities. Exploring the experience co-creation of tourists in a crisis destination on social media from cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects is dearth and vital.

## 1.2. Tourist's co creation of travel experiences in destinations in crisis on social media

The phenomenon of 'Crisis' has been differently defined by a number of scholars (e.g., Faulkner, 2003; Coombs, 2007; Coombs, 2010). A crisis is a situation fundamentally caused by poor choices and decision making such as incompetent management structure and practices, or difficulty in adjusting to change (Faulkner, 2003). Further, a crisis is distinguished by four criteria: unpredictability, threat to stakeholder expectation, impact on organizational performance, and potential for negative outcomes (Coombs, 2007; Coombs, 2010). It eventually leads a system to collapse (Cordero, 2014). Accordingly, crisis is an abstract notion which can be seen from different perspectives based on the situation and the nature of the crisis. Its effects are felt at different levels, individual, organizational, national, regional, and global; and can lead to the collapse of entire systems in existence.

Crises are not new to tourism (Hall, 2010). Tourism as an industry, however, is stronger in terms of its structure and growth, and recovers faster than other sectors though crises can impact tourist arrivals, tourists' travel decisions, employment, and business investments (Senbeto & Hon, 2020). For example, with the global financial crisis in 2007, global tourism declined severely in 2009, but recovered rapidly and continued to contribute to world GDP growth from 2010 onwards (Jiménez-Guerrero et al., 2021). Despite this, crises can negatively impact the image of a destination, and this can be worsened by dramatized, fake information and rumours (Ritchie et al., 2004). Thus, proper communication during a crisis is of utmost importance to tourism.

In such contexts, it is evident that social media is an effective crisis communication tool (Freberg et al., 2013; Kim & Fesenmaier, 2015) and destination branding strategy (Oliveira & Panyik, 2015; Xu et al., 2022) in terms of cocreation on social media by Destination Management Organisations (DMOs') (Xu et al., 2022; Mele et al., 2023). However, the image of a destination is not created only by DMOs. Travelers who use social media also contribute to co-creation by posting stories, digital photographs, and narrations on experiences with the offerings in these destinations (Filieri et al., 2021). Accordingly, Neuhofer et al. (2013) argue that social and mobile technologies lead tourists to connect and co create their travel experiences and value without many limits. Further, traveller created or recreated experiences on social media, as user-generated content, are assumed to be more credible than the content publish by tourism businesses (Oliveira & Panyik, 2015). Apart from that, stakeholder safety is an integral part of crisis communication (Coombs et al., 2010). Information on destinations in crisis can be considered more reliable if it is shared by travellers as part of their travel experiences. Xu et al. (2022) highlights the travellers co-create their experiences in the form of sharing travel advice. This includes knowledge-related aspects about their holiday experience such as tickets, hotels/accommodations and attractions and consumption-related information and skills at the destination. Demonstrating bloggers knowledge of real holiday experience and advises guide potential tourists travel decision and prepare in advance for any matters arising on their trip. Further, bloggers co create their emotional experiences: For example, in relation to Gulangyu, the explored blogs demonstrated the overall positive feelings and emotions towards the destination. Similarly in destination in crisis context, Filieri et al. (2021) found that on tourists' co-creation on Instagram about the city of London highlight that tourists who love a destination render emotional support towards that destination in crisis. Observed from these perspectives, co-creation provides the experience environment, in other words, the benefits in terms of extracting value. However, co-creation is not always positive and co-destructions can also happen with technology facilitation. Using SDL, identifies that connection as value co creation and explains how tourists integrate ICTs to co-create both positive and negative values, and these can be found through associated tourist experiences (Neuhofer et al., 2013). However, social media has also created the conditions for individuals to be active participants in the communication process, co-creating value with other users (Filieri et al., 2021; Filieri et al., 2023). However, social media users vary in their adoption, use and scope of social media; where use is determined by the level of trust and influence, as well as final travel decisions and activities (Yuan et al., 2022). Accordingly, imagery and the videos of bloggers / vloggers are increasingly getting attention on travel in today's context (Oliveira & Panyik, 2015; Peralta, 2019; Xu et al., 2021; Xu et al., 2022). Hence, this study focused on travel vlogs on Youtube.

## 1.3. Travel vlogging on YouTube

Travel bloggers and vloggers constantly share their narratives on the destinations they visit, the people they meet, the food they try, the sights they see and the sounds they hear. They receive feedback on their videos and encourage others to visit the destinations. Vlogs are an extended feature of text blogging; whereas blogging is limited to words and photographs, vlogs employ videos created using a smartphone or a digital camera (Peralta, 2019). Videos on different themes such as daily activities, games, sports, and tourism are available on different media such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, etc. (Aran et al., 2013; Purwadi et al., 2017; Peralta, 2019; Irfan et al., 2022). With recent advances in tools used for producing videos, mobile phones with cameras, webcams and editing software, it is easy to create and post videos on platforms such as YouTube, and reach remote audiences (Aran et al., 2013). The study of Purwadi et al. (2017) notes that vlogs are informative; and viewers can watch longer, more extensive travel videos on YouTube than on Instagram. Further, viewers of YouTube videos can comment on, like and subscribe to channels they prefer to get new updates on. As the most widespread form of travel videos, travel vlogs are extensively viewed on

YouTube (Henderson, 2018). YouTube provides more entertaining experiences and creates business opportunities, for example, for influencers and micro-celebrities (Cheng et al., 2020). In 2024, it is forecasted that YouTube users will be increased continuously between 2024 and 2029 and approximately 232.5 million (+24.91 percent) people in the world will be newly joined to YouTube by 2029 (Degenhard, 2024). Since its launch in 2005, YouTube has been useful to tourism in allowing travellers to share their travel experiences in video form (Arora & Lata, 2020). YouTube allows tourists and influencers to co-create their identity in videos. Consequently, the role played by vloggers in predefining the image of a destination is growing. However, tourists' contribution via vlogging has been under explored and insufficiently revealed (Borges-Tiago et al., 2019).

Hence, in order to fill the research gap, explore what are the aspects of the destination do travel vloggers who travel in crisis destinations co-create on YouTube vlogs and on what motivates them to cocreate their experiences at a crisis destination on YouTube vlogs.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopted thematic analysis to understand the factors and themes highlighted in YouTube vlog videos on the crisis situation during the crisis in Sri Lanka, and the particular factors emphasised by these vloggers for potential tourists.

### 2.1. Study context

Many studies of crises have been conducted in developed countries due to two main reasons: studying tourism crisis management is over-reliance on tourism and crisis situations which are exacerbated by the state of uncertainty associated with developing countries as compared to developed countries and due to limited human and financial resources for tourism marketing and development, and poor governance structures and lack of tourism planning (Novelli et al., 2018). In this ground, the study context is Sri Lanka, which is a developing country with many attractions in South Asia. It was the best country in the world to visit in 2019, as per the Lonely Planet. Sri Lanka's popularity as a travel destination soared after the conclusion of the civil war in 2009. Tourism earnings of USD 349.3 Mn in 2009 increased to USD 4380.6 Mn in 2018 (Wilson, 2018). However, the Easter Sunday terrorist attack on 21st April 2019 besmirched the image of Sri Lanka, ten years after the end of the 30-year civil war (Gunasingham, 2019; Singh, 2019). During 2019, tourist arrivals to the country declined by 18 percent due to the terrorist attack. And yet, tourism was still the third-largest income earner in the local economy. In 2020 and 2021, the intermittent shutdowns of the airport and travel restrictions imposed in the country due to COVID-19 once more led to extremely low tourist arrivals to Sri Lanka ((Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, 2019; 2022). Sri Lanka lost revenue from tourism for two consecutive years (Samarathunga, 2020). According to the World Bank (2022), Sri Lanka is now in a highly unstable position due to its fiscal and external imbalances. Therefore, the state of the country today is uncertain, with the economic crisis and social and political unrest badly affecting tourism.

### 2.2. Data collection

In order to collect textual data, the videos posted on YouTube were searched based on relevance to the study scope by using the search terms, or key terms: 'travel during crisis in Sri Lanka', 'crisis in Sri Lanka', 'safety in travelling during the crisis in Sri Lanka' 'Sri Lanka vlog'. The inclusion criteria used to select the sample were: the video script should be available on YouTube; the video script should be done in English; the vloggers should have visited Sri Lanka during the crisis in Sri Lanka and posted the videos in the period between April 2022 and October 2022, and the videos should be 15 minutes or more in length. Purposive sampling was employed to select the videos. Initially, 16 videos appeared with the search of keywords and four videos were excluded due to non -English content. One was excluded due to not availability of a video script, and another one was removed due to duplication of the content. Ten videos finally remained for analysis. The total word count of the ten videos was 26863.

First, the title of the video, its vlog name, posting date and location, and the number of views for the video at the time of the researcher's viewing were recorded on an Excel sheet. Table 1 shows the population of the study, sample selection method, and sample characteristics.

Table 1: Population, Sample and Sample Characteristics

<b>Population</b>	International vloggers who shared information on the status of traveling in Sri Lanka during the crisis
<b>Sampling frame</b>	YouTube vloggers
<b>Sample size</b>	10 Video transcripts with 26863 words
<b>Sampling Method</b>	Purposive sampling
<b>Key terms</b>	"travel during crisis in Sri Lanka", "crisis in Sri Lanka" "safety in travelling during crisis in Sri Lanka"

<b>Recorded Location</b>	Sri Lanka (09), Katmandu (01)		
<b>Posted Timeframe</b>	April-October 2022		
<b>Number of views</b>	A Bangladesh	Solo	45,689 views
	B United Kingdom	Couple	33,286 views
	C Australia	Couple	184,593 views
	D India	Solo	1,085,969 views
	E United Kingdom	Couple	16,106 views
	F Australia	Couple	3,930 views
	G United Kingdom	Couple	78,902 views
	H Russia	Solo	5,269 views
	I Turkey	Couple	11,278 views
	J India	Solo	2,720,594 views

The QDA Minor Lite software was used for data coding. The main purpose of using the software was to identify the word frequencies in relation to the crisis and travel experience. The transcripts which were in MS Word format, were then imported to the QDA Minor Lite software. The study adopted thematic analysis (TA) to organize and describe the data with the underlying themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). TA was chosen since this method provides a rich and detailed view of the phenomenon and data sources can be any sort of literature, interviews which are individual and or/focus group, focus groups and social media and other related methods (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Berbekova et al., 2021). First, at the initial coding stage, 553 reference points were identified. 54 open codes were generated next. Then, thirteen interpretative codes were identified and finally, these codes were grouped into four main themes. Thereafter, split coding was performed, and one member of the team coded each transcript. Subsequently, questions or concerns related to the codes were discussed during research meetings. This enhanced the trustworthiness of the study (Richards & Hemphill, 2018).

### 3. FINDINGS

The first research question aims to explore the aspects tourists' co create on a destination in crisis on YouTube Vlogs.

#### 3.1. Information on the crisis

This theme explains the cognitive information about the crisis in Sri Lanka. It contains narratives on the crisis, causes for the economic crisis, and the difficulties faced by the locals as consequences (Table 2).

##### 3.1.1. Narratives on the crisis

Tourists provide a brief narrative of the crisis in the country and give a description of the economic crisis as the basis for the political crisis and social unrest in the country. An Indian solo vlogger highlights it at the beginning of his vlog as follows.

*“Right now, Sri Lanka is in a very bad condition and... It's facing a very severe Political and Economic crisis...Which many of you might already be aware of”.*

Several vloggers created narratives of the crisis in the country at the start of their accounts and stated that the economic crisis is the basis for the political instability of the country which they witness right now. The vlogger from Bangladesh mentioned this fact as follows:

*“Sri Lanka is in a political crisis right now, but all of this basically started from an economic crisis which led to Sri Lanka being basically bankrupt”.*

##### 3.1.2. Causes for the economic crisis.

Tourists explained that the crisis in Sri Lanka is a result of many factors, and that those factors in combination influenced the crisis situation prevailing in the country. Vloggers identify that the economic crisis is due to a lack of foreign reserves in the country. The causes of the economic crisis were highlighted as over dependence on tourism, mismanagement by the government and problems with the power generating sources of the country.

The over dependency on tourism was explained by the Bangladesh vlogger as follows:

*“Sri Lanka was over depending on the tourism and due to various causes, such as 2019 attack, covid 19 pandemic and travel restrictions, tourists were stopped coming to the country limited the foreign currency or revenue coming to the country”.*

The second point they mentioned was the mismanagement of the government in terms of tax policy, new agricultural policy, loans from other countries, and nepotism in the political system in Sri Lanka.

The third code was identified as the power and energy sources of the country, as Sri Lanka depends a great deal on hydro power, and bad weather conditions (lack of rain) increases the demand on fuel as an alternative power generating source.

### 3.1.3. Difficulties faced by the locals.

The difficulties faced by the locals are explained by tourists in various ways: difficulties in importing essentials and health care products, gas and fuel shortages, fuel queues and inflation within the country. The vlogger from Bangladesh connects all the difficulties faced by locals as follows.

*“So, this meant they couldn't buy like very essential stuff from abroad because they didn't have the money to buy it. They didn't have the money to buy fuel, which is probably one of the most important things. They didn't have the money to buy very essential medical supplies and this lack of foreign currency also led to inflation that the country had never seen before in all these decades since independence, and it led to the basic commodities getting more expensive without people's salaries”.*

### 3.2. Tourists' safety at the destination during the crisis

The second major theme identified from the narratives of tourists was whether travelling to a destination in conditions of crisis is safe for a tourist. This theme explains 1) the crisis reported by the media 2) tourists' destination experiences: positive and negative aspects related to tourists' safety in travelling in Sri Lanka 3) the precautions in place for tourists who are visiting the destination during the crisis.

A vlogger from the United Kingdom used the word “repeat” to attempt to communicate again and again that the country was absolutely safe.

*“There is absolutely no danger in Sri Lanka for the tourists. I repeat that again there is no danger for the tourists it is just as safe as it always has been now right now in Sri Lanka”.*

An Australian vlogger explained the difference between what he had hear from the media and his own experience from the time of arrival to the airport to the day he created the vlog as follows.

*“You know like I said before when we'll drive from the airport that when we first decided to come to Sri Lanka you know, you see the media, the media make it so bad like it's sort of dangerous like it's not electronic cars no car running but everything is still fine. yeah, but as a like a tourist you know you're super safe here and people are soft.”.*

Tourists' destination experiences: The positive factors were the airport procedures, prices, hospitality and friendliness of the people, the sites not being crowded, availability of food in the market, accommodation, destination attributes, and activities in which tourists were involved. Furthermore, destination attributes such as nature, culture, religion, activities engaged in, places visited, history and sculpture. Tourists' past experiences in Sri Lanka and empathy towards the Sri Lankans were also positive aspects that highlighted the safety of visiting Sri Lanka.

On the other hand, the negative aspects of travelling during the crisis were travel delays, transport difficulties, special facilities in an accommodation needed to be sought due to fuel and gas unavailability and the power cuts: for example, a vlogger from the United Kingdom had this to say:

*“Suffering that's probably the hardest bit about being in Sri Lanka, traveling in Sri Lanka right now, it's got nothing to do with the power cuts the lack of gas and these kinds of things, you know, no I can't think of anything”.*

Finally, the precautions for tourists who are planning to visit based on these vloggers' experiences were also identified: flexibility, have contingency plans for budget tourists. Similarly, Nasir & Yilmaz (2017) also highlighted in a research study during terrorist attacks at Istanbul, the tourists pointed out that visiting Istanbul even during a crisis was valuable in terms of emotional, functional, and overall values. Furthermore, they were positive about the destination atmosphere, travel environment, attractions & events, shopping, accommodation, and dining dimensions, even when they were at risk reflection as a Vlogger.

### 3.3. Vloggers' self-reflections

Under this theme, tourists' self-reflections in terms of their spending, their lifestyle in terms of their hobbies, what they take with them when they travel, and travel preferences were explained. A Turkish vlogger explained the equipment he brought to Sri Lanka. All those go-pro devices and drones were for creating videos. This reflects these vloggers' travel modes, their spending as well as their lifestyles.

*“I’m so excited to be on that tuk-tuk and travel around Sri Lanka. I have two heavy bags, one in the front, all my equipment is here and the one at the back my clothes and etc this one is an expensive bag but this one is cheap. I have everything here inside I have my go-pro I have my drone and my everything you are my everything yes, it is my everything”.*

### 3.4 Motivations for vlogging on a crisis destination

The second objective of the study was to identify tourists’ motivations for co creating value on a crisis destination on their vlogs.

#### 3.4.1. Rewards

Travel vloggers sometimes develop videos on destinations in crisis due to the financial rewards they receive. Some travellers mentioned that they maintain vlogs as their means of living, in other words, that it is their profession. A Bangladeshi vlogger highlighted that vlogging is his means of living. In other words, his profession or career is making travel-related videos.

*“I was traveling as much as I could around the countries to popular tourist destinations and making videos because that’s kind of what I do for a living: make videos for this channel”.*

Another reward is to expand their follower base. Therefore, most of the time, they request their viewers to subscribe to their channel, as follows.

*“If you like this video, feel free to hit the like button”.*

#### 3.4.1. Entertainment

A vlogger from the United Kingdom works as an English teacher and travels as a hobby or entertainment activity. While travelling, he creates videos. He further promotes his online English classes among his followers and those who watch his travel videos.

*“The days I’m at home I’m working, and I teach English online to help me be able to travel which by the way if any of you want English lessons, I’ll leave the link down below feel free to book a lesson with me, it’ll help me keep traveling and make videos so one thing”.*

This shows that vloggers have different motivations to create vlog videos. Therefore, several reasons were cited by these tourists as their motivations for creating vlogs on a crisis destination.

#### 3.4.2. To help other tourists

Tourists are motivated to develop videos on crisis destinations to help other tourists or viewers of their vlogs, who are interested in knowing about the crisis destinations.

*“This is just something a lot of people are asking me about, so I wanted to clarify. If you know someone who might have benefited from watching this video, feel free to share this with them. That’s it for this one”.*

#### 3.4.3. To help the locals

A vlogger from the United Kingdom expressed his motivation to convince other tourists to visit the country, to help Sri Lankans who are facing difficulties due to the crisis.

*“Everything about Sri Lanka is amazing. It’s got to be one of my favourite places I’ve ever experienced in my whole life. If just one person decides to come to Sri Lanka, thanks to this video, then I’ll consider this video a success”.*

Table 2: Summary of Findings

Research objectives	Themes	Subthemes
The aspects of the destination that travel vloggers who travel in crisis destinations co-create on YouTube vlogs.	<b>1.Information on the crisis</b>	Narratives on the crisis
		Causes for the economic crisis.
		Difficulties faced by the locals.
	<b>2. Tourists Safety at the destination during the crisis</b>	Crisis reported by the media.
		Positive on travelling during the crisis. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Friendly airport procedures, favourable prices, hospitality and friendliness of the people, the sites not being crowded, availability of food in the market, accommodation, activities in which tourists were involved.</li> <li>destination attributes they experienced such as nature, culture, religion, activities engaged in, places visited, history and sculpture.</li> <li>Tourists' past experiences in Sri Lanka and empathy towards the Sri Lankans were also positive aspects that highlighted the safety of visiting Sri Lanka.</li> </ul>
<b>Negative aspects</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>travel delays, transport difficulties, special facilities in an accommodation needed to be sought due to fuel and gas unavailability and the power cuts.</li> </ul>		
	The precautions in place for tourists flexibility, have contingency plans for budget tourists.	
	<b>Vloggers' self-reflections</b>	their spending, their lifestyle in terms of their hobbies, what they take with them when they travel, and travel preferences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Motivation of vloggers to cocreate their experiences at a crisis destination on YouTube.</li> </ul>	Motivations for vlogging on a crisis destination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rewards</li> <li>Entertainment</li> <li>To help other tourists</li> <li>To help the locals</li> </ul>

#### 4. DISCUSSION

Several studies mention that tourists co-create their personal experiences at the destinations, rather than crisis-related information (e.g.: Pappas & Glyptou, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2023; Mele et al., 2023). In contrast, it is found in the current study that tourists co-create cognitive information such as background information on the crisis along with tourists' safety at the destination in crisis, and tourists' self-reflections as vloggers on YouTube, regardless of efforts taken by other stakeholders such as locals, DMOs, TOs etc. Though vloggers were emphatic about the difficulties faced by the locals due to the crisis, they demonstrated some strong feelings when explaining travel safety at the destination. This supports the findings of Xu et al. (2022) that tourists not only co-create cognitive information but also their emotions. Further, the researchers highlighted that the information provided via videos demonstrates the real experience at the destination which works as advice to future travellers. Further, Nguyen et al. (2023), a cognitive image is derived from the actual situation at the affected destination, and the affective situation is formed through tourists' encounters at destinations. Further, both cognitive and affective images created through their experiences lead tourists towards empathetic behaviours towards both in-group and out-group stakeholders. In particular, customers' attitudes toward interaction and responsive attitudes lead to co-creation via engaging in participation and citizenship behavior (Ahn et al., 2020). Moreover, Novelli et al. (2018) point out that most crisis-related social media studies have been conducted on developed travel destinations: for example, tourists' accommodation choices in Greece during Covid 19 (Pappas & Glyptou,



2021); investigating the role of integrated resort customers' value co-creation attitude on their co-creation behaviour (Ahn et al., 2020); comparison on how Milan and Paris' DMOs communicated via their Instagram accounts before and during the health crisis (Mele et al., 2023). Hence, this implies that tourists co-create more on the crisis on their vlogs while they travel in developing destinations like Sri Lanka than when travelling during crises in developed countries.

Moreover, this study identified that the motivations of tourists towards the co-creation of their experiences at a crisis destination are not limited to personal rewards and entertainment. Moreover, if tourists are highly satisfied with their overall travel experience, they express it. They will also recommend their visits to others and are willing to revisit the destination (Nasir & Yilmaz, 2017). Furthermore, most user-generated videos on YouTube and TikTok are developed by individuals, not so much by companies, to spread word-of-mouth communication on branded products (Filiari et al., 2023). However, as stated by Nguyen et al. (2023) in relation to crisis destinations, tourists who co-create their experiences on vlogs demonstrate empathetic behaviour. Similarly, in this study, vloggers demonstrated empathetic motivations for co-creating with the intention of helping other tourists as well as locals affected by the crisis.

## 5. IMPLICATION

### 5.1. Theoretical implications

This study fills the research gap by providing a rich description of the aspects of the crisis in a tourism-dependent developing country that vloggers co-create on their vlogs, describing their motivations with empirical evidence. Thus, exploring co-creation aspects of a destination in crisis by vloggers on YouTube and the motives behind such actions from the tourists' perspective may expand the scope of value co-creation towards marketing the crisis. The concept of co-creation, which is the theoretical basis of SDL, has been applied to explore facets of tourists' attitudes and experiences through their responses, engagement, and relationship with destination image (Ahn et al., 2020; Nguyen et al., 2023; Mele et al. 2023). However, in terms of theoretical contribution, this study is in line with Payne et al. (2008), where the relationship experience concept in the customer value creation process is developed based on the SDL assumption of the experiences a customer undergoes over a time period, creates relevant meanings by expressing cognitive information, emotions, and behaviours in their travel vlogs. Further, the study reflects tourists' cognitive and emotional connectivity to a destination, and tourists' behaviours at the destination as evaluations of those expressed in vlogs affect the value co-creation on a destination (Xu et al., 2022). Theoretically, this study supports the fact that tourists are not just passive consumers of experiences, but they are also active co-creators of travel experiences through social media platforms like YouTube. This highlights the importance of considering the role of tourists as co-creators, similar to how companies co-create content with their audience on social media (Oliveira & Panyik, 2015). Furthermore, it is found that tourists also co-create cognitive information in terms of background information about the crisis, other than the positive and negative aspects that affect for tourists' safety in the destination during a crisis. It can lead potential tourists to take precautions and help for make decisions. On the other hand, tourists connect their emotions and empathetic behaviours towards the locals in various encounters at a destination and express their motivations to create the vlogs. Further, exploring tourists' conscious and unconscious initiatives of co-creating value contributes to co-repairing or co-restoring the affected destination's image during adverse times (Glyptou, 2021).

### 5.2. Managerial implications

This study has implications for tourism policymakers, tourism associations, tourism businesses, and local communities, especially in developing plans and policies for promoting tourism destinations during a crisis. Several scholars identified the importance of consumer-generated tourism content marketing (Yoo & Gretzel, 2010; Nguyen et al., 2023) as an important perspective for the economic development of countries that are making great efforts to develop their economy through tourism after a crisis: for example, to reestablish the destination image and resolve booking issues during the Covid 19 pandemic (Nguyen et al., 2023). This provides the implication for the tourism development authorities and tourism businesses to integrate the tourist-created experiences at a destination with their destination branding strategies. In addition, tourists' actual experiences are often more trustworthy than what is broadcast on media news. Apart from that, it was observed that tourists co-create their experiences not just based on personal rewards but also due to empathetic and voluntary motives for helping others. Hence, how stories about travel experiences are told contributes to practical knowledge related to creating and dramatizing stories (Adam, 2015). Business firms and authorities need to encourage tourists to co-create the destination experiences by rewarding and recognising their efforts. Further, tourists' experiences in the co-creation of engagement depend on safeguarding and ensuring the actual visitation intention (Glyptou, 2021). During a crisis, it is necessary to communicate accurate information to reduce the risk perception of tourists (Coombs, 2010; Pee & Lee, 2016; Ouyang et al., 2020). This raises the importance of using social media vlogs like YouTube and travel vlogs as strategic communication tools during times of crisis. However, the quality and quantity of information on experiences should be deemed worthy of attention by policymakers, relevant authorities, and tourism companies. Hence, they should be aware that technology-enabled co-creation of tourists' experiences can potentially co-create value construction as well as value destruction (Neuhofer et al., 2013).

## 7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This study has several limitations. Firstly, the implications of this study are limited to the co-creation of crisis information as tourist experiences in YouTube travel vlogs. This study was limited to the analysis of only ten verbatim video scripts and did not investigate the accompanying images and photographs displayed in the videos by the vloggers. Thirdly, this study focused on the co-creation of experiences in destinations in crisis by vloggers via YouTube and does not address the vlogs from the viewers' perspective. These limitations emphasize the need for further studies to explore the underlying dynamics of motives for tourist experience co-creation, particularly in the context of YouTube travel vlogs. Fourthly, the findings of this study provide insights into enhancing the co-creation of tourist experiences in similar developing destinations, as a destination marketing strategy. However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations in generalizing the specific findings related to this tourist destination to others. Therefore, future research should consider these limitations and explore the co-creation of tourist experiences in similar contexts.

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