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## **PREVENTING AND HANDLING FOOD POISONING THROUGH USER REVIEWS**

### **Abstract:**

Restaurants and the other organizations that serve food and beverages are more aware of online reputation and their importance for decision making than ever before. Many of them, except communication on the official websites, are engaging in online communication through social networking sites (Rutsaert et al., 2013). Visibility is important but even more are important users' opinions posted online. They represent user experiences which other user are very likely to take into account when they are making decisions about consuming certain product or a service (Jakopović, 2016). There are more than a few websites that are specialized in providing platforms for rating and reviewing restaurants all over the world (TripAdvisor, Yelp) and restaurants are keen to use positive reviews and ratings for promotional purposes (for example using sticker Recommended on TripAdvisor at the entrance of a restaurant). On the other side, what happens when reviews – user-generated content (UGC) starts to undermine restaurant's reputation in the online space and when there are worst scenarios with "food poisoning", "diarrhea", „salmonella“ and „ „Escherichia coli" (Gaspar et al., 2016)? How can public relations manage this online content and use it for prevention of further contamination and poisoning? How can this content be identified on time before it spreads outside the space where it occurred and grows into general food crisis with irreversible harmful consequences for organizational reputation? In the light of set challenges for maintaining and improving organizational reputation, the author associates the use of user-generated content with the approaches concerning prevention and managing crisis in the food industry.

### **Keywords:**

food poisoning; online reputation; user-generated content; crisis communication; public relations

**JEL Classification:** H12, D83, L66