

SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE FOR TRAVEL INFORMATION AND ITS DETERMINANTS: A STUDY OF MILLENNIALS

Shikha Sota*, Harish Chaudhry**

**Research Scholar, Department of Management Studies, Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, India. Email: shikhasota@gmail.com*

***Associate Professor, Department of Management Studies, Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, India.*

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the factors that motivate millennials to consume travel information through social media platforms. It is also aimed at profiling millennials to understand their travel-related information consumption behaviour through social media platforms. This study used primary data which was collected through a self-administered questionnaire. A total of 488 usable questionnaires filled up by millennials were used to test the seven hypotheses formulated. ANOVA, t-test, and Structure Equation modeling (SEM) were used for data analysis. The findings reveal that perceived risk is a strong predictor of social media use for travel information followed by usefulness of the information; whereas, ease of use, emerged as a weak predictor, unlike previous studies. The results also show that millennials of varied gender, age group, and educational backgrounds behave differently when it comes to consumption of social media information. This study will help tourism and hospitality professionals to be more socially conscious by understanding the role of content on social media platforms and the factors that determine its usage. It will also help them in targeting their prospects by pushing the relevant information to them. The core contribution of this study is the understanding of factors for their consumption of social media information. Also, it contributes towards profiling them on the basis of gender, age, and educational qualification. The data is collected from Indian millennials; therefore it gives insights of a country which has huge number of millennials along with massive social media usage.

Keywords: *Social Media, Tourism, Millennials, Travel, Decision-Making*

Introduction

Technological developments have impacted almost every aspect of our lives, including how people consume products and information. The advancements in technology have led to researchers probing into the understanding of consumer behaviour. One of the phenomena which has a huge impact on society and consumer behaviour is the internet and in particular social media. The tourism and hospitality industry is highly influenced by the use of social media (Ayeh et al., 2013; Hur et al., 2017). The impact of social media on the travel and tourism industry can be seen before, during and after travel (Amaro et al., 2016). The tourism industry is also hugely impacted by the overwhelming numbers of millennials, who like to travel (Fromm, 2018). The individuals born between 1982 and 2004 are known as millennials and are also popularly called as Generation Y or Net generation (Howe and Strauss, 2009). The total number of millennials in India account for her one-third population and 46% of the workforce (Morgan Stanley, 2017). According to the same report by Morgan Stanley (2017), the country is on the threshold of becoming the youngest country in the world in the next two years, with a median age of 29. The country is not just high on the number of millennials, but also on the usage of internet and social media. As per Statista (2017), the internet users of India are nearly 460 million, of which mobile internet users are approximately 440 million.

The unprecedented growth of the internet and social media, along with an increasing number of millennials has motivated us to study the impact of it on consumer behaviour. This study aims at understanding as the online travel-related information seeking behaviour of Indian millennials. We seek to contribute by researching and understanding the motives of millennials who use information on social media platforms for travel-related purposes. The first part of this paper reviews the existing literature and underlying theories to formulate the hypotheses. The second part of the paper presents the quantitative analysis of hypotheses using 488 usable responses from millennials to understand their social media behaviour. The last section of the paper discusses the conclusions that are drawn from the empirical analysis followed by implications of the study.

Theoretical Background

Social Media, Travel and Millennials

Kaplan and Haenlin (2010, p. 61) define social media as a “group of Internet-based applications build on the ideological and technological foundations

of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content (UGC)". The emergence of online platforms and social media pages have changed the way travelers search, rank, evaluate and make decisions regarding their purchase of travel related products and services (Varkaris & Neuhofer, 2017; Buhalis & Law, 2008). Numerous studies have been done in the past to infer that social media has an impact on travel planning (Sparks & Browning, 2011; Sparks et al., 2013; Xie et al., 2014; Yoo et al., 2011). Travel organizations use social media to a very large extent for communication of their messages (Akehurst, 2009; Song & Yoo, 2016) and consider that the information posted by the actual users of the service is most influential (Kang & Schuett, 2013). Some studies have also recognized the importance of UGC and how consumers look for such information (Goldsmith & Horowitz, 2006; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004, Filieri et al., 2015). Social media helps in giving access to a lot of UGC through blogs, videos, pictures, tagging shared via Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and the like (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Youth travelers have become one of the important segments of the travel and tourism industry. Millennials are the digital natives (Krishnan, 2017) and have grown up in an increasingly online and socially networked world. A research done by Richards and Wilson (2003) indicated that millennials are eager to gain new experiences and therefore they are traveling more. In fact, 23% of all international tourists who traveled the world in 2016 were millennials (World Tourism Organization, 2017).

The travel information that one looks for when planning a vacation is of various kinds. There is information regarding choice of accommodation, choice of travel activities, choice of travel destinations, choice of restaurants and choice of tour operators (Jacobsen & Munar, 2012). Gender has an impact on social media use and males tend to use most social media platforms more than females (Kim et al., 2014). In order to understand the behaviour of millennials better, we propose the following hypotheses to see if men and women millennials differ in their behaviour in social media information consumption behaviour of various kinds of travel information.

H1a: There is no significant difference between males and females pertaining to consumption of choice of accommodation information via social media.

H1b: There is no significant difference between males and females pertaining to consumption of choice of travel activities information via social media.

H1c: There is no significant difference between males and females pertaining to consumption of choice of travel destination information via social media.

H1d: There is no significant difference between males and females pertaining to consumption of choice of restaurants information via social media.

H1e: There is no significant difference between males and females pertaining to consumption of choice of tour operator information via social media.

The following postulations were made to understand if the distribution of choice of travel-related information is same across the categories of age. The millennials are people born between 1982 and 2004 and we categorized the information four categories being 16-20 years, 21-25 years, 26-30 years and 31-35 years.

H2a: There is no significant difference between the categories of age pertaining to consumption of choice of accommodation information via social media.

H2b: There is no significant difference between the categories of age pertaining to consumption of choice of travel activities information via social media.

H2c: There is no significant difference between the categories of age pertaining to consumption of choice of travel destination via social media.

H2d: There is no significant difference between the categories of age pertaining to consumption of choice of restaurants information via social media.

H2e: There is no significant difference between the categories of age pertaining to consumption of choice of tour operator information via social media.

Kim et al. (2014) also state that academic background also has an impact on social media usage. The millennials were also asked to mention their highest educational qualification so that this information can be used to understand the profile the choice of information consumption via social media. The educational qualification was divided into four categories, high school, bachelors' degree, masters' degree, and doctoral degree. The following hypotheses were framed to understand the distribution of travel-related across categories of educational qualification.

H3a: There is no significant difference between the categories of educational qualification pertaining to consumption of choice of accommodation information via social media.

H3b: There is no significant difference between the categories of educational qualification pertaining to consumption of choice of travel activities information via social media.

H3c: There is no significant difference between the categories of educational

qualification pertaining to consumption of choice of travel destination via social media.

H3d: There is no significant difference between the categories of educational qualification pertaining to consumption of choice of restaurants information via social media.

H3e: There is no significant difference between the categories of educational qualification pertaining to consumption of choice of tour operator information via social media.

Ease of Use and Usefulness

Davis (1989, p. 320) defines usefulness as “the degree to which a particular system would enhance one’s work”. The ease of use of a particular system is the extent to which the user believes that using that system would not need effort (Davis, 1989). Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is one of the most widely used theory for explaining the use of a system. TAM suggests that ease of use and usefulness of a system determines an individual’s attitude and intention towards that system (Davis, 1989). A lot of researchers have used TAM in their studies (Ayeh et al., 2013; Di Pietro et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2013) and have proposed extended versions of TAM based on their empirical studies. However, Moon and Kim (2001) argue that ease of use is fundamental to usage and acceptance of a technological platform; it may not be the only factor for the heavy usage or popularity of information technology. We propose the following hypotheses based on TAM to understand its role in Indian millennials’ behaviour.

H4: There is a positive relationship between ease of use and consumption of social media information for travel purposes.

H5: There is a positive relationship between the usefulness of information and consumption of social media information for travel purposes.

Perceived Risk

The users of social media look for content on these platforms generated by both the organization as well as the actual users. The travel organizations use these platforms as a medium for communication with their current and prospective customers, whereas consumers use these platforms share their actual experiences on social media platforms. Gretzel and Yoo (2008) researched users consuming information from Trip Advisor, a popular travel review website to understand consumer behaviour. Their study concluded that travelers seek information not only about things to do but also look very closely at activities and places to avoid. The nature of the tourism products

is intangible and is available at a different location, therefore, prospective travelers tend to reduce their risk by reading actual users experiences (Jeong & Jang, 2011). Consumers seek information online not spontaneously, but in a systematic manner, for they wish to reduce their risk of buying the wrong product or service (Goldsmith & Horowitz, 2006). Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

H6: There is a positive relationship between perceived risk and consumption of social media information for travel purposes.

Enjoyment

“Enjoyment refers the extent to which the activity of using a certain technological platform is perceived as being enjoyable, without looking at the performance of it or the value derived from using the platform” (Davis et al., 1992, p, 1113). Some of the previous researches have studied the motivating factors for users to share information online and have concluded that social cohesion is linked with feelings of happiness, reward and enjoyment (Kang & Schuett, 2013). A study done by Moon and Kim (2001) states that perceived enjoyment act as a motivation which leads to increase the time spent on any particular technology. Social media is seen as one of the ways that help consumers to take a detour from their routine lives and seek enjoyment in their lives (Hur et al., 2017). Therefore, we hypothesize the following relationship:

H7: There is a positive relationship between the level of enjoyment and consumption of social media information for travel purposes.

Research Methodology and Data Collection

Questionnaire and Measurements

The measurements items for this study have been derived from the previous literature and have been adapted to make it applicable to the current research. The measurements and items have been depicted in Table 1. The constructs used for this study are ease of use, usefulness, perceived risk, enjoyment, information collected from social media and social media consumption for travel. The four items of ease of use have been adapted from the research of Goldsmith and Horowitz (2006) and Ayeh et al. (2013); four usefulness items have been adapted from a study done by Ayeh et al. (2013); four items of perceived risk have also been adapted from the research of Goldsmith and Horowitz (2006); four items for enjoyment have been adapted from Chung and Koo (2015); and five items for information collected from social media from research done by Jacobsen and Munar (2012). The three items for the consumption of social media have been adapted from a study done by

Amaro et al. (2016). The items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Also, three questions pertaining to demographic information like age, gender and education have been included to fathom the profile of respondents. Before floating out the final questionnaire, five experts were asked to screen the questionnaire for suitability of constructs and respective items.

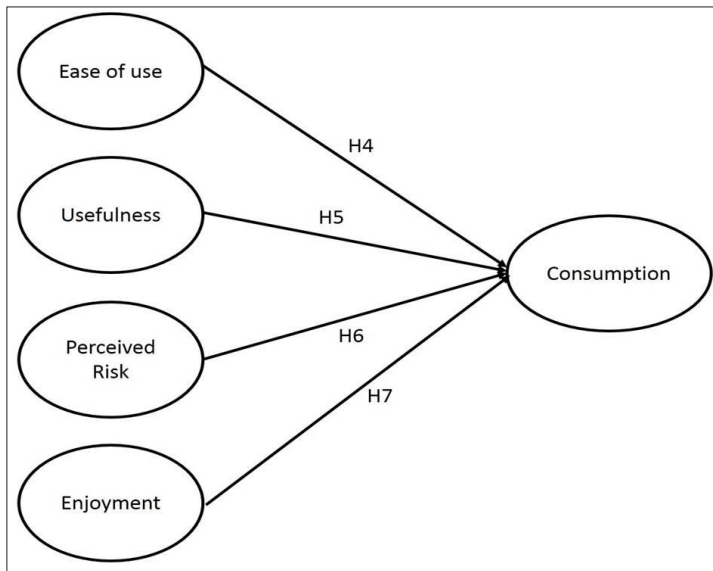


Fig. 1: Conceptual Model

Data Collection

The data for this study was collected from Indian millennials. Since the age group is 16-35, educational institutes seem the best place to collect data from. To qualify for inclusion, the respondent has to have a social media account and has taken a trip in the past 24 months either within or outside of the country. The questionnaire was formed using Google forms and an offline version of it was also prepared. The questionnaire was sent to different educational institutions in various cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Chandigarh, and Bangalore. The online version was forwarded first and limited response was generated out of it. Therefore, the respondents were given a paper and pen questionnaire to fill up. The questionnaire was sent to a total of 1073 respondents and 488 qualified responses have been gathered. The response rate was much better in the second phase and the total response rate for this study has been approximately 46%. The constructs and the items underlying those constructs are mentioned in Table 1.

Table 1: Constructs and Items in the Measurement Model

Construct	Notation	Variables	Cronbach Alpha	Adapted from
Ease of Use	EAS 1	It is easy to find travel information on social media.	.713	Ayeh et al. (2013); Goldsmith and Horowitz (2006)
	EAS 2	It is easy to use the content available social media to plan my trip.		
	EAS 3	The amount of effort that I have to make to find travel information is very small.		
	EAS 4	It is easy for me to search information from anywhere (School, office, home).		
Usefulness	USE 1	It improves my travel planning.	.829	Ayeh et al. (2013)
	USE 2	It makes my travel planning easier.		
	USE 3	It helps me in planning my trip efficiently.		
	USE 4	It makes it easier for me to reach to travel-related decisions.		
Perceived Risk	PR 1	I use social media so that chances of me making bad decisions are reduced.	.851	Goldsmith and Horowitz (2006)
	PR 2	It helps me in avoiding bad decisions.		
	PR 3	It helps me in hearing from people who have already purchased the travel services.		
	PR 4	It helps me in reducing the risk of making a wrong choice.		

Construct	Notation	Variables	Cronbach Alpha	Adapted from
Enjoyment	ENJ 1	It is enjoyable to search for travel information through social media.	.874	Chung and Koo (2015)
	ENJ 2	Travel information search through social media is fun.		
	ENJ 3	It is interesting to search for travel information through social media.		
	ENJ 4	It is a pleasant experience to search for travel information through social media.		
Information collected from social media	CHO_A	Choice of accommodation	.765	Jacobsen and Munar (2012)
	CHO_TA	Choice of travel activities		
	CHO_TD	Choice of travel destination		
	CHO_R	Choice of restaurants		
	CHO_TO	Choice of tour operator		
Consumption of social media information for travel	CON 1	I read reviews from other travelers on social media.	.721	Amaro et al. (2016)
	CON 2	I search for travel and hospitality information on social media.		
	CON 3	I read other travelers experiences on social media platforms.		

The ease of use, usefulness, perceived risk, enjoyment, information collected from social media and consumption of social media for travel constructs had high reliability, all Cronbach alpha more than .70. Also, the Cronbach alpha for all the motivation variables is .856, which is quite acceptable (Hair et al., 2010).

Results

Profile of Respondents

Table 2 shows the descriptive profile of respondents. 54% of the respondents were male and 49% were female. Out of the total millennial

respondents, a little over half of them (51.2%) had completed their masters' degree, 30% had completed their bachelors' degree, approximately 14% were pursuing their doctoral degree and rest (4.5%) had finished high school. More than half of the respondents (57%) were in the age group of 21-25 years, approximately 33% were in the age group of 26-30 years, 6% were in the age group of 16-20 years and rest were in the age group of 31-35 years.

Table 2: Descriptive Profile of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	264	54.1
Female	224	45.9
Educational Qualification		
High School	22	4.5
Bachelor's degree	147	30.1
Master's degree	250	51.2
Doctoral degree	69	14.1
Age (in Years)		
16-20	30	6.1
21-25	278	57.0
26-30	160	32.8
31-35	20	4.1
Total	488	100

Result of Hypotheses Testing

To understand the relationship between the demographics of millennial respondents and the consumption of information regarding the choice of travel information SPSS 20 was used. Independent sample t-test was run to understand if males and females differ in information search choice for accommodation. The difference was not significant $t(421.491) = 1.470, p > .05$ and therefore we fail to reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, hypothesis 1a is accepted and it shows that there is no significant difference between males and females choices of accommodation information via social media platforms. Hypothesis 1b was tested using t-test and it was found that on average, females ($M = 3.9596, SE = .05516$) look for information pertaining to travel activities more than males ($M = 3.7879, SE = .05449$). The difference is significant $t(480.459) = -2.215, p < .05$. Therefore, hypothesis 1b is rejected. Upon testing

hypothesis 1c, it was found that the difference was not significant $t(423.508) = 1.351, p > .05$ and therefore we fail to reject the null hypothesis. Therefore hypothesis 1c is accepted and it shows that there is no significant difference between males and females choices of travel destinations information via social media platforms. The result of hypothesis 1d testing revealed that on average, females ($M = 3.9072, SE = .06856$) look for information pertaining to restaurants more than males ($M = 3.5644, SE = .07730$). The difference is significant $t(484.406) = -2.350, p < .05$. Therefore, hypothesis 1d is rejected. When it came to the choice of tour operator information via social media platforms, it was found that the difference was not significant $t(485) = 1.92, p > .05$ and therefore we fail to reject the null hypothesis. Therefore hypothesis 1e is accepted and it shows that there is no significant difference between males and females choices of tour operator information via social media platforms.

The hypotheses 2 was framed to understand if there a significant difference between the categories of age pertaining to consumption of choice of travel information via social media. One way ANOVA was used to test the hypotheses 2. Upon testing hypothesis 2a, it was found that there were no statistically significant differences between the group means, ($F(3,484) = 2.144, p > 0.05$) Therefore we fail to reject hypotheses 2a; the four age groups do not differ significantly when it comes to information searched for the choice of accommodation. Upon testing hypothesis 2b, it was found that the age groups were statistically different when it comes to information search for the choice of travel activities ($F(3,484) = 9.969, p < 0.001$). Therefore, hypothesis 2b is rejected. A post-hoc comparison, using Games-Howell test was done to understand as to which groups differ significantly in their behaviour. The results of the test indicated that millennials between the age group 21-25 years ($M = 4.00, SD = 0.61$) differ significantly from the ones between the age group 26-30 years ($M = 3.59, SD = 1.11$). Their mean difference was significant at 0.05 level. Similarly, hypothesis 2c was tested and the analysis depicts that the age groups differ significantly when it came to searching for travel destinations ($F(3,484) = 3.228, p < 0.05$). Hence, hypothesis 2c is rejected. The Games – Howell post-hoc test was done and it indicated that millennials between the age group 30-35 years ($M = 3.35, SD = 1.08$) differ significantly in their information seeking behaviour pertaining to travel destinations from the ones between the age group of 16-20 years ($M = 4.06, SD = 0.78$) and 21-25 years ($M = 3.98, SD = 0.91$) at 0.10 level. The analysis of hypothesis 2d revealed that there is no significant difference between the various categories of age when it comes to information searched for the choice of restaurants ($F(3,484) = 1.754, p > 0.05$). Therefore, we fail to reject hypothesis 2d. The analysis of ANOVA results of hypothesis 2e

depicted that the four age groups do not differ significantly when it comes to information searched for the choice of tour operators ($F(3,484) = 1.689, p > 0.05$). Therefore, we fail to reject hypothesis 2e.

The hypotheses 3 were framed to understand if there is a significant difference between the educational qualification categories when it comes to consumption of choice of travel information via social media. One way ANOVA was used to test the hypotheses 3. Upon testing hypothesis 3a, it was found that there were statistically significant differences between the group means, ($F(3,484) = 6.265, p < 0.001$) Therefore, we reject hypothesis 3a; the four categories of education differ significantly when it comes to information searched for the choice of accommodation. Upon conducting Games-Howell post-hoc tests, it was found that millennials with bachelor's degree ($M = 3.48, SD = 1.11$) differ significantly from the ones with master's degree ($M = 3.77, SD = 0.87$) and doctoral degree ($M = 4.10, SD = 1.23$) at 0.05 level. Upon testing hypothesis 3b, it was found that the educational qualification groups were statistically different when it comes to information search for the choice of travel activities ($F(3,484) = 3.243, p < 0.05$). Therefore, hypothesis 3b is rejected. Similarly, hypothesis 3c was tested and the analysis depicts that the four educational qualification groups do not differ significantly when it comes to search for travel destinations ($F(3,484) = 2.571, p > 0.05$). Hence, we fail to reject hypothesis 3c. The analysis of hypothesis 3d revealed that there is a significant difference between the various categories of educational qualification when it comes to information searched for the choice of restaurants ($F(3,484) = 4.389, p < 0.05$). Therefore, we reject hypothesis 3d. The post-hoc analysis was done using Games-Howell test and it indicated that millennials with bachelor's degree ($M = 3.85, SD = 0.97$) differ significantly from the ones with master's degree ($M = 3.48, SD = 1.23$) at 0.05 significance level. The analysis of ANOVA results of hypothesis 3e depicted that the four educational qualification groups differ significantly when it comes to information searched for the choice of tour operators ($F(3,484) = 11.944, p < 0.001$). Hence, hypothesis 3e is rejected. The post-hoc analysis showed that there is a significant difference between millennials with bachelor's degree ($M = 3.00, SD = 1.01$) and the ones with master's ($M = 3.52, SD = 1.09$) and doctoral ($M = 3.89, SD = 1.35$) degrees regarding the choice of tour operators' information search through social media platforms.

Measurement Model

The reliability and validity of measures were assessed through the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). After the examination of reliability and validity, Structure Equation Modeling (SEM) was used for the analysis of

understanding the relationship between various factors and usage of social media for travel planning.

The Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct were calculated and examined. Table 4 depicts the standardized loadings along with AVE and CR. For each construct, the composite reliabilities were more than 0.6, which is the recommended threshold (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). This implies that the measures are reliable. Convergent and discriminant validity was examined to assess the construct validity. The convergent validity of the scale as established as AVE for each factor was more than 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) but one. For the 'ease of use' construct, the AVE was less than 0.5 but CR is above the threshold value of 0.6, which is acceptable (Lam, 2012). To establish the discriminant validity, the squared correlations and Average Variance Extracted scores for each of the pair wise construct were compared. In each case, the Average Variance Extracted scores were greater than the correlation squared. The standardized loadings of the items along with AVE and CR are summarized in Table 3.

The standardized loadings and the fit statistics of the model indicated satisfactory fit indices ($\chi^2 = 234.9$, $df = 90$, $p < 0.001$). The Goodness of Fit (GFI) index was 0.92, the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) was 0.901, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) was 0.926 and Incremental Fit Index (IFI) was 0.926, all above the 0.90 cut off level (Byrne, 1998). The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was 0.071 and CMIN/df was 2.61.

Table 3: Assessment of Measurement Model

Items	Standardized Loadings	AVE	CR
Ease of Use		0.354	0.683
It is easy to find travel information on social media.	0.621		
It is easy to use the content available social media to plan my trip.	0.812		
The amount of effort that I have to make to find travel information is very small.	0.507		
It is easy for me to search information from anywhere (School, office, home).	0.846		
Usefulness		0.569	0.839
It improves my travel planning.	0.721		
It makes my travel planning easier.	0.819		

Items	Standardized Loadings	AVE	CR
It helps me in planning my trip efficiently.	0.851		
It makes it easier for me to reach to travel-related decisions.	0.709		
Perceived Risk		0.584	0.848
I use social media so that chances of me making bad decisions are reduced.	0.746		
It helps me in avoiding bad decisions.	0.842		
It helps me in hearing from people who have already purchased the travel services.	0.677		
It helps me in reducing the risk of making a wrong choice.	0.783		
Enjoyment		0.649	0.879
It is enjoyable to search for travel information through social media.	0.803		
Travel information search through social media is fun.	.0883		
It is interesting to search for travel information through social media.	0.871		
It is a pleasant experience to search for travel information through social media.	0.642		
Consumption		0.527	0.760
I read reviews from other travelers on social media.	0.772		
I search for travel and hospitality information on social media.	0.48		
I read other travelers experiences on social media platforms.	.0869		

Note: CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted

Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

Structural Equation Modeling was used to test hypotheses 4-7. An acceptable fit was achieved by the structural model. The χ^2/df statistic was 392.04 with 132 degrees of freedom ($p < 0.001$). The Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) was 0.91, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) was 0.921 and Incremental Fit Index (IFI) was 0.921 and Goodness of Fit (GFI) was 0.942. All the incremental fit measures; were above 0.90 suggested value (Byrne, 1998). The inference

statistical tests reveal a satisfactory structural model with RMSEA = 0.078 and CMIN/df = 2.97, which is acceptable (Byrne, 1998).

The hypothesis testing results showed that the relationship between ease of use and consumption of information is positive (Path coefficient = 0.31) and significant. Therefore H4 is accepted. The fifth hypothesis, which stipulates the relationship between usefulness and consumption of social media information by millennials was confirmed with the positive coefficient (Path coefficient = 0.54) and significant. The construct which showed the highest positive relationship with consumption was perceived risk with the coefficient (Path coefficient = 0.62). Hence, hypothesis 6 is accepted. Lastly, the relationship between enjoyment and consumption was analyzed and it was found that the relationship between them is significant and positive (Path coefficient = 0.40). Therefore, hypothesis 7 is accepted. The summary of results is depicted in Table 4.

Table 4: Summary of Hypothesis Testing

	Relationship	Path Coefficient	Hypothesis Accepted/Rejected
Hypothesis 4	EAS → CON	0.31**	Accepted
Hypothesis 5	USE → CON	0.54**	Accepted
Hypothesis 6	PR → CON	0.62**	Accepted
Hypothesis 7	ENJ → CON	0.40**	Accepted

Note: EAS – Ease of Use; USE – Usefulness; PR – Perceived Risk; ENJ – Enjoyment; CON – Consumption

Discussion

The current study helps in understanding the behaviour of millennials towards consumption of travel information through social media platforms. Our results state that men millennials and women millennials do not differ when it comes to looking for information regarding choice of accommodation, travel destination and tour operator; whereas they differ when it comes to choice of travel activities and restaurants at the holiday destination. In both, the cases, females look for such information more than males via social media.

The results also show that millennials of different age group vary in their information looking behaviour when it comes to choice of travel activities and choice of travel destinations, whereas they do not differ in their information

seeking behaviour pertaining to choice of accommodation, restaurants and tour operators. Millennials of the age group of 21-25 years look for information pertaining to travel activities more than the one of age group 26-30 years. Also, the younger millennials (16-20 years) look for information regarding the choice of destination more than their older counterparts. The millennials of varied educational backgrounds differ significantly when it comes to their information seeking behaviour for the choice of accommodation and tour operators. The millennials with doctoral degree look for accommodation and tour operators' information more than the ones with bachelors' degree. On the other hand, bachelors' degree holders look for the choice of restaurant information more than their other counterparts.

Further, our results showed that perceived risk is one of the biggest motivation factors that contributes to looking for information on social media for travel. Most of the millennials considered that it would help them in avoiding a bad choice. This implies that they wish to utilize other users' experience to save themselves from any bad choice pertaining to their holiday. The purchase of travel products is considered as risky (Huang et al., 2010) because consumers make decisions and pay for services before actually visiting or staying at the location. A study done by Varkaris and Neuhofer (2017) acknowledged that consumers like to read a lot of content on social media platforms before booking a hotel to avoid making bad decisions and non availability of content prevents them to booking that hotel. Our results corroborate with previous studies (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008; Amaro et al., 2016) that social media plays a vital role in reducing the risk. This is also because prospective consumers look at the pictures and reviews shared by the consumers who had availed the services in the past to make decisions which they believe reduces their risk perception. Quite contrary to the previous studies (Moon & Kim, 2001; Ayeh et al., 2013), ease of use of social media websites is a factor that contributes the least towards the consumption of travel information. In our study, it emerged as a weak predictor of information consumption through social media. In fact, in the study done by Ayeh et al. (2013), ease of use and enjoyment emerged out to be the strongest predictor. Their results indicated that ease of use of a platform has a great impact in the context of use of consumer-generated information for travel planning; unlike the results indicate for Indian millennials. Millennials do not just look up for travel-related information on social networking sites because it is easy to do so, rather the results reveal that the information has to be useful for them to look for it. Our results are in accordance with some of the previous studies done by Kim et al. (2007), Chung and Koo (2015), and Song and Yoo (2016). Most of the millennials use social media as it is considered as an enjoyable activity and the results of our study also showed that enjoyment

acts a motivator for millennials to look for travel-related information on social media platforms. The studies done by Ayeh et al. (2013), Kang and Schuett (2013), and Wang and Fesenmaier (2004) support the findings of our study. The results encourage travel organizations to recognize the role that social media plays and understand the social media behaviour for travel information for millennials.

Implications

The literature review and our study clearly depict that social media plays an important role in the travel and hospitality industry. The results also show that people look for travel information on social media for a variety of reasons. With the increasing number of people having access to the internet and using social media, these have implications for the travel organizations. Although, there have been numerous studies done on social media sharing of travel information, but very little research has been done about the country's population which has the highest number of millennials and their behaviour towards the use of social media websites for travel planning. India being one of the most populous countries with an extremely large millennial population is also a nation of heavy social media consumers. This study will contribute to understanding the behaviour of millennials when it comes to travel information search for destination and other travel services choice. It will also help in profiling the millennials with regard to use of social media usage for travel, which can be used for segmentation and targeting by travel organizations. At the same time, it will contribute to helping tourism and hospitality services managers to understand the role of content on social media platforms and the factors that determine its usage. A major chunk of content on social media platforms is user-generated and organizations cannot control the quantity and quality of it, but the organizations can be responsive to consumer's view and feedback. The feedback can be used by organizations to incorporate suggestions given in form of a review to deliver better services. Also, the organizations can use social media platforms to create their own pages and provide information about the services. As the results suggest, usability is one of the strong predictors of millennials' use of social media for travel planning, therefore travel organizations can work on making their social media pages useful and user-friendly. Increasing the usability of content and information available on these platforms encourages millennials to use social media for travel planning. As social media is a very popular tool for communications with a large number of active users, there is a superfluity of information. The travel organizations can streamline the information so that it becomes easily usable for prospective consumers, which increases their chances of consumption of information. The travel and hospitality organizations can

make an effort towards decreasing the perceived risk as it is the strongest predictor of usage of social media. The perceived risk can be decreased by constantly monitoring and being responsive to the consumer-generated content, along with uploading genuine pictures and the latest information about the product and the services. It will help in building the credibility of the travel product/service, which in turn will help in reducing perceived risk. The study can assist tourism and hospitality managers in curating the content and appropriate targeting. For example, it can be seen from the results that women look for restaurants options more than males, or, younger millennials look at social media platforms for deciding the holiday destination more than their older counterparts. These insights can help tourism managers to design right content for targeting suitable prospects.

Limitations

This study has a few limitations, which can be addressed by future researches. The present study focuses on social media platforms in general and did not differentiate between different platforms and their use for information seeking by consumers. The future researchers can explore how various platforms differ and how consumer behaviour varies across these platforms. Also, the current research focuses only on the big cities of India and not on the smaller cities. The millennials residing in metropolitan may vary from the ones residing in smaller cities in terms of their needs, preferences, and resources. Future studies can analyze the consumer behaviour of millennials of tier II and tier III cities and can compare the differences. Future researchers can also differentiate between the type of travel i.e. domestic, international, leisure, business etc. that millennials undertake and subsequently how it impacts their consumption of information for travel planning.

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