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What drives travelers' adoption of user-generated content? A literature review

Abstract

User-generated content (UGC) has become an important part of travel planning, as travelers evaluate travel products based on past reviews. However, different factors account for why tourists utilize UGC. The aim of this study is to review extant studies on UGC to identify the antecedents of UGC utilization for travel planning and the theories, models, and frameworks used in these studies. A total of 54 studies from 2005 to 2016 were found. This study found that UGC adoption is determined by attributes relating to the user, the source, the content, and response variables. It also found distinct and heterogeneous theories and frameworks mainly drawn from the information systems, socio-psychology, and management disciplines. Among the antecedents, the average path coefficients of the extracted relationships show that trust predicted attitude more than the other variables. Implications and future research directions are provided.

Keywords: social media, user-generated content, tourism, travel, hospitality, TAM, adoption, intention

1. Introduction

Recently, there has been broad interest in social media as an important platform for disseminating information on products and services (Yang, 2013; Lu and Stepchenkova, 2015). Marketers use social media platforms to share information and attract traffic to their offerings (Culnan, McHugh and Zubillaga, 2010; Sigala, 2011; Aluri, Slevitch and Larzelere, 2015). Social media platforms have also become equally powerful tools for consumers to use to spread information via word of mouth (WOM). In the tourism and

hospitality services industries, user-generated content (UGC) has become an effective tool tourists use to gather information to make travel decisions (Ukpabi & Karjaluoto, 2017a). Tsao, Hsieh, Shih and Lin (2015) found that approximately 80% of travelers claim to read reviews about a hotel before embarking on a trip, and 53% say that they will not book a hotel that has no reviews. By sharing travel experiences through text, pictures, and videos, users enhance the free information provided for potential travelers regarding new markets, new topics, and sensitive issues (Tsao et al., 2015). The importance of UGC in tourism and hospitality services is underscored by the following considerations: First, tourism is a hedonic experience; therefore, consumers want to make the best travel decisions in order to make the most of the experience, and they seek to do so by reading reviews and comments from fellow consumers (Rageh, Melewar and Woodside, 2013). Second, tourism cannot be experienced before consumption; thus, consumers rely on the knowledge and experiences of others (Zhang, Ye, Law and Li, 2010). Finally, reviews from fellow consumers are deemed honest and trustworthy, so consumers rely on them as a dependable source of information for their travel decisions (Cox, Burgess, Sellitto and Buultjens, 2009; Ukpabi and Karjaluoto, 2017b).

Some studies have reviewed existing research on social media in the tourism industry. One of the earliest reviews, by Leung, Law, Hoof and Buhalis (2013), used content analysis to evaluate studies from 2007 to 2011 and identified two major research streams: consumer-focused and supplier-based. Consumer-focused studies primarily highlighted social media as cardinal platforms for the tourist's trip planning phase, as they provide the traveler with a huge amount of varied information relevant to the travel decision. Interestingly, however, they noted that the role of social media in evaluating alternatives or influencing purchases is rarely studied.

As expected, supplier-based studies focused on social media as a marketing, promotion, and research platform. While corroborating the findings of Leung et al. (2013) on the use of social media as an information source during trip planning by consumers and as a marketing tool by suppliers, Zeng and Gerritsen (2014) nevertheless contended that studies relating to social media are still in their infancy, considering the wide-ranging nature of the tourism industry. Thus, while they noted that extant studies had discussed UGC from the perspectives of the consumer, they called for future studies examining the value of UGC as a strategic tool for tourism enterprises. Finally, Lu and Stepchenkova (2015) analyzed extant studies on UGC in tourism with an emphasis on the methodological approaches and software used. They found that the majority of the studies did not report the theoretical perspectives underpinning the analyses. Additionally, the majority of the studies utilized manual data collection, and in specific instances in which software programs were used, they were self-developed applications such as spiders, crawlers, worms, or robots.

These reviews represent comprehensive attempts to understand the methods used in these studies. However, a review of UGC adoption in travel planning is still lacking, despite the specific call by Ayeh, Au and Law (2013a) for future studies exploring broader factors influencing UGC adoption in travel planning. Therefore, this study has been conducted to fill this gap in the literature. It aims to understand the factors that influence the adoption of UGC in travel planning through a review of existing studies. Specifically, the study objectives include (1) identifying the theories, models, and frameworks used in these studies and methodological approaches; (2) identifying the geographic coverage of the studies; (3) identifying the antecedents of UGC adoption in travel planning; and (4) analyzing the strengths of these antecedents in predicting the adoption of UGC in travel planning.

76 Against this backdrop, this study makes three key contributions to the literature. First, in
77 line with the work of Okoli and Schabram (2010), this study will provide a solid
78 theoretical background for subsequent research by synthesizing theories from the
79 reviewed studies. Additionally, in line with Webster and Watson's (2002) concept-
80 driven review methodology, this systematic review also provides the different concepts
81 and contexts used in the reviewed studies. This will serve as a vital material for
82 subsequent research in the field. Second, by extracting the coefficients of tested path
83 relationships from the reviewed studies (see Appendix 1), this study provides a ready
84 source for scholars wishing to undertake research in UGC, especially a meta-analysis of
85 UGC in tourism. Third, the findings of this study will clarify and harmonize previous
86 findings. For instance, while Ayeh (2012) found that perceived ease of use (PEOU) is a
87 strong determinant of attitude and intention to use consumer-generated media, Lee,
88 Xiong, and Hu (2012) found that PEOU had no effect on attitudes towards using
89 Facebook to attend a festival. When such contradictions exist, a review that clarifies the
90 findings is of immense value to future research in this field. Finally, the framework
91 developed based on the reviewed studies will enhance understanding of the factors
92 influencing UGC adoption during travel information searches.

93 The remainder of the study is organized as follows: section 2 provides the background
94 information, section 3 describes the research methods, section 4 presents the results, and
95 section 5 provides the discussion, contributions, limitations, and future research
96 directions. In this study, adoption refers to the intention to use and use of UGC in travel
97 information searches.

98 **2. Background Information**

99 Traditionally, consumers have been perceived as passive recipients of marketing
100 messages, thus, the mono-directional communication pattern rendered consumers
101 powerless, as they only received information deemed necessary by marketers (Bacile,
102 Ye and Swilley, 2014). However, with WOM, consumers have been able to influence
103 not only fellow consumers but also firms' marketing and communication programs
104 (Groeger and Buttle, 2014). Clearly, a satisfied consumer is likely to recommend a
105 product or service to another consumer (Chiu, Wang, Fang and Huang, 2014). The
106 emergence of information and communications technology (ICT) and subsequent
107 expansion into Web 2.0 radically changed how consumers communicate (Ukpabi and
108 Karjaluoto, 2017a), and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) became a new vehicle for
109 product and service recommendations among consumers (Cheung and Thadani, 2012).
110 In order to get favorable eWOM recommendations, marketers turned to product and
111 service quality improvement (Sigala, 2009; Sigala, 2011).

112 UGC enables other consumers to read, learn about, and share in the experiences of
113 others (Chiu, Wang, Fang and Huang, 2014). The terms UGC and consumer-generated
114 media (CGM) have been used interchangeably in the literature (Ayeh, Au and Law,
115 2013b). CGM is defined as "media impressions created by consumers, typically
116 informed by relevant experience and archived or shared online for easy access by other
117 impressionable consumers" (Gretzel, Kang and Lee, 2008, p. 100). In the tourism and
118 hospitality industries, consumers express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a
119 product or service through UGC. Social media offers opportunities for people to
120 socialize and form communities of interest by creating and sharing content (Chung and
121 Koo, 2015). Consumers use UGC for a variety of reasons, such as evaluating service

quality and price (Liu and Lee, 2016) and identifying the best attractions, food, and destinations (Lee et al., 2012). Others search for social acceptance (Khan and Khan, 2015), enjoyment (Ayeh et al., 2013b), a communal feeling (Ku, 2011), and involvement (Sotiriadis and Zyl, 2013).

When trip planning, consumers search for information from both marketers and fellow consumers. However, they rely more on UGC because they expect it to be sincere and honest and to convey the creators' real experiences (Wang, 2012). Tourists perceive UGC to be more influential because it reflects the performance of typical tourism products, thus making it more persuasive than marketer-generated content (Sparks and Browning, 2011). However, the authenticity of UGC has recently come under close scrutiny (Ayeh, Au and Law, 2013a). Some consumers may post reviews as a form of revenge (Sparks and Browning, 2011), and some of these are legally defamatory (Ayeh et al., 2013a). Still, many other consumers post reviews as a form of altruism (Wang, 2015), and these have helped others in pre-trip planning decisions. Overall, UGC is growing in popularity because online third-party advice has proven to be a very reliable source of information for travelers (Tsao et al., 2015). Additionally, consumers' preferences for independent discussion boards, such as TripAdvisor and Lonely Planet, have allowed these sites to remain popular among travelers.

Focusing on these limited platforms through which consumers can obtain information from fellow consumers on tourism and hospitality services, early streams of research highlighted flow and enjoyment in online community membership (Wu and Chang, 2005; Lin, 2007). As members shared information on experiences with tourism products and services, negative WOM influenced how community members perceived these services (Cheng, Lam and Hsu, 2006). Seeking advice from community members

became an important part of travel planning (Casalo, Flavian and Guinaliu, 2011). However, many factors influenced consumers' acceptance of such information as a determinant of choice of tourism and hospitality services. These factors include the individual consumer, the source of the information, the nature of the information, and how it was shared.

The demographic attributes of the consumer influences how he or she perceives UGC (Fan and Miao, 2012). For instance, younger travelers tend to evaluate reviews from many sources out of curiosity before reaching a decision, while adult travelers have limited search opportunities (Ayeh et al., 2013b). Additionally, those who derive high levels of enjoyment and involvement from online reviews are more prone to accept them than those who do not (Sotiriadis and Zyl, 2013; Chung and Koo, 2015). Acceptance of online reviews as an important element of travel planning is also predicated on the source of the information. In particular, source credibility and expertise (Sotiriadis and Zyl, 2013) are important features of the believability of such reviews. Finally, the nature of the information and how it is shared also determine acceptance. Sparks and Browning (2011) found that consumers are particularly influenced by negative reviews when such information is negatively valenced. Chen, Shang and Li (2014) also posited that consumers' perceptions of their enjoyment of travel blogs and the blogs' novelty, reliability, understandability, and interestingness influence consumers' intentions to visit a destination.

3. Research Methods

3.1 Literature Search

Drawing mainly from the methodology of Shaikh and Karjaluoto (2015) and the review approaches of Perea, Monsuwé, Dellaert, and De Ruyter (2004) and Cheung and

Thadani (2012), this study drew up a plan based on the recommendations of previous reviewers. First, we identified the keywords that would form the basis of the literature search and extraction. Second, we established the literature inclusion criteria. Based on these keywords and inclusion criteria, we used the following search terms, among others: “social media adoption in tourism”, “e-WOM in tourism and travel”, “Web 2.0 adoption in tourism and travel”, “user-generated content in tourism and travel”, “social networking in tourism and travel”, “blogs in tourism and travel”, “online communities in tourism and travel”, and “virtual communities in tourism and travel”. As recommended by Shaikh and Karjaluoto (2015), we conducted horizontal and vertical searches. For horizontal searches, we used Google Scholar, a key reference database that hosts a broad range of academic materials and provides easy access to relevant studies (Zeng and Gerritsen, 2014). To ensure that we captured as many relevant studies as possible, we also conducted vertical searches of specific databases, including Science Direct, SAGE, Wiley, Springer, Emerald, JSTOR, IEEE, Taylor & Francis, and Inderscience. Furthermore, as social media is a rapidly growing technological phenomenon with conferences specifically dedicated to exploring its different perspectives (Paquet-Clouston, Bilodeau and Décary-Hétu, 2017), we expanded our search to include conference proceedings.

3.2 Literature Selection

In order to meet our objectives, we set both inclusion and exclusion criteria. Our inclusion criteria required that the study be consumer-based and empirical, have a defined sample size, and include measurements for independent and dependent variables. Additionally, we decided that studies to be included must contain the results of the data analysis and a solid discussion section and offer both practical and

managerial implications. Our exclusion criteria eliminated firm-based studies in addition to conceptual and theoretical studies. We adopted the approach of Lu and Stepchenkova (2015) by speed-reading the studies and identifying those that met the above criteria. Guided by Tranfield, Denyer and Smart (2003), who posited that inclusion is subjective based on the researcher's interests and objectives, we identified a total of 54 studies published from 2005 to 2016 for inclusion: 51 articles from 28 journals, 1 conference paper, and 2 PhD dissertations.

4. Results

In the following sections, we present the results of our findings. In line with our objectives, the first part of the results section describes the identified theories, models, and frameworks. This study also analyzed the composition of the journals publishing the studies, the geographical spread of the studies, and the methodological approaches used. Furthermore, the study provides solid discussion of the antecedents of UGC adoption for travel planning and of the critical characteristics of the source, content, and the user in determining such adoption. A conceptual framework is then provided to encapsulate how the different elements fit together. The results section concludes with a discussion and computation of the strengths of the major variables in predicting UGC adoption using the path coefficients identified from the selected studies.

4.1 Statistics

The 54 reviewed studies, presented in Appendix 1, used 22 distinct and heterogeneous theories, frameworks, and models. The technology acceptance model (TAM) was used in 14 (26%) studies. The theory of planned behavior was used in five (9%) studies, the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) in three (5%) studies, and the theory of reasoned

action in three (5%) studies. Only one (1.8%) study used the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology. Because UGC draws from the traditional eWOM literature, most of the studies borrowed constructs from other models and used eWOM as a framework (e.g. Wang, 2012; Zhao et. al., 2015).

Of the 28 journals in which the reviewed studies were found, 32% (9 out of 28) were tourism-based journals, while 68% (19 out of 28) were non-tourism-based journals (Appendix II). This result further confirms that of an earlier study, which found that technology-based tourism-related studies are mostly published in non-tourism-based journals rather than traditional tourism journals (Cheng, 2016). Of the 54 studies, 35 (64.8%) were conducted between 2013 and 2015. No study was published in 2008 or 2009. The geographic distribution of the studies was as follows: 1 (1.8%) study in Africa, 28 (51.8%) in Asia, 2 (3.7%) in Australia/Oceania, 13 (24%) in Europe, and 11 (20%) in North America. Most studies were conducted in the following countries: Taiwan with 11 (20%), the United States with 10 (18%), China with six (11%), and Spain with six (11%). In terms of data collection, as stated earlier, all of the studies were quantitative; however, two (3.7%) studies utilized an experimental approach, and one (1.8%) used panel data. Over half (63.6%) used online (web-based, email) survey methods to obtain responses, while 17 (31.5%) used field-based surveys. One study combined online and field-based methods of data collection (Zhao, Wang, Guo and Law, 2015). As indicated in Appendix 1, the majority of the studies adopted a structural equation modelling (SEM) approach. The application and popularity of SEM in social sciences is anchored in its versatility in handling multivariate statistical techniques, thus providing scholars a comprehensive tool for performing factor analysis and testing structural relationships (Xiong, Skitmore and Xia, 2015). Xiong et al. (2015) contended that the use of SEM in an emerging research stream is vital for theory development; the

addition of moderators and mediators often provides clues for solving complex and contentious theoretical issues. Building from the above arguments, we noted variations in the use of moderators and mediators. While some studies used and applied them in the earliest UGC research, others adopted and tested variables using direct relationships instead (Wu and Chang, 2005; Cheng, Lam and Hsu, 2006; Lin, 2007). Interestingly however, the use of moderators and mediators has become popular again in recent studies (e.g. Chung and Koo, 2015; Liu and Lee, 2016).

4.2 Basic determinants of consumers' attitudes and intentions to adopt UGC for travel planning

This review uncovers the major antecedents of UGC adoption in tourism and travel. The various dependent variable used relate to attitude, intention, and usage. Variables such as intention, attitude, perceived usefulness, and ease of use have received considerable attention in the technology adoption literature (Lee et al., 2012). Attitude has been found to positively influence intention and usage regarding UGC in a travel planning context (Casaló et al., 2010). However, findings conflict regarding whether perceived usefulness (PU) or perceived ease of use (PEOU) better predicts attitude and intention. According to Casaló et al. (2010), while both PU and PEOU exert positive effect on attitude, PEOU exerts a stronger effect. Additionally, with the integration of social identity, the study also found that belonging to a network has a positive effect on both attitude and subjective norm, implying that group members have positive influences on the utilization of UGC among network members. However, in a hybrid of three models used to test the role of blogs, Facebook, and TripAdvisor as UGC platforms, Muñoz-Leiva, Hernandez-Mendez and Sanchez-Fernandez (2012) found that PU had a stronger effect on attitude across the three models. Similarly, though blogs have proven to be an

important source of information for travelers, the relationship between ease of use and intention was negative, implying that the fewer options available on blogs make them less attractive than Facebook and TripAdvisor, which contain a variety of information from other travelers.

Consumers' intention to use UGC for travel decisions hinges on functional, social, and hedonic benefits (Parra-Lopez, Bulchand-Gidumal, Guterrez-Tano and Diaz-Armas 2011). Regarding functional benefits, consumers seek information critical to their choice of tourism products and services. In addition, consumers may also seek information on the availability of online travel communities. These communities are especially important when a particular community promotes the consumer's interests. In some cases, consumers seek the opinion of others to reduce the risks related to their travel decisions (e.g. assess the safety of the destination) or get lower prices (Goldsmith and Horowitz, 2006).

Cost considerations constitute an important element of travel decisions (Parra-Lopez et al., 2011). Consequently, consumers do a comparative assessment of tourism products and services based on others' opinions. Importantly, however, there are costs related to assessing UGC on social media as well. According to Parra-Lopez et al. (2011), such costs relate to effort, difficulty of usage, and loss of privacy. Effort costs include the personal effort, monetary costs, and time spent accessing travel-related information. Difficulty of usage costs arise if the process of accessing or contributing opinions is cumbersome. Finally, privacy costs involve the risk of revealing personal information on the social media platform. If these costs are high, the consumer will be deterred from using UGC. Parra-Lopez et al. (2011) found that though consumers may be aware that

these costs exist, they do not constitute a hinderance to the use of social media for travel planning.

Furthermore, two key TAM constructs, PU and PEOU, also constitute determinants of functional benefits of using UGC for travel planning. According to Davis (1989), PU is defined as the individual's perception that using the technology will improve her or his performance. In the context of adoption of UGC for travel planning, PU relates to the individual's perception that using UGC will improve his or her chances of making the best travel decisions. Thus, Lin (2007) found that PU is a key determinant of the sustainability of virtual communities. Furthermore, Yang (2013) posited that the PU of a website has a significant effect on eWOM intentions, just as PU also significantly moderates the relationships between satisfaction/egoistic needs and eWOM intentions.

Consumers utilize various social media platforms for travel planning. Chung, Han, and Koo (2015) contended that PU and social relationships significantly influence travel information adoption, suggesting that the type of event and the social media platform determine the usefulness of the UGC. Their results indicate that travelers' emotional affections will be high on social media platforms with high social presence, meaning that the platform accommodates content such as pictures, video, and other graphical images that increase users' interactivity. These affections influence adoption. Thus members who are in the same network and are familiar with one another are more likely to follow the travel recommendations of members they are familiar with than those they are not. For platforms with low social presence, such as blogs, argument quality (the persuasive strength of content) is a vital element of adoption. The difference between blogs and Facebook or YouTube is that while the former should employ greater persuasion to convince readers, the latter will need to embed interactive content. Lee,

Xiong and Hu (2012) echoed this finding, as they found that embedding captivating and interactive content pages such as videos and photographs on Facebook events significantly influences attendees' perceptions of usefulness, ease of use, and enjoyment. Thus, photographs and videos are critical to influencing travel information seekers' enjoyment and adoption of UGC. Interestingly, these antecedents have been applied in different contexts. Table 1 presents response and adoption antecedents, frequency (the number of times they appeared in the systematic review), and the different studies in which they were used.

Table 1. Response and adoption antecedents

Construct	Definition	Frequency	Author(s)
Perceived usefulness	The extent to which a traveler believes UGC is useful during a travel information search	13	Casaló et al., 2011; Ayeh et al., 2013; Casaló et al., 2010; Zhao et al., 2015; Lin, 2007; Chung et al., 2015; Munoz-Leiva et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2012; Ayeh, 2015; Pietro & Pantano, 2013; Ayeh, 2012; Yang, 2013; Ting, Ting, & Hsiao, 2014
Perceived ease of use	The extent to which the traveler believes using UGC is free of effort	10	Ayeh et al., 2013b; Casaló et al., 2010; Lin, 2007; Bilgihan, Barreda, Okumus, & Nusair, 2016; Munoz-Leiva et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2012; Ayeh, 2015; Pietro & Pantano, 2013; Ayeh, 2012; Yang, 2013
Attitude	The extent to which the traveler feels the UGC is beneficial in travel information searches	17	Casaló et al., 2010; Ayeh et al., 2013b; Sparks, Perkins, & Buckley, 2013; Ayeh, et al., 2013a; Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012; Hsiao et al.,

2013; Casaló et al., 2011; Wang, 2015; Zarrad & Debabi, 2015; Jalilvand, Ebrahimi, & Samiei, 2013; Munoz-Leiva et al., 2012; Albarq, 2014; Cheng et al., 2006; Lee et al., 2012; Ayeh, 2015; Ayeh, 2012; Ting et al., 2014

Intention	The traveler's expressed desire to read UGC during a travel information search	All the studies except 6	Refer to Appendix 1
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322

323 Another TAM construst that has received much attention in the literature is PEOU.

324 PEOU is defined as the individual's perception that using a new technology will be free

325 of effort (Davis, 1989). In the context of this study, we define PEOU as the individual's

326 perception that using UGC for travel planning will be free of effort. Perea et al. (2004,

327 p. 108) contended that the relationship between PU and PEOU lies in the fact that while

328 PU "referred to consumers' perception regarding the outcome of the online shopping

329 experience, 'ease of use' refers to their perceptions regarding the process leading to the

330 final online shopping outcome." In the context of our study, this means that PU shows

331 how effective using UGC is in helping tourists reach a travel decision, while PEOU is

332 how easy the tourist finds using UGC in travel planning to be. In the context of tourism

333 and travel, the first study to apply the TAM model in virtual communities (Lin, 2007)

334 found that PEOU is a key determinant of the sustainability of virtual communities. In a

335 related study, Ayeh (2012) found PEOU to be a significant predictor of online travelers'

336 perception of UGC usefulness. However, Lee et al. (2012) opined that PEOU had no

337 effect on attitude towards using Facebook to attend a festival. This is particularly of

338 interest because according to the TAM model, PEOU is especially influential in the

339 early stages of user experience, but individuals grow in their ability to easily use

340 specific systems with increasing direct contact (Davis, 1989).

In addition to PU and PEOU, other influences motivate consumers to adopt UGC. These factors, which either proceed from within the consumer (endogenous) or are external to the consumer (exogenous), have variously been found to affect the consumer's adoption of UGC in travel planning. This review uncovers various ways in which these factors have been integrated into original theories and models (see Appendix 1) to determine their impact on travel planning.

4.2.1 Source-based characteristics

Source-based antecedents, factors outside the consumer that relate to the origin of the information, play a role in the consumers' adoption of UGC in travel planning. Table 2 presents major source-based characteristics, their definitions, frequency (number of times used in the reviewed studies), and the studies that discussed them. In the context of tourism, these characteristics of the origin and the originators of the travel-related information posted online serve as information and guides for potential travelers.

Among these characteristics is source credibility. Chung, Han and Koo (2015) defined source credibility "as the extent to which an information source is perceived to be believable, competent, and trustworthy by the information recipient." The importance of source credibility in UGC adoption is underscored by the intangibility of tourism products and the inability of the consumer to experience the product or service before actual consumption. Thus, the origin and originator of the UGC are important signifiers of the believability of the content. Ayeh et al. (2013a) posited that expertise and trustworthiness comprise source credibility. Expertise "refers to the extent to which UGC contributors are perceived to be a source of valid assertions [truth]," while trustworthiness "describes the degree of confidence in the source's intent to communicate the assertions they consider most valid [true]" (p. 3). Chung et al. (2015)

argued that the name of the author who wrote the message, the number of messages the author has posted, and the number of replies the content has generated accentuate expertise. Accordingly, source trustworthiness is underpinned by the degree of confidence the user has in the source, the website, and the information provided (Ayeh, Au, & Law, 2013). In determining the influence of eWOM on tourists' intention to visit a destination, Wang (2015) found that source credibility positively affected tourists' recommendation intention but not their visit intention. Additionally, source credibility was not found to influence tourists' attitudes towards the destination, implying that while information sources only act as a catalyst, the actual choice is determined by the cognitive and evaluative attributes of the destination.

Table 2. Source-based characteristics

Construct	Definition	Frequency	Author(s)
Source credibility	The extent to which a traveler perceives a UGC source to be believable, competent, and trustworthy	5	Filiery, Alguezaui, & McLeay, 2015; Ayeh et al. 2013a; Wang, 2015; Chung et al., 2015; Ayeh, 2015
Expertise	The extent to which UGC contributors are perceived to be a source of valid assertions	5	Ayeh et al., 2013a; Zhao et al., 2015; Sotiriadis & Zyl, 2013; Ayeh, 2015; Ayeh, 2012
Trustworthy	The extent to which the source is perceived as making valid assertions	2	Ayeh et al., 2013a; Sparks et al., 2013
Homophily	The extent to which the traveler perceives UGC contributors to be similar in some attributes	2	Ayeh, 2012; Ayeh et al., 2013a

Members of a group who share similarities in age, gender, education, social status, profession, and geographical location will believe information emanating from within the group more than information from outside it (McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook, 2001). Perceptual homophily, the extent to which individuals are similar in some attributes, plays a very important role in the evaluation of content among members of a community. In the context of tourism and travel planning, content from similar users is

more believable than from dissimilar users. Credibility issues related to deceptive postings on some travel review websites has generated controversy. For instance, TripAdvisor has faced sanctions in the UK due to postings on its websites (Ayeh et al., 2013a). Thus, consumers have elevated their evaluative criteria of UGC. In searching for travel information, consumers from communities usually accorded the content credibility because the members saw themselves as belonging to the same family.

4.2.2 Content-based characteristics

In addition to source characteristics, the nature of the information plays a role in its adoption. Different authors have used various ways of describing the nature and characteristics of travel information that stand out to travelers seeking information (see Table 3). Prominent among them is content novelty, or the newness of the travel information (Chen et al., 2014). It plays an important role in the travel information search process because it distinguishes between what the user is familiar with and what is new and interesting, stimulating interest. Furthermore, the direction of the valence of UGC (either positive or negative) also impacts its adoption. Generally, UGC is posted to express either positive feelings related to a product or service encounter or frustration and complaint. In the context of hotel bookings, Sparks and Browning (2011) found that exposure to positively valenced reviews increases booking intention and trust. Additionally, Mauri and Minazzi (2013) argued that positive online comments increase booking intention but also increase consumers' expectations. Thus, hotel managers should continuously improve their services to match guests' expectations.

Table 3. Content-based characteristics

Construct	Definition	Frequency	Author(s)
Aesthetics	The extent to which the traveler perceives the content to be beautiful and	1	Hsiao, Lu, & Lan, 2013

	emotionally appealing		
Valence of reviews	The extent to which the traveler perceives UGC as positive or negative	5	Zhao et al., 2015; Book et al., 2015; Tsao et al., 2015; Sparks & Browning, 2011; Lee, Xiong, & Hu, 2012
Information accuracy	The extent to which the traveler perceives UGC to be correct	1	Filieri & McLeay, 2013
Argument quality	The persuasive strength of arguments embedded in the UGC	3	Chung et al., 2015; Wang, 2015; Chong & Ngai, 2013
Information relevance	The extent to which the traveler perceives UGC to be helpful and applicable	1	Filieri & McLeay, 2013
Information reliability	The degree to which the traveler perceives UGC to be believable	2	Chen, Shang, & Li 2014; Chung & Koo, 2015

407
408 The attractiveness of UGC is also an important factor in its utilization. Aesthetics, or the
409 balance, emotional appeal, or beauty of the content as expressed in colors, font type,
410 music, or animation, can arouse interest in the content (Cyr, Head and Ivanov, 2006). In
411 the context of travel information searches, blogs and video content are particularly
412 important, as they present the opportunity to creatively add fun and enjoyment to the
413 presentation. Hsiao et al. (2013) found that the aesthetics of storytelling travel blogs
414 effectively increase readers' intention and positive feelings and attitudes about the
415 destination. Moreover, argument quality, referred to "as the persuasive strength of
416 arguments embedded in an informational message" (Bhattacharjee and Sanford, 2006,
417 p. 811), has been studied extensively in eWOM adoption. In the context of travel
418 information, a communication that has higher argument quality is more likely to
419 increase adoption than one with low argument quality. Thus, helpful, valuable, and
420 persuasive content positively influences readers' interest in and intention to visit a
421 destination (Wang, 2015). However, Chung et al. (2015) argued that the utilization of
422 UGC based on argument quality is moderated by social presence. Thus, argument

quality significantly affected perceived usefulness when there was low social presence but had less effect in situations with high social presence. Finally, in examining the factors that influence travelers' utilization of information from online reviews, Filieri and McLeay (2013) applied the ELM to understand information quality through central and peripheral routes. Central routes—information timeliness, information understandability, information relevance, information accuracy, value-added information, and information completeness—and peripheral routes—information quality and product ranking—both predicted tourists' destination choices.

4.2.3 User-based characteristics

The consumer's characteristics, such as age, gender, income, and literacy level, influence adoption of UGC. Young and middle-aged adults are predominant users of social media for travel planning (Filieri and McLeay, 2013) because this age group, characterized by inquisitiveness and curiosity, explores different social media platforms to make friends and stay informed about trending news in politics, economy, entertainment, and sports. Additionally, many among this age group perceive exploring social media platforms as fun. Females use the internet and social media more than males (Akman and Mishra, 2010), perhaps because females are more socially cohesive than males and social media provides a platform for fulfilling the natural need to socialize with others. This also affects travel planning, as females' already-developed social media usage impacts their adoption of UGC. Consumers' income is also an important determinant of engagement in different activities. Availability of disposable income highly predisposes the consumer to purchase items such as computer gadgets, which in turn allow them to explore social media platforms. Finally, literacy levels play a major role in UGC utilization in travel planning. An individual's educational level has

been seen to correlate with his or her income, thereby impacting his or her use of computer devices and allowing the exploration of social media with such devices to become an important element of the travel decision. Table 4 presents user-based characteristics, their definitions, the number of times they appeared in the reviewed studies (frequency), and the studies in which they were used.

Table 4. User-based characteristics

Construct	Definition	Frequency	Author(s)
Involvement	The traveler's perception of the relevance of UGC to the travel information search	3	Huang, Chou, & Lin, 2010; Leung & Bai, 2013; Sotiriadis & Zyl, 2013
Perceived enjoyment	The extent to which the traveler perceives UGC to be fun and enjoyable	11	Lee et al., 2012; Aluri, Slevitch, & Larzelere, 2015; Ayeh et al., 2013b; Ku, 2011; Chen et al., 2014; Chung & Koo, 2015; Kang & Schuett, 2013; Pietro & Pantano, 2013; Ayeh, 2012; Wang, 2015; Ting et al., 2014
Experience	The traveler's knowledge and skills that enhance the use of UGC in travel information searches	3	Ku, 2011; Kang & Schuett, 2013; Filiery et al., 2015
Perceived benefit	The extent of the gains the traveler derives from using UGC in travel information searches	3	Parra-Lopez et al., 2011; Chung & Koo, 2015; Oz, 2015

Literature on involvement abounds in the fields of sociology, psychology, and consumer behavior (Leung and Bai, 2013). Defined as "a person's perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values, and interests" (Zaichkowsky, 1985, p. 342), involvement has been found to have a significant influence on the consumer's decision-making process. In the tourism context, involvement is an important determinant of purchase since tourism services are high-risk and cannot be evaluated before consumption (Sotiriadis and Zyl, 2013). Thus, in travel planning, consumers explore different sources of information, and a highly involved consumer explores travel

information through many social media platforms. Huang et al. (2010) found that personal involvement on travel blogs is a determinant of consumers' response to advertising.

Another intrinsic motivation that has received great attention is perceived enjoyment. Studies that have incorporated perceived enjoyment into the TAM model have observed varying results, depending on the context. For instance, in the utilitarian context, Venkatesh (2000) conducted experiments in which employees were introduced to an online help desk system, multimedia system, and PC environment (Windows 95) for a payroll system. The study found that enjoyment was a weaker predictor of intention and use of the new information system. In the context of tourism, using social media is perceived as a hedonic activity; however, using UGC for travel information searches is perceived as a utilitarian activity (Ayeh et al., 2013b). Studies have found perceived enjoyment to be a strong determinant of attitude and intention in travel information search (Pietro and Pantano, 2013; Aluri et al., 2015).

Consumer's adoption of UGC for travel planning has also been attributed to experience and knowledge (Chong & Ngai, 2013). The internet provides consumers with unlimited access to products and services without limitations imposed by geographic locations. Thus, consumers experienced and knowledgeable in computer systems and the internet will have a strong motivation to use UGC for travel information searches (Chong & Ngai, 2013). In a study of UK and Northern Ireland tourists mainly consisting of 18–35 year olds, Filiery et al. (2015) suggested that user experience (knowledge and skill) influences consumer trust in UGC.

The benefit sought also determines consumers' intent to use and use of UGC in travel planning. In using UGC, consumers seek different types of benefits. According to Parra-

Lopez et al. (2011), such benefits can be functional, social, psychological, or hedonic. Functional benefits include finding the best destinations, low costs, and efficient services. Thus, consumers seeking these benefits consider using UGC to obtain relevant information. In terms of social benefits, social media provides a platform for consumers to connect and share information on common interests. The social benefits derived from such platforms include bonding, engagement, emotional support, companionship, and encouragement (Chung et al., 2015). Finally, different scholars have found that consumers' interest in and intent to use social media derives from the fun, pleasure, enjoyment, and playfulness they obtain from using it (Perea et al., 2004). Thus, in the context of travel planning, watching videos and seeing photographs of pleasing scenery in various destinations can stimulate interest in the use of UGC.

The fundamental assumption of WOM is that WOM episodes involve two parties: the sender and the receiver (Cheung and Thadani, 2012). Our framework on UGC adoption (Figure 1) is based on the classifications of the reviewed literature, which in turn are based on the premise that UGC adoption depends on three factors: source-based characteristics, user-based characteristics, and content-based characteristics. Source-based characteristics relate to the sender, while user-based characteristics relate to the receiver. Content-based characteristics are elements of the content.

Figure 1: Determinants of UGC utilization for travel planning

4.3 Strengths of the antecedents in predicting adoption

An analysis of the average path coefficients' effect sizes has been conducted to explain the strengths of antecedents in predicting dependent variables (Shaikh and Karjaluoto, 2015). Shaikh and Karjaluoto analyzed the strengths of the most frequently used antecedents to explain attitude, intention to use, and usage in mobile banking. Accordingly, we analyzed the average path coefficients of the effect sizes of the R-values of the most frequently used relationships as extracted (see Appendix 1); relationships used in six or more studies were included. The results, as shown in Table 5, indicate that trust has the strongest effect on attitude, followed by perceived ease of use. Additionally, attitude has the strongest effect on intentions, which is understandable because attitude has been found to be the most commonly used antecedent. Interestingly, perceived usefulness also has a stronger influence on intentions than perceived ease of use.

Table 5. The average path coefficients' effect sizes of major antecedents

Constructs	Attitude	Intention
Attitude	-	.511
Perceived usefulness	.180	.432
Trust	.362	.352
Perceived ease of use	.264	.347
Subjective norm/social influence	-	.343
Enjoyment	-	.335

5. Discussion

The aim of our study was to provide a review of the literature on what drives travelers' use of UGC during travel information searches. Through rigorous search criteria, we identified 54 articles from both tourism- and non-tourism-based journals. We also identified 22 heterogeneous and distinct theories, models, and frameworks with different antecedents. We also analyzed the articles based on the methodological approaches used and their geographical spread. Furthermore, critical determinants and elements of UGC adoption relating to the source, content and receiver characteristics were identified. Finally, we provided a framework to demonstrate how these elements fit together and analysed the average path coefficients of the effect sizes to determinant the strengths of the variables in predicting adoption.

Consumers perceive the experiences shared by fellow tourists to be sincere, believable, and trustworthy (Sparks et al., 2013). Tourism and travel information can be shared among members of the same social network, among those who do not belong to the same networks, and even among those who are geographically distant (Muñoz-Leiva et al., 2012). When content is shared by those who do not belong to the same network, source credibility becomes an important determinant of the believability of UGC. Source credibility includes trustworthiness and expertise (Ayeh et al., 2013a).

Trustworthiness implies confidence in the source and the source's reliability, while expertise implies that the source has knowledge about the destination. Tourists seeking travel information will regard the UGC of those who have similar interests to be more trustworthy and credible.

Travel information differs based on valence (negatively or positively framed content). Reading positive reviews can have a positive effect on travelers' inclination to visit the destination (Tsao et al., 2015). However, some studies have generated conflicting results regarding the influence of positively and negatively framed content on travelers' intentions (Sparks and Browning, 2011; Zhao et al., 2015). When tourists seek travel information, the novelty and understandability elements of UGC positively influence booking intentions (Chen et al., 2014). In a virtual world, information quality, which includes accuracy, timeliness, completeness, and relevance, seems to influence trust and booking intentions (Filieri and McLeay, 2014). In traditional social media contexts, intentions to use social media are directly influenced by perceived benefits (functional, psychological, hedonic, and social) (Parra-López et al., 2011). In the context of tourism and travel, benefit-seeking behaviors related to pursuing the best destinations, attractions, hotels, transportation, food, beverages, and prices explain the use of UGC (Öz, 2015). Most of the reviewed studies found that UGC positively influences tourists' intentions to book a hotel and visit a destination. Some studies also revealed that social influences, involvement, enjoyment, and experience are important determinants of UGC adoption for travel and tourism (Chung and Koo, 2015).

5.1 Contributions of the study

5.1.1 Implications for research

First, our study found that UGC adoption for travel planning depends on three factors: source-based characteristics, user-based characteristics, and content-based characteristics. The identification of trust as having the strongest effect on attitude is in line with earlier studies that identified trust as an important criterion for using UGC because those who use social media are unknown to one another (Parra-López et al., 2011; Ayeh et al., 2013). Second, geographical analyses of previous work on information and communication technology found that the majority of the studies were carried out in North America, Europe, East Asian regions (China, South Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan), and the Middle East, with no studies in South Asia or Africa (Shaikh & Karjaluoto, 2015). In this study however, no study was conducted in the South Asian regions (comprising India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan) and only one study in Africa.

Third, of the 22 different theories, frameworks, and models our systematic review uncovered (see Appendix 1), the TAM was the most used (26%). Though the TAM was originally developed at the organizational level, its use and application at the consumer level are well-noted in literature (Muñoz-Leiva et al., 2012). However, the identified weaknesses of the TAM in predicting technology adoption at the individual level (Chau and Hu, 2001) required some studies to combine the theory with other models (e.g. Casaló et al., 2011) and to extend the theory by adding other constructs (Ayeh et al., 2013b). Similarly, in a review of literature on the drivers of consumers to shop online, Perea et al. (2004) extensively highlighted the TAM and its constructs in consumers' online shopping

Fourth, the identified theories and the antecedents with their path coefficients from different studies (see Appendix 1) provide a solid theoretical background for subsequent

research (Okoli and Schabram, 2010); thus, this work provides a ready source for scholars wishing to undertake research, especially a meta-analysis of UGC in tourism. Fifth, the contributions of scholars from the information systems field are growing, and not only within the domain of management science, as evidenced by the higher inclusion of research on social media in tourism and travel in non-tourism based journals.

5.1.2 Implications for practice

Our systematic review generates some implications for practice. First, the pervasiveness of ICT has transformed consumers from passive recipients of marketing messages to active participants in brand building and product and service co-creation. Social media and, by extension, UGC provide a platform for this. Interestingly, availability of free access to the internet is a significant contributor to consumers' satisfaction with a given tourism service, so managers should ensure that consumers have unhindered and unlimited access to the internet. In a study evaluating customers' ratings of hotels, Bulchand-Gidumal, Melián-González and Lopez-Valcarcel (2013) found that hotels offering free wifi received higher scores and patronage than others. To accentuate the importance of internet to consumers, airlines have started providing internet access to airborne passengers (Medina, Hoffmann, Rossetto and Rokitansky, 2010), which was previously unavailable.

Second, customers' evaluations of satisfaction/dissatisfaction arise from two pillars: core services and relational factors. Core services include basic expectations related to room size and cleanliness, toilet facilities, meal types and availability, lighting, furnishings, and fittings. Relational factors primarily relate to customer service performance. Excellent delivery of these services typically generates positive UGC, and

this raises the expectations of prospective visitors. Therefore, managers should continue to improve their services in order to continuously match visitors' expectations.

Third, while information provided by fellow consumers is important, the actual decision to visit still resides with the consumers, who base their choices on the cognitive and evaluative attributes of the destination. Thus, managers should not completely give up based on reviews and comments about their services. Consumers still take additional steps to evaluate services and products and do not necessarily make decisions based on reviews.

Finally, our study also found that the utilization of social networks is very germane for festival and event managers. Importantly, such forums provide the opportunity for previous attendees to share their experiences, questions asked, and feedback obtained. While traditional web pages may contain very limited information about such activities, Lee, Xiong, and Hu (2012) found that Facebook is an influencing medium that not only provides information but also allows managers to have real-time chat sessions with consumers. Event organizers must therefore be sure to provide exciting experiences that will generated positive UGC. The sharing of such experiences on Facebook pages will influence those who read such content to visit.

5.2. Limitations and Future Research Directions

One of the limitations of the study is that it was based on quantitative studies; therefore, it did not incorporate qualitative research. Second, the review was based on UGC and did not incorporate marketer-generated media. Marketer-generated media could offer more insights into the utilization of online content for trip planning. Third, the review only covered the period from 2005 to 2016. Relevant studies that were published before this period could impact the review.

Among the emerging markets, only China and Taiwan were substantially reflected, with one study in Africa. Thus, we recommend studies be conducted in important emerging markets such as India and countries in Africa and South America that have witnessed rapid rates of internet subscription and social media adoption. Additionally, Facebook and Twitter were the most commonly studied social media platforms. Platforms such as YouTube, Delicious, Digg, and Lonely Planet are also very important for travel and tourism; further research should seek to incorporate these networks into the UGC literature. Importantly, all the reviewed studies merely listed the sample profile, none took a deeper step towards weighting the sample characteristics in UGC adoption in travel planning. This is an interesting area of study, especially in the emerging markets.

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