


The Impact of Credibility Attributes on Consumer Intention to Adopt Information on Social Networking Sites: Application to Tourism Services

Yasmeen Elsantil, Faculty of Commerce, Tanta University, Egypt*

Riyad Eid, United Arab Emirates University, Al-Ain, UAE

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5900-2225>

Khaled Bedair, Faculty of Commerce, Tanta University, Egypt

ABSTRACT

This study examines the effect of consumers' perceived credibility of information on SNS on their attitude and intention to adopt this information in the Arab world. The study adopted a quantitative research approach using a survey questionnaire conducted among 317 individuals. Structural equation modelling was conducted. The results highlighted that there are positive direct effects of authority cues, expertise, trustworthiness, social identity, and argument strength on perceived credibility. Although both authority cues and transparency have non-significant direct effects on perceived credibility, they have positive direct effects on attitude and indirect effects on intention via attitude. Finally, the positive impact of credibility on intention is mediated by attitude. This study contributes to the literature on the credibility of information on SNS and its effect on consumer intention to adopt it.

KEYWORDS

Credibility Attributes, Intention to Adopt Information on SNS, Social Networking Sites (SNS), Tourism Services

INTRODUCTION

Social media plays a critical role for both travelers and tourism companies (Chung & Buhalis, 2008; Ye, Fong, & Luo, 2021). Instead of resorting to official company websites, consumers are increasingly turning to social networking sites (SNS) pages to search for any relevant information, including travel-related tips (Mehraliyev, Choi, King, 2021). Nowadays, suggestions from friends and family, online recommendations, as well as online comments influence travelers' decisions for planning for a trip (Berhanu & Raj, 2020). SNS allow travelers to share their experiences and ideas with others. SNS provide easily accessible forums on which travelers may share their personal information, experiences and ideas with others and leave their comments, reviews, opinions and suggestions about airlines, hotels or restaurants (Hur, Kim, Karatepe & Lee, 2017). As information from SNS comes from a large number of users every day, it can be difficult to quickly differentiate reality from fiction or actual news from mere opinions (Johnson & Kaye, 2014). According to Sunny Tsai and Rita Men

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*Corresponding Author

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(2013), to support consumers' engagement with SNS, the credibility of information provided by both brand developers and consumers on SNS pages is an essential element for establishing trusting relationships with consumers (Pop, Săplăcan, Dabija, & Alt, 2021). Similar findings regarding trust in news in social media were also reported recently (Karlsen & Aalberg, 2021). Perceived online credibility is defined as the extent to which one perceives information to be believable and this is considered as a strong predictor of consumer's further action (Li & Suh, 2015) and decision making (Alrubaian, Al-Qurishi, Alamri, Al-Rakhami, Hassan, & Fortino, 2018). Prior research has reported how to judge the information credibility on traditional media or websites (Metzger & Flanagin, 2013). However, information on social media platforms suffers from a lack of professional gatekeepers who can monitor content (Li & Suh, 2015), leading to the presence of some fake news in social media (Abdallah, 2021). It is not unusual to find unverified or false information flow on social media (Di Domenico, Sit, Ishizaka, & Nunan, 2021). In this situation, online consumers are forced to look for new ways to evaluate the credible information.

Although past research has examined the use of social media for travel-related purposes (Varkaris & Neuhofer, 2017; Rahman, Sharmin & Akhter, 2021), scant attention has been paid to how perceived credibility of information on SNS influences consumers' intention to adopt such information in purchasing decisions, specifically in the hospitality marketplace (Li & Suh, 2015). Since consumers can access services indirectly and form a degree of trust of a service provider through online interactions with both a company and other customers (Daugherty, Eastin & Bright, 2013), it is expected that SNS can also play a vital role in consumers' intentions to adopt and act on information on SNS. Although previous research has attempted to investigate antecedents that drive consumers to visit or follow SNS information (Daugherty et al., 2013), more research on a larger and more diverse sample which is applicable to a variety of SNS is needed to aid understanding of consumers' perceived credibility of information concerning SNS and how this affects their intention to adopt it (Li & Suh, 2015).

Importantly, Aluri et al., (2016) argued that despite the popularity of social media usage by travel services, companies still wonder whether social media channels truly enhance the overall experience of travelers, particularly their intention to adopt information on SNS. Research on the perceived credibility of information on SNS is still not very clear or well established, and future research is still needed (Alkhamees et al., 2021). Johnson and Kaye (2014) found that SNS was ranked as less credible than traditional and other online sources of information. Johnson and Kaye (2014) recommended that more research should be conducted to examine the relationship between SNS credibility and the intention to adopt information on SNS for purchasing decisions. This is especially important because according to Inversini and Masiero (2014) and Ayeh, Au and Law (2013), describing and explaining the role of social media in the tourism and travel industry involves cultural elements. Accordingly, further research on a variety of customer attributes is needed in order to increase our understanding of the impact of the perceived credibility of information on SNS on purchasing in tourism services (Song & Yoo, 2016).

Tourism SNS and Credibility

Recently, social media has become an effective channel for the marketing of tourism services (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014; Hysa, Karasek, & Zdonek, 2021; Mehraliyev et al., 2021). Reports showed that there are 4.38 billion internet users, including 3.48 billion active social media users (Global Web of index, 2019). This may be because tourism customers have become more active and information shared in social media considerably reduces the burden of their decision-making process (Icoz, Kutuk & Icoz, 2018). The Forbes (2017) report highlights that social networking sites have gained remarkable popularity especially among the younger generation of people because they can share pictures, videos and stories. As the travel planning process frequently entails high level of uncertainty due to the characteristics of tourism, the availability of online travel information that can be accessed anytime and anywhere has become increasingly important in order to optimise travel plans (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010; Hsu & Cox, Burgess, Sellitto, & Buultjens, 2009).

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