

# Attitude towards the Consumption of Social Media: Analyzing Young Consumers' Travel Behavior

Farzana Sharmin, Mohammad Tipu Sultan, Benqian Li

**Abstract**—Advancement of new media technology and consumption of social media have altered the way of communication in the tourism industry, mostly for consumers' travel planning, online purchase, and experience sharing activity. There is an accelerating trend among young consumers' to utilize this new media technology. This paper aims to analyze the attitude of young consumers' about social media use for travel purposes. The convenience random sample method used to collect data from an urban area of Shanghai (China), consists of 225 young consumers'. This survey identified behavioral determinants of social media consumption by the extended theory of planned behavior (TPB). The instrument developed support on previous research to test hypotheses. The results of structural analyses indicate that attitude towards the use of social media is affected by external factors such as availability and accessibility of technology. In addition, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control have partially influenced the attitude of respondents'. The results of this study could help to improve social media travel marketing and promotional strategies for respective groups.

**Keywords**—Social media, theory of planned behavior, travel behavior, young consumer.

## I. INTRODUCTION

SOCIAL media is a platform to create and share information through virtual communities, networks [1]–[3], and exchange of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 [4]–[6]. The term “social networking” has to be considered alongside the term “social media” [7]. Social media technologies [8] have integration facilities into our social and economic life nowadays. Scholars generally agree that social media function as tools to connect with people through communication on these sites [9]–[13].

Many research found that the accessibility and user friendly approach of social media provide opportunity for consumers' to create, edit and share ideas promptly [14]–[17].

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

### A. The TPB and Related Studies on Travel

The TPB is one of the most important theoretical frameworks for predicting human behaviors [18], [19]. In the

TPB model, behavioral intention is directly influenced by three components: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (PBC) [18], [19]. The three components can provide useful predictions of intention and behavior.

### B. Attitude

Attitude refers to a relatively persistent and consistent behavioral inclination of individuals based on their recognition and likes and dislikes of people, event objects and the environment [20]–[22]. In the context of travel and tourism, several studies find a significant positive relationship between attitudes towards using social media for destination choice, and intentions to visit or prefer.

### C. Subjective Norms

Ajzen and Fishbein regarded the subjective norm as the product of normative belief and motivation to comply [18], [19]. Normative belief reflects the pressure perceived by individuals to perform or not to perform a behavior in relation to those persons or organizations important to them [23]–[26]. The role of subjective norms as a driver of behavioral intentions is well recognized in the marketing and tourism literature [27].

### D. PBC

PBC is a composition of control belief or the beliefs about the factors facilitating or impeding the behavior and the control power individuals have over these factors [18], [19]. PBC not only influences intention, but it may also directly influence the behavior of an individual.

### E. Behavioral Intention

Ajzen [18], [19] defined intention as a person's subjective probability of performing a behavior. It reflects the willingness of an individual to engage in certain behavior [28]–[30]. In the study of travel and tourism, behavioral intention refers to the intention to participate again within a year of having traveled and the preparedness to spend more for travel [11], [22], [27]. Behavioral intention measurement is mainly conducted based on such indicators as the intention to travel again [20]–[22], [27].

### F. Social Media Using for Travel Purpose

Travelers interact and share their travel experiences, opinions and recommendations as a primary source of travel information [30]–[32]. This creates travelers who consume social media in three travel phases; pre-travel, during travel and post travel. An important issue regarding the use of social media for travel planning is examining in all travel phases [13], [33], [34]. Previous research found that 16% of the

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respondents had posted travel experience online during travelling [35]. Based on the above discussion, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

Hypothesis 1. Usefulness of social media significantly influences consumers' attitude towards its usage for travel.

Hypothesis 2. Subjective norms significantly influence the attitude of social media use for travel.

Hypothesis 3. PBC has a significant influence on consumers' attitude of social media use.

Hypothesis 4. Attitude significantly influences the intention to use social media for travel purposes.

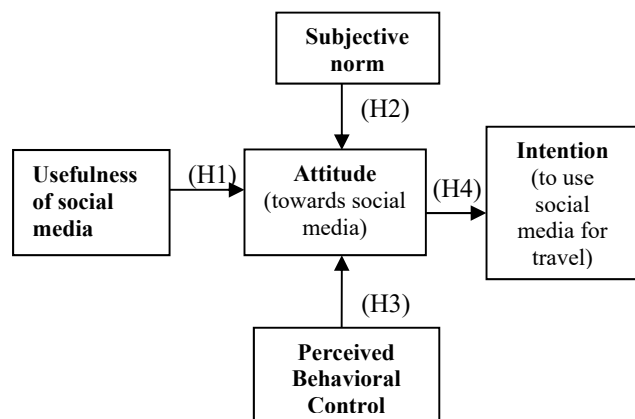


Fig. 1 The theoretical research model (TPB)

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### A. Sample and Data Collection

A quantitative study conducted based on the related literature [1], [33], and a convenience random sampling technique employed to collect data from Shanghai, an important market for a tourism destination. The data collection took place at the popular tourist places from Shanghai (the Bund, Yu Garden, Pudong Area, Shanghai Museum, and Nanjing Road). Data were collected in a face-to-face mode of survey administration and online, which allowed for better communications with the respondents and increased response rate. The final sample size after data cleaning was 225.

#### B. Survey Instrument

The structured survey questionnaire was developed for collecting two types of information from the young consumers'. First, consumers' demographic information such as gender, age, educational, and income levels were collected. Second, factors that could influence the attitude to use social media for travel purposes were assessed. The questionnaire was divided into seven sections and consists of 24 questions in total, which was modified from previous research [1], [13], [33]. Based on the scale items, the survey respondents rated the importance of the factors using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) [1], [36]. The questionnaire was developed in English and proofread by a native English speaker. A native Chinese speaker translated it, and then this version was reviewed by academic experts whose first language is Chinese. Data

collection and analysis were done over the period between June-August 2018. All received data were downloaded from the survey website into a spreadsheet format and then imported into a statistical package program for further analysis (IBM SPSS Statistics 23).

### IV. RESULTS

#### A. Demographic Profile

First, socio-demographic analyses were conducted to identify basic statistical characteristics. The demographic profile of the respondents is provided in Table I.

TABLE I  
 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS (N = 225)

Variable	Category	China	
		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%) of Responded
Gender	Male	110	48.9
	Female	115	51.1
	Total	225	100.0
Age	18-22 years old	64	28.4
	23-27 years old	68	30.2
	28-32 years old	64	28.4
	33-37 years old	29	12.9
	Total	225	100.0
Education	Bachelor degree	90	40.0
	Master's degree	70	31.1
	Doctoral degree	55	24.4
	Postdoctoral degree	10	4.4
Monthly income	Total	225	100.0
	Less than 3000 RMB	81	36.0
	3001-6000 RMB	62	27.6
	6001-9000 RMB	53	23.6
	9001-12000 RMB	20	8.9
	12001 RMB or above	9	4.0
Total	225	100.0	

The most significant number of responses was recorded for the age group 23-27 years, with 30.2% of the total of responses. This figure was 28.4% for the age groups 28-32 years and 18-22 years, while the 33-37 year age group recorded the lowest percentage at 12.9%. With regard to the level of education, the majority of respondent have completed a Bachelor (40%) or a Master's (31%) degree. Slightly more male (54%) than female (46%) consumers' participated in the survey. About 36% of the participants earned a monthly income less than RMB 3000 (USD 443), followed by 27.6% earning between RMB 3001-6000 (USD 443-885) and 23.6% earning between RMB 6001-9000 (USD 885-1328), and only 4% earning RMB 12001-above (USD 1770-above).

#### B. Use of Social Media

Table II shows social media types used at least once over the past year by the respondents. According to the findings, respondents' have been using social media for 4-5 years (44.9%). Around 45.8% of Chinese respondents enter social media sites 7-8 times per day. Sina Weibo (45%) and WeChat (35%) are the most popular social media platforms.

TABLE II  
SOCIAL MEDIA USE OF RESPONDENTS (N = 225) FOR TRAVEL PURPOSE

Variable	Category	China	
		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%) of Responded
How long been using SM	2-3 years	38	16.9
	4-5 years	101	44.9
	5+ years	86	38.2
	Total	225	100.0
SM use frequency per day	3-4times	14	6.2
	5-6 times	76	33.8
	7-8 times	103	45.8
	9+ times	32	14.2
Total	225	100.0	

C. Influence of Social Media on Consumers' Attitude

TABLE III  
HYPOTHESIS 1: DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Attitude	12.71	1.559	225
Social media use	13.20	1.699	225

TABLE IV  
HYPOTHESIS 1: INFERENCE ANALYSIS

Correlations			
		Attitude	SMU
Attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	0.304**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	225	225
Social media use	Pearson Correlation	0.304**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	225	225

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Tables III and IV assess hypothesis one (Hypothesis 1. Usefulness of social media significantly influences consumers' attitude towards its usage for travel), in which the Pearson correlation test was employed. The significant level  $p < 0.001$  evidencing that social media significantly influences consumers' attitude towards its usage for travel ( $r = 0.304$ ,  $n = 225$ ,  $p = -0.000$ ). This supports Hypothesis 1.

D. Influence of Subjective Norm on Consumers' Attitude

TABLE V  
HYPOTHESIS 2: DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Attitude	12.71	1.559	225
Subjective norm	11.95	1.396	225

TABLE VI  
HYPOTHESIS 2: INFERENCE ANALYSIS

Correlations			
		Attitude	SMU
Attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	0.104
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.119
	N	225	225
Subjective norm	Pearson Correlation	0.104	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.119	
	N	225	225

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Tables V and VI assess hypothesis two (Hypothesis 2.

Subjective norms significantly influence the attitude of social media using for travel), in which the Pearson correlation test was employed. The significant level  $p < 0.001$  evidencing that subjective norm does not have any influence on consumers' attitude of social media use for travel ( $r = 0.104$ ,  $n = 225$ ,  $p = -0.119$ ). As a result, Hypothesis 2 is not supported.

E. Influence of PBC on Consumers' Attitude

TABLE VII  
HYPOTHESIS 3: DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Attitude	12.71	1.559	225
PBC	13.25	1.449	225

TABLE VIII  
HYPOTHESIS 3: INFERENCE ANALYSIS

Correlations			
		Attitude	SMU
Attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	0.200**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.003
	N	225	225
PBC	Pearson Correlation	0.200**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.003	
	N	225	225

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Tables VII and VIII assess hypothesis three (Hypothesis 3. PBC has significant influence on consumers' attitude of social media use), in which the Pearson correlation test was employed. The significant level  $p < 0.001$  evidencing that PBC has a significant influence on consumers' attitude of social media use ( $r = 0.200$ ,  $n = 225$ ,  $p = -0.003$ ). This supports Hypothesis 3.

F. Behavioral Intention for using Social Media for Travel Purposes

Tables IX and X assess hypothesis four (Hypothesis 4. Attitude significantly influences the intention to use social media for travel purposes), in which the Pearson correlation test was employed. The significant level  $p < 0.001$  evidencing that consumers' attitude significantly influences the intention to use social media for travel purposes ( $r = 0.263$ ,  $n = 225$ ,  $p = -0.000$ ). This supports Hypothesis 4.

TABLE IX  
HYPOTHESIS 4: DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Attitude	12.71	1.559	225
Behavioral intention	20.64	2.146	225

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this study is to examine the predictors of Shanghai young residents' intention of the use of social media for travel purposes. In Asia, China is the world's largest social network market. Chinese people have their own social media platform which differs from the rest of the world [25], [28], [29]. WeChat has been integrated into Chinese people's daily life and is reshaping online relationships for users of all ages; one statistics found that 33% of users using mobile data for

WeChat [37], [38].

TABLE X  
HYPOTHESIS 4: INFERENCE ANALYSIS

Correlations			
		Attitude	SMU
Attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	0.263**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	225	225
Behavioral intention	Pearson Correlation	0.263**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	225	225

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

This research extends the body of literature on the TPB in two ways. First, social media using frequency was measured separately, as suggested in previous attitudes literature but rarely applied to tourism [27], [32], [39]. The vast majority of previous studies have measured attitudes through semantic differentials. By connected attitudes with social media using frequency, research results revealed that social media using frequency has a significant influence on the travel information search among young consumers. In conclusion, this study provides baseline information about the potential social media using habits of Shanghai residents in terms of travel. From the above results, Chinese respondents tended to rely more on the search for reviewers comments at the pre-travel phase to ensure the destination. In relation to social media creation during and post-travel phase, social media used to upload travel pictures and videos, share own travel experiences and share location update was most significantly associated with both countries. Other studies have evidenced [1], [40], [41] that social media websites are more likely to be used for sharing travel information.

## VI. IMPLICATIONS

This study significantly contributes to the literature by providing evidence of the use of social media for travel purposes are still scarce. Therefore, travel marketers and providers aim to attract travelers high in the use of social media and pay close attention to their travel-related promotional strategies.

The major limitation of this study was the small size of sample and location. In fact, this study intended to motivate other researchers to pursue better explanations on how cultural differences influence the use of social media platforms, namely to search use. Indeed, further research is necessary to provide increased confidence regarding the results and to clarify the influence of national culture on social media use for travel purposes.

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