
Travel Blog Content Relevancy on Tourist Visiting Intention: Mediated by Perceived Enjoyment

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to identify how the information relevance on travel blogs content on social media platforms impact on readers' visiting intention via the mediating effect of perceived enjoyment with reference to local travel community. The study focuses on filling the existing gap in relation to Sri Lankan context. A questionnaire is distributed among a convenient sample of 250 local travel blog followers on social media platforms. Based on the concept of information relevance, the proposed model to examine the interrelation of information relevance on travel blogs content towards the readers' visiting intention is mediated by perceived enjoyment while the analysis is executed through the SPSS software and the PROCESS Macro of Andrew F. Hayes. The study illustrated that there is yet a partial mediation effect on the correlation between information relevance and visiting intention. Thus, what drives themselves most for the visiting intention is the information relevance of the content of the blog.

Keywords: *Information Relevance, Perceived enjoyment, Social media travel blogs, Visiting intention*

1. Introduction

According to the social media research summary 2020, the social media sites are currently accessed by 3.80 million active social media users and increased by more than 9 per cent (321 million new users)(Joanna Carter, 2020). Thus, different social media platforms are fundamentally changing the way travelers and tourists search for, find, and read information regarding tourist suppliers and tourist destinations, and travelers can share their travel experiences through Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube (Sigala et al., 2012) and thus, social media is considered as an important source of tourism information (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010;

Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). Many researches have highlighted the fact that most of the social media users “somewhat” or “significantly influenced” by social media for their travel related decisions and it is also shown that there is a strong relationship between perceived level of influence from social media to travel intention (Fotis et al., 2012).

When signifying about Information Relevance Theory; the information relevance once has been used as a criterion determining whether the retrieved information meets consumers’ needs since 1970s (Huang, 2018). The quality and the content of the information relevance stands on a strong combination of Novelty, Reliability, Understand ability and Interestingness (Chen et al., 2014) of the information. Recently, personal travel blogs have become an important source for acquiring travel information (Lin & Huang, 2006; Litvin et al., 2008; Scott, 2001; Singh et al., 2008; Yoo & Gretzel, 2016) Thus these characteristics of travel blogs on the social media platforms attract tourists’ attention and influence their decisions and interest of blogs’ content affect the behavioural intention of the travellers (Chen et al., 2014).

High levels of information quality are also found to provide enhanced enjoyment (Ahn et al., 2007). When tourists browse social media, tourists usually perceive some enjoyment when reading travel blogs on social media (Huang, 2018). Based on the concept of information relevance, blog’s content and perceived enjoyment show that novelty, understand ability and interest of blogs’ content affect the behavioural intention to visit through the blog usage enjoyment (Chen et al., 2014). Thus perceived enjoyment have shown that it mediates the relationship in between the information relevance to readers’ visiting intention (Chen et al., 2014; Huang, 2018).

In Sri Lankan context, Raigam Social Media Awards in 2019 (Raigam, 2019), awarded “Travel with Wife” as the most popular social media travel influencer of the year which clearly indicates that local travel community has been influenced by social media content on travel intentions and destination choices of travelers. Thus, it is clear that they have gained this exposure of broader travel intention and destination choices through the social media content visibility (DailyFT, 2017). Although Sri Lankan travel community gained a broader travel intention and destination choices through travel blogs content, it is still an unexamined phenomenon that whether the perceived enjoyment mediates in between the information relevance of the travel blogs content on social media and readers’ visiting intention. Although foreign studies (Chen et al., 2014; Huang, 2018), have proven that perceived enjoyment mediates travel blogs content and readers’ visiting intention, the lack of studies in Sri Lankan context is the empirical gap being researched in this novel study.

2. Methodology

2.1. Philosophical Approach

This research study follows the positivism research philosophy under epistemology. Deductive reasoning approach is adopted while a quantitative analysis is conducted.

2.2. Conceptual Framework

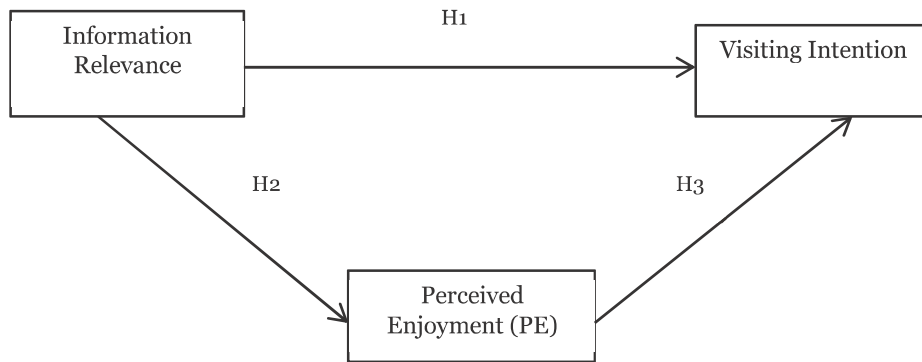


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

2.2.1. Hypotheses

H1: Information Relevance on the travel blog content has a positive effect towards the readers' visiting intention.

H2: Information Relevance on the travel blog content has a positive effect on the readers' perceived enjoyment.

H3: Perceived enjoyment has a positive influence towards the readers' visiting intention.

H4: Perceived enjoyment mediates the relationship between information relevance and visiting intention.

2.3. Data Collection Methods

Under primary and secondary data collection methods, for primary data, a questionnaire is distributed among the targeted audience-local tourist community. An archival study is

conducted to collect required secondary data. The collection of data started around early-March from both the sources. The questionnaire consisted of; a demographic section and 19 close ended statements which a 5 point Likert-scale provided where 01='Strongly Disagree' and 05='Strongly Agree' to measure the variables.

Table 1: Operationalization

Variable	Question	Measurement
Novelty (Independent)	Q1_1 Substantial amount of new information in this blog	(Chen et al., 2014)
	Q1_2 I Knew little about the destination described in the blog	
	Q1_3 This blog has a substantial amount of unique information	
	Q1_4 Through this blog, I discovered a new destination	
	Q1_5 Through this blog, I learned about the destination's culture	
	Q1_6 Through this blog, I am satisfied regarding the curiosity aroused about this destination	
Reliability (Independent)	Q1_7 I think the content of this blog is accurate	(Chen et al., 2014)
	Q1_8 I think the content of this blog is consistent with facts	
	Q1_9 I think the content of this blog is reliable	
Understandability (Independent)	Q1_10 The information in this blog was easy for me to understand	(Chen et al., 2014)
	Q1_11 I was able to follow this blog's content with little effort	
	Q1_12 Readers like me should find this blog easy to read	
Interestingness (Independent)	Q1_13 I think the content of this blog is interesting	(Chen et al., 2014) (Kim et al., 2017)
	Q1_14 I think the content of this blog is attracting	
Perceived Enjoyment (Mediating)	Q1_15 this blog provides me enjoyment	(Chen et al., 2014)
	Q1_16 this blog makes me feel relaxed and pleasant	
	Q1_17 this blog makes me feel happy	

	Q1_18 Using this blog is fun	
Visiting Intention (Dependent)	Q1_19 I intend to visit the destination mentioned in this blog	(Chen et al., 2014)
	Q1_20 When I go on a trip, the probability that I visit the destination mentioned in this blog is high	

2.4. Population and Sampling

The population based for this particular research is the local travel community in Sri Lanka. Among the selected population, a sample of 250 is taken to conduct the survey. Also, convenience sampling technique is used here to distribute the questionnaire.

2.5. Data Analytical Tools and Analytical Method

Quantitative data analytical approach is used and the mediation analysis is used to examine the mediating effect of the perceived enjoyment. SPSS software is mainly used and PROCESS Macro v3.5 by Andrew F. Hayes add-on is used to analyse mediation analysis.

3. Data Analysis

3.1. Assessing Reliability of Variance

Table 2: Reliability Statistics of the Study Variables

Constructs/Dimensions	Number of Items	Cronbach's alpha coefficient
Full Scale Reliability	25	0.903
Novelty	6	0.727
Reliability	3	0.820
Understandability	3	0.715
Interestingness	2	0.948
Enjoyment	4	0.820
Visiting Intention	2	0.729

Source: Survey Data (2020)

Since all the values are above 0.7, it is confirmed that the reliability of the questionnaire is acceptable according to (Kim et al., 2017)(Lisawadi et al., 2019).

3.2. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 3: Demographic Characteristics

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	158	63.2
	Female	92	36.8
Age	18 – 24	149	59.6
	25 – 29	70	28.0
	30 – 34	23	9.2
	25 and above	8	3.2
Use of Social Media	Instagram	122	48.8
	Facebook	95	38.0
	YouTube	33	13.2

Source: Survey Data (2020)

3.3. Mediation Analysis

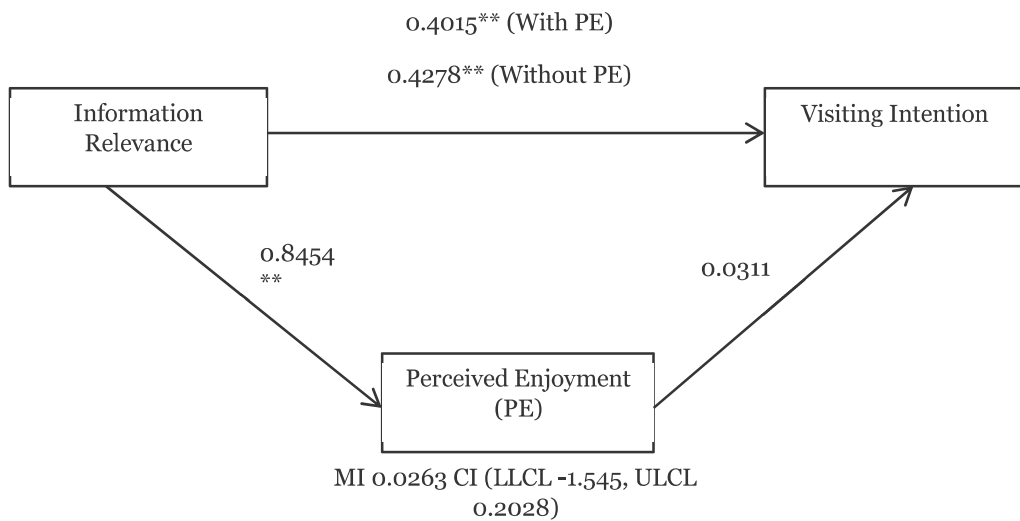


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework and the Relationships

Figure 2 depicts the correlation coefficient between information relevance (independent variable) and Perceived enjoyment (mediating variable), is indicated as statistically significant with the correlation coefficient of 0.8454 ($r=0.8454$, $p\text{-value} < 0.05$) while the correlation coefficient between the perceived enjoyment and the visiting intention (dependent variable), depict a lower association and statistically insignificant as the correlation coefficient is 0.0311 ($r=0.0311$, $p\text{-value} > 0.05$). Considering the direct effect of the independent variable on the

dependent variable with the mediation of perceived enjoyment, the correlation is 0.4015 and is statistically significant ($r=0.4015$, $p\text{-value} < 0.05$). At the same time, the findings indicate a correlation of 0.4278 between information relevance and the visiting intention without the mediating variable ($r=0.4278$, $p\text{-value} < 0.05$).

Considering the correlations, mediation is derived from multiplying the correlation values of 0.8454×0.0311 which equalled to 0.0263. Since the mediation value is low and the direct effect of information relevance on readers visiting intention including the mediating effect have shown a correlation of 0.4015 ($r=0.4015$, $0.004 < 0.05$), it demonstrates that still a partial mediation exists. Still, the magnitude is much lower in the results comparing to the correlation value of 0.4278 ($r=0.4278$, $p\text{-value} < 0.05$) between information relevance and the visiting intention without the perceived enjoyment. Thus, the significance of the mediating factor; perceived enjoyment between the information relevance to visiting intention is not significant in implications.

Table 4: Results of the hypothesis testing

Path	Path coefficient	<i>p</i> -value	Accepted or Rejected
H1. Information relevance -> Visiting intention	0.4278	0.0001	Accepted
H2. Information relevance -> Perceived enjoyment	0.8454	0.0001	Accepted
H3. Perceived enjoyment -> Visiting Intention	0.0311	0.7192	Rejected
H4. Information relevance to visiting intention through mediation effect	0.4015	0.004	Accepted

*P-value significant at $p < 0.05$

4. Conclusion

According to the research findings, the majority interested in travel blogs are of the 18-24 age category; the younger population and then 25-29 and 30-34 respectively. Considering genders, mostly males have shown their interest in following travel blogs in the local context. Freedom, less responsibilities and social cultural perceptions might have been the reason to the significantly large number of male respondents and respondents from the age range 18-24. Instagram and Facebook have been selected by the majority as the most popular social media platforms.

Furthermore, according to the findings, mediating factor- perceived enjoyment partially mediates the direct effect. This factor might get applied to the foreign context very well as per other researches; (Chen et al., 2014)(Kim et al., 2017) which are considered as the base to this novel research in Sri Lankan context. Although the existing local travel bloggers being creative to their maximum to get the readers attracted to their blogs by influencer marketing techniques considering the local context, it is not that much efficacious as per the findings. Due to the partial mediating effect, other than the perceived enjoyment to drive the readers towards their visiting intention, they seem to be considering more on mere information presented by the travel bloggers.

These findings will be significant in decision making for academics and researchers expanding dimensions broadly on influencer marketing. Furthermore, local Destination Management Companies will also benefit since domestic tourism is equally important to a DMC just like inbound tourism. However, the content of the blog should be highly monitored since it is the relevancy of the information provided affecting the local travel community when stimulating their visiting intention. But if focusing on inbound tourism, perhaps perceived enjoyment can also be considered important. Sri Lankan government as the policy maker, can execute a project of identifying the influential local travel bloggers and provide the basic trainings and further strategic support with key points to be addressed in order to promote the destination image of Sri Lanka for inbound and domestic tourism promotions.

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