

# Investigating the Credibility of Online Travel Reviews Adoption in Trip Planning Intention among Indian Travellers

Jasveen Kaur<sup>A</sup>, Jobanjeet Kaur<sup>B\*</sup>

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## Abstract

*Travellers evaluate online travel reviews usage through their argument quality and credibility of the source. As a result, travel marketers such as hoteliers, destination marketers and travel agency websites managers should set up mechanisms to assess tourists' concern to avoid unfavorable experience from social media reviews. Accordingly, this study aims to develop a scale and validate the modified Information Adoption Model (IAM) in the tourism context, while studying the impact of online review usefulness on its adoption. Secondly, the mediation role of travelers' attitude toward online reviews between review usefulness and its adoption is determined. Further, the credibility of online travel review adoption on the behavioral intentions of travelers has been assessed. This paper adapts the modified IAM given by Abedi et al. (2019) to develop scale and provide a comprehensive model in the tourism context. The study used 284 travelers who use online travel reviews from social media for their trip planning to evaluate the proposed model through SmartPLS software. The results show that online travel review usefulness significantly affects online travel review adoption. Secondly, the relationship between online review usefulness and its adoption is fully mediated by the mediating variable (attitude towards online travel reviews). Hence, this empirical paper intends to add to the research on online travel review adoption by travelers for their trip planning, considering the forwarding of information as one of the behavioral intentions along with purchase intentions, which depicts the novelty of this paper.*

**Keywords:** Online Travel Reviews, Travel Review Usefulness, Information Adoption Model, Trip-Planning, Social Media

<sup>A</sup> Serving Senior Faculty and Former Chairperson-Head, University Business School (UBS), Guru Nanak Dev University (GNDU), Amritsar-143005, Punjab, India. Email: [jasveen.ubs@gndu.ac.in](mailto:jasveen.ubs@gndu.ac.in)

<sup>B</sup> Senior Research Fellow, University Business School (UBS), Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar-143005, Punjab, India.

\* Corresponding author email: [saddal.joban@gmail.com](mailto:saddal.joban@gmail.com)

## Introduction

Presently, social media has increased consumer-to-consumer communications, where people can quickly generate content on these online platforms in mobility (Sotiriadis, 2017; Popp et al., 2016). People can easily get into debate and share relevant information on social media, asking their acquaintances for advice, exchanging thoughts about holiday destinations, and receiving recommendations from them. The massive increase of this user-generated content on the internet has labeled this era the “Age of Acceleration” (2006–2016), where technology has drastically changed the role of online platforms, from publishing to participating platforms (Xiang, 2018).

Furthermore, social media has profoundly altered the customers’ distribution of word-of-mouth (WOM) (Balaji et al., 2016). Earlier, the consumers used to discuss their views with a fixed set of social networks; eventually social media has enabled them to share thousands of responses every minute with an extensive and diverse range of customers (Zhang et al., 2017; Lin et al., 2014). Therefore, social media has evolved into a powerful medium for sharing pre-purchase details to its users (Zhang et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2013). Consequently, customers may now look for information provided by other customers to feel more at ease before buying goods/services (Erkan, Evans, 2016). Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) has superseded the previous version of WOM due to advanced technology. The eWOM refers to internet-accessible opinions regarding a product or service made by prospective, current, or past consumers (Song et al., 2021). Many relevant venues for eWOM have emerged on the internet, including discussion forums, blogs, review websites, and social networking sites (Cheung, Thadani, 2012). Meanwhile, social media allows people to share their experiences regarding goods/services with their friends, acquaintances, or anonymously (Erkan, Evans, 2018; Chu, Kim, 2011).

Consequently, consumers are increasingly seeking information via social media, and these are seen as a suitable platform for eWOM (Sotiriadis, 2017). Social networking sites - SNS (Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube) have attracted increasing attention in recent years, where users spend most of their time on such online platforms. Also, marketers may reach their target audience via these social media platforms directly and indirectly. Consumers may now actively engage in producing and distributing eWOM on social media without the help of a marketer, thanks to the internet and new versions of smart phones (Erkan, Evans, 2018; Mahapatra, Mishra, 2017; Cheung, 2014; Berthon et al., 2008).

eWOM is highly common in the tourism sector since travelers seek reliable information to plan their trips, and information is, without a doubt, the fabric of tourism (Xiang, 2018). As tourism is a service industry, travelers cannot anticipate its experience in advance like other physical products. To minimize the risk of trip planning, travelers try to get reliable information from various sources: offline, i.e., from their friends/relatives, or online, i.e., from social media (Shu, Scott, 2014; Cheung et al., 2008). Hence, social media has evolved into an effective tool for finding any information. It is loaded with information written by an ordinary man who has no personal interest in posting their experiences on social media. Therefore, this information reported from the consumer’s perspective is considered valuable by the people.

Searching for travel information on SNS or travel review websites is a common activity among people to plan their trips efficiently (Bonn, Furr & Susskind, 1999; Buhalis et al, 2011; Fotis et al., 2012). While analyzing this travel information, a recipient uses different measures to ensure its usability in their trip planning. Hence, the reliability of travel reviews is a top concern for travelers who want to organize their trips effectively. The information quality and its credibility lead to review usefulness which further enhances its adoption by the travelers

(Tien et al., 2019; Chung et al., 2015; Lis, 2013; Fan et al., 2013; Cheung et al., 2012; Cheung et al., 2009). Next, the attitude plays a vital role in the behavioral intentions of the travellers for purchasing (Filieri et al., 2021; Teng et al., 2014; Tien et al., 2019; Filieri et al., 2016) and forwarding of this information to other people (Abedi et al., 2019), whose mediation effect has also been studied in this paper (Abedi et al., 2019; Hur et al., 2017). To understand the association among these variables for tourism industry, following objectives of the study have been considered.

1. To determine the impact of online travel review usefulness on its adoption while mediating the effect of travelers' attitude for this information.
2. To examine the effect of online travel review adoption on the behavioral intentions of travelers.

Accordingly, this research paper has adapted the modified Information Adoption Model given by Abedi et al. (2019) to develop scale and validate this model in the tourism context.

Therefore, this empirical paper would be a valuable contribution to the tourism and hospitality literature and may offer recommendations for tourism businesses operating in social media. Practically, this study's results will have consequences for social media-active travel firms, destination marketers, and hotels, leading to social media integration into their marketing promotional mix.

## Review of Literature and Theoretical Discussion

### Social Media and eWOM

Social media platforms serve as a powerful medium for eWOM to customers, acting as a core aspect of product-related information and reviews (Song et al., 2021; Kudeshia, Kumar, 2017). Such networks have altered consumers' purchasing choices since they can rapidly share information of products and perspectives with their connections regardless of place or time limitations (Graham, Havlena, 2007). eWOM based social network marketing significantly affects customer decision-making (Chu, Kim 2011). People constantly rely on social media to get information (Chong et al., 2018; Naylor et al., 2012). Such eWOM on social media platforms may appear in a variety of ways. People may purposefully comment about their product/service experiences. Hence, individuals may inadvertently broadcast their preferences by liking, commenting, or posting material on social media. Also, marketers may provide content through their official accounts on these platforms. Similarly, individuals who plan trips get information from various sources, including friends and family, social networking sites, and travel review sites (Erkan, Evans, 2016; Alboqami et al., 2015). As tourism is a service industry, travel planning is a critical activity that involves risk because travelers cannot feel the experience of traveling in advance. Hence, travel planning is a meticulous process, where every traveler wants to get the most out of their precious money spent traveling in superior services and ultimate destination exploration. As a result, individuals attempt to get as much information as possible about their potential destination, accommodation, and recreational activities via social media. People see this material as more trustworthy since it is provided from a customer's viewpoint, unlike marketers who create content on their websites for personal monetary gain. Therefore, individuals who come across eWOM on social media must thoroughly evaluate the information before using it for their optimal trip planning. Several models and ideas have been used in previous research to assess consumer information adoption. However, this study has adapt-

ed modified IAM given by Abedi et al. (2019) in the tourism context, initially developed for eWOM information by Sussman & Siegal (2003).

### **IAM: Information Adoption Model**

Sussman & Siegal were the first to offer this IAM Model (2003) to understand how individuals develop intentions to learn about specific promoted ideas, behaviors, or technologies (Filiari, McLeay, 2014). According to Erkan & Evans (2016), the IAM explains how material on computer-mediated communication networks affects the individual. Yet, this model has been condemned for concentrating solely on information attributes, namely credibility, and quality, and proposed considering people's actions towards information into this model. Hence, this model was extended by Abedi et al. (2019) while incorporating additional constructs of consumers' behavioral intentions and attitudes towards online information.

### **TRA: Theory Reasoned Action**

According to Yusuf et al. (2018), one of the fundamental aspects determining human action in varied contexts is attitude. Consequently, it's possible to characterize it as the holistic judgments that demonstrate a person's propensity towards a particular activity. In this respect, the Theory Reasoned Action (TRA) indicates that individuals may form behavioral intentions before participating in an activity. In most cases, a person's conduct is within their voluntary control (Ajzen, Fishbein, 1977). As a result, an individual's conduct may be anticipated based on the individual's desire to execute the action. The previous study on the association between online information credibility and purchase intent has often utilized TRA (Erkan, Evans, 2016; Reichelt et al., 2014; Cheung, Thadani, 2012). However, these researchers only utilized two TRA components: attitude and behavioral intention. Yet, behavioral intention was chosen over behavior since this research investigates the impact of online information adoption on behavioral intention of the travellers for online travel reviews given on social media.

### **SET: Social Exchange Theory**

Social Exchange Theory is a critical viewpoint to examine interpersonal relationships. Different parties execute tasks and share valuable information in the context of interpersonal relationships (Jinyang, 2015). After evaluating the possible advantages, individuals undertake various actions and choose the most significant benefits. This theory describes interpersonal interaction as a system in which people undertake tasks and share valued information. It is based on reciprocity in incentives for information (Mahapatra, Mishra, 2017). According to Jinyang (2015), members of online communities share and transmit important information in exchange for physical benefits (discounts, gifts, or points) or psychological benefits (support, friendship, self-esteem, trust, prestige, and social interdependence). The previous study on online information may be divided into three categories. The first stream focuses on the factors that influence why people search, consider, or acknowledge online information, which is primarily argument quality and source credibility (Mahapatra, Mishra, 2017). Individual motivations such as personal motivation, opportunity, belongingness, uniqueness, and altruism are addressed in the second stream (Cheung et al., 2012). Lastly, the third stream determines the influence of online information on purchase decisions, customer attitude and behavior, product judgment and adoption, and information dissemination (Mahapatra, Mishra, 2017; Che-

ung et al., 2008). SET is utilized in this study to forward online information and behavioral to expand the IAM.

## Research Model and Hypotheses Development

### Research model

Following comprehensive research assessment, online review quality and credibility are vital antecedents of online review usefulness (Abedi et al., 2019; Chung et al., 2015). This online review’s usefulness further enhances the desire of travelers to adopt this information. As a result, the current research offers a new model in the tourism context that considers the antecedents of online travel review usefulness and its adoption in travel planning decisions, which further leads to behavioral intentions of the travellers. The modified Information Adoption Model (IAM) in the tourism context includes:

- Components linked to information usefulness (online review quality and online review credibility).
- Online review adoption.
- Attitude towards reviews and behavioral intentions (purchase intent and forwarding of the information).

Combining above mentioned constructs in a model and experimentally verifying it is critical. Table 1 lists these constructs and prior research that supports them.

**Table 1. Constructs**

Authors name	Online review quality	Online review credibility	Online review usefulness	Attitude towards online reviews	Online review adoption	Purchase intention	Forwarding of online reviews
Song et al. (2021)	√	√	√		√	√	
Filieri et al. (2020)		√	√			√	
Abedi et al. (2019)	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Kapoor & Munjal (2019)				√		√	√
Tien et al. (2019)		√	√		√	√	
Chong et al. (2018)	√	√				√	
Yusuf et al.(2018)	√	√		√		√	
Hur et al. (2017)	√	√				√	√
Mahapatra & Mishra (2017)		√			√		√
Beneke et al. (2016)	√	√				√	
Matute et al. (2016)	√	√	√			√	
Erkan & Evans (2016)	√	√	√	√	√	√	
Ayeh (2015)		√	√	√		√	
Chung et al. (2015)	√	√	√		√		
Gunawan & Huarng (2015)	√	√		√			

Authors name	Online review quality	Online review credibility	Online review usefulness	Attitude towards online reviews	Online review adoption	Purchase intention	Forwarding of online reviews
Tsao et al. (2015)	√	√				√	
Chen (2014)	√	√				√	
Cheung et al. (2014)	√		√			√	
Teng et al. (2014)	√	√	√		√	√	
Lis (2013)		√				√	
Fan et al. (2013)	√	√				√	
Cheung et al. (2012)	√	√					
O'Reilly & Marx (2011)		√					

Source: Based on literature review

Considering the above constructs used by the preceding researcher, the present study has used online review quality, online review credibility, online review usefulness, online review adoption, attitude towards online review, purchase intention, and forwarding of the information as constructs in its proposed research model where online review quality and online review credibility are taken as antecedents of online review usefulness, which enhances review adoption by the travelers. Travelers' attitude towards online review information is taken as a mediator, which is tested to determine its probable mediation effect between online review usefulness and adoption in their trip planning. Additionally, the influence of review adoption on the behavioral intention of travelers is examined. Figure 1 shows the constructs used for the present study forming conceptual research model.

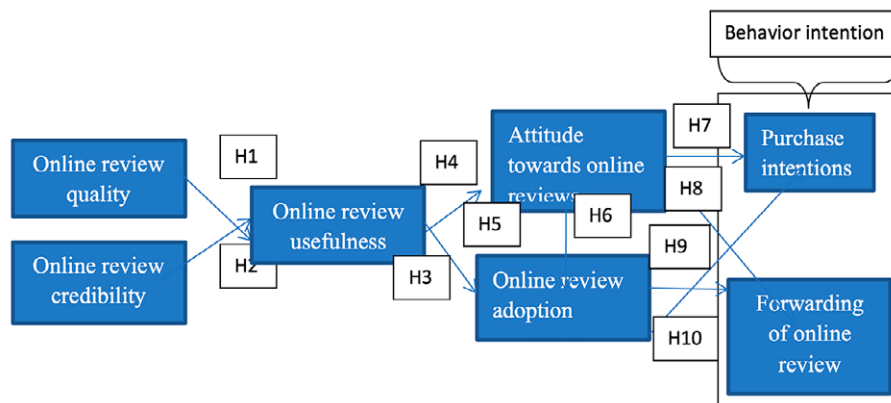


Figure 1. Research model

## Hypothesis formation

The hypothesis relationship between the above constructs has been explained below.

**Online Review Quality and Usefulness of Online Information:** According to Yeap et al. (2014), information quality is the strength of the information contained in an informative communication, which is critical in assessing products or services by people. Also, Park et al. (2007) explain that it is a crucial element in influencing customer attitudes on social media. Cheung (2014) ascertained that the content of internet communications determines the quality of information, which is significant in adopting information on the social media platform. Petty et al. (1983) demonstrated that comprehensible and objective communications are more effective and more robust than weak ones, primarily emotional and subjective. The more messages analyzed, the more positive connections to its support are established, resulting in a more acceptable attitude development. Several studies on information systems have found different aspects of the quality of information. Even though those information quality characteristics are well-defined and suitable for information system users, this study concentrate on information quality characteristics that highlight consumers' perspectives rather than marketers'. As a result, the literature on information quality has adhered to the customer's perspective that accesses the quality of information to purchase goods/services. According to Cheung (2014), eWOM information quality is the eWOM's material deemed to offer impartial and supportive data for the purchase choices made by consumers. Cheung et al. (2008) investigated the connection between information usefulness and quality. It was found that the information quality characteristics of comprehensiveness and relevance have a substantial impact on customers' perceptions of review usefulness. Cheung and Thadani (2012) indicated that the perceived eWOM usefulness is directly linked to its quality. Chung et al. (2015) mentioned in their study that the quality of information significantly affects its perceived usefulness. Erkan and Evans (2016) revealed the more significant the perceived information quality of eWOM information, the better the perceived information usefulness. Chong et al. (2018) studied the relationship between argument quality and its use in tourism. The author found a significant association between these constructs. As a consequence, the following is the resultant hypothesis:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** *The quality of online review is positively associated with its usefulness.*

**Review Credibility and Usefulness of Online Information:** Information credibility refers to people's trust in reviews available on the internet (Cheung et al., 2008). Likewise, the extent to which a person sees a recommendation from others as trustworthy, authentic, or accurate is referred to as information credibility (Cheng, Zhou 2010). The assessment of information's trustworthiness by a person is a crucial first step in the information process of reasoning (Wathen, Burkell, 2002). Sussman and Siegal (2003) mentioned in their study that people are more inclined to accept internet data and utilize it to make buying choices if they believe the information they get is reliable. Sweeney et al. (2012) further stated that an individual's willingness to adopt a review is impacted by their perception of a message's credibility, as shown by its cognitive and analytical nature, implying perceived value. Credibility is critical as online evaluations are often anonymous, which creates mistrust and cynicism among readers of online reviews. As a result, the internet's anonymity may negatively influence information reliability (Luo et al., 2013).

On the other hand, this research emphasizes the reliability of the information provided by travelers on social media, which might influence the information's usability and buying intentions. As a result, the review's credibility is essential for online information usability (Song et

al., 2021). Therefore, if online reviews are compelling and logical, people are more inclined to trust them. People express their views and feelings about a product or service on social media platforms. Because people see this kind of personal information as unbiased and independent, it increases perceived utility of this information (Abedi et al., 2019). Customers see user evaluations as more legitimate, genuine, and helpful than the material given by the marketers (Erkan, Evans, 2016). As a result, when travelers perceive online travel reviews shared on social media as credible, they will see them as helpful for their travel planning. Chong et al. (2018), Ayeh (2015) and Chung et al. (2015) studied the relationship between review credibility and usefulness in the tourism context and found a significant relationship between these constructs. Based on the literature's assessment, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H<sub>2</sub>:** *The credibility of an online review is positively associated to its usability.*

**Information Usefulness, Attitude toward Online Information and Information Adoption:** According to Sussman and Siegal's (2003) IAM, the choice to assume information is influenced by its perceived utility on social media. New ideas for products or services are articulated on online platforms. People have their views on whether these opinions help them make a better purchasing choice. As a result, if people feel that social media content is helpful, they accept that information (Cheung et al., 2008). In their study, Zhang and Mao (2008) mentioned that information usefulness is related to people's skewed evaluation of the utility of the information. In this study, the perceived utility of information means people's belief that information given on social media would assist their purchasing decisions (Erkan, Evans, 2016; Cheung, 2014). As a result, if people believe that other people's reviews on social media platforms are helpful, possibly they would adopt it. The primary driver of information adoption is its usefulness (Erkan, Evans, 2016). Hence, social media travel reviews are regarded as usable information, influencing information adoption. An association between travel review usefulness and its adoption by the travellers was studied by Chung et al. (2015), where significant relationship was determined between these variables. Later, Chong et al. (2018) examined an association between online reviews' usefulness and their adoption in travel decisions. Therefore, the following hypothesis is given:

**H<sub>3</sub>:** *The usefulness of an online review is positively associated with its adoption.*

According to Davis (1989), perceived usefulness has been a stimulant for developing a favorable attitude for information usage. Customers who believe online content is helpful for trip planning are more likely to adopt and utilize it (Ayeh, 2015). As a result, if people think the travel reviews they get on social media are usable, they will favor such information and utilize it in their travel planning process. The following hypothesis is generated:

**H<sub>4</sub>:** *The usefulness of an online review is positively associated with one's attitude towards it.*

**Mediation effect of attitude towards online information between online review usefulness and online review adoption:** The attitude towards online reviews is tested as a mediating variable between the usefulness of online travel reviews and their adoption by travellers. However, the mediating role of consumer attitude between information usefulness and its adoption in purchase decision had been studied by Abedi et al. (2019) for eWOM information. Hence, this empirical study aims to determine the function of attitude towards information in mediating the associations between online travel reviews' usefulness and their adoption. The following hypothesis is given:

**H<sub>5</sub>:** *The usefulness of an online review and its adoption is mediated by travellers' attitude towards online reviews.*



**Attitudes toward online information and Adoption of online information:** The extent to which a person exhibits positive or negative conduct toward something is described as attitude. Earlier research on information systems found attitude as the primary motivator for information adoption (Abedi et al., 2019; Bhattacharjee, Sanford, 2006; Angst, Agarwal, 2009). In online information adoption studies of social media, attitude is also addressed (Cheung, 2014; Cheung et al., 2008). Prior study has shown attitude as customers' confidence in the reliability of online information and discovered that online information is favorably related to its perceived trustworthiness and adoption. Users' cognitive attitudes about online information on Facebook had a beneficial impact on the adoption of online information (Aghakhani et al., 2018). Attitude may alternatively be defined as the degree to which customers regard it as beneficial to utilize certain online information (Liang et al., 2015). This specific point of view is critical in social media, where the primary aim is to foster social connections among its users. The above discussion would help establish a relationship between consumers' attitudes towards online reviews and the adoption of their tourism choices. Similarly, a person is more likely to adopt travel reviews on social media if they are useful. As a result, the hypothesis is put forth:

**H<sub>6</sub>:** *One's attitude toward online review is positively associated with the adoption of these online reviews.*

**Attitude towards online information, Purchase intention, and Online information forwarding:** According to TRA, one of the most significant predictors of behavior intention is attitude (Ajzen, Fishbein, 1975). Behavioral intention denotes the degree to which people tend to do or refrain from performing the activity (Ajzen, 1991). Ajzen and Fishbein's (1975) idea was used to modify attitudes toward online information. According to Ajzen and Fishbein (1975), the attitude toward online information is assumed to be the precursor of behavioral intention. There is a parallel connection between attitude and people's behavior intentions (Bagozzi et al., 1992; Davis, 1989). People who have a positive attitude are more prone to participate in the activity (Ajzen, 1991). Practical investigations have supported this viewpoint that attitude may favorably influence a person's behavioral intentions (Williams et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2009).

In this respect, online information has played a considerable part in impacting customer perceptions and behavioral intentions (Prendergast et al., 2010). Consumers see online information as usable and are more likely to adopt and utilize it in their decision-making processes.

Furthermore, eWOM research revealed that online communication substantially affects attitudes and behavioral intentions, i.e., purchasing intent and forwarding this information to other people (Mahapatra, Mishra, 2017; Erkan, Evans, 2016). Furthermore, Bagozzi et al. (1992) determined an association between attitude and behavior intention. Customers' favorable attitude about online information will strengthen their behavioral intentions (Prendergast et al., 2010). According to Erkan and Evans (2016), customers' optimistic attitude toward online information shared on social media impacts their purchase intention. Prior literature found a significant relationship between consumers' attitudes and purchase intent (Abedi et al., 2019; Kapoor, Munjal, 2019; Yusuf et al., 2018). In this research, the attitude toward online travel reviews is identified in this research as the extent to which a consumer positively evaluates online travel review information on social media, which has a favorable impact on their purchasing intentions. Hence, the following hypothesis is given:

**H<sub>7</sub>:** *One's attitude toward an online review is positively associated with its purchase intention.*

Further, the forwarding of online information is an essential behavioral intention. According to Dobele et al. (2007), when people spread knowledge to others on social media, a viral or ripple effect occurs, making it easier to spread rapidly online. The aim of re-sending the message is referred to as forwarding of online information (Mahapatra, Mishra, 2017; Gershoff et al., 2003). When individuals get a viral e-mail, they go through different stages: reception, a choice to open, reading a message, and forwarding a decision (Phelps et al., 2004). One's mindset is strongly related to the desire to share knowledge. If people form unfavorable attitudes and consider it of poor quality, sending purpose is hampered (Phelps et al., 2004). Hence, the message shared on social media must be helpful and straightforward to forward it to other people (Palka et al., 2009). According to the findings of Abedi et al. (2019) and Kapoor and Munjal (2019) research, people having a positive attitude about online information are extra inclined to transmit and share it with others. This association between consumers' attitudes toward online information and its forwarding to others has also been studied in the tourism context by Hur et al. (2017). Hence, the above discussion establishes the relationship between consumers' attitude towards online information and its forwarding to other contacts. Therefore, when a traveler acquires an optimistic attitude toward information received from others on social media, they take the necessary steps to spread the word. Hence, the hypothesis is proposed:

**H<sub>8</sub>:** *One's attitude toward an online review is positively associated with the forwarding of online information*

**Online information adoption, Purchase intention, and Forwarding of online information:** Information adoption is how individuals acquire new information (Cheung et al., 2008). It is the primary activity people want to engage in virtual communities. Users may adopt information by reading the views and comments made by others before they decide to buy a product/service. Furthermore, purchasing intent is the extent of deliberate preparations made by the customer to buy the product/service (Ajzen, Fishbein, 1975). Prior research has shown that online information impacts customers' purchasing intentions (Song et al., 2021; Filieri et al., 2020; Abedi et al., 2019; Erkan, Evans, 2016; Teng et al., 2014; Cheung, Thadani, 2012). Yet, all online information shared on social media platforms is not accurate; however, the degree of impact may differ (Buchanan, 2020). Tien et al. (2019) studied the role of eWOM adoption for its purchasing intention by the cosmetic users on social media. The author found a positive association between these two variables. Later, Chong et al. (2018) studied the relationship between review adoption by travelers and their purchase intent in the tourism context. The authors found significant associations between these constructs. However, this research indicates that online travel reviews on social media platforms may positively impact purchase intent since information is exchanged amongst familiar people. Accordingly, a hypothesis is given as under:

**H<sub>9</sub>:** *Adoption of online review is positively associated with purchasing intention.*

Further, Sussman and Siegal (2003) described in their study how people adopt and evaluate online information and recommend this information to other people only if they perceive this information as reliable. Huang et al. (2011) observed that reviews regarded as trustworthy are helpful, accepted, and shared, resulting in broad dissemination of online information. Previously, researchers suggested a significant and favorable relationship between individuals' optimistic assessment of the message, which leads to the adoption and forwarding of online information (Berger, Milkman, 2013). As a result, it appears that people only forward information when they find it helpful and have a favorable attitude toward adopting it (Phelps et al., 2004). Cho et al. (2014) demonstrated that a statement of reputable group members built on trust and

harmony has a higher chance of being recognized, viewed, and transmitted in this regard. A significant correlation between information usefulness and its reach across online platforms was discovered by Cheung et al. (2008) using an IAM.

Mahapatra and Mishra (2017) found that source trustworthiness is essential in adopting online information. The authors concluded that people transmit online information to others when they believe online information sources. Hur et al. (2017) found that travellers seek information on social media considering the quality of the argument, which leads to the sharing of information to others. However, Abedi et al. (2019) found an insignificant relationship between adoption of information and its forwarding to other people for eWOM information. Hence, these constructs have been studied in the tourism context in light of the above discussion. Accordingly, a hypothesis is developed as under:

**H<sub>10</sub>:** *Adoption of online review is positively associated with the forwarding of online information.*

## Methodology

**Data collection process:** This research study is exploratory and descriptive in nature followed by purposive and snowball sampling. The sample unit is the tourists who read online travel reviews for their trip planning on social media. Social media in this study is limited to social networking sites (Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube) and travel review website (TripAdvisor). This research is based on primary data gathered through online and offline modes for which 300 questionnaires were delivered. After eliminating the incomplete questionnaires, 284 were accepted for the primary analysis. However, a pilot study of 50 questionnaires was undertaken before the final survey to verify the reliability of the research tools.

The questionnaire was created after a thorough literature review relevant to the study's goal. Expert opinions from academics and researchers in the tourism and hospitality industries were taken. These experts' opinions helped in ensuring the questionnaire's content validity. Also, the recommendations of the experts and academics produced relevant changes to the final draft of the questionnaire. Further, two sections of a research questionnaire were created. The first part of the questionnaire has the seven constructs (Online review quality, online review credibility, online review usefulness, online review adoption, attitude towards online review, purchase intention, and forwarding of the information). The second section includes the respondents' demographic details, i.e., gender, marital status, age, occupation, highest level of education completed, annual family income, trip companion, length of the trip, and purpose of the trip. The respondents rated the measures on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree).

**Measurement procedure:** The constructs of this paper were adapted from Abedi et al.'s (2019) study. Originally, the IAM was given by Sussman and Siegal (2003) with constructs related to the information characteristics, i.e., argument quality, source credibility, information usefulness, and information adoption. However, IAM was later modified by Abedi et al. (2019) by incorporating constructs related to consumer' behavior: attitude towards eWOM information and behavioral intentions (purchase intent and forwarding of eWOM information). This research paper has adapted the modified model of Abedi et al. (2019) to validate this model in the tourism context. However, when PLS-SEM was conducted on the data, few items got removed: Q<sub>5</sub>, CRED<sub>4</sub>, U<sub>4</sub>, A<sub>4</sub>, P<sub>3</sub>, P<sub>4</sub>, and F<sub>4</sub> given in appendix- A as their outer loadings were not significant. As a result, this study has led to scale development and validation of modified IAM in the tourism context.

**Data analysis:** The PLS-SEM approach was chosen to investigate and estimate the relevance of the research constructs in the current study in the tourist context. Since, this technique is well-suited for theory building and evaluating complicated models with many constructs (Hair et al., 2019; Jöreskog, 1982). The capacity of PLS-SEM to cope with higher-order reflective constructs (Cheah et al., 2020; Sarstedt et al., 2019) and mediation effects (Nitzl et al., 2016) in a single model is the basis for employing it in this study. This research aims to provide a comprehensive model that makes PLS-SEM an excellent approach for data analysis. Another rationale for choosing PLS-SEM is that the primary goal of this study is to investigate a complicated research model (Hair et al., 2017).

**Common method bias (CMB):** CMB is a concern in self-reported quantitative research because it arises when data is taken from a single source (Spector, 2006; Avolio et al., 1991). CMB affects the validity and impacts the structural relationships (Kline, 2015; MacKenzie, Podsakoff, 2012). Two methods for reducing the risk of CMB have been used in this study: procedural design and statistical control (Reio, 2010). In the prior approach, Respondents were permitted to reply anonymously, the questionnaire was organized to be concise, demographic questions were placed at the end of the questionnaire, and the questionnaire was pilot tested prior to the final data collection step. Next, Harman’s one-factor test was used to check the CMB, and it was discovered that the most considerable variance explained was 27.549 percent of the total variance, which is less than the 50 percent threshold recommended (Fuller et al., 2016), indicating that CMB is not a problem for the present research.

## Data Analysis and Interpretation

A frequency distribution was computed for the demographic variables and the responses of the respondents are given in table 2.

**Table 2.** Demographic profile of the respondents

Demographic variables	Frequency	Percent %
Gender		
Male	161	56.69
Female	123	43.30
Marital status		
Single/unmarried	188	66.19
Married	96	33.80
Age		
21-30	152	53.52
31-40	60	21.12
41-50	38	13.38
51 and above	34	11.97
Occupation		
Government job	45	15.84
Private job	57	20.07
Self employed	57	20.07
Student	88	30.98

Demographic variables	Frequency	Percent %
Home-maker	37	13.02
Education		
Secondary school	37	13.02
Graduation	115	40.49
Post-graduation	132	46.47
Family annual income		
Less than 3 lakh	25	8.80
3 to < 6 lakh	67	23.59
6 lakh to < 10 lakh	123	43.30
10 and above	69	24.29
Purpose of travelling		
Leisure	120	42.25
Business	77	27.11
Education	22	7.74
Friends/relatives	38	13.38
Pilgrimage	27	9.50
Who accompanied you in trip?		
Single	18	6.33
Couple	64	22.53
Family with kids	87	30.63
Friends	38	13.38
Business associates	77	27.11
Length of the trip		
1-3 days	104	36.61
4-7 days	140	49.29
8-14 days	23	8.09
15 and more days	17	5.98

Source: Based on primary data

The majority of respondents in this survey are travelers between the age group of 21 to 30. 43.30% of the respondents were female, while 56.69% were male. About 40.49% of respondents were graduates, while 46.47% were postgraduates. 33.80% of respondents were married, and 66.19% were single or unmarried. The majority of respondents (30.98%) were students, and almost 43.30% of respondents had a yearly household income of 6 lakh to < 10 lakh rupees. The majority of respondents' reasons for traveling were leisure-related (42.25%).

**Evaluation of the measurement model:** Internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity were investigated to assess the measurement model. First, internal consistency was considered where Cronbach's Alpha and CR values were greater than the significant value of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2013). Next, convergent validity was determined using factor loadings and AVE. Table 3 indicates the loadings of the items that surpassed the required threshold of 0.6 (Hair et al., 2017; Chin et al., 2008) and AVE was also higher than the essential value of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2013). The items that did not surpass these thresholds were removed (Q5, CRED4, U4, A4, P3, P4, and F4).

**Table 3.** Internal consistency and convergent validity details

Construct Name	Items	Outer loadings	Average variance extracted (AVE)	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite reliability (CR)
Online review quality	Q1	0.630	0.524	0.720	0.812
	Q2	0.638			
	Q3	0.889			
	Q4	0.708			
Online review credibility	CRED1	0.829	0.630	0.703	0.836
	CRED2	0.841			
	CRED3	0.703			
Online review usefulness	U1	0.746	0.637	0.721	0.840
	U2	0.804			
	U3	0.841			
Attitude towards reviews	A1	0.780	0.660	0.74	0.853
	A2	0.831			
	A3	0.825			
Online review adoption	ADOP1	0.822	0.644	0.816	0.878
	ADOP2	0.850			
	ADOP3	0.793			
	ADOP4	0.743			
Purchase intention	P1	0.907	0.820	0.780	0.901
	P2	0.904			
Forwarding of review information	F1	0.875	0.673	0.758	0.860
	F2	0.765			
	F3	0.817			

Source: Based on primary data

Next, Discriminant validity was measured that show the degree to which other variables do not reflect the variables. As per Fornell and Larcker (1981), the square root of each construct's AVE (diagonal values) is more prominent than its associated correlation coefficients, indicating appropriate discriminant validity, as seen in Table 3. Hence, the measurement model demonstrated reasonable convergent and discriminant validity according to Fornell and Larcker (Table 4) and the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) (Table 5).

**Table 4.** Discriminant Validity (Fornell and Larcker)

	Attitude towards review	Forwarding of review information	Online review usefulness	Online review adoption	Online review credibility	Online review quality	Purchase intention
Attitude towards review	0.812						
Forwarding of review information	0.507	0.820					
Online review usefulness	0.419	0.319	0.798				
Online review adoption	0.649	0.507	0.462	0.803			
Online review credibility	0.537	0.377	0.370	0.612	0.794		
Online review quality	0.202	0.108	0.273	0.133	0.217	0.724	
Purchase intention	0.486	0.417	0.551	0.599	0.578	0.198	0.905

Source: Based on primary data

**Table 5.** Discriminant Validity (Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio)

	Attitude towards review	Forwarding of review information	Online review usefulness	Online review adoption	Online review credibility	Online review quality	Purchase intention
Attitude towards review							
Forwarding of review information	0.662						
Online review usefulness	0.520	0.405					
Online review adoption	0.832	0.628	0.576				
Online review credibility	0.734	0.512	0.523	0.791			
Online review quality	0.316	0.159	0.313	0.174	0.297		
Purchase intention	0.634	0.528	0.720	0.746	0.775	0.212	

Source: Based on primary data

**Evaluation of the structural model:** This study utilized SmartPLS 3.3.3 to evaluate the structural model. A bootstrapping method was used to test the statistical importance of the weights of path coefficients and sub-constructs (Chin et al., 2008). Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) was computed to produce the model’s overall goodness-of-fit (GoF). The SRMR is the difference between the implied and observed correlation matrix models. A number less than 0.10 are usually considered a good fit (Schamberger et al., 2019). In this case, the SRMR value was estimated to be 0.08, indicating a good model fit. Next, the hypothesized relationships in the structural model were tested, following the measurement model and GoF. Figure 2 below exhibits the analysis result. The corrected R<sup>2</sup>s in table 6 relate to the predictor variable on the respective construct’s explanatory power.

**Table 6.** The result of R<sup>2</sup> and Q<sup>2</sup>

Endogenous latent construct	R <sup>2</sup>	Q <sup>2</sup>
Online review usefulness	0.176	0.095
Online review adoption	0.466	0.288
Attitude towards review	0.175	0.104
Purchase intention	0.375	0.292
Forwarding of review information	0.312	0.182

Source: Based on primary data

Online review quality and online review credibility explained 17.6 percent of the online review usefulness. At the same time, online review usefulness explained 17.5 percent of attitude towards review. Further, attitude towards review and online review usefulness explained 46.6 percent of the online review adoption. Attitude towards online review and online review adoption explained 37.5 percent of the purchase intention. Also, attitude towards online review and online review adoption explained 31.2 percent of the forwarding of review information.

Based on the  $R^2$  values, Chin et al. (2008) categorized endogenous latent variables as significant, moderate or weak in model validity. As a result, online review adoption ( $R^2 = 0.466$ ), purchase intention ( $R^2 = 0.375$ ), and forwarding of review information ( $R^2 = 0.312$ ) indicated moderate value. At the same time, online review usefulness ( $R^2 = 0.176$ ) and attitude towards review ( $R^2 = 0.175$ ) are weak. In addition to  $R^2$  size, the predictive sample reuse method ( $Q^2$ ) was used as a standard for predictive relevance (Chin et al., 2008).  $Q^2$  demonstrates how the gathered data could be empirically recreated using the PLS and model parameters based on the blind-folding process. The  $Q^2$  for this study was achieved via cross-validated redundancy methods (Chin et al., 2008).  $Q^2$  higher than 0 indicates the model is predictively relevant, while  $Q^2$  less than 0 means that the model is not predictively appropriate. As shown in Table 6,  $Q^2$  for online review usefulness, online review adoption, attitude towards review, purchase intention, forwarding of review information signified acceptable predictive relevance as 0.095, 0.288, 0.104, 0.292, and 0.182, respectively.

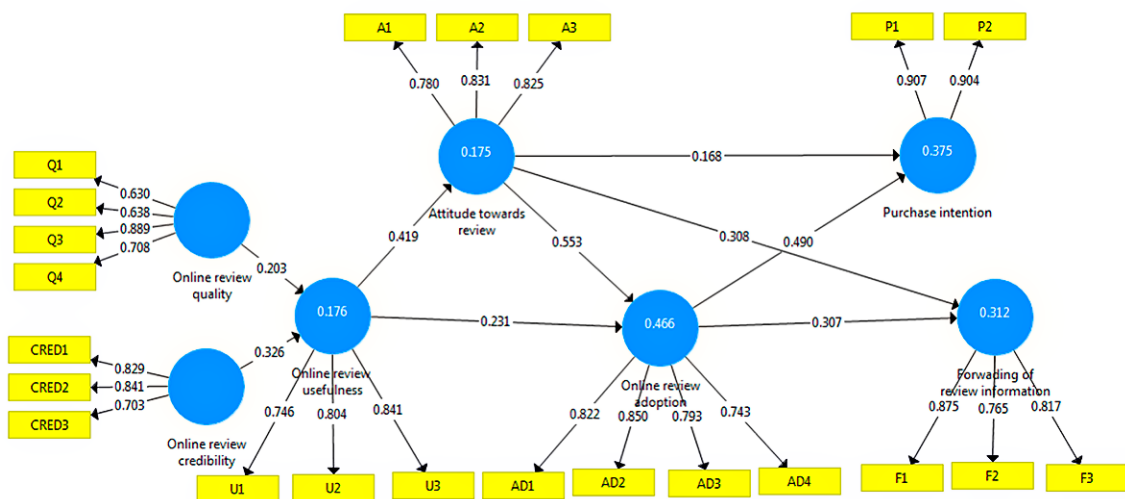


Figure 2. Structural Model

**Mediation analysis:** The mediation role of travelers' attitude toward online reviews on the linkage between online review usefulness and adoption was done following mediation analysis. The results (Table 7) revealed that the total effect of online review usefulness on its adoption was significant where  $B = 0.462$ ,  $t = 5.597$ , and  $p < 0.05$ . With the inclusion of the mediating variable (attitude toward online reviews), the impact of online review usefulness on online review adoption became insignificant for  $B = 0.231$ ,  $t = 2.919$ , and  $p = 0.004$ . While the indirect effect of online review usefulness on online review adoption through mediating variables (attitude toward online reviews) was significant at  $B = 0.231$ ,  $t = 4.381$ , and  $p < 0.05$ . Hence, the online review usefulness and adoption relationship are fully mediated by the mediating variable (attitude toward online reviews).



**Table 7. Mediation Analysis**

Total effect (U -> AD)	Direct effect (U -> AD)	Indirect effect (U -> A -> AD)
Coefficient = 0.462	Coefficient = 0.231	Coefficient = 0.231
p- value = 0.000	p- value = 0.004	p- value = 0.000
		SD = 0.053
		t- value = 4.381
		BI (confidence intervals bias corrected) (2.5 % - 97.5 %) = (0.066 - .398)

Source: Based on primary data

The PLS method was used to evaluate the ten hypotheses given in this study. The research model investigated the path significance of each predicted relationship. Thus, a two-tailed t-test was employed in this study since the independent variables may positively or negatively impact the dependent variables (Helm et al., 2010). The significance threshold of 0.05, or  $p > 0.05$ , needs  $t > 1.96$ , according to the two-tailed t-test ( $df = 393$ ).

Table 8 displays all significant path coefficients. Except for H7, all of the structural paths in the research model were statistically significant.

**Table 8. Path Coefficients**

Hypothesis	Path	Path coefficient	t-statistics	P value	Decision
H <sub>1</sub>	Q - U	0.203	2.193	0.029	Supported
H <sub>2</sub>	CRED-U	0.326	4.127	0.000	Supported
H <sub>3</sub>	U-AD	0.231	3.212	0.001	Supported
H <sub>4</sub>	U- A	0.419	4.792	0.000	Supported
H <sub>5</sub>	U-A-AD	0.231	4.381	0.000	Supported
H <sub>6</sub>	A-AD	0.553	7.452	0.000	Supported
H <sub>7</sub>	A-P	0.168	1.434	0.152	Rejected
H <sub>8</sub>	A-F	0.308	2.584	0.010	Supported
H <sub>9</sub>	AD-P	0.490	4.303	0.000	Supported
H <sub>10</sub>	AD-F	0.307	2.503	0.013	Supported

Source: Based on primary data

## Discussion

This research examines the impact of online travel review usefulness on its adoption while accessing the mediating effect of travelers’ attitudes toward online travel reviews between these two factors. Secondly, it determined the impact of online travel review adoption on the behavioral intentions of travelers. This empirical study validated the Information Adoption Model (IAM) by Abedi et al. (2019) in the tourism context to establish a comprehensive online travel review adoption model. The findings of this empirical study further demonstrate the scale development. The model’s conclusion for each hypothesis has been explained. The first hypothesis revealed a significant relationship between the quality and usefulness of online travel reviews. This conclusion aligns with the results of earlier studies in different areas reported by prior researchers (Chong et al., 2018; Chung et al., 2015). Hence, the quali-

ty of information obtained by travelers on social media from other tourists may be described as excellent and acceptable. As a result, customers see this information as helpful and incorporate it into their trip planning decisions. The second hypothesis reveals that online review credibility is significantly associated with its usefulness, consistent with Chong et al. (2018), Ayeh (2015), Hur et al. (2017) and Chung et al. (2015). This implies that the reviews perceived to be convincing and robust are considered credible by other travelers. Hence, the usability of online travel reviews constitutes their quality and credibility. This online travel information shared by travelers on social media, unlike marketers, has no motive to suggest a specific destination or accommodation; hence it is perceived as unbiased information.

In contrast, marketers offer content that may be deceptive while following their promotional tactics (Erkan, Evans, 2016; Prendergast et al., 2010). The third hypothesis revealed that the usefulness of online travel reviews significantly impacts online travel review adoption. The findings follow prior studies (Chong et al., 2018; Chung et al., 2015; Teng et al., 2014). Reviews that are informative, valuable, and support travel planning decisions are useful. As a result, travelers adopt them to enhance the effectiveness of their trip planning decisions. The fourth hypothesis discovered that the usability of online travel reviews significantly affects the attitude of travelers toward this information, which is consistent with the results of Ayeh (2015). It implies that if a person perceives travel reviews as useful, he might develop a positive attitude toward this information and feel confident in planning their trip. In that case, the uncertainty involved in trip planning might be minimized. The fifth hypothesis showed that the association between online review usefulness and adoption is fully mediated by a mediating variable (attitude toward online reviews). It means that the usefulness of online travel reviews brings a favorable attitude among travelers, leading to the adoption of travel reviews as information. The mediation effect of travelers' attitudes towards online travel information demonstrated the Information Adoption Model (IAM) extension. The sixth hypothesis explains a significant relationship between the attitude of the travelers and travel information adoption by them. If travelers develop a positive attitude towards online travel reviews, they might adopt specific information for their trip planning. The seventh hypothesis revealed an insignificant relationship between the attitude of the travelers and their purchase intentions for considering that information in their trip planning. This result is in contrast to the results of Ayeh (2015). It may be because travelers do not immediately and directly consider the travel review information for their present travel decisions and might use it later for their future trip planning, which might affect the current purchase intentions of the travelers. The eighth hypothesis shows a strong association between the attitude of the travelers and the forwarding of the information to their contacts or friend groups. Therefore, the favorable attitude of the travelers towards travel reviews might lead to the forwarding of this travel information to their contacts on social media or other friend groups. The ninth hypothesis shows an essential relationship between travellers' information adoption and purchase intentions, which agrees with Tien et al. (2019), Chong et al. (2018) and Teng et al. (2014). It means if travel reviews contribute to their knowledge, they might use that information in their travel planning decisions. Finally, the tenth hypothesis revealed that travel review adoption by travelers has a significant association with the forwarding of the information. It shows that if a traveler adopts the travel information in their trip planning, they might pass this specific information from one group of contacts to another or their friend list on social media.

## Practical implications

The study's results are essential for e-marketers and managers because the results present an approach for analyzing the impact of online travel reviews' usefulness on their adoption by travellers on social media. Social media is viewed as the prime destination for eWOM information. Consequently, marketers may construct a more successful promotional mix for understanding travel information on social media by utilizing the main criteria outlined in this research. Consumers evaluate the usefulness of travel reviews while deciding whether or not to use them. Consequently, companies should establish mechanisms to monitor traveller complaints to minimize negative reviews on social media. Because adverse traveller interactions are more severe than good ones, companies should listen genuinely to customer concerns and seek solutions to maintain their competitive edge. These activities provide consumers with a feeling of security, indicating that they are essential to the company. As a result, the inclination to propagate unfavorable information about travel service providers is reduced. This study found that the information customers get on social media persuades them to use it in their travel planning decisions. As a result, marketers should enable consumers to share their views with others. Travel service providers, such as online travel agencies, hoteliers, destination marketers, and others, may build social media groups and pages encouraging travellers to share their thoughts and suggestions via promotional techniques. Electronic marketers should categorize reviews to reduce the inevitable effect of information load since numerous comments and opinions connected to tourism may mislead travellers and overwhelm them with information. Since this era has been marked as the 'Age of Acceleration', advanced technology in the tourism sector would promote safe tourism and provide a mechanism at destinations and accommodations where health safety is ensured. The advancement of technology in this sector will soon offer new opportunities to tourists.

## Conclusion

This research paper created an inclusive, modified information adoption model (IAM) in the tourism context, validated to determine the impact of online travel review usefulness on its adoption on social media while accessing the mediating effect of travelers' attitude toward such reviews. Further, the impact of travelers' review adoption on the behavioral intentions of the travelers is examined. The research model is empirically validated, and the findings show valuable practical implications. The primary input of this research was developing a scale and presenting the IAM in a tourism context that includes the behavioral intentions of the travelers especially focusing on forwarding of this information to others. The model shown in this study provides a complete approach by having vital factors related to the recipients' characteristics, such as attitude toward online travel reviews, purchase intention, and forwarding of the information, all in the same model. As a result, this model offers a new approach to adopting online travel reviews. It provides new insights for academics that use social media to study online travel information for trip planning. At the same time, it offers a theoretical framework for analyzing the mediating function of travelers' attitudes toward online travel information for validating the Information Adoption Model. This research adds to the literature by laying the new theoretical grounds by adding travelers' behavioral intentions into social media travel reviews.

## Limitation and future research

This study has limitations: Firstly, it uses only online review quality and credibility as antecedents of review usefulness. However, other variables related to reviewer and recipients' characteristics can expand this model further in future research. Secondly, the sampling method used for this study was non-probability sampling that limits the generalization of the results obtained. Thus, biases on the part of the sampling method cannot be ignored. For future studies, it is recommended to use a probability sampling method to get reliable and representative output.

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## Appendices - A

### Online Review quality (Q)

The online travel reviews shared by people on social media:

- (1) Q1: I think they are understandable.
- (2) Q2: I think they are clear.
- (3) Q3: I think they are objective.
- (4) Q4: I think they have sufficient reasons supporting the opinions.
- (5) Q5: In general, I think the quality of online travel reviews is high.

### Online Review Credibility (CRED)

- (1) CRED1: I think they are convincing.
- (2) CRED2: I think they are strong.
- (3) CRED3: I think they are credible.
- (4) CRED4: I think they are accurate

### Online Review Usefulness (U)

- (1) U1: I think they are generally useful.
- (2) U2: I think they are generally informative.
- (3) U3: I think they are advantageous for supporting my travel planning decisions.
- (4) U4: I think they are generally valuable.

### Attitude toward reviews (A)

- (1) A1: They make me confident in planning my trip.
- (2) A2: If I do not read them when I plan my trip, I worry about my decision.
- (3) A3: I always read them when I plan my trip.
- (4) A4: They are helpful for my decision-making when I plan my trip.

### Online Review Adoption (ADOP)

- (1) ADOP1: They contribute to my knowledge about trip planning.
- (2) ADOP2: They make easier for me to make travel decision.
- (3) ADOP3: They enhance my effectiveness in making travel decision.
- (4) ADOP4: They motivate me to make travel decision.

### Forwarding review information (F)

- (1) F1: I tend to pass on travel information to the contacts on my friends list on social media when I find it useful.
- (2) F2: I am likely to pass along my contacts' comments containing travel information that I like to other contacts.
- (3) F3: When I receive travel-related information or an opinion from a friend, I pass it along to my other contacts.
- (4) F4: I am likely to pass along interesting travel related information from one group of my contacts on my friend list to others.

### Purchase intention (PI)

After considering information from travel reviews which are shared by other travellers:

- (1) P1: It is very likely that I will consider that information in my travel planning.

- (2) P2: I will definitely use this information in my travel planning.
- (3) P3: I will recommend that information to my friends or other travellers.
- (4) P4: I will use this information next time, I do travel planning.