

A Study on the Intentions of Dot-com Travelers to use Social Networking Websites

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Abstract

This paper will present some significant findings about intention of Dot com travelers (Dot ComT) to use social networking travel websites. Social networking websites (SNW) are extensively used by youth travelers, mostly by free and independent travelers. Due to the advancements of information technology and emergences of social media, social networking travel websites have become an important platform of communication for dot com generation. The most important advantage of social networking websites (SNW) are information sharing and social interaction. Social networking websites (SNW) has changed the fundamental structure of communication and information gathering. It has become a tool for peer-to-peer, person-to-person (P2P) marketing. The demographic profile of the Indian travelers is changing at a very rapid pace as the country has approximately 350 million people who belong to middle class. According to a report by Boston Consulting Group (BCG) and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), India's robust economic growth and rising household incomes would increase consumer spending to US\$ 3.6 trillion by 2020. The maximum consumer spending is likely to occur in food, housing, consumer durables, and transport and communication sectors (Source: ibef.org). The tourism industry is primarily a service based industry and is dominated by young generation who is highly quipped with the advance technology and has strong urge to travel. This generation 'dot com generation' / 'I-pad generation' / 'connexivity kids' who believes in value for money and love experiencing the new vistas of tourism has been greatly influenced in their travel intentions by the usage of social networking sites. The present study will try to explore the various intentions and reasons behind the high involvement of dot com generation on social networking websites (SNW) on the basis of information Sharing , Social interaction and Innovations.

Key Words: Dot-com generation, Social networking travel websites, Social interaction, information sharing.

Introduction

With the advancement of technology and more specifically the social media the social networking sites has grown immensely in past few years. Social networking travel websites are effective and growing face of communication in tourism industry. Social networking sites (SNS) can be defined as a “website that enable users to create public profile within that web site and forms a relationship with other users of the same web site who access their profile. Social networking sites can be used to describe community-

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based web sites, online discussion forums, chat room and other social spaces online” (Source: www.webopedia.com). SNS made it possible for people to communicate, share, and connect; tourists can post their thoughts, experience and opinions about holidays, by making them available to the global community of internet users (Loredana Di Pietro and Francesca Di Virgilio, Loredana Di Pietro and Francesca Di Virgilio, 2012; Dellarocas, 2003). Facebook, twitter, Myspace, linkedin, wikis, and blogs are few examples. Since the main characteristics of social networks are meeting other users and sharing information (i.e. videos, texts, audio, etc.) in an ease and entertaining way. Social networking travel sites have allowed tourists to communicate not only with the tour operators but also the individual tourist who have recently experienced services from the operator whom they are considering booking their travel with. This has allowed the tourist an opportunity to gather information first-hand from other tourists and make decisions about the operator (Jenkin Hamish, 2010). The SNS innovative operation mode has not only successfully drawn the attention of industry and academia, but has also boosted user growth. SNS is currently the world’s fastest developing personal networking tool (Kuan-Yu Lin, Hsi-Peng Lu, 2011)

Social networks have witnessed the tremendous growth in last few years. “It is estimated that there will be around 197 million social network users in India, up from 86.7 million in 2013”. (Source: www.statista.com) It benefits potential tourist to know about the tourism product by communicating to other peers which influence their decision process. Dot com generation is highly influenced by the fetchers of Social networking travel websites. The electronic word of mouth and user generated contents on social networking websites (SNW) which are insights from their friends and family or certain stranger who has experienced that particular product. SNS has been popular, in particular, with Free and Independent Travelers (FIT) and backpackers as it has been claimed that the FIT’s and the backpackers are not only interested in travel but also want to travel to the new places, as they have the desire to experience the new thing and meet other travelers. Young travelers are active participants of social networking travel websites.

The present study focuses on Dot com generation. As dot com generation spends a considerable amount of time using OSNs for messaging, sharing information and keeping in touch with friends (Pempek et al., 2009). Logically this generation represents the future of tourism consumption. Generation Dot com, s is known by many names as the “connexivity kids”, “generation Y”. Consumers who belong to this generation are more familiar with new technologies, they are concerned to be connected and understand the importance and the meaning of networks in their lives. (Evgenia Egorova, 2013). Dot com generation is using social networking travel websites for sharing their travel information. Inventiveness, social interaction, information sharing. There is no consensus over the exact birth dates that define Dot com generation (Khaldoon ‘Khal’ Nusair et al 2012). (,Khaldoon ‘Khal’ Nusair et al 2012,Jorgensen ,2003) lists the common characteristics of this cohort, saying they are information and media savvy; comfortable with change; and seeking blended collaboration, networking and interdependence to achieve goals.

Table1. Generation chart by year, name and age group (reproduced from Moscardo & Benckendorff, 2010).

Birth year	Generation name	Age range in 2014
1925-1945	Silent	69-89
1946-1964	Baby Boomers	50-68
1965-1976	Generation X	38-49
1977-2003	Generation Y	11-37
2004-	Generation Z	10 or younger

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of the study is to find out the usages of social network travel websites by the students of the Central university of Jammu. The specific purposes of the study are as follow:

1. To find out the frequency visited social networking websites (SNW) by Gen Y.
2. To identify the use of social networking travel websites for information sharing by dot com generation.
3. To find out whether dot com generation uses social networking websites (SNW) for social interaction.
4. To identify whether dot com generation uses social networking sites websites because of their perceived utility.

Research Question

RQ1: Which are the frequently visited social networking websites (SNW)?

RQ2: Do dot-com generation use social networking websites (SNW) for information sharing related to travel?

RQ3: Do dot-com generation use social networking websites (SNW) for social interaction?

RQ4: Do dot-com generation use social networking websites (SNW) because of their perceived utility for travel?

Literature review

Aghaei Sareh, Nematbakhsh Ali Mohammad, and Khosravi Farsani Hadi, (2012) has mentioned that The term web 2.0 was officially defined in 2004 by Dale Dougherty, vice-president of O'Reilly Media, in a conference brainstorming session between O'Reilly and MediaLive International. Tim O'Reilly defines web 2.0 on his website as follows: "Web 2.0 is the business revolution in the computer industry caused by the move to the internet as platform, and an attempt to understand the rules for success on that new platform. Chief Among those rules is this: Build applications that harness network effects to get better the more people use them

Danah M. Boyd; Nicole B. Ellison (2007) defines social networking sites as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site.

Bilgihan Anil, (2011) in his paper Has mentioned the history of social networking sites Primitive social networking on Internet started in the form of generalized online communities such as Theglobe.com (1994), and Geocities (1994). In very binging the online community was developed of gather peoples to interact with each other via chat rooms. Social networking websites (SNW) introduced user profiles as the principal feature in late 90s which allowed users to search the people having the profile on same website and have similar interests it also had the fetcher that allowed its users to compile friend list. Finally, Facebook launched in 2004, and turn out to be the largest social networking site. After the introduction of smart phones with GPS Location Based Services.

Kaur Gagandeep (2011) in his paper has mentioned social media is best understood as group of new kind of online media which share most or almost all the following character. Participation, Openness, Conversation, Community, Connectedness

According to the Ling Jiaming, (2010) Use of OSNs among travelers has been growing fast, prompting a number of tourism businesses and organizations to start using OSNs as part of their online advertising or promotional activities to take advantage of this "electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)," get feedback from tourists and increase their loyalty. It is critical for tourism organization marketers or business owners to understand travelers' use and adoption of OSNs for travel purposes; all the more as these collaborative behaviors.

It has been found that Generation Y have associated their life with technology since it has shaped the way the digital generation learns and the way they process information (Patridge & Hallam, 2006; Martin, 2005). The author has mentioned the general characteristics of generation Y consumers are brand-conscious and they have high expectation or desired or expected service when purchasing apparel. The generation Y consumers are more conscious about their purchase decision.

Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO (2008) has described that Today's generation of young people are more informed, more mobile and more adventurous than ever before.

According to the Moscardo & Benckendorff, 2010 Generation Y members have grown up in a sheltered environment, and are said to be more indulged, self-reliant, independent and seeing themselves as special and entitled. Generation Y members have great tolerance for diversity and for different cultural styles, because of a mix match culture created by globalization, Internet and media. Researcher has motioned that very little study has been made on relation between generation Y and tourism.

Methodology

A questionnaire was developed based on extensive review of literature and expert opinions. This method is used because the study intends to obtain the opinions of the respondents on use of social networking sites among post graduate students of Central university of Jammu. The area of the study is Central University of Jammu. The choice of the area was for proximity. We gathered our data in

August 2015 and administered the questionnaire to the respondents personally. The research design for this study is the descriptive survey research design. The participants were asked to fill a questionnaire developed on 22 items; the survey instrument consisted of four sections: 1) demographics of the respondent 2) Information Sharing 3) Social interaction 4) Innovation. which were measured with five-points Likerts' scale (1– strongly disagree; 5 – strongly agree) and six items on consumer profile including gender, age, education, as well as the most used social networking sites. The questionnaire adapted questionnaire items from previous literature. The scale for information sharing and social interaction was adopted from Nusair, K. K., Bilgihan, A., & Okumus, (2013) and the scale for perceived utility was adopted from, kown, O; & Wne, Y. (2010) and F.D. Davis (1989). The population for this study was entire post graduate students of central university of Jammu. 110 students of post graduation of central university of Jammu were randomly selected to participate in this study out of which only 100 valid responses from the respondents were analyses for the interpretation of the data.

Data analysis and result

The results are presented according to the research questions, and the responses were organized using rank weighted means and simple percentage frequencies. The reliability of the scales was measured using Cronbach's Alpha (.858). A total of 55 percent of the respondents were male and 45 percent were female.

RQ 1: Which are the frequently visited social networking sites?

Table1. Social Networking Website Usage Percentages

Social Networking Website	Percentage
Facebook	79%
LinkedIn	5%
Twitter	7%
Blogger	9%

From table 1, majority of the respondents use face book for social networking. LinkedIn is a least popular amongst the post graduate student's of Central University of Jammu. Some respondent specified the following categories of social networking websites (SNW):

1. Whatsapp
2. You Tube
3. Yahoo

RQ 2: Do dot com generation uses social networking websites (SNW) for information sharing related to travel?

Table 2: Mean responses of using social networking websites (SNW) for information sharing related to travel.

S/ N	ITEMS	1 SD	2 D	3 NC	4 A	5 SA	MEAN	REMARK
1	I share information related to my travel on social networking travel website.	2	12	13	44	33	4.060	Accepted
2	I share information related to my hotel stay on social networking travel websites.	2	9	16	38	35	3.950	Accepted
3	I share information related to my adventure activity on travel on social networking travel websites	1	6	11	35	47	4.210	Accepted
4	I Use social networking travel sites for finding information related to travel	2	7	8	45	38	4.100	Accepted
5	The travel related information I share with my friends on social networking travel websites influence my decision to purchase travel related product.	1	8	6	54	31	4.060	Accepted

Table 2, shows that the majority of respondent tends to agree with the statement related to the using social networking websites (SNW) for information sharing related to travel. The results indicate that all items were accepted as to the use of social networking websites (SNW) for information sharing for travel by dot com generation.

RQ 3: Do dot com generation use social networking websites (SNW) for social interaction?

Table 3: Mean responses on their using social networking travel websites for social interaction.

S/ N	ITEMS	1 SD	2 D	3 NC	4 A	5 SA	MEAN	REMARK
1	I Use social networking travel sites for communicating and interacting with friends and family	0	2	4	48	46	4.380	Accepted
2	I Use social networking travel sites for communicating and interacting with friends of my friends.	3	9	10	58	20	3.830	Accepted
3	I Use social networking sites for leisure and personal socialization	3	0	9	53	35	4.170	Accepted
4	I use social networking travel websites to discuss my activity.	2	4	9	53	32	4.090	Accepted
5	I use social networking sites for updating profile information s.	1	3	15	47	34	4.100	Accepted

Table 3, shows that the majority of respondent tends to agree with the statement related to the using social networking websites (SNW) for social interaction. The results indicate that all items were accepted as to the use of social networking travel websites for interaction.

RQ 4: Do dot com generation use social networking websites (SNW) because of perceived utility for travel.

Table 4: Mean responses on their using social networking travel websites for perceived utility.

S/ N	ITEMS	1 SD	2 D	3 NC	4 A	5 SA	MEAN	REMAK
1	Usually, I am among of the first to try out new places and post my selfies of places, I have travelled.	1	4	7	39	49	4.370	Accepted
2	When I see my friends travel photographs and sharing the write-ups regarding their experiences about the place then it encourages me to travel.	2	2	17	46	33	4.060	Accepted
3	It helps in strengthening interpersonal relationships and helps to know about the different cultures and places.	0	1	12	52	35	4.210	Accepted
4	It encourages virtual meeting with people who love to travel	1	3	11	51	34	4.140	Accepted
5	It support collaborative and peer to-peer learning about travel.	0	4	3	52	40	4.280	Accepted

Table 4, shows that the majority of respondent tends to agree with the statement related to the using social networking travel websites because of perceived utility. The results indicate that all items were accepted as to the use of social networking travel websites due to perceived utility.

Conclusion

Present study contributes to the current literature on social networking travel websites and its usages by dot com generation, who

are also known as generation Y /I-pad generation etc. The advancement of technology and increasing fetchers of social media is motivating the young travelers to use social networking travel websites. The result obtained from this study shows that the reasonable number of dot com generation uses the social networking websites (SNW) for the purpose of travel. This study attempts to understand the usages of social networking travel websites.

Finally from the present study it can be inferred that, dot com generation uses the social networking websites (SNW) for information sharing related to travel, interaction with friends, family and with the people of similar interests and very frequently shares their photographs and experiences on SNW . This study has found that the respondents are most interested in functional benefits of social networking travel websites. It also points out that the generation Y travelers are influenced by the information available on social networking travel websites; peer to peer learning and interpersonal interaction attract dot com generation.

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