

Motivation in Using and Sharing Experience on Social Media among Multi-Generational Travelers

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Abstract

Social media has been integrated into a part of travel industry. Subsequently, it has influenced tourists' travel behavior. Prior studies claim that individuals have different behaviors regarding the use of social media for travel purposes. With lack of studies focusing on age group, the objective of this study is to determine whether there is a difference in the motivation among three generations in using social media for the sake of sharing travel experiences. Finding shows that all generations use social media with similar motivation for travel purposes. They have high motivation in obtaining travel information before the trip and in sharing memorable travel experiences through social media. They also wanted to keep such information as personal document during and after the traveling.

Keywords : Motivation in Using Social Media, Sharing Experiences on Social Media, Multi-Generational Travelers

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1. Introduction

Information and communication technology is playing an important role in the development of modern tourism [Kang and Schuett, 2013]. Social media, as one of the most powerful online networking tools, has been integrated into a part of travel industry. Consequently, it has changed the nature of communication among travelers [Dickinson et al., 2014; Huang et al., 2010] and has certainly influenced tourists' travel behavior [Wang et al., 2011].

As traveling becomes cheaper in the digital age, nowadays everyone loves to travel. Today's travelers can be classified into three generations: Baby Boomers (born in 1946-1964), Gen Xers (born in 1965~1980), and Gen Y or Millennials (born in 1981~2000) [Vivion, 2016].

Previous empirical studies have shown that individuals, especially those belong to different generations, have different behaviors regarding the use of social media for travel purposes [Zeng and Gerritsen, 2014]. Travelers' use of social media can happen before, during and after the trip.

Most of the time, travelers' use social media before the trip for information acquisition to make travel decisions [Chung and Buhalis, 2008; Parra-López et al., 2012]. Before traveling, people search for ideas on where to go (destination), where to stay (accommodation), and what to do (activities) to secure the quality of trip [Cox et al., 2009]. Such use of social media is meant for functional (informational) benefits. On the other hand, hedonic benefit is the other side of motive to use social media. That is, travelers want to add fun and excitement to the trip [Gretzel and

Yoo, 2008; Gretzel et al., 2007; Parra-López et al., 2012].

Some travelers use social media during the trip to share photos or videos of their travel experiences [Text 100, 2013]. During the trip, travelers can find seasonal event information and begin sharing their travel experiences and generating comments and reviews. Nevertheless, not many travelers post their photos or videos after the trip. They tend to lose interests in giving photos, videos, comments and reviews regarding their travel experiences in social media [Fotis et al., 2012; Parra-López et al., 2012].

Kang and Schuett [2013] argue that the more individuals experience social media, and the more they perceive that social media is less complex to use, the more likely they are to share their travel experiences on social media. It is also claimed that individuals who use social media as an information source for travel planning are more likely to share their travel experiences on social media. Therefore, Gen Xers and Baby Boomers are presumed to share their travel experiences but less than Millennials who are always "connected."

This impression emerges from the widely accepted premise on active participation and extensive connection on social media among Millennials so that social media applications are deeply incorporated into their lives [Fox, 2007; Madden, 2006]. However, with the current evolution that everybody from all generations are attached to their smart phone wherever they go, it needs to be explored further whether Millennials still have the highest motivation to search travel information and share experiences as compared to the older generations. As a counter example, a study per-

formed by Shullman Research Center finds that technology adoption among Baby Boomers exceeded Gen Xers [Vivion, 2016].

Prior research shows that technology is a prevalent demand in each generation, and differences exist among individuals' online pursuit [DiMaggio et al., 2004; Hargittai, 2007; Livingstone and Helsper, 2007]. A person's background, the context of their Internet use, and their level of experience all influence the way they use the social media [Hargittai, 2008].

Higher experience with social media is correlated to higher tendency to share travel experiences on social media [Kang and Schuett, 2013]. Individuals who use social media as an information source likely to share their travel experiences on social media [Kang and Schuett, 2013].

Further, Gen Yers and younger Gen Xers appear to attach greater importance to the functional needs [Huang et al., 2010]. Consequently generations may play a major role in shaping travelers' research habits and priorities [Intelity, 2017].

Nevertheless, there is a lack of empirical studies focusing on the travelers from three generations who use social media for travel purposes [Ip et al., 2012; Yoo and Gretzel, 2012]. Therefore, it is of high interest to examine whether there is a difference in the motivation of the three generations (Millennials, Gen Xers, Baby Boomers) in using social media for travel purposes. To give a better analysis, the motivation in using social media before, during, or after the travel is also examined in this study. By understanding the differences in motivation among different generations of travelers, tour operators will be able to design improved marketing strategies.

2. Literature Review

This section will review key concepts and prior research on the motivation in using social media among travelers and the conceptualization of generations of travelers.

2.1 Motivation in Using Social Media for Travel Purposes

Motivation in using social media for travel purposes includes seeking travel information, maintaining connections, finding travel companions, providing travel tips and suggestions, or simply having fun by sharing interesting travel experiences with each other [Wang et al., 2002]. Several previous studies have identified key motivating factors of travelers using social media, which are incorporated into (1) seeking advice, (2) information dissemination, (3) social interaction, (4) friendship, (5) enjoyment, (6) status, and (7) personal documentation [Huang et al., 2010].

Travelers use social media before, during, and after traveling. Before traveling, people search for information on the destination, accommodation options, and other leisure activities [Cox et al., 2009]. Studies found that social media are predominantly used before the trip [Cox et al., 2009] by providing ideas, reducing risk and making it easier to imagine what places will be like [Gretzel and Yoo, 2008].

During the trip, travelers not only consume social media to find holiday related information, but also begin to share their travel experiences [Text 100, 2013]. Travelers' use of social media during the trip has been found to be much lower than before the trip [Cox et al., 2009; Fotis et al., 2012].

After the trip, travelers share information regarding their trip by writing comments or reviews, as well as sharing photos or videos [Fotis et al., 2012; Parra-López et al., 2012]. By this time, the use of social media is the lowest [Cox et al., 2009], however, another study found that social media is predominantly used after the trip [Fotis et al., 2012].

2.2 Generations of Travelers

Today, travelers can be categorized into three generations. They are Baby Boomers (born in 1946 ~1964), Gen Xers (born in 1965 ~1980), and Gen Y or Millennials (born in 1981 ~2000) [Vivion, 2016].

2.2.1 Baby Boomers

As Baby Boomers transition into retirement, most of Baby Boomers are in their spending prime and subsequently eager to travel for pleasure. Majority of them have time and is affordable to enjoy traveling [Benbria, 2016; Clarke, 2015; Goldberg, 2015; Maneval, 2016; Vivion, 2016].

Baby boomers prefer to go to a travel agent to make vacation plans [Maneval, 2016]. Statistics show that 50% of Boomers do not use travel booking sites at all to plan their trips, only 39% use them [Benbria, 2016]. This condition is consistent to the finding of Trip Advisor's Trip Barometer Travel Trends 2016, which discovered that 52% of Baby Boomers rely on word of mouth from family and friends when planning their travel [Benbria, 2016].

However, another study finds that among Boomers, 84% have purchased travel online and

72% have researched travel through online travel agencies (OTAs) [Goldberg, 2015; Intelity, 2017; Vivion, 2016]. Nowadays, Baby Boomers are becoming increasingly reliant on technology in order to book their travel arrangements [Intelity, 2017: 34]. They also heed online review web sites when choosing accommodations which can influence in their decision to book [Benbria, 2016].

In addition, 41% of Baby Boomers will book online at hotel web sites and perform research and compare trips before making final decision [Intelity, 2017]. Consequently, they do appreciate a user-friendly web site which allows them to book directly with a company [Tran, 2018]. Most of them book their travel arrangements using a laptop (41%) while only 9% book via mobile [Benbria, 2016].

According to AARP Travel Research in 2016, two-thirds of Baby Boomers will not post to a social media website while they are on vacation [Benbria, 2016]. However, another study says they want to stay connected while being away on a trip [Intelity, 2017], therefore, TripAdvisor found that fifty-five percent of Baby Boomers say a smartphone is essential while traveling [Benbria, 2016; Intelity, 2017].

2.2.2 Gen Xers

Gen Xers are less likely to travel for business than millennials, but more likely than baby boomers [Vivion, 2016]. A Shullman Research Center study reveals that 79% of them travel for pleasure [Vivion, 2016]. They prefer more family-focused travel or relaxation trips that come with a few more amenities.

Most Gen Xers are less likely to look for help

from a travel agent, but far more likely to look for a nicer hotel, amenities, and plan their trips further ahead. Around 82% booking travel online and 71% use online travel agencies (OTAs) to make purchase decisions [Vivion, 2016]. Gen-Xers can be categorized as a do-it-yourself traveler because they are “savvy” travelers who like to do their own research – reading blogs, social media posts, other publications and talk to friends when they are deciding on a trip [Maneval, 2016].

2.2.3 Gen Y or Millennials

The Gen Y or Millennials have grown up completely surrounded by and adapting to high-tech gadgets, the Internet, social networks and an encompassing feeling of being plugged in 24/7 [Price, 2016]. They rely on travel apps which provide transparent and self-serve booking [Price, 2016; Vivion, 2016], almost 1/3 more than past generations [Price, 2016]. Furthermore, social media plays a pivotal role in how the millennial traveler makes their decisions. In fact, 87% are looking at Facebook for travel inspiration [Price, 2016].

Millennials are forever connected [Price, 2016]. For example, a travel statistic states that 90% of Millennials books travel online, with 87% using digital tools to compare options [Vivion, 2016]. Millennials travelers have a nearly endless supply of smart phone apps at their disposal while exploring [Shallcross, 2015]. 87% use online travel agencies for research and comparisons [Goldberg, 2015].

3. Research Methods

Following a quantitative research design approach, questionnaires were designed and administered.

Data were collected through a web questionnaire sent via social media (Facebook, WhatsApp, email) as well as in the form of hard copy. The research questionnaire was divided into three sections. The first section consisted of demographic data, such as gender, age, job level, and citizenship. The second section related to social media usage and trip details, namely favourite social media apps, trip purposes, trip companion, number of trips per year, and country of destination.

The last section was self-administered questionnaires on travelers’ use of social media and motivation in sharing travel experience on social media. Each item was measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

The questionnaire is designed by slightly modifying the ones developed by Amaro et al. [2016] and Huang et al. [2010]. Travelers’ use of social media is slightly modified from the questionnaires developed by Amaro et al. [2016] to suit the context of the research. Motivation in sharing travel experiences using social media is measured by a modification from the tool of Huang et al. [2010]. Items include obtaining travel information, sharing information or travel experiences through photos or videos, writing reviews, gaining social status, and documenting personal archives.

Generation is classified into three groups, namely Gen Yers (20~35 years), Gen Xers (36~50 years old), and Gen Baby Boomers (>50 years old).

Using the purposive sampling method, the criteria used for selection for respondents were those who have travelled and used social media. Aside from descriptive analysis for respondents’ travel-

ing profile, exploratory factor analysis was used to find out when the respondents used the social media (before, during, or after the traveling). One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was utilized to answer the research objective, which is to determine whether there is any similarities or differences in the motivation in using social media among the three generations.

4. Results

This study revealed that from 146 respondents, majority of them are Millennials (57%), followed by Gen Xers (27%), and Baby Boomers (16%). They are mostly employees in private and public institutions (56%). Respondents traveled between 2015 to 2017.

Favorite social media apps used by all generation are Facebook (87%) and Instagram (61%). Other apps are Line (15%), WhatsApp (14%), and Twitter (11%). Trip purposes of all generation are for pleasure (56%), followed by family trip (16%) & tour (12%). Gen Y prefers traveling with friends, while BB with family. Gen X favors going with family or colleagues.

<Table 1> shows that Gen Xers have the highest level of motivations compared to Millennials and Baby Boomers. The lowest motivation is uploading photos or videos among Baby Boomers and writing travel reviews on the Internet among Millennials.

Searching information for travel arrangements (including accommodation, food, tour destinations) were mostly done by Millennials before traveling, while Gen Xers and Baby Boomers did it before and during traveling. For instance, reading

hotel reviews from other travelers which was usually done when they were not happy with the services. Another example is looking for good restaurants to eat because Gen Xers and Baby Boomers wanted to eat something depending on their appetite.

<Table 1> Mean Score of Motivation in Using Social Media among the Three-Generations of Travelers

	Mill	X	BB
Search for travel info on social media	4.17	4.49	4.38
Search destination Picture	4.33	4.46	4.29
Look at activities reviews of other travelers	4.14	4.44	4.13
Read hotel review from other travelers	4.18	4.54	4.29
Visit official websites of the destination	3.88	4.28	3.83
Read other travelers' experiences and tips	4.27	4.54	3.88
Search for food and restaurant information	3.82	4.23	3.63
Search for hotel information	4.29	4.33	4.29
Search for tour destination information	4.13	4.38	4.13
Wrote review on the Internet	2.17	2.90	2.38
Share photos	3.70	4.03	3.54
Share travel experience	3.13	3.72	2.96
Share opinion and evaluation	2.81	3.54	2.83
Update location on social media	3.25	3.41	3.08
Post photos on social media	3.65	3.85	3.00
Wrote reviews of tour attractions on social media	2.65	3.26	2.54
Wrote reviews of places visited on social media	2.54	3.21	2.50
Upload photos/videos	2.57	2.90	2.00
Keep a record of my experiences	4.18	4.15	3.21
Gain attention & respect on social network site	3.10	3.38	2.88
Tell others about myself	3.13	3.36	2.63
Increase self-esteem	3.06	3.54	3.13

Notes) M=Millennials, X= Gen Xers, BB=Baby Boomers.

Sharing photos on social media was done by Millennials during traveling, whereas Gen Xers and Baby Boomers did it mostly after traveling. There was one unique motivation of Gen Xers which was to keep a record of their travel experiences before traveling, because Millennials did it during traveling and Baby Boomers after traveling.

<Table 2> Differences in Motivation in Using Social Media among the Three-Generations of Travelers

	(I) Gen	(J) Gen	(I-J)	Sig.
Share travel experiences	X (3.72)	M (3.13)	0.585	0.044*
Share opinion and evaluation	X (3.54)	M (2.81)	0.731	0.005*
Wrote review on the Internet	X (2.90)	M (2.17)	0.729	0.008*
Post photos on social media	X (3.85)	BB (3.00)	0.846	0.031*
Wrote reviews of places visited on social media	X (3.21)	M (2.54)	0.663	0.043*
Upload photos/videos	X (2.90)	BB (2.00)	0.897	0.028*
Keep a record of travel experiences	BB (3.21)	M (4.18) X (4.15)	-0.972 -0.946	0.000* 0.001*
Tell others about myself	X (3.36)	BB (2.63)	0.734	0.026*

Notes) M=Millennials, X= Gen Xers, BB=Baby Boomers.

Having the highest mean scores, Gen Xers had significant differences with the motivations in using social media of Baby Boomers and Millennials (see <Table 2>). For example, Gen Xers was different from Millennials on the motivation in sharing travel experiences and sharing evaluation, as well as in writing reviews regarding the tour destination on the Internet or social media. Millennials

usually did it during traveling, while Gen Xers after traveling.

Gen Xers differed from Baby Boomers in terms of posting and uploading photos on social media, as well as documenting travel experiences for personal archives. Both generations usually did it after traveling.

5. Discussion

Respondents from the three generations have high motivation in using social media for arranging the trip before traveling; just like the previous studies [Cox et al., 2009]. During traveling, the intensity of using social media is getting lesser except Gen Xers who still have high level of motivation. After the trip, all generations have medium range of motivation in using social media for travel purposes.

Surprisingly, respondents from Gen Xers travelers have the highest mean scores starting from before, during and after the trip as compared to Millennials and Baby Boomers. That is why Gen Xers is significantly different in the motivation in using social media before, during, and after traveling from the other generations (Millennials and Baby Boomers).

5.1 Motivation in Using Social Media among the Millennials

Before traveling, Millennials searched tour destination pictures, searched for hotel or accommodation information, and read other travelers' experiences regarding the targeted destinations. These are the top three motivations in

using social media of Millennials. It is very similar to the previous studies done in 2015 which state that Millennials do lots of online research [Goldberg, 2015]. They want information right away and rely on their smartphones. If they don't know something, they can get the answer in a flash online [Goldberg, 2015] because they can ask a question on social media and receive real-time recommendations [Shallcross, 2015]. For instance, they can scroll through Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Foursquare, and Snapchat stories to browse for more travel inspiration. Aside from deftly using social media to plan their trips, Millennials have a nearly endless supply of smartphone apps at their disposal while exploring [Shallcross, 2015].

Furthermore, based on a survey in 2016, Millennials have more travel apps on their phone (75%) compare to other generations (47%), therefore, 85% of them check multiple sites before booking their travel to get the best deal possible and 74% search for travel related information on mobile devices [Price, 2016]. In addition, 46% of them book travel through a smart phone or tablet and they like automated check-ins (36%) more than other generations (19%) [Price, 2016].

During traveling, this study reveals that Millennial travelers like to share their experience on social media, especially in their Facebook and Instagram. They usually like to share their authentic experiences [Price, 2016; Vivion, 2016], especially to gain social status from their friends. Sharing – and perhaps flaunting – on social media is an integral part of their travel experience, because amongst Millennials peer response is important [Morrison et al., 2016].

Another survey also found that 97% of Millennials will post while traveling, and 75% will post once a day [Price, 2016]. Almost all of Millennials (94%) use Facebook, the most popular social network for traveling millennials [Price, 2016], just like Millennial travelers in this study.

Although not as eager as before traveling, Millennials still have a motivation to write travel reviews or share travel experiences in social media that maybe useful to their friends. They are willing to post likes and dislikes about tourist destinations to prevent people going to bad places by writing review on travel web sites. They also like to provide quality travel information and suggestions based upon their own journey to gain social status of being very knowledgeable, as well as to continue the circle of sharing.

After traveling, the pictures of videos posted and shared on their social media (Facebook and Instagram) are kept by Millennial travelers for personal documentation of their memorable experiences. This finding is similar to the previous study which concludes that 42% of Millennials think that social media is a better way to record photos than physical albums compared to only a quarter of Non-Millennials [Morrison et al., 2016].

Millennial travelers in this study prefer traveling for pleasure with friends than with family. This result is supported by a Shullman Research Center study which found that 77% of them travel for pleasure [Vivion, 2016] and prefers to travel with friends (58%) more than other generations (38%) [Price, 2016]. Since many of Millennials don't have children, it gives them more flexibility [Maneval, 2016] to travel with friends.

5.2 Motivation in Using Social Media among Gen Xers

Gen Xer travelers have the highest motivation among the other generations. The main motivation of Gen Xers is to obtain sufficient information before making travel decision.

Gen Xers favors going for pleasure with family or colleagues. This is similar to a Shullman Research Center study which reveals that 79% of them travel for pleasure [Vivion, 2016] and prefer more family-focused travel or relaxation trips that come with a few more amenities. Several others want to travel with friends or couples traveling with other couples [Maneval, 2016]. Gen Xers are less likely to travel for business than Millennials, but more likely than Baby Boomers [Vivion, 2016].

Before traveling, Gen Xers make sure to search for travel information, such as attractive destination pictures and reviews about them before deciding to book the trip. Considered as “savvy” and do-it-yourself travelers, Gen Xers like to do their own research by reading other travelers’ blogs or social media posts as well as discussing to friends before choosing a trip [Maneval, 2016].

Since social media can be used to document personal photo or video collections much better than photo albums, Gen Xers in this study has started having the motivation to keep a record of their travel experiences before traveling.

During traveling, Gen Xers have the motivation to read other travelers’ experiences and tips. The reason is they want to find out whether they can experience what they could not do when they were younger [Maneval, 2016]. Gen Xers have different purposes of traveling, therefore, some of them

want to do something different, for example tend to be a little more adventurous and more experience-focused, as well as look for local experiences that are kid-friendly [Maneval, 2016]. In terms of food, Gen Xers is a little bit choosy because they usually travel with their family. Some of them even want to have a culinary experience that they can’t have back home [Maneval, 2016] and try it with their family.

After traveling, they start sharing their photos or videos in their Facebook and Instagram, because during the trip they were fully occupied by visiting tour destinations and attractions they have planned before the trip. By sharing travel experiences in their social media, such as Facebook or Instagram, Gen Xers have motivation to gain self-esteem, especially when they can show to friends that they can afford to travel domestically or abroad, as well as try authentic experiences with their family.

5.3 Motivation in Using Social Media among Baby Boomers

Baby Boomers in this study prefer traveling for pleasure or family trip with the companion of family. It is similar to a previous survey which states that more than 67 percent of Boomers are traveling to visit family, while other travel priorities include relaxing and sightseeing vacations, with itineraries filled with museums, historical sites, arts and culture [AFP Relaxnews, 2017].

Before traveling, Baby Boomers have high motivation to search for travel information, hotel information, and destination pictures on social media or reviews from other travelers. During traveling,

Baby Boomers still search for tour destination information to make sure they have made the right choice. Traveling with family has made them willing to explore culinary tourism by searching for food recommendations around their place.

After traveling, they upload and share photos mostly in their Facebook to let others know about their travel experiences, just like the younger generations. That is why Baby Boomers also claim that having smartphone is essential while traveling, just like Millennials and Gen Xers [Intelity, 2017]. Aside from searching for travel information, they need to have smartphone to take a lot of photos or recording videos for several unforgettable moments during the trip.

5.4 Similarities in the Motivation in Using Social Media among the Three-Generations of Travelers

This study found that Gen Xers were significantly different from Millennials on the motivation in sharing travel experiences and in writing reviews regarding the tour destination on social media. Gen Xers differed from Baby Boomers in terms of posting and uploading photos on social media, as well as documenting travel experiences for personal archives. The differences occurred not only because they use social media to search travel information in different travel websites or travel apps, but also because every traveler comes from different background with his/her own motives to travel.

Actually, what really matters is they have one common similarity: all of the generations in this study have given extra effort in planning their

trip before traveling. Before traveling, all generations want to obtain as many travel information or experiences as they can get to make the right travel decision. During traveling, all generations enjoy having fun and seeking enjoyment by searching food or tour destination, while some have started to share their travel experiences. After traveling, all generations like to tell others about their experiences by posting some pictures or videos not only for personal documents, but also to gain social status.

To summarize, all generations use social media have similar motivation which is to carefully plan a fun and excitement trip. Millennials have the motivation to search the most adventurous and authentic travel experiences to be shared in their Facebook and Instagram and be kept as personal documentation. Motivation of Gen Xers is to get travel information for making the trip with friends more enjoyable to gain self-esteem, while Baby Boomers' motivation is mainly for having a memorable family trip which can be shared to their extended families.

6. Conclusion

This study reveals that all generations use social media with similar motivation for travel purposes. They have high motivation in obtaining travel information before the trip to share their memorable experiences in their social media and keep them as personal document during and after traveling.

The emerging trend in the digital age has turned the travel industry an easier prospect for all generations, from the ease of booking travel, to the

ease of searching travelers' good and bad experiences, to sharing authentic trips. Consequently, tourist providers should pay attention to the marketing strategies because different travelers' generations have different preferences.

To get a balanced number of respondents from all generations, future study should consider giving hardcopy survey form to Baby Boomers and older Gen Xers because many of them do not have Gmail account or forget their password. Another suggestion is to design a user-friendly online survey so that all generations can answer it easily, since not all the targeted respondents have smart phones.

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