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Consumer perception of knowledge-sharing in travel-related Online Social Networks

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Perceived ease of use (PEOU) is still a prominent construct.
- PEOU positively influences utilitarian beliefs, subjective norms, belief in integrity and intention to share knowledge.
- When customers trust the organization, they are more likely to share the organization's content.
- Subjective norms and utilitarian beliefs strengthen users' belief in integrity.

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ABSTRACT

Consumers trust the Internet for advice. Online Social Networks (OSNs) are creating collective knowledge and becoming major information gathering sources among tourists when making travel decisions and purchasing travel-related products and services. The aim of the current study is to develop a theoretical model that tests the precursors of "intention to share knowledge" behaviors in the context of OSNs. Based on the previous literature, a theoretical model was developed and tested using Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Structural Equation Modeling with a sample of travel-related OSN users who had at least one year of online travel shopping experience. Study results show that both perceived ease of use and belief in integrity positively influence knowledge sharing behaviors. Utilitarian beliefs and subjective norms positively influence belief in integrity. This is one of the few research studies within this field and study results present clear theoretical and practical implications for the travel and tourism industry.

1. Introduction

Online Social Networks (OSNs) have become important social platforms for computer-mediated communications (Ellison, Vitak, Gray, & Lampe, 2014; Majchrzak, Faraj, Kane, & Azad, 2013), acting as cyber "coffee shops" where people are able to find and then electronically 'talk' to others with similar interests (Ayeh, Au, & Law, 2013). As a Web 2.0 technology, OSNs are gaining attention as knowledge sharing platforms for the travel and tourism industry as more and more travelers are using this method to exchange information (Bradley, Sparks, & Weber, 2015; Kandampully, Zhang, & Bilgihan, 2015; Law, Buhalis, & Cobanoglu, 2014; Morosan, Bowen, & Atwood, 2014). They have been recognized as innovative knowledge sharing networks (e.g. product reviews, trends, restaurant and hotel reviews, and travel blogs) by enabling users to connect, share, and interact with others (Inversini & Masiero, 2014; Öz, 2015; Uhrig, Bann, Williams, & Evans, 2010). They are powerful platforms that allow users to collaborate and contribute to developing, extending, rating, commenting on travel related experiences (destination reviews, TripAdvisor things to do lists, Yelp reviews, restaurant Instagram pages, etc.). Among OSNs, TripAdvisor has more than 175 million reviews. Tourism and hospitality stakeholders often open and manage accounts on numerous platforms including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Vine, Snapchat, Twitter and Google+. OSNs have therefore become the mainstay of a digital marketing strategy for the travel industry. It is estimated that online reviews influence more than US$10 billion in online travel purchases every year (Nusair, Bilgihan, Okumus, & Cobanoglu, 2013).

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OSNs are creating "*collective knowledge*" and becoming a major source to gather knowledge among consumers (Ayeh et al., 2013; Bilgihan, Peng, & Kandampully, 2014; Sigala, 2012). Thus, user generated content is on the rise. Data available from national statistical surveys show that the main interest for OSN websites is to share information and to seek advice (Vickery & Wunsch-Vincent, 2007). Mackenzie (2011) compiled various marketing research, and reported that 81% of online population received recommendation from friends and other OSN users prior to a purchase decision and 74% of those who received a recommendation found it to be influential in their decision making process. Another survey conducted by Sheraton Hotels reveal that 64% of respondents use OSNs to make their travel plans (Mackenzie, 2011). It is also reported that more than half of Facebook members use the site to get travel-related information (Mackenzie, 2011). OSNs play vital roles in the decision-making process of travelers as they engage in OSNs to obtain travel related information and share their personal experiences, reviews, comments, and opinions (Inversini & Masiero, 2014; Law, Leung, Lo, Leung, & Fong, 2015). In sum, consumers in the OSN medium are influenced by the opinions of other people in making purchasing decisions (e.g. when choosing hotels, restaurants, attractions, and destinations).

Internet users are not only using OSNs to search information, but they are also the ones who create the content in them (Bronner & de Hoog, 2011; Sigala, 2012). The motives of travelers to share their experiences and knowledge in OSNs have not been examined. Most OSN users are lurkers who read discussions, reviews, and feedback but rarely or never participate (Heinonen, 2011). The biggest challenge for tourism firms is to convince users to share knowledge with other members in OSNs (Urban, Sultan, & Qualls, 2012). Thus, success of OSN profiles of tourism companies and organizations depends on whether users are willing to share their experiences and knowledge with other users (Aluri, Slevitch, & Larzelere, 2015; Bakshy, Rosenn, Marlow, & Adamic, 2012; Lee, Cheung, & Chen, 2005; Sigala, 2012). The willingness of travelers to participate in knowledge sharing is of importance to the travel and tourism industry. Therefore, the aim of the current study is to examine the factors that motivate users to share travel related information in OSNs using a multidisciplinary approach to the topic that combines an understanding to social, marketing and information systems literature. In summary, this study will introduce a theoretical model to understand the antecedents of the intention to share knowledge behaviors. The authors have first developed a measurement model based on an extensive literature review and then empirically tested this model.

2. Literature review and hypotheses development

2.1. Knowledge sharing

Knowledge sharing occurs when an individual intends to deliver, obtain, and communicate knowledge (Chen, Chang, Tseng, Chen, & Chang, 2013; Hung & Cheng, 2013; Okumus, 2013). Ma and Chan (2014, p. 52) define knowledge sharing as "the communication of knowledge from a source in such a way that it is learned and applied by the recipient". Knowledge sharing is further defined as "the combination of one or both parties seeking knowledge in response to the request, such that one or both parties are affected by the experience." (Ghosh & Scott, 2007, p.4). Blogs are seen as one of the principal methods of knowledge sharing (Hsu & Lin, 2008). Lately, OSNs have become important tools for travelers to acquire knowledge. In the travel context, it was found that social support is a relevant reason for participation in online groups. The majority of tourists consider helping others as an important reason for sharing their experiences (Sarkar, Au, & Law, 2013). Additionally, tourists tend to share knowledge online because they want to prevent other people from selecting incorrect products and services (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014). The following sections will discuss the role of OSNs as knowledge sharing platforms and builds a theory driven research model.

2.2. Perceived ease of use and knowledge sharing behaviors in OSNs

Perceived ease of use (PEOU) is associated with users' evaluation of the effort involved in the progression of utilizing a technology (Venkatesh, 2000). In this study, PEOU refers to the degree to which an individual considers that using an OSN to post or retrieve travel information is free from effort (Davis, 1989). Users that believe that a technology is useful and easy to operate are more likely to have a favorable attitude towards the technology, which in return increases users' willingness to utilize it in the future (Davis, 1989; Rosen, Whaling, Rab, Carrier, & Cheever, 2013).

PEOU is defined as the degree to which an individual believes that utilizing a specific system would augment and improve his/her life (Joo, Lim, & Kim, 2011). PEOU can motivate individuals to share information with other members in the network (Al-Busaidi & Olfman, 2014). Research shows that PEOU has significant influence on knowledge sharing in blogs (Hsu & Lin, 2008). An OSN user would be more likely to share knowledge when the interaction with the website is easy. This simply means that the user will only write a review of a product or service if the user perceives the review submission easy. Numerous studies have proposed that PEOU would affect knowledge sharing behaviors in virtual environments (McGowan et al., 2012). Expected benefits from using a system and perception of ease of use are considered as incentives for knowledge sharing (Sharratt & Usoro, 2003). Therefore, we posit that:

H1. Perceived ease of use has a significant positive influence on knowledge sharing in travel-related OSN websites.

2.3. Perceived ease of use and utilitarian beliefs

Coherent with the marketing literature, we use the term "utilitarian benefits" to specify the functional, influential, and practical contributions of utilization offerings of the reviewed website. Utilitarian beliefs view products and services in a more functional and instrumental way (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982; Kandampully et al., 2015; Xiong, King, & Hu, 2014). Lack of utilitarian benefits (e.g. not obtaining functional and practical benefits) is the major reason why individuals do not utilize a website. Utilitarian beliefs are related to the level of performance, productivity and effectiveness obtained through the use of OSNs (Premkumar, Ramamurthy, & Liu, 2008).

Studies show that utilitarian beliefs toward a technology depend primarily on the PEOU (Monsuwe, Dellaert, & de Ruyter, 2004); for example, from a TAM (Technology Acceptance Model) perspective, utilitarian beliefs are influenced by the PEOU, because the easier a technology is perceived, the more utilitarian it could be (Venkatesh, 2000; Dabholkar, 1996; Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1989). According to O'Cass and Fenech (2003), when users perceive low or no effort using a website, they believe that the website reflects the utilitarian aspects of an adequate online experience. Therefore, it is expected that PEOU acts as an antecedent of utilitarian beliefs (Bridges & Florsheim, 2008; Sun & Zhang, 2006). Hence, we posit that:

H2. Perceived ease of use has a significant positive influence on utilitarian beliefs in travel-related OSN websites.

2.4. Perceived ease of use and subjective norms

When the environmental pressure is evident, the individual asks for help from direct fellows (e.g. family and colleagues) to execute a particular behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Subjective norm refers to an individual's perception or opinion about what important others believe the individual should do (Teo, 2009). Fishbein and Ajzen (1974, 1975) suggest that subjective norms exert pressures on an individual to complete a specific behavior. The theory of reasoned action asserts that individuals' behavioral intentions are determined by their attitude toward the behavior and their subjective norm (Kucukusta, Law, Besbes, & Legohérel, 2015). Ajzen (1991) defines subjective norm as "the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behavior in question" (p. 188). Consumers may believe that family, friends, and peer groups favor certain behaviors (in this case sharing information using OSNs), and their beliefs influence their behavioral intentions (Pavlou & Chai, 2002).

In technology adoption, PEOU seems to be a precursor of subjective norms (effect from others to use the technology). A person's subjective norm may be impacted by the perception of others that the system is easy to use and requires minimum effort (for instance, when technology users tell others that they perceive the technology is easy to use). These interpretations are formed based on the individuals' perceptions of the use of the system. In this case, when users hold certain perceptions assume that other users also hold them (Butler, Giuliano, & Guiso, 2012). These perceptions of PEOU may then be considered to infer the influence from others to use the technology. This may be illustrated with the following example: I believe the travel-related OSN website is easy to use and requires minimum effort to operate and understand, other travel-related OSN users also believe the OSN website is easy to use and requires minimum effort to operate and understand; other users consider I should use this useful, important, and simple to use travel-related OSN website.

This research expects that PEOU has an explanatory power on subjective norms. If friends and relatives think that a system is easy to use, they are likely to expect others to use this system. PEOU triggers the beliefs of the users that their social environment expects the user to utilize the technology. This tends to influence user to take a particular course of action. In other words, users are expected to feel social pressure if others perceive that the OSN is easy and useful (Braun, 2013). Hence, we posit that:

H3. Perceived ease of use has a significant positive influence on subjective norms in travel-related OSN websites.

2.5. Perceived ease of use and belief in integrity

Belief in integrity is the perception of individuals that a provider is committed and honest to its customers/users (McKnight, Choudhury, & Kacmar, 2002). Belief in integrity refers to the person's belief that the provider follows a set of standards throughout the interaction and transaction process (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). Belief in integrity inculcates individuals' certainty in providers' behavior and diminishes perceptions of risk. In an online context, regulations of integrity refer to: (a) behavior on virtual purchasing interaction, (b) consumer service procedure following a transaction, and (c) provider's handling of private user information (Bhattacherjee, 2002). Online providers have the ability to form integrity beliefs by openly declaring the norms of trade (for instance, shipping procedures, merchandise exchange rules, customer data privacy philosophy) on their websites, in this way, users will be constantly informed of any alteration below the standards (Zhou, 2013). In OSNs, it includes the users' perception that OSN is honest and sincere. As online travelers seek information from various OSN platforms, credibility has become a major concern in OSNs (Ayeh et al., 2013). Greater ease of use is perceived as a signal of benevolence and it is interpreted as the desire to adjust to consumer needs (Beldona, Buchanan, & Miller B, 2014; Flavián, Guinalíu, & Gurrea, 2006; Kim & Qu, 2014). Low levels of ease of use generate errors and such errors increase feelings of distrust and discourage future transactions. In e-commerce, ease of use influences perceived competence and trust (Flavián et al., 2006; Kucukusta et al., 2015). It is expected that if an OSN website is easy to use and navigate, users will tend generate trust to the website. Hence:

H4. Perceived ease of use has a significant positive influence on belief in integrity in travel-related OSN websites.

2.6. Subjective norms and switching costs

Porter (1980) defines switching costs as "one-time" costs (p. 10), as opposed to the ongoing costs associated with using a product or provider once a repeat–purchase relationship is established (Burnham, Frels, & Mahajan, 2003). Burnham et al. (2003) classify switching costs into procedural (the time and effort contained), financial (quantity lost) and relational (personal and brand relationship loss provoking psychological distress). Therefore the nature of switching costs is economic, psychological and emotional. Switching costs can be defined as individuals' observations of the time, money, and effort involved with replacing online providers (Chang & Chen, 2009). In line with Chang and Chen (2009), this study conceptualizes switching costs as users' perceptions of the any impediment to a customer's changing of OSN.

Consumers' perceptions about social norms have significant influence on their switching behaviors (Gall & Olsson, 2012). According to the theory of planned behavior, switching behaviors depend on expectations about the external environment in which the individual performs. Therefore, the perceived pressure on a person to perform a given behavior influences the person's motivation to comply with those pressures (Bansal & Taylor, 2002). Online users tend to switch or keep using the website due to the sensation of being pressured and feel locked in by his/her immediate environment (Gall & Olsson, 2012). Thus, high level of subjective norm pressure is associated with high switching costs (Madden, Ellen, & Ajzen, 1992, p. 9). Hence, we posit that:

H5. Subjective norms have a significant positive influence on switching costs in travel-related OSN websites.

2.7. Subjective norms and belief in integrity

From the perspective of numerous scholars who studied the TAM, subjective norm is the degree to which an individual perceives the demands of the referent others about that how the person must perceive technology (Pavlou, 2003; Schepers & Wetzels, 2007; Teo, 2009). In simple terms, subjective norms refer to the effect from others to use the technology. From an individual's perspective, the perceived subjective norms in the direct and indirect environments play a strong influence on an individual's perception of honesty and sincerity. This belief of integrity refers to keeping commitments and being honest and sincere (implying reliability), perceptions that may be perceived and influenced by others on the individual (Kim, Kim, & Shin, 2009; McKnight et al., 2002). In many cases, subjective norm is associated with an individual's perception to belief in the integrity of the system (Li, Hess, & Valacich, 2008). Hence, we posit that:

H6. Subjective norms have a significant positive influence on belief in integrity in travel-related OSN websites.

2.8. Utilitarian beliefs and belief in integrity

Numerous studies suggest that utilitarian beliefs positively influence individuals' integrity beliefs (e.g. Liao, Palvia, & Lin, 2006). Utilitarian attributes consider useful elements of the OSN including convenience, price, and variety (Pookulangara, Hawley, & Xiao, 2011). Psychologists indicate that utilitarian beliefs affect the beliefs in integrity in social relationships evaluations (Frank, Torrico, Enkawa, & Schvaneveldt, 2014). According to other researchers, individuals associate the useful elements of technology with the beliefs of integrity (McKnight et al., 2002). If consumers believe that the website is functional and of high quality, they will be more likely to possess trusting beliefs about the firm's integrity, and benevolence. Despite extensive literature on the influence of utilitarian beliefs when adopting technology, only few studies have investigated the influence power of utilitarian beliefs with respect to belief in integrity, especially in the travel context. Website attributes, particularly website usability, may influence the perceptions of the consumer about the website and thus of the expected degree of trust (Flavián et al., 2006). We posit that:

H7. Utilitarian beliefs have a significant positive influence on belief in integrity in travel-related OSN websites.

2.9. Belief in integrity and knowledge sharing

Online knowledge sharing depends largely on beliefs of integrity (Hsu, Ju, Yen, & Chang, 2007); for example, Sharratt and Usoro (2003) highlight that integrity and benevolence beliefs are the critical factors of intentions to share knowledge. Other researchers that are interested in understanding the reasons that provoke people to share knowledge with their OSN have shown the influence of belief in integrity (e.g. Bock, Zmud, Kim, & Lee, 2005; Langerak, Verhoef, Verlegh, & De Valck, 2004). Bock et al. (2005) find that when the provider follows a set of standards of exchange, users tend to have a positive attitude toward knowledge sharing. Moreover, some studies found that a sense of integrity may enhance the likelihood of individuals' contribution and participation in an OSN website. Integrity beliefs have a critical role to play in motivating knowledge-sharing behaviors. Similarly, when a user views an OSN website as being honest to its users, acting honest and sincere in dealing with users, it is likely that this will be a greater degree of motivation to share knowledge. In other words, users will not share information with their OSN if they do not trust the OSN. Hence:

H8. Belief in integrity has a significant positive influence on intentions to share knowledge in travel-related OSN websites.

2.10. Switching costs and knowledge sharing

From an e-commerce perspective, switching costs involved not only costs that are determined in monetary terms, but also the costs that are associated with psychological terms. For example, the consequence of becoming a consumer of a new alternative service/product, and the time and energy involved when obtaining and purchasing these services/products from a different supplier (Bock et al., 2005) might be the reasons why the consumer keeps using the website. Previous studies have highlighted the distinctive components that influence individual's willingness to share knowledge, such as costs and benefits, incentive systems, extrinsic and intrinsic motivations (Kankanhalli, Tan, & Wei, 2005; Wasko & Faraj, 2005). Similarly, when individuals consider that they may obtain intrinsic advantages such as self-assurance and social identification, then they will also develop positive attitudes toward knowledge sharing (Kankanhalli et al., 2005). In a virtual environment it is posited that an individual with low levels of switching cost will tend to share knowledge more frequently than individuals with high levels of switching costs. Therefore we posit:

H9. Switching costs have a significant positive influence on intentions to share knowledge in travel-related OSN websites.

2.11. Research model

The present research model is shown in Fig. 1. The first three factors consist of utilitarian beliefs, PEOU and subjective norm. The second order factors are formed by belief in integrity and switching costs. Based on the proposed model, the study hypothesizes PEOU, utilitarian beliefs and subjective norms are expected to positively influence belief in integrity and switching costs, and in return influence users' intention to share travel knowledge (Fig. 2).

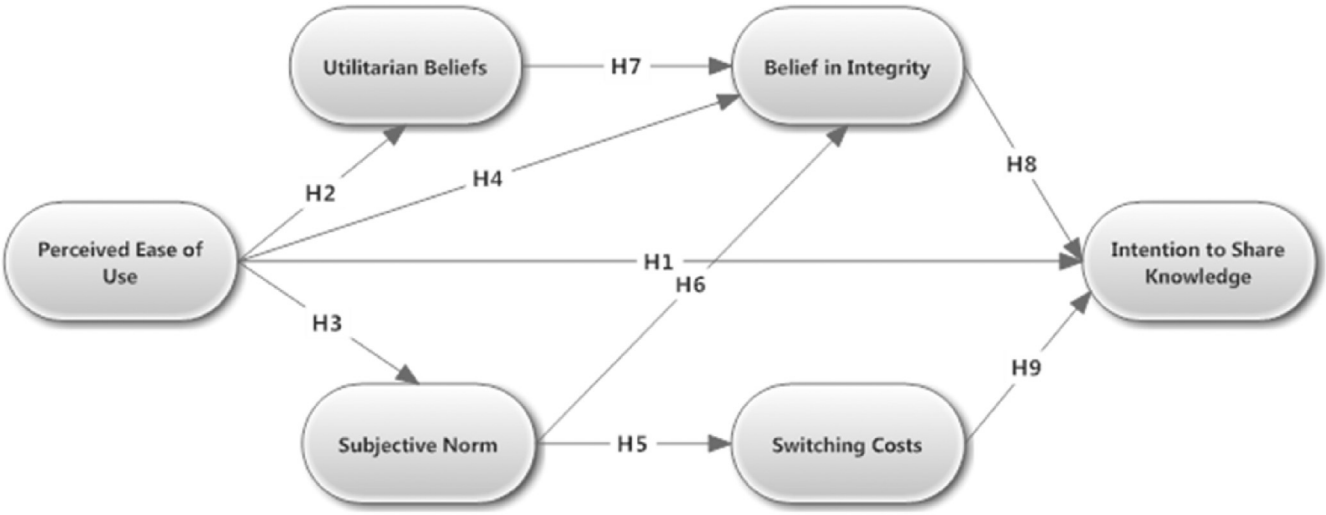

Fig. 1. Research model.

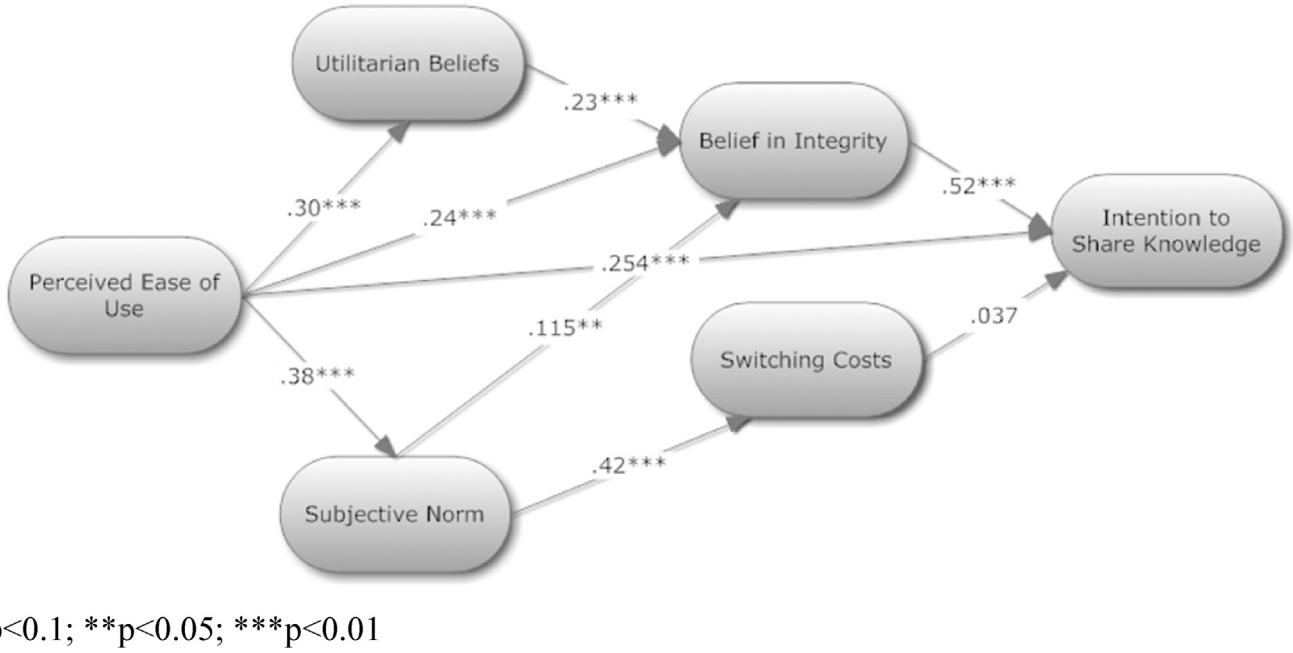

Fig. 2. Structural model.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Measurement

An online questionnaire was designed to assess OSN user perceptions of the research constructs using multiple-item scales, adjusted from existent research that reported high reliability, convergent and discriminant validity. All constructs were measured using multiple items, which were gathered in the survey using a seven-point Likert type scale. The constructs were primarily adapted from previous studies but making minor wording changes to tailor them to the OSN travel context. Pretesting of the measurement was conducted with 20 respondents whose characteristics resemble the target population for this study. Such characteristics include that they were older than 18 years, use OSNs, and had at least one year's online travel shopping experience.

We developed measurement items by adopting measures that had been validated in prior studies, modifying them to fit our context of knowledge sharing. After responding to the qualifier question, participants were asked to provide demographic information and respond to 18 statements on the six constructs in this study. For the construct of "intention to share knowledge", three measurement items were derived from a previous study (Chow & Chan, 2008). The measurement items for shared utilitarian beliefs were based on three questions from Premkumar et al. (2008). The measurement items for the switching costs were all adopted from Chang and Chen (2009) by adopting their measuring items to travel context. The measurement of utilitarian beliefs was composed of three items from Premkumar et al. (2008). Perceived ease of use and belief in integrity were based on Palvia (2009). Respondents were asked to evaluate their level of agreement with statements using a Likert scale of 1–7, where a value of 7 represented "strongly agree," and 1 represented "strongly disagree." Table 1 and Table 2 define and summarize the measures of the seven constructs.

3.2. Data collection

The study participants were OSN users in the U.S. who had at least one year of online travel shopping experience. The participants filled out the questionnaire with an OSN website experience in mind. Data was gathered by an online survey distributed through a marketing company. This marketing company possesses a database of participants that have used OSNs for travel related purposes (e.g. looking for attractions, reading hotel reviews). The e-mail message contained the link to the questionnaire and described the research purpose. Questionnaire included a screening question to make sure that respondents had an experience with an OSN page for travel purposes. The respondents participated voluntarily in the research topic. The hyperlink was sent to a random sample of 8000 US consumers from a national database marketing company. After a month, 322 responses were collected with a response rate of 4%. After inputting the data into SPSS, it was determined that 38 of the respondents did not complete the questionnaire and thereby their responses were eliminated. Also, 136 of the respondents failed to pass the screening question therefore, 148 were left for data analyzing purposes.

Data was screened for missing values and outliers, and the convergent and discriminant validities were established. To obtain reliable results in SEM, Kline (2005) recommended a sample size of 100–150 cases. Initially, descriptive statistics are used to develop a

Table 1
Research constructs.

Construct	Definition
Intention to share knowledge and experience	Refers to intention to share knowledge and experiences in OSN context
Switching costs	Refers to describe any impediment to a customer's changing of OSN
Belief in integrity	Refers to use of user information by the OSN
Perceived ease of use	Refers to the degree to which a person believes that using the OSN would be free of effort. It is related to the importance to choosing an easy to use OSN
Utilitarian beliefs	Refers to the functional elements of the OSN
Subjective norm	Refers to significant others wanted them to perform the behavior

Table 2
Questionnaire items.

Constructs	Origin	Questionnaire items
Intention to Share Knowledge	(Chow & Chan, 2008)	1 I will share my travel experiences with my network more frequently in the future using this OSN profile. 2 I will always share my pictures, comments, and reviews with my network in the future using this OSN profile. 3 I will always share my opinion at the request of my friends in my network using this OSN profile.
Switching Costs	(Chang & Chen, 2009)	1 In general, it would be a hassle changing this OSN profile. 2 It would take a lot of time and effort to change this OSN profile. 3 For me, the costs in time, money, and effort to switch this OSN profile are high.
Belief in Integrity	(Palvia, 2009)	1 I believe this OSN profile is honest to its users. 2 I believe this OSN profile acts sincerely in dealing with users. 3 I believe this OSN profile will not overcharge me during sales transactions.
Perceived Ease of Use	(Palvia, 2009)	1 My interaction with this OSN profile is clear and understandable 2 I find this OSN profile easy to use. 3 It is easy for me to become skillful at using this OSN profile.
Utilitarian Beliefs	(Premkumar et al., 2008)	1 Using this OSN profile improves my performance. 2 Using this OSN profile increases my productivity. 3 Using OSN profile enhances my effectiveness.
Subjective Norm	(Premkumar et al., 2008)	1 People who are important to me think that I should use this OSN profile. 2 My superiors think that I should use this OSN profile. 3 My friends think that I should use this OSN profile.

profile of respondents and to summarize the variables. Second, both the reliability and validity of measures were examined. Reliability assessments were conducted using Cronbach alpha and composite reliability, while validity was reviewed by factor analysis. Table 3 shows the demographic profile of the respondents.

4. Results

4.1. Analysis of the measurement model (CFA)

The measurement model for the six constructs was first assessed by a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using AMOS 20.0.

Table 3
Sample socio-demographic characters.

Gender	
Male	37.7
Female	62.3
Age	
Less than 19	1.4
19 to 24	3.4
25 to 34	28.1
35 to 44	37.0
45 to 54	16.4
55 to 64	9.6
65 to 74	4.1
Education	
Less than high school	1.4
High school/GED	15.1
Some college	30.1
2-year college	22.6
4-year college	15.8
Master's degree	8.2
Doctoral degree	2.1
Professional degree	4.8
Marital status	
Single	21.2
Unmarried couple living together	8.2
Married	55.5
Divorced/Separated	11.6
Widowed	3.4
Income (US$)	
Less than 50,000	47.3
50,000–74,999	29.5
75,000–99,999	16.4
100,000–149,999	6.2
150,000–199,999	0.7

The goodness-of-fit measures were used to assess the overall model fit. The CFA overall fit was acceptable (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998) with indices of Chi-square/df equal to 3.67, RMSEA of 0.091, NFI of 0.93, CFI of 0.95, GFI of 0.89, RFI of 0.91and IFI of 0.91. Convergent validity was assessed by examining the magnitude, direction, and statistical significance of the estimated standardized factor loadings (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). As shown in Table 4, the average variance extracted (AVE) values were above 0.5 and the reliabilities were above 0.8; which indicate a support of convergent validity (Gerbing & Anderson, 1992). In addition, discriminant validity was assessed by comparing the average variance extracted with the squared correlation between constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The squared correlations between pairs of constructs were less than the AVE (Table 4), provides the supportive evidence for discriminant validity (Table 5).

4.2. Model assessment (structural model)

After confirming the fit of the measurement model, the structural model was examined to test the hypothesized nine relationships among the six constructs. The proposed model was tested by

Table 4
Measurement model results.

Construct	Variables	Standardized loadings	Construct reliability	AVE
Intention to share knowledge	ISK1	0.89	0.93	0.83
	ISK2	0.95		
	ISK3	0.88		
Switching costs	SOC1	0.91	0.93	0.83
	SOC2	0.97		
	SOC3	0.84		
Belief in integrity	BII1	0.96	0.91	0.78
	BII2	0.88		
	BII3	0.79		
Perceived ease of use	PEOU1	0.81	0.92	0.81
	PEOU2	0.87		
	PEOU3	1.00		
Perceived utility	UTIL1	0.97	0.92	0.80
	UTIL2	0.91		
	UTIL3	0.79		
Subjective norm	SN1	0.91	0.86	0.69
	SN2	0.97		
	SN3	0.84		

Table 5
Standardized path coefficient and t-value for the structural model.

			Estimate	S.E.	t-value	P
ISK	<—	PEOU	0.254	0.058	4.349	<0.001
UTIL	<—	PEOU	0.309	0.050	6.128	<0.001
SN	<—	PEOU	0.383	0.060	6.384	<0.001
BII	<—	PEOU	0.294	0.043	6.804	<0.001
BII	<—	UTIL	0.235	0.046	5.158	<0.001
SC	<—	SN	0.422	0.049	8.529	<0.001
BII	<—	SN	0.115	0.039	2.966	0.003
ISK	<—	BII	0.525	0.084	6.237	<0.001
ISK	<—	SC	0.037	0.054	0.681	0.496

Table 6
A summary of research results.

Parameter estimates structural paths			Standardized path coefficients	Supported?
SN	→ (+)	SC	0.422	Yes
PEOU	→ (+)	SN	0.383	Yes
PEOU	→ (+)	UTIL	0.309	Yes
PEOU	→ (+)	BII	0.294	Yes
UTIL	→ (+)	BII	0.235	Yes
SN	→ (+)	BII	0.115	Yes
BII	→ (+)	ISK	0.525	Yes
PEOU	→ (+)	ISK	0.254	Yes
SC	→ (+)	ISK	0.037	No

the structural equation modeling (SEM) using AMOS 20.0. The results of the structural model show that the overall fit statistics demonstrate acceptable model fit (Chi-square/df equal to 3.88, RMSEA of 0.094, NFI of 0.92, CFI of 0.94, GFI of 0.87, RFI of 0.89, and IFI of 0.94.

The success of OSN profiles of businesses depends on whether individuals are willing to share their experiences and knowledge with other users (Bakshy et al., 2012), especially in the tourism context. In recent research, tourism scholars investigate the basic factors that motivate individuals to share their travel experiences with others. Altruistic and community-related motivations are most relevant for information sharing (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014). Our study examines the motivations of users to share knowledge in OSNs by deploying social, marketing and information systems constructs, thus offering a multidisciplinary approach.

According to the study results, eight of the nine proposed hypotheses were supported. Research results regarding H1, which states PEOU is positively associated with intention to share knowledge, were significant (path coefficient = 0.254). Results related to H2, proposing that PEOU is positively related with utilitarian beliefs, were significant (path coefficient = 0.309). H3, which hypothesized the positive relationship between PEOU and subjective norm was significant (path coefficient = 0.383). H4 proposed that there was a positive relationship between PEOU and belief in integrity, and it was supported (path coefficient = 0.294). H5, suggesting that subjective norm is related to switching costs was supported (path coefficient = 0.422). Research result related to H6, which predicted the positive relationship between subjective norms and belief in integrity was significant (path coefficient = 0.115). Utilitarian beliefs are positively related to belief in integrity (H7, path coefficient = 0.235). This study found that belief in integrity is positively related to intention to share knowledge (H8, path coefficient = 0.525), whereas switching cost is not (H9, path coefficient = 0.037). This may imply that OSN users now use multiple OSN platforms and follow multiple brands/destinations at the same time and therefore do not perceive high switching costs.

5. Discussion and conclusions

OSNs are important tools for travelers as they play a critical role in the travelers' decision making process. Most travelers read discussions, reviews, and feedback but rarely or never share their knowledge with other travelers. It is challenging to convince travelers to share their knowledge with other members in OSNs. Therefore, the goal of this research was to investigate the precursors of "intention to share knowledge" behaviors in the context of OSNs. A summary of study results, including hypotheses and their directions, and path coefficients are presented in Table 6. According to the study results, eight of the nine proposed hypotheses were supported. Belief in integrity has the strongest effect on intention to share knowledge, followed by PEOU. Our model suggests that PEOU is still a prominent construct in information systems research that positively influences utilitarian beliefs, subjective norms, belief in integrity and intention to share knowledge.

Influencing the participation and the intention to share knowledge through the use of OSNs is not a simple task; it requires travel companies and destinations to influence different user beliefs and to differentiate themselves from their competitors. Travel experts may consider focusing more on influencing the perception of system usefulness and trust as a fundamental online strategy. They are advised to develop an OSN platform that provides functional and practical benefits. Study results particularly highlight that if an OSN user's social environment forces user to keep using the OSN, the user is likely to keep using the OSN. Another finding is that belief in integrity is the key antecedent of intention to share knowledge. Users will only share information if they trust the site. PEOU is still a valid and an important factor in OSN's usage.

5.1. Theoretical implications

The current research provides clear theoretical implications. First, PEOU positively and directly affects intention to share knowledge which suggests that when users perceive OSNs as easy medium to utilize, they are more likely to share knowledge on OSNs. Second, study results suggest that PEOU influences utilitarian beliefs, which implied that a well-established OSN that is perceived as easy to operate with no effort of energy involved, influences utilitarian beliefs. This is because the easier and more effortless a website is perceived, the more likely the utilitarian beliefs tend to grow when interacting with a website. Third, PEOU positively affects subjective norm, which implies that PEOU also has explanatory power on subjective norms. If a system is easy to use, the individual will feel social pressure to utilize the system.

Fourth, the study demonstrates that PEOU both directly and indirectly influences belief in integrity. These results imply that PEOU provides cues in virtual interactions that trigger utilitarian beliefs. These findings reveal that PEOU present cues that may be utilized to augment users' utilitarian beliefs about using an OSN website, which in turn increases users' beliefs of integrity. Furthermore, the findings of the study reveal that subjective norms, social pressures, tend to influence users' beliefs in integrity. If the user perceives that most people who are important to him/her think he/she should use the OSNs will not switch the OSN they are using. Finally, it was found that user will share information only if he/she thinks that the site is honest and sincere. Belief in integrity strongly determines whether the user will share information on OSNs whereas switching cost is not a significant determinant of intention to share knowledge on OSNs. Sparks, Perkins, and Buckley (2013) highlight that travelers' beliefs in the utility of the reviews, together with their trust in the resort and the reviews positively influence travelers' attitudes toward staying at the resort, which in

turn mediate purchase intentions. Therefore, theoretically belief in integrity not only makes travelers to share their knowledge online but also effects their destination choice.

Lastly, it is noteworthy to comprehend the role of belief on integrity and switching costs on the intention to share knowledge in travel-related OSN websites. These two constructs were considered a consequence of utilitarian beliefs, subjective norms, and PEOU. Belief in integrity and switching costs mediate the relationship among intention to share knowledge and the utilitarian beliefs, subjective norms, and PEOU. In addition, PEOU and subjective norms play a significant role in influencing the perception of individuals that a travel-related OSN website keeps commitments and is honest to its members.

5.2. Practical implications

OSNs are widely influential in tourism as they relate to driving customer buying decisions by informing and inspiring people. More and more people are using OSNs to plan their vacations and they trust the recommendations of their virtual network. Travelers are looking for suggestions, recommendations and insight from OSNs. Destinations who manage to create a virtual environment that builds a virtual community by engaging travelers to share their knowledge and insights will be more successful. Therefore, OSN marketing is instrumental for destinations. OSN marketing is different from traditional marketing where the company directly sends marketing messages to their customers (Law et al., 2015). Rather, in OSNs it is usually the user that communicates the messages to other users. Therefore, it is important to understand that information sharing behaviors of users are important and powerful assets to a business. Our results highlight the importance of utilitarian features, PEOU, and belief in integrity as precursors of information sharing behaviors online. Hotel booking websites and e-commerce websites are advised to facilitate the ease of use for information sharing. For example, such sites could embed OSN sharing buttons to their websites. Adding OSN icons to the organization's website will trigger customers to share the organization's posts on their OSNs. Organizations need to post content that their audience can't get anywhere else in order to increase the utilitarian beliefs of the users. Offering up insightful information that their audience believes valuable is key. Further, when customers know and trust the organization, they are more likely to share the organization's content with their friends. Travelers who share their travel pictures on OSNs are also more likely to purchase souvenirs (Boley, Magnini, & Tuten, 2013)

Beneficiaries of the findings of the present empirical investigation may be managers and industry experts who use travel-related OSN websites as a communication tool with customers. They need to persuade customers to share knowledge about their experiences with particular travel-related providers. The findings help them to understand the process that effectively influences users to share knowledge when using travel-related OSN websites. Managers and other practitioners particular calls for action from the present investigation's findings. First, practitioners must motivate individuals to perceive that the traveled-related OSN website is useful and easy to operate by making interactions easier for consumers. Second, practitioners must persuade consumers to perceive that using the travel-related OSN website includes a minimum of effort. And lastly, practitioners could use the influential power of subjective norms to strengthen an individual's belief in integrity. This will also influence positively the actions taken by users who ultimately will influence them to share knowledge when using travel-related OSN websites.

6. Limitations and future research

While the current study attempts to fill a gap in the literature, several limitations persist. First, there may be other antecedents that potentially influence intention to share knowledge such as monetary and psychological benefits. Also, there might be some potential moderators such as personal innovativeness and prior experience with OSNs. Another limitation is that the current research collected data using an online survey. Despite the many advantages of online surveys, it appears that their response rate is lower than traditional mail surveys (e.g. Granello & Wheaton, 2004). Also, people who voluntarily tend to participate in online surveys might be more likely to share information through OSN. In order to generalize the results of the study, care should be taken. First, PEOU is a multi-faceted construct, and even when the present study has concentrated on the components of OSN user perceptions which are associated to technology acceptance past frameworks, other constructs may yield distinctive results. Future research could study the influence of other constructs on the intention to share knowledge. Future research is advised to test the proposed model in a context different than the travel context.

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