

## Tourist Destination Choice And Social Media

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**ABSTRACT:** Tourism sector is considered one of the basic driver of countries' economies. In light of globalization and the tremendous technological development in the world, the tourism field has become highly dependent on social media. They have changed the behavior of the tourist during all stages of trips from seeking information to sharing experience.

Thus, this study aims to evaluate the impact of social media on the consumers' destination choice.

After a short literature review, we develop a conceptual model based on TAM model.

An empirical study was conducted among 245 participants from Algeria. Results indicate that the usefulness and trust have a positive impact on attitude towards social media unlike Ease of use. They also highlight the role of attitude in determining the choice of destinations by tourists

**KEYWORDS -** Tourist Destination – Social Media– Tam model- Destination choice- Trust)

### I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is recognized worldwide as an industry that generates considerable profits and gains and contributes to nations growth.

The development of Internet and Web 2 in particular has favoured the development of this sector and has opened up new perspectives thanks to low cost, the global dimension and the dynamic image that it offers.

When one considers that almost 90% of travelers plan their vacations or business trips on the basis of consumer's reviews sites and 44 % have chosen their hotel based on the opinions of other consumers published on Internet (StrategyOne, 2017), we cannot fail to be impressed by the tremendous impact that Internet represents today in tourism sector. Indeed, it has profoundly changed the way that travelers access to information, how they plan and book trips, and how they share their travel experiences (Buhalis & Law, 2008, Senecal & Nantel, 2004, Xiang & Gretzel, 2010, Mariani et al, 2016).

Today the customer can communicate directly and virtually with the various actors in the tourism profession (Lehu, 2000). Social media (one of the applications of web 2) are in fact a perfect tool adapted to the development of tourism sector, especially since tourists are now demanding and looking for new destinations that offer unique and innovative tourism.

The social media allow tourists to interact and collaborate with each other. Hence, they share their brand experience with a wide audience (Kuksov et al., 2013), provide opinions and advices, communicate and publish original content such as blogs, videos, wikis, reviews or photos (Boyd and Ellison, 2008). All of that influence the perceptions of brand destination's image which is considered a key element in attracting tourists and therefore impact the choice of destination decision (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993).

Social media defies all traditional tourism marketing and promotional tools (Sigal et al. , 2012). It is indeed an effective marketing channel that can be used widely in tourism marketing (Sotiriadis & Vanzyl, 2013).

So, Our research aims to:

- Examine the impact of social media on destination choice.
- Develop a conceptual model and test it in algerian context

After a short review of literature, we will present the conceptual model and the research hypotheses, than we will present the research methodology and finally the results of the empirical study.

## I. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1. Definition of tourist destinations

Traditionally, defined as regions or geographic areas such as an island country or city with a political and legislative framework for tourism marketing and planning (Davidson and Matland, 2000). It refers to the places where people travel and choose to stay a period of time Leiper (1995).

Cooper et al. (2005) defines it as a geographical area considered by visitors as a unique entity where facilities and services are designed to meet visitors' needs.

According to Middleton (1998), the tourist destination consists of five elements: The natural areas of the attraction site, facilities and services, ease of access to the site, image designed to attract tourists to the site, the total cost of the vacation.

Tourist destinations offer an integrated visitor experience, as the purchase of a tourism product is accompanied by increasing levels of emotional and illogical factors. So visitors trust the opinions of family and friends more than ads.

### 2. Social media

Social media is one of modern concepts that have emerged with the evolution of the Web 2 in 2005. Therefore, there are few studies that clarify this concept and define it precisely.

Some definitions could be mentioned:

- Channels of communication and cooperation on Internet (Schlagwein et al., 2016).
- According to Graham (2005), anything that users can create and share content.
- And Boyd & Ellison (2008), a free web-based service that allows individuals to communicate with their families and friends by sharing photos, videos, personal stories etc.
- For Wakefield & Wakefield (2016), they are specific types of social media platforms and websites that have common characteristics such as : user identification, user access to digital content, user list of relational ties, user ability to view user relationships.

Through these definitions, we can say that social media are a group of websites and platforms based on web. They allow to form virtual groups who create content (personal or professional) as an image, video, software, stories, text, etc. in an interactive and cooperative environment between the various members of the groups. It is an effective means of communication.

A range of characteristics make social media unique : they are easy to use, universal, interactive, participatory, and a space for the expression of opinions and views on various questions.

Due to the remarkable and popular development of social media ; It is imperative that companies integrate them into their strategies.

Social media has changed the way to communicate and build relationships with customers( Airline Business, 2009). It creates trust and confidence between companies and their customers (Qualman, 2009). Many researchers also demonstrated its ability to create value for all stakeholders (Barrett et al. , 2016) . Without forgetting their obvious role in promoting and advertising (Lee et al., 2016 ; Chang et al., 2015) .

### 3. The role of social media in promotion of tourist destinations

In the era of globalization and high competitiveness in tourism market, destination must be distinctive from competition (Porter, 1996). Destinations can highlight its characteristics and maintain its competitive advantage through a sophisticated communication strategy based on social media (Királová & Pavláčeká, 2015).

In fact social media have completely revolutionized tourism sector. Now, visitors no longer trust on ads that focus on the special features of destinations but they need personal, smart, interactive and creative messages.

Consequently, social media has become an integral part of marketing campaigns. It's a tourism marketing tool that can greatly enhance the destination's reputation and popularity (Milano et al., 2011; Királová & Pavláčeká, 2015).

In one hand, it contributes to creating a positive image of the destination and all the actors in the sector (Gretzel, 2010) and provides a new online marketing strategy that does not aim to support sales only, but also build a strong relationship with customers (Mastorakis et al., 2015; Ang, 2011). It has created a great opportunity to maintain relationships with busy clients (Yadav et al., 2012).

Also it contributes to getting more interaction with its target audience (Leeflang et al., 2014) and enhancing their loyalty (Senders et al., 2013), which contributes to raising sales number (Királová & Pavláčeká, 2015).

On the other hand, social media appears to be a new and less expensive tool of communication compared to traditional communication tools (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Because it simplifies the value chain. This, in turn, helps companies to do their marketing activities more efficiently and successfully (Alalwan et al., 2016).

It has also demonstrated its role in resolving crises (Sigala, 2011; Pennington-Gray et al., 2011). It can change behaviors and perceptions about brand destination (Királová & Pavláčeká, 2015).

In addition to several other benefits for destinations: return on investment, increase (visitor's number, destination awareness, preference for the destination, website visitor's, the number of referrals to the web site, the number of Facebook fans), create content by the user, public relations, search engines optimisation, etc.

Social media provide a variety of tools that help tourist destinations to achieve their goals. For example: UGC, E-wom, Visual content, Photopoints, games and contests, etc.

#### 4. Conceptual model

Actually, tourism marketing have changed due to the flourishing of information technologies, and ICTs have been the new tools for tourism marketing and management (Buhalis & Law, 2008), from seeking information to online reservation systems.

Under these circumstances, users' acceptance of new technology has drawn much attention from both academicians and practitioners in the tourism domain.

Our conceptual model is based on TAM model developed by Davis et al., 1989. It's the most widely used model to predict user's adoption and acceptance of a new technology in various areas (mobile ads, shopping, social media, online review, tourism and hospitality). In the tourism context researchs we find several application of this model : (health tourism, W Phatthana & NKN Mat, 2010 ; the choice of tourist destination (Di Pietro et al., 2012, Tham et al., 2013 ; intention to travel Kaplanidou and Vogt, 2006 and hotel reservations (Morosan and Jeong, 2008), etc.

Inspired from theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975), Davis et al., 1989 have illustrated that computer usage behavior depends on cognitive beliefs (perceived usefulness and perceived ease-of-use) which influence attitude towards technology (affective dimension) and intention to use (conative dimension) and effective use (behavior) (Al-Somali et al., 2009).

Perceived ease of use represents the degree to "which a user believes that using that technology would not require effort" (Chung and Tan, 2004).

Perceived usefulness represents "the degree to which a user believes that using that technology will enhance his/her job performance" (Davis, 1989).

While attitude consists of "user assessment toward the technology and behavioural intention represents the degree to which a person is prompt to accomplish a certain behaviour" (Davis, 1989).

In fact, Prior studies have included different external variables that influence attitude based on different circumstances.

In our model, we add trust on social media.

In view of the above, we can propose the following hypotheses:

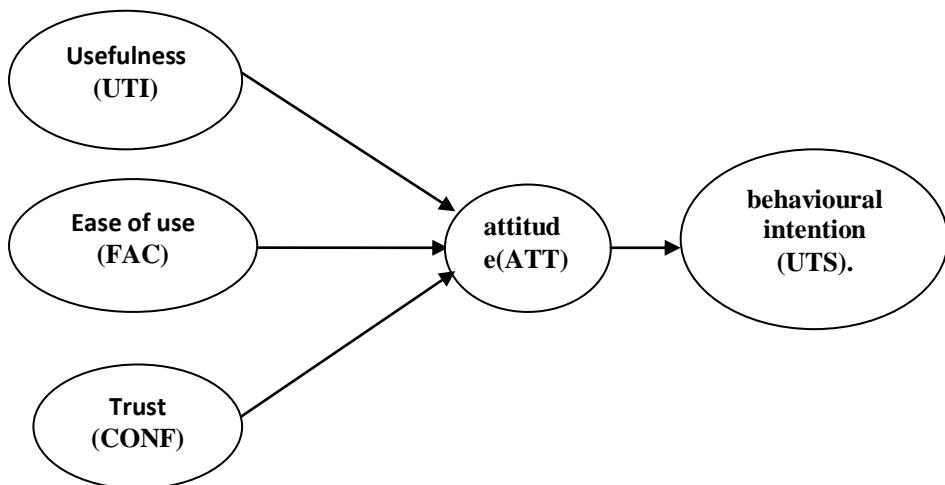
**H1. Perceived usefulness of social media (UTI) has a positive effect on tourist attitude towards the use of the social networks for the choice of tourism destinations (ATT).**

**H2. Perceived ease of use (FAC) has a direct influence on the tourist's attitude towards the use of the social media for the choice of tourism destination (ATT).**

**H3. Trust on social media (CONF) has a positive effect on tourist attitude towards the use of the social networks for the choice of tourism destinations (ATT).**

**H4. Tourist's attitude towards the use of the social networks (ATT) has a direct influence on his/her subsequent behavioural intention in using this technology for the choice of tourism destination (UTS).**

The conceptual model is illustrated in figure 1.

**Figure 1: The conceptual model**

## II. METHODOLOGY

In our research we used the Structural equation modeling by PLS (Partial Least Squares) approach developed by Wold (1982). Like the other structural equation methods, it allows us to test the causal links between latent variables simultaneously (Bagozzi, 1980). It's relies on least squares regression techniques to estimate the models. This method is widely used in marketing (Hair, 2013).

Smartpls version 3 software was used.

### 1. Measurement scale

All the scales used in our study have been validated in literature and have shown a good reliability: Ease of use scale (3 items), attitude scale (4 items), trust scale (3 items), usefulness scale (5 items), use of Social media scale (3 items) The items for each variable were based on five-points Likerts' scale (1 – strongly disagree; 5 – strongly agree).

Online questionnaires were used for data collection with a random sample of 245 algerian person, aged over 18 years.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Sample

Our study was conducted with a sample of 245 people from Algeria, It's is composed of % 35.6% men and 64.4% women. The most respondants are students aged under 35 years with university degree qualification (See table 1).

**Table 1: Characteristics of the Sample**

	<b>Item</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Sex</b>	Male	25.6
	Female	74.4
<b>Age</b>	18-24	50.1
	25-35	30.8
	35-50	21.2
<b>Function</b>	> 50	30.8
	Students	80.5
	Employee	13.8

	Retired	10
	Unemployed	9
<b>Qualification</b>	Primary school	0
	School	0
	Secondary school	10.3
	University degree	87.4

## 2. Reliability and validity

Convergent validity can be confirmed with AVE (Average Variance Extracted). Fornell and Larcker (1981) recommend a minimum value of 0.5. The results in the table 2 confirm the convergent validity of all scales. Concerning reability The value of all the indices (Composite reliability, Rho-a, Cronbach's alpha) are very satisfactory.

Discriminant validity : We can evaluate it using Fornell-Larcker criterion. All values are consistent (See table 3).

**Table 2: Reliability and validity of the construct**

	Average variance	Composite reliability	Rho-a	Cronbach's alpha
ATT	0.617	0.865	0.802	0.792
CONF	0.661	0.854	0.753	0.745
FAC	0.571	0.797	0.785	0.656
UTI	0.514	0.807	0.697	0.684
UTS	0.712	0.881	0.824	0.800

**Table 3: Discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker criterion)**

	ATT	CONF	FAC	UTI	UTS
<b>ATT</b>	0.785				
<b>CONF</b>	0.708	0.813			
<b>FAC</b>	0.421	0.402	0.755		
<b>UTI</b>	0.591	0.541	0.470	0.717	
<b>UTS</b>	0.743	0.575	0.511	0.532	0.844

In the PLS approach, the predictive power of the model can be assessed using R2 (Hair, 2013). All R<sup>2</sup> values meet the minimum limit of 0.10 as recommended by (Hair, 2013)(See table 4).

**Table 4 : R Square**

	R.square adjusted
ATT	0.567
UTS	0.552

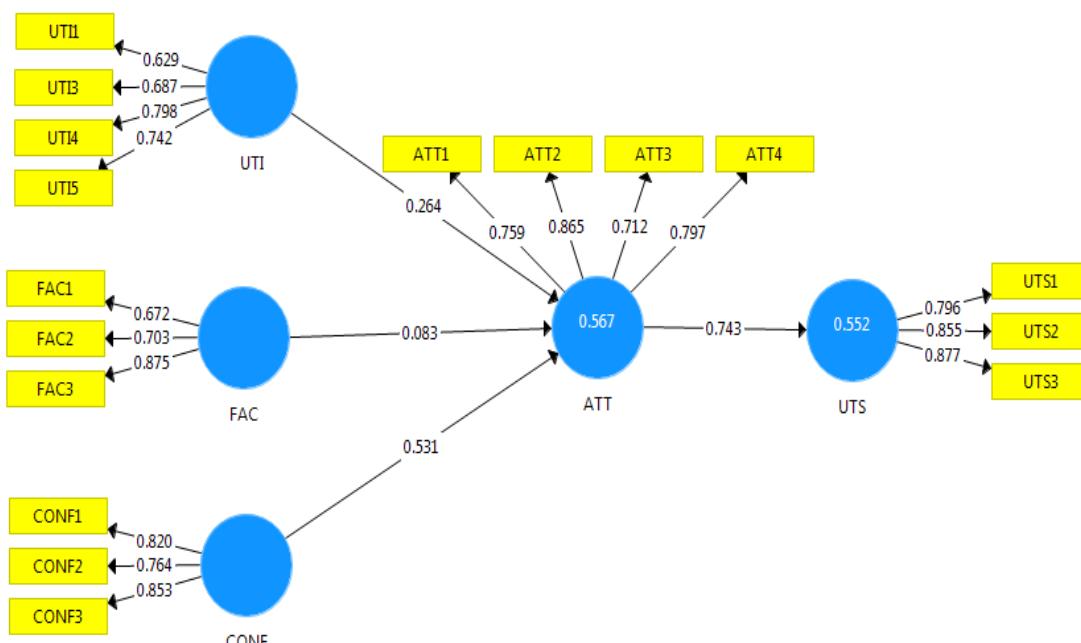
The results shown in the figure 3 below confirm that usefulness ( $\beta=0.264$ ,  $p=0.008$ )and trust  $\beta=0.264$ ,  $p=0.000$ )have a positif impact on attitude toward social media unlike the ease of use which not impact it ( $\beta=0.083$ ,  $p=0.271$ ).

The results indicate also that the link between attitude toward social media and the use of social media for the choice of tourism destination is strong and positif ( $\beta=0.743$ ,  $p=0.000$ ).

So we can conclud that H1, H3 and H4 are confirmed but H2 is rejected (See table 5).

**Table 5 : hypotheses results**

	Results
H1. Perceived usefulness of social media (UTI) has a positive effect on tourist attitude towards the use of the social networks for the choice of tourism destinations (ATT).	Rejected
H2. Perceived ease of use (FAC) has a direct influence on the tourist's attitude towards the use of the social media for the choice of tourism destination (ATT).	Confirmed
H3. Trust on social media (CONF) has a positive effect on tourist attitude towards the use of the social networks for the choice of tourism destinations (ATT).	Confirmed
H4. Tourist's attitude towards the use of the social networks (ATT) has a direct influence on his/her subsequent behavioural intention in using this technology for the choice of tourism destination (UTS).	Confirmed

**Figure 3 : Structural model results**

#### IV. CONCLUSION

While social media are heavily utilized by both marketers and tourists, few studies investigated this area of research in Algeria. Thus the main objectif of this study was to know if algerian tourists use social media for the choice of destination.

The TAM model was employed with adding trust on social media variable and have been tested by the structural equation model (SEM-PLS).

The results shown that trust and usefulness have positif impact on attitude towards social media which has a positif impact on the use of social media for destination choice. In addition, trust was more influential than perceived usefulness. Therefore, the link between ease of use and attitude is not significant.

So we can conclude that social media play an important role for tourists' destination choice. They are a real opportunity to personally engage a community and therefore create a close relationship that reinforced exchanges between destination and tourists.

##### *Mangerial implication*

Now tourists trust on E-WOM than Ads. So, social media should be an integral part of the communication strategy of destination. Nevertheless, the instant reaction of Internet users can be an advantage as it can be a disadvantage. Tourists share online their favorites as well as their disappointments, so destinations who have adopted these essential tools must take into account and manage negative comments and complaints by adopting a continuous consumers' evaluation mechanism.

Destination managers should also facilitate through social media decision choice by proposing a visit

planning, improve content quality and users' online experience.

Future researches may:

- Use extended technology acceptance model (TAM2, TAM 3) or UTAUT model
- Include some mediating variables such as: social media engagement, E-wom, etc.

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