

Effects of social media on restaurant visit intention and willingness to pay more: generation Z

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the effects of social media reviews on restaurant visit intention and willingness to pay more. Research data were obtained from Turkey between January-March 2023 by using a questionnaire. The data obtained from 404 questionnaires were analysed by using PLS-SEM. The findings revealed the positive effect of the attitude toward social media reviews on restaurant visit intention and on the willingness to pay more. In addition, it has been observed that there is a positive relationship between perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, trust, information quality, and attitude.

Keywords: tourism, social media, restaurant visit intention, willingness to pay more

Introduction

Technology development and the widespread use of the Internet have contributed to increasing the use of social media in social activities, education, and business (Wijaya, et al., 2019; Yap & Lim, 2017). Social media are online platforms where people with the same interests can share their thoughts, comments, and ideas, create an environment for discussion, and interact (Aksoğan & Türel, 2021; Weber, 2009). The fact that social media can reach a large user base is low cost, has become a part of people's lives and is useful for businesses to attract marketing activities, build customer awareness and create virtual brand communities (Chen & Lin, 2019; Wibowo et al., 2021). The widespread use of social media has transformed the interaction skills of businesses and consumers and the level of their interaction with each other (Li et al., 2021). The social media's efficiency is higher than that of other traditional channels, so industry leaders believe companies need to participate in Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other sites to succeed in online environments. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Laroche et al., 2012; Vinerean et al., 2013).

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Through social media, people can share experiences, learn, and discuss about products and services of brands. This has created valuable opportunities for electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) conversations (Erkan & Evans, 2016). Recently, e-WOM on social media has rendered traditional marketing communication ineffective by making consumers trust social media more in their purchasing behaviour (Popy & Bappy, 2022). Social media offers a unique opportunity to promote word-of-mouth marketing to a broad audience, support consumer-consumer communication, and increase brand awareness through large social networks (Kozinets et al., 2010; Pütter, 2017).

In particular, the role of social media reviews in the food and beverage and hospitality industries can be pronounced in shaping the behaviour of consumers (Popy & Bappy, 2022) due to reasons such as sharing of people's experiences, promotions of social media phenomena, sharing of images of places to visit, hotels, restaurants, and comments and recommendations for the services received. Xhema (2019) stated that social media influences customers' behaviour and that social media are a two-way communication where customers are less tolerant of poor service or overpricing. According to Pütter (2017), from a strategic viewpoint, companies that attach importance to social media will be more advantageous than those that do not. Discussing the importance of social media in tourism marketing will contribute to both the sector and the literature (Sahin & Sengün, 2015).

From this point of view, this study aims to answer two main research questions: (1) Has the attitude toward positive reviews of social media directly affected the intention of consumers to visit the restaurant? (2) Does the attitude toward positive social media reviews directly affect consumers' willingness to pay more (WPM)? In analysing these research questions empirically, the antecedents were determined considering the previous literature and a proposed model. Then, the methods of the study were described, and the results were presented and interpreted. Finally, limitations and further research recommendations were clarified.

1. Literature review

1.1. The importance of social media reviews

The growth of Web 2.0 technologies has led to the rapid development of social media sites, including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, and reaching large audiences (Gohil, 2015). Allowing two-way communication, interaction, and the creation of user-generated content, social media has dramatically changed conventional world marketing, unlocking some key opportunities for word-of-mouth and viral marketing (Buted et al., 2014). Mersey (2010) stated that the development and rapid growth of online social networks have allowed customers to engage in various types of activities such as blogging, chat and interaction, gaming and entertainment, and messaging. Alsubagh (2010) found that there is a strong and

positive relationship between user-generated content variables and consumers' attitudinal purchasing behaviour in her research on social media users aged 18 and over.

In particular, the role of social media in the tourism industry has become much more important. This is mainly because tourism needs information technologies to distribute its products on the market and to communicate with customers (Michopoulou & Buhalis, 2013). Social media is very attractive in tourism because it reaches more people and costs less than traditional methods such as magazines, brochures, travel programmes, and newspapers (Kim et al., 2017). In addition, because tourism-related products and services are relatively expensive and there is a certain time constraint, tourists often try to collect and research a lot of information about their trip in their decision-making process (Leung et al., 2013). Chung and Buhalis (2008) claimed that e-WOM is the most important source of information when a tourist decides to choose a destination.

1.2. Willingness to pay more

WPM refers to the maximum monetary value that consumers are willing to spend on a product or service (Boronat-Navarro & Pérez-Aranda, 2020; Namkung & Jang, 2017). In the hospitality and tourism literature, the research on the willingness to pay more is widely related to green products (Boronat-Navarro & Pérez-Aranda, 2020; Chia-Jung & Pei-Chun, 2014; Galati et al., 2021; Nicolau et al., 2020; Yu et al., 2014;), but also to accommodation (Fragkogianni, 2019; Masiero et al., 2015), restaurants (Frash et al., 2015), museums (Blasco López et al., 2021), destinations (Jurado-Rivas & Sánchez-Rivero, 2019), technological products (Ivanov & Webster, 2021), etc. Nieto-García et al. (2017) have demonstrated the role of e-WOM in determining the WPM of consumers in accommodation businesses. In their research on the restaurant followers in Saudi Arabia, Bushara et al. (2023) showed that social media marketing had an impact on the willingness to pay a premium price.

When the literature was examined, a limited number of studies on social media and WPM in restaurant services were found. Therefore, this article can partially fill this gap.

1.3. Hypotheses development

TAM is derived from the psychology-based theory of reasonable action (TRA) and the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) and has played an important role in explaining users' attitudes toward technology (Marangunic & Granic, 2015). Attitude is a crucial element in explaining online consumer behaviour (Celuch et al., 2007). It is accepted that the effect of perceived usefulness on consumer attitude is direct and positive, both in the pre-and post-acceptance stages of using information

systems (Casaló et al., 2011). The studies on TAM have particularly proven that there is a positive relationship between perceived ease of use and attitude toward technology (Davis et al., 1989; Sahli & Legohérel, 2016). Choe et al. (2022) found that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use directly affect consumers' attitudes toward robotic restaurants. Hua et al. (2017) revealed a positive relationship between perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and attitude toward using social media as a tool to select tourism destinations. Park et al. (2018) found that perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness affect attitudes toward using the intranet in quick-service restaurants. Therefore, perceived ease of use and usefulness have been considered important indicators of attitude (Lee et al., 2013; Hua et al., 2017).

H1: Perceived usefulness of social media reviews has a positive effect on attitude toward social media reviews.

H2: Perceived ease of use of social media reviews has a positive effect on attitude toward social media reviews.

TAM has often been explored in the use of technology adoption and has been modified to explore external factors influencing user acceptance in various industry sections, including the hospitality and tourism industry (Park et al., 2018). Trust in this research primarily targets information on social media rather than on products. The credibility of information sources is one of the key elements that visitors consider when planning to visit a particular destination or restaurant (Berhanu & Raj, 2020). When a source of information is trusted, those adopting the given information will perceive the user-generated content on social media as useful information (Chung et al., 2015). Ayeh et al. (2013) found that trustworthiness positively and directly affects attitudes toward user-generated content because of their research on 661 travel consumers. Research by Wong found that e-WOM is related to trust. In addition, according to Popy and Bappy (2022), there is a significant relationship between trustworthiness and attitude toward social media reviews.

H3: Trust in social media reviews has a positive effect on attitude toward social media reviews.

Information quality plays a crucial role in consumers' evaluation of the quality of products or services on an online platform (Rahaman et al., 2022). Cheng et al. (2017) revealed the relationship between information quality and social media communication by using the cognitive onion model. Ing and Ming (2012) found in their research that the quality of information positively affects consumers' attitudes toward bloggers' suggestions.

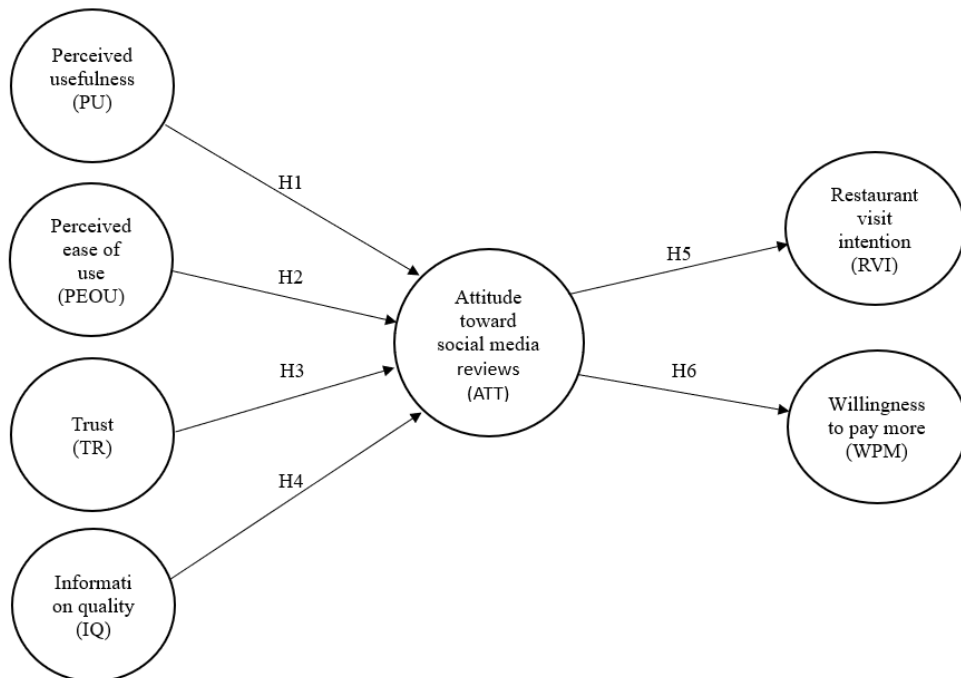
H4: Information quality of social media reviews has a positive effect on attitudes toward social media reviews.

The intention is to motivate people to make decisions and to plan them consciously (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Individual attitudes toward intentions are recognized as an important psychological phenomenon associated with behaviour. (Lee & Green, 1991). According to Klobas (1995), attitude is the best predictor to explain people's behavioural intentions. Hua et al. (2017) showed that attitudes have

a positive relationship with behavioural intentions when using social media to select tourist destinations.

H5: Attitude toward social media reviews positively affects the restaurant visit intention.

Figure 1. Research model



Source: author's representation

Social media comments created by people on social media networks can contribute to tourists' benefiting from these contents. Individuals change their attitudes and behaviours according to the sources they trust, and social media has an important place in their willingness to pay more (Godey et al., 2009). Yıldız (2021) revealed that the views of social media phenomena have a positive effect on the willingness to pay. Dedeoglu et al. (2021) found that social media reviews positively affect tourists' willingness to pay more.

H6: Attitude toward social media reviews positively affects willingness to pay more.

2. Methodology

2.1. Instrument

A questionnaire was used as the data collection tool for this research. The questionnaire comprises two parts. The first part of the questionnaire contained statements related to perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, trust, information quality, attitude toward social media reviews, restaurant visit intention, and willingness to pay more. In the second part, the items associated with the demographic factors of the respondents were included. The scales created for the purpose of the study were adapted from previous studies. These are stated below:

- Perceived usefulness - Hsu et al. (2013) and Hanifati (2015);
- Perceived ease of use - Shih (2004); Popy and Bappy (2022);
- Trust - Ing and Ming (2018); Hsu et al. (2013);
- Information quality - Erkan and Evans (2016); Ing and Ming (2018);
- Attitude toward social media reviews - Ing and Ting (2018); Popy and Bappy (2022);
- Restaurant visit intention - Hsu et al. (2013);
- Willingness to pay more - Yarimoglu and Gunay (2020).

The questionnaire was translated into Turkish as it was conducted with the Z-generation people living in Turkey. A back-translation process was performed. After this stage, a pilot test was applied to 37 people to verify the intelligibility of the statements. After the pilot test, semantic corrections were made in 2 statements related to the “attitude toward social media reviews” and “perceived ease of use” dimensions, and no statement was removed from the questionnaire.

2.2. Sampling and data collection

The population of the research consisted of Generation Z individuals living in Turkey. Generation Z, which consists of people born after 1995, did not live in a world without the Internet unlike other generations (Goh & Lee, 2018). For this reason, Generation Z is very efficient and knowledgeable in the use of internet-based technology (Ozkan & Solmaz, 2015).

The questionnaires were collected in two ways: face-to-face and drop-off methods. The drop-and-collect method was preferred alongside the face-to-face data collection technique because the number of respondents was large, allowing data to be collected from a representative sample at a relatively low cost in terms of time and money (Dedeoglu et al., 2018). The questionnaires were conducted from 7 different regions of Turkey in January, February and March 2023. To reach the Z-generation participants, questionnaires were dropped at universities, cafes, and bistros and collected after 2 weeks. In addition, questionnaires were also conducted through individual interviews. Of the 800 questionnaires distributed for data

collection, 437 were returned and 29 were excluded because they were incomplete. 408 questionnaires were prepared for analysis.

2.3. Data analysis

Partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was used to test the hypotheses in the study because it provides an appropriate analytical method for examining the relationships among variables in multivariate structures. The PLS-SEM path model consists of two elements: the measurement model and the structural model (Hair et al., 2017). The measurement model was checked before the structural model. Hair et al. (2013) state that a data scanning process should be applied before implementing a PLS-SEM application. The missing values were checked and replaced by using the mean substitution method, as suggested by Hair et al. (2014). Outliers were then examined with Mahalanobis distance and, due to extreme values, 4 questionnaires were removed. 404 questionnaires were used to test the hypotheses.

3. Findings

The data on the demographic characteristics of the respondents in the research are shown in Table 1. The Table shows almost similar gender distributions, with a high proportion of respondents between the ages of 21 and 23. Many of the participants were single (87.1%) and more than half of them (58.9%) lived in a hostel/dormitory/rented house without parents. It is possible to indicate a partially balanced distribution in the data on monthly average restaurant expenditures. Approximately 67% of the participants spend an average of more than 3 hours on social media per day.

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents

Demographics	Group	<i>f</i>	%
Gender	Male	209	51.7
	Female	195	48.3
	Missing	-	-
Age	17-20	142	35.1
	21-23	168	41.6
	24-27	94	23.3
	Missing	-	-
Marital Status	Single	352	87.1
	Married	52	12.9
	Missing	-	-
Residence	Home with parents	166	41.1
	Hostel/dormitory/rented home	238	58.9
	Missing	-	-
	0-500 TL	112	27.7

Average monthly expenditure on a restaurant bill	501-1000 TL	128	31.7
	1001-1500 TL	93	23.0
	1501 TL and above	71	17.6
	Missing	-	-
Time spent on social media per day	1-2 hour(s)	45	11.1
	2-3 hours	89	22.0
	3-4 hours	134	33.2
	4 hours and above	136	33.7
	Missing	-	-

Source: author's calculations

Table 2. Result of the outer model

Dimensions	Items	Outer loadings	t-values	CR	AVE	Cronbach alpha
Perceived usefulness	Perceivedusefulness1	0.77	22.663	0.90	0.68	0.90
	Perceivedusefulness2	0.80	23.309			
	Perceivedusefulness3	0.85	28.472			
	Perceivedusefulness4	0.87	24.748			
Perceived ease of use	Perceivedeaseofuse1	0.71	15.222	0.86	0.60	0.86
	Perceivedeaseofuse2	0.82	19.934			
	Perceivedeaseofuse3	0.77	15.707			
	Perceivedeaseofuse4	0.81	22.721			
Trust	Trust1	0.80	20.656	0.89	0.68	0.89
	Trust2	0.77	20.075			
	Trust3	0.86	27.648			
	Trust4	0.87	29.061			
Information quality	Informationquality1	0.78	27.476	0.78	0.54	0.78
	Informationquality2	0.72	20.881			
	Informationquality3	0.71	20.954			
Attitude toward social media reviews	Attitude1	0.77	23.612	0.82	0.53	0.82
	Attitude2	0.73	21.721			
	Attitude3	0.71	21.619			
	Attitude4	0.71	17.948			
Restaurant visit intention	Visitintention1	0.91	29.700	0.88	0.71	0.87
	Visitintention2	0.72	14.023			
	Visitintention3	0.89	31.249			
Willingness to pay more	Willingnesstopaymore1	0.97	39.617	0.97	0.90	0.97
	Willingnesstopaymore2	0.97	45.745			
	Willingnesstopaymore3	0.91	36.302			

Source: author's calculations

Before testing the hypotheses of the research, the internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity of the constructs included in the research were examined. While Cronbach alpha and composite reliability (CR)

coefficients were used to evaluate internal consistency reliability, outer loadings and average variance extracted (AVE) values were used to determine convergent validity (Hair et al., 2017). Table 2 shows that Cronbach's alpha values are between 0.78 and 0.97; the CR values are also higher than 0.70. In addition, average variance extracted (AVE) values above 0.50. It can be stated that internal consistency reliability and convergent validity are achieved since the outer loadings are between 0.71 and 0.97 among other values in the research.

Table 3. Result of discriminant validity

Fornell-Larcker	PU	PEOU	TR	IQ	ATT	RVI	WPM
PU	0.825						
PEOU	0.512	0.774					
TR	0.486	0.453	0.824				
IQ	0.593	0.630	0.570	0.737			
ATT	0.672	0.592	0.614	0.703	0.730		
RVI	0.466	0.368	0.414	0.586	0.481	0.844	
WPM	0.265	0.144	0.413	0.332	0.421	0.310	0.951

Source: author's calculations

The Fornell-Larcker's (1981) criteria were considered to evaluate discriminant validity. According to Fornell-Larcker (1981), the square root of the average variance extracted values of the dimensions in the research should be higher than the correlation coefficients between the dimensions. When the values in Table 3 are examined, the average variance extracted value of each construct is higher than the correlation of the square root with other constructs. This result shows that discriminant validity was provided in the research.

Table 4. Inner model and results of hypotheses

Hypotheses	Relations	Path coef.	t-values	p	VIF	R²	f²	Q²
H1	PU→ATT	0.310	4.835	0.000	1.688	0.645	0.161	0.318
H2	PEOU→ATT	0.140	2.204	0.028	1.763		0.031	
H3	TR→ATT	0.228	3.546	0.000	1.575		0.093	
H4	IQ→ATT	0.302	3.687	0.000	2.212		0.116	
H5	ATT→RVI	0.481	9.604	0.000	1.000	0.231	0.300	0.131
H6	ATT→WPM	0.421	8.466	0.000	1.000	0.177	0.216	0.130

Source: author's calculations

The PLS algorithm was used to calculate the linearity, path coefficients, R² and effect size of the research model and blindfolding analysis was run to calculate the predictive power (Q²). T-values were calculated by bootstrapping (typically using 5,000 samples) to evaluate the significance of the PLS path coefficients. The

path coefficient, t -values, p , VIF, R^2 , f^2 , and Q^2 values related to the research results are shown in Table 4.

Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, trust, and information quality have a significant and positive effect on the attitude toward social media reviews. Therefore, H1, H2, H3, and H4 were supported. Also, the attitudes of the participants toward their social media reviews had a positive and significant impact on their restaurant visit intentions. Accordingly, H5 is also supported. In addition, it has been observed that the attitude towards social media reviews has a positive and significant effect on the willingness to pay more; therefore, H6 is supported.

According to the calculated R^2 values, it has been reported that 64.5% of the attitudes of potential restaurant consumers in the Z generation towards social media reviews are shaped by perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, trust, and information quality. Additionally, the explanation rates of potential young restaurant customers' intention to visit a restaurant and their willingness to pay more according to antecedent factors are 23.1% and 17.7%, respectively. When the f^2 values in Table 4 are examined, it is revealed that the attitude toward social media reviews moderately affects both the intention to visit the restaurant ($f^2=0,30$) and the willingness to pay more ($f^2=0,22$).

Q^2 value is expected to be higher than 0 during the evaluation of predictive relevance (Dedeoglu et al., 2022). As seen in Table 4, since Q^2 values of attitude toward social media reviews ($Q^2=0,32$), intention to visit a restaurant ($Q^2=0,13$), and willingness to pay more ($Q^2=0,13$) are bigger than 0, their explanatory latent construct indicates a predictive relevance (Henseler et al., 2009).

Conclusions

The effect of social media has been investigated in many areas of the tourism and accommodation industry, especially in recent years. This study was conducted to explore the effect of social media reviews on the intention to visit a restaurant and the willingness to pay more. According to the results of the research, people's attitudes toward social media reviews have a positive effect on their intention to visit the restaurant and their willingness to pay more. From a theoretical point of view, the effect of the attitude toward social media reviews on both the intention (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Ing & Ming, 2018; Popy & Bappy, 2022) and the willingness to pay more (Dedeoglu et al., 2021) is similar to the studies in the literature. The current research shows that attitude is an important factor affecting the intention to visit. Therefore, if restaurant managers or marketers give importance to comments, information, and shares on social media and develop plans and policies in this direction, they can contribute to an increase in the number of customers in the restaurant. In addition, people are more willing to pay restaurants, especially considering the comments, opinions, and shares of influencers and famous people, as well as the posts of their close friends or people who share their experiences.

The findings of the study revealed that the TAM model with TR and IQ could be the antecedents of attitudes toward social media review. The results of the study are consistent with the results of the research conducted by Popy and Bappy (2022) from the perspective of Bangladeshis, even though it was conducted in different geographies. In addition, this research shows that perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness positively affect attitudes toward social media reviews, thus supporting previous studies (Hanifati, 2015; Ing & Ming, 2018; Kim et al., 2016). It has also proven that trust and information quality, as well as the TAM model, are important to social media reviews. Given that the quality and trust of information influence attitudes toward social media reviews, restaurant managers should focus on disseminating quality and trust-based information from social media. Restaurant managers should be aware of the effect of information quality on attitude and should provide transparent, clear, understandable, and accurate information to their customers on social media. For instance, the food images and information about the restaurant must be the same both on social media and in the restaurant. When customers go to a restaurant, they should not be served food which is different in terms of looks and contents compared to what is displayed on social media. As a result of such a situation, customers will see that the information provided by the restaurant on social media is both accurate and reliable.

Each generation has features that affect its unique purchasing behaviour. These features consist of people's environment, lifestyle, expectations, perspectives on life, demographic characteristics, etc. Generation Z is much more interested in technology than previous generations. In addition, it is a very successful generation in internet-based interaction. Higgins (1998) argued that marketers should know the world views of target generations and design marketing strategies accordingly. As a matter of fact, considering the consumer-oriented modern marketing approach, the way to meet the demands and needs of consumers in the most appropriate way is to know and understand them better. Since the study has revealed that approximately 66% of the participants spend more than 3 hours daily, on social media, it will be beneficial for the industry if restaurant managers use social media more frequently and effectively in their marketing processes.

Since the constantly evolving technology also changes consumer behaviour, the consumer behaviour of Generation Z may differ compared to other generations. Generation Z emphasizes the importance of information on social media, discussing experiences about visits to restaurants on social media, and learning about new places from social media. Taking into account the attitudes of generation Z towards social media review, it is important to create unique and interesting content for generation Z.

The outputs obtained due to this study will provide benefits for both academics and sector managers. This research provides evidence on how social media reviews can affect attitude, intention to visit, and willingness to pay more. This study differs from other studies (Ing & Ming, 2018; Park et al., 2018; Popy & Bappy, 2022) in

that it measures the effects of social media on both the intention to visit and the willingness to pay more. Therefore, it will close an important gap and moreover, contribute to the literature.

Despite the consistent scientific research, there are limitations to this study. The research was designed for positive social media reviews only. Therefore, it may be recommended to conduct studies on negative social media reviews in the future. In addition, the research sample was created for a certain population segment. Therefore, it is necessary to be careful when generalizing. The sample of the research was carried out on the Z generation, which may be described as relatively young. Future studies can investigate the general population.

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