Analyzing the Influence of Social Media and Offline Factors on Consumer Behaviour: A Study of the Low-Cost Airlines

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Abstract

This study delves into the ramifications of social media and real-life interactions on the purchasing behaviors and recommendation tendencies of consumers utilizing budget airline services. Employing the Theory of Reasoned Action, the research explores how offline social dynamics (like interpersonal relationships and external influences) influence customer attitudes towards online purchases. It suggests that these factors amplify intentions for repeat online purchases and positive word-of-mouth communication, both conventional and electronic, within the realm of budget services. Through structural equation modeling, the study evaluates a conceptual model using a cohort of Internet users who have engaged with budget airline services. Results indicate that interpersonal offline influences, such as those from friends, relatives, and family, significantly influence intentions for repeat online purchases and traditional word-of-mouth but not electronic word-of-mouth. Conversely, external offline influences, like media or expert opinions, only impact consumer intentions to recommend future purchases through social networking travel sites, without affecting intentions for repeat online purchases or traditional word-of-mouth communication. Additionally, the study underscores the impact of Consumer-to-Consumer (C2C) information exchanges on attitude, subsequently shaping intentions for repeating purchases and both forms of word-of-mouth communication.

Keywords: low-cost airline services, theory of reasoned action, online C2C exchanges, word of mouth, social media, multichannel communication.

1. INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry has been significantly impacted by the evolution of social media, influencing both consumer behavior and marketing strategies adopted by tourist organizations. Social media now plays a pivotal role in shaping travel planning for consumers and is extensively utilized by tourism companies to enhance their online presence and advertise their offerings (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).Tourists are increasingly reliant on social media as a significant source of information that influences their preferences, emotions, actions, and decisions regarding travel providers and destinations.(Casaló et al., 2011); (Tham et al., 2013). Travel sites like forums, chats, blogs, and travel communities let people compare prices for tourism services, share information, and check ratings for destinations and providers ((El-Gohary, 2012); (Tham et al., 2013)). Through extensive access to information and social networking opportunities, they support consumer empowerment by facilitating electronic sharing of opinions and knowledge(Johnson & Grier, 2013)). In this setting, Consumer-to-Consumer (C2C) information sharing entails either passive or

active communication between consumers. This exchange of information acts as a source of knowledge and improves competency throughout the purchasing process, including before and after the purchase ((Gruen et al., 2005);(Gruen et al., 2006)). Consumers have more confidence in these platforms than they do in traditional communication channels, They view this information as dependable, impartial, and up-to-date. Social media's rise and evolution have significantly transformed marketing approaches in the tourism industry for marketers (Hays(Hays et al., 2013);(Kang & Schuett, 2013)). Comments on travel-related social networking sites like Flyertalk help airlines and other companies in the industry gain valuable insights into their customers' preferences and opinions. However, the convenience of comparing websites and intense price competition often leads online consumers to switch between different service providers((Taegoo et al., 2009);(Tham et al., 2013)) or to communicate positive or negative information to other consumers ((Verhagen et al., 2013). Tourism companies that conduct business online must exert extra effort to ensure customer satisfaction and retention, aiming to establish long-term relationships and enhance positive feedback (Blas et al., 2014). Previous studies on social networking sites ((Filieri & McLeay, 2013);(Godes & Silva, 2012)) The primary focus has been on two key subjects. First, it examined the features of social networking platforms and customer feedback that enhance their credibility and value for users (such as source reliability, comment length, number of reviews, etc.)(Ho & Lee, 2007). Secondly, Academic studies have examined the reasons and traits of people, such as altruism, self-improvement, and inquisitiveness, that promote engagement on websites ((Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004);(Munar & Jacobsen, 2014)). Despite the increasing amount of research dedicated to social media, there are still gaps in the tourism field that require further investigation. One area of interest is the potential impact of social networking travel sites on tourist companies ((Casaló et al., 2010);(Xiang & Gretzel, 2010), Little is currently understood about the results of customer engagement on these platforms. Understanding these results is crucial for businesses and researchers, as it would enable them to assess the impact of information gathered from social networking sites on actual consumer actions. We suggest that involvement in social networking travel platforms plays a significant role in two distinct outcomes: individual customer behavior (intentions to buy travel services) and social customer behavior (intentions to recommend travel services through offline channels and social networking travel sites). Additionally, the rapid growth of multichannel retailing has highlighted the need for the academic literature to develop a comprehensive theory of how channels interact. (Avery et al., 2012). Fernández-Sabiote and Román (forthcoming) emphasized that the study of multichannel customer behavior is in its initial phase, offering various opportunities for further exploration and development. Prior studies have underscored the significant impact of word-of-mouth communications on consumer decision-making regarding tourism services ((Luo & Zhong, 2015);(Qu & Lee, 2011); (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010)), but it remains uncertain whether this influence differs based on the specific channel through which consumer recommendations are shared. Additionally, while there has been more focus on the impact of social media on purchasing behavior for medium and high-cost items (Kim & Ko, 2012), There is an ongoing question about whether social factors have any impact on inexpensive products, especially when the perceived risk is low and price appears to be the primary motivation for the purchase.

The aim of this paper is to assess the combined impact of online and offline social influences on customer behavior in relation to tourism services, using a multichannel approach. Referring to the Theory of Reasoned Action(TRA)(Ajzen & Fishbein, 1969), We suggest two particular research goals. First, we examine the impact of in-person social pressures on both individual (e.g., purchases) and social (e.g., word-of-mouth and electronic word-of-mouth) customer behavior. Second, we investigate the influence

of online consumer-to-consumer information sharing on attitudes and subsequently on both individual (e.g., purchases) and social (e.g., word-of-mouth and electronic word-of-mouth) customer behavior. Our focus is on low-cost airline services as they have experienced significant growth rates since the deregulation of the air travel market, thereby stimulating international tourism development ((El-Gohary, 2012)(Graham, 2013)). This paper makes two main contributions to the existing research. Firstly, it utilizes a multichannel approach by combining online and offline social influences, and evaluates the impact of other consumers on customer decision-making in the tourism industry. It demonstrates the significance of each information channel on individual and social customer behavior, indicating that information from one channel can influence another. Secondly, it investigates customer behavior concerning low-cost airline services to determine if the influence of other customers is significant for decisions where low fares are considered as the primary factor by customers.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Low-cost airline industry

The deregulation of the air travel industry has opened up new possibilities for airlines, especially budget carriers, leading to a significant increase in their customer base.((Akamavi et al., 2015);(Graham, 2013);(Linz, 2012)). Euromonitor International states that budget airlines remain the most prosperous segment in the aviation industry. During times of financial instability, travelers seek to reduce expenses without compromising on service quality ((Akamavi et al., 2015);(Taegoo et al., 2009)). According to the 2012 report from the World Tourism Organization, there was a significant increase in budget air travel in Europe, which is notable way in which the low cost phenomenon has changed the way Europeans travel and the impact this has made on the tourism sector (p. 32). TThe success of low-cost airlines is rooted in their overall corporate strategy, which focuses on minimizing operational expenses and maximizing fleet usage(Akamavi et al., 2015). This strategy, along with their variety of affordable prices and ongoing initiatives to minimize maintenance expenses, has enabled these airlines to experience swift expansion (Linz, 2012).The market share and revenue of low-cost airlines are influenced by three factors(Lin & Huang, 2015), attracting new customers, boosting sales to existing customers, and retaining current clients. For these airlines, making initial sales to potential customers and securing repeat purchases from existing ones are crucial for survival and long-term profitability. Like any other service industry, the continuity of the low-cost market share may hinge largely on purchase intentions(Akamavi et al., 2015). Low-cost airlines can secure sustained success by addressing the factors influencing online buying intentions (Lin & Huang, 2015).A recent research on budget airlines highlights the impact of social factors on the decision to buy tickets online (Escobar-Rodríguez & Carvajal-Trujillo, 2014). Social factors lead individuals to intend to buy their airline tickets directly from low-cost airlines websites because people in their circle (friends, family, and colleagues) believe they should. Low-cost airlines need to focus on these influential connections as they impact the intention of purchasing low-cost services online.

Social elements greatly influence online purchase intent, prompting budget airlines to utilize social media platforms for promotional and operational purposes. However, certain airlines have demonstrated greater activity in their endeavors to expand their customer base (Akamavi et al., 2015). Southwest Airlines, for instance, is among the biggest global airlines and incorporates all social media platforms into its communication strategy to make better use of them. On the other hand, Ryanair, Europe's largest low-cost airline, only started considering the use of social media as part of their strategic approaches in 2013(Euromonitor, 2014),The influence of social media continues to pose a significant challenge for

airlines and necessitates a fundamental shift in the culture of airline companies to realize lasting advantages.

2.2. The Theory of Reasoned Action

The TRA (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1969) a widely embraced framework for forecasting consumer intentions(see (Sheppard et al., 1988), for a meta-analysis). An individual's actions are influenced by their intention to engage in that behavior, which is determined by two psychological factors: the person's attitude towards the behavior and their subjective norms or normative social influences (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) An attitude is the positive or negative emotions (evaluative affect) an individual has about engaging in a specific behavior, which stems from their judgment of expectancy value. Subjective norms indicate a person's belief regarding whether important individuals to them think they should or should not engage in the particular behavior (refer to Figure 1). The Theory of Reasoned Action has garnered significant empirical support through various studies on tourism services and has been used to analyze diverse behaviors including online travel purchases (Ho & Lee, 2007), meeting participation (Lee & Back, 2005) and ethnic/healthy food experiences(Chou et al., 2012). These studies suggest that individual behavior is generally influenced more by personal attitudes towards a specific behavior than by the perception of social influence to engage in that behavior. While having numerous strengths, TRA also has limitations to consider. Firstly, TRA does not identify consistent precursors of attitude, as these can differ based on the phenomenon under study. In the context of Information Technologies, these precursors have predominantly focused on the characteristics of the technology being examined (perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, etc.). Secondly, prior TRA research extensively explored the impact of subjective norms within interpersonal settings(Langdridge et al., 2007), but only a small number of studies consider the impact of additional external sources such as media and experts on consumer behavior ((Bhattacherjee, 2000);(Cheng et al., 2006);(Li, 2011)). Finally, Most of the existing research on TRA has focused primarily on analyzing the factors that lead to specific intentions such as purchasing, while overlooking the consideration of other related individuals' intentions. Our research model aims to address these limitations. This model is innovative in that it extends beyond traditional offline focus by examining how online information exchanges between customers influence attitudes using a multichannel approach. Additionally, our research model incorporates interpersonal and external influences as subjective norms and encompasses three customer behavioral intentions: individual behavior (online repurchase) and social behavior.Figure 1. TRA.

Figure 1. TRA
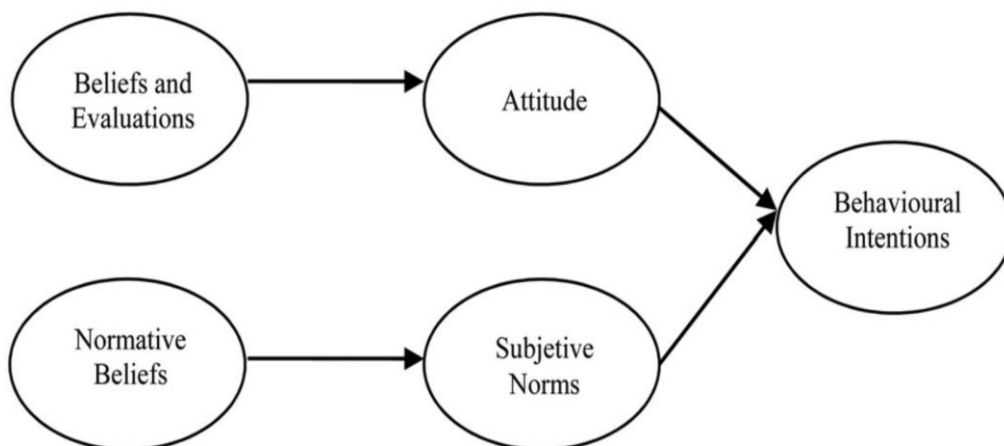
2.3. Antecedents of online repurchase intentions of low-cost airline services Offline social influences and online purchasing

(Bhattacherjee, 2000) Subjective norms are viewed as a combined element that encompasses two types of offline influences: interpersonal and external. Interpersonal influences refer to the impact of friends, family members, colleagues, and knowledgeable individuals who are familiar to the prospective adopter. ((Bhattacherjee, 2000);(Roca et al., 2006)). External offline influences can be described as information from mass media, expert viewpoints, and other non-personal sources that influence adopters when they make a deliberate decision to accept something ((Bhattacherjee, 2000) p. 413). These two aspects of subjective norms are believed to impact the intention to repurchase online in the context of low-cost airline services. The following hypotheses are put forth:

H1: Interpersonal influences have a positive effect on consumer repurchase intentions of low-cost airline services.

H2: External influences have a positive effect on consumer repurchase intentions of low-cost airline services.

Attitude towards online purchasing and online C2C exchanges

Previous research has shown that according to the Theory of Reasoned Action models, there is a direct impact of attitude on an individual's intentions to make online purchases (e.g.(Fenech & O'Cass, 2001);(Keen et al., 2004)). Attitude in this study is defined as consumers' favorable inclination towards buying low-cost airline services on social networking travel sites. Consumers display a positive attitude toward using social networking travel sites to purchase low-cost airline services, mainly because they can acquire price advantages by comparing fares from various airlines. The cost savings resulting from direct sales to consumers via the Internet, point-to-point service, and non-refundable tickets are what set apart the price benefits offered by low-cost airlines ((Escobar-Rodríguez & Carvajal-Trujillo, 2014); (Kim & Ko, 2012)). Despite the ongoing presence of travel agents and call center bookings, an increasing number of consumers have a favorable inclination toward directly purchasing affordable airline services online. Thus, based on the TRA, we propose that:

H3: Positive consumer attitude towards online purchases on social networking travel sites has a positive effect on their repurchase intentions of low-cost airline services

It has been previously detailed that customer behavior analysis should not solely focus on offline social influences. Social media platforms allow customers to discover other consumers' viewpoints, share their own contributions, and cultivate social interactions(Adjei et al., 2009). Online consumer engagements also offer insights into products and services, serving as valuable endorsements (Gruen et al., 2005). They decrease the uncertainty of the purchase, influence customer emotions, and enable them to make more efficient decisions ((Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010); (Söderlund & Rosengren, 2007)). As a result, online customer-to-customer exchanges have become a vital source of information in the purchasing process(Moe & Trusov, 2011). Online C2C information exchanges have a significant impact on travel services, particularly because the intangible nature of these services means they cannot be assessed prior to consumption, due to the inseparability of their production and consumption(Klein, 1998). Customers seek impartial and supplementary information before making a decision, aiming to understand the advantages of the service and its potential value to them (Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009). Online consumer interactions have a significant influence on customers' decisions related to travel (e.g.(Xiang & Gretzel, 2010); (Zhang et al., 2010)). Online C2C information exchanges can influence customer attitudes as they share the thoughts and satisfaction levels of individuals who have used the service (see(Vermeulen &

Seegers, 2009), regarding travellers' attitudes to hotels). We propose that online C2C transactions enhance customer perception of purchasing low-cost airline services online:

H4: Online C2C exchanges have a positive effect on consumer attitude towards online purchases on social networking travel sites

Antecedents of social communications on low-cost airline services

The classic version of the TRA states that intentions are the most effective way to analyze customer behavior. However, alternative research has discovered that factors influencing the intention to repurchase do not consistently have the same impact on actual repurchasing behavior (Mittal & Kamakura, 2001). They believe that focusing solely on future repurchase intentions limits the understanding of customer behavior, so additional factors like social customer behavior (word-of-mouth or electronic word-of-mouth) need to be considered. Word-of-mouth is described as an individual's intent to share their personal experiences and opinions about a company or product with other consumers(Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Prior studies have shown that online customer behavior is impacted by both personal connections like family, friends, and colleagues, as well as offline mass media. This influence is reflected in the electronic version of word-of-mouth, known as e-WOM (Bronner & Hoog, 2010); (Brown & Reingen, 1987)). These factors shape the way people live, altering their beliefs, mindset, and viewpoints. Consumers are highly driven to follow the guidance of those they look up to and adjust their actions based on their suggestions. As a result, when a company's actions are approved by a customer's important social circles, it is likely that positive word-of-mouth will follow (Cheng et al., 2006). We propose the following hypotheses:

H5: Interpersonal influences have a positive effect on willingness to engage in positive WOM about online purchases of low-cost airline services.

H6: External influences have a positive effect on willingness to engage in positive WOM about online purchases of low-cost airline services

As already demonstrated by (Cheng et al., 2006) Theory of Planned Behavior(Ajzen & Fishbein, 1969), TRA is seen as valuable for gaining a deeper insight into the factors influencing word-of-mouth communication. Within the tourism sector, several research works have explored how customer attitudes and satisfaction relate to both loyalty and word-of-mouth endorsements. It is suggested that customers with positive/negative perceptions of a specific service are more inclined to share their experiences with other consumers in a positive/negative manner(Sánchez-García & Pérez, 2011). As (Cheng et al., 2006) In the context of the hospitality sector, it has been observed that brand attitude plays a crucial role in influencing negative word-of-mouth. We suggest that this association also holds true for generating positive WOM in the context of low-cost airline services. As a result, we posit the following hypothesis:

H7: Consumers' positive attitude towards online purchases on social networking travel sites has a positive effect on their willingness to engage in positive WOM.

The rise of the Internet and social media has sparked a transformation in word-of-mouth marketing, providing new opportunities for sharing purchase experiences. Consumers can now readily share their thoughts, reviews, and emotions with the wider online community, giving them a previously unprecedented level of influence ((Inversini et al., 2010); (Mauri & Minazzi, 2013)).Despite the disparities between the conventional notion of word-of-mouth and the modern concept of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), participants in both settings demonstrate a remarkably similar range of motivations(Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).These similarities indicate that word-of-mouth mechanisms operate similarly on the internet, implying that the factors driving electronic word-of-mouth may closely resemble those of traditional word-of-mouth(Gruen et al., 2006). So, we suggest that the impact of attitudes and interpersonal

and external factors on word-of-mouth communication(Cheng et al., 2006) can be converted into electronic word-of-mouth. As a result, we establish the following connections:

H8: Interpersonal influences have a positive effect on the willingness to engage in positive e-WOM about online purchases of low-cost airline services.

H9: External influences have a positive effect on the willingness to engage in positive e-WOM about online purchases of low-cost airline services.

H10: Customers' attitude towards online purchases on social networking travel sites has a positive effect on their willingness to engage in positive e-WOM about online purchases of low cost airline services.

3. METHODOLOGY

A rising number of papers are derived from corporate data (see, for example,(Godes & Silva, 2012); (Moe & Trusov, 2011)), Consumer surveys are also effective for understanding motivations and attitudes. This study aims to analyze consumer behavior and perceptions that are not easily observable, making a survey the most suitable method for data collection. Information was gathered via a survey containing closed-ended questions as part of our research.

A series of preliminary trials for the questionnaire were conducted through face-to-face interviews to identify and address any potential issues or uncertainties that may arise during the data collection process. The surveys were distributed to 20 students and 20 technology experts who had experience in purchasing airline tickets and were active users of social media travel platforms, mirroring the target sample. Respondents were instructed to complete the questionnaire and provide feedback. As a result, redundant questions were removed, and some scales were adjusted to enhance clarity and minimize misinterpretations. Research concepts were measured using multiple items adapted from previous studies (refer to Table 1). All variables utilized a 7-point Likert scale where participants rated their perception on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 7, with survey items obtained from prior research sources (see Table 1). In line with standard practices in Internet and social networking research data collection, online surveys were selected (e.g.(Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006);(Steenkamp & Geyskens, 2006)). Consumers participated in the survey using a web page created specifically for this study.

The study focused on internet users, aged 15 and above, who had bought inexpensive airline tickets in the past month and maintained a profile on at least one travel-related social networking site. Initially, 2947 individuals were approached for participation, of which 1149 agreed to take part. To mitigate selection bias, sampling quotas based on gender and age were set beforehand. Navegantes en la Red study(Asociación para la Investigación, 2013), which is the primary directory of e-commerce in the country under review. As a result, we ensured that the sample accurately represented the typical online shopper. Ultimately, we chose 441 respondents who had exclusively bought low-cost airline services in the preceding month, comprising our focus group. Similarly, we sought to prevent any influence from customers who had purchased other standard or high-priced services

The study data was acquired using a singular collection approach; thus, in order to avoid common method bias, we adhered to the suggestions in (MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012), During the process of collecting and analyzing data, several measures were taken. To begin with, participant responses were kept anonymous during data collection to ensure confidentiality, and the specific purpose of the study was not revealed to prevent influencing participants' answers. Additionally, questionnaire items related to dependent variables were positioned after indicators for independent variables. Furthermore, participants

had limited access to their previous responses in order to avoid any bias in their subsequent answers. Finally, Harman's single factor test was used for statistical validation of the absence of common method bias in the data (Hays et al., 2013) The examination revealed that all measures do not load onto a sole factor(Podsakoff et al., 2003). Thus, it is confirmed that there is no common method bias.

The demographic profile of the participants consists of a significant female representation at 42.4%, with the majority falling within the 25–49 age bracket, particularly in the 25–34 (34.9%) and 35–49 (32.7%) categories. The highest proportion holds university degrees at 71.2%. When examining the interview findings, it is worth noting that a large percentage, specifically 89.1% of respondents, reported daily online activity, demonstrating their status as heavy Internet users. All participants had purchased airline tickets; additionally, hotel reservations were made by 79.1% while event ticket purchases stood at 60%. In terms of their experience with airlines services, a considerable number (46·6%) had utilized low-cost services over two years ago and more than half (55·4%) spent over €300 on airline tickets last year. All constructs evaluated in the proposed model exhibit an average score exceeding mid-point on a scale from one to seven; notably high scores are observed for Online repurchase intentions (6·21), Attitude towards social networking travel sites usage(6·04), and positive Word-of-Mouth recommendations (5·27). Concerning influences from both online and offline environments - interpersonal influences demonstrated higher average importance ratings than External influences as well as Online Consumer-to-Consumer information exchanges.

Analysis and results

Table 1. Measurement of the variables

Variables	Items
INTERPERSONAL INFLUENCES (INI) (Bhattacherjee, 2000; Limayem, Khalifa, & Frini, 2000; Roca et al., 2006)	My family thinks I should purchase low cost airline services on social networking travel sites
	My work/study mates think I should purchase low cost airline services on social networking travel sites
	My friends think I should purchase low cost airline services on social networking travel sites
EXTERNAL INFLUENCES (EXI) (Bhattacherjee, 2000; Limayem et al., 2000; Roca et al., 2006)	I often read information that considers the purchase of low cost airline services on social networking travel sites to be a good idea
	The opinion of experts about the purchase of low cost airline services on social networking travel sites generates a positive feeling in me
	The media have encouraged me to purchase low cost airline services on social networking travel sites
ATTITUDE (ATT) (Ahn, Ryu, & Han, 2004; Yu, Ha, Choi, & Rho, 2005)	The use of social networking travel sites for the purchase of low cost airline services ...
	... is a good idea
	... is an intelligent idea ... is a positive idea
ONLINE C2C INFORMATION EXCHANGES (Gruen et al., 2005)	Overall, social networking travel sites are an important source of information for me
	I find the interaction among social networking travel sites users enhances my knowledge
	I can depend on the social networking travel sites to provide answers to my questions
	In general, the ideas suggested on the social networking travel sites are reliable
WORD OF MOUTH (WOM) (Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996)	... I like to say positive things to other people
	... I would recommend low cost airline services online
	purchase to anyone who asked my opinion
	... it is likely that I would encourage my friends and
ELECTRONIC WORD OF MOUTH (e-WOM) (Zeithaml et al., 1996)	I would write positive comments on social networking travel
	sites regarding low cost airline services
	I would recommend low cost airline services online purchasing through social networking travel sites
	I would encourage others to purchase online low cost airline services through social networking travel sites
ONLINE REPURCHASE INTENTIONS (ERI) (Limayem et al., 2000)	I intend to continue purchasing online low cost airline services in the future
	It is likely that I will purchase online low cost airline services in the near future
	I expect to purchase online low cost airline services in the future

3.1 Validation of the measuring scales

In order to ensure the trustworthiness and accuracy of the measurements, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis was conducted on all the multi-item constructs in our framework using Structural Equation Modeling with robust maximum likelihood estimation method via statistical software EQS 6.1(Bhattacherjee, 2000). The findings are presented in Table 2. The results indicate that our measurement model is well-suited to the data: S-Bχ2 = 261.95, df = 188, p = .000; RMSEA = 0.048; NFI = 0.961; NNFI = 0.975; CFI = 0.980. The scales' reliability was assessed using the Composite Reliability Coefficient and the Average Variance Extracted. In all instances, the outcomes exceeded the suggested threshold of 0.6 (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006) and 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), respectively. In terms of convergent validity, the standardized loadings exceeded 0.5 and were found to be statistically significant at the 99% confidence level(Steenkamp & Geyskens, 2006) an R2 value greater than 0.30. Table 2 demonstrates the strong internal reliability of the constructs. Two methods were used to demonstrate the distinctiveness of the measures (see Table 3). First, none of the 99% confidence intervals for the individual components in the correlation matrix of latent factors included a value of 1.0 (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Secondly, the common variance between sets of constructs was consistently lower than the related AVE (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The measures utilized in this study demonstrate adequate reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity based on these criteria.

Results

To study the main factors influencing intentions to make online purchases and social communication behavior, we utilized SEM and robust maximum likelihood estimation.(Bhattacherjee, 2000). This analysis allows for the concurrent assessment of the variables, offering a deeper understanding of the dynamic relationships within the model(Bhattacherjee, 2000)). The suggested model has been evaluated based on these standards: general model quality (χ2/df, RMSEA, NFI, NNFI, and CFI) and the statistical importance of the proposed variables (Akamavi et al., 2015) The suggested model underwent path analysis using EQS 6.1 software. Table 4 presents the empirical estimates for the primary effects in the model. The results demonstrate that our model fits the data well: S-Bχ2 = 647.38, df=196, p=.00; RMSEA=.091; NFI=.904; NNFI=.909; CFI=.923. These findings suggest that our extensive framework effectively predicts online tourist behavior related to low-cost airline services.

Table 2. Internal consistency and convergent validity of the theoretical construct measures

Variable	Indicator	Factor loading	Robust t-value	R2	Composite reliability	AVE	Cronbach's alpha
INTERPERSONAL INFLUENCES (INI)	INI1	0.669	14.034	0.448	0.887	0.727	0.875
	INI2	0.927	24.827	0.859			
	INI3	0.936	22.959	0.875			
EXTERNAL INFLUENCES (EXI)	EXI1	0.847	20.487	0.718	0.84	0.64	0.831
	EXI2	0.87	20.451	0.757			
	EXI3	0.667	13.294	0.444			
ATTITUDE (ATT)	ATT1	0.939	13.254	0.882	0.946	0.854	0.945
	ATT2	0.922	15.675	0.851			
	ATT3	0.911	14.362	0.831			
ONLINE C2C EXCHANGES	C2C1	0.897	30.819	0.805	0.943	0.846	0.957
	C2C2	0.925	30.698	0.856			
	C2C3	0.938	32.944	0.88			
	C2C4	0.926	30.52	0.858			
WOM	WOM1	0.672	13.535	0.452	0.87	0.694	0.856
	WOM2	0.91	19.702	0.828			
	WOM3	0.896	17.072	0.802			
e-WOM	EWOM1	0.923	32.498	0.853	0.961	0.89	0.96
	EWOM2	0.956	36.456	0.913			
	EWOM3	0.952	37.21	0.905			
REPURCHASE INTENTIONS	FI1	0.94	12.134	0.884	0.908	0.768	0.887
	FI2	0.95	13.862	0.903			
	FI3	0.721	13.183	0.521			

Table 3. Discriminant validity of the theoretical construct measures

INI	EXI	ATT	C2C	WOM	EWOM	FI
0.73	0.29	0.15	0.05	0.17	0.03	0.13
[.44;.63]	0.64	0.12	0.17	0.09	0.13	0.06
[.28;.50]	[.23;.46]	0.85	0.05	0.37	0.04	0.54
[.12;.33]	[.31;.51]	[.13;31]	0.85	0.15	0.69	0.03
[.31;.52]	[.17;.42]	[.49;.72]	[.29;.48]	0.7	0.19	0.42
[.07;.28]	[.26;.47]	[.10:.307]	[.79;.87]	[.35;.52]	0.89	0.02
[.26;.45]	[.14;.35]	[.63;.83]	[.07;25]	[.56;.73]	[.05;.23]	0.77

Notes: Interpersonal Impact; Outside Forces; Perspective; Consumer-to-Consumer Interactions (C2C), verbal recommendations, online word of mouth; Intention to Repurchase. The bold numbers in the diagonal indicate the Average Variance Extracted, while above the diagonal it displays the shared variances. Below the diagonal, you can find the 95% confidence interval for estimated factor correlations. Interpersonal factors strongly impact the likelihood of repeat purchases for budget airline services ($\beta1$ = .13; p < .05) and word-of-mouth recommendations ($\beta5$ = .19; p < .01). This supports H1 and H5. As (Taegoo et al., 2009) stated,Others' viewpoints, such as those of family, friends, and colleagues, may shape individuals' perceptions of the value of Business to Consumer (B2C) eCommerce in the airline sector. Specifically, opinions about particular low-cost airline offerings are believed to impact consumers' inclination to advocate for these services and their intent to use them again. This finding aligns with previous studies on this topic ((Bhattacherjee, 2000); (Liao et al., 2007)) stating that in non-hierarchical settings such as the online purchase of low-cost airline tickets, interpersonal influences play a role in determining loyalty. However, contrary to the proposed hypothesis (H8), interpersonal influences do not impact e-WOM ($\beta8$ = −.11; p > .05). This outcome could be attributed to the composition of the sample, which consists of individuals familiar with sharing comments in travel communities. The consumer experience of exchanging information on travel services in Web 2.0 environments is significantly different from offline communication channels. On social networking travel platforms, customers can easily access detailed information on air-related products and thereby receive more personalized and differentiated services such as itinerary management and air fare simulators. Additionally, information obtained through interpersonal influences tends to be more personal and private, often being conveyed within the same physical environment and context where it was received.

Table 4. Structural model results.

Hypothesis	Path	Standardized Path Coefficients	Robust t-value
H1	Interpersonal influences - Repurchase intentions	.13*	2.377
H2	External Influences - Repurchase intentions	-0.06	-1.594
H3	Attitude - Repurchase intentions	0.73**	9.408
H4	Online C2C exchanges - Attitude	.24**	4.808
H5	Interpersonal influences - WOM	.19**	2.89
H6	External influences - WOM	0.06	0.932
H7	Attitude - WOM	.56**	7.429
H8	Interpersonal influences - e-WOM	-0.11	-1.899
H9	External influences -> c-WOM	.47**	7.123
H10	Attitude - 5e-WOM	.12*	2.177

In line with our expectations stated in H9, outside factors are positively associated with e-WOM ($\beta9$ = .47; p < .01). However, external influences do not impact online repurchase intentions (H2: $\beta2$ = −.06; p

> .05), or WOM (H6: $\beta6 = 0.06$; p > .05). Therefore, information obtained from offline mass media or tourism leaders (external influences) is more likely to be shared through e-WOM than traditional WOM. Customers who frequently use social networking travel sites base their decision to purchase low-cost airline services on interpersonal factors and their own judgment, using external influences primarily to share their recommendations in digital channels. Thus, information concerning external influences tends to consist of neutral, general public opinions that are disseminated and provided as a reference so individuals can establish themselves as experts in front of large audiences.

Online customer-to-customer exchanges have a significant and positive impact on customers' attitude towards purchasing low-cost airline services online (H4: $\beta4 = .24$; p < .01). This attitude in turn significantly influences three important aspects of customer behavior: repurchase intentions (H3: $\beta3 = .73$; p < .01), word-of-mouth recommendations (H7: $\beta7 = .56$; p <. 01), and electronic word-of-mouth sharing (H10: $\beta10 = .12$; p<.05). As a result, attitudes towards online purchases on social networking travel sites not only affect customers' repurchase intentions but also influence their inclination to share their opinions about the low-cost travel service both offline and through social media platforms like e-WOM(H10) which is consistent with previous research in the airline industry.((Taegoo et al., 2009);(Sanz et al., 2013)),which have been empirically demonstrated to affect loyalty towards online travel services. Therefore, marketing strategies focused on shaping more positive customer perceptions (attitudes) can be highly impactful for most budget airline marketers.

Our results also validate that online consumer-to-consumer transactions influence individual purchasing behavior for low-cost services (purchase intentions) and social customer behavior in the consumer's offline surroundings, as well as within the travel community (e-WOM), indirectly through attitude. Consequently, online C2C exchanges have a 0.18 impact on repurchase intentions, 0.13 on WOM, and 0.03 on e-WOM. This outcome aligns with findings from other research methodologies ((Godes & Silva, 2012); (Moe & Trusov, 2011). In summary, people are inclined to share information they find online in person. Analyzing how this information from different sources affects purchasing and electronic word-of-mouth can influence consumer loyalty, especially in the budget travel industry where pricing is a key factor in airline selection.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONTRIBUTIONS

This study examined how social media and offline settings influence tourists' online purchasing and recommendations for tourism services. The research findings indicate that interpersonal influences impact repurchase intentions and word-of-mouth recommendations, but they do not have an effect on electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM). This outcome may be attributed to the personal and private nature of information obtained directly from family and friends, which is typically only shared with individuals in this type of relationship through traditional means.

Without disclosing it on the Internet (e-WOM), customers are willing to share information from external influences in online platforms, but they do not base their purchasing decisions on it or pass it along to close offline connections. Therefore, e-WOM should stem from consumers' interactions in social media (C2C) or offline mass media, while WOM is shaped by consumers' interactions (C2C) and interpersonal influences offline. Our findings also demonstrate that consumer attitude impacts repurchase intentions, WOM, and e-WOM, which is influenced by online C2C exchanges. Similarly, the results indicate that C2S exchanges through social networking travel sites generate more opinions in this medium (e-WOM) and affect purchase intentions of tourism companies. This study has established a connection between

information received from other customers (online C2C) and the intention to share their own experiences(WOM and e-WOM).

Our primary contribution to the general research body is two-fold. First, this paper addresses specific gaps in social media studies and the original TRA formulation by integrating online and offline environments to explore the impact of various consumer influences on customer behavior. The paper presents a multichannel approach to illustrate how different social environments influence consumer intentions regarding purchasing and expressing their opinions. Future studies on social influences and consumer behavior in travel services should consider interactions within a multichannel environment where information obtained online is transmitted offline, as well as vice versa.

Secondly, this paper concentrates on affordable tourism services. Existing studies of these services have primarily examined the cost structure of companies and their contribution to a country's economy. (e.g. (Blas et al., 2014); (Rey et al., 2011)).The affordability of the services is considered a key factor influencing consumer choices, with little attention given to other factors affecting customer purchasing decisions. Our research delves deeper into the drivers of customer behavior in tourism services and suggests that future studies should take into account not only how customers perceive pricing and promotions, but also the combined impact of online and offline social influences As (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006) noted, Decision-making for consumers is significantly influenced by social processes. Our findings highlight the relevance of social influences for tourism companies, even within a low-cost services framework.

5. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This study offers several managerial implications related to the impact of social influences, both offline and online, on customer behaviour in low-cost airline services.

Low-cost airline businesses should combine both online and offline efforts to enhance positive word-of-mouth. By implementing these unified communication strategies, airlines can garner favorable recommendations from customers and non-customers alike, ultimately fostering a strong brand image that encourages referrals. Additionally, it would be beneficial for airlines to analyze the behavior of referrers and understand the settings in which they share their opinions at different times. Attention directed towards referrers is crucial as they significantly impact consumer purchasing decisions and promote positive information dissemination through word-of-mouth and electronic WOM (e-WOM(Wang et al., 2016)).

Airline companies ought to launch initiatives aimed at promoting the sharing of consumer knowledge within their customer communities in order to cultivate a more positive perception of online purchasing(Bigné et al., 2016). The attitude toward online purchases on social networking platforms significantly impacts both the intention to buy travel services and social interaction behavior. Therefore, it is crucial for marketers in the online travel industry to carefully consider the factors that contribute to a favorable attitude. Research has demonstrated that engaging in consumer-to-consumer exchanges online directly influences customer attitudes positively(Pietro & Pantano, 2013). Consequently, airlines should integrate or facilitate social media features such as blogs, forums, and chats on their websites for seamless exchange of information among customers. These tools not only offer guidance on purchasing budget-friendly airline services but also influence potential and existing customers' perceptions while ultimately driving sales up.

Airline companies should encourage customers to serve as social liaisons or points of reference for others. In-person influencers, including friends, family members, colleagues, and experts, play a crucial role in

shaping online behaviors and traditional word-of-mouth marketing.(Bigné et al., 2016) Airlines can incentivize existing customers to share their positive buying experiences by recommending the online purchase of air travel tickets to others. Promoting online reviews on airlines' websites will enhance airline credibility and stimulate purchasing behavior.

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