

Consumer Generated Media Creation and its Helpfulness in Tourism

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In India travelers use travel related websites/portal not just for travel booking but also for acquiring information, As a result of that number of travelers using consumer generated information as well as those creating the content or sharing their own travel experiences are increasing day by day. So, there is a dire need to identify the factors that influence consumer to generate media and apart from that it is also necessary to find out what makes that content helpful to the customers planning their trips. After intensive literature study and thorough observation of consumer generated media this paper has been developed, which depicts the CGM creation and its usefulness in context of Indian Tourism.

Key words: Consumer Generated Media (CGM), Online Travel Booking, Travel Experiences, E- Word of mouth (EWOM)

INTRODUCTION

Internet users in India are growing day by day, as in year 2012, December the internet users have grown to 150 million from 65 million in year 2011 (Internet & Mobile Association of INDIA). As online travel audience are growing at much faster pace compared to other customers; according to comscore research, last year the travel site visit grew by 32%. It is interesting to note that many people visit travel sites just to have information and they don't end up booking. Further, they share their experiences by posting opinions, videos, photos etc. Thus, Information age has brought in the empowered customer called ICT skilled tourist (Jacobsen & Munar, 2011).

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Due to advent of web 2.0 the social media opinion sites, internet forums, discussion board, online reviews, blog, photo, and video serve as sources of pre-purchase information (Dellarocas & Narayan, 2007) and source of online information is CGM which includes text, images, videos and ranking posted by other consumers (Stephen Burgess, Carmine Sellitto, Carmen Cox). Web 2.0 and CGM have been changing the way people search, read, comprehend, share and create information (Ye, Law & Chen, 2010). Further, with the proliferation of web based media, the cost of information disclosure is reduced and rampant information flow is there for public (Kazama, Imada & Kashiwagi, 2011). Internet is much ahead of previous communication media due to its bi-directionality, through which individuals can make their opinions and reactions easily accessible to fellow netizens (Dellarocas, 2003)

Search products can be evaluated prior to purchase but that is not true for the product with experience quality. Consumers are more influenced by the online information associated with an experience product than a search product and most of the information regarding tourism is about experience. Albeit, Interpersonal information and sources of information generated by others are deemed as the most important sources while consumers are making travel purchase decision. Influence of these sources is quite high in hospitality and tourism industry as due to its intangible nature it becomes difficult to evaluate product/services prior to consumption (Litvin, Goldsmith

& Bing Pan, 2006). With the advent of E-commerce consumers are more indulged in Cross-shopping and price checking activities than ever before, Hence CGM usage becomes one of the deciding factors in an online travel purchasing process (Pasi Tuominen, 2011) and blogs, social networking sites, opinion sites, you tube videos have become important platforms for CGM Creation (Dwyer, 2007).

In recent years, many consumers seek and post information online, this online information has

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become essential tool for consumers and retailers who want to maintain their customer base. (Pan & Zhang, 2011). As now days, more and more consumers create and use travel-related content online which has been created and posted by fellow travelers rather than by travel service providers. Understanding the nature of these consumers, the way of determining whether content is credible; motivation for

them to post reviews is of great interest to providers of review Web sites as well as general marketers. (Kyung Hyan Yoo, Melanie Purifoy, 2007).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Pete Blackshaw, Executive Vice President of Nielson Online Strategic Services and Co-founder of Word of Mouth Marketing Association , who is frequently quoted in Wall Street Journal ,New York Times , Advertising Age , and USA today has first time coined the term “Consumer Generated Media” (Dan Schawbel,2008).The term consumer generated media refers to online content created by people. It includes blogs, podcasts, video, photos, online reviews, ranking or recommendations, opinions, wikis, user communities on social networking site etc. It is the combination of two distinct but connected networks called social network and informational network (Dawyer, 2007). Albeit, numbers of CGM users are growing day by day the gap between the CGM creators and CGM users is very large (Yoo & Gretzel, 2010). Hence it is

necessary to find out what drives consumers to create content as well as factors which hinder consumers from indulging in CGM creation.

The considerable research has been done on CGM or UGC (user generated content) and their impact on sales, purchase decision making, online hotel booking, credibility etc. (e.g. Flanagan & Metzger; Yoo & Gretzel; Pan & Zhang). However, little is known about what are the factors affecting CGM creations. Furthermore, CGM research to the date is mostly conducted in individualist society (Western countries), so applicability of the same findings in collectivist society (eastern countries) is questionable (Yang, Fame & Richard), as collectivism is best described by interdependence (Konsky, Eguchi & Kapoor, 1999) and CGM itself is one kind of interdependence exercised by large group of consumers and customers. Hence, the purpose of this study is to identify the factors affecting CGM creation in India and helpfulness of CGM to other customers.

FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR CREATION OF CGM IN TRAVEL AND TOURISM INDUSTRY

Due to its intangible nature Travel & Tourism industry is more than a search product and it depends on experiences and images reflected by the interpersonal relation as well as other media channels or sources of information (Aliklic, 2008). For most of the people the use of CGM is a stepping stone in their journey from being lurker to being CGM creators. More numbers of travelers are using CGM before making purchase decision, however the gap between the lurkers and creators is wide (Yoo & Gretzel, 2010) so it is essential to identify which factors affect the CGM creation activity. Yoo & Gretzel suggested that Personality has an influence on factors responsible for CGM creation. C.M.K Cheung and M.K.O Lee identified five factors 1) Egoism led by reciprocity and reputation 2) Collectivism as a result of sense of belongingness 3) Altruism as source enjoyment of helping others 4) Principlism as a part of moral obligation and 5) Knowledge Self – Efficacy. However, in their findings Reciprocity, moral obligation and knowledge self- efficacy didn't demonstrate significant relation with EWOM creation intention that is a part of CGM activity; the reason may be the fact that there is a thin line between reciprocity and moral obligation as when customer writes in reply to or in acknowledgement of

someone else query it may be due to the belief that those who contributed expecting help from others (C.M.K Cheung and M.K.O Lee,2010), when people help each other it is also the demonstration of one's knowledge self – efficacy which boost the ego of the contributor. In their study Yoo and Gretzel found that reciprocity/altruism and enjoyment /self-enhancement are the most prominent drivers of CGM creation. Motivation of venting is also one of the influential factors. Hence, following factors identified which influences CGM creation activity.

Satisfaction Level

Venting has been an outcome of lower satisfaction and it influences the CGM creation (Yoo&Gretzel). People who are satisfied or delighted would also like to go for expression of their positive experience through photographs, video, blogs etc. so here satisfaction level is also one of the drivers which influence the CGM creation. Further, Online reviews posted by consumer have been an expression of their satisfaction or dissatisfaction regarding the experience (Vela, Chou & Pearson, 2010). The negative E- WOM is perfect example of publicly stated commitment to dissatisfaction, through which consumer try to convey the image of product or service providers to fellow consumers (C.M.K Cheung and M.K.O Lee, 2010). On the basis of these the following proposition has been defined.

P1: There is a significant influence of satisfaction level on CGM creation behavior.

Demographic Factors

In India the internet usage behavior depends on demographic as most of the creators of CGM on site like Tripadvisor.com, makemytrip.com, mouthshut.com, oktatabyebye.com are young Indian males. e.g. on trip advisor out of 150 reviews of one hotel, 108 reviewers were males. As per Yoo&Gretzel, most of the travel related CGM creators tend to be young, male, have higher income, proficiency in using internet and they were frequent travelers. Further, they found that travel photo posting was the popular activity among the younger generation compared to boomers and seniors. In most of the literature differences have been noted in terms of socio – demographic and cultural context.

P2: There is significant difference in CGM creation behavior across the demographics.

Altruism

Enjoyment of helping others has been deemed as an altruistic factor by many of the researchers which has been one of reason for sharing experiences with others (C.M.K Cheung and M.K.O Lee, 2010). Yoo and Gretzel had identified altruism as an important factor that drives CGM creation. As per some of the literature, information sharing was deemed as “public good phenomenon” which refers to importance of altruism in CGM creation activity. Yoo and Gretzel found that agreeableness was expected to have influence on altruism. Vela, Chou & Pearson found that agreeableness was a contributing personality type in CGM creation. Yoo&Gretzel in their study with support from tripadvisor.com found that 96.3% consumers have opted for CGM creation to help others by sharing their own experiences. Some of the consumers write reviews to warn others or save others from bad experiences.

P3: There is a significant influence of altruism on CGM creation

Feedback mechanism of intermediaries/ service providers

Consumer is pursued by the service provider or intermediaries to provide reviews after purchase. As, consumers are deemed as new employees to promote the product and services through expression of positive reviews, word of mouth, photos, blogs and videos. Intermediaries have various details from consumer and they often ask consumers to provide online review and rate the review on the basis of perceived helpfulness of review. Previous studies have shown that feedback mechanism of intermediaries and service providers was an anecdote to create CGM. Furthermore, intermediaries and service providers believed that positive review from the consumers helped them boost their sales (Vela, Chou & Pearson, 2010)

Consumers are deemed as new employees to promote the product and services through expression of positive reviews, word of mouth, photos, blogs and videos.

P4: There is a significant positive influence of Feedback mechanism of intermediaries, opinion sites or service provider on CGM creation behavior.

Reciprocity:

As described in study of Yoo & Gretzel 95% consumers believed that others have helped them so they should return favor to others. Sometimes, consumers involve in discussion through online media and as a byproduct of that discussion CGM creation takes place. There is very thin line between reciprocity and moral obligation. However, Reciprocity is more suitable because reviews are read and generated by customers who are online and although lurkers or passive customers are there, in reality CGM creator cannot differentiate between lurkers / passive customers and content providers. As it is in nature of Collectivist Country’s people to believe in interdependence which led to following proposition.

P5: There is a significant positive influence of Reciprocity on CGM creation activity

Self-expression

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|---|---|--|
| <p>Yoo & Gretzel found that 92.8% consumer loved to tell others about their great experiences, 91.1% consumers joy about good consumers felt experiences people use blog and they like to through blogs. generation media is a form</p> | <p>For today’s young generation creation of online media is a form of self-fulfillment and tool to satisfy their “wanna be Page 3” desire.</p> | <p>liked to express their experiences, 79.2 % good after sharing their online. Further, many as their public diary record their life events For today’s young creation of online of self-fulfillment and</p> |
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tool to satisfy their “wanna be Page 3” desire. Many consumers try to find earning opportunities through their blog or website and some write for recognition and self enhancement.

P6: There is a significant contribution of self-expression in CGM creation

Internet experience

Here internet experience includes internet proficiency, usage frequency and media platforms that have been used. P.B. Brandtzaeg identified user types ranging from non-user to advance user on the basis of frequency of use, variety of use, typical activity and media platform. However in this study to find drivers of CGM creation it is considered that users have availed internet facility but the skill level is different , again usage frequency depend up on availability of time , hi speed internet connection and interest of user and again It's a media platform that determines which venue provokes consumers for CGM creation.

P7: There is a significant positive influence of Internet experience on CGM creation.

Device/Medium used:

As technology advances, the hand held devices are coming up with more facilities and applications that makes easier for people to search and create information. As per the study of Yoo and Gretzel some of the barriers in CGM creations are internet access problem, time constraint, as well as security and privacy concern. Hence, if the device with proper internet connectivity as well as compactness like tablet, mobiles, phablet then these devices will provide ease of use to customers and they can create CGM at anytime from anywhere when internet connectivity is there.

P8: The type of device/Medium used has a significant influence on CGM creation

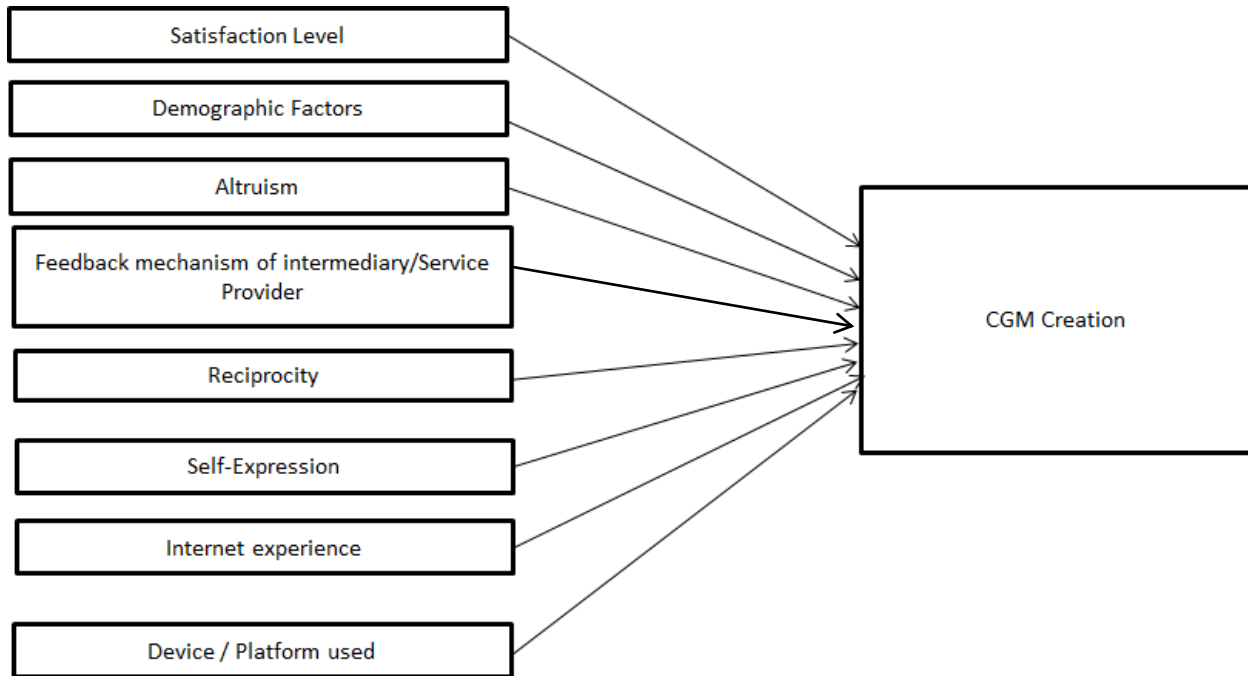


Figure 1: Factors influencing CGM Creation Behavior

FACTORS DETERMINING HELPFULNESS OF CGM

CGM has become essential tool for customers as well as service providers/Retailers who wanted

Most of tourists' primary motive for accessing CGM was to enhance quality of experience and to minimize monetary, functional, physical, social and psychological risk.

to retain customers, yet little is known about what are the factors that determine helpfulness of CGM (Pan & Zhang, 2011). As CGM is becoming pervasive, the strategic focus shifted from mere presence of CGM to helpfulness of it (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010). Most of tourists' primary motive for accessing CGM was to enhance quality of experience and to minimize monetary,

functional, physical, social and psychological risk (Jacobsen & Munar, 2011). Tourist buy an experience rather than product and experiences involved three phases namely anticipation, consumption and memory. Reviews of fellow travelers contributed to the first and last phase of

travel experience (Ricci & Wietsma). However, the consumption is anecdote to memory and from memory consumer joins pieces together to form CGM. For today's customers CGM is an important part of travel decision making however to increase customer perceived value it is necessary identify factors which increases the economic , function and psychological benefits and decreases monetary , time , energy and psychological cost. Hence, below the factors determining helpfulness of CGM has been identified.

Type of CGM

As CGM includes photographs , videos , blogs , online reviews , user ratings , virtual community etc. it is indispensable to identify in travel context which type of CGM helps more to customer in travel planning and decision making process. As per Yoo & Gretzel's findings most of the users found virtual community most useful and travel related blogs are least useful for them. However, each review type has its distinct features like photographs and videos are better for visibility and it reduces the anxiety regarding overall experiences as it give vivid picture of whole experience, blogs are details of experience in terms of rational as well as emotional view points, as it may include information in terms of time & distance with practical tips . User ratings are important as they rate the location or hotels on same standards or defined parameters and that's why they make comparison easier for customers. Online reviews are more specific and most of the time they are written with purpose of providing information or venting, which serves the purpose of gaining idea regarding image of destination before visiting. Further, on ebay product featuring actual photographs generated highest selling price.(Heide, Johnson, & Vang, 2013)

P8: There is a significant association between type of CGM and helpfulness of CGM

Time period of CGM creation

Experience products are time bound and they are perishable, so customer tries to obtain the reviews which may be more recent compared to the older reviews. Again the reviews which have been provided in near past might have objective details like opening times of parks , zoo ,

sanctuaries , museum , as well as fees, timings and prices regarding local transportation facilities. Hence, more recent reviews might be deemed as more helpful.

P9: There is a significant association between time period of CGM creation and helpfulness of CGM

Reviewer's Characteristic

Laboratory for intelligence system in tourism has defined cues regarding reviewer which includes attitude, life style, objectivity, honesty etc. Here the similarity in terms of demographics is also an important factor as customer with similar demographic as reviewer may find the review more helpful. Again the frequency with which single reviewer post the review has also an impact on perceived helpfulness of review. Identity disclosure, reputation and expertise also influence helpfulness of review (P. Racherla& W.Frisk, 2012)

P10: There is a significant association between reviewer's characteristic and helpfulness of review

Characteristics of Review

As per Yoo&Gretzel reviews can be detailed, to the point, positive, negative or realistic. Reviews may have emotional or humors tone. Each review's helpfulness depends up on the characteristics of review. Some of the consumers may asses review on the basis of fluency and grammatical correctness. For experience product reviews, reviews with extremity are less helpful than moderate reviews (Mudambi&Schuff, 2010). Length of review (Korfietis,Bariocanal&Sanchaz Alonso,2012) as well as Review elaborateness and review valance also influence the helpfulness of review (P. Racherla&W.Frisk, 2012).

P11: There is a significant association between characteristics of review and helpfulness of review.

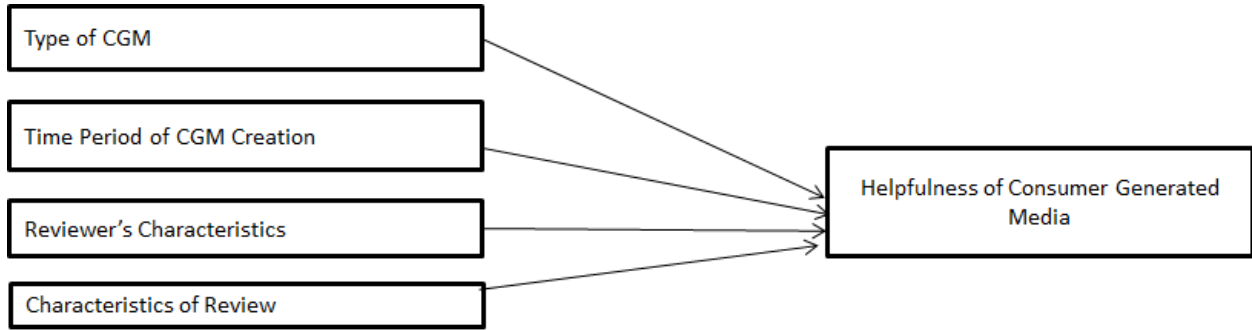


Figure 2 Factors Influencing helpfulness of CGM

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Internet has business is done. be monologue from now it has become the market is shift from marketer Further, consumers employees of promote the product

Positive CGM acknowledges marketer’s efforts and works as a conformation to marketer’s promises made through other media.

changed the way Earlier it used to marketers’ side bidirectional and witnessing power to consumers. can be deemed as organization to or services.

However, due to pervasiveness of internet when they go for negative word of mouth, the bad news travels fastest. Still, CGM is helpful in reducing risk especially when there is an intangible product or it is linked with experiences. When there is positive CGM it acknowledges marketer’s efforts and works as a conformation to marketer’s promises made through other media. Thus, CGM may be useful in enhancing customer’s benefit and somewhat reducing some of the customer’s cost which will result in high customer perceived value.

In India there are many travel related digital media generated and consumed by customers as well as encouraged by travel portal/intermediary/communities like trip advisor. in, makemytrip.com, oktatabyebye.com, and indiamike.com. These websites provide opportunities to both CGM creators and CGM users. However, if it is known what drives consumer to generate CGM and consume it, marketers can develop the strategies to encourage CGM creation as well

as its consumption. For examples oktatabyebye.com community's editor short out top 10 travel blogs and travelogues as well as editor's pick that is the best writing piece of any traveler. Further, trip advisor.in asks customer to rate most useful reviews.

Due to embryonic stage of CGM concept and limited literature available on CGM in Indian Context, exact positive or negative influences cannot be proposed in some of the propositions.

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