

## THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON USERS' TRAVEL DECISION USING INFORMATION ADOPTION MODEL

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine how user-generated content (UGC) in social media influence the travel decision of the travellers' using social media for choosing tourism destination and services. UGC is used by the travellers before travelling, while traveling and after traveling, which has primarily transformed tourism and hospitality industry. The social media users' normally share their positive or negative reviews about their experience on destinations and services which influence the travellers in choosing tourism destination and services. So, the current study proposed to examine the information adoption behavior of the travellers' using a conceptual model developed on the basis of Information Adoption Model (IAM). This study has examined the influence of information quality, information credibility, information usefulness on information adoption behavior of the travellers' using structural equation modelling (SEM) based on surveys of 384 respondents from National Capital Region, India. Finding of the study has established positive relationship between the variables. Further, this study has presented theoretical and practical implications as well as recommendations for further research.

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**Keywords:** Tourism, social media, Information Adoption Model, information usefulness, information adoption, India

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### INTRODUCTION

Travelers normally search for information posted by the traveller visited the place previously, in order to make them comfortable before planning the travel. The people are using social media for searching information on tourism destinations and services shared by friends and acquaintances for last few years (Ma & Kirilenko, 2021; Yu et al., 2021; Leong et al., 2021; Pop et al., 2021; Kumpu, et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2019; Narangajavana et al., 2019; Arya et al., 2018, 2019, 2021; Gretzel, 2018; Sigala & Gretzel, 2018) as well as for e-learning (Sharma & Gupta, 2021; Jha, 2018); green consumption (Kumar et al., 2020); Fashion Apparel (Tripathi, 2019); Media and Lifestyle (Paul & Uikey (2017); fast-food industry (Hanaysha et al., 2021); knowledge sharing (Sharma, 2021); purchase decision (Rashid et al., 2022; Sharma et al., 2021, 2022a, 2022b). Social media have changed the methods of searching information for travel planning by the travellers; they look for experience of others in social media, try to get connected with other travellers and

communicate with them. Tuten & Solomon (2015) mentioned social media is serving the following functions in tourism and beyond: 1) community; 2) publishing; 3) entertainment; and 4), commerce. Further, Chen et al. (2021) and Yoo et al. (2010) have pointed out that travellers are using social media for guidance. Thus, the people who are very familiar with social media websites or applications like WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Instagram etc. like to use them for searching useful information on tour and travels. It is evident from the previous studies that social media is useful for choosing travel decisions (Stylos 2020; Panda & Thakkar (2018); Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014; Ribeiro et al, 2014; Sparks & Browning, 2011; Ye et al., 2011; Ye et al., 2009; Yoo & Gretzel, 2008). It has empowered tourists to co-create value in their travel experiences (Buhalis, 2019; Zhang, 2020). Lots of studies are available on impact of social media in tourism and hospitality sector, most of the studies used technology acceptance model in context of social media adoption like Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Lin,

2007), Extended TAM (Ayeah et al., 2013a; 2013b), Combined Technology Acceptance Model- Theory of Planned Behavior (C-TAM-TPB) (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012), Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Hsiao et al., 2013), Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) (Filieri & McLeay, 2013). Some of the integrated models or theories are also used to explore consumers' intention to use social media for travel decision; they are ELM and TPB (Wang 2012), TPB, TAM and Social Influence (SIT) (Casaló et al., 2010), but there is no study available on impact of social media in tourism and hospitality sector using Information Adoption Model (IAM) (Sussman & Siegal 2003).

The current study will focus of understanding the tourist intention to use social media for tourism and hospitality using Information Adoption Model (IAM). Social media is relatively new form of media which have brought new form of communication between business-to-business (B2B), business-to-customer (B2C) and customer-to-customer (C2C). People are now able to exchange their opinions, experiences and discuss their experience on social media (Chu & Kim, 2011; Kozinets et al., 2010).

According to Chu & Choi (2011) social media has a potential to reduce anonymity and make the information more trustworthy and reliable. The information generated in social media could be imaginative with an objective to influence the customers. Since travellers are exposed to vast amount of information through social media, they may screen the information before using it. Thus, user generated content (UGC) in social media can influence consumers behavioural intention (Knoll 2015; Jain et al., 2021). Although it has been tested in context of consumers' purchase intention (Bickart & Schindler, 2001; Chan & Ngai, 2011; Park et al., 2007; Pitta & Fowler, 2005; See-To & Ho, 2014; Poonia et al., 2021), but it not tested in context of travellers' intention to choose of tourism destinations and services. Therefore, the current study will examine the factors influencing travellers' intention to use UGC in social media for choosing tourism destinations and services.

More specifically, the proposed model will examine the influence of information quality, information credibility, information usefulness on information adoption behavior of the

travellers. The result of the study going provide theoretical insights on influence of UGC on travellers' intention to use in social media and it will add knowledge to current literature. While the managerial implication of the study will help the tour operators, managers and other stakeholders to understand the role of different determinants of UGC information in social media and it effect on traveller' choice or intentions to use of social media, thus it will help the marketers to better utilize UGC in their marketing activities. So, for the current study, a conceptual model is developed based on the Information Adoption Model (IAM) (Sussman & Siegal 2003) to unfold the situation, where travellers will evaluate the information before adopting any information for choosing tourism destinations and services. The remaining the paper is as follows. Section 2 is on review of literature and research model. Section 3 is dedicated to research methodology. Section 4 describes the results and analysis of the study. Discussion and implications are presented in section 5. In last section limitations, conclusion and future scope is discussed.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND RESEARCH MODEL

### Social Media

Social media is a cost-effective means for interaction and engagement with their stakeholders, which enable immediate access to real-time data created by them (Roshan et al., 2016). It has empowered stakeholders, they can generate content in favour off or against any organisation on social media platforms (Etter et al., 2019; Welbers & Opgenhaffen, 2019; Zhai et al., 2019). While Kaplan and Heinlein (2010) mentioned that social media includes of social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, My Space and collaborative projects like Wikipedia. It also includes YouTube as content communities, virtual social worlds and blogs. Social media is defined as "a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technical foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user content" (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010, p. 61 as cited in Whiting & Williams, 2013). Thus, it used to create, maintain and circulate information for educating one another in a marketplace. Social media is used to create, communicate, deliver and exchange

information among the stakeholders (Tuten and Solomon 2018). According to Alhadid (2014), there are five dimensions of social media marketing, namely, online community, interaction, content sharing, accessibility and credibility.

Content of social media is either created by its users or marketers. Content is “the critical information the website, application, intranet or any other delivery vehicle was created to contain or communicate” (Halvorson and Rach, 2012, p. 28), which people read to learn and experience. Social media includes Social Networking Sites (SNS) like Facebook (2004), Myspace (2003), Hi5 (2003), Social bookmarking like Digg (2004), Video sharing like YouTube (2005), Picture sharing like Flickr (2004), Professional networking sites like LinkedIn (2003), User forums/ weblogs like. Blogs (1990s), Micro blogging like. Twitter (2006), Plurk (2008) and it also includes text messaging, *Personal Digital Assistants* (PDAs), instant-messaging (IM), chat, e-mail and videoconferencing allow an individual to create their own materials and distribute (Hays et al., 2013; Kietzmann et al., 2010). Social media provides lots of information to the users, which they use for the purpose of decision making. In recent past, there is enormous growth in use of social media by the travellers as well as by the service providers in tourism and hospitality industry (Lopez et al., 2011).

#### **User generated content (UGC)**

The information created by the users in social media is termed as user generated content (UGC). In some of the recent studies, it was found that travellers get influence by different types of information generated by the users like photographs, videos, reviews and blogs on their travel experience (Yoo and Gretzel, 2010). The travellers normally use the social media platforms for consuming, using and generating information. Hennig-Thurau and colleagues (2004) mentioned that people are generating online content because of eight reasons: venting negative feelings, providing platform assistance, to show concern for other consumers, to create extra-version/ positive self enhancement, to get social benefits, getting economic incentives, helping the company and to advice others (Zhang & Lee, 2012)

## **THE RESEARCH MODEL**

### **Information Adoption Model (IAM)**

The IAM originally suggested by Sussman & Siegal (2003), is widely used in context of information adoption across various contexts. In past, researchers have applied Theory of Action Reasons (TRA), Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) as base models to identify the determinants for adaptation of ideas or information (Ajzen, 1985; Davis, 1989; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). However, Sussman and Siegal, (2003) developed IAM by integrating two models; TAM (Davis 1989) and Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Petty et al., 1981). According to IAM, the people get influenced by the message from two routes, central and peripheral (Shen, Cheung, & Lee, 2013; Sussman & Siegal, 2003). The central route is known for the core of the message, while the peripheral route is known for the issues which are indirectly related to core of the message (Cheung et al., 2008; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Shu & Scott, 2014).

The IAM used in this study has four components adopted from original IAM (Sussman and Siegal, 2003). The first component, argument quality is referring to central route, while the second component source credibility refers to peripheral route, third component is information usefulness and the fourth component is information adoption. The IAM explains how people get influenced by the user generated information in digital platforms. Since this model explains the information adoption among the travellers in context of digital platforms, that is information generated in social media, it was applied to study the influence of word of mouth generated in social media Cheung et al., 2008; Cheung et al., 2009; Shu & Scott, 2014; Viviani & Pasi, 2017; Fileiri & McLeay, 2013; Yan et al., 2016; Erkan and Evans, 2016).

Since this research is focus on examining the travellers' intention to adopt UGC in social media for choosing travel destination and services, IAM is found to be most appropriate model for this study. The different components of IAM are modified and applied in this study. They are information quality, information credibility, and information usefulness and information adoption. Figure I depicts the proposed conceptual model employed in this study. Model states that

information quality and information credibility are precursors of information usefulness which further influence the travelers' intention to adopt UGC in social media for choosing travel destination and services.

The users of social media are exposed to a huge amount of UGC in social media either deliberately or accidentally and it was established previously that UGC in social media influence consumers' purchase intentions (See-To & Ho, 2014; Wang et al., 2012). However, all UGC in social media do not have the similar effect on consumers' purchase intentions, it varies with context; in fact, the level of impact varies from product to product (Yang, 2012). In the current study, IAM is used to predict that the travellers' intention to adopt UGC in social media for choosing travel destination or services.

#### *Information quality*

UGCs are generated by users, tour operators, and hospitality industries on social media; since the information is coming from different sources it is now become more critical to understand importance of information quality and credibility (Erkan and Evans, 2016; Xu, 2014). Consumers purchase or use a product or service when they get satisfied with the information given in social media (Olshavsky, 1985). Further, the previous research on IAM found that the quality of UGC or users' reviews have positive impact on consumers' purchase intentions (Lee & Shin, 2014; Park et al., 2007). Erkan and Evans (2016) found that information quality influence information usefulness, which indirectly impacted the purchase intention (Xue et al., 2018). Thus, it is predicted that the quality of UGC in social media can be one of the determinants which may be positive related to usefulness of information generated by the users in social media which may indirectly affect travellers' intention to adopt UGC in social media for choice of travel destination and services.

H1. Information quality of UGC in social media has positive relation with information usefulness for choosing travel destination and services.

#### *Information credibility*

Information credibility is defined as a trustworthiness of the source (Wathen and

Burkell, 2002). The previous studies have established that there is positive relationship between information credibility on consumers' purchase intentions (Torres et al., 2018; Srinivasan & Barclay, 2017; Hui, 2017; Nabi & Hendriks, 2003; Prendergast et al., 2010) which effect the consumer' information adoption (McKnight & Kacmar, 2006). Nevertheless, according to Wathen and Burkell (2002), information credibility is the initial factor in developing individuals' point of view towards information. Therefore, it is predicted that the credibility of UGC in social media can be one of the determinants which may have positive relationship with usefulness of information generated by the users in social media which may indirectly affect travellers intention to adopt UGC in social media for choice of travel destination and services.

H2. Information credibility of UGC in social media has positive relation with information usefulness for choosing travel destination and services.

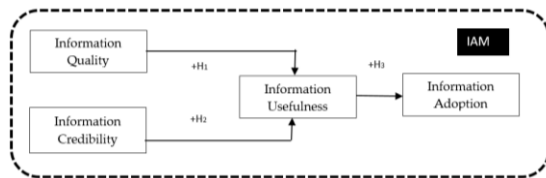
#### *Information usefulness and information adoption*

Information usefulness has been defined as perception made by the people that new information will be useful to people and it will enhance his/her performance (Bailey & Pearson 1983; Cheung et al., 2008; Yeap et al., 2014). Information usefulness is one of the important determinants of information adoption (Davis 1989; Sussman & Siegal, 2003; Erkan and Evans, 2016) and purchase intention (Lee & Koo, 2015). Research also shows a positive relationship between information usefulness and purchase intention (Cheung, 2014; Dachyar and Banjarnahor, 2017). People normally opt to engage with the information it they find it is useful. Predominantly in social media, the travellers come across a large amount of information generated by the users' before travelling, during travelling and after travelling (Chu & Kim, 2011). Therefore, the travellers' may have intention to adopt UGC in social media when they find them useful for choosing their travel destination and services or seeking advice from others. Thus, this study hypothesizes that information usefulness is related to information adoption.

H3. Information usefulness of UGC in social media has positive relation with intention to

adopt of UGC in social media for choosing travel destination and services.

**Figure I: Hypothesized Research Model for the Study**



**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In order to test the hypothesized relationships among variables for the proposed research model, a survey was conducted using a structured questionnaire comprise of two sections. Section one brings together demographic data of the respondents’ namely age, gender, educational qualification, and occupation. The second section of the questionnaire was developed based on the detailed review of literature, which content four constructs incorporated in the conceptual research model, namely, information quality, information credibility, information usefulness and travelers’ intention to adopt UGC in social media for choosing travel destination and services.

This study used pre-tested statements that have been validated in earlier studies. A three-item scale was used to measure information quality adapted from the study of Park et al. (2007) (i.e., “about tourism which are shared by my friends in social media is understandable”, “I think the Information about tourism which are shared by my friends in social media is credible”, “I think the Information about tourism which are shared by my friends in social media is clear”) and information credibility was measured with the help of four items based on Chu and Kim (2011) (“I think the Information is factual”, “I think the Information is accurate”, “I think the Information is credible”, “I think the Information is reliable”). The information usefulness was measured using three statements adapted from Bailey and Pearson (1983) (“I think the Information is valuable”, “I think the Information is informative”, I think the Information is helpful). Finally, to measure intention to adopt three items were tailored from Cheung et al. (2009) (“I think the I will

buy the information”, “I think I will the Information again and again”, “I think I will definitely buy the Information). All these statements were measured on a five-point Likert scale anchored from ‘1’ (strongly disagree) to ‘5’ (strongly agree). Inputs were taken from the experts working in the field of tourism to ensure the content validity of the questionnaire.

Before the final survey, pilot study was conducted on 30 respondents who use UGC in social media for choosing travel destination and services and the suggestions given by them were incorporated. The data collection was done in NCR region, India to study travelers’ intention to adopt UGC in social media for choosing travel destination and services. Data collection was done using online and offline survey from 384 respondent is considered appropriate when the population constitutes millions (at 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error) (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970; Sekaran, 2006). The respondents of the study consisted of adults with an age 20 and above and use UGC in social media for choosing travel destination and services.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Demographic Profile of the Respondents**

Table III depicts the respondent profile, which have intention to adopt UGC in social media for choosing their travel destination and services. Of these 384 samples, 258 (67.2%) of the respondent are less than 60 years of age, while 228 (59.4%) were male and 156 (40.6%) were female. 225 (58.6%) of the respondent are having annual income less than or equal to 10,00,000INR (68.6%) and remaining 159 (41.4%) having annual income more than 10,00,000INR. 146 (45.8%) of the respondent are service holder while 208 (54.2%) of them are businessman or businesswoman.

**Table III.** Respondent’s Profile

Demographics	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
20- less than 40	140	36.5
40- less than 60	118	30.7
60 and above	126	32.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100</b>
Gender		
Male	228	59.4
Female	156	40.6

<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100</b>
Annual Income (in INR.)		
Up to 10,00,000	225	58.6
10,00,000 -20,00,000	130	33.8
Above 20,00,000	29	7.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100</b>
Occupation		
Service	176	45.8
Business	208	54.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Authors' Work

### Assessment of Reliability and Validity

All constructs are measured on the basis of the respondents' opinions. Amos 21 is utilized for assessing the reliability and the validity of the measurement model and further for the assessment of the structural model. Table I shows the standard loadings, alpha values, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE).

**Table I.** Standard Loading, Convergent Validity, and Reliability

Construct and Item	Std. loading <sup>a</sup>	Alpha Val.	CR	AVE
Information Quality (IQ)		0.703	0.742	0.561
IQ1	0.733			
IQ2	0.838			
IQ3	0.661			
Information Credibility (IC)		0.864	0.847	0.577
IC1	0.831			
IC2	0.742			
IC3	0.753			
IC4	0.733			
Information Usefulness (IU)		0.893	0.811	0.763
IU1	0.814			
IU2	0.931			
IU3	0.847			
Information Adoption (IA)		0.834	0.857	0.683
IA1	0.837			
IA2	0.874			
IA3	0.654			

Note: <sup>a</sup>All factors loadings are significant at  $p < 0.01$

Source: Authors' Work

All the items load on their respective dimensions are significant ranging from 0.661 to 0.931. Also, the AVE values obtained are all above 0.50, indicating convergent validity among items for each latent construct (Hair et al., 2006). Internal consistency has been shown

through the composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha values which are above 0.70 for each construct (Hair et al. 2006). Table II exhibits the correlation matrix showing maximum shared variances (MSV), average squared variances (ASV), and average variance extracted (AVE). The MSV and ASV values are less than the value of AVE indicating the discriminant validity among the constructs (Hair et al. 2006).

**Table II.** Correlation Matrix, MSV Values, ASV Values

Constructs	MSV	ASV	IU	IC	IQ	IA
IU	0.535	0.171	<b>0.873</b>			
IC	0.483	0.092	0.072	<b>0.761</b>		
IQ	0.483	0.121	0.024	0.695	<b>0.751</b>	
IA	0.565	0.202	0.753	0.134	0.149	<b>0.828</b>

Note: 1. Diagonals represents the square root of the average variance extracted, while off-diagonal values represent the correlations.

Source: Authors' Work

### Assessment of the Structural Model

Table IV shows the results of the structural model fit indices. All the indicators have shown improvement in the values after path analysis indicating towards a good model fit. For the structural model, the chi-square value ( $\chi^2 = 13.315$  with 3 degrees of freedom (d.f.) and CMIN is ( $\chi^2/d.f.$ ) = 4.363. Other reported indicators such as GFI, TLI, CFI, and REMSEA have also shown improvement over the measurement model (Table IV).

**Table IV.** Structural Model Estimates

Model	$\chi^2$ d.f.	$\chi^2/d.f.$	GFI	TLI	CFI	REM	SEA
	13.315	3	4.363	.901	.905	.828	.043

Source: Authors' Work

### Results of Hypotheses Testing

Figure II represents the research model with beta values. The path estimates are shown in Table V and the values suggest that IQ and IC have significant positive relationship with IU. Path estimates also suggest that IU has a significant relationship with ( $\beta = .79$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) with travellers' intention to adopt in social media for choosing travel destination and services.

Results indicate that IQ is more important ( $\beta = .58$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) factor influencing IU than IC ( $\beta$

= .19,  $p < 0.01$ ). In sum, all the hypotheses developed for the study have been accepted.

**Table V.** Path Estimates

Hypothesis	Estimates	Results
H <sub>1</sub> . Information Quality -----> Information Usefulness	1.210 <sup>***</sup>	Accepted
H <sub>2</sub> . Information Credibility ----- > Information Usefulness	.762 <sup>*</sup>	Accepted
H <sub>3</sub> . Information Usefulness ----- > Information Adoption	.813 <sup>***</sup>	Accepted

Note: Significant at the  $p < 0.001^{***}$ ,  $p < 0.01^*$

Source: Authors' Work

## DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

### Discussion

The results of the study showed that the variables empirical support for the hypothesized model (Figure II). The result of the study suggest that Information Quality ( $\beta = .58$ ) and Information Credibility ( $\beta = .19$ ) have significant relationship with Information Usefulness. The results corroborate with previous researches conducted using IAM model (Sussman & Siegal, 2003). Thus, tourists find UGC useful, they adopt UGC for choosing travel destination and services. Furthermore, the study found that IU has significant positive relationship with IA, it is evident from the result that information usefulness have positive significant impact on information adoption for choosing travel destination and services as suggested by Sussman & Siega (2003), IAM model is applicable in understanding the travellers' intention to use UGC in social media for choosing travel destination and services.

The research conducted previously by Shu & Scott (2014) found that there is positive relationship between the determinants. It has been proved that people in India, especially in NCR are using UGC in social media for choosing travel destination and services. Consequently, the study established that IAM model fit in tourism and hospitality study and information quality, information credibility and usefulness of information turn out to be

important determinant which influences the traveller's information adoption.

### Theoretical Implications

The present study theoretically contributes in literature by providing invaluable insights in the field of tourism and social media research using IAM. This study further contributes to the existing literature that information quality is strongly associated with information usefulness, which implies that information quality is important for travellers' adopting information from social media. Although information credibility is associated with information usefulness, it has been found to be insignificant for predicting information usefulness. However, information usefulness is strongly associated with information adoption and it is responsible for as much as 61 percent of variance. These addresses certain gaps in the literature by examining the information adoption behavior of the travellers using UGC in social media for choosing travel destination and services. It is important for researchers to simultaneously bear in mind that information quality plays important role in persuasion. This study is among the few works, which highlight travelers' behaviour towards adoption of UGC in social media for choosing travel destination and services.

### Practical Implications

In terms of practical contribution, the findings of the study will help the tour operation, managers and other stakeholders working in tourism and hospitality industry. This study will help them in designing strategic business plans and promotional strategies for promoting tourist destination using social media. Managers can also use social media platforms for sharing experiences of their existing customers which will further help in instilling confidence regarding their services among the tourists. The findings of the study will be helpful for the government in framing tourism policies and developing better regulatory framework for the tourists after analysing the users' review and feedback in social media.

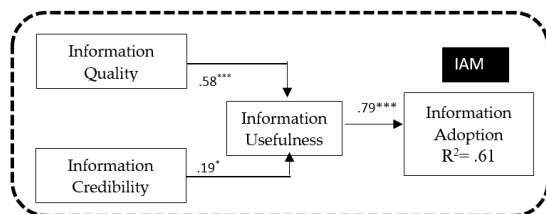
### Limitations, Future Scope and Conclusion

The present study has some limitations which need to be acknowledged. First, the study is limited in terms of generalization, since the data was collected in NCR, India only. Second,

several moderator factors age, gender, marital status, occupation and income of the tourist can be used to assess the information adoption behavior of the travellers across various groups. Since the study is related with the behavioural aspect of the tourists, longitudinal study could provide more insightful information. Lastly, future studies should be conducted in some other cities from some other country to check the relationship between the variables.

To conclude, the present study is undertaken to examine the travelers' intention to adopt UGC in social media for choosing travel destination and services using IAM. The results of the study found that the factors studied have contributed ( $R^2 = .61$ ) towards travelers' intention to adopt UGC in social media for choosing travel destination and services. The study establish that UGC in social media for choosing travel destination and services is beneficial for all the stakeholders such as travellers, tour operators, government, and hospitality industry as a whole.

Figure II: Research Model with Path Estimates



Source: Authors' Work

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