

# THE ROLE OF MOBILE APPLICATIONS IN TRAVEL INTENTIONS AMONGST TOURISTS IN UTTARAKHAND

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## ABSTRACT

*The companies from the tourism industry have developed an inclination towards these mobile applications and therefore motivate their customers to exchange information including their details, reviews, experiences or feedbacks that works as a torch bearer for these companies in creating a suitable plan leading to a win-win situation for all. Understanding the expeditious modifications in consumer buying behaviour in context to their travel intentions has observed a shift from the very 'traditional' to 'digital' methods. The shift has been successful for both the industry and consumer by enabling both parties to get connected with the internet enabled mobile applications. Therefore, there exists an urgent need to investigate the mediating role attitude towards mobile applications between perceived usefulness, perceived trust and travel intention.*

**Key words:** Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Trust, Mobile Applications, Travel Intention.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

India being an attractive tourist destination appealing to the people with varied travel interest be it international or the natives of our own country. In present scenario, India being one amongst world's largest travel and tourism industry (TTI) and ranked seventh out of worlds total of one hundred and eighty-four countries. India's tourism industry's gross domestic production contribution in the year 2017 stands third and paramount's in forex record contribution of CAGR of 7.23%. The India tourism industry provides employment to 8% of working population of India which is approximately 42 million and has potential to provide employment to 2 million people by 2022. The Indian travel industry has the capability to attain US\$48 billion by 2022 at a growth rate of 11% to 11.5% and travel through aviation is presumed to be the largest benefactor. India's hotel industry is anticipated to achieve US\$ 13 billion in 2020 at a growth rate of 13% (KPMG – FICCI Report, 2018).

The Indian tourism industry has attained this development due to generous policies by strengthening and modernizing infrastructure and technology benefitting this very industry by providing a spark of growth (Tourism and Hospitality Report, 2018, ibef). The government's effort to make travel and tourism more affordable to middle class has added a large number to the over-all size of tourism industry. Additional important factors like providing low-cost internet facilities and availability of mobile applications facilitating the consumers in accessing abundant information on travel related issues (BCG – Google Report, 2017). These mobile applications work like a "one stop shop" by providing a platform with a treasure of information of numerous travel destinations, mediums connecting to them be it road, rail, air or sea and finally providing payment gateways to finalize the travel plan and are quite useful and consumer trust these applications.

These mobile applications possess numerous features enabling consumers to decide about their travel plans, be it accessing information, reviewer's inputs, booking a customized travel plan, payment with security a priority, easy cancelation facility, comparing various options and fetching a best deal for themselves. The companies from the tourism industry have developed an inclination towards these mobile applications and therefore motivate their customers to exchange information including their details, reviews, experiences or feedbacks that works as a torch bearer for these companies in creating a suitable plan leading to a win-win situation for all.

This paper attempts to investigate the decisive factors that motivate consumers to use mobile applications for their travel intentions. In this regard, this study endeavors to fill with the gap with the consumer behavior towards travel from cross cultural point of view (Rivera et al., 2016). Especially, the attitude towards mobile applications is of utmost importance keeping in view the behavioural aspects of consumers that perceived usefulness (PU), signifying the utility of the services and perceived trust (PT) as the hallmark of safety and quality standards of the service.

Understanding the expeditious modifications in consumer buying behaviour in context to their travel intentions has observed a shift from the very 'traditional' to 'digital' methods. The shift has been successful for both the industry and consumer by enabling both parties to get connected with the internet enabled mobile applications. Therefore, there exists an urgent need

to investigate the mediating role attitude towards mobile applications (ATMA) between perceived usefulness (PU), perceived trust (PT) and travel intention (TI).

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS FORMULATION**

### **2.1. Theoretical Foundation**

Information technology has made it easier to process, send and exchange the information communication and technology services by linking the people through computer or smart phone at distant geographical location (Laudon and Laudon, 2011). IT enabled mobile applications possess the potential to modify the tourism industry and its products, the way it works and the manner in which it competes (Lam and Jogaratnam, 2005). The foundation of a mobile application is a computer run program specifically designed to work on mobile gadgets. Budi (2013) ascertained these mobile applications in three different ways i.e. native apps, web apps and hybrid apps.

### **2.2. Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Attitude towards Mobile Applications (ATMA).**

The acceptance of a mobile application largely depends on its perceived usefulness and its ease of use that can influence the consumer's attitude to use the mobile application frequently, without thinking much about suiting the consumers behaviour intention. The features like content opulence, the concern towards consumer satisfaction and perceived gaiety. The perceived usefulness of a mobile application largely depends on the relevance of the information provided on the application, its sufficiency while sorting information for travel destination and its timeliness as the per the convenience of the consumer (Jung et al., 2009).

*H1: Perceived Usefulness (PU) has significant and positive effect on Attitude towards Mobile Applications (ATMA) in Tourism.*

### **2.3. Perceived Trust (PT) and Attitude towards Mobile Applications (ATMA).**

Mobile applications are expected to provide required information and features that can be trusted with highest levels of services quality standards (Noh and Lee, 2015). Many a times consumers are reluctant in using mobile applications fearing leakage of their details, as majority of mobile applications collect customer's personal information in order to provide customized information and offerings, therefore mobile application owners try to win the trust by providing all possible safety features positively affecting attitude towards mobile applications (Morosan and DeFranco, 2016a). The mobile application users concern related to data privacy may negatively affect attitude towards mobile application (ATMA), hence the mobile application operators and owners take trust as a significant factor to minimize the risk factor involved (Hsu and Huang, 2013). Trust has emerged as a pivotal factor that can encourage customers to actively download and use these mobile applications (Antunes and Amaro, 2016). The trust on mobile application is developed with positive word of mouth with history of providing suitable information and track record, customers develop positive attitude once they are satisfied with the results and past experience resulting in regular usage (Nunes and Mayer, 2014).

*H2: Perceived Trust (PT) has significant and positive effect on Attitude towards Mobile Applications (ATMA) in Tourism.*

### **2.4. Attitude towards Mobile Applications (ATMA) and Travel Intention (TI).**

In present scenario majority of tour and travel companies and hotels operate through mobile application providing information on their offerings with an option to customize or make changes your travel plans. The content provided by the mobile applications enhances the

likelihood to finalize the travel destination (Rivera et al., 2016). Customers find it convenient to use mobile applications as compared to other mediums, they extract information through mobile application and are even interest to make safe payment through the mobile application through their smart phone (Im and Hancer, 2014).

H3: Attitude towards Mobile Applications (ATMA) has significant and positive effect on Travel Intention (TI) for destination.

### 2.5. Attitude towards Mobile Applications (ATMA) as Mediator.

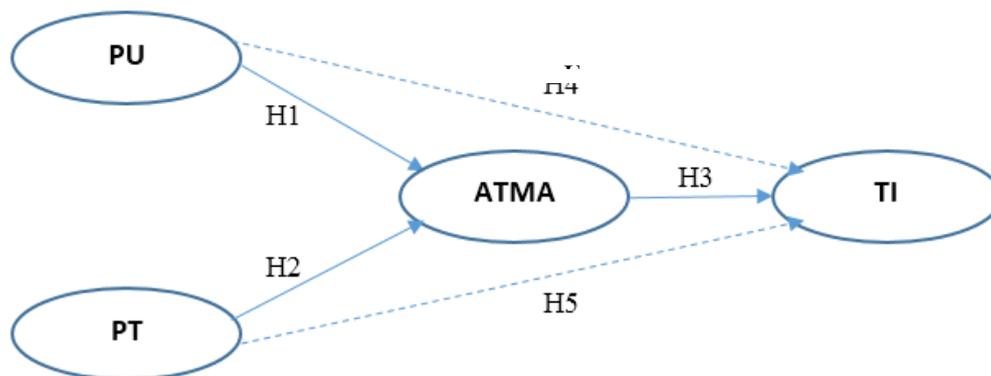
The consumer is influenced by mobile application, if it is capable of providing added useful information (Lee and Chen, 2010) that consumer is looking for, besides the existing information that consumer already possess, further that information can be used and consistent (No and Kim, 2014), motivating to buy services provided by the mobile application (Morosan, 2014) ensuring booking hotels or stay at travel destination (Park and Huang, 2017) and raising the experience during the travel (Lee et al., 2015). Bader et al. (2012) suggest the consumer uses these mobile application with a motive to no waste any time in finalizing travel destination with being more proficient and efficacious.

Douglas and Lubbe (2013) posits that majority of customers appreciate using mobile applications for their travel intentions, keeping in view its usefulness and trust. The objective to use the mobile application for reservations is not limited to the ease of use and enjoyment only but also to the content that is useful and a mobile application that can be trusted for not only the features but also the payment safety (Rivera et al., 2015). The ease of use and enjoyment are psychological motives for the travelers and real motive will be the mobile application's usefulness and the trust while making reservations for their travel (Ozturk et al., 2016) enabling customers to control the process of deciding about travel intention till the safe payment as the final step (Park and Huang, 2017).

H4: Attitude towards Mobile Applications (ATMA) positively and significantly mediates the relationship of Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Travel Intention (TI).

H5: Attitude towards Mobile Applications (ATMA) positively and significantly mediates the relationship of Perceived Trust (PT) and Travel Intention (TI).

### 2.7. Theoretical Model



Legends → PU: Perceived Usefulness, PT: Perceived Trust, ATMA: Attitude towards Mobile Applications, TI: Travel Intention

Figure 1 Hypothesized Model

### 3. RESEARCH METHOD

#### 3.1. Data Collection and Sampling

Data was collected from students of different institutions and universities in Uttarakhand. Both post graduate and under graduate students participated in the process of data collection. The participants were familiar with the mobile applications used for tourism related activities like, Uber for transportation, Google maps for direction and location etc. To receive data questionnaire was used as a tool, with multiple questions using Likert scale (five points) as questionnaire is better tool because there is no link between the respondents and the researcher, thus collected data is pure in nature (Saunders et al., 2009). The questionnaires was shared through Google forms to the respondents. The data was gathered from July, 2020 to Aug, 2020. We received 371 filled questionnaires out of which 273 were serviceable, with 73 percent response rate. Within respondents 57 percent was male and 43 percent were female.

### 4. RESULTS

#### 4.1. Descriptive Analysis

The Mean, standard deviation and correlations amongst the variables are shown in Table 1. The variables standard deviation ranges from 0.856 to 1.158 and mean remains between 2.460 to 2.797. At  $p < .01$ , the values of correlation between variables found significant. The variance inflation factor (VIF) was noticed below 4, so no issue of multicollinearity in this study. Used data was cross sectional in nature so there was no need to test for causal relationship.

**Table 1** Descriptive analysis

Descriptive Statistics			Pearson Correlation			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	eWOM	SC	TST	BI
PT	2.4602	.85680	1			
ATMA	2.7743	1.05560	.700**	1		
TI	2.7146	1.15830	.392**	.685**	1	
PU	2.7979	1.05690	.447**	.523**	.292**	1

#### 4.2. Assessment of Measurement Model

For CFA (“Confirmatory Factor Analysis”) Amos v21 is used. The dealings of model were tremendous as achieving the compulsory cut offs as: CFI=0.983, RMSEA=0.042, PClose =0.790, SRMR=0.033,  $\chi^2 / df = 1.485$ , as specified in previous studies the values found were satisfying (Gaskin & Lim, 2017). According to Scott & Bruce (1994), the GFI value should be greater than 0.8, in this study it is found 0.944. AGFI should also be above 0.8 (Seyal A. H., et al., 2002) and in this study it was found 0.92. All the values for model fit are shown in table 2, which interprets a good model.

**Table 2** Measures for Model Fit

Measure	Estimate	Threshold	Interpretation
CMIN	124.780	--	--
DF	84	--	--
CMIN/DF	1.485	Between 1 and 3	Excellent
CFI	0.983	>0.95	Excellent
SRMR	0.033	<0.08	Excellent
RMSEA	0.042	<0.06	Excellent

Measure	Estimate	Threshold	Interpretation
PClose	0.790	>0.05	Excellent

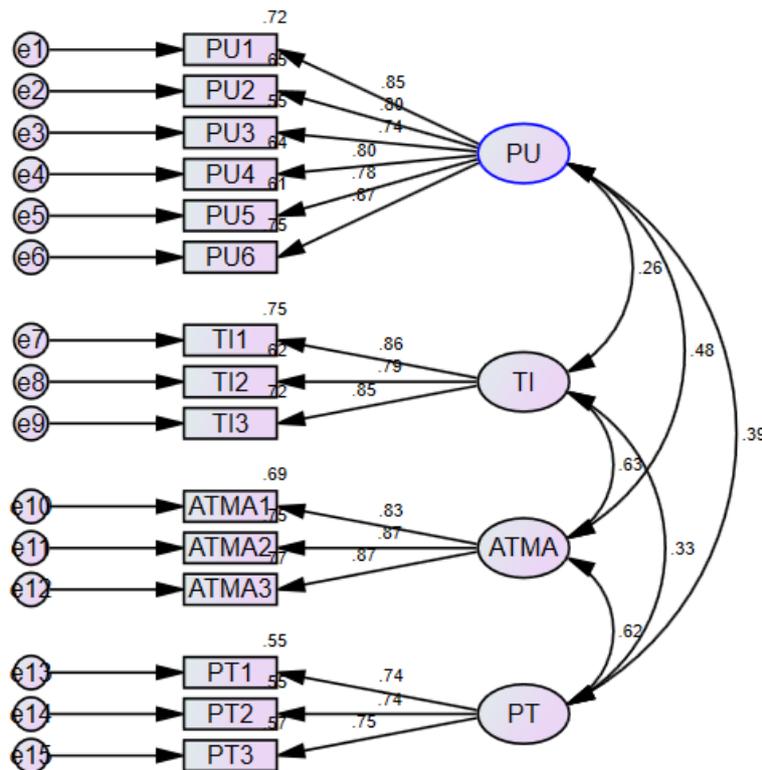


Figure 2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

To evaluate psychometric properties of constructs, we conducted a reliability and validity test. To ensure reliability, the factor loading is > 0.70. According to Hair, et al (2010), Cronbach’s alpha coefficient should be greater than 0.7, in this study it is above 0.7 for all variables. The CR, AVE and MSV of variables are shown in Table 3. The model fulfills all the conditions for Convergent Validity as CR > AVE, AVE>0.5 and CR > 0.7. The model also satisfies all the conditions for Discriminant Validity as AVE>0.5 and AVE > MVE (Hair, et. al., 2010).

Table 3 Factor loading reliability and Validity

Constructs	Item	AVE	MSV	Cronbach’s Alpha /CR	Factor loading	t-value
PU	PU1	0.653	0.234	0.918/0.918	0.849	
	PU2				0.803	16.052***
	PU3				0.745	14.32***
	PU4				0.801	15.975***
	PU5				0.779	15.316***
	PU6				0.865	18.095***
TI	TI1	0.694	0.391	0.791/0.872	0.864	
	TI2				0.786	14.665***
	TI3				0.847	15.922***
ATMA	ATMA1	0.736	0.391	0.892/0.893	0.834	
	ATMA2				0.866	16.971***
	ATMA3				0.875	17.19***

Constructs	Item	AVE	MSV	Cronbach's Alpha /CR	Factor loading	t-value
PT	PT1	0.558	0.382	0.870/0.791	0.744	
	PT2				0.744	10.473***
	PT3				0.752	10.541***

\*\*\* Denotes  $p < 0.001$

### 4.3. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM): Hypothesis Testing

A SEM is accomplished for testing the hypothesis and mediating properties after the CFA. The model describes  $\chi^2 / df = 1.485$  so acceptance of compatibility between default model and model data (Hu & Bentler, 1999) and PClose was 0.79. As structural model is worthy model fit (CFI= 0.983, SRMR= 0.033, RMSEA= 0.042) it is appropriate for advance analysis.

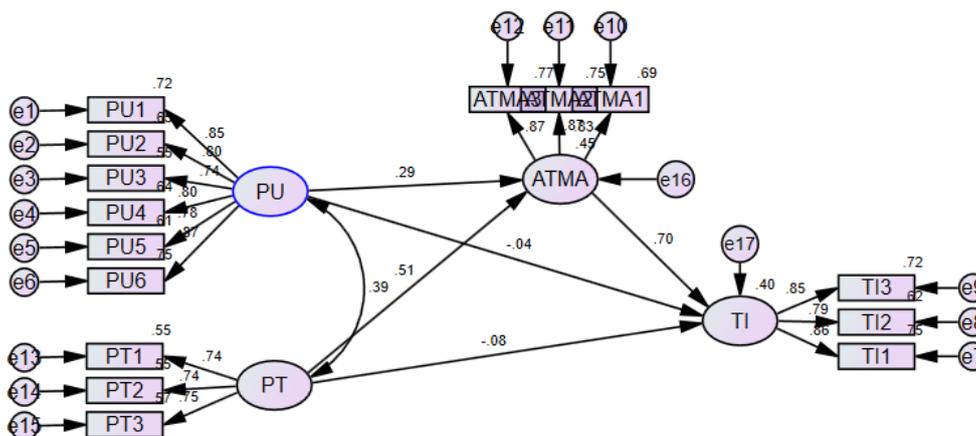


Figure 3 Structural Model

The results of hypothesis are revealed in Table 4. H1 is, that PU has significant and positive effect on ATMA, and it is found that PU have positive significant impact on ATMA ( $\beta = .285$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), thus H1 is accepted. According to H2: PT has significant and positive effect on ATMA, as per table 4, PT have significant impact on ATMA ( $\beta = .503$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), so H2 is accepted. H3 states that ATMA has significant and positive effect on TI, table 4 displays ATMA with positive impact on TI ( $\beta = .696$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) thus H3 is accepted. The 40% of variation (R Squared) is described by the variables on TI.

Table 4 Hypothesis testing summary

Hypothesis	B value	t-value	Conclusion
PU → ATMA	.285	4.541***	Hypothesis accepted
PT → ATMA	.503	7.715***	Hypothesis accepted
ATMA → TI	.696	7.501***	Hypothesis accepted

Sign \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

### 4.4. Mediation Analysis

According to Baron & Kenny (1986), the main effect between independent and dependent constructs must be tested first for mediation analysis, Awang (2015) the impact of mediating variable will be taken as full mediation if the main effect is insignificant. As depicted in Table 5, the direct effect of PU on TI is insignificant, and indirect effect with the ATMA as mediator is significant, thus there is a full mediation effect of ATMA between PU and TI. The direct effect of PU on TI is insignificant, and indirect effect with the ATMA as mediator is significant,

thus there is a full mediation effect of ATMA between PU and TI. In the same way the direct effect of PT on TI is insignificant, and indirect effect with the ATMA as mediator is significant, thus there is a full mediation effect of ATMA between PT and TI. Table 5 shows the value of direct and indirect effects of PU and PT on TI.

**Table 5** Mediation Analysis

Hypothesis	$\beta$ (Direct)	$\beta$ (Indirect)	Output
PU → ATMA → TI	-.040 #	.199 ***	Hypothesis accepted (full Mediation)
PT → ATMA → TI	-.083 #	.353 ***	Hypothesis accepted (full Mediation)

(“Sign \*\*\* p<0.001, \*\*p<0.01, \*p<0.05, # p>0.05: insignificant”)

## 5. DISCUSSION

A strong relationship amongst all PU, PT, ATMA and TI suggest that customers find mobile application suitable for their travel decisions. The mobile applications have emerged as the strongest medium to share and get informed regarding travel and tourism. Large number of customers enjoy using mobile applications and intend to do so for future travel plans. These mobile applications have been successful in providing usefulness and developing trust. With an ever increasing usage of smart phones, the usage of mobile application has also increased. Which are capable of by providing a blend of suitable services mix with an objective to create a support system that can enhance overall experience. A lot now depends on mobile application for finalizing the travel destination and the information provided is very useful in majority of cases. The findings indicated significant mediating role of attitude towards mobile application (ATMA) between perceived usefulness (PU), perceived trust (PT) and travel intention (TI). Though perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived trust (PT) have direct and significant relationship with travel intentions (TI) but the mediating effect of attitude towards social media (ATMA) provided better results revealing the customers deliberately using these applications. The results obtained in this research paper are evidently mirror to the preceding literature reflecting effect of social media on travel intention (Krishnamurthy and Kumar, 2018). The sources with high perceived usefulness and perceived quality have a strong relationship with social media reflecting positive results on travel intention.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

Attitude towards mobile applications as emerged as an imperative way of extracting information related to travel destination. Internet and internet technologies enabled mobile applications have created an aura, where customers find it to be the first source for searching information related to tourism. Attitude towards mobile application plays a vital role while finalizing the travel intention as it has emerged as the source where mass information can be gathered related to travel ideas.

This paper aimed to understand how mobile applications are influencing the customers for their travel intention. In order to attain this aim, the data was collected from customers and the tour and travel agents. The outcome of the research demonstrates that mobile applications play a vital role in influencing the customers for finalizing their decision related to travel destination. This includes two important factors perceived usefulness and perceived trust, and mediation of attitude towards mobile application through which the travel and tourism related organization improve their services for improved results. Any organization which operates in the tourism industry, if handles its mobile application optimally may take advantage of competitive edge over its competitors.

Mobile applications have provided numerous influencers in the form of either recommenders or reviewers providing information with the positive and negative feedback of the product and services. This information shared and accessed through mobile applications has potential to strongly influence the travel intention, therefore the marketers are urgently required to devise suitable strategies that can persuade travelers for their travel decisions. The marketers can set up such social media campaigns which can provide maximum and suitable to information to the travelers, the suggestions can be invited from travelers to make travel experience more memorable for all good reasons. The future study may also focus on covering more states, countries, mobile applications, social media platforms by giving priority to providing best possible real time information to the travelers.

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