



## Survey on Young Users' Preferences for Using Online Travel Guide

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## ABSTRACT

OTA (Online Travel Agency) refers to the practice of travelers making online or offline purchases of travel-related goods and services through travel services, i.e. Each tourism entity can market or sell its products through the Internet. The advent of OTA in the travel sector has increased the share of online promotion and information dissemination in tourism sales, delivering tourism services in a larger and multi-level way. This is due to the rapid growth of mobile network innovation. More and more young users are choosing to use their mobile devices to book travel products, find travel tips, etc. However, research on the behavior of young users using online travel tips is still incomplete. We used a questionnaire survey to collect 110 valid samples of data and analyzed them through descriptive statistics. Through the study, we summarised the focus and preferences of young users in using online travel guides and made suggestions on the functions and design of the current online travel guide app.

## KEYWORDS:

Online travel strategy, User needs, Questionnaire research, Youth, Mobile applications

## 1 INTRODUCTION

One of the most dynamic global trends right now is tourism. Tourism as a business should address a range of visitor behaviors along with internal and external factors that have a significant impact on these behaviors. This industry is thought to be highly active. The web + traditional manufacturing model must have gradually replaced the majority of such links in the traditional communication and sales channels in different sectors, realizing direct contact between the demand side as well as the supply side. This development coincides with the development of mobile internet technology. All major online travel service providers have, coincidentally, developed mobile clients, making the mobile Network environment a new market for traditional travel agencies and e-commerce businesses to enter. Mobile communities provide more up-to-date information than traditional online travel communities [1]. Mobile phone travel APPs are quickly becoming a crucial tool for travelers, expanding the distribution of travel advice beyond traditional print and television media. At present, the mainstream travel guide apps used by Chinese users include China's Antbee's Nest Free Travel, Poor Travel Guide, and abroad's Trip Advisor. The model of online travel information dissemination with user participation is also constantly being updated.

Tourism consumption behavior is intrinsically driven by consumer demand. With the promotion of internet media, the youth group is starting to become potential tourists since they have a keen curiosity about the outside environment, increasingly solid consumer demand [2]. Young travelers are essential to the industry's future for at least three reasons: the enormous number of young people traveling today [3, 4]; the possibility that the larger public would adopt new views regarding tourism as a result of their original decisions [5, 6]; the hope that young people would still go on vacation in the future [7]. This latter element is very significant from a prospective future standpoint. Today young generation has different needs than

their parents or grandparents in general [8]. This demographic stands out because of the social and economic circumstances that have created their particular travel motivations, values, and attitudes [9]. Online Travel Agency must comprehend and meet these evolving needs if it is to be ready for the future. Motivations for travel and behavioral preferences for the use of mobile applications among youth groups emerge as important areas of research.

## **2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Youth tourism**

Young people in the Asia-Pacific region travel more frequently for jobs, school, leisure, and related reasons [10]. In 2000, the International Federation of Youth Tourism Organisations (F.I.Y.T.O.) announced that youth tourism accounted for 20% of all international visitors internationally. Worldwide, 284 million young people go abroad each year, spending close to USD 280 billion [11]. The youth tourism market is proving to be a large and promising one. A focus on youth tourism can contribute to the development of tourism as a whole [12].

With the blending of new and traditional media, as well as the development of machine learning technologies, the present media ecology has undergone a significant transition. The youth group relies on the use of new media in all stages before, during, and after travel [13]. From a sociocultural standpoint, it has been noted that youth are a creative force and that their decisions may influence how the larger society handles tourism [14, 15]. Younger generations are more accustomed to booking travel products on mobile apps [16]. All of these factors indicate the significance of researching this target population.

### **2.2 Travel preferences**

Consumer travel preferences help explain their choice of travel destinations and travel activities [17]. The definition of preference covers psychological/biological needs and desires and includes the internal forces that inspire, guide, and integrate a person's behavior and activities. To explain preference, numerous academics have offered ideas and models [18, 19, 20, 21]. Preference can be used as a starting point to study tourism behavior and comprehend travelers' decisions [22].

## **3 FOCUS ON THIS STUDY**

The background presented shows that online travel tips are increasingly valued in travel and those young users are an important group using online travel tips. All following study questions were posed to better understand young consumers' preferences for internet travel guides according to previous research:

RQ1: Detailed data on young people's travel habits and how they utilize travel website advice.

RQ2: Preferences of young users for travel guide apps.

## **4 METHOD**

### **4.1 Participants**

A convenience sampling method and a semi-structured questionnaire were used for this study. Researchers mostly distributed the questionnaire via social networking applications including Tencent, Sina, Post, and

Little Red Book. The age range for participants in this poll, which examined how young people utilize internet travel advice, was set at 18 to 25.

## 4.2 Procedures

The current questionnaire was adapted from a related study (Chen et al., 2017) and was divided into three sections:

1. Basic personal information of young users, including 3 items of gender and occupation.
2. Data on transportation by youths and their use of online travel tips, with 16 items: frequency of transportation, the purpose of journeys, whether it should prepare ideas and tips, duration preparing tips and advice, tendency to receive full tips directly, sources of tips, challenges using online travel tips, as well as bad experiences acting on tips.
3. Preferences of young users of travel guide apps, including 29 items: commonly used travel guide apps, aspects to focus on when using travel guide apps.

It takes 5-9 minutes to complete this questionnaire. This survey was conducted using a convenience sampling method and the questionnaire was distributed over 14 days from 27 June 2022 to 10 July 2022. 110 questionnaires were returned, with 110 valid questionnaires and an efficiency rate of 100%. Of these, 50% (55) of the participants completed the questionnaire on the day of publication. To examine reliability on the total and sub-scales, Cronbach's alpha analysis and correlation analysis were used. The total and sub-scale Cronbach's alpha levels were .988, .845, and .995, respectively, indicating that each had an adequate level of inter-item reliability. Each group underwent a descriptive statistical analysis. Levene's statistic was used to test the premise of homogeneity of variances. The factors' descriptive, reliability, and validity data are shown in [Table 1](#).

**Table 1. Cronbach's alpha analysis**

Variable	Number of items	M	SD	Cronbach's alpha
Information on young users' travel and use of online travel tips	16	5.4	11.012	.845
Preferences of young users of travel guide apps	29	5.418	39.404	.995
Total	45	10.818	50.297	.988

## 5 ANALYSIS

Our results show the following. The vast majority of young users do travel guides and spend most of their time one to two days. [Table 2](#) summarises the travel frequency of young users aged 18-25. Firstly, the majority of users included in the survey are students by profession (90.91%), followed by employed people who make up 6.36% of the respondents.

**Table 2. Occupation of young users and frequency of travel during the year**

Occupation	Sample size	Percentage	Frequency of travel during the year			
			0 times	1-3 times	4-5 times	More than 5 times
Working people	7	6.36%	57.14%	42.86%	0%	0%
Student	100	90.91%	28%	64%	6%	2%

Freelancer	3	2.73%	33.33%	33.33%	33.33%	0%
Total	110	100%	30%	61.82%	6.36%	1.82%

Regarding the frequency of travel, 30% of young users have not traveled in a year, 61.82% have traveled 1-3 times in a year, 6.36% have traveled 4-5 times in a year and 1.82% have traveled more than 5 times. This means that 70% of young people have a regular annual travel plan. Because the survey respondents were selected between the ages of 18-25, a large number of this age group are students. Students typically travel 1-3 times more per year than employed or independent workers, which is simple to understand why given that they enjoy more free time for this.

Figure 1 shows the relationship between the frequency of travel of young users and their production of travel tips. Consumers who travel more often each year tend to produce detailed and complete travel guides. Apart from the number of trips, the vast majority of young people tend to make detailed tips. About 90% of young people who choose to travel 1-3 times a year create travel guides. But there is no significant difference in the level of detail of the tips. However, those who choose to travel more than four times a year reflect a greater enthusiasm for travel and a significantly greater willingness to do detailed travel planning. That leads us to the additional conclusion of young users value the function of travel advice and that the majority of them prepare ahead of time.

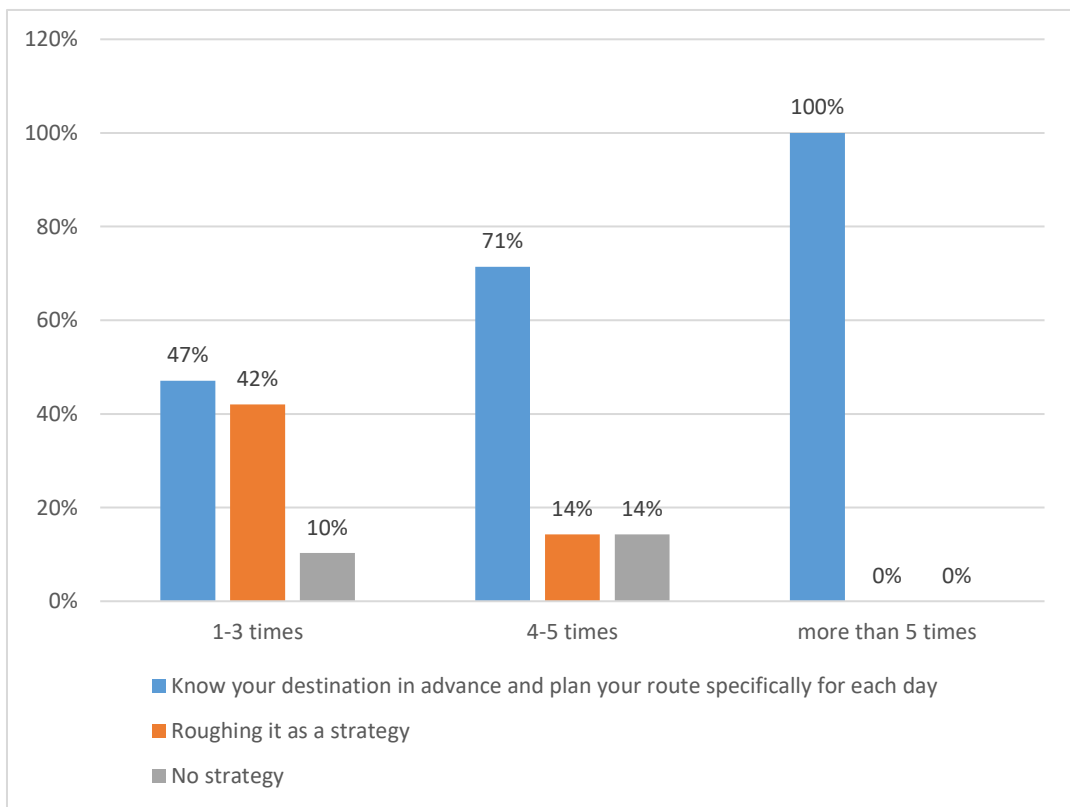


Figure 1. Number of trips and degree of strategy making

75% of all young users encounter the problem of too much information and difficulty in sifting through the relevant information in the process of making a guide, and 68.48% of young users find the information too mixed to be able to determine the truth or falsity of the information. A significant proportion of young users encounter both of these difficulties, choosing both. A further 1.09% of young users had other difficulties, too many advertisements when making travel tips.

In practicing travel tips, more than half of the participants reported problems with online travel tips not matching reality. 72% of young people experienced disappointment when their guide was overly embellished, 62% were misled by the information in the guide (outdated information, errors, etc.) and 50% experienced accidents when they did not travel well enough. Young travelers choose to avoid these situations by comparing travel tips on multiple online platforms, which to some extent improves the timeliness and authenticity of the information. However, this is a very time-consuming task and sometimes the traveler's enthusiasm is dulled in the process.

Figure 2 uses scoring in order of preference, with the average combined score for the options =  $(\sum \text{frequency} \times \text{weight}) / \text{number of people completing this question}$ . The text category contains both a rich personal and emotional experience and a guide to the travel process. Personalized, vivid narratives are most popular with participants and can give the reader a sense of immersion. This is followed by information on pictures of the destination, which is an essential visual aspect. The lowest-scoring helpful articles are those that contain a bunch more detailed travel directions; this is likely because they have an excessive amount of plain text and are visually taxing.

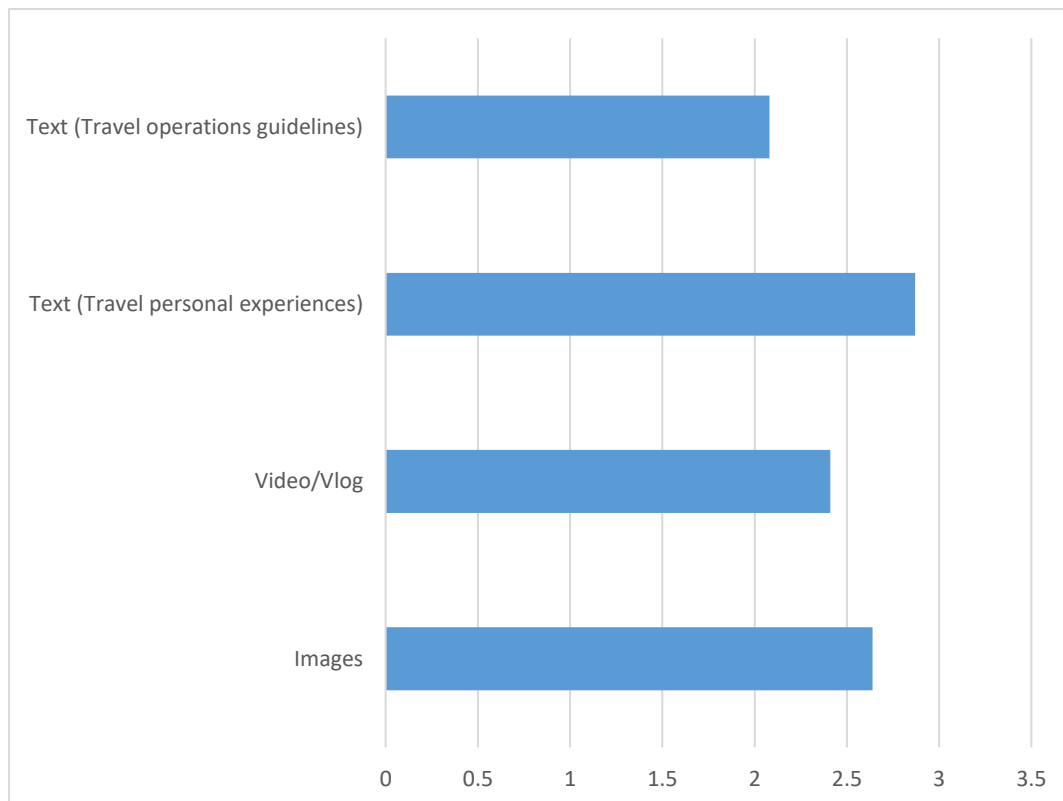
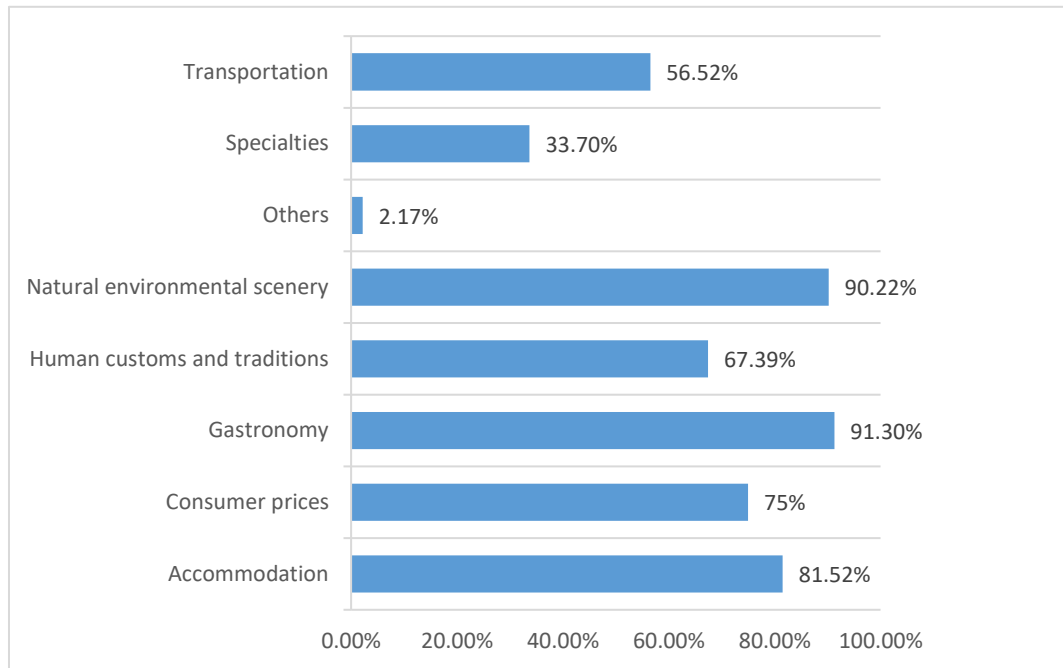


Figure 2. Preference for each kind of content

Figure 3 illustrates that out 90% of young users select destination food quality natural environment scenery as their top two considerations when formulating travel recommendations. This was followed by accommodation conditions, consumer prices at the destination, human customs and habits, and local transportation, which accounted for a higher percentage. Other factors such as security issues and infrastructure were also specifically cited by young users.



**Figure 3.** Strategy-making considerations

Figure 4's statistics make it obvious how recommendations from friends and new media apps are the two most common sources of travel advice for young consumers. This question is multiple choice, with around 90% of respondents choosing new media apps, which shows their popularity. Friends' recommendations also accounted for a significant proportion, indicating that young people trust their friends' recommendations. Travel magazines are the least popular channel for young people, probably because fewer young people book magazines and magazines are not as convenient and accessible as other online channels.

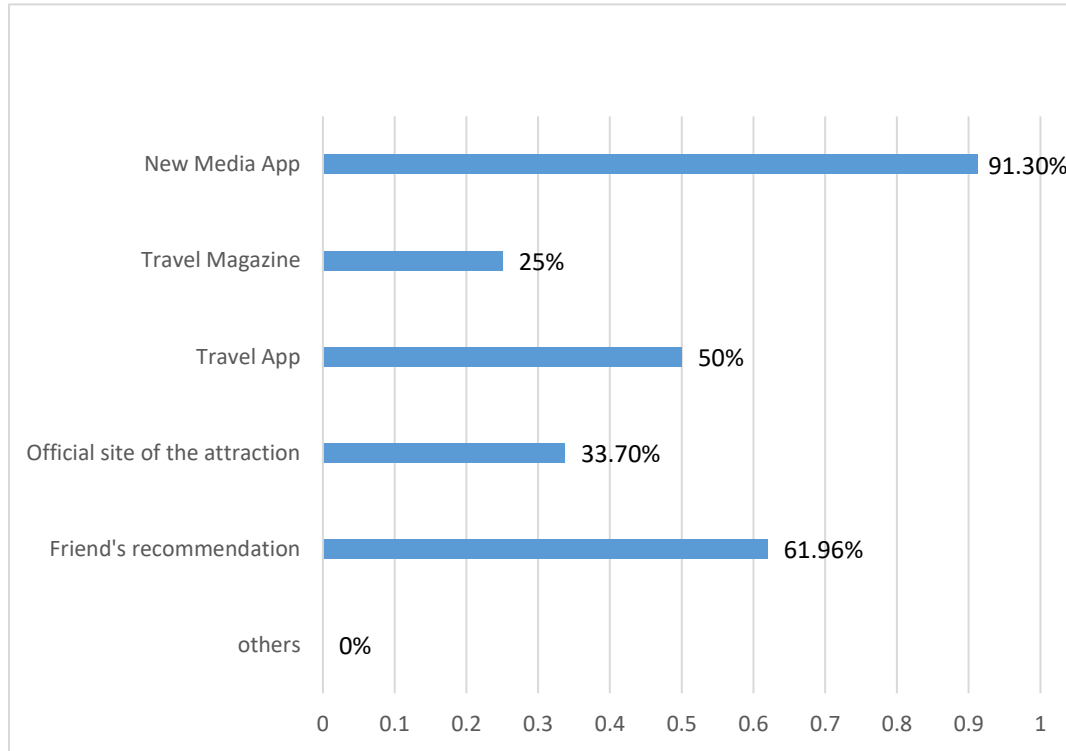


Figure 4. Travel information access path preferences

With young users of a trip guide app, functionality comes first, then interpersonal engagement and UI design. The most important aspect of a travel guide app is its basic functionality. Other young users (8.7%) focus on information, simplicity, content, clarity, etc.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

### 6.1 Fundamentals for internet travel advice

The results of this survey show that young people prefer lively, interesting textual narratives with personal emotions, as well as photo-rich presentations. The presentation of office processes has limited appeal to young people. The video format is also not popular with young people due to the lower entropy of the information and the higher internet traffic required. When uploading and sharing online travel tips, users can add travel details and personal experiences to their online travel tips to make them even better. Even if the material seems straightforward and helpful, articles with lots of particular travel directions may quickly bore young readers because they are too stiff. To compensate because of this, we could add some visual information to articles like this. In summary, online travel guides that include pictures of the destination and share details of the trip and personal experiences are more popular with young users.

The quality of travel tips published online has a significant impact on the actual travel experience of travelers [1]. Too much embellishment of the actual situation can lead to a sense of psychological disconnect for the user. The authenticity of travel guides requires some evaluation and feedback mechanisms to help users filter valid information. Timeliness makes an important dimension in the evaluation of the quality of travel tips. Software platforms should provide a filtering mechanism for the time dimension to give users a better experience.



## 6.2 Travel guide app usage preferences

To attract and retain young users, the most important aspect of a travel guide app is the functional services. A travel guide app that meets the needs of users should include advanced culling, price comparison, attraction reviews, food and accommodation recommendations, timely booking, itinerary planning, and point out pre-selected statistics [23]. Of course, user interface design and user social interaction aspects are also important. A well-designed travel website can positively drive consumer attitudes towards online shopping for travel products [24]. User social interaction, which has the advantage of trust in third-party recommendations, also needs attention.

Of all the major software platforms, Little Red Book makes it the most popular travel guide finder among young people. Little Red Book has more original graphic information from individual users and fewer ads, making it more trusted by young people. Furthermore, Little Red Book's two-column waterfall UI design and graphical page rate are more in line with mobile users' browsing and interaction habits. All of this makes Little Red Book the most popular app among youths for searching for travel tips than professional travel apps like Where to Go and Ctrip. If they are simply looking for tips, more young users will choose Little Red Book, while when they need to book other travel-related products, they will use professional travel software.

## 6.3 Limitations and future research directions

There are still some shortcomings in this paper. Firstly, the majority of participants are from the province of Guangdong, with the remainder dispersed among Henan, Beijing, Fujian, and other provinces. As a result, the geographical distribution of the research participants is uneven but also insufficient. Secondly, this paper does not distinguish between young users of different education levels.

Based on the findings of this study, researchers could expand further by employing stratified sampling procedures, focus groups, and personal interviews to increase that sample's representativeness and the applicability of such results. Future research will differentiate between young users with different levels of education and will take into account factors such as young users' household income. The findings from this youth user preference survey can also provide references to the design of official tourism organizations, tourism software platforms, and new media operating platforms. In the future, in-depth research can be conducted in the areas of software platform service design, operation strategy, software interaction design, and user interface design based on the results of the preference survey.

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