

# Online Travel Review Study

## Role & Impact of Online Travel Reviews

### Project Director:

Dr. Ulrike Gretzel

Director

Laboratory for Intelligent Systems in Tourism

Texas A&M University

### Research Staff:

Kyung Hyan Yoo

Melanie Purifoy

### Supported By:



February, 2007



Laboratory for Intelligent Systems in Tourism

My experience with this property took place in: September, 2006

Would I recommend this hotel to my best friend? probably not

My ratings for this hotel are:

- Value: 4/5
- Rooms: 4/5
- Location: 4/5
- Cleanliness: 4/5
- Check in / front desk: 4/5
- Service: 4/5

I recommend this hotel for: An amazing honeymoon, A romantic getaway, Older travelers

I do not recommend this hotel for: Museums / Cultural / Historical sites

I selected this hotel because ... Museums / Cultural / Historical sites

My age: 35-49

Traveling group: Spouse / significant other

My visit was for: Romantic getaway

# Table of Contents

<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>1 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>2 STUDY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>3 METHODOLOGY</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>4 FINDINGS</b> .....	<b>10</b>
4.1 TRIP PLANNING BEHAVIOR .....	10
4.2 USE OF OTHER TRAVELERS' ONLINE REVIEWS.....	17
4.3 EVALUATION OF OTHER TRAVELERS' ONLINE REVIEWS .....	21
4.4 INFLUENCE OF OTHER TRAVELERS' ONLINE REVIEWS .....	25
4.5 MOTIVATIONS TO WRITE/POST REVIEWS .....	27
4.6 SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS.....	31
4.7 CHARACTERISTICS OF FREQUENT TRAVEL REVIEW READERS .....	36
4.7.1 <i>Trip Planning Behavior</i> .....	36
4.7.2 <i>Use of Other Travelers' Online Reviews</i> .....	42
4.7.3 <i>Evaluation of Other Travelers' Online Reviews</i> .....	45
4.7.4 <i>Influence of Other Travelers' Online Reviews</i> .....	50
4.7.5 <i>Motivation to write/post online travel reviews</i> .....	54
4.7.6 <i>Characteristics</i> .....	54
4.8 CHARACTERISTICS OF TRAVEL REVIEW WRITERS.....	57
4.8.1 <i>Trip Planning Behavior</i> .....	57
4.8.2 <i>Use of Other Travelers' Online Reviews</i> .....	59
4.8.3 <i>Evaluation of Other Travelers' Online Reviews</i> .....	60
4.8.4 <i>Influence of Other Travelers' Online Reviews</i> .....	62
4.8.5 <i>Characteristics</i> .....	64
<b>5 IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>67</b>
<b>6 REFERENCES</b> .....	<b>69</b>

## List of Figures

Figure 1. Number of Pleasure Trips in the Past 12 Months .....	12
Figure 2. Time of Advance Trip Planning .....	12
Figure 3. Information Source for Advance Trip Planning .....	13
Figure 4. Perception of Trip Planning .....	13
Figure 5. Involvement in Trip Planning .....	14
Figure 6. Trip Planning Decision Making Styles .....	14
Figure 7. Extent of Trip Planning .....	15
Figure 8. Frequency of Internet Use for Trip Planning .....	15
Figure 9. Activities During Online Trip Planning I .....	16
Figure 10. Activities During Online Trip Planning II .....	16
Figure 11. Have Read Other Travelers' Online Reviews .....	18
Figure 12. Frequency of Reading Travelers' Online Reviews .....	18
Figure 13. Use of Online Reviews in Different Trip Planning Stages .....	19
Figure 14. Importance of Travel Reviews for Travel-Related Decisions .....	19
Figure 15. Travel Web Sites Used to Find Other Travelers' Online Reviews .....	20
Figure 16. Importance of Information When Evaluating a Travel Review I .....	22
Figure 17. Importance of Information When Evaluating a Travel Review II .....	22
Figure 18. Additional Information Cues for Evaluating a Travel Review .....	23
Figure 19. Influence of Reviewer Characteristics on Perceived Credibility .....	23
Figure 20. Usefulness of Review When Posted by Certain Types of Reviewers .....	24
Figure 21. Other Travelers' Reviews Compared to Information from Travel Service Providers .....	24
Figure 22. Influence of Other Travelers' Reviews I .....	26
Figure 23. Influence of Other Travelers' Reviews II .....	26
Figure 24. Respondents Who Have Posted Online Travel Reviews .....	28
Figure 25. Barriers to Writing/Posting Online Travel Reviews .....	29
Figure 26. Motivation to Write Online Reviews I .....	29
Figure 27. Motivation to Write Online Reviews II .....	30
Figure 28. Motivation to Write Online Reviews III .....	30
Figure 29. Gender & Marriage .....	32
Figure 30. Age .....	32
Figure 31. Children under 17 Living in Household .....	33
Figure 32. Highest Level of Education Completed .....	33
Figure 33. Total Annual Household Income Before Taxes .....	34
Figure 34. Internet Skills .....	34
Figure 35. Online Activities in Past 3 Months .....	35

## Executive Summary

Ever more consumers read and share travel-related content online which has been created and posted by their peers rather than by travel service providers. Understanding who these consumers are, how they determine whether content is credible, and what motivates them to post reviews is of great interest to providers of review Web sites as well as general marketers.

A total of 7,000 TripAdvisor.com users who had previously agreed to participate in a research panel were surveyed in January 2007 to:

- Examine the role and impact of travel reviews in the pleasure trip planning process.
- Identify factors which influence review readers' evaluations of a review
- Investigate the influence of consumer-generated reviews on trip planning
- Identify motivations and barriers to posting reviews
- Understanding the differences between frequent online travel review readers and occasional readers as well as between those who post reviews and those who do not.

The Web-based survey effort led to 1480 useable responses, which represents a 21.1 percent response rate. The majority of the respondents are female (64%) and mostly between 35 and 64 years old (76.9%) with a large percentage (69.1%) having received a college or post graduate degree. A majority of the respondents (78.5%) has children living in their households. Nearly half of the respondents who reported income information have an annual household income before taxes of \$50,000-\$109,000 and 36 percent have household incomes of \$110,000 or more. The respondents generally see themselves as highly skilled at using the Internet and more than half engage in a variety of online activities such as reading blogs (64.4%), rating products/services (60.9%), rating reviews (57.4%), watching/downloading videos (55.9%), and posting/sharing photographs (55.6%).

The results of the study indicate that most of the surveyed TripAdvisor.com users travel frequently for pleasure. They do not like to make spontaneous decisions and plan their trips to a large extent in advance. Accordingly, they mostly start planning pleasure trips four or more months in advance and see trip planning as a critical and enjoyable process in which they become highly involved.

Almost all respondents use the Internet as an information source for planning pleasure trips and a majority (82.5%) uses it every time they plan a pleasure trip. Their most frequent travel planning-related online activities are: looking at other consumers' comments/materials (90%), printing out maps/directions (82.7%), reading travel-related blogs (64.2%), requesting printed materials/brochures (59.9%), and printing out coupons (40.7%).

More than half (57.8%) read other travelers' online reviews every time they plan a pleasure trip while 36.7% read them very often or frequently. A majority uses them to narrow down choices (64.7%) and in the beginning of trip planning to get ideas (63.7%). Respondents most frequently look for other travelers' reviews on virtual community Web sites (92.3%), travel guidebook sites (60.6%), online travel agency/auction sites (58.1%), search engines or portal sites (51.5%) and local destination Web sites (44.6%). More than three quarters (77.9%) of online travel review readers think that other travelers' reviews are extremely or very important for determining where to stay. The importance of reviews for other travel-related decisions is seen as much smaller.

Most online travel review readers indicate that detailed descriptions (71%), the type of Web site where the review is posted (64.7%), and the date the review was posted (59.3%) are critical to evaluating a review. A reviewer's credibility is most frequently judged based on the reviewer's travel experience (75.3%), similarity in terms of activities engaged in during a trip (65.9%), trip purpose (60%) and writes in a polite and friendly manner (58.5%). Similarly, a review's usefulness is most frequently judged based on the reviewer's travel experience (78.5%), similarity in terms of activities engaged in during a trip (68.2%), trip purpose (64.4%) and similarity in terms of age, gender or marital status (53.1%). However, the study respondents also provided an extensive list of additional cues used to judge travel reviews.

Most online review readers perceive other travelers' reviews as being more likely to provide up-to-date information, enjoyable information, and reliable information compared to content posted by travel service providers. Where travelers' reviews do not seem to provide such clear advantages is in terms of offering detailed and relevant information.

Travel review readers perceive that other travelers' online reviews have great impacts on their pleasure trip planning process. Almost all agree that travelers' reviews help them learn about a travel destination, product or service, help them evaluate alternatives, help them avoid places they would not enjoy and also provide them with ideas. Over 80 percent also agree that reading other travelers' online reviews increases confidence in decisions, makes it easier to image what a place would be like, helps reduce risk/uncertainty, makes it easier to reach decisions, and helps with planning pleasure trips more efficiently.

A majority (83%) of respondents not only reads but also writes/posts travel reviews. Of those who do not write/post reviews, time constraints is the most frequently mentioned reason. Online travel review writers are mostly motivated by a concern for other consumers, helping a travel service provider and needs for extraversion/positive self-enhancement. Venting negative feelings or receiving rewards for postings are not seen as important motives.

Analyses of the differences between occasional and very frequent readers of other travelers' reviews indicate that frequent readers plan pleasure trips even more in

advance, perceive planning as even more important and enjoyable, and become even more involved in trip planning. Frequent travel review readers are also even less likely to make impulsive decisions and are more likely to seek out other people's advice when planning trips. In addition, frequent review readers use the Internet even more and are even more likely to look at other consumers' materials, read travel-related blogs, watch videos online and use interactive trip planners. They are more likely to use travel reviews throughout all trip planning stages and more likely think that online travel reviews are important for a variety of travel-related decisions. Almost 88 percent think travel reviews are important for deciding where to stay.

Frequent travel review readers are more likely to look for travel reviews on virtual community and online travel agency Web sites. They are also more likely to strongly consider various criteria when evaluating reviewer credibility and judging a review's usefulness. Not surprisingly, they clearly see other travelers' reviews as superior to marketer information and more likely to be highly influenced by reviews. Frequent travel review readers are more likely to also post reviews. As far as their demographic characteristics are concerned, frequent travel review readers tend to be younger and have somewhat higher incomes. They are more skilled at using the Internet and are more likely to use and contribute content online. Specifically, 70.6 percent of frequent travel review readers read blogs, 66.2 percent rate products/contents online, 64.9 percent rate reviews, and 59 percent post/share photographs.

In contrast to those who do not actively write/post travel reviews, travel review writers are more likely to travel for pleasure and are more involved in trip planning than non-writers. Review writers are also more likely to use the Internet frequently for trip planning and have a greater tendency to look at other consumers' comments and to use live chat. In addition, review writers are more likely to use reviews throughout all trip planning stages. A great difference exists especially for use after the trip with 33.3 percent of writers compared to 11% of non-writers reading reviews in this stage. Travel review writers are more likely to use reviews for deciding where to go and deciding where to stay than non-writers and are also more likely to look for reviews on virtual community sites.

Travel review writers find the length of the review, type of Web site on which the review is posted and detailed descriptions included in reviews to be more important. They are also more likely to take a reviewer's similarity in terms of activities, a reviewer's writing style and the reviewer's rating by others into account when judging credibility. Further, writers are more likely to consider whether the reviewer appears to be a nice person, and writes in a polite and friendly manner when evaluating the usefulness of a review. Review writers are also more likely to see other travelers' reviews as superior to travel provider information and are more influenced by reviews.

As far as their characteristics are concerned, travel review writers are more likely to be male and young, have higher incomes and have greater Internet skills. They also

have a greater tendency to read blogs, write blogs, post comments to a blog, use social networking sites, listen to audio podcasts, watch videos online, post/share audio files, post/share videos, post/share photographs, rate products, rate reviews, maintain personal Web sites and contribute to wikis.

The results of this study indicate that TripAdvisor users, and in particular those who read other travelers' reviews frequently, represent an especially desirable demographic for travel marketers.

Most see reviews as important in deciding where to stay but only a minority of respondents evaluates them as very important for other travel-related decisions. Strategies for expanding consumers' perceptions of travel reviews are needed to create awareness of other uses, thus increasing use as well as impact of reviews. Also, incentives are needed to encourage consumers to use travel reviews in later stages of their travel-decision making process, during the trip, and after returning.

The study results clearly indicate that review readers use a variety of cues to judge whether they should take a review into account. The findings suggest that it is very important to provide context information such as information about the reviewer and about the trip. They also suggest that review sites such as TripAdvisor.com have a clear advantage as they provide a great amount of reviews and consumers evaluate reviews in the context of other reviews and other contributions by the same reviewer. The type of Web site where the review is posted also seems to play a role. Company sites appear to have a disadvantage to this respect.

It is difficult to motivate consumers to write/post travel reviews as motivations are to a great extent intrinsic. Rewards do not seem to encourage consumers much. It appears that decreasing the barriers to writing is a more effective strategy. Making it easy and efficient for people to contribute, reminding them that others helped them and that they can now help others after returning home seem to be critical in increasing the extent to which consumers contribute.

# 1 Introduction

The advent of the Internet has brought about a word-of-mouth revolution. Through the Internet, individuals can make their thoughts, opinions easily accessible to the global community of Internet users (Dellarocas, 2003). A total of 44 percent of US Internet users publish their thoughts or otherwise create content online (Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2004) and a majority of consumers report that they trust consumers' opinions posted online (Intelliseek, 2004).

Recently, increasing numbers of travelers use the Internet for travel planning (Travel Industry Association, 2005); indeed, searching for travel-related information is one of the most popular online activities (Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2006). Forrester (2006a) estimates current online travel spending at \$73 billion, which represents 35% of total online spending. More than 80% of web shoppers said they use other consumers' reviews (Forrester, 2006b). Similarly, Compete, Inc (2006) found that nearly 50% of travel purchasers visited a message board, forum, or online community for their online travel purchasing and one in three of these buyers said that consumer reviews helped with their purchase decision. Importantly, almost half of those whose purchasing decision was influenced by consumer reviews said that consumers' opinions actually caused them to change their mind about what they purchased. Moreover, among those buyers, 25% said they also posted a review on a consumer review site after making their purchase. Clearly, online consumer-generated information is taking on an important role in online travelers' decision making.

In spite of the increasing importance of online peer-to-peer (P2P) information exchange, many challenges still remain. One issue is establishing trust (Gretzel, 2006). The latest Internet study conducted by the Center for the Digital Future (2006) indicates that information pages posted by individuals have very low credibility, with only 11.5% of users saying that the information on Web sites posted by individuals is reliable and accurate. Also, a number of studies reported that online reviewers are perceived as being lower in credibility and likeability compared to traditional word-of-mouth sources due to the absence of source cues in online environments (Jin et al., 2002; Smith, Menon & Sivakumar, 2005; Dellarocas, 2006). Another challenge is a lack of studies that examine the role of travel reviews in travelers' trip planning process. Without a better understanding of its role and use in travel planning, review providers can not improve their services. Further, although studies have been conducted to investigate what motivates consumers to actively contribute to virtual travel communities (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2003) and some research also exists regarding motivations to share opinions online (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh & Gremler, 2004), no specific data is available to shed light on consumers' motivations to write travel-related reviews.

Consequently, a travel review study was conducted to investigate the role and impact of online travel reviews in the travel planning process, the factors that



influence the credibility and usefulness of online travel reviews, as well as consumers' motivations to write and post online travel reviews.

## 2 Study Goals and Objectives

The following five specific goals were identified for the study:

1. Examining the role and impact of travel reviews in the process of planning pleasure trips.
2. Identifying factors which influence travel review readers' evaluations of the review's credibility and usefulness.
3. Investigating the influence of travel reviews on specific aspects of travel planning.
4. Identifying motivations and barriers to posting an online travel review.
5. Understanding frequent online travel review readers and travel review writers in terms of demographic characteristics, travel experience/planning style, and Internet use/online activities.

## 3 Methodology

**What?** Questions related to general travel experience/planning style, perceptions, use and impact of online travel reviews, motivations and barriers to posting online reviews, and demographic information were included. Questions were asked with respect to pleasure trip planning and were worded to include only those travel reviews posted online by other travelers (as opposed to expert opinions).

**When?** The survey was administered during a 4 week period between January 5 and January 31, 2007.

**Who?** The respondents were from a TripAdvisor.com traveler panel. The panel includes TripAdvisor users mostly from the US but also including users from other countries such as Canada, the UK and Australia. To avoid potential bias, consumers who work in or live with someone who works in market research, advertising, marketing, media/news, or public relations are excluded from the panel. Also, the panel includes only consumers who had taken pleasure trips in the previous year and/or anticipated taking pleasure trips the following year when the

panel was recruited. A total of 7000 panelists received an email invitation to complete the survey and 1480 (21.1%) panelists participated in the survey.

**How?** A web-based survey that included 29 questions was administered. Pre-tests were conducted with 15 survey experts to test the survey questionnaire and design. A drawing for one of two \$100 Amazon.com gift certificates was used as an incentive to encourage survey participation.

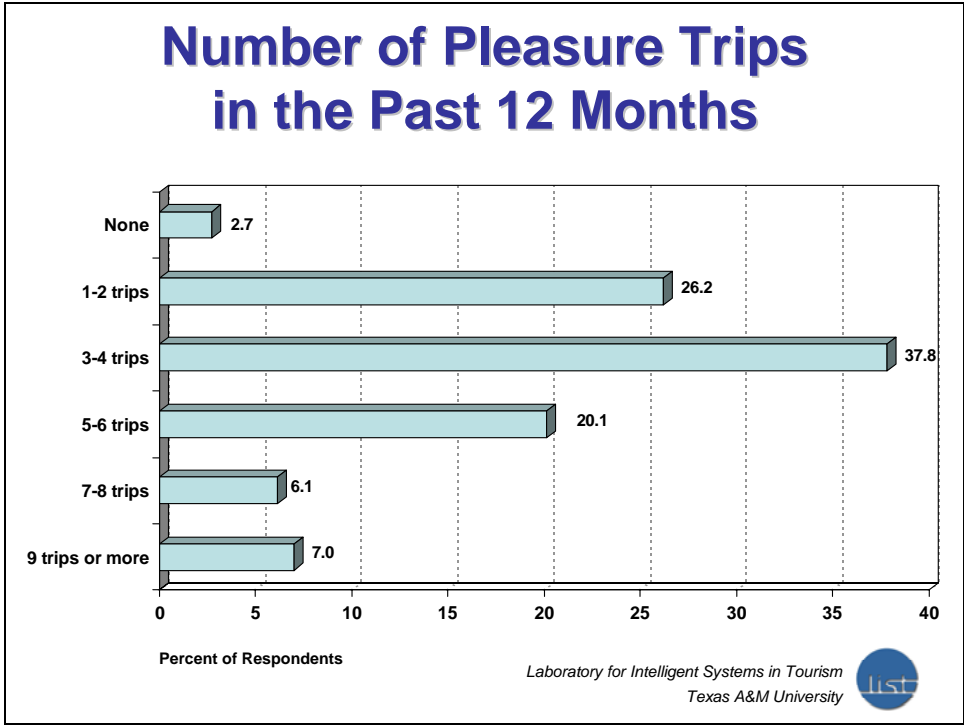
## 4 Findings

### 4.1 Trip Planning Behavior

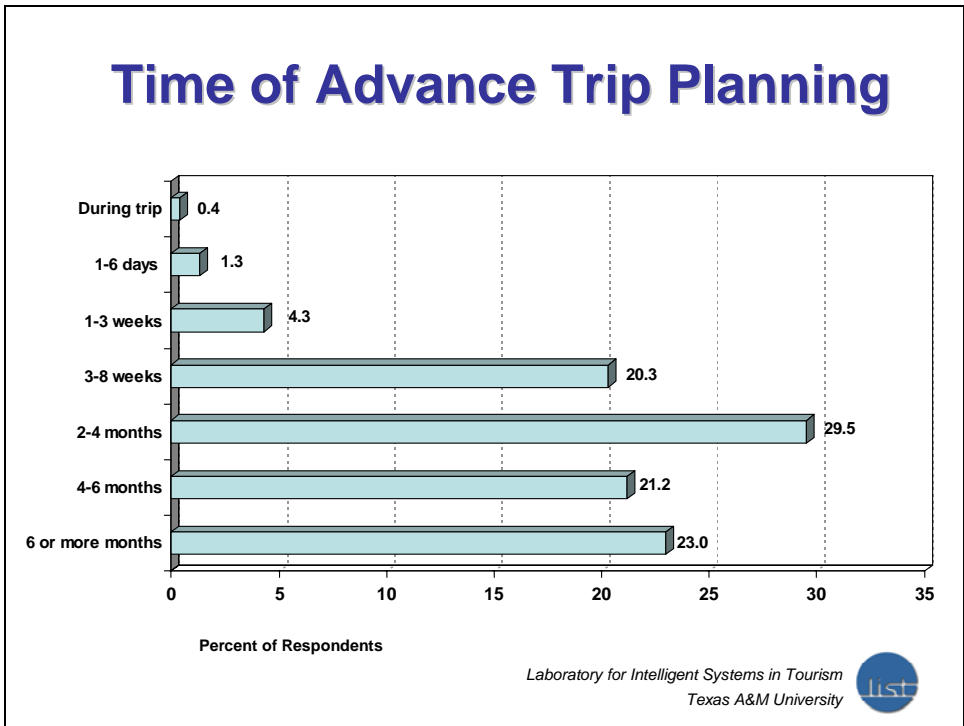
- Over one third (37.8%) of the respondents reported taking 3-4 pleasure trips in the past twelve months. Over one quarter (26.2%) of the respondents reported taking 1-2 trips in the past 12 months. 20.1% have taken 5-6 trips, 13.1% have taken 7 or more trips and 2.7% have taken no pleasure trips in the past twelve months.
- Almost 45 percent (44.2%) of the survey respondents begin their trip planning four or more months in advance. Nearly 30 percent (29.5%) plan 2-4 months in advance, 20.3 percent plan 3-8 weeks in advance and 1.3 percent plan 1-6 days in advance. Only 0.4 percent make travel decisions during their trip.
- A large majority of the respondents (96.4%) use the Internet as a source for trip planning. Travel books were listed as the second most used source for trip planning (68.3%), followed by family/friends (41.6%), magazines (35.6%), brochures/flyers (33.9%), newspapers (27.8%), tourism offices (22.6%), travel agents (22.3%), and AAA (21.4%). Television and radio were reported as the least used. Other sources mentioned include timeshare companies, maps, and travel shows.
- A large majority of the respondents reported feeling that travel planning is: very important (95.4%), something they like to do (94.0%), enjoyable (93.2%), critical (92.2%), essential (92.0%), and fun (91.5%). Significantly less see it as a chore. Only over half of the respondents reported that travel planning is process they have to go through (69.8%) and must be done (63.6%). Only slightly over thirty percent view trip planning as a necessary chore (31.8%).
- Most of the respondents stated they typically become very involved in trip planning (96.5%) and devote a lot of effort to trip planning (92.7%). Over two

thirds of the respondents feel trip planning is a process which takes up much of their time (70.8%). On the other hand, only 20.1 percent of respondents like to leave trip planning to others.

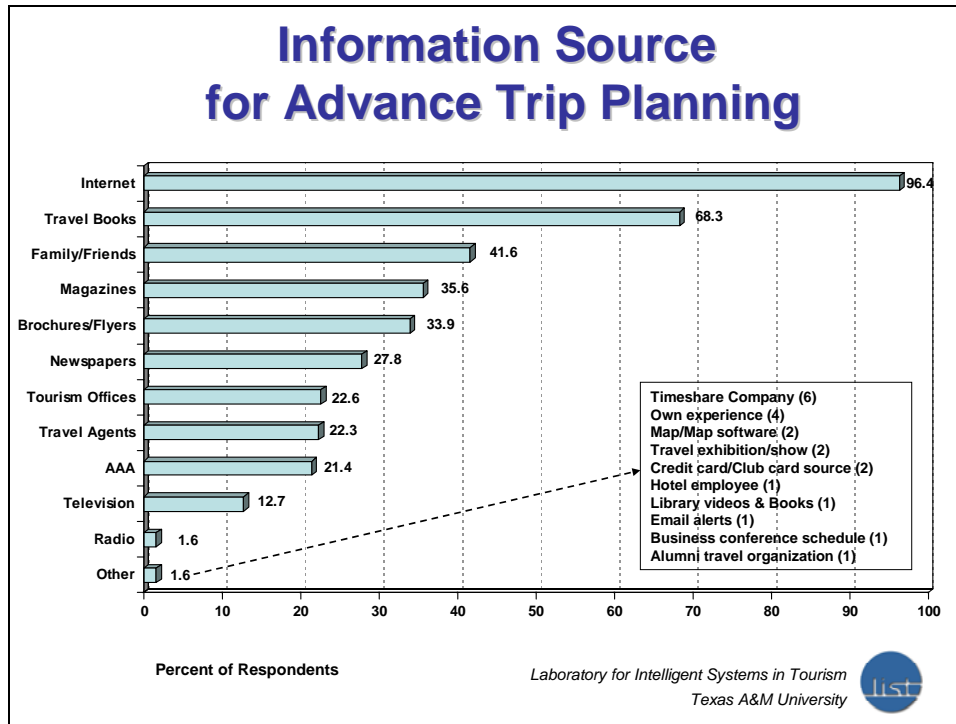
- The decision making style which the respondents most associate themselves with is intuition: they trust inner feelings and reactions (71.4%), rely upon their instincts (60.7%), and rely on their intuition (58.3%). The second most reported style is relying on others: seek out advice of people (58.3%), make decisions rarely without consulting other people (49.0%), often need assistance of other people (27.4%). Spur of the moment decisions was the least reported decision making style by the respondents: make decisions in the spur of the moment (24.6%), impulse decisions (21.5%), and snap decisions (13.1%).
- Overall, most respondents plan major aspects of their trip in advance (67.0%). One quarter of respondents like to plan in advance and are only open to minor changes (23.6%) and 2.4 percent plan in great detail and do not enjoy change. Fewer respondents keep advance planning to a minimum (6.4%) or make almost all decisions while on vacation (0.7%).
- It is clear that a majority of respondents always uses the Internet (82.5%) during their trip planning. 17.1 percent of respondents use the Internet often (13.5%) or sometimes (3.6%) when they make trip plans. On the other hand, only 0.4% use the Internet rarely or not at all during the process.
- Most of the online activities that respondents take part in during their trip planning are looking at other consumers' comments/materials (90.0%), printing out maps or directions (82.7%), read travel-related blogs (64.2%) and request printed materials/brochures (59.9%). 40.7 percent print out coupons. Approximately one quarter of respondents also watch videos online (27.7%) and use interactive trip planners (26.9%). A smaller percentage of people listen to travel-related audio files/podcasts (6.6%), use live chat to talk with travel experts (4.7%) and send virtual postcards to friends/family (3.7%). Less than one percent (0.7%) report using none of the listed options.



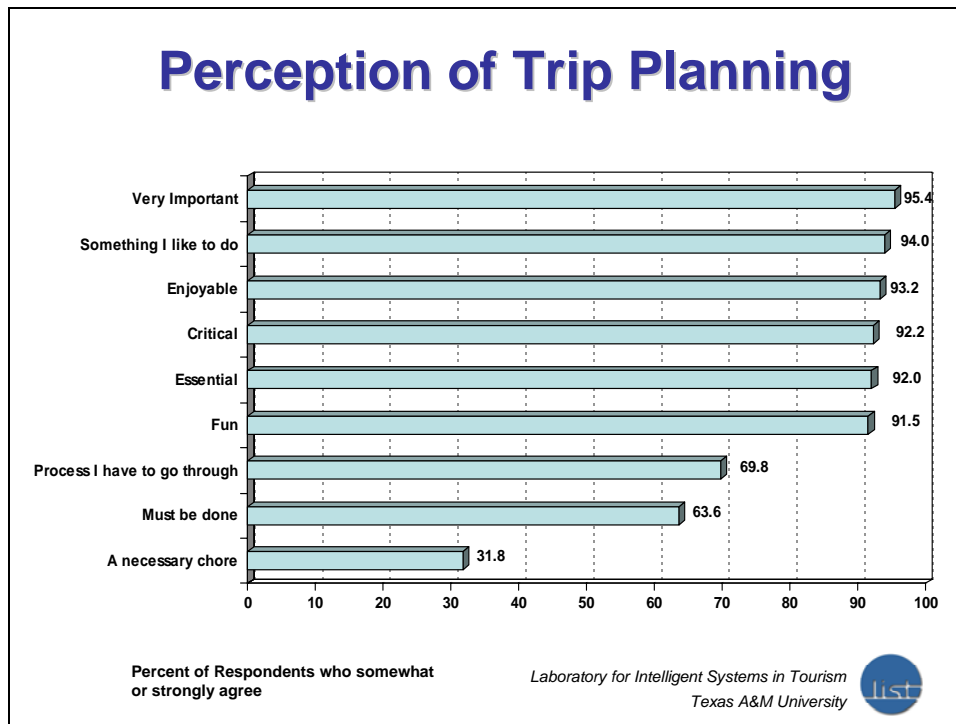
**Figure 1. Number of Pleasure Trips in the Past 12 Months**



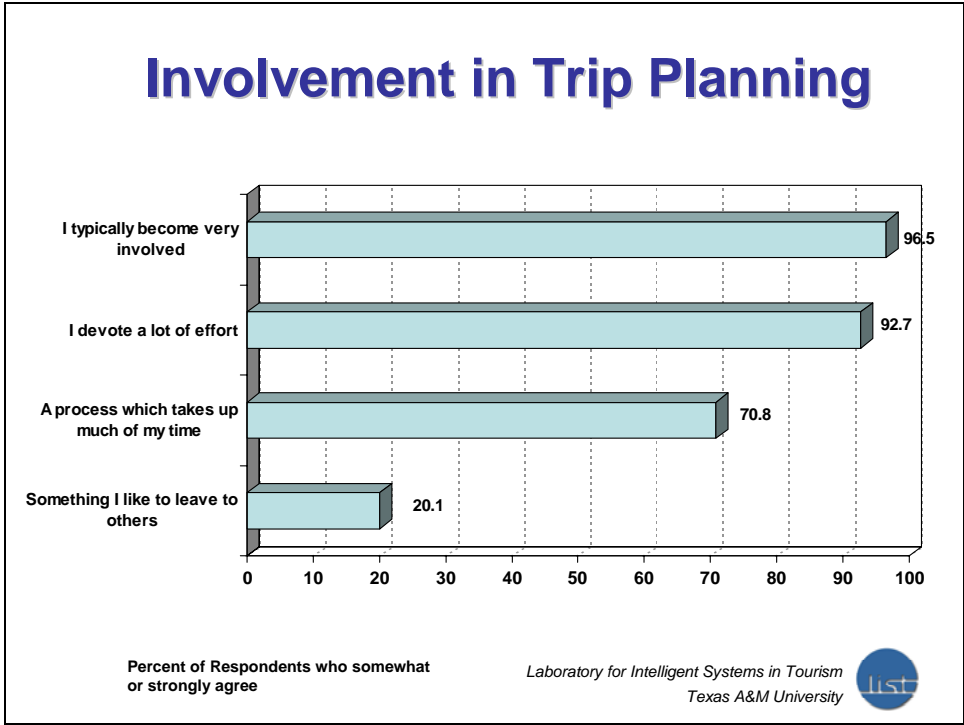
**Figure 2. Time of Advance Trip Planning**



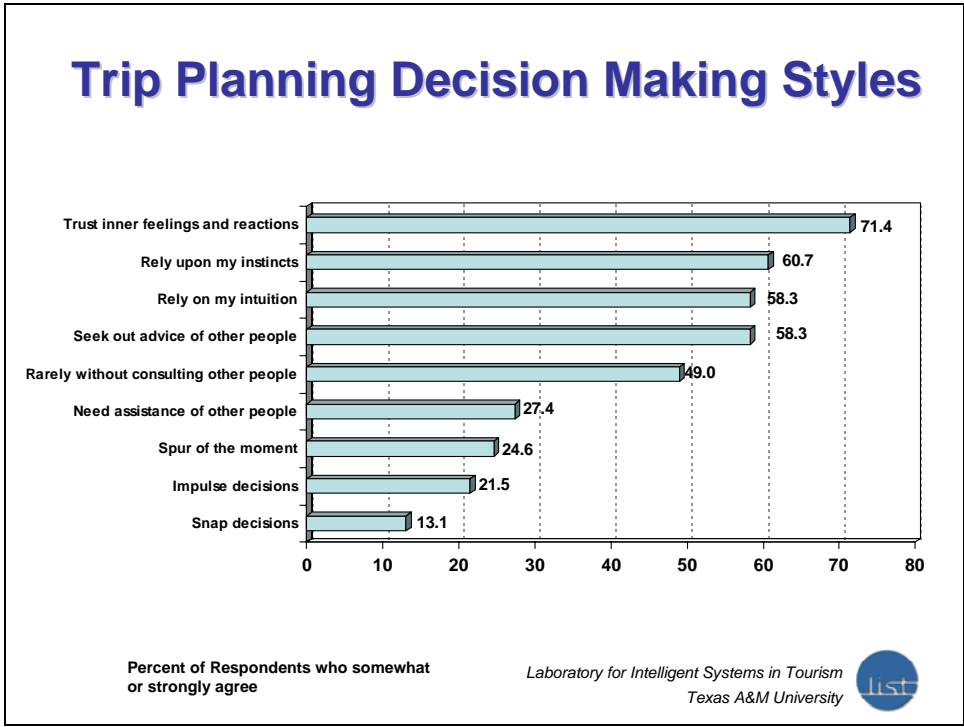
**Figure 3. Information Source for Advance Trip Planning**



**Figure 4. Perception of Trip Planning**



**Figure 5. Involvement in Trip Planning**



**Figure 6. Trip Planning Decision Making Styles**

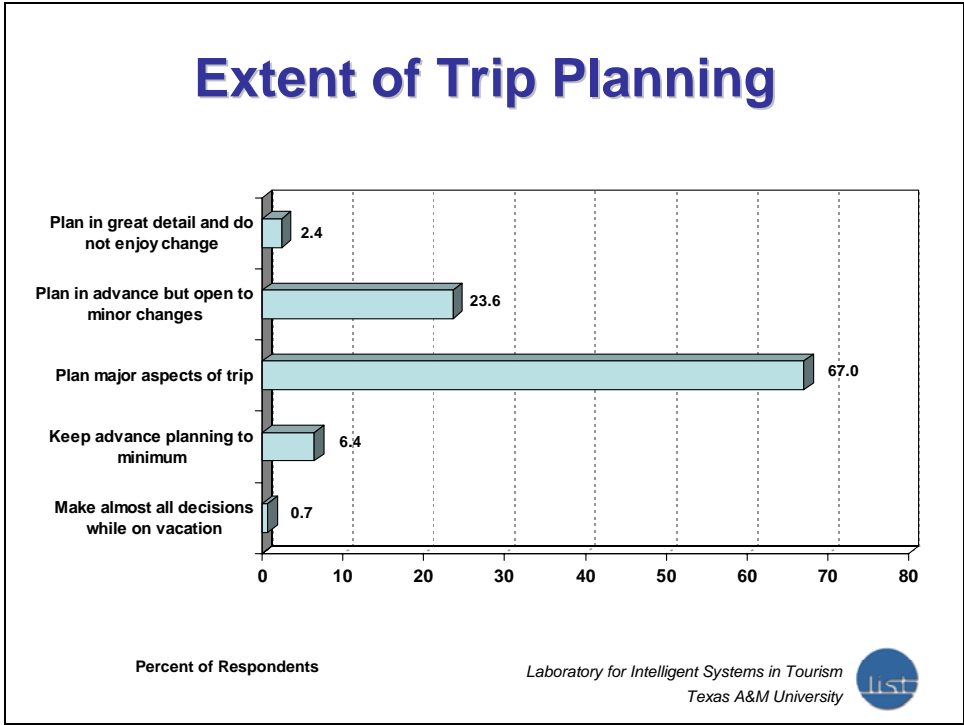


Figure 7. Extent of Trip Planning

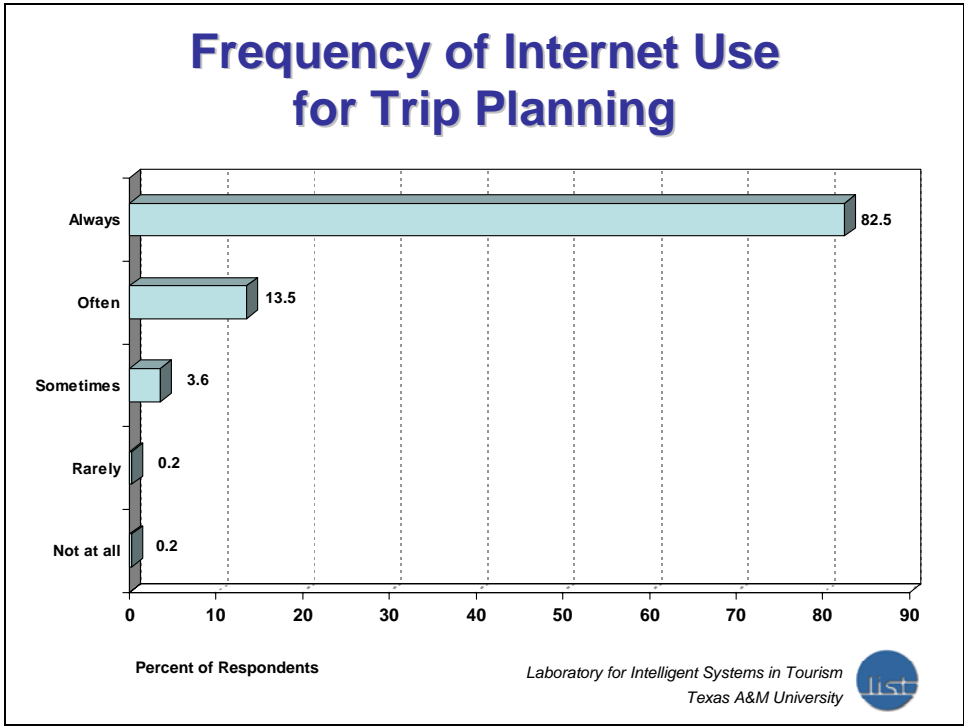
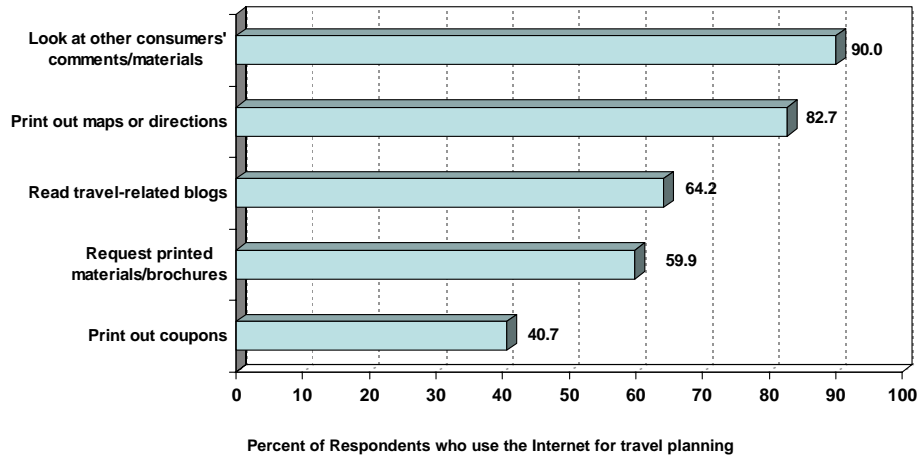


Figure 8. Frequency of Internet Use for Trip Planning

## Activities During Online Trip Planning I

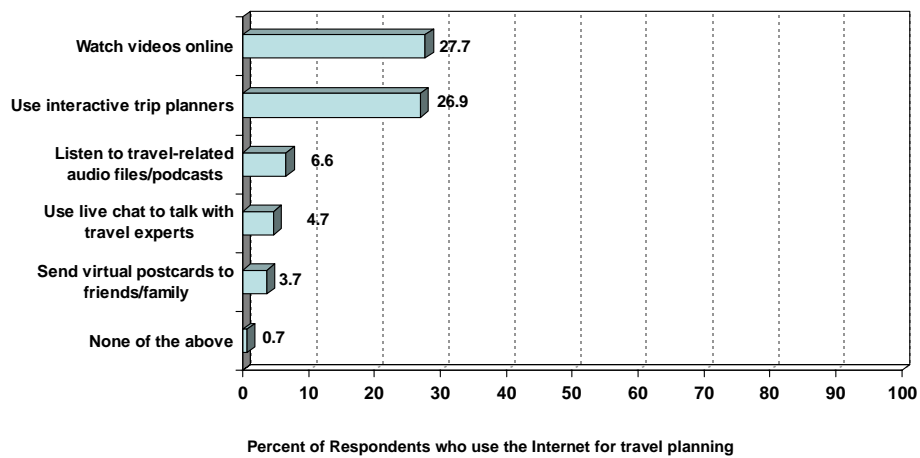


Laboratory for Intelligent Systems in Tourism  
Texas A&M University



Figure 9. Activities During Online Trip Planning I

## Activities During Online Trip Planning II



Laboratory for Intelligent Systems in Tourism  
Texas A&M University



Figure 10. Activities During Online Trip Planning II



## **4.2 Use of Other Travelers' Online Reviews**

- Not surprisingly (given the sample which represents TripAdvisor users), almost all (97.7%) of the respondents read other travelers' online reviews.
- Over half (57.8%) of respondents state they read other travelers' online reviews every time they plan a trip. 36.7% read them very often or frequently while 5.5% read them only occasionally or rarely.
- Of those who read other travelers' online reviews, a majority reads them in the beginning of the trip planning process to get ideas (63.7%) and in the middle of planning to narrow down choices (64.7%). 40.8 percent of respondents also use online reviews later in their planning, in order to confirm their decisions. Almost 9 percent use the reviews during the trip (8.7%), and nearly 30 percent use reviews after the trip to compare and share experiences (29.5%). Others have stated reading reviews is an ongoing process and they read them with no specific trip in mind; or they read reviews throughout the planning process, long before a trip, or only for accommodations.
- With respect to travel related decisions, most respondents think other travelers' online reviews are extremely or very important for deciding where to stay (77.9%). Importance ratings are much lower and somewhat similar for all other travel-related decisions: where to eat (33.6%), what to do (32.5%), where to go (27.0%) and when to go (26.6%).
- A majority of respondents (92.3%) use virtual communities (TripAdvisor, VirtualTourist, LonelyPlanet, etc.) to find other travelers' online reviews. Many also use travel guidebook sites (Frommers, Conde Nast, etc.) (60.6%), online travel agency/auction sites (Expedia, Orbitz, Priceline, etc.) (58.1%), search engines or portals (Google, Yahoo, AOL, etc.) (51.5%), local destination websites (44.6%), state tourism web sites (29.7%), and company sites (27.9%). Meta-travel search engines (Sidestep, Mobissimo, Kayak, etc.) were only reported as used by 13.4% of the respondents. Other web sites respondents listed were specific travel-related review sites (e.g. cruisecritic.com), general review sites (epinions.com), blogs, newspaper/magazine sites, and travel expert sites (e.g. Rick Steves).

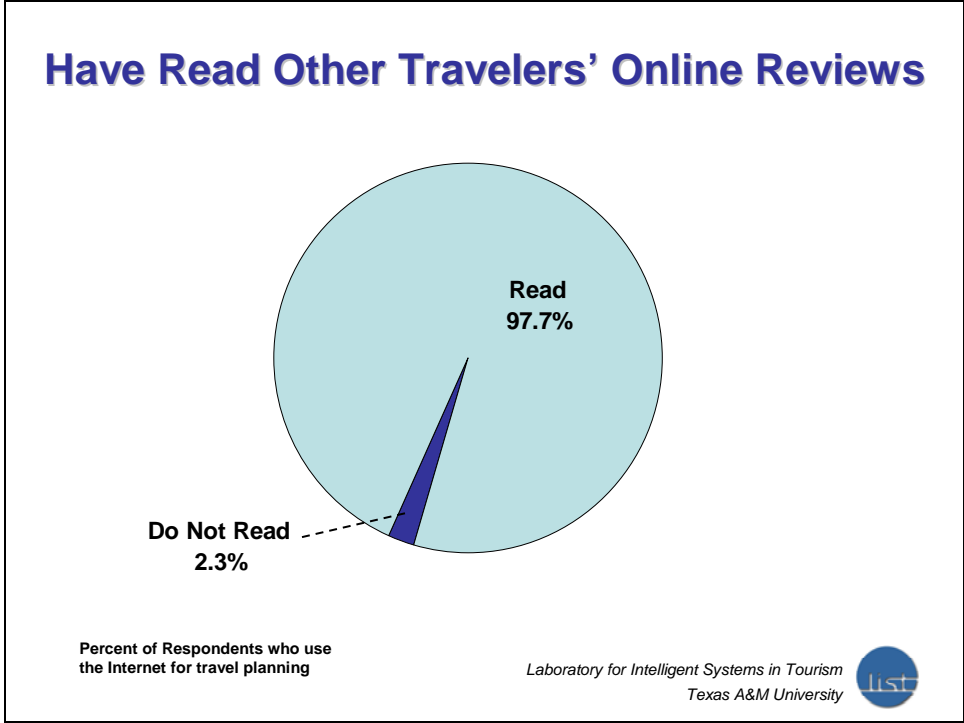


Figure 11. Have Read Other Travelers' Online Reviews

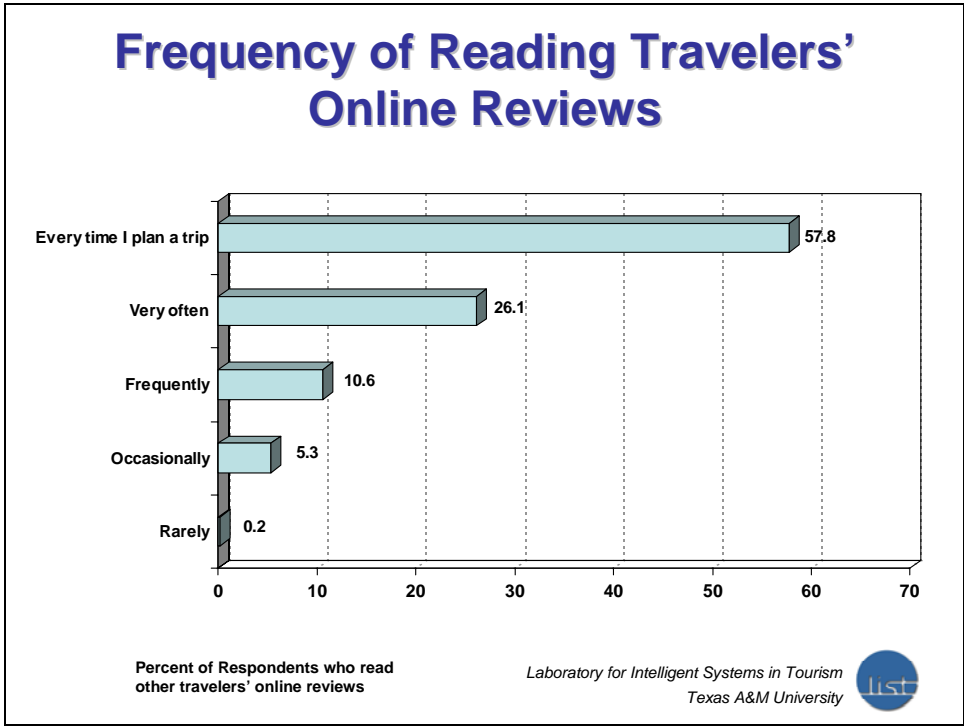


Figure 12. Frequency of Reading Travelers' Online Reviews

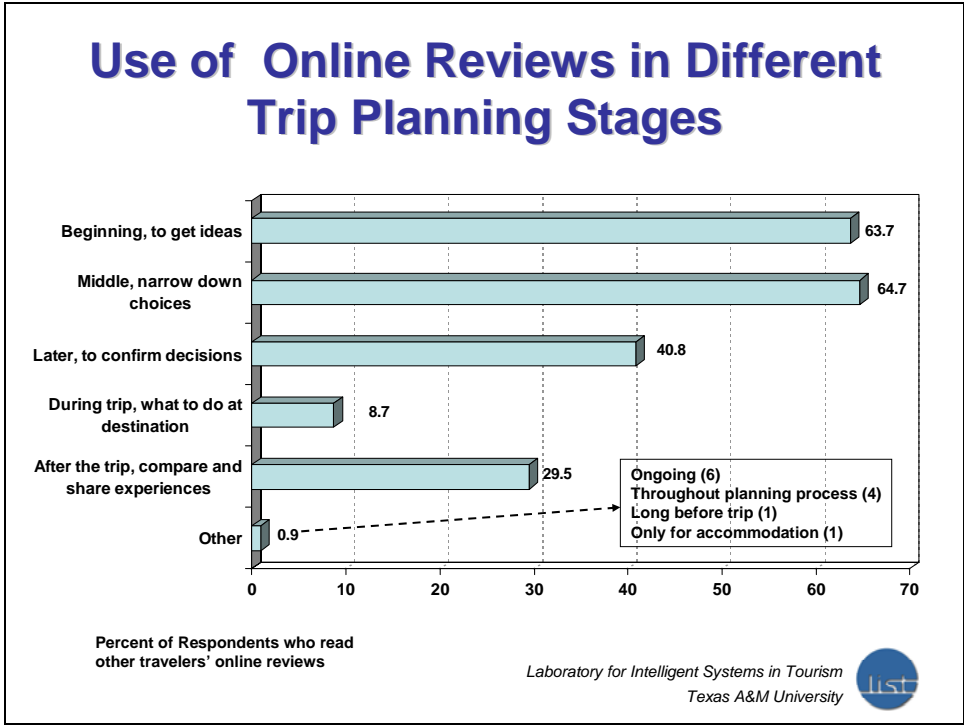


Figure 13. Use of Online Reviews in Different Trip Planning Stages

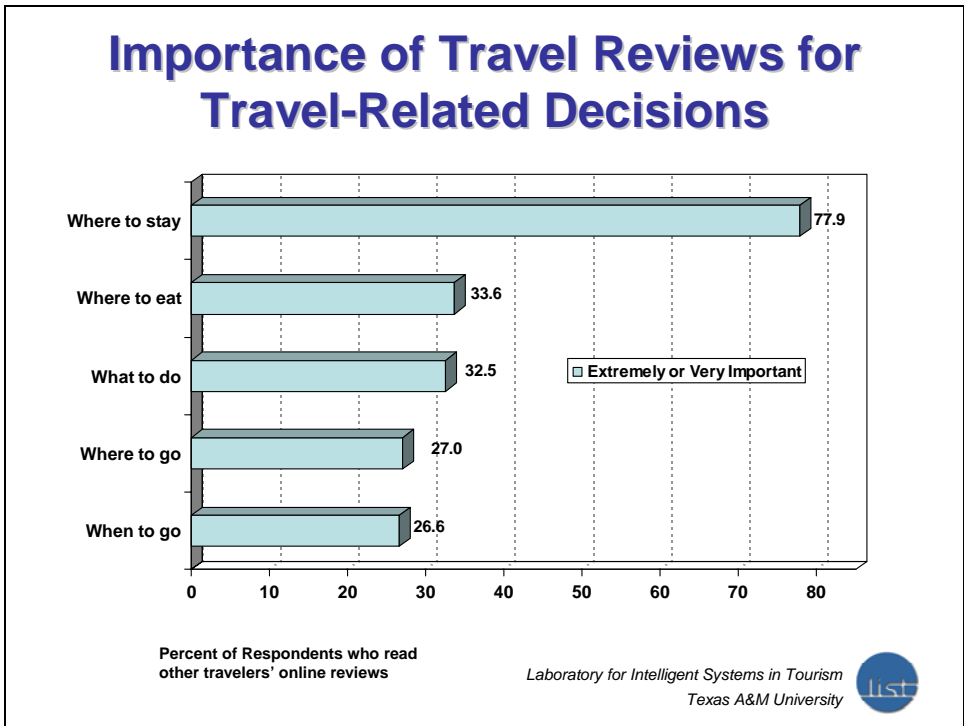
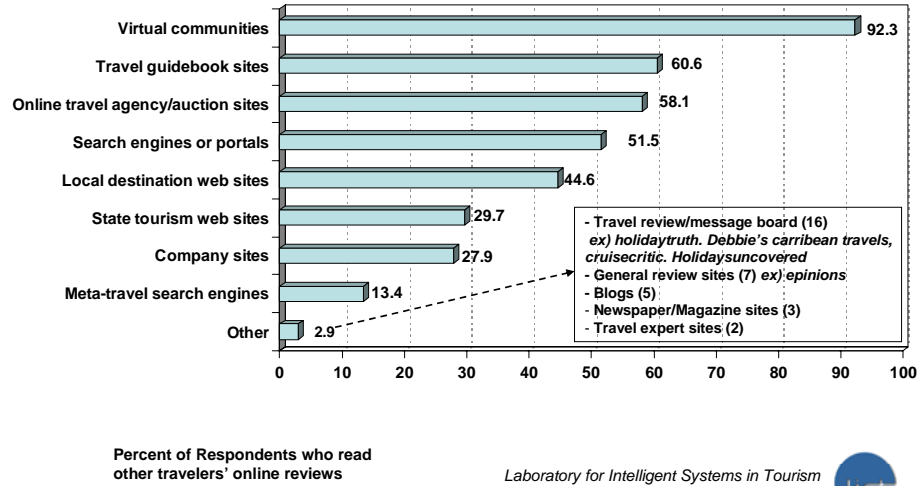


Figure 14. Importance of Travel Reviews for Travel-Related Decisions

## Travel Web Sites Used to Find Other Travelers' Online Reviews



**Figure 15. Travel Web Sites Used to Find Other Travelers' Online Reviews**

### **4.3 Evaluation of Other Travelers' Online Reviews**

- The majority of respondents rate the following three types of information as being extremely or very important when evaluating a travel review: detailed description (71.0%), type of website on which the review is posted (64.7%), and the date the review was posted (59.3%). Other criteria were only rated as extremely or very important by less than half of the respondents who read other travelers' reviews: travel date (44.3%), photos (43.9%), purpose of trip (35.9%), other travelers' ratings of the usefulness of the review (34.4%), reviewers' demographic information (33.5%), travel party information (children included, size, etc.) (33.2%), review free of spelling/grammar mistakes (28.9%), length of review (21.8%), where the reviewer lives/resides (18.4%).
- Additional cues mentioned as important for judging a review were mostly related to tone and clarity of the writing, providing facts, a balance of pros and cons, specific information such as price, location, cleanliness, etc. and consistency with other reviews. Cues related to the reviewer were also frequently mentioned, including objectivity/honesty, attitude/personality, especially pickiness, travel experience, frequency of review posting, sexual orientation, similarity and prior experience/intention to revisit places.
- Most of the respondents perceive the reviewer's credibility based on the following characteristics: has a lot of travel experience (75.3%), engages in similar activities during the trips (65.9%), travels for a similar trip purpose (60.0%), and writes in a polite and friendly manner (58.5%). Other important characteristics are: similar in terms of age, gender or marital status (48.7%), liking based on writing and/or photos (47.8%), lives at destination (45.3%), has received high ratings from others for his/her review (44.4%), appears to be a nice person (36.2%), and is similar in terms of residence (23.6%).
- Most of the respondents perceive a review as extremely or very useful based on the following characteristics of the reviewer: has a lot of travel experience (78.5%), engages in similar activities during the trips (68.2%), travels for a similar trip purpose (64.4%) and has similar age, gender or marital status (53.1%). Appears to be a nice person (32.1%) and similar in terms of residence (24.1%) were perceived as least important in determining a review's usefulness.
- A majority of respondents reported feeling other travelers' reviews are more likely to carry the following information in comparison to travel service providers: up-to-date information (65.3%), enjoyable information (61.2%), reliable information (61.1%). Where travelers' reviews seem to not provide clear advantages is detailed and relevant information. Nevertheless, more than half of online travel review readers still say reviews are superior along these two dimensions.

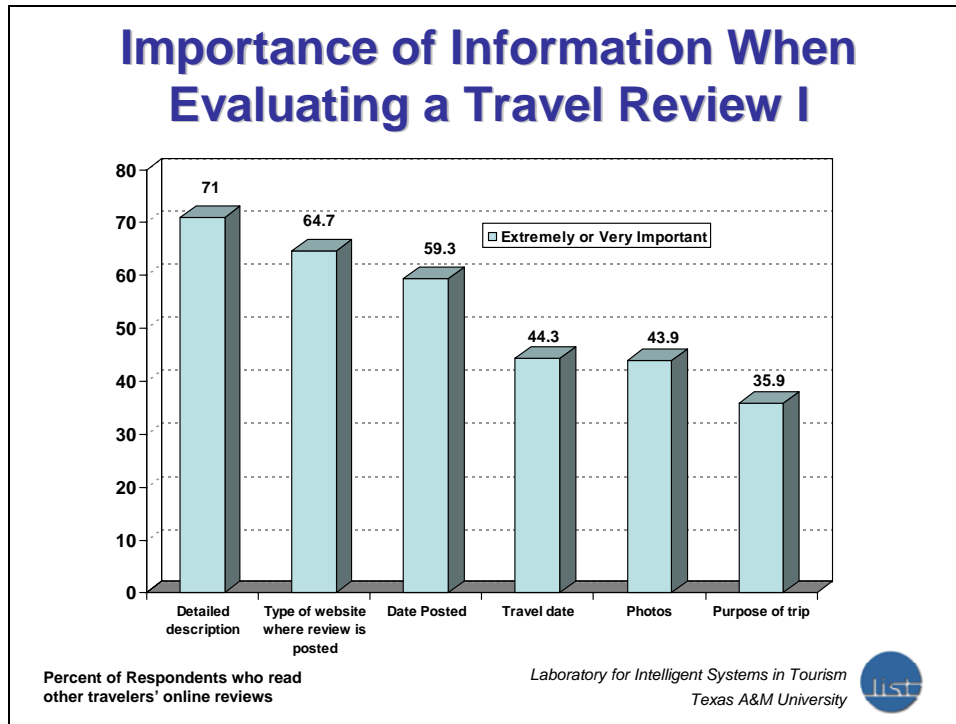


Figure 16. Importance of Information When Evaluating a Travel Review I

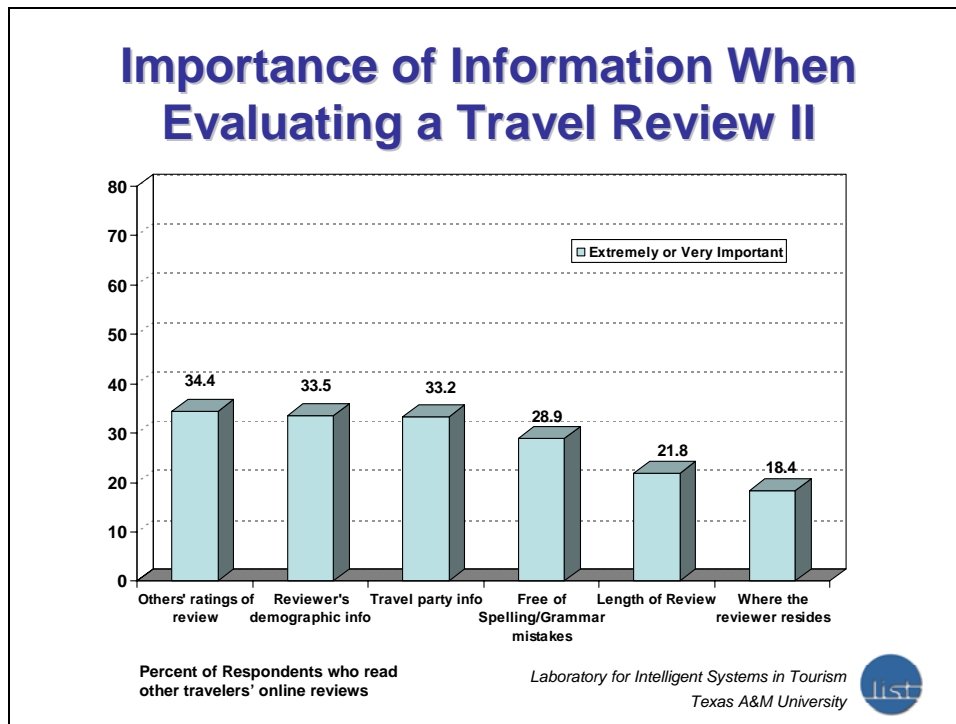


Figure 17. Importance of Information When Evaluating a Travel Review II

## Additional Information Cues for Evaluating a Travel Review

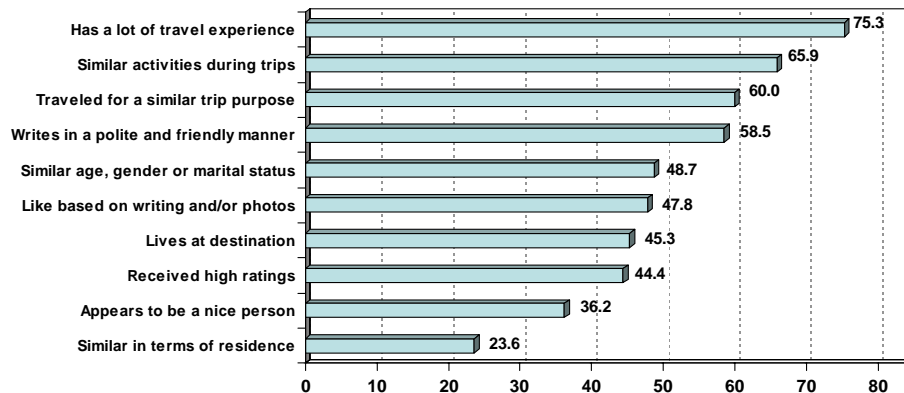
Cues Related to Reviewer	Cues Related to Review	Others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attitude</li> <li>• Objectivity, Honesty</li> <li>• Similarity (Interests, situation)</li> <li>• Detail travel party information (Children age, number of people)</li> <li>• Pickiness</li> <li>• Prior trip experience/frequency</li> <li>• Prior experience at hotel/area</li> <li>• Independence</li> <li>• Sexual orientation</li> <li>• Country of origin (Different standard between US vs Europe)</li> <li>• Cultural background</li> <li>• Intention to revisit the place</li> <li>• Frequency of posting reviews</li> <li>• Other reviews posted by same reviewer</li> <li>• Life style</li> <li>• Social Status</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall tone</li> <li>• Detail, Clarity</li> <li>• Accuracy, Realistic</li> <li>• Balance of negative &amp; positive views</li> <li>• Objectivity</li> <li>• Breadth &amp; range of information</li> <li>• Consistency with other reviews</li> <li>• Relevancy to me</li> <li>• Contains budget/cost/price information</li> <li>• Practical tips (money saving)</li> <li>• Sense of humor</li> <li>• Emotional tone, good word image</li> <li>• Recency</li> <li>• Language of review</li> <li>• Grammar/Fluency</li> <li>• Opinion or fact, justifications</li> <li>• Contains weather information</li> <li>• Contains cleanliness, location and rating information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take as a whole (Not just one cue)</li> <li>• Evaluation based on all reviews</li> <li>• Website where the review is posted</li> </ul>

Laboratory for Intelligent Systems in Tourism  
Texas A&M University



**Figure 18. Additional Information Cues for Evaluating a Travel Review**

## Influence of Reviewer Characteristics on Perceived Credibility



Percent of respondents who read other travelers' online reviews and who perceive reviewer's credibility as high or very high when reviewer characteristic is present.

Laboratory for Intelligent Systems in Tourism  
Texas A&M University



**Figure 19. Influence of Reviewer Characteristics on Perceived Credibility**

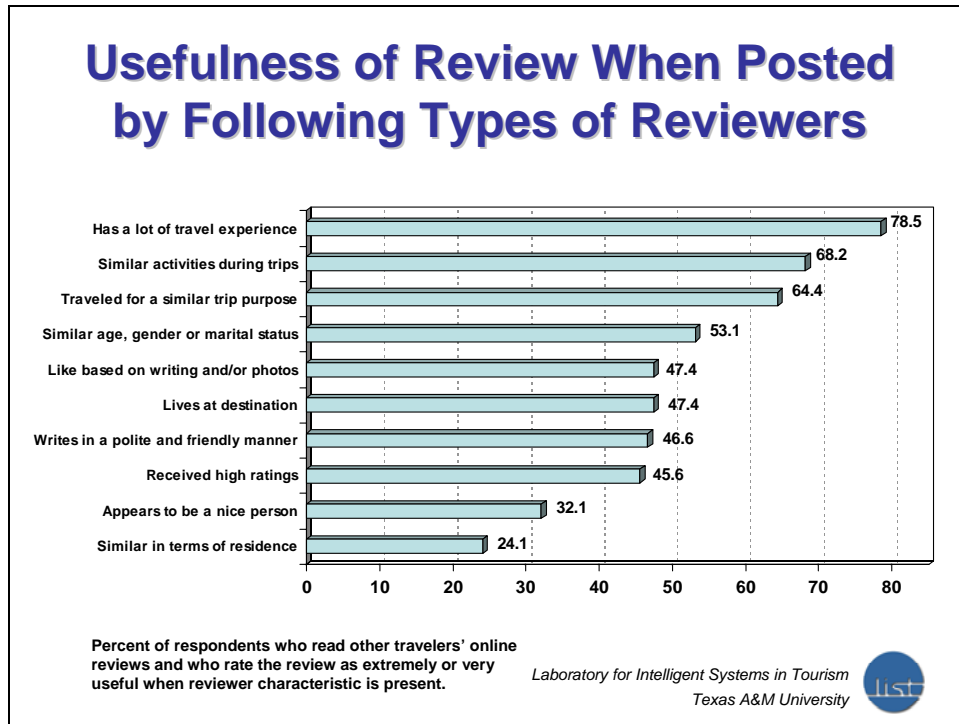


Figure 20. Usefulness of Review When Posted by Certain Types of Reviewers

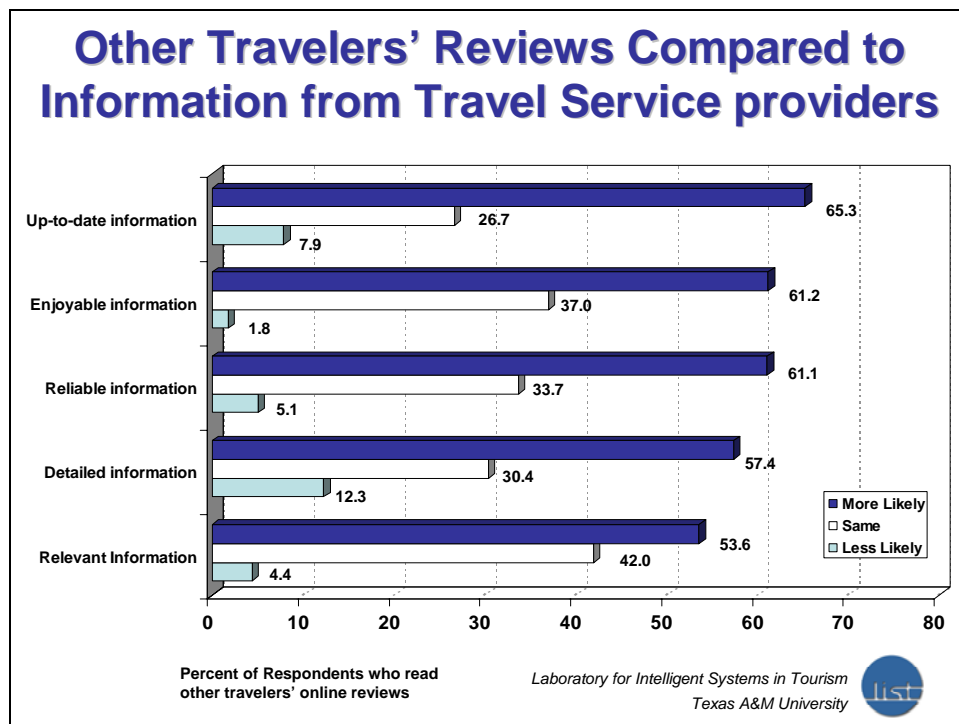
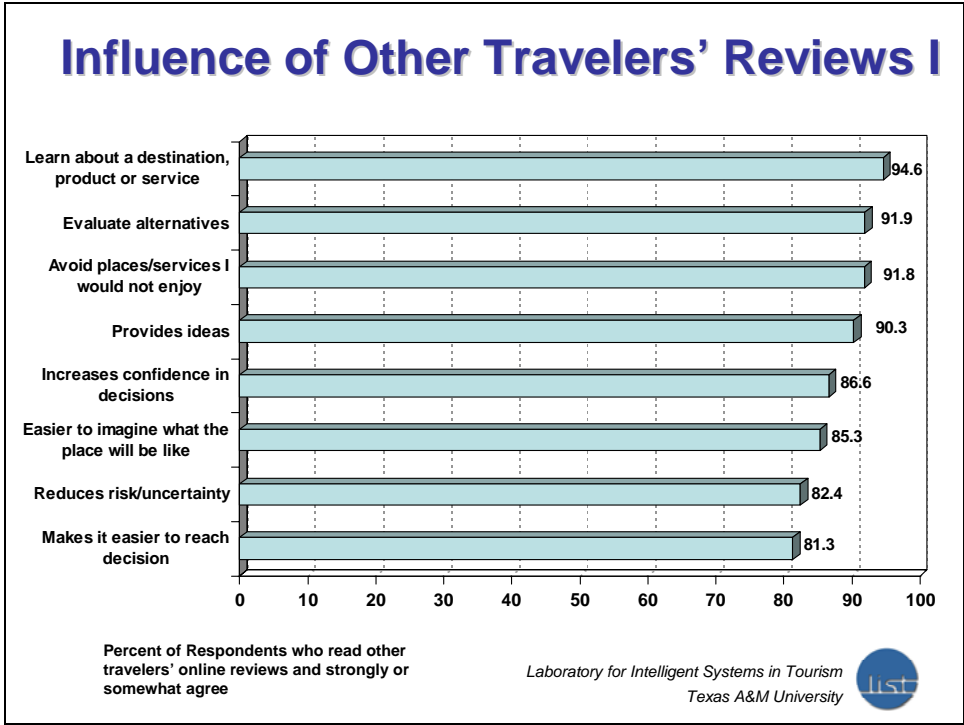


Figure 21. Other Travelers' Reviews Compared to Information from Travel Service Providers

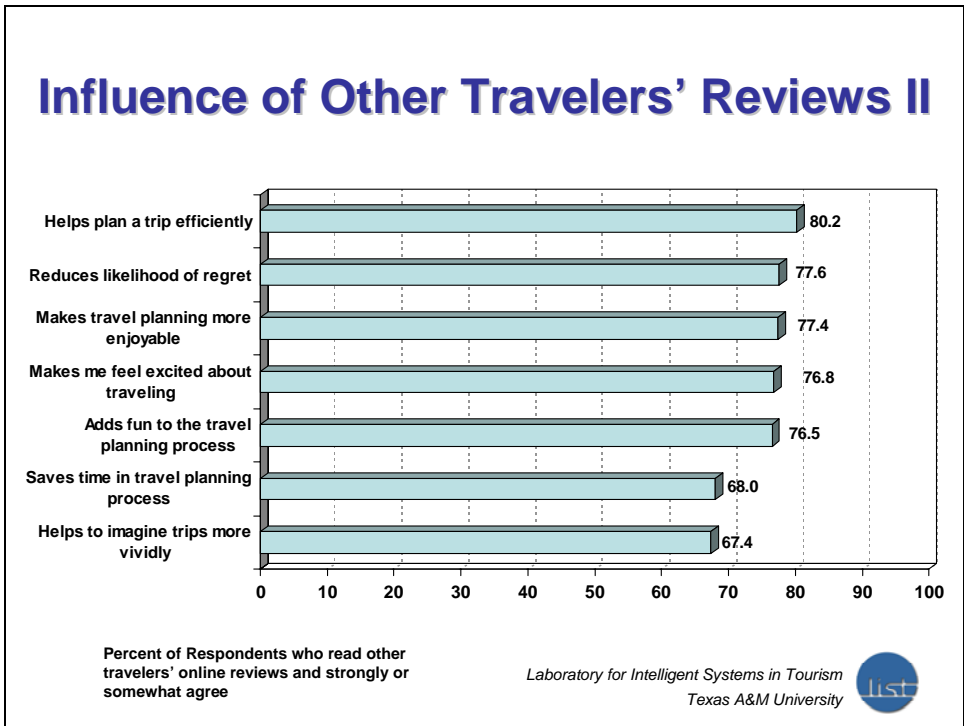


#### **4.4 Influence of Other Travelers' Online Reviews**

- Travel review readers stated that other travelers' online reviews have a variety of impacts on their travel planning. Almost all of the respondents strongly or somewhat agreed that other travelers' reviews influenced them in the following ways: learning about a travel destination, product or service (94.6%), evaluating alternatives (91.9%), avoiding places or services they would not enjoy (91.8%), and providing them with ideas.
- Over 80 percent of respondents who read online travel reviews indicated an influence of other travelers' reviews on the following: Increase confidence in decisions (86.6%), make it easier to imagine what the place will be like (85.3%), help reduce risk/uncertainty (82.4%), make it easier to reach decisions (81.3%), help plan a trip efficiently (80.2%).
- Over three quarters of online travel review readers said reviews reduce the likelihood of regret (77.6%), make travel planning more enjoyable (77.4%), make them feel more excited about traveling (76.8%) and add fun to the travel planning process (76.5%).
- Almost 70 percent strongly or somewhat agreed that other travelers' online reviews save time in the travel planning process (68%) and help imagine trips more vividly (67.4%).



**Figure 22. Influence of Other Travelers' Reviews I**

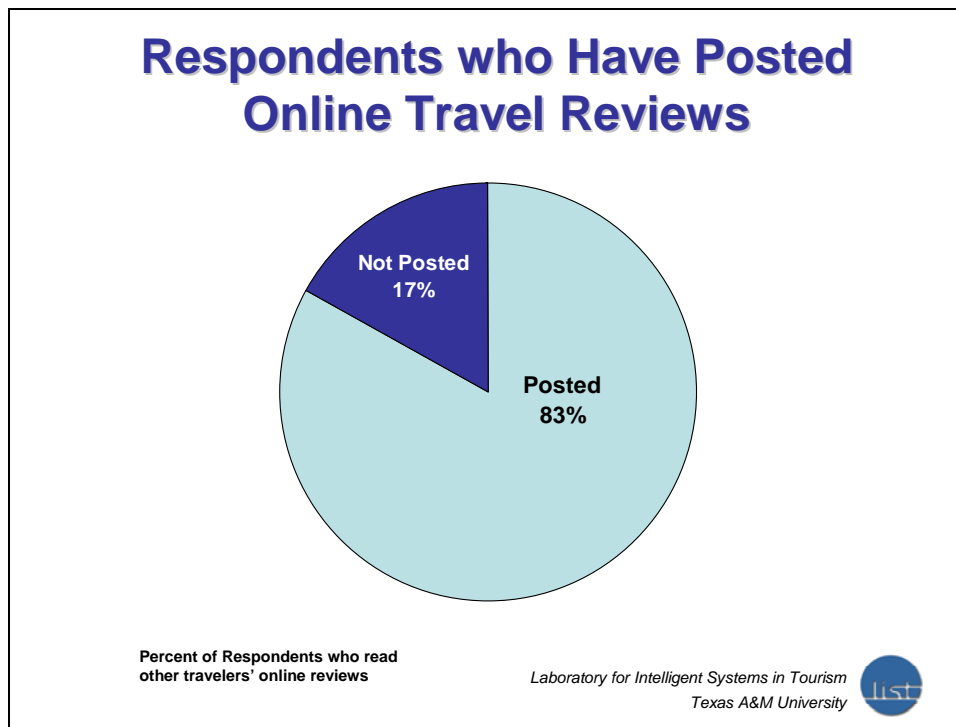


**Figure 23. Influence of Other Travelers' Reviews II**

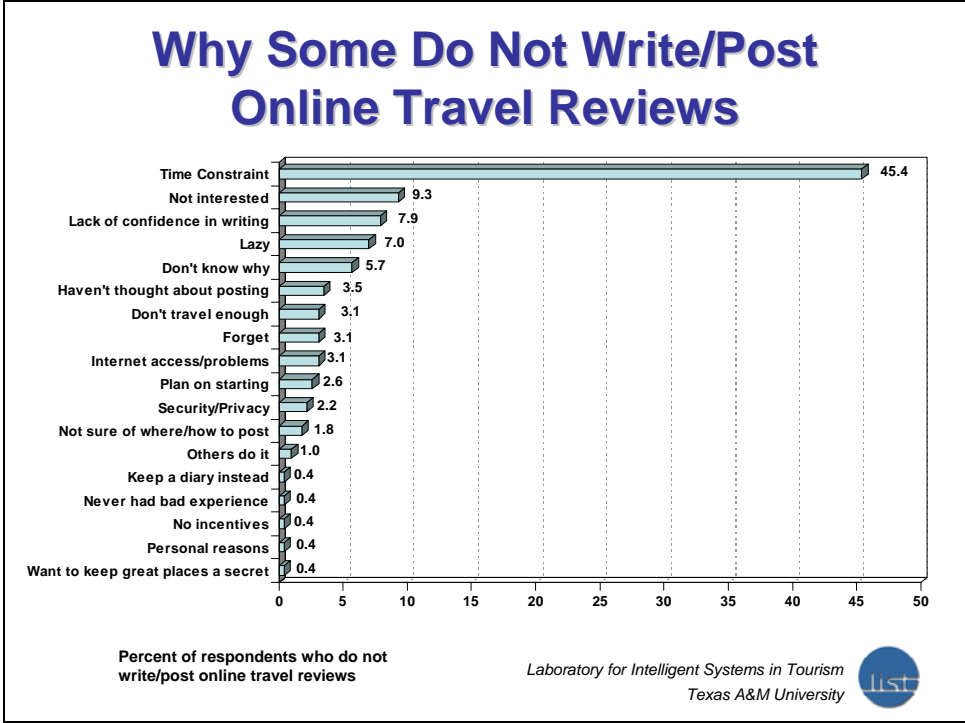
## 4.5 Motivations to Write/Post Reviews

- A large majority of the respondents reported having posted online travel reviews (83.0%).
- Of those who do not write or post online travel reviews, time constraints was the most frequently mentioned reason (45.4%). Other frequently mentioned reasons include: not interested (9.3%), lack of confidence in writing (7.9%), and being lazy (7.0%). Less frequently but also mentioned were: don't know why, haven't thought about posting, don't travel enough, forget, Internet access problems, plan on starting, security/privacy concerns, not knowing how to post, others do it, keep a diary instead, never had bad experience, no incentives, personal reasons, and wanting to keep great places a secret.
- A majority of respondents somewhat or strongly agreed that concern for other consumers was a large motivation for writing online reviews: help others by sharing my own positive experiences (96.3%), other travel reviews helped me and I want to return the favor (95.0%), save others from negative experiences (83.9%), and warn others of bad services (82.4%) are factors that motivate a majority of online travel review writers.
- Helping the company was also reported as a large motivation: good travel service providers should be supported (93.9), and help travel service provider to be successful (91.1%).
- Motivations out of needs for extraversion and positive self-enhancement also rated high: tell others about a great experience (92.8%), express my joy about a good experience (91.1%), share my travel experience with others (87.3%), I enjoy it (79.2%), feels good when I can tell others about my trip successes (75.9%).
- Extending the experience was also a factor for a majority of online travel review writers: reflect on the trip after returning home (68.1%) and being able to relive my trips (57.2%) motivated more than half.
- Social benefits: communication among like-minded people is a nice thing (75.3%) and I meet nice people this way (21.8%) were motivating for some.
- Greater impact was also less of a motivation: more power together with others than writing a single letter of complaint (58.4%), more convenient than writing to or calling the travel service provider (39.4%), and travel service providers are more accommodating when I publicize matters (31.2%) were only mentioned by some online travel review posters as motivations.

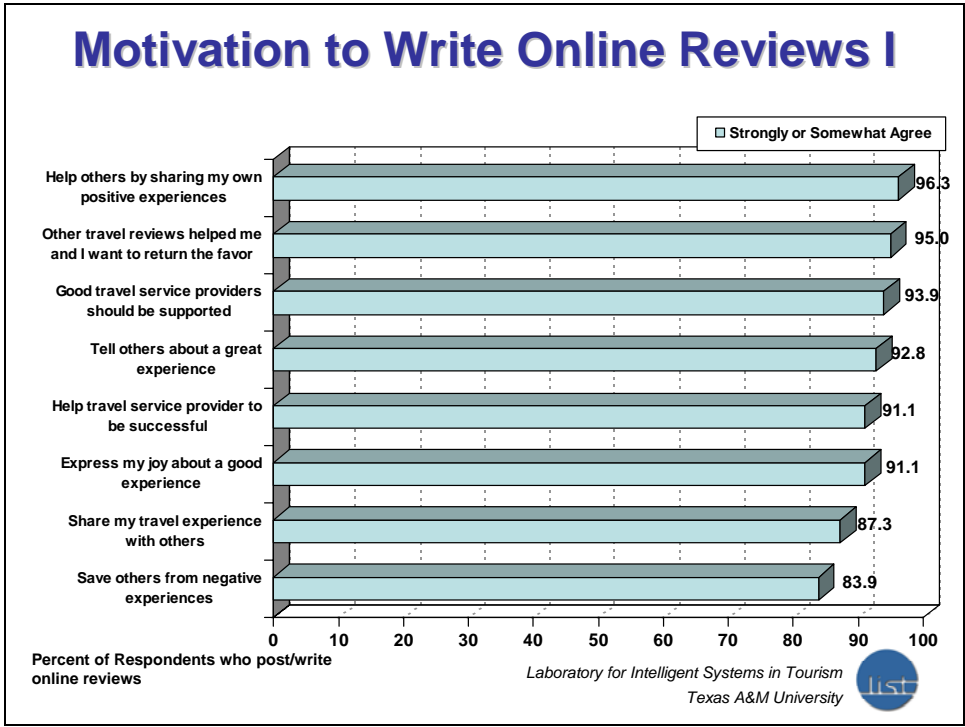
- Venting negative feelings was not a very common motivation: if a company harms me, I will harm the company (18.9%), and to take vengeance upon a travel service provider (10.3%) were mentioned by a minority of respondents who post online travel reviews.
- Similarly, economic incentives were not identified as major motivators: incentives are offered (14.0%) and I receive an award for the writing (7.6%) motivate less than 15 percent of the online travel review writers.



**Figure 24. Respondents Who Have Posted Online Travel Reviews**



**Figure 25. Barriers to Writing/Posting Online Travel Reviews**



**Figure 26. Motivation to Write Online Reviews I**

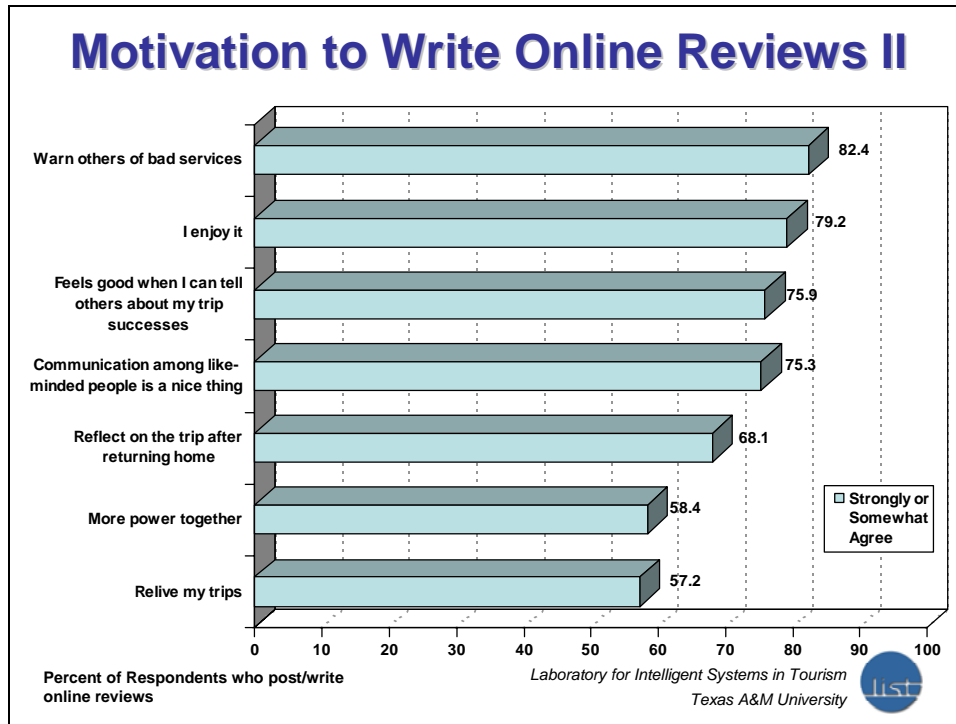


Figure 27. Motivation to Write Online Reviews II

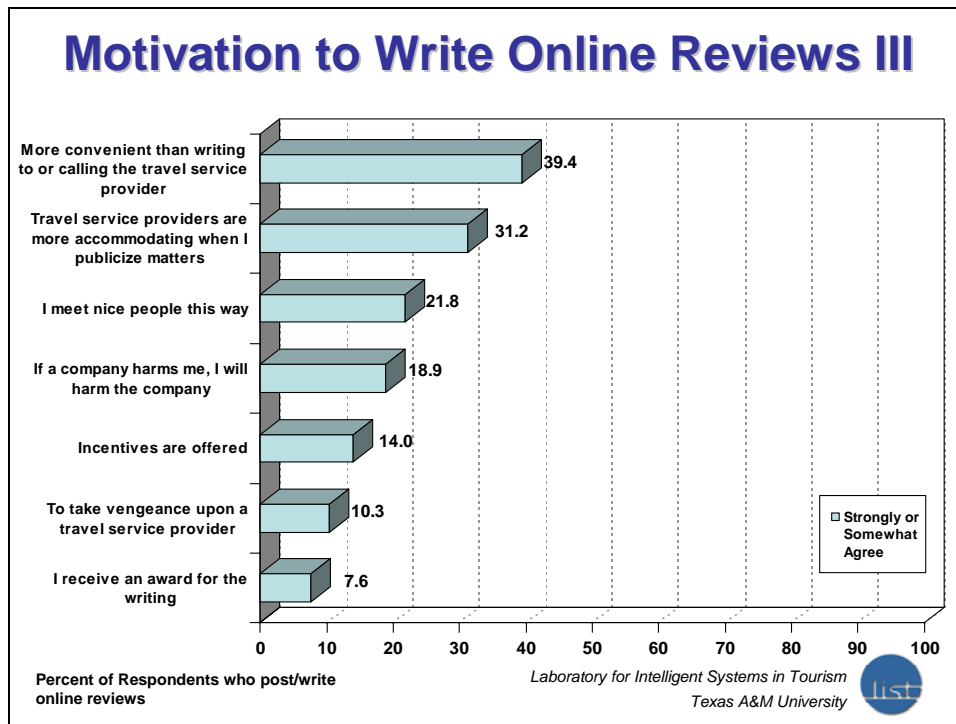
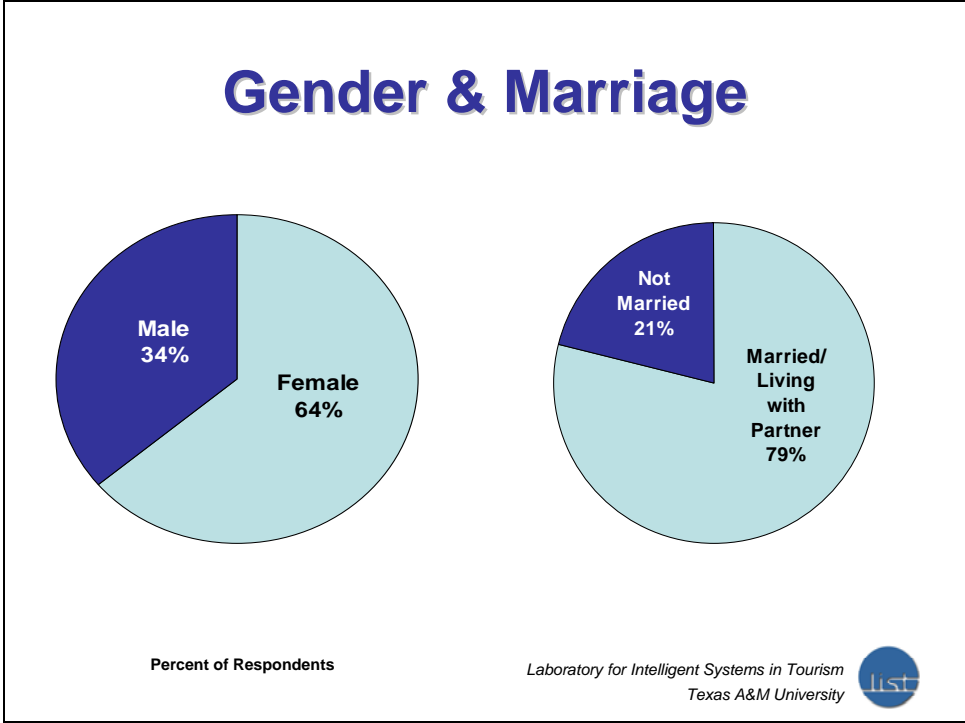


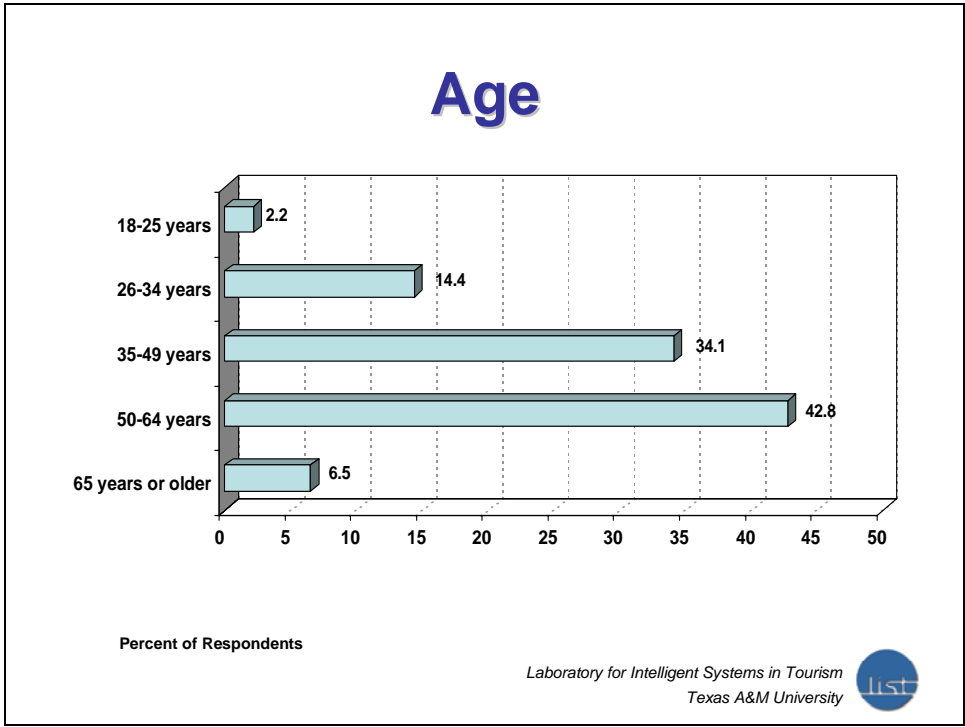
Figure 28. Motivation to Write Online Reviews III

## **4.6 Sample Characteristics**

- There were more female respondents (64%) who completed the survey than there were male respondents.
- Most respondents reported being married or living with a partner (79%).
- The largest group of respondents was 50-64 years of age (42.8%). The age group of 35-49 years of age included 34.1% of the respondents, and the third largest group was 26-34 year olds (14.4%). Only 6.5 percent reported being 65 years of age or older and 2.2 percent stated they were between 18 and 25 years old.
- A majority of respondents reported having children under 17 living in their household (78.5%).
- A greater part of the respondents are college graduates (38.1%). 31 percent hold a post graduate degree. The third largest group is those with some college experience (18.4%). About
- About one quarter (25.5%) of the respondents chose not to report income-related information. 14.9 percent of respondents earn \$49,999 or less. Nearly half of respondents who provided income information reported incomes of \$50,000 – \$109,999 (49.1%). 36 percent of respondent who provided income information reported an income of \$110,000 and over.
- A majority of the respondents strongly or somewhat agreed that they are skilled at using the Internet: I am very skilled at using the Internet (84.1%), I know how to find what I want on the Internet (96.1%), I know more about using the Internet than most people (66.7%).
- The online activities which respondents most participated in, in the past three months, were: reading blogs (64.4%), rating products and contents (60.9%), rating the usefulness of reviews (57.4%), watching or downloading videos (55.9%), and posting and sharing photographs (55.6%). Over 30 percent (30.9%) listened to or downloaded audio podcasts and 25.9 percent posted comments to a blog. Almost 18 percent (17.7%) used a social networking site and 14.3 percent wrote a blog. About 11 percent (11.2%) subscribed to an RSS feed and (10.9%) maintained a personal web site. 10.1 percent posted/shared audio files and 9.6% posted/shared videos. Only 5 percent reported contributing to a wiki in the past three months.

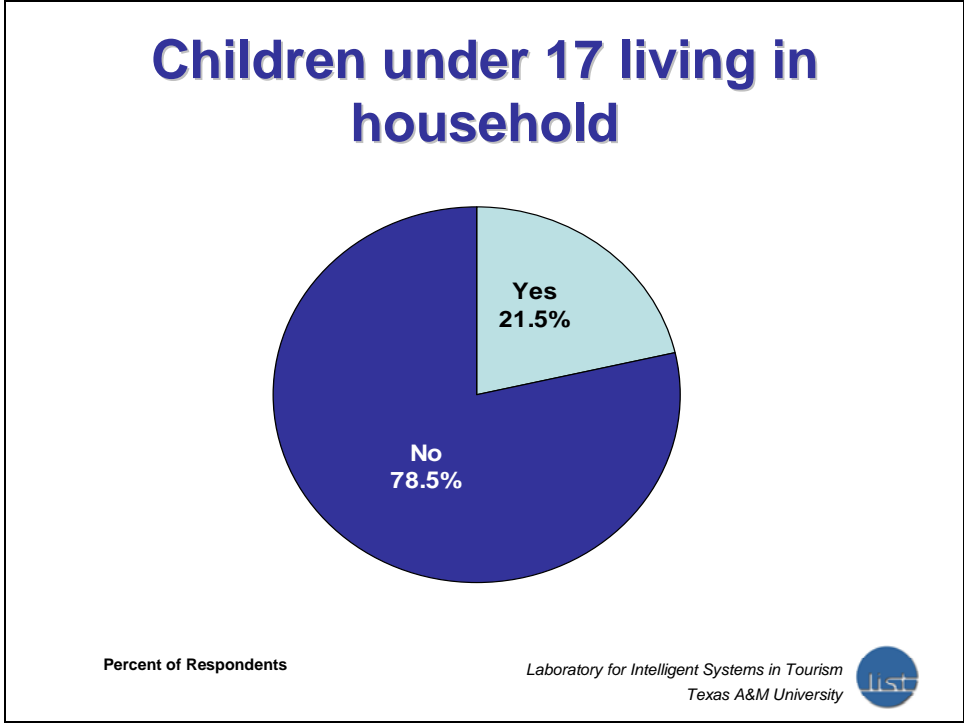


**Figure 29. Gender & Marriage**

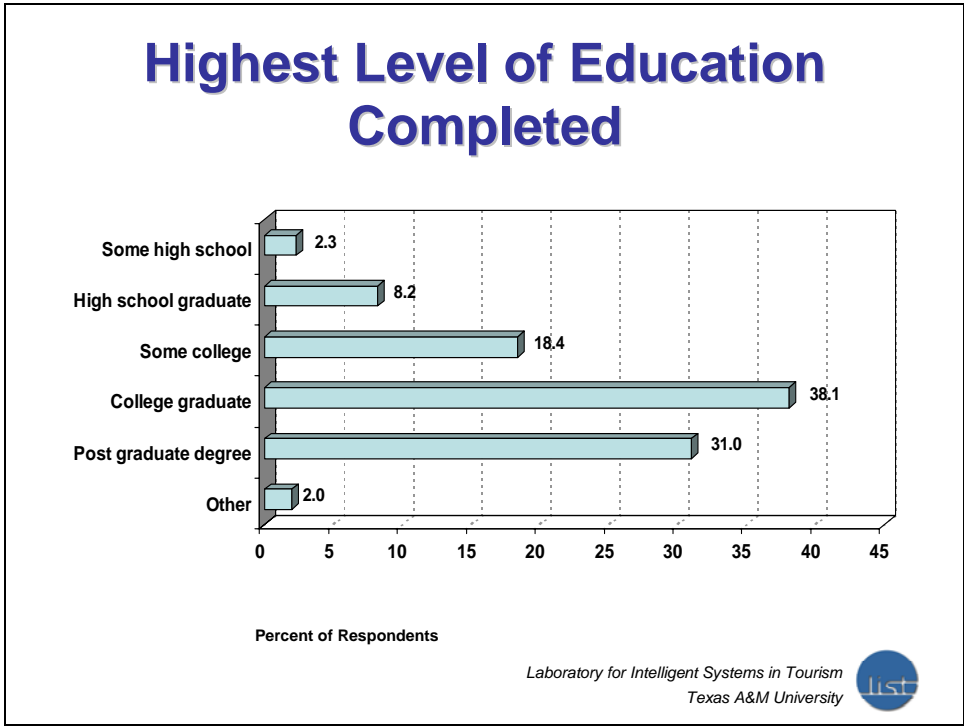


**Figure 30. Age**



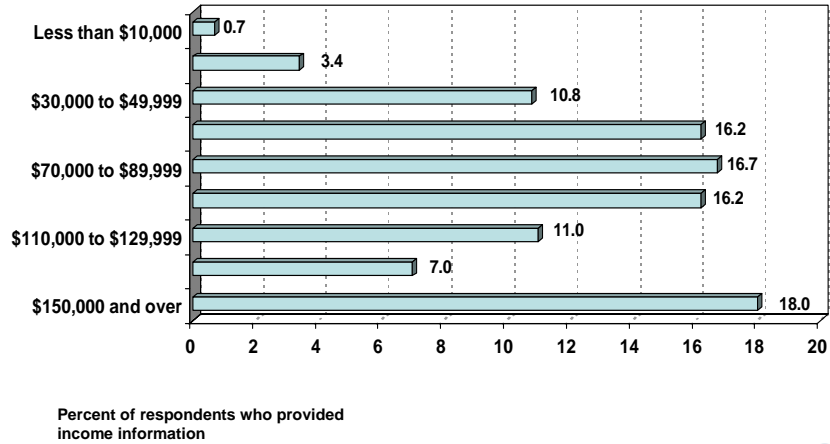


**Figure 31. Children under 17 Living in Household**



**Figure 32. Highest Level of Education Completed**

## Total Annual Household Income Before Taxes

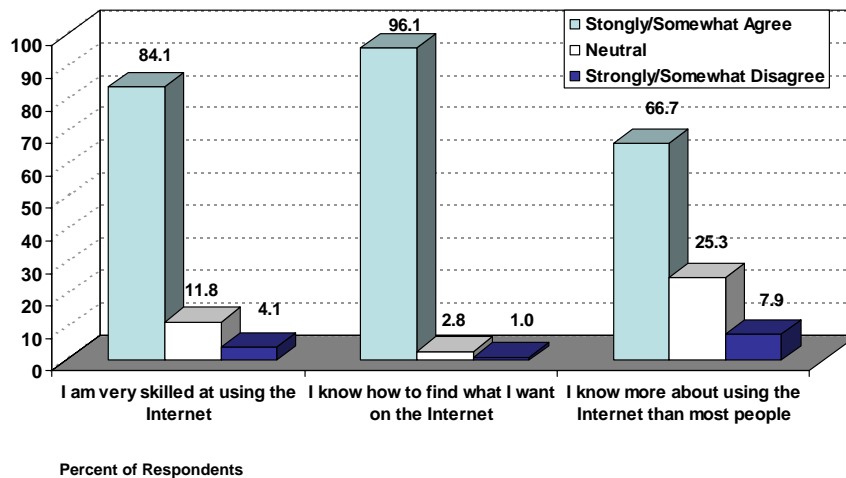


Laboratory for Intelligent Systems in Tourism  
Texas A&M University



Figure 33. Total Annual Household Income Before Taxes

## Internet Skills

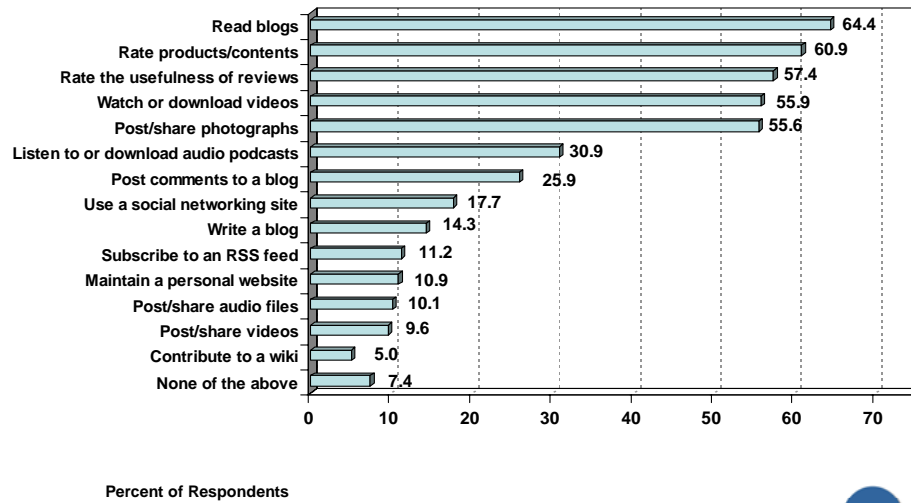


Laboratory for Intelligent Systems in Tourism  
Texas A&M University



Figure 34. Internet Skills

## Online Activities in Past 3 Months



Laboratory for Intelligent Systems in Tourism  
Texas A&M University



Figure 35. Online Activities in Past 3 Months

## 4.7 Characteristics of Frequent Travel Review Readers

Crosstabulations and Chi-Square statistics were used to test whether differences exist among online travel review readers in terms of the frequency with which they read other travelers' reviews. Since not many respondents had indicated that they rarely read online travel reviews, this category was collapsed with occasional readers. Only significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) are reported.

### 4.7.1 Trip Planning Behavior

- There seems to be a U-shaped relationship between frequency of review reading and frequency of travel. Respondents who read online travel reviews rarely/occasionally are more likely to travel very little or very much. Respondents who read travel reviews every time they plan a trip were most likely to have taken 3-4 trips in the past 12 months.

	Frequency of Online Travel Review Reading			
	Rarely or Occasionally	Frequently	Very Often	Every time
<b>Number of pleasure trips in the past 12 months</b>	(%) N=80	(%) N=153	(%) N=376	(%) N=834
None	6.3	2.6	2.7	2.0
1~2 trips	35.0	30.7	17.6	27.8
3~4 trips	23.8	34.6	35.9	41.1
5~6 trips	20.0	17.6	26.3	18.5
7~8 trips	5.0	5.9	9.0	4.9
9 trips or more	10.0	8.5	8.5	5.6
<b>Time of advance trip planning</b>				
During the trips	1.3	1.3	0.3	0.2
1-6 days in advance	6.3	0.7	1.9	0.4
1 to less than 3 weeks in advance	10.0	4.6	5.9	2.9
3 to less than 8 weeks in advance	18.8	24.2	18.6	19.8
2 to less than 4 months in advance	27.5	34.6	28.7	29.5
4 to less than 6 months in advance	16.3	14.4	25.0	21.7
6 or more months in advance	20.0	20.3	19.7	25.5

- Frequent online travel review readers are more likely to plan their pleasure trips earlier. Almost half of those who read other travelers' reviews every time they plan a trip start their trip planning at least 4 months in advance.
- Frequent online travel review readers are more likely to plan major aspects of pleasure trips in advance while those who read reviews rarely are more likely to keep advance trip planning to a minimum.

Frequency of Online Travel Review Reading				
	Rarely or Occasionally	Frequently	Very Often	Every time
	(%) N=80	(%) N=153	(%) N=376	(%) N=834
<b>Extent of trip planning</b>				
Plan in great detail and do not enjoy change	6.3	1.3	1.3	2.5
Plan in advance but open to minor changes	13.8	17.0	18.9	28.3
Plan major aspects of trip	61.3	73.2	72.6	64.3
Keep advance planning to minimum	18.8	6.5	6.9	4.3
Make almost all decisions while on vacation	0	2.0	0.3	0.6

- Frequent online travel review readers are more likely to perceive trip planning as an essential, critical and very important process.

Frequency of Reading Online Travel Reviews				
	Rarely or Occasionally	Frequently	Very Often	Every time
	(%) N=80	(%) N=153	(%) N=376	(%) N=834
<b>Perception of Trip Planning</b>				
<b>Essential</b>				
Strongly Disagree	1.3	0.7	0.8	0.1
Somewhat Disagree	2.5	2.6	2.7	0.6
Neutral	11.3	8.5	8.5	4.0
Somewhat Agree	31.3	32.0	34.8	21.5
Strongly Agree	53.8	56.2	53.2	73.9
<b>Critical</b>				
Strongly Disagree	2.5	0.7	0.5	0.4
Somewhat Disagree	6.3	2.6	3.2	1.2
Neutral	11.3	5.9	5.6	3.6
Somewhat Agree	30.0	34.6	33.8	23.3
Strongly Agree	50.0	56.2	56.9	71.6
<b>Very Important</b>				
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0.1	0
Somewhat Disagree	2.5	3.3	0.8	0.4
Neutral	7.5	4.6	5.9	1.9
Somewhat Agree	31.3	26.1	32.2	19.1
Strongly Agree	58.8	66.0	60.9	78.7

- Frequent online travel review readers are also more likely to perceive trip planning as something which has to be done. However, they are less likely to see it as a necessary chore.

<b>Frequency of Reading Online Travel Reviews</b>				
	<b>Rarely or Occasionally</b>	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Very Often</b>	<b>Every time</b>
	(%) N=80	(%) N=153	(%) N=376	(%) N=834
<b>Perception of Trip Planning</b>				
<b>The process I have to go through</b>	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Strongly Disagree	3.8	2.6	3.2	5.2
Somewhat Disagree	7.5	11.1	9.6	4.7
Neutral	25.0	29.6	20.5	27.6
Somewhat Agree	30.0	30.1	33.8	29.0
Strongly Agree	33.8	36.6	33.0	43.5
<b>Something which has to be done</b>				
Strongly Disagree	6.3	5.2	5.9	8.9
Somewhat Disagree	7.5	9.8	13.0	8.4
Neutral	21.3	22.9	21.3	16.3
Somewhat Agree	35.0	18.1	25.5	24.9
Strongly Agree	30.0	34.0	34.3	41.5
<b>A necessary chore</b>				
Strongly Disagree	17.5	16.3	22.6	28.1
Somewhat Disagree	12.5	16.3	27.9	24.3
Neutral	28.8	27.5	17.3	18.7
Somewhat Agree	23.8	22.2	19.1	14.0
Strongly Agree	17.5	17.6	13.0	14.9

- Importantly, the more frequently respondents read other travelers' online reviews, the more likely they are to perceive trip planning as an enjoyable and fun activity they like to do.

<b>Frequency of Reading Online Travel Reviews</b>				
	<b>Rarely or Occasionally</b>	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Very Often</b>	<b>Every time</b>
<b>Perception of Trip Planning</b>	(%) N=80	(%) N=153	(%) N=376	(%) N=834
<b>Enjoyable</b>				
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0.3	0.2
Somewhat Disagree	2.5	2.6	1.6	1.9
Neutral	3.8	7.2	5.3	3.6
Somewhat Agree	31.3	37.3	34.3	23.5
Strongly Agree	62.5	52.9	58.5	70.7
<b>Something I like to do</b>				
Strongly Disagree	1.3	0	0.3	0.1
Somewhat Disagree	0	2.0	1.6	1.4
Neutral	7.5	5.9	5.1	2.9
Somewhat Agree	27.5	29.4	27.9	18.7
Strongly Agree	63.8	62.7	65.2	76.9
<b>Fun</b>				
Strongly Disagree	1.3	0	0.3	0.2
Somewhat Disagree	0	1.3	2.4	2.2
Neutral	8.8	7.8	7.4	5.0
Somewhat Agree	35.0	37.3	33.5	25.5
Strongly Agree	55.0	53.6	56.4	67.0

- Frequent online travel review readers are more likely to be involved in trip planning. More than 90% of respondents who read travel reviews every time they plan a trip agreed that trip planning is an activity in which they typically become very involved.
- Frequent online travel review readers are also more likely to devote a lot of effort to trip planning and trip planning takes up a lot of their time.
- Frequent online travel review readers are more likely to disagree with the statement that trip planning is something they like to leave to others.

<b>Frequency of Reading Online Travel Reviews</b>				
	<b>Rarely or Occasionally</b>	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Very Often</b>	<b>Every time</b>
	(%) N=80	(%) N=153	(%) N=376	(%) N=834
<b>Involvement in Trip Planning</b>				
<b>Something I like to leave to others</b>				
Strongly Disagree	46.3	51.0	58.2	72.2
Somewhat Disagree	28.8	31.4	32.7	20.6
Neutral	16.3	8.5	4.5	4.1
Somewhat Agree	6.3	8.5	3.7	2.5
Strongly Agree	2.5	0.7	0.8	0.6
<b>An activity in which I typically become very involved</b>				
Strongly Disagree	1.3	0	0.5	0.5
Somewhat Disagree	1.3	1.3	0.3	1.0
Neutral	5.0	5.2	1.6	1.2
Somewhat Agree	28.8	23.5	23.4	9.7
Strongly Agree	63.8	69.9	74.2	87.6
<b>A process which takes up a lot of my time</b>				
Strongly Disagree	6.3	1.3	1.6	1.8
Somewhat Disagree	12.5	17.0	10.6	8.8
Neutral	27.5	19.0	18.4	14.1
Somewhat Agree	36.3	38.6	43.4	41.6
Strongly Agree	17.5	24.2	26.1	33.7
<b>Something to which I devote a lot of effort</b>				
Strongly Disagree	2.5	0	0.8	0.8
Somewhat Disagree	3.8	2.6	1.9	1.3
Neutral	12.5	5.9	3.7	3.1
Somewhat Agree	35.0	35.9	34.0	19.5
Strongly Agree	46.3	55.6	59.6	75.2

- As far as travel decision-making styles are concerned, frequent online travel review readers are less likely to make impulsive travel decisions and, not surprisingly, are more likely to seek out the advice of other people.



<b>Frequency of Reading Online Travel Reviews</b>				
	<b>Rarely or Occasionally</b>	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Very Often</b>	<b>Every time</b>
<b>Travel Decision-Making Style</b>	(%) N=80	(%) N=153	(%) N=376	(%) N=834
<b>I often make travel decisions on the spur of the moment</b>				
Strongly Disagree	16.3	18.3	16.0	25.7
Somewhat Disagree	28.8	34.6	34.8	36.8
Neutral	13.8	17.6	23.1	16.5
Somewhat Agree	35.0	23.5	21.3	15.7
Strongly Agree	6.3	5.9	4.8	5.3
<b>I generally make snap decisions in the context of travel</b>				
Strongly Disagree	22.5	25.5	21.8	32.3
Somewhat Disagree	37.5	38.6	40.4	39.8
Neutral	22.5	20.9	22.1	16.5
Somewhat Agree	12.5	13.7	13.0	9.8
Strongly Agree	5.0	1.3	2.7	1.6
<b>I often make impulsive travel-related decisions</b>				
Strongly Disagree	17.5	18.3	17.3	28.2
Somewhat Disagree	26.3	45.1	38.8	36.2
Neutral	21.3	15.7	21.0	16.4
Somewhat Agree	28.8	14.4	18.9	14.6
Strongly Agree	6.3	6.5	4.0	4.6
<b>I seek out the advice of other people in making important travel decisions</b>				
Strongly Disagree	11.3	3.9	6.4	6.2
Somewhat Disagree	17.5	15.0	14.6	14.3
Neutral	35.0	20.3	22.9	18.1
Somewhat Agree	27.5	47.1	42.6	42.9
Strongly Agree	8.8	13.7	13.6	18.5

- Frequent online travel review readers clearly use the Internet more for their trip planning than respondents who read reviews rarely or occasionally. 91.8% of respondents who read other travelers' reviews every time they plan a trip said they always use the Internet for their trip planning. In contrast, only 55% of respondents who read online reviews rarely/occasionally stated that they always use the Internet when planning pleasure trips.

<b>Frequency of Online Travel Review Reading</b>				
	<b>Rarely or Occasionally</b>	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Very Often</b>	<b>Every time</b>
<b>Frequency of Internet use for trip planning</b>	(%) N=80	(%) N=153	(%) N=376	(%) N=834
Sometimes	20.0	7.2	3.2	1.1
Often	25.0	28.1	17.3	7.1
Always	55.0	64.7	79.5	91.8

- In addition, significant differences exist with respect to the activities in which respondents engage online when planning pleasure trips. Frequent review readers are more likely to watch videos online and use interactive trip planners during their trip planning. Also, a majority of frequent review readers said that they read travel-related blogs and look at other travelers' comments and materials for their travel planning.

<b>Frequency of Online Travel Review Reading</b>				
	<b>Rarely or Occasionally</b>	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Very Often</b>	<b>Every time</b>
<b>Online Activities During Trip Planning</b>	(%) N=80	(%) N=153	(%) N=376	(%) N=834
<b>Watch videos online</b>				
No	82.5	79.7	76.3	67.1
Yes	17.5	20.3	23.7	32.9
<b>Read travel-related blogs</b>				
No	63.8	44.4	41.0	27.3
Yes	36.3	55.6	59.0	72.7
<b>Look at comments/materials other consumers have posted</b>				
No	43.8	11.8	5.6	5.4
Yes	56.3	88.2	94.4	94.6
<b>Use interactive trip planners</b>				
No	86.3	75.2	73.1	70.9
Yes	13.8	24.8	26.9	29.1

#### **4.7.2 Use of Other Travelers' Online Reviews**

- Frequent online travel review readers are more likely to use online travel reviews throughout all trip planning stages.

<b>Frequency of Reading Online Travel Reviews</b>				
	<b>Rarely or Occasionally</b>	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Very Often</b>	<b>Every time</b>
<b>Use of Online Reviews in Different Trip Planning Stages</b>	(%) N=80	(%) N=153	(%) N=376	(%) N=834
<b>Beginning, to get ideas</b>				
No	53.8	51.0	45.7	27.7
Yes	46.3	49.0	54.3	72.3
<b>Middle, to narrow down possible choices</b>				
No	56.3	35.3	38.0	32.1
Yes	43.8	64.7	62.0	67.9
<b>Later, to confirm my decisions</b>				
No	76.3	68.6	62.2	54.4
Yes	23.8	31.4	37.8	45.6
<b>During the trip, to decide what to do at the destination</b>				
No	92.5	95.4	94.1	89.2
Yes	7.5	4.6	5.9	10.8
<b>After the trip, to compare and share travel experiences</b>				
No	90.0	83.0	75.0	64.3
Yes	10.0	17.0	25.0	35.7

- Frequent online travel review readers are more likely to think that online travel reviews are important for all travel-related decisions.

	Frequency of Reading Online Travel Reviews			
	Rarely or Occasionally	Frequently	Very Often	Every time
Importance of Travel Reviews for Travel-related Decisions	(%) N=80	(%) N=153	(%) N=376	(%) N=834
<b>Deciding where to go</b>				
Not at all important	15.0	9.2	8.0	6.1
Not very important	31.3	33.3	30.6	22.8
Somewhat important	45.0	41.8	41.2	37.2
Very important	7.5	12.4	16.2	18.6
Extremely important	1.3	3.3	4.0	15.3
<b>Deciding where to stay</b>				
Not at all important	3.8	0	0.3	0.2
Not very important	11.3	4.6	1.3	0.8
Somewhat important	48.8	43.1	23.4	11.0
Very important	23.8	38.6	50.3	36.5
Extremely important	12.5	13.7	24.7	51.4
<b>Deciding what to do at destination</b>				
Not at all important	7.5	5.2	3.2	1.7
Not very important	30.0	24.8	19.7	12.6
Somewhat important	51.3	47.7	50.3	46.8
Very important	10.0	19.0	22.9	26.9
Extremely important	1.3	3.3	4.0	12.1
<b>Deciding where to eat</b>				
Not at all important	15.0	9.2	5.9	4.4
Not very important	25.0	22.2	21.0	15.7
Somewhat important	45.0	52.3	43.6	39.4
Very important	13.8	13.7	25.0	27.3
Extremely important	1.3	2.6	4.5	13.1
<b>Deciding when to go</b>				
Not at all important	20.0	13.1	21.0	8.9
Not very important	18.8	24.2	31.1	22.7
Somewhat important	46.3	43.1	36.4	36.6
Very important	12.5	16.3	15.4	21.5
Extremely important	2.5	3.3	5.1	10.4

- Frequent online travel review readers are more likely to visit virtual community sites and online travel agency/auction sites to find other travelers' online reviews.

<b>Frequency of Reading Online Travel Reviews</b>				
	<b>Rarely or Occasionally</b>	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Very Often</b>	<b>Every time</b>
<b>Websites Visited to Find Other Travelers' Online Review</b>	(%) N=80	(%) N=153	(%) N=376	(%) N=834
<b>Online Travel agency or auction sites (Expedia, Orbitz, Priceline etc.)</b>				
No	57.5	45.1	40.7	40.3
Yes	42.5	54.9	59.3	59.7
<b>Virtual communities (TripAdvisor, Virtual Tourist, LonelyPlanet etc.)</b>				
No	26.3	14.4	9.3	4.0
Yes	73.8	85.6	90.7	96.0

#### 4.7.3 Evaluation of Other Travelers' Online Reviews

- Frequent online travel review readers are more likely to consider travel date, type of Web site where review is posted, purpose of trip, detailed descriptions, photos provided along with review, other travelers' ratings of its usefulness, and the date the review was posted when evaluating a review.

<b>Frequency of Reading Online Travel Reviews</b>				
	<b>Rarely or Occasionally</b>	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Very Often</b>	<b>Every time</b>
<b>Importance of Information for Travel Review Evaluation</b>	(%) N=80	(%) N=153	(%) N=376	(%) N=834
<b>Travel date</b>				
Not at all important	2.5	7.2	4.8	4.4
Not very important	12.5	23.1	18.9	12.1
Somewhat important	46.4	31.4	37.8	36.8
Very important	33.8	34.0	29.8	32.1
Extremely important	5.0	14.4	8.8	14.5
<b>Type of Website on which the review is posted</b>				
Not at all important	6.3	4.6	3.2	1.9
Not very important	13.8	13.1	8.5	6.7
Somewhat important	41.3	28.1	26.3	21.0
Very important	31.3	38.6	42.8	40.8
Extremely important	7.5	15.7	19.1	29.6

	Frequency of Reading Online Travel Reviews			
	Rarely or Occasionally	Frequently	Very Often	Every time
Importance of Information for Travel Review Evaluation	(%) N=80	(%) N=153	(%) N=376	(%) N=834
<b>Purpose of trip</b>				
Not at all important	6.3	4.6	7.4	4.2
Not very important	18.8	19.6	19.1	17.9
Somewhat important	47.5	37.3	38.8	41.1
Very important	26.3	32.7	30.3	27.1
Extremely important	1.3	5.9	4.3	9.7
<b>Detailed descriptions</b>				
Not at all important	0	0	0.5	0.6
Not very important	11.3	5.2	3.5	2.3
Somewhat important	45.0	40.5	28.7	18.8
Very important	30.0	42.5	48.7	46.4
Extremely important	13.8	11.8	18.6	31.9
<b>Photos provided along with review</b>				
Not at all important	1.3	7.2	6.9	3.6
Not very important	25.0	23.5	19.4	15.3
Somewhat important	36.3	40.5	33.5	32.0
Very important	25.0	21.6	27.7	28.3
Extremely important	12.5	7.2	12.5	20.7
<b>Other travelers' rating of usefulness of the review</b>				
Not at all important	12.5	7.2	11.2	10.4
Not very important	17.5	19.6	23.1	24.8
Somewhat important	41.3	34.0	31.4	30.7
Very important	22.5	34.6	28.5	24.1
Extremely important	6.3	4.6	5.9	10.0
<b>Date review was posted</b>				
Not at all important	2.5	3.3	3.2	1.7
Not very important	12.5	7.8	7.7	6.1
Somewhat important	40.0	33.3	32.4	29.7
Very important	35.0	41.2	41.8	38.4
Extremely important	10.0	14.4	14.9	24.1

- Frequent online travel review readers are more likely to evaluate a reviewer's credibility as high based on similarity in terms of demographics and activities performed during a trip as well as the travel experience of the reviewer.

<b>Frequency of Reading Online Travel Reviews</b>				
	<b>Rarely or Occasionally</b>	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Very Often</b>	<b>Every time</b>
<b>Reviewer Credibility</b>	(%) N=80	(%) N=153	(%) N=376	(%) N=834
<b>Similar in terms of age, gender or marital status</b>				
Very low	1.3	3.3	1.3	2.5
Low	8.8	3.3	4.5	5.3
Good	53.8	49.0	49.2	39.8
High	27.5	34.0	33.2	34.7
Very high	8.8	10.5	11.7	17.7
<b>Lots of travel experience</b>				
Very low	0	2.0	1.9	1.3
Low	6.3	3.3	2.4	3.2
Good	22.5	21.6	20.7	19.2
High	52.5	44.4	46.0	39.0
Very high	18.8	28.8	29.0	37.3
<b>Appears to be a nice person</b>				
Very low	6.3	8.5	6.6	7.6
Low	26.3	22.9	14.4	14.7
Good	35.0	38.6	45.7	38.6
High	25.0	26.8	27.1	27.7
Very high	7.5	3.3	6.1	11.4
<b>Writes in a polite and friendly manner</b>				
Very low	2.5	3.9	2.9	2.8
Low	6.3	8.5	6.6	5.2
Good	43.8	35.9	34.0	30.3
High	35.0	41.2	41.8	40.3
Very high	12.5	10.5	14.6	21.5
<b>Similar activities during trips</b>				
Very low	3.8	2.0	1.3	1.3
Low	6.3	4.6	5.9	5.0
Good	28.8	30.7	29.3	25.7
High	43.8	49.0	46.3	41.6
Very high	17.5	13.7	17.3	26.4

- Frequent online travel review readers are more likely to evaluate a reviewer's credibility as high based on whether the person writes in a polite and friendly manner and appears to be nice. Also, frequent review readers are more likely to consider whether they like the person based on their writing and/or photos.

<b>Frequency of Reading Online Travel Reviews</b>				
	<b>Rarely or Occasionally</b>	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Very Often</b>	<b>Every time</b>
	(%) N=80	(%) N=153	(%) N=376	(%) N=834
<b>Reviewer Credibility</b>				
<b>I like based on writing and/or photos</b>				
Very low	2.5	3.3	4.0	4.8
Low	8.8	15.0	10.1	9.7
Good	47.5	40.5	40.7	34.8
High	38.8	32.0	35.1	34.9
Very high	2.5	9.2	10.1	15.8

- Frequent online travel review readers are more likely to evaluate the usefulness of a review higher than occasional review readers when the review is posted by a reviewer who has lots of travel experience, appears to be a nice person, writes in a polite and friendly manner, engages in similar activities during a trip and is someone they like based on his/her writing and/or photos.

<b>Frequency of Reading Online Travel Reviews</b>				
	<b>Rarely or Occasionally</b>	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Very Often</b>	<b>Every time</b>
	(%) N=80	(%) N=153	(%) N=376	(%) N=834
<b>Usefulness of Review When Posted by Following Types of Reviewer</b>				
<b>Lots of travel experience</b>				
Not at all useful	1.3	0.7	1.1	0.7
Not very useful	1.3	3.3	3.2	2.2
Somewhat useful	26.3	23.5	19.1	15.9
Very useful	51.3	42.5	47.6	43.8
Extremely useful	20.0	30.1	29.0	37.4
<b>Appears to be a nice person</b>				
Not at all useful	6.3	9.2	5.6	5.9
Not very useful	20.0	21.6	18.1	14.7
Somewhat useful	51.3	46.4	47.1	43.3
Very useful	21.3	19.0	23.4	27.1
Extremely useful	1.3	3.9	5.9	9.0



<b>Frequency of Reading Online Travel Reviews</b>				
	<b>Rarely or Occasionally</b>	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Very Often</b>	<b>Every time</b>
<b>Usefulness of Review When Posted by Following Types of Reviewer</b>	(%) N=80	(%) N=153	(%) N=376	(%) N=834
<b>Writes in a polite and friendly manner</b>				
Not at all useful	3.8	6.5	2.7	3.2
Not very useful	11.3	11.8	8.2	7.9
Somewhat useful	50.0	39.9	44.9	39.1
Very useful	31.3	37.9	34.6	36.6
Extremely useful	3.8	3.9	9.6	13.2
<b>I like based on writing and/or photos</b>				
Not at all useful	2.5	7.8	5.1	3.6
Not very useful	11.3	17.6	11.4	10.7
Somewhat useful	46.3	38.6	38.0	34.7
Very useful	33.8	27.5	36.7	34.9
Extremely useful	6.3	8.5	8.8	16.2
<b>Similar activities during trips</b>				
Not at all useful	1.3	2.0	0.8	0.7
Not very useful	5.0	4.6	5.9	2.9
Somewhat useful	35.0	26.8	26.1	26.6
Very useful	41.3	50.3	51.3	44.5
Extremely useful	17.5	16.3	16.0	25.3

- Frequent online travel review readers are more likely to evaluate other travelers' online reviews as providing up-to-date, detailed, reliable, unbiased, relevant and enjoyable information compared to information offered by travel service providers.

<b>Frequency of Reading Online Travel Reviews</b>				
	<b>Rarely or Occasionally</b>	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Very Often</b>	<b>Every time</b>
<b>Travelers' Review Compared to Info. from Travel Service Providers</b>	(%) N=80	(%) N=153	(%) N=376	(%) N=834
<b>Up-to-date information</b>				
Less likely	26.3	12.4	9.0	4.8
Same	33.8	34.0	33.0	21.9
More likely	40.0	53.6	58.0	73.3

	Frequency of Reading Online Travel Reviews			
	Rarely or Occasionally	Frequently	Very Often	Every time
<b>Travelers' Review Compared to Info. from Travel Service Providers</b>	(%) N=80	(%) N=153	(%) N=376	(%) N=834
<b>Detailed information</b>				
Less likely	20.0	13.7	13.3	10.8
Same	35.0	42.5	32.4	26.7
More likely	45.0	43.8	54.3	62.5
<b>Reliable information</b>				
Less likely	15.0	8.5	4.5	3.8
Same	45.0	39.2	37.2	30.1
More likely	40.0	52.3	58.2	66.1
<b>Unbiased information</b>				
Less likely	15.0	7.8	7.2	5.8
Same	37.5	27.5	24.7	16.2
More likely	47.5	64.7	68.1	78.1
<b>Relevant information</b>				
Less likely	10.0	4.6	3.7	4.1
Same	55.0	52.9	46.0	36.9
More likely	35.0	42.5	50.3	59.0
<b>Enjoyable information</b>				
Less likely	3.8	0.7	2.7	1.4
Same	46.3	47.1	41.0	32.5
More likely	50.0	52.3	56.4	66.1

#### 4.7.4 Influence of Other Travelers' Online Reviews

- Frequent online travel review readers are more likely to be highly influenced by other travelers' reviews.
- Frequent online travel review readers more likely indicate that reading online travel reviews is an efficient way of planning a trip. They more likely agree that it helps them save time, increase confidence, reduce risk/uncertainty, evaluate alternatives and provide ideas. In addition, frequent online travel review readers are more likely to view reading online travel reviews as an enjoyable process. They are more likely to agree that it adds fun, makes them excited, and helps them imagine their trip more vividly.

	Frequency of Reading Online Travel Reviews			
	Rarely or Occasionally	Frequently	Very Often	Every time
<b>Influence of Other Travelers' Reviews</b>	(%) N=80	(%) N=153	(%) N=376	(%) N=834
<b>Make it easier to reach decisions</b>				
Strongly Disagree	2.5	2.0	0.3	0.5
Somewhat Disagree	6.3	4.6	4.5	1.9
Neutral	25.0	20.9	18.6	11.0
Somewhat Agree	56.3	61.4	55.1	49.4
Strongly Agree	10.0	11.1	21.5	37.2
<b>Help me save time in the travel planning process</b>				
Strongly Disagree	3.8	2.6	2.4	1.1
Somewhat Disagree	6.3	9.8	9.8	7.1
Neutral	35.0	26.8	25.0	18.9
Somewhat Agree	47.5	47.1	48.7	38.8
Strongly Agree	7.5	13.7	14.1	34.1
<b>Make travel planning more enjoyable</b>				
Strongly Disagree	2.5	1.3	1.1	0.2
Somewhat Disagree	6.3	1.3	1.9	1.3
Neutral	37.5	30.1	24.7	14.6
Somewhat Agree	46.3	54.2	55.6	43.3
Strongly Agree	7.5	13.1	16.8	40.5
<b>Increase my confidence in the decisions I make</b>				
Strongly Disagree	3.8	1.3	0.8	0.6
Somewhat Disagree	2.5	3.3	2.7	1.0
Neutral	9.7	20.6	28.4	41.3
Somewhat Agree	60.0	54.9	58.2	43.9
Strongly Agree	15.0	19.6	26.6	46.9
<b>Help me imagine my trips more vividly</b>				
Strongly Disagree	3.8	0.7	1.9	1.0
Somewhat Disagree	13.8	8.5	7.7	4.7
Neutral	25.0	28.8	26.1	23.7
Somewhat Agree	51.3	47.7	48.1	39.0
Strongly Agree	6.3	14.4	16.2	31.7

	Frequency of Reading Online Travel Reviews			
	Rarely or Occasionally	Frequently	Very Often	Every time
<b>Influence of Other Travelers' Reviews</b>	(%) N=80	(%) N=153	(%) N=376	(%) N=834
<b>Reduce the risk/uncertainty involved in making travel decisions</b>				
Strongly Disagree	5.0	2.0	0.5	0.4
Somewhat Disagree	7.5	7.2	4.8	1.9
Neutral	21.3	22.2	15.2	10.0
Somewhat Agree	53.8	54.2	53.5	47.1
Strongly Agree	12.5	14.4	26.1	40.6
<b>Help me plan my trips more efficiently</b>				
Strongly Disagree	2.5	2.0	0.3	0.5
Somewhat Disagree	5.0	4.6	4.3	1.3
Neutral	28.8	14.8	19.9	12.2
Somewhat Agree	51.3	51.6	56.1	45.9
Strongly Agree	12.5	17.0	19.4	40.0
<b>Provide me with ideas</b>				
Strongly Disagree	1.3	0	0.2	0.2
Somewhat Disagree	1.3	1.3	1.9	1.0
Neutral	10.0	9.2	9.6	7.0
Somewhat Agree	66.3	66.0	56.9	42.3
Strongly Agree	21.3	23.5	30.9	49.4
<b>Make me feel excited about traveling</b>				
Strongly Disagree	2.5	2.6	1.6	0.6
Somewhat Disagree	6.3	2.0	6.4	1.2
Neutral	30.0	28.1	18.4	16.9
Somewhat Agree	48.8	43.8	47.9	35.0
Strongly Agree	12.5	23.5	25.8	46.3
<b>Help me evaluate alternatives</b>				
Strongly Disagree	0	1.3	0	0.1
Somewhat Disagree	1.3	0.7	0.8	0.2
Neutral	18.8	7.8	7.7	6.0
Somewhat Agree	65.0	71.9	59.7	41.9
Strongly Agree	15.0	18.3	31.7	51.7

	Frequency of Reading Online Travel Reviews			
	Rarely or Occasionally	Frequently	Very Often	Every time
<b>Influence of Other Travelers' Reviews</b>	(%) N=80	(%) N=153	(%) N=376	(%) N=834
<b>Add fun to the travel planning process</b>				
Strongly Disagree	2.5	0.7	1.1	0.4
Somewhat Disagree	5.0	2.6	5.1	2.6
Neutral	32.5	30.1	22.6	14.7
Somewhat Agree	52.5	47.7	48.4	38.7
Strongly Agree	7.5	19.0	22.9	43.5
<b>Reduce the likelihood that I later regret a decision</b>				
Strongly Disagree	3.8	2.6	0.5	0.7
Somewhat Disagree	3.8	6.5	4.3	2.8
Neutral	28.8	29.4	21.8	12.7
Somewhat Agree	50.0	49.7	48.9	47.5
Strongly Agree	13.8	11.8	24.5	36.3
<b>A good way to learn about a travel destination, product or service</b>				
Strongly Disagree	0	0.7	0	0.1
Somewhat Disagree	3.8	0	0.5	0.1
Neutral	15.0	5.2	6.1	3.2
Somewhat Agree	61.3	64.7	55.9	37.5
Strongly Agree	20.0	29.4	37.5	59.0
<b>Make it easier to imagine what a place will be like</b>				
Strongly Disagree	1.3	0.7	0.8	0.6
Somewhat Disagree	3.8	2.0	2.7	1.1
Neutral	17.5	12.4	16.0	10.1
Somewhat Agree	60.0	64.1	54.3	45.4
Strongly Agree	17.5	20.9	26.3	42.8
<b>Help me avoid places/services I would not enjoy</b>				
Strongly Disagree	2.5	1.3	0.3	0.2
Somewhat Disagree	1.3	1.3	1.6	0.6
Neutral	15.0	11.8	7.4	4.7
Somewhat Agree	57.5	55.6	47.9	39.0
Strongly Agree	23.8	30.1	42.8	55.5

#### 4.7.5 Motivation to write/post online travel reviews

- Frequent readers of other travelers' online travel reviews are more likely to write/post travel reviews. Almost 90 percent of respondents who read travel reviews every time they plan a trip also post online travel reviews.

	Frequency of Reading Online Travel Reviews			
	Rarely or Occasionally	Frequently	Very Often	Every time
<b>Have previously written/posted a travel review</b>	(%) N=80	(%) N=153	(%) N=376	(%) N=834
No	48.8	26.1	18.4	11.8
Yes	51.38	73.9	81.6	88.2

#### 4.7.6 Characteristics

- Frequent review readers are more likely to have higher household incomes.

	Frequency of Online Travel Review Reading			
	Rarely or Occasionally	Frequently	Very Often	Every time
<b>Total annual household income before taxes</b>	(%) N=80	(%) N=153	(%) N=376	(%) N=834
Less than \$10,000	3.3	1.8	1.1	0.2
\$10,000-\$29,999	13.1	1.8	2.2	3.0
\$30,000-\$49,999	16.4	11.6	12.4	9.4
\$50,000-69,999	13.1	20.5	16.8	15.2
\$70,000-\$89,999	18.0	15.2	15.7	17.3
\$90,000-\$109,999	16.4	12.5	18.6	15.9
\$110,000-129,999	3.3	13.4	9.5	12.1
\$130,000-\$149,999	4.9	8.9	6.2	7.5
\$150,000 or more	11.5	14.3	17.5	19.5

- Frequent review readers are more likely to be younger than 35 compared to respondents who only rarely/occasionally read reviews.

<b>Frequency of Online Travel Review Reading</b>				
	<b>Rarely or Occasionally</b>	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Very Often</b>	<b>Every time</b>
<b>Age</b>	(%) N=80	(%) N=153	(%) N=376	(%) N=834
Younger than 35 years	13.8	13.7	14.9	18.2
35-64 years	67.5	76.5	77.4	78.4
65 years or older	18.8	9.8	7.7	3.4

- Significant differences were also found with respect to Internet use skills. Frequent travel review readers more strongly agree that they have high Internet use and online search skills.

<b>Frequency of Online Travel Review Reading</b>				
	<b>Rarely or Occasionally</b>	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Very Often</b>	<b>Every time</b>
	(%) N=80	(%) N=153	(%) N=376	(%) N=834
<b>I am very skilled at using the Internet</b>				
Strongly Disagree	3.8	2.0	1.6	0.4
Somewhat Disagree	6.3	5.9	3.5	1.8
Neutral	17.5	13.7	12.0	10.6
Somewhat Agree	37.5	39.2	36.2	27.3
Strongly Agree	35.0	39.2	46.8	60.0
<b>I know more about using the Internet than most people</b>				
Strongly Disagree	1.3	0.7	0	0
Somewhat Disagree	1.3	1.3	1.9	0.4
Neutral	6.3	2.0	4.0	1.6
Somewhat Agree	38.8	40.5	27.4	21.2
Strongly Agree	52.5	55.6	66.8	76.9
<b>I know how to find what I want on the Internet</b>				
Strongly Disagree	3.8	1.3	2.9	1.4
Somewhat Disagree	10.0	10.5	4.8	4.7
Neutral	27.5	30.1	25.0	24.1
Somewhat Agree	36.3	35.9	37.0	32.4
Strongly Agree	22.5	22.2	30.3	37.4

- Frequent travel review readers engaged more often in general online activities in the 3 months prior to the study. Respondents who read reviews every time or very often for their trip planning are more likely to have read blogs, have written blogs, posted comments to a blog, listened to or downloaded audio podcasts, posted/shared photographs, rated products/contents, and rated the usefulness of reviews.

<b>Frequency of Online Travel Review Reading</b>				
	<b>Rarely or Occasionally</b>	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Very Often</b>	<b>Every time</b>
<b>Online activities in past 3 months:</b>	(%) N=80	(%) N=153	(%) N=376	(%) N=834
<b>Read blogs</b>				
No	58.8	40.5	38.6	29.4
Yes	41.3	59.5	61.4	70.6
<b>Write a blog</b>				
No	95.0	89.5	86.4	83.3
Yes	5.0	10.5	13.6	16.7
<b>Post comments to a blog</b>				
No	88.8	81.0	75.3	70.0
Yes	11.3	19.0	24.7	30.0
<b>Listen to or download audio podcasts</b>				
No	80.8	69.9	71.5	66.1
Yes	20.0	30.1	28.5	33.9
<b>Post/share photographs</b>				
No	57.5	47.1	43.9	41.0
Yes	42.5	52.9	56.1	59.0
<b>Rate products/contents</b>				
No	63.8	46.4	40.2	33.8
Yes	36.3	53.6	59.8	66.2
<b>Rate the usefulness of reviews</b>				
No	78.8	54.2	42.3	35.1
Yes	21.3	45.8	57.7	64.9



## 4.8 Characteristics of Travel Review Writers

Crosstabulations and Chi-Square statistics were used to test whether differences exist among respondents who actively write/post online travel reviews and those who do not. Only significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) are reported.

### 4.8.1 Trip Planning Behavior

- Review writers traveled more frequently for pleasure in the 12 months prior to the study than non-writers.

	Review Posting Experience	
	Non-writer	Writer
<b>Number of pleasure trips in the past 12 months</b>	(%) N=246	(%) N=1197
None	3.3	2.3
1~2 trips	35.4	23.9
3~4 trips	35.8	38.6
5~6 trips	17.1	21.2
7~8 trips	5.3	6.3
9 trips or more	3.3	7.7

- Review writers are more likely to be involved in trip planning while non-writers are more likely to somewhat or strongly agree that trip planning is a necessary chore.

	Review Posting Experience	
	Non-writer	Writer
<b>Perception of Trip Planning</b>	(%) N=246	(%) N=1197
<b>A necessary chore</b>		
Strongly Disagree	26.0	24.6
Somewhat Disagree	18.7	24.8
Neutral	19.5	19.9
Somewhat Agree	22.8	15.5
Strongly Agree	13.0	15.2

	Review Posting Experience	
	Non-writer	Writer
<b>Involvement in Trip Planning</b>	(%) N=246	(%) N=1197
<b>Something I like to leave to others</b>		
Strongly Disagree	58.5	66.2
Somewhat Disagree	24.4	25.6
Neutral	8.5	4.7
Somewhat Agree	6.5	3.1
Strongly Agree	2.0	0.5
<b>An activity in which I typically become very involved</b>		
Strongly Disagree	0.4	0.5
Somewhat Disagree	0.4	0.9
Neutral	4.1	1.5
Somewhat Agree	21.5	14.6
Strongly Agree	73.6	82.5

- Review writers more frequently use the Internet for their pleasure trip planning. 85.8 percent of review writers compared to 73.4 percent of non-writers said they always use the Internet for their trip planning.
- Review writers more likely use live chat tools to talk with travel experts during their travel planning and more than 90% of review writers reported that they look at other consumers' comments/materials during their trip planning.

	Review Posting Experience	
	Non-writer	Writer
<b>Frequency to use Internet during trip planning</b>	(%) N=246	(%) N=1197
Sometimes	4.9	3.0
Often	21.5	11.2
Always	73.6	85.8
<b>Online activities during trip planning: use live chat to talk with travel experts</b>		
No	98.4	94.7
Yes	1.6	5.3
<b>Online activities during trip planning : look at comments/materials other consumers have posted</b>		
No	11.8	7.5
Yes	88.2	92.5

## 4.8.2 Use of Other Travelers' Online Reviews

- Review writers are more likely to use online travel reviews throughout all trip planning stages; in particular, more than 30% of review writers agreed that they use online travel reviews after the trip to compare and share their travel experience while only 11% of non-writers reported that they use online reviews after their trip.

	Review Posting Experience	
	Non-writer	Writer
<b>Use of Online Reviews in Different Trip Planning Stages</b>	(%) N=246	(%) N=1197
<b>Middle, to narrow down possible choices</b>		
No	42.3	33.9
Yes	57.7	66.1
<b>Later, to confirm my decisions</b>		
No	68.7	57.2
Yes	31.3	42.8
<b>During the trip, to decide what to do at destination</b>		
No	95.5	90.5
Yes	4.5	9.5
<b>After the trip, to compare and share travel experiences</b>		
No	89.0	66.7
Yes	11.0	33.3

- Review writers are more likely to think that online travel reviews are important for destination and accommodation decisions than non-writers.

	Review Posting Experience	
	Non-writer	Writer
<b>Importance of Travel Reviews for Travel-related Decisions</b>	(%) N=246	(%) N=1197
<b>Deciding Where to go</b>		
Not at all important	10.2	6.9
Not very important	27.6	26.1
Somewhat important	42.3	38.5
Very important	11.0	17.9
Extremely important	8.9	10.6
<b>Deciding where to stay</b>		
Not at all important	1.6	0.2
Not very important	4.9	1.3
Somewhat important	29.3	17.8
Very important	39.0	39.7
Extremely important	25.2	41.0

- Review writers are more likely to visit virtual communities to find other travelers' online reviews.

	Review Posting Experience	
	Non-writer	Writer
<b>Websites Visited to Find Other Travelers' Online Reviews</b>	(%) N=246	(%) N=1197
<b>Virtual communities (TripAdvisor, Virtual Tourist, LonelyPlanet etc.)</b>		
No	17.5	5.7
Yes	82.5	94.3

#### 4.8.3 Evaluation of Other Travelers' Online Reviews

- Review writers are more likely to evaluate a review based on its length, whether it includes detailed descriptions, and on the type of Website where the review is posted.

	Review Posting Experience	
	Non-writer	Writer
<b>Importance of Information for Travel Review Evaluation</b>	(%) N=246	(%) N=1197
<b>Length of review</b>		
Not at all important	11.4	7.9
Not very important	28.9	28.7
Somewhat important	43.9	40.4
Very important	14.6	18.8
Extremely important	1.2	4.2
<b>Type of Website on which review is posted</b>		
Not at all important	5.3	2.3
Not very important	9.8	7.9
Somewhat important	34.6	22.1
Very important	36.2	41.4
Extremely important	14.2	26.2
<b>Detailed description included in the review</b>		
Not at all important	0.8	0.4
Not very important	4.9	3.1
Somewhat important	33.7	23.4
Very important	42.7	46.3
Extremely important	17.9	26.8

- Review writers are more likely to judge a reviewer's credibility based on whether the reviewer writes in a polite and friendly manner, whether the reviewer has received high ratings from others, and whether he/she engages in similar activities when traveling.

	Review Posting Experience	
	Non-writer (%) N=246	Writer (%) N=1197
<b>Reviewer Credibility</b>		
<b>Writes in a polite and friendly manner</b>		
Very low	2.0	3.1
Low	6.9	5.8
Good	44.7	30.2
High	34.1	41.8
Very high	12.2	19.2
<b>Has received high ratings from others for his/her review</b>		
Very low	7.7	4.3
Low	11.0	13.7
Good	42.3	36.6
High	29.3	31.9
Very high	9.8	13.5
<b>Engages in similar activities during trips</b>		
Very low	2.8	1.3
Low	5.3	5.3
Good	23.6	28.1
High	51.6	42.1
Very high	16.7	23.3

- Review writers are more likely to judge a review as useful when it was posted by a reviewer who appears to be a nice person and writes in a polite and friendly manner.

	Review Posting Experience	
	Non-writer (%) N=246	Writer (%) N=1197
<b>Usefulness of Review When Posted by Following Types of Reviewers</b>		
<b>Appears to be a nice person</b>		
Not at all useful	6.9	6.0
Not very useful	17.9	16.4
Somewhat useful	52.0	43.6
Very useful	18.7	26.2
Extremely useful	4.5	7.8
<b>Writes in a polite and friendly manner</b>		
Not at all useful	4.1	3.3
Not very useful	11.8	7.9
Somewhat useful	48.4	39.8
Very useful	28.9	37.3
Extremely useful	6.9	11.5

- Review writers have a greater tendency to think that other travelers' reviews are more likely to provide up-to-date, reliable, unbiased, relevant, and enjoyable information than travel service providers.

	Review Posting Experience	
	Non-writer (%) N=246	Writer (%) N=1197
<b>Travelers' Review Compared to Information from Travel Service Providers</b>		
<b>Up-to-date information</b>		
Less likely	11.8	7.1
Same	36.2	24.8
More likely	52.0	68.1
<b>Reliable information</b>		
Less likely	7.3	4.7
Same	44.3	31.6
More likely	48.4	63.7
<b>Unbiased information</b>		
Less likely	8.1	6.6
Same	30.9	18.7
More likely	61.0	74.7
<b>Relevant information</b>		
Less likely	5.3	4.2
Same	53.7	39.6
More likely	41.1	56.2
<b>Enjoyable information</b>		
Less likely	2.4	1.7
Same	46.7	35.0
More likely	50.8	63.3

#### 4.8.4 Influence of Other Travelers' Online Reviews

- Review writers are more likely to indicate that other travelers' reviews make their trip planning more enjoyable and add fun to the trip planning process, increase their confidence in the decisions they make, reduce risk/uncertainty, make them feel excited about traveling, help them evaluate alternatives, reduce the likelihood of regret, are a good way to learn about a place, help them imagine what a place will be like, and help them avoid places they would not enjoy.

	Review Posting Experience	
	Non-writer (%) N=246	Writer (%) N=1197
<b>Influence of Other Travelers' Reviews</b>		
<b>Make travel planning more enjoyable</b>		
Strongly Disagree	0.4	0.8
Somewhat Disagree	2.8	1.5
Neutral	25.6	19.0
Somewhat Agree	48.8	47.6
Strongly Agree	22.4	31.1
<b>Increase confidence in the decisions</b>		
Strongly Disagree	1.6	0.8
Somewhat Disagree	2.8	1.5
Neutral	11.0	10.7
Somewhat Agree	57.3	48.1
Strongly Agree	27.2	38.9
<b>Reduce the risk/uncertainty involved in making travel decisions</b>		
Strongly Disagree	0	1.0
Somewhat Disagree	4.5	3.3
Neutral	18.3	12.2
Somewhat Agree	52.0	49.5
Strongly Agree	25.2	34.0
<b>Make me feel excited about traveling</b>		
Strongly Disagree	0.8	1.3
Somewhat Disagree	4.5	2.6
Neutral	20.7	18.9
Somewhat Agree	45.1	39.0
Strongly Agree	28.9	38.3
<b>Help me evaluate alternatives</b>		
Strongly Disagree	0	0.3
Somewhat Disagree	0	0.6
Neutral	9.3	6.9
Somewhat Agree	57.7	49.6
Strongly Agree	32.9	42.6
<b>Add fun to the travel planning process</b>		
Strongly Disagree	0.4	0.8
Somewhat Disagree	4.5	3.2
Neutral	23.6	18.5
Somewhat Agree	47.6	42.0
Strongly Agree	24.0	35.5

	Review Posting Experience	
	Non-writer	Writer
	(%) N=246	(%) N=1197
<b>Influence of Other Travelers' Reviews</b>		
<b>Reduce the likelihood that I later regret a decision</b>		
Strongly Disagree	0.8	1.1
Somewhat Disagree	4.5	3.4
Neutral	24.8	16.3
Somewhat Agree	48.0	48.3
Strongly Agree	22.0	30.9
<b>A good way to learn about a travel destination, product or service</b>		
Strongly Disagree	0	0.2
Somewhat Disagree	0.4	0.4
Neutral	6.5	4.5
Somewhat Agree	54.9	44.8
Strongly Agree	38.2	50.1
<b>Make it easier to imagine what a place will be like</b>		
Strongly Disagree	0	0.8
Somewhat Disagree	2.0	1.7
Neutral	17.1	11.3
Somewhat Agree	53.7	49.9
Strongly Agree	27.2	36.3
<b>Help me avoid places/services I would not enjoy</b>		
Strongly Disagree	0	0.6
Somewhat Disagree	0.4	1.1
Neutral	10.6	5.9
Somewhat Agree	48.4	43.2
Strongly Agree	40.7	49.2

#### 4.8.5 Characteristics

- Almost 38 percent of online review writers are male while only 29.3 percent of non-writers are male, suggesting that the tendency to write reviews is greater for males.

	Review Posting Experience	
	Non-writer	Writer
	(%) N=246	(%) N=1197
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	70.7	62.3
Male	29.3	37.7



- Review writers are more likely to be younger than 35 years and non-writers are more likely to be 65 years or older.
- Review writers are more likely to have higher household incomes.

	Review Posting Experience	
	Non-writer	Writer
<b>Age</b>	(%) N=246	(%) N=1197
18-34 years	13.8	17.2
35-64 years	76.4	77.5
65 years or older	9.8	5.3
<b>Total annual household income before taxes</b>		
Less than \$10,000	1.1	0.7
\$10,000-\$29,999	7.5	2.4
\$30,000-\$49,999	14.4	10.1
\$50,000-69,999	14.4	16.4
\$70,000-\$89,999	17.2	16.6
\$90,000-\$109,999	19.5	15.6
\$110,000-129,999	7.5	11.7
\$130,000-\$149,999	7.5	7.1
\$150,000 or more	10.9	19.4

- Review writers more strongly agree that they are very skilled at using Internet and also know more about using Internet and searching online.

	Review Posting Experience	
	Non-writer	Writer
<b>I am very skilled at using the Internet</b>	(%) N=246	(%) N=1197
Strongly Disagree	1.2	1.0
Somewhat Disagree	5.7	2.3
Neutral	17.9	10.4
Somewhat Agree	37.0	30.3
Strongly Agree	38.2	56.0
<b>I know how to find what I want on the Internet</b>		
Strongly Disagree	0.4	0.1
Somewhat Disagree	1.6	0.8
Neutral	4.5	2.1
Somewhat Agree	31.3	24.7
Strongly Agree	62.2	72.3

	Review Posting Experience	
	Non-writer	Writer
<b>I know more about using the Internet than most people</b>	(%) N=246	(%) N=1197
Strongly Disagree	2.8	1.8
Somewhat Disagree	8.5	5.0
Neutral	28.9	24.4
Somewhat Agree	36.2	33.8
Strongly Agree	23.6	35.1

- In the 3 months prior to the study, review writers more frequently engaged in many online activities compared to non-writers. The results indicate that review writers are more likely to read and write blogs, post comments to a blog, use a social networking site, listen to or download audio podcasts, watch or download videos, post/share audio files, post/share videos, post/share photographs, rate products, rate the usefulness of reviews, maintain a personal Website and contribute to a wiki.

	Review Posting Experience	
	Non-writer	Writer
<b>Online activities in past 3 months:</b>	(%) N=246	(%) N=1197
<b>Read blogs</b>		
No	43.1	32.8
Yes	56.9	67.2
<b>Write a blog</b>		
No	95.9	83.3
Yes	4.1	16.7
<b>Post comments to a blog</b>		
No	91.1	70.0
Yes	8.9	30.0
<b>Use a social networking site</b>		
No	90.7	80.3
Yes	9.3	19.7
<b>Listen to or download audio podcasts</b>		
No	75.6	67.3
Yes	24.4	32.7
<b>Watch or download videos</b>		
No	53.3	41.2
Yes	46.7	58.8

	Review Posting Experience	
	Non-writer (%) N=246	Writer (%) N=1197
<b>Online activities in past 3 months:</b>		
<b>Post/share audio files</b>		
No	95.1	88.5
Yes	4.9	11.5
<b>Post/share videos</b>		
No	95.1	89.2
Yes	4.9	10.8
<b>Post/Share photographs</b>		
No	54.9	40.9
Yes	45.1	59.1
<b>Rate products/contents</b>		
No	62.6	33.5
Yes	37.4	66.5
<b>Rate the usefulness of reviews</b>		
No	70.3	35.5
Yes	29.7	64.5
<b>Maintain a personal Web site</b>		
No	96.3	87.6
Yes	3.7	12.4
<b>Contribute to a wiki</b>		
No	99.2	94.1
Yes	0.8	5.9

## 5 Implications and Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that TripAdvisor users, and in particular those who read other travelers' reviews frequently, represent an especially desirable demographic for travel marketers. They travel frequently for pleasure, like to plan ahead, are highly involved in trip planning, enjoy planning, and, thus, are more likely to be open for travel-related information. They also have high incomes, are well-educated, and use a variety of multimedia contents online. They see clear advantages in consumer-generated content and are highly influenced by other travelers' reviews but at the same time appreciate the detail and relevance of information provided by travel service providers.

Most see reviews as important in deciding where to stay but only a minority of respondents evaluates them as very important for other travel-related decisions. Strategies for expanding consumers' perceptions of travel reviews are needed to

create awareness of other uses, thus increasing use as well as impact of reviews. Also, incentives are needed to encourage consumers to use travel reviews in later stages of their travel-decision making process, during the trip, and after returning.

The study results clearly indicate that review readers use a variety of cues to judge whether they should take a review into account. The findings suggest that it is very important to provide context information such as information about the reviewer and about the trip. They also suggest that review sites such as TripAdvisor.com have a clear advantage as they provide a great amount of reviews and consumers evaluate reviews in the context of other reviews and other contributions by the same reviewer. The type of Web site where the review is posted also seems to play a role. Company sites are at a disadvantage to this respect. Objectivity was identified as critical by many respondents and independent sites seem to be more successful in gaining consumers' trust.

It is difficult to motivate consumers to write/post travel reviews as motivations are to a great extent intrinsic. Rewards do not seem to encourage consumers much. It appears that decreasing the barriers to writing is a more effective strategy. Making it easy and efficient for people to contribute, reminding them that others helped them and that they can now help others after returning home seem to be critical in increasing the extent to which consumers contribute. Specifically, sending reminder emails that directly link to a Web space where the review can be written and posted can greatly increase contribution rates. This approach can be easily executed by travel service providers which collect email addresses. Sites like TripAdvisor.com which do not require users to sign in face a greater challenge but can use other appeals (banners, etc.) on their Web site to encourage posting.

## 6 References

- Center for the Digital Future (2006). 2005 Digital Future Report. Accessed online (May 19, 2006) at:  
[http://www.digitalcenter.org/pages/current\\_report.asp?intGlobalId=19](http://www.digitalcenter.org/pages/current_report.asp?intGlobalId=19)
- Compete, Inc. (2006). Embracing Consumer Buzz Creates Measurement Challenges for Marketers. December.
- Dellarocas, C. (2003). The Digitization of Word-Of-Mouth: Promise and Challenges of Online Feedback Mechanisms. *Management Science*, 49 (10), 1407-1424.
- Dellarocas, C. (2006). Reputation Mechanisms. In T. Hendershott (ed.), *Handbook on Information Systems and Economics*, Elsevier Publishing, forthcoming.
- Forrester Research (2006a). The State Of Retailing Online 2006.
- Forrester Research (2006b). Teleconference: Forty Facts About The US Online Shopper. Available at  
<http://www.forrester.com/Teleconference/Overview/0,5158,1634,00.html>
- Hennig-Thurau, T., Gwinner, K. P., Walsh, G. & Gremler, D. D. (2004). Electronic Word-of-Mouth Via Consumer-Opinion Platforms: What Motivates Consumers to Articulate Themselves on the Internet? *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 18(1), 38-52.
- Intelliseek Research (2004). *Consumer-Generated Media (CGM) 101*. White Paper. Accessed online (August 1, 2006) at <http://www.Intelliseek.com>
- Jin, Y., Bloch, P. & Cameron, G. T. (2002). A Comparative Study: Does the Word-of-mouth Communications and Opinion Leadership Model Fit Epinions on the Internet? *Proceedings of the Hawaii International Conference on Social Sciences*.
- Gretzel, U. (2006). Consumer Generated Content:Trends and Implications for Branding. *e-Review of Tourism Research (eRTR)*, 4(3).
- Pew Internet & American Life Project (2005). *Latest Trends*. Accessed online December 8, 2005 at <http://www.pewInternet.org/trends.asp>
- Pew Internet & American Life Project (2006). Internet Activities. Accessed online (December 1, 2006) at  
[http://www.pewInternet.org/trends/Internet\\_Activities\\_7.19.06.htm](http://www.pewInternet.org/trends/Internet_Activities_7.19.06.htm)

Smith, D., Menon, S., & Sivakumar, K. (2005). Online Peer and Editorial Recommendations, Trust, and Choice in Virtual Markets. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 19(3), 15-37.

Travel Industry Association of America (2005). Traveler's Use of the Internet. Washington, DC: TIA.