# Swipe Up, Swipe Up and Stop: I want to go there!

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**Abstract**

Dissertation Title: Swipe Up, Swipe Up and Stop: I want to go there!

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Social Media platforms have a great influence in the Tourism industry, enabling tourists to share their experiences and search for information about destinations they want to visit.

Currently, Instagram is one of the most powerful Social Media platforms and London is the third most visited city in the world in 2019.

To complement the investigation made on this topic, the main objective of this dissertation is to investigate if Instagram influences Millennials to visit London city.

In order to study the developed hypotheses, using as the main method a quantitative approach, it was used a questionnaire, developed through the Conceptual Framework and adapted from the previous investigation. The questionnaire was collected via online – mainly through social media platforms – aiming to collect the answer from Millennials that use Instagram.

After conducting a statistical analysis on IBM SPSS Statistics 25, using as the main test the Linear Regression to verify the defined hypotheses, the findings support that:

(i)     Functionality and Benefit of using Instagram as a main source of information positively influences Millennials intention to visit a certain destination;

(ii)    Trustworthiness of Instagram does not influence Millennials intention to visit a certain destination;

(iii)   Functionality and Trustworthiness of Instagram positively impact Millennials to visit London city;

(iv)    Instagram Benefit is not a decisive factor that leads Millennials to visit London city.


**Keywords**: Tourism, Millennials, London city, Web 2.0, Social Media, Instagram

**Resumo**

Título da Dissertação: Swipe Up, Swipe Up and Stop: I want to go there!

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As Redes Sociais têm uma grande influência na Indústria do Turismo, permitindo aos turistas partilhar as suas experiências e pesquisar informação acerca de destinos que possam querer visitar.

Atualmente, o *Instagram* é uma das mais poderosas plataformas de Redes Sociais e Londres é a terceira cidade mais visitada no mundo em 2019.

Para complementar a investigação feita em redor deste tópico, o principal objetivo desta dissertação é analisar se o *Instagram* influencia os *Millennials* a visitar Londres.

Por forma a analisar as hipóteses desenvolvidas, utilizando como principal método uma abordagem quantitativa, foi empregue um questionário, construído através do Modelo Teórico e adaptado de pesquisas anteriores. O questionário foi divulgado via online – através das redes sociais – para obter respostas de *Millennials* que utilizam o *Instagram*.

Após a análise estatística efetuada através do *IBM SPSS Statistics 25*, utilizando principalmente uma Regressão Linear para analisar as hipóteses, os resultados obtidos confirmam:

(i)     A Funcionalidade e o Benefício do *Instagram* influenciam positivamente a intenção de visita dos *Millennials* a um destino turístico;

(ii)     A Veracidade do Instagram não influencia a intenção de visita dos *Millennials* a um destino turístico;

(iii)      A Funcionalidade e a Veracidade de utilizar o *Instagram* influenciam positivamente a intenção dos *Millennials* de visitar a Londres;

(iv)      O Benefício do *Instagram* não é um fator decisivo que leva os *Millennials* a visitar Londres.

**Palavras-Chave**: Turismo, *Millennials*, Londres, *Web 2.0*, Redes Sociais, *Instagram*

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**List of Acronyms and Abbreviations**

Apps – Applications

e-WOM – Electronic Word of Mouth

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

OTA's – Online Travel Agencies

SMM – Social Media Marketing

SNS's – Social Networking Sites

SPSS - Statistical Package, for Social Sciences

UGC – User Generated Content

UK – United Kingdom

UNWTO – United Nations World Tourism Organization

WOM – Word of Mouth

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## 1. Introduction

Olivia, a 22-year-old assisting teacher, was very excited when she saw, for the first time, online photographs of the Croatian waterfalls on Instagram; after seeing the photos, she became so enthusiastic about them, that she had to book a holiday trip for Split.

*"Not only did I want to see the waterfalls for myself, but I wanted to get photos of myself and my friends there for my Instagram."*, she said (The Telegraph, 2018).

After this statement, it is clear that users want to share their experiences with others, but they are also influenced by Instagram to visit new destinations. To better analyze this connection, research was conducted, providing two important pieces of information: first, according to report developed by MasterCard (2019), the most visited cities in 2019 were, respectively, Bangkok, Paris, London, Dubai and Singapore; secondly, and in addition, the most *hashtagged* cities on Instagram are, respectively, London, New York, Paris, Dubai and Istanbul (Statista, 2019).

These days, Social Media platforms are referred to as Web 2.0, which, in simple words, allows users not only to connect with each other, but also with events, interest groups and companies (Newman, Chang, Walters, & Wills, 2016). The content created by these consumers is termed as *User Generated Content* (UGC) which, according to research, is proved to play a critical role when it comes to travel planning (Alcázar, Piñero, & Maya, 2014). Not only enables tourists to share their travel experiences with relative ones, or even publicly (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014), but it is also an important source when it comes to search more information about destinations, and making a final decision (Kim, Lee, Shin, & Yang, 2017); nevertheless, this research topic is still in its infancy, and further investigation is needed (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014).

Indeed, the referred articles state the connection between Social Media and the Tourism Industry, claiming its importance not only for collecting information, but also to share their experiences with others. Some of these articles have a more specific approach regarding how Millennials are influenced by the new technologies to visit touristic destinations (Fortuna, Mihaela, Lavinia, & Maria, 2016), and some adopt a broader focus, explaining and analyzing how Social Media platforms changed and revolutionized the Tourism Industry. However, and despite being an emerging topic, previous research does not explain how a specific platform will lead and influence its users to visit a specific touristic destination.

Therefore, and in order to study this topic more accurately, the present research is focused on Instagram, the third most used Social Media site, especially among Millennial's (Pew Research Center, 2018), and London city, one of the most visited cities in 2019, with a total of 19 million visitors in 2018 (MasterCard, 2019), but also the most *hashtagged* on the mentioned platform, with a total of 88.78 million mentions (Statista, 2019).

Thus, the main research question of this dissertation is: **Does Instagram influence Millennials (aged between 18 and 34 years old) to visit London city?** To be able to investigate this topic more deeply, the dissertation has two major objectives:

**Objective 1**: Investigate if Instagram has an effect on Millennials' intentions to visit.

**Objective 2**: Understand if Instagram influences users to visit London city.

To answer the main Research Question and, consequentially, the defined objectives, it is important to understand the main reasons that lead individuals to use Instagram for traveling intentions, but also how this platform impacts Millennials when planning a trip. Thus, to be able to study these factors, six hypotheses were developed through the Literature Review which, consequentially, were studied through a quantitative method, based on a questionnaire developed through previous research, that was distributed among different Social Media platforms, aiming to have as the main target population both Millennials and Instagram users.

This dissertation is structured into five main sections - the first section is the "Literature Review", which based on previous research, aims to analyze the main topics of this study (Tourism industry and Instagram). The succeeding sections will explain the "Methodology" used to collect the necessary data, followed by the "Results" and the "Discussion" of the assembled information. In the last section, the "Conclusions" will resume the main findings of this study, providing information to answer the main question of the study.

**Keywords**: Tourism, Millennials, London city, Web 2.0, Social Media, Instagram

## 2. Literature Review

This chapter is a summary of the theory developed by previous authors about the studied topics - Tourism industry and Social Media -, being divided into two main sections, including the respective subsections, aiming to follow the *Keywords* mentioned on the "Introduction" – (1) the first section is a brief explanation of the current trends in "Tourism Industry", that includes the subsections of "Millennials" and "London city"; (2) the second section is about "Web 2.0" and Social Media, being composed by the subsections of "Social Media as a business strategy", "Social Media in Tourism" and, at last, "Instagram", that aims to explain more about this social media platform.

### 2.1 Tourism Industry

The Tourism industry has been suffering many changes through time, especially since the appearance of the Internet (Fortuna et al., 2016; Alcázar et al., 2014). The new technologies have completely transformed consumption behaviors, and the travel sector has also dramatically changed with it (Amaro, Duarte, & Henriques, 2016). Thus, the Internet has also revolutionized the traveler's behavior – besides having access to much more and diversified information, it is also helpful for decision-making (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014).

These days, Tourism is considered to be one of the largest industries in the world, being the second industry in the world with the highest *Gross Domestic Product* (GDP) growth, behind the Manufacturing sector (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2019). It has now the highest contribution to the worldwide economy, being an industry that has been growing approximately 4% per year, for eight years straight. This growth has been increasing exponentially since the second world war, and hit the maximum value in the year of 2018 – in comparison to 2017, the industry had an increase of 6%, with a record of 1.4 billion international tourist arrivals (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2017).

The most visited cities in 2019 were, respectively, Bangkok, Paris, London, Dubai and Singapore, according to the report developed by MasterCard (2019) about touristic destinations. Regarding Bangkok, it is now for the fourth consecutive year the most visited city, with a total of 22 million visitors per year. All the cities in the Top 10 of the Global Destination Cities Index had more visitors in comparison to the previous year, except for London, which confirms that the Tourism Industry is continuously growing.

In addition, and connected to digital technologies, it is important to state that individuals feel the need to share with relative ones their experiences, especially when they are traveling, and the easiest way to do so is through Social Media platforms (Kang & Schuett, 2013). That is the main reason why destinations are so common to appear in any users' feed, which might influence their traveling behaviors. For instance, a study developed by Statista (2019) revealed that the most *hashtagged* cities on Instagram are, respectively, London, New York, Paris, Dubai and Istanbul. These cities correspond to some of the most visited this year; thus, this might indicate that there is a connection between the platform Instagram and the Tourism Industry.

### 2.1.1 Millennials

Generations have been changing throughout times, and it is possible to identify mainly four of them - Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z, being the last one the most recent (Boyle & Townsend, 2019). Generation Y commonly referred to as Millennials, is considered to be the individuals aged between 18 and 34 years old (Statista, 2019). According to Fromm & Vodicka (2016), they can be characterized in different ways:

(1) **Experience Pioneers**: they place a higher value on experiences rather than just products, in order to collect important memories not only for them but also to share with relative ones;

(2) **Digital Functionalists**: they are digital natives, raised among the technological evolution, being used to a smartphone since they were kids (Duffet, 2015);

(3) **Travel Day Traders**: Millennials look for products and services that are able to better provide them the overall experience. However, and before making a final decision, they check an average of 10 sources to choose the cheapest option;

(4) **Spontaneous Planners**: although they search for the option that best suits them, Millennials are also considered to be spontaneous, especially when it comes to booking a last-minute trip;

(5) **Social Validators**: they are the generation that uses social media platforms the most (Constantinides, 2014), especially, Instagram and Snapchat (Pew Research Center, 2018), spending around 6 hours and 19 minutes on these *applications* (apps), (Lafayette, 2018).

These characteristics that represent the Millennials generation explain a lot about their behaviors, especially regarding the usage of Social Media platforms, particularly Instagram - first, they are so used to technologies, that digital connectivity is considered by them as a human need and, second, besides looking to know more about others experiences, they also want to share what is happening in their lives (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014).

The usage of Social Media platforms is prevalent among the process of travel planning – according to Fromm & Vodicka (2016), 86% of millennial travelers were inspired to book a trip based on the content they viewed online and 43% of them affirmed that the comments of other travelers are an important source of information. This data supports the study of Fortuna et al. (2016), which states that the rate of young travelers has increased in the last years.

### 2.1.2 Tourism in London City

*"What makes London the best city in the world to visit? Is it our world-class theatre, our free national museums, our eye-opening art galleries, historic royal palaces, vibrant markets, or the abundance of green spaces across the city? It's all of these things and more."*

**Boris Johnson, former Mayor of London, 2015**

London is now the third most visited city in the world (Rosen, 2019), being the most popular destination in the United Kingdom (UK), and it is the first more *hashtagged* on Instagram (Statista, 2019). In the year 2018, it had a total of, approximately, 19 million overnight international visitors, registering an increase of 3.48% in the current year (MasterCard, 2019).

Usually, London travelers stay in the city for an average of 5.8 days and spend a daily amount of 148$, which is equivalent to 135€ (MasterCard, 2019). Thus, the tourism industry is positively connected to the overall economy in the UK (Shahzad, 2017), which is responsible for 2.5% of the British GDP, and it is estimated that last year, travelers have spent almost 23£ billion. Therefore, a projection indicates that, by the year of 2025, the tourism industry in the UK will be worth 10% of GDP, and will employ more than 1 in 10 individuals (Blackall, 2019).

The majority of the outbound visitors are mainly from the United States of America, accounting for 12% of all visits. Mainly, the purpose of the trips is for holiday's, but also to visit relative ones (London & Partners, 2016). Regarding the demographics of the visitors, the majority of them are aged between 25 and 45 years old - counting with 4.5 million visitors aged between 25 and 34 years old and 4.4 million aged between 35 and 44 years old (Statista, 2019).

Besides being one of the most visited cities in 2019, London has also huge popularity on Social Media platforms, especially on Instagram. On October 4 of 2019, the "*#london*" was tagged on Instagram in more than 129 million posts, a number that keeps changing every day, besides having many Instagram accounts dedicated to the city, that are followed by hundreds of users, who keep updated with amazing pictures from the city.

London city can be referred through two main typologies – besides being the national capital city, it is also the World Tourism City. Regarding the typology of World Tourism City, it is defined by Maitland & Newman (2009), as "(…) *cities with substantial historical assets and iconic buildings, that are also centers of cultural excellence and, arising from their roles in global business networks, generate large numbers of business visitors in addition to those tourists attracted by tradition and cultural images*.". Moreover, some of the other cities that are also included in this definition by the authors are Sydney, New York, Paris and Berlin.

Since 2016, the UK is facing a political crisis regarding a well-known topic these days – *Brexit*. A mix between the words "*Britain*" and "*exit*", this ideology defends that Great Britain should leave the membership of the European community of nations. They believe that it would be better if they were independent of Europe, not only because they already have their own currency (Pounds), but also because they are against receiving migrants into their country (Maxim, 2019). Still, after three years since *Brexit* was announced, and despite the many debates and negotiations that have been made around this topic, there is still not a final decision for what will be the UK's future (Mueller, 2019).

For many years, Britain was able to rely on Europe, since it is the most important export market, but also the biggest source of foreign investment. Thus, *Brexit* will not only have bad consequences for Europe but especially for Britain's and its economy; according to a projection made by the government, in 15 years the country's economy will be between 4%-9% smaller with *Brexit*, than in a normal situation (O'Carroll, 2019).

Besides the economic impact, a possible *Brexit* will also affect the British Tourism industry. Since it pretends to reduce migration into the country, this new approach would affect the number of workstations, especially since Tourism is a sector-based, mostly, on migrant workers. Thus, *Brexit* will not have an impact regarding the attractiveness of the country to its visitors, but rather when it comes to its workforce (Blackall, 2019).

London city is currently seeking to improve its Tourism quality, but there are many challenges that the city will have to deal with. According to a study developed by Maxim (2019), which analyzed the documents of current strategies promoted by local authorities, that guide tourism development in London, the main challenges faced by the city are:

- Protection and conservation of the natural heritage;
- Maintain distinctiveness, and overcome the pressure created by globalization and standardization;

- Improve public transportations and develop more sustainable methods of transport, such as walking and cycling;
- Safety and security for the local residents and tourists – in London, according to the Metropolitan Police, both Westminster and Camden are the locations with the highest levels of crime;
- Create sustainable tourism, avoiding climate change, although this topic has received little attention so far.

For many years, London has been improving its safety the best they can, due to the high number of terrorist attacks. According to Europol, UK is the country with the highest number of attempted and successful attacks in Europe; since 2005, there have been confirmed 12 attacks, and the most recent one took place in 2018 when a car ran into cyclists outside the Parliament (Dearden, 2018). Currently, according to the Metropolitan Police, the national threat level is "Severe", which means that a terrorist attack is highly likely to happen (Metropolitan Police, 2019).

**2.2 Web 2.0**

Internet is a global network, connecting computer systems around the world (Christensson, 2015), that brought many changes with it, some negative and some positive. With the appearance of the Internet, so did appear what is called the Cyber-crimes - these are Internet-based attacks, that pretend either to acquire financial gain, for instance, by steeling business-related information, or steel important and confidential information from the government (Zhang & Gupta, 2018). Despite the cons, Internet revolutionized the entire world, including Business, Education, Government, Healthcare and, especially, individual's life on a daily basis - it now makes part of the life of millions of people, and, combined with smartphones, it is so easily accessible, that it is possible to do anything in any part of the world (Alalwan, Rana, Dwivedi, & Algharabat, 2017). The Internet also brought with it the Web 2.0, and consequentially, Social Media, and its appearance completely changed how individuals interact with each other. Although Social Media is often recognized as Facebook or Instagram, it is much more than that -  they are *Social Networking Sites* (SNS's), that include websites and apps, for instance, Blogs, Social Networks and Forums, that enable users to interact with each other through the creation and share of content (Pittman & Reich, 2016).

Currently, Social Media is one of the most powerful networking sites, based on the foundations of Web 2.0 (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). This form of Web start appearing around 11 years ago, and it brought a new reality into the technological world, allowing it to create a social and interactive type of Internet. Based on O'Reilly (2005), Web 2.0 is a wide collection of sites and services sharing common characteristics, that depends on the content created by their own users. These services control data created by the users, that becomes richer as more people use them. Nowadays, in simple words, it is described as links between people, but also between events and companies, that allow to generate, share and edit content (Newman et al., 2016).

Over the years, other definitions have been given to Web 2.0, to better characterize it according to its evolution. This is explained by the complexity of the subject, due to its multidimensional characteristic - it is very challenging to define a phenomenon composed by marketing, psychological and technological elements (Constantinides, 2014). Thus, there is still not a precise definition for what Web 2.0 is, as well as it is still not clear how its future will be (Newman et al., 2016).

2.2.1 Social Media as a business strategy

Despite the wide variety of components that are included in the scope of Social Media, the most powerful these days are Social Media platforms, also called Social Networks, due to the important role they have on their user's daily life (Alalwan et al., 2017). Among the many platforms that exist, the five most famous are Facebook, YouTube, Messenger, WhatsApp and Instagram (Global Web Index, 2018). Although these platforms are different from each other, because of the purpose for what they are used for, they are similar regarding their foundations – they combine several traditional Internet functions, such as data uploading and sharing, messaging and multimedia (Fuchs et al., 2010).

As it becomes easier to have access to an electronic device, and to the Internet, it is also easier to access Social Networks. According to Lafayette (2018), and based on a study conducted by Nielsen in 2018, adults are spending more time on Social Media, which might be explained by the easy acquaintance of smartphones. Also, the same study presents that 30% of smartphone users affirm that they use the device several times a day while watching TV, mainly to look up for information about the actors, text their friends and/or share photos.

Besides, Social Media users are becoming more dependent on these platforms by each year, which can be proven by the increase of the time spent on them, either on a daily basis or weekly. The share of Social Media users who say that these platforms are becoming harder to give up, increased by 12 percentage points since 2014 (Pew Research Center, 2018).

The increasing dependence that is noticed on individual's regarding the usage of Social Media platforms might be explained by the research of Sundar & Limperos (2013) – the authors believe that individuals actively chose, use and engage with a specific Social Media platform for two main reasons: 1) to fulfill specific needs of their own and 2) need of information-seeking, which might be driven by the need of authenticity or consistency, or even both of them. Another study conducted by Nadkarni & Hofmann (2012) affirms that the two main reasons that lead to the usage of Social Media platforms are belong and need for self-presentation, besides being helpful when it comes to knowing what is happening on the overall network and having fun.

Regardless of the impacts that Social Media has on its users - which might be seen as negative, due to the increased time spent on them and, consequentially, the dependence they are creating -, these platforms are now a mandatory element of any Business Marketing Strategy (Alalwan et al., 2017). Since Social Networks are now more used than ever, many companies start seeing them as a tool to leverage their businesses, being helpful to communicate and interact with potential customers, revealing to be an effective mechanism to create involvement and potential relationships (Constantinides, 2014). Based on the research conducted by Buffer (2019), within almost 1.850 marketing professionals of different industries, around 80.9% use Instagram to promote their businesses, with the majority of the respondents agreeing that, indeed, it reveals to be an effective strategy.

This approach used by many companies is now called *Social Media Marketing* (SMM) which, according to Dwivedi, Kapoor, & Chen (2015, p. 291), can be defined as "(…) *a dialogue often triggered by consumers/audiences, or a business/product/services that circulate amongst the stated parties to set in motion a revealing communication on some promotional information so that it allows learning from one another's use and experiences, eventually benefitting all of the involved parties*.". Thus, and taking into consideration this definition, SMM follows two main approaches: (1) the Passive approach, where Social Media platforms are used by companies as a method to provide information's about the market needs and the main trends to its users and (2) the Active approach, that uses Social Media as a communication tool, to promote products and services; the main focus of this last approach is to create engagement, which, eventually, will lead to acquisition and, most importantly, create retention, and make customers loyal the brand (Constantinides, 2014).

Customer engagement has been a topic studied by many others. Throughout the years, the studies have proven and concluded that, indeed, customer engagement is linked to many businesses' performance indicators, such as sales growth, customer involvement and customer feedback; besides, and not surprisingly, most of the engagement is made online (Harrigan, Evers, Miles, & Daly, 2017). However, to conquer the attention of consumers through Social Media, aiming to create engagement and a possible relationship whit them, it is important to make them interact with companies – more than ever, they want to know more about the business itself and be part of it, by making questions and giving opinions (Alalwan et al., 2017).

The opinions of previous users are also an important source of information since it serves as a reference to understand more about business performance and, especially, about specific products and services. This phenomenon is called *electronic word of mouth* (e-WOM), and it is now one of the most powerful communication tools that exist in the market. Not only it has a higher reach and influence regards to the traditional *word of mouth* (WOM), spread through persona human interactions (Hudson, Huang, Roth, & Madden, 2016), but it is also an important source to acquire and retain consumers (Ye, Law, Gu, & Chen, 2011).

In fact, it is possible to affirm that SMM is now one of the most important components of any Marketing Strategy, not only because it is an easy method to promote businesses, but also because it is more affordable than the traditional communication techniques – TV commercials, Radio and Outdoors (Leeflang, Verhoef, Dahlström, & Freundt, 2014). However, marketers should not forget to use SMM as a method to enable openness and commitment to listen to the consumers' needs, rather than control them. Thus, this new strategy should be seen as an opportunity to operate in a new business environment, where the customer should be placed at the top of corporate priorities (Constantinides, 2014).

Despite understanding the importance of SMM, it is still not yet fully understood how Social Media impacts consumers' buying decisions and leads them to buy a product from a specific brand they follow. However, it has been proven that Social Media users are being positively influenced by brands they follow to acquire online products. According to Lafayette (2018), which is based on the study developed by Nielsen in 2018, it is possible to affirm that Social Media users are more likely to make online purchases than the ones that do not use Social Media. Consequently, the items that have a higher demand by those users are clothes, accessories, books, movie tickets, airline tickets and beauty items.

2.2.2 Social Media in Tourism

Indeed, it is stated that Social Media platforms have a tremendous impact in the current days – not only it is considered to be an important component of any Business Marketing Strategy, but it has also changed and revolutionized its users daily life, especially in the way they interact with each other (Alalwan et al., 2017). In addition, and despite the mentioned changes, Social Media platforms also impacted the Tourism Industry, becoming an important component when it comes to providing information to travelers, influencing them on their final decision (Amaro et al., 2016).

Before planning a vacation, consumers need to search for different types of information, such as the destination they want to go, how they want to get there and where they are going to stay. Hence, and compared to other products/services, traveling requires users to search for more information about the different components before making a final decision; besides being risky, there is no possibility to try these products before purchasing them (Amaro et al., 2016; Kang & Schuett, 2013). Thus, tourism-related products and services are considered to be high-involvement products, that need a previous review of a lot of information (Kim et al., 2017), which will decrease the uncertainty that travelers have when making a decision (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014).

Therefore, Social Media platforms are a great tool to collect additional information about a traveling destination. This data collection is only possible due to the shared information by previous travelers, which is recognized by other users as an important source –not only it helps travelers to make a decision but also to influence potential new travelers to visit a touristic destination (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014; Munar & Jacobsen, 2014). However, Social Media is not only used before the trip but rather during the entire process, which is composed of three main stages: Pre-phase, During the trip and Post-phase (Amaro et al., 2016).

According to Cox, Burgess, Sellitto, & Buultjens (2009), Social Media is an important source of information across all the stages of the traveling planning process, although its usage is predominantly more common for travelers before the trip – also referred to as ***Pre-Phase***. It is considered to be one of the most important sources of information, among recommendations from family relatives and friends. Based on the study developed by the same authors, the usage of Social media platforms by travelers before the trip, happens for three main reasons: 1) need of recognition, 2) information search – besides being an important tool to gather different types of information, such as accommodation, places to visit and restaurants, it is also an excellent tool for decision-making behaviors, which will reduce the risk involved in planning a trip (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014) -, and 3) evaluation of alternatives, including alternative destinations.

Regarding the second reason – information search - that is pointed as one of the main factors for Social Media usage on the *pre-phase* of the planning process, it is possible to identify that, some of the major sources for collecting traveling related information are, for instance, advertising, previous travel experiences and UGC created by former travelers, being this one currently considered to be one of the most powerful sources of information on Social Media platforms (Alcázar et al., 2014).

According to the study developed by Cox et al. (2009), it is possible to affirm that UGC is able to influence some decisions in any stage of the traveling process, but especially on the pre-phase, during the collection of information. Thus, Social Media platforms and the content created by its users, has reshaped how individuals plan, buy and consume tourism-related products and services, which might be explained by the fact that users believe this is a trustworthy and reliable source of information for their decision-making process (Del Chiappa, Árcon-Del-Amo, & Lorenzo-Romero, 2016; Ye et al., 2011; Ayeh, Au, & Law, 2013).

Regarding the second stage of the traveling process – ***During the trip*** -, the usage rate is much lower when compared to the first stage (pre-phase). Still, during the trip, travelers commonly use Social Media to (1) collect information about the place they are visiting, (2) make purchase decisions and (3) share their experiences, either through photos and videos, or reviews and opinions (Amaro et al., 2016).

The third and last stage - ***Post-Phase*** - is common for both of the final two stages of traveling experience, although is more common on the post-phase – according to Cox et al. (2009), this is also referred as the evaluation phase, since this is the stage where travelers make their final evaluation of the trip, through the share of their experiences with relative ones. This is called e-WOM, which also influences other users to travel to the same destination (Kim et al., 2017).

Thus, Social Media platforms have brought many benefits to the Tourism Industry - besides being an excellent source to collect additional information about the destination that travelers are going to visit, it is also an important tool to know more about specific locals to visit inside the visited destination, and share the experience with other users, which might influence them to also visit that same place (Alcázar et al., 2014).

Despite those benefits, there are no pros without cons, and that is also applied to the social media platforms used for travel planning. Therefore, it is important to note that this tool has brought many disadvantages and constraints to the industry, and some of them might be difficult to reverse (Yazdanifard & Yee, 2014).

The first and most problematic disadvantage is overcrowding, also referred to as Mass Tourism. This factor might be explained by the rise of global mobility - now, it is easier than ever, through digital technologies, to buy a plane ticket, at an affordable price. Thus, transactional travel had led to an immense increase of travelers, especially among the most famous cities of the world, that are no longer simple locations, but rather destinations that many tourists seek to visit (Blackall, 2019).

A very good example of Mass Tourism is the city of Venice in Italy, that received 37 million international tourists in 2017. While this situation is very positive for the city's economy, it is also a problem regarding overcrowding. Thus, Venice is trying to implement some measures to reduce tourism, such as (1) implementing a pay entrance fee into the city of 10€ and (2) reducing the number of cruise ships that enter daily in the city, due to the significant environmental damage they have caused to the city's waterways and lagoons (Fox, 2019).

At last, the UGC shared on social media platforms is considered to be a powerful e-WOM (Alcázar et al., 2014), where it is possible to collect not only positive but also negative opinions from dissatisfied customers. Therefore, if not managed properly, social media platforms may have negative impacts for many touristic brands, that might be seen negatively by possible travelers, due to the bad opinions shared by previous users (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). Although it is not possible to control all the reviews given to a certain product or service, a bad review defaming the brand may affect the opinion and decision of another user (Yazdanifard & Yee, 2014).

According to Davies (2019), UGC has such a big importance for touristic brands that some hoteliers are now being contacted by unknown organizations that offer to write positive reviews of their hotel on their social media platforms, in exchange for a monthly fee. Although UGC is considered by some authors as a trustworthy and reliable source of information for the decision-making process (Del Chiappa et al., 2016; Ayeh et al., 2013), it is seen by others as a dubious source, that should be carefully analyzed by others (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014).

### 2.2.3 Instagram

In fact, Social Media platforms have a big impact in different areas. These days, one of the most powerful platforms is Instagram, an online photo-sharing app that was launched on October 6 of 2010 by Mike Krieger and Kevin Systrom, and just on the first day of its existence, 25.000 users created an account (Instagram - Info Center, 2019). After being acquired by Facebook in 2012, the platform was a target of significant changes, that improved the app in many different ways; some of the improvements include the creation of new tools, like new filters for the photographies, Stories, Boomerang and IGTV. Now, it has more than 1 billion monthly active users and more than 500 million daily stories (Mohsin, 2019), being the platform that presents the highest increase of users in comparison to a study developed in 2016 (Pew Research Center, 2018).

For many years, Instagram creators believed that this was an app used mainly to share photos and videos online. However, as the app was continuously improving, they realized that the main focus of the company is now different; according to Kevin Systrom, the mission of the Instagram is "*strengthening relationships through shared experiences*". Thus, instead of being seen as a tool to make users share photos, it is now used to share their moments and keep others updated (Mccracken, 2017).

Instagram is now one of the main platforms with the highest number of users (Global Web Index, 2018), being those users mainly aged between 18 and 34 years old (Statista, 2019). Besides being the ones that use Instagram the most, they are also the ones that use the app more regularly. The share of Instagram users that visit the platform daily has increased a little in comparison to the same study developed in 2016 - 81% of the app users among this age group affirmed that they visit the platform on a daily basis, with 55% of them confirming that they do it several times per day (Pew Research Center, 2018).

The content created by users is referred to as UGC, which, based on a research developed by Alcázar et al. (2014, p. 159), can be defined as "(…) *online information sources that are created, initiated, circulated and used by consumers who intend to educate each other and share information about products, brands, services, personalities and other issues*.". It is also regarded as e – WOM, due to the fact that it is a reliable source of information for users, especially when it comes to travel planning (Ayeh et al., 2013; Ye et al., 2011).

The importance of Instagram content might be explained by the statement "A picture is worth a thousand words". This famous declaration, stated by the Chinese philosopher Confucius, tries to convey the meaning that it is easier to spread a message visually, rather than through words. This clarifies why Instagram content is a powerful influencer for its users regarding their traveling intentions, which can also be justified by some underlying factors that are present on this platform, mainly its Functionalities, Benefits and perceived Trustworthiness (Parra-López, Bulchand-Gidumal, Gutiérrez-Taño, & Díaz-Armas, 2011).

Regarding the functionalities of Instagram, they can be described as its pictures, videos, reviews and comments (Harrigan et al., 2017) – these functionalities are also referred to as e – WOM, which according to Zeng & Gerritsen (2014), is recognized as a powerful source of engagement with brands, but also of information collection, especially for travel planning, since tourists are highly motivated by it to obtain further knowledge for their trips.

Related to the usage of functionalities in organizing trips, comes the perceived benefits provided by Instagram to its users, which also influences them to organize and take trips to new destinations (Wang, Yu, & Fesenmaier, 2002), since this platform allows its users not only to spend free time and engage with touristic brands, but also to easily collect information about new destinations to visit (Del Chiappa et al., 2016).

However, it is important to reflect that Instagram users will only be influenced by the content provided on the platform if they find it to be trustworthy (Ayeh et al., 2013). According to Ye et al. (2011), the majority of Instagram users trust on the content created by other users, which will positively influence their decision-making process, and, ultimately, their travel-related decision (Del Chiappa et al., 2016; Ayeh et al., 2013).

## 3. Methodology and Data

The following chapter is divided into five main parts – after the "Objectives", that clarify the main focus of this dissertation, the remaining sections will be composed by the "Hypotheses Development and Conceptual Framework", constructed from the Research Objectives and previous research, and the "Questionnaire Conception", where it will be explained what was the main method used to study the developed hypotheses. The last two sections are the "Target Population", explaining what is the desired target of this study and, finally, the "Statistical Methods" where it will be described the statistical tests applied to study the hypotheses.

### 3.1 Objectives

The general purpose of this study is to evaluate if Instagram has an effect on Millennials regarding their intentions to visit a certain destination, but also to understand if this Social Media platform will influence them to visit London city. Through these objectives, the dissertation aims to answer to the main Research Question of the study: Does Instagram influence Millennials (aged between 18 and 34 years old) to visit London city?

### 3.2 Hypotheses Development and Conceptual Framework

#### 3.2.1 Hypotheses

Social Media platforms are, currently, one of the most powerful components of SNS's (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014), that have revolutionized not only the business world but also the daily lives of its users (Alalwan et al., 2017). According to the information provided by Statista (2019), Social Media usage has been increasing exponentially since its appearance in 2011, having an estimated number of 2.65 billion users in 2018, considering that Social Media users have an account in more than one platform (Bizirgianni & Dionysopoulou, 2013).

These platforms changed an individual's daily life, especially the way they interact with each other (Newman et al., 2016). According to Statista (2019), Social Media usage is prevalent among young adults, aged between 18 and 34 years old, which are also referred to as Millennials. This generation has been raised among the technological explosion and disruptiveness, which characterizes them as the Digital Functionalists (Fromm & Vodicka, 2016), since they haven't been able to experience the world without interacting with technologies (Duffet, 2015; Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). Thus, this explains why they are the main users of Social Media platforms, with a higher usage rate for Instagram and Snapchat (Pew Research Center, 2018).

Despite the technological association, Millennial's are also considered to be Experience Pioneers, due to the importance they place on experiences rather than just products (Fromm & Vodicka, 2016). This explains why the rate of young travelers has increased in the last years, but it is also more diversified than ever due to the growing number of young people in emerging economies (Fortuna et al., 2016).

Associated to the increase of young travelers, it is important to state that, currently, London city is among the most visited cities in the world (Rosen, 2019), with approximately 19 million overnight international visitors in 2018 (MasterCard, 2019), besides being the first city more *hashtagged* on Instagram (Statista, 2019).

When planning their vacations, Millennial's use as the main source of information the Internet (Bizirgianni & Dionysopoulou, 2013). Regarding Instagram usage, Millennials rely on its functionalities as an important source of information for their travel planning (Parra-López et al., 2011). Thus, and according to this, the first hypotheses are:

**H1.a - Instagram functionality has an effect on Millennials' intentions to visit a certain destination.**

**H1.b - Instagram functionality has an effect on Millennials' intentions to visit London city.**

Besides, and concerning Instagram benefits, they tend to find amusing to see the content of relative ones, with the majority affirming that, indeed, they are influenced by this content to make a decision regarding their vacation (Hernández-Méndez, Muñoz-Leiva, & Sánchez-Fernández, 2015; Bizirgianni & Dionysopoulou, 2013). Therefore, the second hypotheses are:

**H2.a - Instagram benefit has an effect on Millennials' intentions to visit a certain destination.**

**H2.b - Instagram benefit has an effect on Millennials' intentions to visit London city.**

At last, Millennials consider Instagram content as an important source of information for their travel planning, because they find it to be trustworthy and reliable for their decision-making (Del Chiappa et al., 2016; Ayeh et al., 2013). Hence, the last hypotheses of this research are:

**H3.a - Instagram trustworthiness has an effect on Millennials' intentions to visit a certain destination.**

**H3.b - Instagram trustworthiness has an effect on Millennials' intentions to visit London city.**

3.2.2 Conceptual Framework

The Conceptual Framework represented below in Figure 1, and the respective hypotheses were developed based on the literature review. This dissertation pretends to test the Model inspired on the study of Parra-López et al. (2011), aiming to study the impact that Functionality, Benefit and Trustworthiness of Instagram have on Millennials' intention to visit, both a certain destination (1) and London city (2).

***Figure 1*** *- Conceptual Framework*
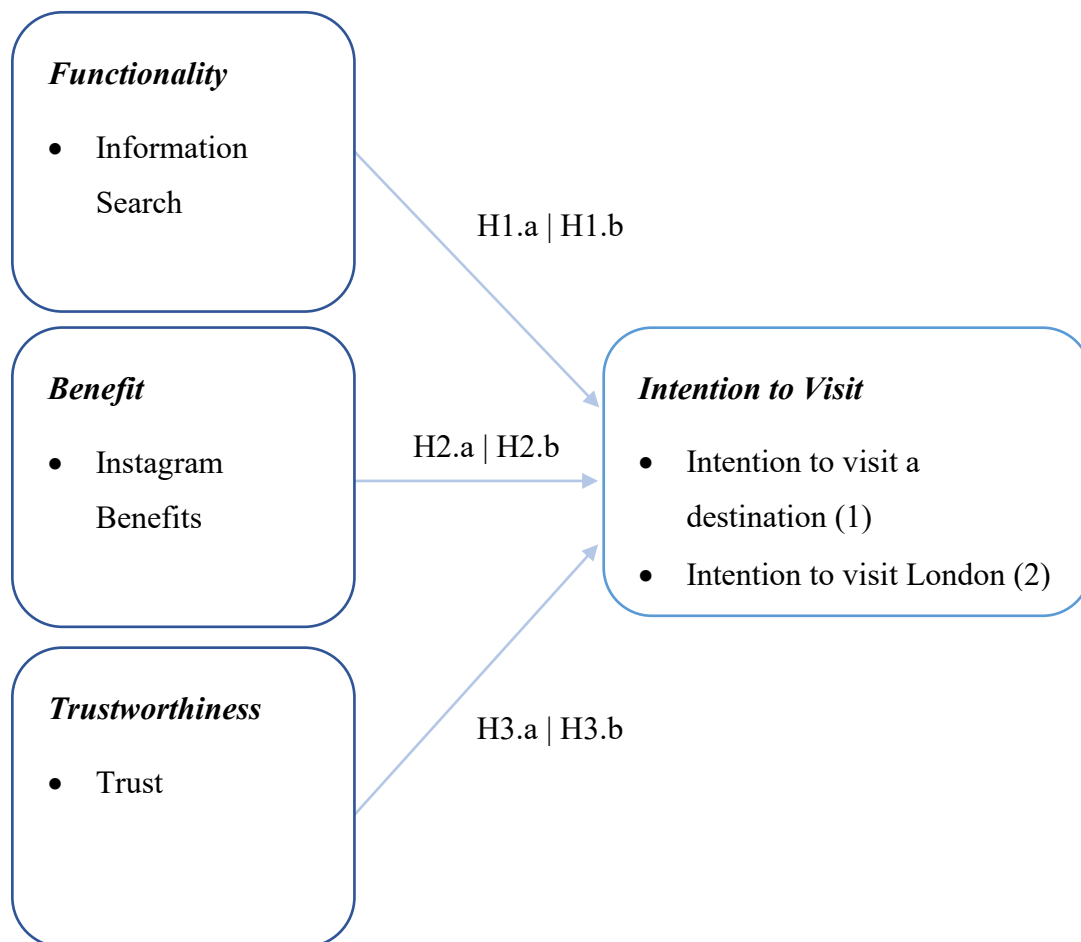


Font: Adapted from Parra-López et al. (2011, p. 646)

**3.3 Questionnaire Conception**

Among the many different types of research, this study implemented a Descriptive and Quantitative approach, by using a Survey as the Primary Research. This method is described as a "(…) *structured questionnaire given to a sample population.*" (Malhotra & Birks, 2007), that reveals to be efficient when collecting information from a variety of participants, to validate their characteristics, but also their behaviors towards a specific product/service.

The questionnaire was designed based on the defined hypotheses and the Conceptual Framework, but also according to previous research articles, being carefully adapted to the main problem of this study. The survey starts with an introductory statement to frame the participants about the aim of the study, but also to ensure the confidentiality of the answers. This paragraph also explained the estimated time required to finish the questionnaire, and my email, in case the participants have any doubt that they needed to clarify. These applied procedures are recommended by other authors to improve the quality and credibility of the survey (Malhotra & Birks, 2007).

### 3.3.1 Macro-Structure

The instrument used to collect the necessary data was developed to study the main problem of this dissertation – understand if Instagram influences Millennials to visit London city. According to the Macro-Structure, the questionnaire was divided into five main parts, respectively: the first analyzes the functionalities of Instagram; the second measures the benefits of Instagram; the third evaluate trustworthiness; the fourth group analyzes Millennials intentions to visit and the fifth and last group is composed by a set of questions related to the demographics and psychographics characteristics of the participants. The variables of the questionnaire, that will be further analyzed, are structured according to the following:

- **(i)      Group I – Functionality**
- Information Search
- **(ii)     Group II – Benefit**
- Instagram Benefits
- **(iii)    Group III – Trustworthiness**
- Trust
- **(iv)    Group IV – Intention to Visit**
- Intention to visit a destination
- Intention to visit London

**(v)      Group V – Demographics and Psychographics**

- Gender

- Educational Level

- Internet Use Frequency

- Social Media Platforms importance

- Travel Intentions

- Travel Decision Influencers

- Sources of Information used for Travel Planning

- Share of Travel Experiences

The first four groups adopted a 5-point Likert Scale, being 1 considered as Strongly Disagree, 2 Disagree, 3 Neutral, 4 Agree and 5 Strongly Agree.

### 3.3.2 Micro-Structure

The questionnaire is divided into five main groups, being composed of a total of 20 questions. The Micro-Structure of the questionnaire is described in Table 3 (see Appendix 2) with the respective articles used to develop the questionnaire.

The first group of items examines the functionalities of Instagram regarding its utilization to collect necessary information for travel planning, being composed by one variable – Information Search – that contains four items, adapted from Del Chiappa et al. (2016) and Parra-López et al. (2011).

The second group measures the benefits of Instagram usage for travel planning. This dimension is composed of one sub-dimension – Instagram Benefits - with a total of four items, based on the studies developed by Del Chiappa et al. (2016) and Parra-López et al. (2011).

Regarding the third group, it examines the level of trustworthiness that users have on travel-related information on Instagram, having one variable – Trust - composed by two items adapted from the research of Parra-López et al. (2011).

The fourth division of the questionnaire is used to understand to what extent Instagram has influenced Millennials intentions to visit, respectively, both a destination and London city – thus, this dimension is composed of one variable – Intention to Visit - with two items developed through Cox et al. (2009).

At last, the final division and last group of the questionnaire is composed by a set of questions related to the demographics and psychographics characteristics of the participants, being adapted from the studies of Hernández-Méndez et al. (2015), Ayeh et al. (2013) and Kang & Schuett (2013).

**3.4 Target Population**

For this investigation, it is considered as the main target population the Instagram users, but also the individuals inserted in the Millennials generation, in order to collect more accurate results to study the main problem of this dissertation. Thus, it was necessary to develop and introduce a filter in the questionnaire, to ensure that only the individuals that belong to this target population would be able to complete the survey.

This filter was applied in the first two questions of the survey, being those considered to be screening/elimination questions, that aim to understand if the respondents are Instagram users, but also if they are Millennials - if any of the respondents do not make part of the defined sample, the survey will immediately end (see Appendix 1).

Preceding to the final questionnaire, a pre-test was made with a survey distributed between 29 of October and 5 of November, collecting a total of 64 answers – only 50 completed questionnaires were used since the remaining participants were immediately eliminated by the screening questions because they were not part of the desired target population. The collected data enabled to conduct the preliminary tests to understand if the results were consistent to support and answer the defined hypotheses – some adjustments were made and the pre-tests confirmed the reliability of the first questionnaire to answer to the Research Problem.

The final questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was distributed online, through different platforms, since it has many advantages, such as – the ability to reach a specific target, to have faster data collection, to reach a larger variety of participants and to collect the results easily. The selection of the sample was performed using the non-random convenience sampling method (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). The survey was available on Social Media platforms, between 12 and 26 of November, being shared by relative ones, in order to reach a large number of participants.

After collecting the necessary answers, the questionnaire was closed, gathering a total of 294 answers - only 210 of those answers were valid, since some of the participants were not inserted in the desired target population, and some questionnaires were not completed. The sample reveals to be representative - according to Hair et al. (1998), the sample should be defined based on 5 to 10 answers per each question of the questionnaire.

**3.5 Statistical Methods**

After closing the questionnaire, the data were exported and analyzed through *Statistical Package, for Social Sciences* (SPSS) - IBM SPSS Statistics 25.

For the statistical characterization of the sample, frequency tables were elaborated, to present both absolute and relative values, but also the identification of the mode for each one of the variables.

In addition, a Univariate Analysis was used for each one of the items that compose the scales of Functionality, Benefit, Trustworthiness and Intention to Visit, through different measures, such as the Mean, Median, St. Deviation, Minimum and Maximum, and the Confidence Interval at 95% to the mean.

At last, the tests used to study the developed hypotheses were mainly Linear Regression. Through this test, it is possible to understand if the Functionality, Benefit and Trustworthiness have a positive or negative effect on Intention to Visit.

## 4.  Results

This is the chapter where the data collected from the questionnaire answers will be examined through the analysis of the SPSS software. The obtained results will be carefully interpreted, through the techniques available, in order to strategically understand the impact that Instagram has on Millennials when planning a trip.  All the exported data was carefully worked and cleaned, eliminating questionnaires that were not completed.

Therefore, and to be able to analyze the data, this chapter will be divided into three main parts: 1) the first part provides a statistical characterization of the target population, 2) the second part is the univariate analysis and 3) the third part is composed by the analyzed data, through specific tests, in order to reject or accept the defined hypotheses and, consequentially, answer to the Research Objectives and, ultimately, the Research Question.

### 4.1 Statistical Characterization of the Target Population

The present research will be based on the data collected from 210 valid answered questionnaires, among Instagram users and Millennials. The statistical characterization of the sample was made based on the last group of the questionnaire, aiming to analyze both the demographic and psychographic characteristics of the participants, more specifically – Gender, Educational level, Internet usage frequency, Social Media platforms importance, Traveling intentions, Travel decision influencers, Sources of information used for travel planning and Share of travel experiences on Instagram.

Regardless of the demographic characterization described in Table 4 (see Appendix 2), the study is mostly represented by women (60.5%), with the majority of the participants having a bachelor's degree as the highest educational level (39%). Besides that, most of the participants confirm that they use the Internet several times each day (93.8%).

The data provided in Table 5 and Table 6 (see Appendix 2) is regardless of the statistical characterization concerning psychographics. In Table 5, it is possible to state that Instagram, followed by Facebook, as a higher importance as a Social Media platform, being the least important Snapchat. In addition, in Table 6, the majority of the participants are planning to embark on a vacation in the following 12 months (65.7%), being highly influenced by friends and family (61%) and using as the main source of information the traveler's reviews and travel blogs/websites. Furthermore, the majority of the participants affirms that they have already shared their travel experiences on Instagram (87.1%).

**4.2 Univariate Analysis**

This subsection aims to explain the results from the analysis of the main variables of this study - these variables, divided into the respective constructs, allow understanding the behaviors of the participants towards Instagram usage during the entire traveling process, besides providing us information if Instagram leads Millennials to visit London city. This is explained in Table 7 (see Appendix 2), which includes the mean, median, minimum, maximum and standard deviation, evaluated through a 5-point Likert scale.

### 4.2.1 Functionality

The construct of Functionality is composed of four main variables divided into one sub-dimension designed as Information Search. Although all the items have a relatively high mean, the variable that presents the highest one is IS1 (3.96), which indicates that the participants agree that Instagram is a good information provider regarding tourist sites and activities of interest. The lowest mean is represented by the item IS4 (3.51), although this section of items is able to demonstrate that most of the participants agree that Instagram is a good tool to search for travel-related information.

### 4.2.2 Benefit

Concerning the construct of Benefit, it is composed of one sub-dimension – Instagram Benefits – with a total of four items. The items that represent the highest mean are IB2 (4.04) and IB3 (4.08), confirming that Instagram is a good tool to share information, either with relative ones or other users. In addition, participants confirm to engage with Instagram (IB1 – 3.68), not only to spend free time but also to choose a destination.

### 4.2.3 Trustworthiness

Regarding the two items that compose the dimension of Trustworthiness, it is possible to observe that the degree of perception of the participants is higher for the variable T1 (3.36), followed by the variable T2 (3.21).

### 4.2.4 Intention to Visit

As for the fourth construct, the mean indicates that travelers are neutral about the Instagram impact to visit a destination (IV1 – 2.97) and disagreeing that it never impacted them to visit London (IV2 – 2.26).

**4.3 Data Analysis**

This is the subsection of the "Results" chapter where the hypotheses will be studied through the analysis of the exported data from the questionnaire, according to the results provided by the tests conducted through SPSS.

In order to have an answer for each of the hypotheses, two Linear Regressions were used, since it is the most suitable test for this analysis: (1) the first one will test what is the effect that the independent variables have on the construct "IV1", indicating if Instagram has a positive effect on the travel planning of Millennials; (2) the second Linear Regression uses as the dependent variable the construct "IV2", aiming to understand if Instagram has a positive effect on Millennials to visit London city.

4.3.1 Analysis of the Hypotheses

To study the hypotheses, it was used a Linear Regression test - there was no need to create dummy variables since all the variables are metric and use the same scale (5-point Likert Scale). Thus, the independent variables used for the test are Functionality, Benefit and Trustworthiness, being the dependent variable Intention to Visit (1) – this test aims to understand the influence that Instagram has when planning a trip to a certain destination.

*Table 1 - Linear Regression to test H1.a / H2.a / H3.a*

| | | Model Summary | ANOVA | Coefficients | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Indep. Variables* | **Dep. Variables** | **R Square** | **Sig.** | **Unstd. Beta** | **Sig.** | **VIF** |
| IS1 | | | | .095 | .349 | 1.939 |
| IS2 | | | | .013 | .898 | 1.888 |
| IS3 | | | | .019 | .823 | 2.059 |
| IS4 | | | | .712 | .000 | 1.718 |
| IB1 | IV1 | 0.508 | .000 | .020 | .800 | 2.040 |
| IB2 | | | | .162 | .048 | 1.524 |
| IB3 | | | | -.065 | .482 | 1.599 |
| IB4 | | | | -.108 | .239 | 1.984 |
| T1 | | | | -.019 | .806 | 1.633 |
| T2 | | | | -.009 | .894 | 1.667 |

The results presented in Table 1 will allow taking the necessary conclusions to analyze the respective hypotheses. The *R Square* in the Model Summary indicates the level of variance in the dependent variable – in this case, 50.8% of the variance in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variables. The ANOVA test assumes a null hypothesis (H0), where all coefficients are zero and, therefore, the independent variables have no effect in the dependent variable. To reject this hypothesis, the *p-value* (Sig.) must be lower than 5%. Indeed, as we can see in the table of ANOVA test, the p-value is lower than 5%, meaning that we reject the null hypothesis and, indeed, the independent variables have an effect on the dependent variable.

After confirming the impact of the variables, it is important to analyze the Coefficients test to verify which of the independent variables have an impact on the dependent variable- if the *p-value* (Sig.) is below 5%, it means that the coefficient is significant and, therefore, it has an impact in the dependent variable. As we can see in Table1, there are only two *p-values* below 5% (marked at darker blue) – IS4 and IB2 -, indicating that those are the independent variables that have an impact on the dependent variable. Looking at the column of the *VIF*, we are able to see that both values are below 2.5, denying the possibility of Multicollinearity, which indicates a high correlation between the variables.

After studying the impact of the independent variables in "IV1" construct, it is also necessary to apply the same test in order to understand what is the impact that the same independent variables have on the Intention to Visit (2), in order to comprehend if Instagram influences Millennials to visit London city.

*Table 2 - Linear Regression to test H1.b / H2.b / H3.b*

| Indep. Variables | Dep. Variables | Model Summary | ANOVA | Coefficients | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | R Square | Sig. | Unstd. Beta | Sig. | VIF |
| IS1 | | | | .057 | .625 | 1.939 |
| IS2 | | | | .102 | .369 | 1.888 |
| IS3 | | | | .071 | .471 | 2.059 |
| IS4 | | | | .355 | .000 | 1.718 |
| IB1 | IV2 | 0.306 | .000 | .084 | .364 | 2.040 |
| IB2 | | | | -.127 | .177 | 1.524 |
| IB3 | | | | .078 | .465 | 1.599 |
| IB4 | | | | -.024 | .822 | 1.984 |
| T1 | | | | -.020 | .818 | 1.633 |
| T2 | | | | .215 | .008 | 1.667 |

The *R Square* from the Model Summary test states that 30.6% of the variance in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variables applied to the Linear Regression. Regarding the ANOVA test, it is possible to reject the null hypothesis (H0), since the *p-value* is lower than 5% - this confirms that the independent variables have an effect in the dependent variable, validating that the model is significant.

However, as it is possible to see through the Coefficients test, there are only two independent variables that have a positive and significant impact in the dependent variable, since the *p-values* are lower than 5% (marked at darker blue) – IS4 and T2. At last, *VIF* is lower than 2.5, rejecting Multicollinearity.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Hypotheses 1

The main findings of the first Linear Regression (see Table 1), is that Instagram functionality (IS4) has a significant and positive impact in the dependent variable (IV1) – this confirms the research developed by Zeng & Gerritsen (2014) and Bizirgianni & Dionysopoulou (2013), proving that Instagram functionality is a helpful and powerful source for travel planning to a destination. Thus, these results lead to the confirmation of hypothesis 1.a:

**H1.a - Instagram functionality has an effect on Millennials' intentions to visit a certain destination.**

Besides, through the second Linear Regression test on Table 2, that aims to understand what is the effect that Instagram has on Millennials travel planning to London city, it is possible to infer that only one item from the dimension of Functionality has a significant impact in the dependent variable (IV2) – this item is IS4, which results in the same conclusions of the previous test - Instagram functionalities are a helpful and powerful source for travel planning (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014; Bizirgianni & Dionysopoulou, 2013). Through this analysis, hypothesis 1.b is confirmed:

**H1.b - Instagram functionality has an effect on Millennials' intentions to visit London city.**

### 5.2 Hypotheses 2

Furthermore, the first Linear Regression test also identified that one of the items of the construct Benefit (IB2) has a significant and positive effect on the dependent variable, also confirming the research of Wang et al. (2002). Therefore, this means that Instagram allows Millennials to plan a future trip, but also to share with friends and family important travel-related information, which will positively impact them to visit a destination. These results enable to confirm hypothesis 2.a:

**H2.a – Instagram benefit has an effect on Millennials' intentions to visit a certain destination.**

However, and as it is possible to state through Table 2, the construct of Benefit does not have a significant impact on the dependent variable (IV2), meaning that Instagram benefits will not have a significant impact on Millennials' travel intentions to London. Consequently, this will result in the rejection of hypothesis 2.b:

**H2.b - Instagram benefit has an effect on Millennials' intentions to visit London city.**

### 5.3 Hypotheses 3

Despite the confirmation that Millennials consider other users' opinions to be trustworthy – supporting Ye et al. (2011) -, this factor does not have a positive effect on their traveling intentions to a destination, as it is possible to state through the results on Table 1. This will lead to the rejection of hypothesis 3.a:

**H3.a - Instagram trustworthiness has an effect on Millennials' intentions to visit a certain destination.**

However, and as it is possible to infer through the second Linear Regression on Table 2, there is one item of Trust that has a significant impact in the dependent variable (IV2), confirming the findings of the research developed by Del Chiappa et al. (2016) and Ayeh et al. (2013).

Thus, these results indicate that Trustworthiness has a positive and significant impact on the dependent variable, meaning that it will positively influence Millennials to visit London city. Through this, it is possible to confirm hypothesis 3.b:

**H3.b - Instagram trustworthiness has an effect on Millennials' intentions to visit London city.**

## 6. Main Conclusions

The aim of this study was to understand if Instagram influences Millennials, aged between 18 and 34 years old, to visit London city, the third most visited city in the world (MasterCard, 2019). The main reason that led to the elaboration of this dissertation is because of the gap problem identified in the research articles – although many of them recognize the influence of Social Media platforms on the Tourism Industry, no article as yet focused on a specific Social Media platform and a specific destination.

To better study this topic and the main research question, a quantitative approach was used through a questionnaire that was based on previous research articles. This questionnaire aimed to understand the individual behaviors towards Instagram usage for traveling intentions. The questionnaire was distributed online, collecting a total of 294 answers - being only used 210 of them -, that were carefully analyzed to answer the defined hypotheses, mainly through a Linear Regression test.

Findings of this study revealed that, indeed, Instagram is the most used platform among Millennials, being Snapchat the least used – these results confront the analysis of the research developed by (Pew Research Center, 2018). Furthermore, Millennials are mainly influenced by other traveler's reviews, thus confirming the studies of Munar & Jacobsen (2014) and Zeng & Gerritsen (2014), although they place a high importance on family and friends opinions.

Besides, the first statistical test applied to study the defined hypotheses – Linear Regression -, confirmed that Instagram functionality (IS4) and benefit (IB2) have a significant and positive influence on Millennials' travel planning to a certain destination. However, and besides considering the content on Instagram to be trustworthy, this factor does not have a significant impact on travel planning to a certain destination.

Moreover, findings of the second Linear Regression also revealed that Instagram functionality (IS4) and trustworthiness (T2) have a positive and significant impact on Millennial's travel intentions to London, although its benefits do not have a significant impact. Thus, and despite the influence of Instagram, London is visited by millions of tourists because of its business and cultural excellence, capable of offering to its visitors' many benefits such as "*(...) easy accessibility, tourism services, diverse accommodation facilities and a variety of entertainment options*" (Maxim, 2019).

**Practical Implications**

In short, it is possible to affirm that Millennials place a higher importance on Instagram usage for travel-related intentions, which influences their travel planning to visit new destinations. Thus, companies in the tourism sector should make an effort to increase their visibility in the different Travel 2.0 apps, but also be capable to manage their profiles properly – through this, they will be likely to increase their revenues, and profits will probably increase in a significant manner.

Also, and despite placing higher importance on traditional WOM, this research states that travelers are highly influenced by other travelers' reviews. Thus, it is important for travel agencies/ companies that are present on Instagram to carefully manage other users' opinions, to avoid a negative impact on future travelers and potential clients.

**Theoretical Implications**

The investigation that enabled the development of this dissertation, allowed not only to support previous research, by confirming their own conclusions but also to strengthen the importance that Social Media platforms have on the Tourism Industry.

Indeed, these platforms are composed of a different set of characteristics that are equally important for users when they are making a final decision. Some of these characteristics are functionalities, benefits and the trustworthiness that the users perceive from the usage of these platforms.

Past research tried to understand how these sets of attributes were able to impact Social Media users regarding their travel planning and travel intentions, indeed confirming that they are very important for them, which, consequentially, leads to a tremendous impact in the Tourism Industry. However, through the research developed on this dissertation, it was possible to confirm previous investigation but also to add that there is a specific Social Media platform capable of influencing a generation regarding its travel intentions.

These days, and as it is possible to infer by the statistical tests applied, Instagram is one of the most powerful social media platforms, used mainly by Millennial - besides being a powerful source of engagement, it is also very important when it comes to travel decision-making for Millennials, being able to impact and influence them to visit certain destinations, but also, specifically, London city.

**Limitations**

The limitations that can be identified in this study are mainly two:

1) The first limitation that can be recognized is the fact that Instagram is not a travel-related platform, such as Trivago, for instance, and, therefore, it may not have a greater influence on travelers as other *Online Travel Agencies* (OTA's);

2) Besides, the results of this study demonstrate that travelers place a higher importance and are more influenced by *Family and Friends*, rather than *Other Internet Users*. In other words, these results prove that travelers place higher importance on traditional WOM than in e-WOM. Thus, and besides the influence of Instagram and e-WOM have on travelers' intentions, the traditional WOM it is still a powerful source to collect information and make a final decision;

**Future Research**

The present research was conducted mainly among Portuguese participants. Thus, for further research made on this topic, it would be interesting to investigate possible differences regarding the country of origin and, consequently, the differences that arise from different cultural backgrounds.

Moreover, future research could be more sustained with both qualitative and quantitative research, to have more credible results. Besides using a survey, that allows to collect quantitative data, some Interviews and Focus Group could also be used, to have a more personal opinion about the topic, but also to better understand the underlying reasons that lead travelers to use Instagram for travel-related decisions.

Finally, research could be further enriched by analyzing how the evaluation of the trip affects the creation of e-WOM on Instagram and, consequentially, how it will influence other travelers' decisions. By doing so, it would be possible to examine and understand a process, that occurs as a cycle, from the beginning to the end of the experience.

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**Appendix**

**Appendix 1- Questionnaire**

The main purpose of this survey is to study how Instagram usage habits will influence traveling decision-making. Thus, I will make you some questions to understand what your social media habits are, not only on your daily basis but also for your traveling decision-making. The questionnaire will take no longer than 5 minutes to complete, and the answers provided are confidential. If you have any doubts, feel free to send me an email, and I will answer you as soon as I can – beatrizferreirasantos97@gmail.com

The following questions will enable you to proceed:

Are you an Instagram user? (If the answer is "No"; the questionnaire will end)

- Yes
- No


Are you aged between 18 and 34 years old? (If the answer is "No"; the questionnaire will end)

- Yes
- No


The following section is comprised of statements that intend to understand your Instagram usage habits during the traveling process (before, during and after the trip). From a scale of 1 to 5, you should evaluate your level of agreement for each of the statements, considering 1- Strongly disagree and 5- Strongly agree.

### Group I – Functionality

*Information Search*

1. Instagram enables me to keep up to date with knowledge about tourist sites and activities of interest.
2. Instagram gives me the possibility to provide and receive info about tourist sites and activities of interest.
3. I visit tourism companies' official Instagram page for travel information.
4. When searching for a destination, I look for content on Instagram.

**Group II – Benefit**

*Instagram Benefits*

5.  Instagram provides touristic information in such a way that it is easy to choose a destination and spend free time.

6.  I always share with my friends and colleagues what I know and the new things that I discover about places to visit.

7.  I have experience with trips that may be of interest to others.

8.  I think that more and more people will use Instagram for travel-related decisions.

**Group III – Trustworthiness**

*Trust*

9.  I find that people that use Instagram to share their travel experiences and opinions are trustworthy.

10. Some personal referent (friend or familiar) uses Instagram in the process of organizing trips and, to a certain extent, has influenced me.

**Group IV – Intention to Visit**

*Intention to Visit*

11. I have already booked a trip to a destination because of the influence of Instagram.

12. I have already booked a trip to London because of the influence of Instagram.

**Group V – Demographics and Psychographics**

13. What is your gender?

• Male

• Female

14. What is your highest educational level?

- High school/secondary school

- Bachelor's degree

- Master's Degree

- Postgraduate


15. How frequently do you access the Internet?

- A few times a month or less

- A few times a week

- About once a day

- Several times each day


16. Which of the following Social Media platforms do you consider more important to you? Please place the options by order, considering the first one to be more important, and the last one the least important to you.

- Facebook

- Instagram

- YouTube

- Twitter

- Pinterest

- Snapchat


17. Are you planning to embark on a vacation trip in the next 12 months?

- Yes

- No

- Not sure

18. Which of the following do you consider influencing you more when you are choosing a travel destination? Please place the options by order, considering the first one to be more important, and the last one the least important to you.

- Friends and Family

- Other Internet users' opinions and reviews

19. Which of the following do you consider more important as a source of information for travel planning? Please place the options by order, considering the first one to be more important, and the last one the least important to you.

- Destination/hotel websites

- Travel blogs/websites

- Travel social media accounts

- Travelers reviews

20. Have you ever shared your travel experiences on Instagram?

- Yes

- No

**The questionnaire is completed. Thank you for your help!**

## Appendix 2 - Tables

*Table 3* - *Micro - Structure*

| Dimensions | Variables | | Items | Authors |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Screening Questions** | Screening Questions | a. | Are you an Instagram user? | (Kim et al., 2017) |
| | | b. | Are you aged between 18 and 34 years old? | (Ayeh et al., 2013) |
| **I - Functionality** | Information search | 1 | Instagram enables me to keep up to date with knowledge about tourist sites and activities of interest. | (Parra-López et al., 2011) |
| | | 2 | Instagram gives me the possibility to provide and receive info about tourist sites and activities of interest. | |
| | | 3 | I visit tourism companies' official Instagram page for travel information. | |
| | | 4 | When searching for a destination, I look for content on Instagram. | (Del Chiappa et al., 2016) |
| **II - Benefit** | Instagram Benefits | 5 | Instagram provides touristic info in such a way that it is easy to choose a destination and spend free time. | |
| | | 6 | I always share with my friends and colleagues what I know and the new things that I discover about places to visit. | |
| | | 7 | I have experience about trips that may be of interest to others. | |
| | | 8 | I think that more and more people will use Instagram for travel-related decisions. | (Parra-López et al., 2011) |
| **III - Trustworthiness** | Trust | 9 | I find that people that use Instagram to share their travel experiences and opinions are trustworthy. | |
| | | 10 | Some personal referent (friend or familiar) uses Instagram in the process of organizing trips and, to a certain extent, has influenced me. | |
| **IV – Intention to Visit** | Intention to Visit a destination | 11 | I have already booked a trip to a destination because of the influence of Instagram. | (Cox et al., 2009) |
| | Intention to Visit London | 12 | I have already booked a trip to London because of the influence of Instagram. | |
| **V – Demographics and Psychographics** | Gender | 13 | What is your gender? | (Ayeh et al., 2013) |
| | Educational level | 14 | What is your highest educational level? | |
| | Internet Use frequency | 15 | How frequently do you access the Internet? | |
| | Social Media importance | 16 | Which of the following Social Media platforms do you consider more important to you? | (Kang & Schuett, 2013) |
| | Travel intentions | 17 | Are you planning to embark on a vacation trip in the next 12 months? | (Ayeh et al., 2013) |
| | Travel influencers | 18 | Which of the following do you consider to influence you more when you are choosing a travel destination? | (Hernández-Méndez et al., 2015) |
| | Travel sources of info | 19 | Which of the following do you consider more important as a source of information for travel planning? | |
| | Share of travel experiences | 20 | Have you ever shared your travel experiences on Instagram? | |

*Table 4 - Demographic Characterization*

| Variables | Category | Frequency | | Mode |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Absolute** | **%** | |
| Gender- Q13 | Male | 83 | 39.5% | |
| | Female | 127 | 60.5% | X |
| Educational Level- Q14 | High school/ Secondary School | 37 | 17.7% | |
| | Bachelor's Degree | 82 | 39% | X |
| | Master's Degree | 71 | 33.8% | |
| | Postgraduate | 20 | 9.5% | |
| Internet usage frequency- Q15 | Few times a month or less | 4 | 1.9% | |
| | Few times a week | 1 | 0.5% | |
| | About once a day | 8 | 3.8% | |
| | Several times each day | 197 | 93.8% | X |

***Table 5*** *- Psychographic Characterization (1)*

| Variables | Category | Order | Absolute | % | Mode | Category | Order | Absolute | % | Mode |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social Media platforms importance -Q16 | Facebook | 1st | 36 | 17.1% | | Pinterest | 1st | 2 | 0.9% | |
| | | 2nd | 77 | 36.7% | X | | 2nd | 18 | 8.6% | |
| | | 3rd | 54 | 25.7% | | | 3rd | 22 | 10.5% | |
| | | 4th | 36 | 17.1% | | | 4th | 66 | 31.4% | X |
| | | 5th | 7 | 3.4% | | | 5th | 60 | 28.6% | |
| | | 6th | 0 | 0% | | | 6th | 42 | 20% | |
| | Twitter | 1st | 5 | 2.4% | | Snapchat | 1st | 0 | 0% | |
| | | 2nd | 14 | 6.7% | | | 2nd | 3 | 1.4% | |
| | | 3rd | 22 | 10.5% | | | 3rd | 3 | 1.4% | |
| | | 4th | 54 | 25.7% | | | 4th | 23 | 11% | |
| | | 5th | 73 | 34.7% | X | | 5th | 64 | 30.5% | |
| | | 6th | 42 | 20% | | | 6th | 117 | 55.7% | X |
| | Instagram | 1st | 142 | 67.6% | X | YouTube | 1st | 25 | 11.9% | |
| | | 2nd | 41 | 19.5% | | | 2nd | 57 | 27.1% | |
| | | 3rd | 22 | 10.5% | | | 3rd | 87 | 41.4% | X |
| | | 4th | 3 | 1.4% | | | 4th | 28 | 13.4% | |
| | | 5th | 1 | 0.5% | | | 5th | 5 | 2.4% | |
| | | 6th | 1 | 0.5% | | | 6th | 8 | 3.8% | |

*Table 6* - *Psychographic Characterization (2)*

| Variables | Category | Order | Frequency Absolute | Frequency % | Mode |
|-----------|----------|-------|--------------------|-----|------|
| Travel intentions-Q17 | Yes | | 138 | 65.7% | X |
| | No | No order | 16 | 7.6% | |
| | Not sure | | 56 | 26.7% | |
| Travel decision influencers-Q18 | Friends and Family | 1st | 128 | 61% | X |
| | | 2nd | 82 | 39% | |
| | Other users' opinions | 1st | 82 | 39% | |
| | | 2nd | 128 | 61% | X |
| Sources of information used for travel planning- Q19 | Destination hotel/websites | 1st | 51 | 24.2% | |
| | | 2nd | 29 | 13.8% | |
| | | 3rd | 44 | 21% | |
| | | 4th | 86 | 41% | X |
| | Travel blogs/websites | 1st | 51 | 24.3% | |
| | | 2nd | 71 | 33.8% | X |
| | | 3rd | 55 | 26.2% | |
| | | 4th | 33 | 15.7% | |
| | Travel Social Media Accounts | 1st | 50 | 23.8% | |
| | | 2nd | 47 | 22.4% | |
| | | 3rd | 65 | 30.9% | X |
| | | 4th | 48 | 22.9% | |
| | Travelers Reviews | 1st | 58 | 27.6% | |
| | | 2nd | 63 | 30% | X |
| | | 3rd | 46 | 21.9% | |
| | | 4th | 43 | 20.5% | |
| Share of travel experiences- Q20 | Yes | No order | 183 | 87.1% | X |
| | No | | 27 | 12.9% | |

*Table 7 - Univariate Analysis*

| Dimension | Var | Items | Mean | Median | Std. Deviation | Min | Max | Confidence Interval |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **I - Functionality** | IS1 | Instagram enables me to keep up to date with knowledge about tourist sites and activities of interest. | 3.96 | 4 | 0.945 | 1 | 5 | [3.83;4.09] |
| | IS2 | Instagram gives me the possibility to provide and receive info about tourist sites and activities of interest. | 3.89 | 4 | 0.960 | 1 | 5 | [3.76;4.02] |
| | IS3 | I visit tourism companies' official Instagram page for travel information. | 3.68 | 4 | 1.157 | 1 | 5 | [3.52;3.83] |
| | IS4 | When searching for a destination, I look for content on Instagram. | 3.51 | 4 | 1.261 | 1 | 5 | [3.34;3.69] |
| **II - Benefit** | IB1 | Instagram provides touristic info in such a way that it is easy to choose a destination and spend free time. | 3.68 | 4 | 1.225 | 1 | 5 | [3.51;3.85] |
| | IB2 | I always share with my friends and colleagues what I know and the new things that I discover about places to visit. | 4.04 | 4 | 1.041 | 1 | 5 | [3.90;4.18] |
| | IB3 | I have experiences about trips that may be of interest to others. | 4.08 | 4 | 0.940 | 1 | 5 | [3.95;4.20] |
| | IB4 | I think that more and more people will use Instagram for travel-related decisions. | 3.79 | 4 | 1.055 | 1 | 5 | [3.65;3.93] |
| **III - Trustworthiness** | T1 | I find that people that use Instagram to share their travel experiences and opinions are trustworthy. | 3.36 | 3 | 1.154 | 1 | 5 | [3.20;3.52] |
| | T2 | Some personal referent (friend or familiar) uses Instagram in the process of organizing trips and, to a certain extent, has influenced me. | 3.21 | 3 | 1.285 | 1 | 5 | [3.04;3.39] |
| **IV – Intention to Visit** | IV1 | I have already booked a trip to a destination because of the influence of Instagram. | 2.97 | 3 | 1.380 | 1 | 5 | [2.78;3.16] |
| | IV2 | I have already booked a trip to London because of the influence of Instagram. | 2.26 | 2 | 1.345 | 1 | 5 | [2.07;2.44] |