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Introduction

As widely acknowledged, word of mouth plays a significant role in forming and influencing consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions. And the development of technology and network has created new channels for consumers to share their experience after using goods and having service, making the word of mouth more easily available and more widespread. The information that consumers use electronic technology to create online is called electronic word of mouth (eWOM), considered as a form of word of mouth and is a fast-growing informal interpersonal communication mode. Most of time, tourism and hospitality industry provide service and experience, which are intangible meanwhile hard to evaluate. eWOM was often play as an evaluation index while the service and experience can be figured in feedback, and turn into reference of travel destination selection.

Most of the existing researches focus on how eWOM affects other potential consumers, but few researches focus on the influence of negative eWOM as well as its authenticity. In the meantime, few studies have compared the impact on tourists in different detail levels of negative eWOM.

Literature Review

Litvin (2008) suggested that word of mouth can be defined as an informal communication bridge between customers, customer and service provider through internet for the exchange information of product or service. Extending by existed concept, eWOM can be explained as all informal communication directly between consumers, is available to the public through network, also can be considered as any positive or negative evaluation by potential, real or previous consumer (Henning-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004).

The potential customers will understand the product or service by visiting the website and reading reviews from other customers before making a purchase decision (Doh & Hwang, 2009).

Relative to positive eWOM and its great influence, negative eWOM is also important but less concerned. Henning-Thurau et al. (2004) claimed that consumers are more likely to believe negative advice compare to the positive one. Among travel experiences, a negative travel experience may impress tourists more within the whole experience, and will provide more specific evidence for negative assessment (Pavesi, Gartner, & Denizci-Guillet, 2016).

People present different response when facing positive information and negative information, from the psychological level, the negative information has stronger stimulus than the positive information in various aspects like the attention, emotions, evaluation and social action. Compare with positive word of mouth, negative word of mouth urgently need more on research by its specialty of easy to spread, attract more attention and well known in the community.

eWOM has an increasingly significant reference value in traveling decision making, as well as products choosing such as vacation destinations, hotels and restaurants (Simpson & Sigauw, 2008).

Kotler, Bowen, and Makens (2013) indicated that potential tourists tend to decrease uncertainty and enhance the exchange utility in their decision making process by searching and reading others' experiences (eWOM). Zhu and Lai (2009) studied how eWOM could affect the tourist destination choice. They found that the total number of online reviews and bloggers (blogs) was significantly related to the actual number of visitors to the tourist destination, but the level of comments and the amount of visitor inquiries were not related to the actual number of tourist destination visitors.

eWOM is more widely used by tourists, consumers are also very willing to use eWOM to their own holiday planning, destination choice and follow-up purchase decision making, regarding eWOM as an important reference for all stages of travel. However, the existing researches are more tend to investigate the overall eWOM without subdivide the type and level of it. Relative to the large number of eWOM researches, the study on impact of eWOM on destination choice especially negative eWOM impact is a bit less. At the same time, different perceive degree make it difficult to accurately judge the negative eWOM, also the authenticity of negative eWOM even positive eWOM is another challenge to this filed.

Methodology

To explore how negative eWOM impact tourists' destination choice, and choose an attraction in Shanghai as an example to analyze whether tourists will change their interest, trust, and intention to visit Shanghai's Tianzifang after reading related negative reviews.

H1: Different detailed level of negative eWOM will affect tourists' interest to the destination.

H2: Different detailed level of negative eWOM will affect tourists' trust to the destination.

H3: Different detailed level of negative eWOM will affect tourists' destination choice.

H4: Increased interest in the destination will result in increased willingness of choosing the destination.

H5: Increased trust in the destination and eWOM information will result in increased willingness of choosing the destination.

Data collection is conducted through questionnaires which consisted of three main sections. The first section is simple demographic questions. The second part is the reading materials, including the introduction of Tianzifang, one question about visiting intention after the short brief used to measure the initial impression of respondents. The negative comments were random selected from lowest rating (1 star) comments, one is formed by comments length above 50 Chinese characters while the other one is formed by comments under 50 Chinese characters, randomly distributed to respondents.

The third part is the relevant scale, asking respondents completed after reading related eWOM reading material, two different material questionnaires using the same scale.

Data analysis used software smartPLS to calculate, due to PLS is more suitable for smaller sample size studies.

Results

The study constructed five relevant hypotheses among the four major variables. The degree of significance of each path of the PLS structural model can be verified by bootstrapping procedure. The resulting path model coefficient line into a bootstrap distribution, can be seen as an approximation of the sampling distribution. The PLS-SEM results for all bootstrap samples provided a standard deviation for each path model coefficient. With these information, t-test of the study can measure the significance of the relationship between the path models (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011).

This study assume level of significant as 0.1. In the path eWOM to choice (T-statistic 0.182) and eWOM to trust (T-statistic 1.4), both P-value are larger than 0.1, the hypothesis fail to reject and not significant, so these 2 hypotheses are not supported. P-value of all other path with different T-statistic are smaller than 0.1, can be concluded these 3 hypotheses are supported. The data indicated that negative eWOM had great impact on destination interest, destination interest had a significant impact on destination choice, and the trust have positive impact on destination choice. In the other hand, negative eWOM have no direct influence to destination choice and trust.

With the same significant level 0.1, only the P-value of path trust to destination choice is larger than 0.1, the hypothesis cannot be supported. All other path with different T-statistic have P-value smaller 0.1, which are all can be supported. The most noticeable path of this model is negative eWOM to destination trust, with 0.757 correlation coefficient which is pretty high, means negative eWOM present have high correlation with both destination trust and eWOM information trust. In this model, negative eWOM has directly positive effect to destination interest, trust as well as destination choice, destination interest has significant influence on destination choice while trust does not affect destination choice.

Conclusion and Discussion

All respondents agreed negative eWOM will influence interest to the destination, and destination interest will have impact on their destination choice no matter based on what detailed level content.

The difference is respondents who read more detailed content (above 50 Chinese words) think the negative eWOM have indirect influence to destination choice according to data, only if the interest as intermediary, those two variable would have relationship. To the contrary, respondents who read brief content (less than 50 Chinese words) confirmed negative eWOM directly influence their choice of destination. The reason may be due to the brief content is relatively easy to read, and would present a more intuitive understanding. The other difference is respondents think brief content value more in trust. Respondents have low response after reading longer negative eWOM and do not think it will influence the trust according to the path is not supported, but they do believe the trust would influence destination choice. In the other hand, with brief content, respondents regard the information they got is highly relevant to the trust, but do not think trust has impact on destination choice. Contrary to the knowledge that more detailed information perhaps means more credible and trust indeed effect choice, the result is a little bit surprising. It shows when most of the tourists facing a unfamiliar attraction, they usually not patient to read too detailed information, their attention is more easily grasp by brief information.

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