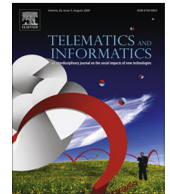




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Dual-route of persuasive communications in mobile tourism shopping



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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to develop and test a communication model for persuasive processes for mobile tourism shopping (MTS). Applying the elaboration likelihood model (ELM), we adopted a confirmatory approach using partial least squares as the analytical method. Respondents ($n = 357$) who had recently purchased a tourism product using mobile devices (smartphones or tablets) were analyzed. Argument quality significantly influences perceived usefulness (central route); source credibility has positive effects on perceived usefulness and site attachment (peripheral route); perceived usefulness significantly influences site attachment and continued usage; and site attachment has a positive effect on continued usage. Social network involvement has a moderating effect on central and peripheral routes. This study reflects increased awareness and interest in understanding persuasive processes at work in MTS. Empirical results demonstrate the value of using the ELM to understand dual-route communication processes at work among mobile shoppers for tourism products. As markets become increasingly competitive, it becomes ever more important for tourism managers to better understand the persuasive processes at work among different segments of MTS. As this study demonstrates, applying the ELM holds promise in achieving such understanding.

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1. Introduction

More travelers than ever are using mobile devices (e.g., smartphones, tablets) to make reservations, navigate to their destinations, and tell others, through social networks, about their trips (Daniszewski, 2012). Mobile is “the belle of the ball” (Clark, 2012, p. 1), and the trend toward mobile tourism shopping (MTS) will fundamentally shape tourism marketing in coming years. Based on Johnsen (2012), 68% of smartphone users plan to use their smartphones for shopping by finding store locations (62%), checking and comparing prices (58%), and obtaining product information (50%). In essence, the smartphone and tablet have rapidly become essential travel tools, and as a consequence, tourism businesses will need to embrace mobile shopping (Kim et al., 2015a). In this study, MTS refers to a purchase or reservation for a tourism product using a mobile device (i.e., smartphone or tablet).

According to Johnsen (2012), 48% of smartphone shoppers make social media part of their shopping processes; among this group, approximately half tap into social networks to look for discounts (54%), research gift ideas (53%), or plan to read reviews from social network sites (47%). Since mobile shopping has a strong social aspect, mobile commerce with social

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networking sites should highlight the social factors (Khansa et al., 2012). Social networks can effectively help mobile shoppers make decisions (Cai et al., 2008). Due to the growing importance of social media in online shopping (Klaus, 2013), MTS sites utilize social network involvement (SNI) to help customers make effective decisions while shopping for tourism products (Kim et al., 2014, 2015a). In addition, dual-process models of travel information (Chung et al., 2015; Jun and Vogt, 2013) and e-commerce (Li, 2013) have been influential in the field of social interactive involvement (i.e., SNI) and persuasive communications. However, despite the widespread use and growing importance of MTS, insufficient research has been conducted to determine how mobile shoppers process persuasive communications obtained through SNI.

The elaboration likelihood model (ELM) uses a dual route process to explain attitude formation and change. Developed in the 1980s by Petty and Cacioppo (1984), the ELM has proven both popular and useful in explaining persuasive communications. The ELM is described as a fairly general framework for organizing, categorizing, and understanding the basic processes underlying the effectiveness of persuasive communications. Persuasive communications are processed by one of two routes, the central route (i.e., processing information cognitively by argument quality) or the peripheral route (i.e., processing information affectively or by source credibility) (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). The ELM has been well documented in many fields such as social psychology (e.g., Chaiken and Maheswaran, 1994; Petty and Cacioppo, 1986), marketing (e.g., Douglas et al., 2008; MacInnis et al., 2002), information technology (e.g., Bhattacharjee and Sanford, 2006; Sussman and Siegal, 2003), and electronic commerce and shopping (e.g., Chen and Lee, 2008; Cheung et al., 2008). Thus, this study applies the ELM to investigate the persuasive processes involved in the MTS context.

In the dichotomous approach of dual-route of persuasive communications, perceived usefulness of information has significant effects between argument quality and behavioral intention as well as between source credibility and behavioral intention (Bhattacharjee and Sanford, 2006; Sussman and Siegal, 2003). For online tourism products, site attachment is an important mediator between motivations (value and trust) and outcomes (altruism and loyalty) on online group-buying sites (Kim et al., in press-b). Site attachment in the context of mobile tourism shoppers is considered to be developed through positive experiences and is a mediator between antecedents (trust, enjoyment, and timesaving) and outcome variables (group and interpersonal attachment and reciprocal altruism) (Kim et al., in press-a). Site attachment explains important relationships between antecedents and consumer behaviors in online communities (Ren et al., 2012). We believe it is useful to examine perceived usefulness and site attachment as mediators between antecedents (argument quality and source credibility) and continued usage of MTS. Consequently, this study relies on the ELM and examines central and peripheral persuasive processes at work during MTS.

One aspect of MTS is group buying in which SNI is an integral part of creating groups in order to obtain better prices (Kim et al., 2014). In particular, mobile tourism shoppers seek to get discounts, coupons, points, and mileage travel rewards from networking activities by uploading their experiences and reviews on mobile social networking sites (Kim et al., 2015a). To better understand this phenomenon, this study examines whether SNI has a moderating role on central and peripheral persuasive processes in the MTS context.

Studies of online information processing routes using the ELM have been conducted (e.g., Bhattacharjee and Sanford, 2006; Chen and Lee, 2008; Cheung et al., 2008; Koo et al., 2014; Li, 2013; Sussman and Siegal, 2003). However, we are aware of no studies in which SNI is shown to be a moderator in dual-route communications for MTS although the levels of SNI affect mobile shoppers' behaviors. Because of the rising importance of MTS and SNI, it will be increasingly significant for practitioners to understand the persuasive processes at work. A rapidly growing trend among tourists is to purchase and reserve tourism products and services from mobile websites accessed via mobile devices (Kim et al., 2015a, in press-a). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the dual-routes of communication of mobile shoppers, which in turn influence consumer decision-making with respect to purchasing and reserving tourism products and services via mobile devices (smartphones and tablets). To do this, this study proposes three research questions: (1) does argument quality influence shoppers engaged in MTS (central route)?; (2) does source credibility influence shoppers engaged in MTS (peripheral

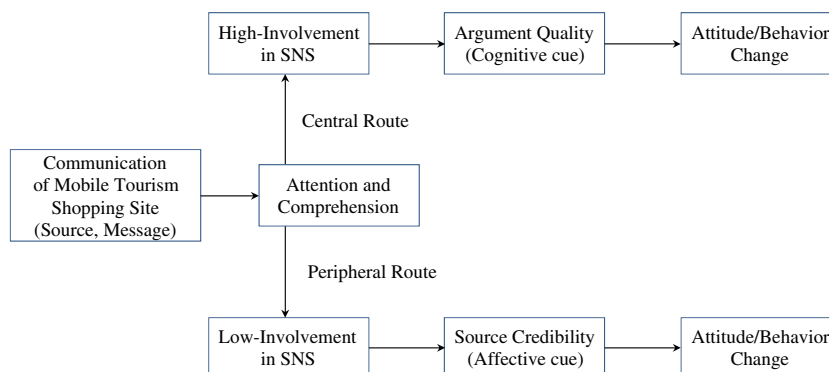


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework.

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