



Research note

The impact of font choice on web pages: Relationship with willingness to pay and tourism motivation



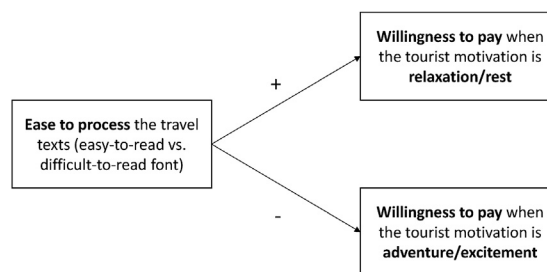
Yunhui Huang, Jiang Wu*, Wenjie Shi

Department of Marketing and Electronic Business, School of Business, Nanjing University, Nanjing 210093, Jiangsu Province, China

HIGHLIGHTS

- Metacognitive ease induced by text font affects persuasiveness of travel texts.
- Tourist motivation determines the direction of the effect.
- Easy-to-read font increases willingness to pay when travelling for relaxation.
- Difficult-to-read font increases willingness to pay when travelling for adventure.

GRAPHICAL ABSTRACT



ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 9 May 2017

Received in revised form

12 October 2017

Accepted 6 December 2017

Keywords:

Metacognitive ease

Font

Willingness to pay

Tourism motivation

Relaxation

Adventure

ABSTRACT

Past research in marketing has shown metacognitive ease affects product evaluation, yet little is known about whether it also affects the persuasiveness of travel texts. Through three experiments, the authors show *metacognitive ease* induced by font (italic or non-italic style, typeface, and color grey or black) affects people's perceptions of a tour, while *tourism motivation* determines the direction of the effect. Results indicate that when a proposed tour offers relaxation/rest, easy-to-read (vs. difficult-to-read) font increases preference for the tour (i.e., willingness to pay); but when a tour offers adventure/excitement, difficult-to-read (vs. easy-to-read) font increases preference for it. The samples sizes ranged from 138 to 205 Chinese student/adult respondents.

© 2017 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Travel texts, such as travel advertising and travel articles, are important for promoting tourism (e.g., Kim, Lehto, & Morrison, 2007; Rozier-Rich & Santos, 2011; Tseng, Wu, Morrison, Zhang, & Chen, 2015; Wicks & Schuett, 1991). Previous research has shown

that multiple factors, such as text content (Dann, 1999; Santos, 2004), message presentation (e.g., advertising or publicity) (Loda, Norman, & Backman, 2005), and characteristics of text recipients (e.g., recipients' levels of involvement or skepticism) (Huang, Chou, & Lin, 2010; Rozier-Rich & Santos, 2011) are likely to affect travel text persuasiveness. However, although visual features are an indispensable part of travel texts, we know little about whether and how these features affect tour appeal. With the development of e-commerce in the travel industry, more and more tour operators are adopting IT to provide added value to travel consumers (Tsai, Huang, & Lin, 2005). The adoption of IT has made the

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: yunhuihuang@nju.edu.cn (Y. Huang), wjiang@nju.edu.cn (J. Wu), swj1227@hotmail.com (W. Shi).

manipulation of visual features feasible. Therefore, understanding the effect of visual features should help travel professionals to better design travel texts and attract more travel consumers.

Previous research based on “feelings as information” theory (Schwarz, 2012) has shown that people are likely to utilize their feelings as a piece of information in making judgments. Specifically, visual features of a message (e.g., font—including italic or non-italic style, typeface, and color grey or black) affect to what extent people feel the message is easy to process (i.e., metacognitive ease) (Alter, Oppenheimer, Epley, & Eyre, 2007; Novemsky, Dhar, Schwarz, & Simonson, 2007). In turn, metacognitive ease/difficulty affects consumers' judgment, because the metacognitive experience which originates from visual features is treated as people's feelings towards the products (e.g., Alter & Oppenheimer, 2009; Lee & Labroo, 2004). Although no previous research has examined the effect of metacognitive ease in the travel industry, it is reasonable to expect that travel texts share some features with product descriptions, and travel consumers may also be affected by metacognitive ease.

Drawing on “feelings as information” theory (e.g., Schwarz, 2012), the present research includes three experiments to examine how metacognitive ease induced by font affects people's perceived incentive value of a promoted tour as well as the moderating role of tourism motivation. Incentive value represents to what extent people want the outcome that an object brings and whether the outcome is best suited, relative to other outcomes, to fulfill their current motivations (Berridge, 1996; Dai, Brendl, & Ariely, 2010; Kim & Labroo, 2011). Following previous research, willingness to pay (WTP) is used to represent incentive value in the current research (Litt, Khan, & Shiv, 2010). Font is manipulated by italic or non-italic style, typeface, and color grey or black (Alter et al., 2007; Novemsky et al., 2007). Tourism motivation is manipulated by destination image (Experiment 1); attractions emphasized in the text (Experiment 2); and participants' imagined desires (Experiment 3), rather than by simply measuring potential tourists' existing motivations. These experimental manipulations of tourism motivation guarantee its causal effect (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002) and provide insights for managerial practices that tour operators might adopt.

The present research contributes in the following ways. First, the studies examine how visual features of the travel text irrelevant to the content affect people's desire for a tour. This may contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of factors that influence the persuasiveness of travel texts. Second, by adopting “feelings as information” theory in the field of tourism management, this research extends our understanding of the contexts in which metacognitive ease/difficulty is likely to take effect. Third, if a moderating effect of tourism motivation exists, it may guide tour operators to design the visual features of travel texts according to different tourism motivations so as to better promote a tour.

2. Theoretical background and hypotheses

2.1. Metacognitive ease and “feelings as information” theory

Studies have consistently demonstrated that visual features of information (such as blurry versus regular fonts) affect consumer judgments through perceived metacognitive ease (for a review, see Schwarz, 2012). For example, a novel behavior is perceived as more difficult to execute if the instruction is written in a difficult-to-read (vs. easy-to-read) font (Song & Schwarz, 2008). A decision is more difficult to make and thus choice deferral is more likely when options are presented in difficult-to-read (vs. easy-to-read) font

(Novemsky et al., 2007; Wang, Novemsky, Dhar, & Baumeister, 2010).

The effect of metacognitive ease is explained by “feelings as information” theory (Schwarz, 2012). That is, metacognitive ease affects evaluative judgment because people treat their own feelings of ease/difficulty as a source of information for inferring the merits of the judgmental target, and sometimes they misattribute their feelings derived from incidental sources (e.g., fonts) to the focal products or brands (Alter et al., 2007; Novemsky et al., 2007). A difficult-to-read statement is often perceived as untruthful because people believe that truthful statements should be familiar and thus easy to process (Reber & Schwarz, 1999). Similarly, an exemplar (e.g., pigeon) written in difficult-to-read (vs. easy-to-read) font is often judged to be a less typical member of a category (e.g., bird) because people believe it should feel easy to make categorizations when an exemplar represents a category well (Oppenheimer & Frank, 2008). Through the inference process, metacognitive ease also increases liking (Reber, Winkielman, & Schwarz, 1998), perceived intelligence of the text writer (Oppenheimer, 2006), judgments of confidence (Simmons & Nelson, 2006), and moral correctness of moral violations (Laham, Alter, & Goodwin, 2009).

Although these evidences suggest metacognitive difficulty is usually associated with decreased evaluation, it may result in higher evaluation when difficulty signals higher value. For example, metacognitive difficulty makes a product appear more likely to be the best possible outcome, because getting the best outcome usually requires effort and involves difficulty (SaraKim & Labroo, 2011). For another example, because unique and special products should be unfamiliar and thus difficult to process, metacognitive difficulty makes products feel special and thus enhances consumers' evaluation of special-occasion goods (Pocheptsova, Labroo, & Dhar, 2010). Similarly, metacognitive difficulty increases people's perception of text book quality (Galak & Nelson, 2011), decision importance (Sela & Berger, 2012), and expected effort and competence of service agents (e.g., an agent providing help with graduate school applications) (Thompson & Ince, 2013).

As described above, the effects of metacognitive ease have been well examined across different domains. However, how metacognitive ease takes effect in the field of tourism management has not yet been examined. In the travel industry, tourism texts, such as travel brochures and travel articles, are important for creating awareness, improving image, and/or persuading viewers to join a tour (e.g., Kim et al., 2007; Rozier-Rich & Santos, 2011; Tseng et al., 2015; Wicks & Schuett, 1991). The present research focuses on how visual features (i.e., font—including italic or non-italic style, typeface, and color grey or black) that alter metacognitive ease might affect people's response to travel texts, while the contents remain unchanged.

2.2. The malleable effects of metacognitive ease

As discussed above, people make inferences about the meaning of their own feelings (i.e., metacognitive ease), which consequently affects evaluations. Previous research has demonstrated that the same cue can lead to opposite effects when reverse naïve theories are drawn on (Briñol, Petty, & Tormala, 2006; Deval, Mantel, Kardes, & Posavac, 2013; Labroo, Lambotte, & Zhang, 2009). Briñol et al. (2006) found that the ease of generating thoughts in favor for an exam increases evaluation of the exam, but the effect is reversed when participants are primed with the idea that easy thoughts are usually unintelligent. Labroo et al. (2009) found that when people assess their understanding of a finding, feelings of ease reduce the finding's perceived importance, because people

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7421153>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7421153>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)