An exploration of the factors influencing social media continuance usage and information sharing intentions among Korean travellers

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Argument quality enhances information seeking and entertainment motives.
- Source credibility increases these motives and relationship maintenance motive.
- The aforementioned motives trigger proclivity to use social media continuously.
- These motives also heighten propensity to share information via social media.

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ABSTRACT

The tourism and hospitality industry is largely influenced by the use of social media. However, there is still a need for more empirical research about the factors social media continuance usage and information sharing intentions among travel-related social media (TSM) users. With this realization, underpinned by elaboration likelihood model (ELM) and uses and gratifications theory (UGT), our study investigates the interrelationships of argument quality, source credibility, and information seeking, entertainment, and relationship maintenance motives, and social media continuance usage and information sharing intentions. Data gathered from TSM users in Korea were used to gauge the relationships through structural equation modeling. Argument quality leads to an increased activity in information seeking and entertainment motives, while source credibility positively influences information seeking, entertainment, and relationship maintenance motives. Information seeking, entertainment, and relationship maintenance motives trigger travelers' propensity to display higher social media continuance usage and information sharing intentions.

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1. Introduction

Social media (e.g., social networking sites, weblogs, photo/video sharing, and virtual communities) as well as travel-related online reviews emerging from consumer-generated media have substantially impacted the tourism and hospitality industry. TSM users can obtain and share information about their personal experiences and leave comments, opinions, reviews, and suggestions about a hotel, an airline, or a restaurant (Nusair, Bilgihan, Okumus, & Cobanoglu, 2013). Such users find travel-related online reviews to be highly trustworthy (Yoo, Lee, Gretzel, & Fesenmaier, 2009). However, source credibility has not been sufficiently investigated in the current literature. This is surprising because "… as on most social media platforms, the number of users who are present during an interaction as well as their proximity to a complaining customer is outside of a control, while their importance may be easily influenced, such as by awarding an expert status to certain users …" (Schaefers & Schamari, 2016, p. 193).

In addition, there are empirical studies that have examined the factors affecting continued usage of mobile tourism shopping (Kim, Chung, Lee, & Preis, 2016), online consumers' purchase decisions (Kwahk & Kim, 2016), online consumers' urge to buy restaurant products and services impulsively (Chung, Song, & Lee, 2017), loyalty to travel-related online social networks (Nusair et al., 2013), travel intention (Tang, Jang, & Morrison, 2012), behavioral intention to visit a tourist destination (Chen, Shang, & Li, 2014), or consumers' behavioral intention of loyalty (Harrigan, Evers, Miles, & Daly, 2017). However, from a theoretical perspective, studies still highlight a need for more empirical research about how to increase

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consumer participation in the use of social media or the factors impacting social media continuance usage and information sharing intentions among TSM users (cf. Ayeh, Au, & Law, 2013; Bigné, Ruiz, Andreu, & Hernandez, 2015).

Given by the acknowledged lack of empirical evidence in the extant tourism research, our study tests the interrelationships of two travel information characteristics (i.e., argument quality and source credibility), three TSM usage motives (i.e., information seeking, entertainment, and relationship maintenance), and two behavioral intentions (i.e., social media continuance usage and information sharing) by building a parsimonious conceptual model based on the tenets of ELM (Petty & Cacioppo, 1984) and UGT (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973). Broadly speaking, our study examines: (a) the influences of argument quality and source credibility on information seeking and entertainment motives; (b) the impact of source credibility on relationship maintenance motive; and (c) the influences of information seeking, entertainment, and relationship maintenance motives on social media continuance usage and information sharing intentions. Data came from TSM users through an online survey utilizing a national panel system in Korea.

Both ELM and UGT provide guidance to develop the above-mentioned relationships that fill in several voids in the extant tourism research. Specifically, ELM consists of argument quality (central route) and source credibility (peripheral route) as the two routes of persuasive processing (Li, 2013). Information surfacing from consumer-generated media is more persuasive and credible than information associated with seller-generated media. In addition, TSM users are more inclined to utilize information from consumer-generated media to make arrangements for their travel when they believe that information arises from credible travelers (Ayeh, 2015).

UGT can be used to understand social media users' different needs such as information, entertainment, and social interaction (Diddi & LaRose, 2006). According to UGT, consumers actively choose media to satisfy their specific needs rather than passively obtain information from media (Gao & Feng, 2016). Consumers can actively select media to seek the information needed, have entertainment, and maintain relationships with the ones they know and do not know (cf. Kim et al., 2016; Lin & Liu, 2012). It appears that travelers who find that they can obtain reliable, accurate, and complete information from social media are inclined to seek information and have entertainment. It also seems that travelers who find that they can collect information from knowledgeable providers in social media are inclined to seek information, have entertainment, and communicate with friends and other parties. These collectively increase consumers' social media continuance usage and information sharing intentions.

2. Theoretical framework, hypotheses, and conceptual model

2.1. Theoretical framework and hypotheses

ELM is used as the theoretical underpinning to develop hypotheses pertaining to the interrelationships of argument quality, source credibility, and information seeking, entertainment, and relationship maintenance motives. Broadly speaking, ELM which is proposed by Petty and Cacioppo (1984) and has been used in marketing, social psychology, information technology, and electronic commerce (e.g., Kim et al., 2016) explains how individuals process information (Li, 2013). According to ELM, argument quality and source credibility are used to understand changes in users' attitudes and beliefs (Bhattacherjee & Sanford, 2006). Based on ELM, both argument quality and source credibility are used to ascertain their relationships with perceived usefulness, social relationships, site attachment, attitude toward information technology acceptance, normative social influence, or informational social

influence (Bhattacherjee & Sanford, 2006; Chung, Han, & Koo, 2015; Kim et al., 2016; Li, 2013). In argument quality, persuasive strength of communication in an informational message is critical (Bhattacherjee & Sanford, 2006) because individuals who want to and are able to process the message are involved in thoughtful and effortful processing of persuasive arguments, pay attention to persuasive arguments, and then generate their own thoughts as a result of these arguments (Park, Lee, & Han, 2007).

Source credibility is defined as "the extent to which information source is perceived to be believable, competent, and trustworthy by information recipients" (Bhattacherjee & Sanford, 2006, p. 811). TSM users often rely on online reviews about a hotel, an airline, or a restaurant to find out recent technology, obtain cues about service delivery and complaint handling processes, and product/service guarantees. This is achieved through sources which are believable, competent, and trustworthy. TSM users are also willing to learn company's responses to customer complaints. Evidence shows that successful service recovery positively influences virtual presence of the company (Schaefers & Schamari, 2016). The ones who receive satisfactory solutions to their problems will leave positive comments about the company's services. This will lead to positive e-word-of-mouth communication about the company and its products and services. Recent research also supports the notion that social media-based relationships foster consumers' positive word-of-mouth communication (Hudson, Roth, Madden, & Hudson, 2015).

Source credibility appears to be more influential for weak arguments and/or low elaboration likelihood, while argument quality seems to be more influential for object-relevant arguments such as product-relevant attributes and issue-relevant arguments under high involvement conditions (Li, 2013; Park et al., 2007; Sussman & Siegel, 2003). For example, TSM users who make travel planning under high involvement conditions prioritize the quality of online reviews and read a number of online reviews when the quality of these reviews is high (Park et al., 2007). On the other hand, TSM users make judgments using simple cues under low involvement conditions (Tang et al., 2012).

Empirically, in a study of mobile tourism shopping, Kim et al. (2016) found that argument quality was a predictor of perceived usefulness and source credibility was a determinant of both perceived usefulness and site attachment. Tang et al.'s (2012) research on destination websites demonstrated that highly involved TSM users were inclined to focus more on argument quality, while users with low involvement were inclined to utilize simple cues to make judgments. Ayeh's (2015) study illustrated that trustworthiness enhanced usage intentions through attitude and perceived usefulness among TripAdvisor users. Ye, Law, Gu, and Chen (2011) showed that positive online reviews increased the sales of an online travel agency. Ahn, Ryu, and Han (2007) reported that information quality influenced entertainment among the users of online shopping sites. Chung et al.'s (2015) research conducted with TSM users documented that argument quality enhanced perceived usefulness, while source credibility increased both perceived usefulness and social relationships. Zhang, Lee, and Zhao's (2010) study indicated that strength of persuasive argument resulted in behavioral intentions among restaurant customers, while source credibility did not.

Consumers want to reach quality and useful online reviews about the products and services of companies while they are trying to focus on travel planning. Therefore, persuasive strength of communication for argument quality is significant (Bhattacherjee & Sanford, 2006). This seems to be more important under high involvement conditions (Park et al., 2007). Service providers should also note that potential customers are more interested in negative online hotel reviews for their future stay because they find these reviews helpful and useful for an overall evaluation (Lee, Jeong, & Lee, 2017). If users receive persuasive messages and are satisfied