



Does time dull the pain? The impact of temporal contiguity on review extremity in the hotel context

Yang Yang^a, Laurie Wu^{a,*}, Wan Yang^b

^a Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA, USA

^b The Collins College of Hospitality Management, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, CA, USA



ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Temporal contiguity
Review extremity
Experience valence
Reviewer expertise
Construal level theory

ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate how the time at which a hotel review is posted influences the hotel rating. Utilizing data collected from a major travel review website, the authors estimate a hierarchical linear regression that reveals a positive relationship between temporal contiguity (i.e., the closeness between the time of hotel stay and the time when a review is posted) and review extremity, as measured by deviation from the hotel's average rating. Moreover, two moderating factors in this relationship are highlighted: experience valence and reviewer expertise. More specifically, the positive effect of temporal contiguity on review extremity is significant only for negative experiences, and this effect decreases as reviewer expertise increases. The major empirical results are further confirmed through robustness checks that apply a different range of temporal contiguity, alternative rules defining positive/negative valence, different estimation methods, and correction for endogeneity bias, respectively. Lastly, theoretical and practical implications are provided.

1. Introduction

In line with the constant proliferation of information and communications technology, various types of online reviews have become major players in consumers' travel-related decision making (Pan and Yang, 2016). Reviewers' opinions and explanations can inform travelers' perceived product quality (Koh et al., 2010), trust and attitudes toward travel service providers (Ladhari and Michaud, 2015), and hotel booking intentions (Sparks and Browning, 2011). In particular, extreme reviews are more likely to sway the overall consensus about an establishment (Zhang et al., 2016a,b) and may potentially prove more helpful and influential for customers compared to less-extreme reviews (Fang et al., 2016). As such, it is crucial for managers and tourism scholars to be aware of and understand the factors that can influence the contents and extremity of online reviews.

Existing research shows that review contents, and notably review extremity, may be influenced by hotel-specific factors including environmental certification (Peiró-Signes et al., 2014) and management response frequencies (Liang et al., 2017). Reviews can also be colored by reviewer-specific characteristics including socio-demographics (Del Chiappa and Dall'Aglio, 2012), travel patterns (Yang et al., 2017), and online review experiences (Liang et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2016). Yet one intriguing factor related to online reviews has yet to capture scholarly attention: temporal contiguity. In today's technology era, consumers

may choose to post reviews that reflect their personal travel experiences wherever and whenever they want. For example, a traveler might post his/her review onsite, immediately after the experience, or from another location weeks or months after the trip. These diverse possibilities raise questions: does time matter in review rating and extremity? Does time alleviate the pain associated with a negative travel experience? And what are the factors that moderate the effect of temporal contiguity? The current research addresses these inquiries.

To answer these research questions, we used online review data collected for Manhattan hotels in 2015 to investigate the relationship between temporal contiguity and review extremity along with the moderating roles of experience valence and reviewer expertise. By doing so, this study represents the very first research effort that highlights the importance of relative posting time on hotel reviews to unveil the effect of temporal contiguity. Moreover, our research findings are expected to provide important implications for hotels in terms of online reputation management and how to decide when to solicit hotel reviews from customers.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Online reviews

Over the past decade, online reviews have become a powerful tool

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: yang@temple.edu (Y. Yang), laurie.wu@temple.edu (L. Wu), wanyang@cpp.edu (W. Yang).

and received increased attention from both scholars and industry practitioners. Studies have demonstrated that online WOM can heavily influence consumers' attitudes, preferences, and purchase behaviors (e.g.: Ludwig et al., 2013; Tsao et al., 2015; Viglia et al., 2016; Ye et al., 2009). Besides the impact of eWOM, scholars also started investigating why and how people post online reviews. For example, Chu and Kim (2011) demonstrated that tie strength, trust, normative and informational interpersonal can trigger online posting behaviors. Yoo and Gretzel (2008) discovered some important eWOM motivators including the need to help a service provider, concerns for other consumers, and needs for positive self-enhancement. A group of scholar studied the impact of status seeking on online review posting. Lampel and Bhalla (2007) revealed that one of the most important motivators of online posting is an individual's status seeking intention. They argue that an individual can build a positive reputation and achieve desired status by posting quality information and conveying his/her consumption experiences through textual communication, and ultimately creating an ideal virtual self in the online community (Goffman, 1955; Jensen Schau and Gilly, 2003). Burtch and Hong (2014) compared mobile and non-mobile eWOM, and they found that consumers tend to give lower ratings and provide more concrete and emotional text when posting reviews via a mobile device. Unfortunately, till today (to the best of the authors' knowledge), it is not clear whether timing matters on eWOM behaviors, especially in the hotel eWOM context. Therefore, in the current study, we introduce a new concept called temporal contiguity and aim to explore the impact of posting time on review rating extremity.

2.2. Temporal contiguity in online reviews

Temporal contiguity can be defined as the temporal closeness between two stimuli or events (Chen and Lurie, 2013). In the context of travel-related online reviews, the construct of temporal contiguity refers to the temporal closeness between travel consumption and the time at which a review is posted (Chen and Lurie, 2013). Temporal contiguity has been underscored as an important factor that shapes individuals' causal judgment and decision making (Buehner and May, 2003; Chen and Lurie, 2013; Reed, 1992, 1999). Previous social psychology research has revealed that the more closely two events occur in sequence, the more likely individuals are to judge the subsequent event as having been caused by the earlier event (Buehner and May, 2003; Einhorn and Hogarth, 1986; Kummer, 1995). Due to this psychological attribution, peripheral informational cues that indicate temporal contiguity (also called temporal contiguity cues) can strongly influence individuals' causal judgment (e.g.: Buehner and May, 2003; Burtch and Hong, 2014; Chen and Lurie, 2013; Kelley, 1973; Wu et al., 2017). For example, in an experiment where respondents were asked to judge the extent to which an action caused an outcome, Shanks et al. (1989) revealed that a low temporary contiguity (a delay) between the action and outcome reduced causality judgments. Similarly, Topolinski and Reber (2010) conducted three experiments and demonstrated that respondents were more likely to judge a solution as the correct one for a problem when it appeared in higher temporal contiguity to that problem.

In the context of the present study, the disclosure of temporal contiguity cues could also influence travelers' causal judgment of online reviews. Some consumers may directly indicate temporal contiguity in their travel reviews by using phrases such as "We just came back from the trip" (Chen and Lurie, 2013). As indicated in prior research, the disclosure of such temporal contiguity cues can indeed influence other customers' judgment of reviewers' posting intentions (Chen and Lurie, 2013; Wu et al., 2017). The closer the temporal distance between travel consumption and time of review posting, the more likely it is that readers will consider a positive review a true reflection of a positive travel experience (rather than attributing the review to other posting intentions, such as to receive a financial reward from the business)

(Chen and Lurie, 2013; Wu et al., 2017). Such attributions can lead to increased purchase intention toward the reviewed business (Wu et al., 2017).

2.3. The impact of temporal contiguity on review extremity: the perspective of construal level theory

While the majority of existing research on temporal contiguity examines the effect on customers' perceptions of posted reviews and the reviewed businesses, the current study takes a unique angle when assessing how temporal contiguity may influence reviewers' rating behavior. In particular, this research aims to understand if temporal contiguity might influence review extremity. Review extremity can be conceptually defined as the extent to which an individual's review deviates from the general consumer consensus about the reviewed business (Schlosser, 2011); thus, review extremity can be measured as the deviation between an individual review rating and the forum consensus rating for the corresponding business (Purnawirawan et al., 2012). Previous marketing research has shown that extreme reviews significantly shape consumer attitudes towards a reviewed business (Schlosser, 2011).

Drawing on construal level theory (CLT), the current research proposes that the temporal contiguity between travel consumption and the time when a review is posted could influence the extent of review extremity. CLT posits that individuals construe an object or event based on their perceived psychological distance from that object or event (Dhar and Kim, 2007; Fiedler, 2007; Trope and Liberman, 2010). While psychologically distant events tend to be construed in an abstract manner (i.e., the desirability of an event/object), psychologically close events are more likely to be reflected in a more detailed and tangible way (i.e., the feasibility of an event/object) (Liberman et al., 2007; Trope and Liberman, 2010). Further, psychological distance can take various forms depending on its driving factors: temporal distance (i.e., the time distance from when the event occurred), spatial distance (i.e., the space distance from where the event occurred), social distance (i.e., the interpersonal distance between individuals who are involved in the event), and hypothetical distance (i.e., imagining the event as likely or unlikely) (Trope and Liberman, 2010). According to CLT, any of these four types of psychological distance could influence the degree of construal along the "concrete-abstract" continuum (Liberman et al., 2007; Trope and Liberman, 2010).

In the context of travel-related online reviews, the temporal contiguity between travel consumption and the time at which a review is posted may also affect how consumers construe their travel experiences. After all, time is a key dimension behind construal-level effects (Liberman and Trope, 2003; Trope and Liberman, 2003). Immediately following a travel experience, the event is psychologically close, and so it can be reflected in a detailed, concrete manner. As time passes, however, the event will be construed more abstractly, and detailed aspects of the experience will gradually fade (Kim et al., 2008). In such circumstances, individuals are more likely to rely on external information to help them recall their travel experiences (Trope and Liberman, 2003, 2010). One such source of information could be the consensus of other reviewers' attitudes towards the business. Given that a psychologically distant experience is vague (Hong and Lee, 2010), reviewers are more likely to rely on others' posted reviews as a social anchor when writing their own reviews. Therefore, the longer the temporal distance between travel consumption and the time when a review is posted, the less a review will deviate from the social consensus about the reviewed business. Thus, we propose that:

H₁. Temporal contiguity between travel consumption and the time when a review is posted is positively related to review extremity.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7418961>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7418961>

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