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Research Paper

Tourism communicative actions of sojourners and information recipients

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the antecedents and consequences of communicative actions of tourism information. It first proposes the associations of foreign sojourners' communicative action and its antecedents that reflect their self-confidence with three aspects: quality of transmitted information, confidence originating from the identity as a sojourner, and confidence about the positive expectation of communication outcomes. This study further proposes a conceptual model describing how the overall tone and the perceived frequency of sojourners' communication affect the information recipients' perceptions and behavioral intentions. The mediating role of perceived information quality on the information recipients is also considered. Data were collected from foreign sojourners in Macao and information recipients in China. The results show a significant association between sojourners' self-confidence and their communicative action, and they provide additional insight on the impact of foreign sojourners' communication on information recipients' perceptual and behavioral reactions and the mediating role of perceived information quality.

1. Introduction

Diversified actors in this globalized and digitized world have transformed the way individuals share information. In tourism, reflecting such social trends, increasing attention has focused on a diversified communication pattern. The main focus has been on understanding the communication strategies of individuals, mostly tourists, who collect and share general and specialized pre-trip, on-site, and post-trip information using different online platforms (Choe, Kim, & Fesenmaier, 2017; Okazaki, Andreu, & Campo, 2017). Actors who have been overlooked in the body of literature are non-tourists who participate in, and may greatly contribute to, tourism information generation and processing. In recent years, more research has focused on the roles of local residents and immigrants, especially in VFR (visiting friends and relatives) tourism (Shani & Uriely, 2012; Williams & Hall, 2002) and place branding (Kalandides, Braun, Kavaratzis, & Zenker, 2013). Recent studies have stressed the unique tourism behaviors of temporary foreign residents who represent expatriates, sojourners, or international students (Dutt, Ninov, & Haas, 2016; Liu & Ryan, 2011).

An increase in non-permanent foreign residents who do not intend to permanently reside in a destination region has led to the concept of the sojourner. The sojourner group, recognized with increasing global mobility, includes international students, volunteers, missionaries, and foreign workers and employers. Studies have focused mostly on their communication during their adjustment in a destination country or region (Church, 1982).

Even with the increasing communicative role of this group, little research has theorized its perceptual and behavioral conditions and outcomes of its communicative pattern of tourism information about the destination region. Acknowledging such a research gap, this study aims to propose and test conceptual models that predict communicative actions and their outcomes from both foreign sojourners as information disseminators and information recipients as those with direct connections to the sojourners. In order to better understand the cause and impact of communication, this study focuses on the self-perceptions of sojourners as specialized and differentiated information disseminators and others' perceived expectations that originate from the information disseminators' identity as sojourners. In order to identify the perceived specialized communicative roles of the sojourners, this study adopts the concepts of self-confidence and expected outcomes to identify the salience in tourism information processing and its impact on information recipients.

The study contributes to the body of literature both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it adopts the concept of self-confidence and applies the concept comprehensively and uniquely by focusing on transmitted information, perceived self-identity, and outcome expectations. It is also theoretically significant in that it considers not only foreign sojourners' communicative process of local information but also information recipients' situational and perceptual factors along with their cognitive, affective, and conative outcomes. Such a comprehensive approach provides valuable implications in understanding the

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unique roles of sojourners and both the actual conditions and impacts of communication by them after identifying the factors of recognizing the content shared and the perceived outcomes of communication as well as self-identification as a sojourner in addition to understanding the information recipients' perceptions towards a communicative action. Practically, this paper provides insight for destination marketing and management in acknowledging the roles of sojourners as information processors and disseminators, who may have crucial impacts on the success of VFR tourism. The findings will provide evidence on not only how much the group of sojourners is influential but also how it influences those back home who have the potential to be visitors and secondary information disseminators.

2. Self-confidence and sojourners' communicative action

2.1. Self-confidence

Self-confidence is an individual's feeling of capability and assurance of what he or she decides to do and self-belief of processing information effectively (Bearden, Hardesty, & Rose, 2001). It is differentiated from self-esteem in that the latter denotes a broad and overall affective evaluation of an individual, while the former is likely to be situation- or product-specific. Self-confidence implies perceptions at the individual level: personal difference is thus acknowledged. In particular, with similar previous experience and knowledge, individuals' perceived states may be different because of personal variation. Self-confidence is an outcome of one's perceptual and behavioral history and state, such as previous experience, self-esteem, perceived control, and dominance (Bearden et al., 2001).

In studies of consumer behavior, self-confidence has been adopted to explain one's information behavior, focusing on the ability to acquire information from the right source (i.e. information acquisition) and to sort out information suitable for a specific situation (i.e. consideration-set formation). In addition, its aspects have been suggested as confidence about positive outcomes through personal decision-making (i.e. positive decision-making outcomes), positive outcomes for people around them (i.e. social outcomes of decision-making), discerning facts from tactics (i.e. persuasion knowledge), and active address of issues (i.e. marketplace interfaces) (Bearden et al., 2001). These dimensions imply that confidence captures one's self-perception of the ability to efficiently collect information, sort out unnecessary information, and positively expect the impact of information sharing: all of which originate from accumulated experience. In the self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977) and the social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), Bandura proposes the impact of positive outcome expectation on an individual's behavior. In addition to confidence in an individual's information, if he or she expects positive outcomes from information sharing, a cognitive force would lead to positive behavioral outcomes such as active communication. In addition to the sojourners' positive outcome expectations, by adjusting the original concept of self-confidence to the context of sojourners' communicative actions, this study stresses two aspects of self-confidence: the quality of shared information and self-recognition as a differentiated communicator of local information.

Self-confidence can be of particular interest in understanding sojourners' communication, considering the linkage of human perception and communication during the decision-making and, in particular, problem solving. In identifying the sojourners who are actively involved in the communication about the experience and information about the host region, this situational variable, rather than socio-demographic, geographic, and other psychographic variables, is particularly useful because communicative actions about such topics are likely to be triggered by the situational motivations (Kim & Grunig, 2011). The three variables are also partly linked to the situational theory of problem solving (Kim & Grunig, 2011): the theory of communication that was developed to explain the salience in individuals'

communication as a process of problem solving, which can be extended to the general communication context and those among sojourners, and can be applied to the context of marketing in general and marketing communication, as related theoretical literature argues (Kim & Grunig, 2011). Self-confidence about shared information quality has common features with the referent criterion, defined as the knowledge or subjective judgement accumulated based on experience and second-hand-information processing, with which one can solve a problem, which has been suggested as a condition for communicative action. Self-confidence originating from identity is linked to involvement recognition in that this proposed variable concerns their identity as those who are relatively deeply involved with the host region, while this study additionally considers the recognition of sojourners' unique position originating from their personal condition of temporary residence. Lastly, positive outcome expectations are conceptually grounded by reverse constraint recognition from the situational theory of problem solving in that this variable identifies the confidence of oneself in making a difference and improves the situation through the action of communication.

2.2. Communicative action in problem solving as an outcome variable

Kim and Grunig (2011) acknowledge that enhanced motivations for problem solving lead to enhanced communicative action, which is, in the context of this study, communication between sojourners as information disseminators and strangers and acquaintances from their home countries and regions as information recipients using online and offline platforms. Furthermore, problem solving is observed as a communicant's process to fill in the knowledge gap between the information providers — experienced tourists, residents and expatriates, and, broadly, sojourners in this study — and information recipients. This study assumes that communication is a tool to solve problems and decrease a knowledge gap, and with an increase of problem recognition, activeness in communication would increase.

In capturing the scope and dimensions of communicative action, this study considers the dimensionality from the communicative action in problem solving (CAPS) model proposed by Kim and Grunig (2011). As an extension of the communicative variables in the theory of publics, which includes information seeking and processing, CAPS includes comprehensive communicative dimensions after considering the active and passive aspects of communication. Passive communication has heuristic characteristics, which involve less cognitive processing. In contrast, active aspects of communication involve relatively comprehensive and systematic information processing with an intensive cognitive effort required to solve a problem. The active and passive aspects of communication are further classified into three types of actions: information acquisition ('active information search' and 'passive information finding'), information selection ('actively ignoring unreliable information' and 'passively welcoming information'), and information transmission ('actively looking for chances to talk' and 'passively willing to talk if somebody asks').

Individuals are particularly motivated to acquire information after recognizing a problem and being motivated to solve it. Information acquisition involves intentional information gathering of relevant information or unintentional exposure to information that may be captured through an individual's five senses and stored and then retrieved to assist problem solving. Passive information acquisition may be initiated by not ignoring but rather attending to information for reference. Active and passive aspects of information selection explain an individual's cognitive processing to achieve optimized problem solving by enhancing efficiency through sorting out unnecessary information and systematically pursuing relevant information. In addition, information transmission includes voluntary information giving and reactive information sharing after questions have been asked and solutions have been sought. Communication studies have showed evidence that, with a high level of problem recognition and less constraint

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