Research on Tourist's Willingness of Conducting Online Word-of-mouth Communication Under Tourism Destination Context*

Xiaoyan Liu
School of Business Administration
Jianghan University
Wuhan, China

Jun Zhao
School of Business Administration
Zhongnan University of Economics and Law
Wuhan, China

Abstract—**Word-of-mouth communication has been widely investigated. Less is known on what drives the willingness of online word-of-mouth communication especially under tourism destination context. Scholars often equate motivation and willingness, and tend to define them theoretically; the connotation of willingness is broader than motivation. Through a survey of 243 tourists/potential tourists, this paper finds that tourists' willingness to disseminate online word-of-mouth communication is not only influenced by motivation involvement (traditional willingness factors), but also affected by marketing involvement and network involvement. The analysis of the empirical data shows supports for the application of online word of mouth theory in tourism.**

Keywords—tourism destination; online word-of-mouth communication; willingness

I. INTRODUCTION

In tourism industry, tourism destination's influence is crucial, because it is the core of whole tourism chain. Studying on the information senders of the tourist destination can find the affecting factors on willingness of information senders, so there will be more effective measures for these "natural advertisers" to stimulate sharing behavior by the relevant management organizations of destination.

At the same time, as a hot topic, the willingness and motivation of word-of-mouth were difficult to understand in the current related research, scholars are unable to distinguish these factors effectively; number of them equated the intention with the motivation of word of mouth. Among them, omeone take the point that motivation is the internal driving force of individual. Meanwhile, the willingness of comuunication is also influenced by the external environmental factors (e.g. social and economic development level, degree of network involvement and so on), which in addition to the internal motivation.This study is more inclined to the latter understanding of willingness on word of mouth, that contain motivation, and other external factors.

In this paper we wish to investigate the affecting factors of the willingness on OWOM, we study this topic in the context of the tourism industry and, more specifically, our focus is the information senders of tourism destination. We propose a conceptual model which based on Propagation theory; we pose three main hypotheses based on literatures and test our hypotheses by analyzing data from a survey on 243 people. Our findings provide contributions to the literatures on OWOM of tourism destination, and provide the reference to tourism destination management departments and managers.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

A. Motivation Involvement

The research on the motivation of word-of-mouth communication can be traced back to Dichter's study in 1966, he proposed four positive word-of-mouth motivations: product involvement, self-involvement, other involvement and information intervention; Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) enriched and validated the motivations of consumers for online word-of-mouth communication through empirical research. This study adds moderating and balancing effects based on relationship utility, consumption utility and praise effect (Balasubramanian, 2001), the ultimate motivations of online word-of-mouth communication include nine factors: seeking help from internet, caring and helping other consumers, eliminating negative emotions, positive emotional expression, enhancing self-worth and identity, social benefits, economic benefits, helping enterprises, and searching for information. Jiang (2009) summarized and extended Hennig-Thurau's conclusions, she believed that motivations of online word-of-mouth communication should include improving image, personal entertainment, information return, sharing emotions, supporting the community, obtaining reports and supporting/punishing behavior to enterprises, service optimization and other contents.

Based on Hennig-Thurau (2004), combined with other scholars' relevant research, this article also classified the motivations of online word-of-mouth communication for

tourists' information sharing behavior on tourism destination into nine kinds. All motivations have been verified by predecessors that there was positive influence on willingness of online word-of-mouth communication, at the level of motivation involved, nine kinds of motivation involvement behaviors are latent variables. Therefore, the hypothesis is as follow:

Hypothesis 1: The information sender (H11: Seeking for support; H12: social benefits; H13: helping the media platform; H14: self-improvement; H15: emotion sharing; H16: altruism; H17: opinion leader responsibility; H18: Individual character; H19: Professional skills and knowledge level) have positive influences on the willingness of online word-of-mouth communication.

B. Marketing Involvement

Chen (2008) analyzed the credibility、 the performance of word-of-mouth recipients in revisit willingness with content characteristics, results were reflected in the book *Principles of online word-of-mouth communication.* American psychology professors Hovland, Janis and Kelly (1953) in their famous book *Communication and Persuasion* proposed that, the main elements, information dissemination elements and subject elements are three important elements of communication and persuasion.

These three main factors have been accepted by many scholars. Cheng (2010), Li (2013) and Wu (2013) have conducted empirical research by the kind of division. However, there still had many shortcomings after the review of the literature; for example, the classification of online word-of-mouth communication willingness is not complete enough. This approach emphasized factors such as the credibility of information sources, the quality of information content, sensory and emotional experience, but did not attach importance to factors such as the credibility and usage of communication channels themselves, also failed to verify the influence of personality differences and social networks.

In recent years, the role of online word-of-mouth communication has become increasingly prominent as "zero media", the influence of the marketing power of enterprises on the online word-of-mouth communication is expanding. By all appearances, marketing involvement is a valuable research issue.

With marketing involvement, it cannot be ignored that the marketing power of enterprises has positively influence on the willingness of online word-of-mouth communication of information senders, which is also included in the motivations of economic interests by many scholars as an important external cause. It also has such logic in the process of information dissemination of tourism destinations. Therefore, we hypothesize as follows:

Hypothesis 2: The marketing involvement by tourism destination can promote the willingness of online word-of-mouth communication.

C. Network Involvement

The aspects involved in network involvement are not only the subject network understanding of Wu (2013), but also the network involvement of social relations and some problems of the network platform itself, such as ease of use, credibility and other factors. As a pre-factor, it is the focus of the development of modern network society. The definition of network involvement in this paper is combined with the description of Wu (2013), at the same time, with the characteristics of current internet development, which defined as three factors: network platform credibility, ease of use of network platform and the network involvement of social relationships. There are no previous studies about the above three types of network involvement. Therefore, we organized a doctoral seminar to determine the hypothesis. The forum invited 1 doctor of marketing, 2 doctors of tourism management and 1 doctor of advertising, to discuss the role of three factors in the willingness of online word-of-mouth communication, and finally, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 3: (H31: network platform credibility; H32: ease of use of network platform; H33: the network involvement of social relationships) is positively associated with willingness of online word-of-mouth communication.

In summary, thirteen latent variables in the model have been confirmed, including nine independent variables in the motivation involvement, one independent variable in the marketing involvement and three independent variables in the network involvement. These independent variables ultimately affect the willingness of online word-of-mouth communication. The theoretical model is as follows:
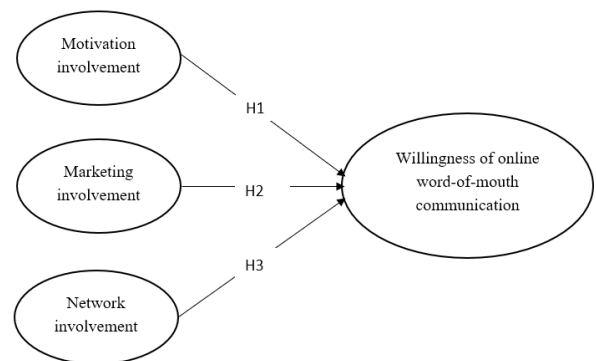

Fig. 1. Theoretical model.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

A. Variable Measurement

In order to improve the validity of the questionnaire in this paper, measures for different constructs in this study were mainly derived from earlier work; these scales have been repeatedly tested and used. The measures are finally adjusted to make it in line with the reality of our country. Specifically, for motivation involvement variables, refer to Dwyer, Zhang and Hiltz (2003), Hennig-Thurau (2004), Jiang (2009), Lin (2018); Marketing involvement variables, mainly refer to Payne (1995), File (1992), Leng (2009) and

Chen & He (2017); Network involvement variables are mainly based on the indicators of Pan and Kong (2007), Golfen (2003); The willingness of online word-of-mouth communication is mainly referred to Brown et al. (2005), Jiang (2009), Ding (2009), Zhao(2017), Li (2013) .

B. Sample and Data Gathering

This study set a pre-test before the formal questionnaire delivering, and purified the questionnaire items by pre-test using a convenient sampling method. A total of 72 questionnaires were distributed and 50 valid questionnaires were returned. The study used the scale test opinion proposed by Aderson and Gerbing (1988) to divide the sample test process into two steps: first, the reliability of the scale was tested with the Cronbach α coefficient, and then the exploratory factor analysis was performed to test validity. After the analysis of the test questionnaire, a total of 17 unqualified items were removed in the formal questionnaire. The final questionnaire items are shown in "Table I".

The formal research objects of this research are mainly for those who may or actually spread information of tourism destination on network platform. They need master the skill of internet use, because the objects are completely selected through the internet platform.

For the sampling conditions, this article randomly and conveniently sampled through Weibo and other tourism forums. We distributed the questionnaires through www.wjx.cn. The survey was conducted from December 2017 to January 2018. Due to the distribution through the internet platform, it is impossible to count the number of questionnaires sented, and finally 306 questionnaires were collected, and invalid questionnaires were eliminated, as a result, a total of 243 valid questionnaires were collected, the effective rate was 79.41%, which basically met at least 200 questionnaires defined before the survey.

IV. MODEL & HYPOTHESIS TESTING

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A. Measure Validation and Reliability

Since we only selected one respondent to answer all questions, we examined the common method bias problem with reference to the practice of Podsakoff et al. (2003). First, by discussing the content of the questionnaire with several experts, the ambiguity problem is removed to ensure that the respondents can clearly understand the problem; then, we add several reverse questions to the questionnaire and disrupt the logical order of the items.Third, we use the Harman single-factor method to test the common method bias problem. The results show that the first factor explains the variance of 27.139%, which means that all variables did not

form a single high-order factor, which indicates that in this study, the common method bias is not a serious problem.

In the further analysis, factor means and inter-factor correlations are determined. The reliability of the underlying factors is assessed in terms of Cronbach's alphas. Finally, CFA is performed to check whether the items met the criteria for convergent and discriminate validity, as well as construct reliability. The results of the factor analysis are ignored, but all Cronbach's alphas equal or exceed the widely accepted cut off value of .70(Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). All items loaded significantly on their corresponding latent construct at the .001 level, indicating that the constructs were appropriately reflected by their indicators. Further, the average variance extracted (AVE) values met the requirements, which are above the 0.50 threshold (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988) showing enough convergent validity. As a final step to assess the unidimensionality of each construct, we calculate composite reliabilities (CR). All CR's ranged from 0.70 to 0.9, surpassing the generally acceptable level of 0.70 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). Having satisfied all these tests, we feel confident that the measurement model demonstrates reliability, discriminate validity and convergent validity.

In order to test the central idea of this paper, we processed SEM using the above constructs and fitting the data. The results are summarized in "Table I", all models have a reasonable fit to the data in terms of statistics such as CMIN/DF, RMSEA and SRMR.According to the results of the reliability and validity test, further study can be continued.

TABLE I.   MODEL FIT STATISTICS

Fit index	statistics	Scale
X2/df	2.16	<3
RMSEA	0.952	>0.9
SRMR	0.03	<0.08
GFI	0.943	>0.9
NFI	0.932	>0.9
CFI(RNI)	0.978	>0.9

B. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics on the control variables such as gender, age, occupation, education, income, frequency of travel and Internet using time of 243 respondents are shown in "Table II":

TABLE II.　BASIC INFORMATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

Control variables	Classification	frequency
gender	male	88
	Female	155
age	Before the age of 20	9
	21-30 years old	186
	31-40 years old	43
	41 years old or older	5
Career	Not working	18
	Enterprise unit employee	162
	Civil servant or employee	39
	Other occupations	24
Education	Before university	9
	University (college)	151
	Master degree and above	83
Income	Not working	18
	Less than 2,000 RMB	34
	2000-6000 RMB	143
	6000-10000 RMB	24
	More than 10,000 RMB	24
Travel frequency	0 times	39
	1 time	100
	2-4 times	75
	5-8 times	29
Time of internet use	Within 1 hour	9
	1-3 hours	54
	4-8 hours	148
	More than 8 hours	32

C. SEM Results and Hypotheses Testing

The results indicate that the sender of the destination network information is affected by the motivation involvement. When tourists edit the destination information through online word-of-mouth communication, the possible motives including all the nine kinds of motivation involvement factors are positively related, see "Table III".

In terms of marketing involvement, if the tourism destination provides a certain stimulus strategy, it will positively affect the online word-of-mouth communication. For each unit of marketing reward, the sender's willingness will increase by 0.426 units.

At the same time, network involvement, which also directly affects the willingness of online word of mouth. Especially, network involvement of social relationships has a strong, significant, positive relationship on willingness of online word of mouth ($\beta=0.821$, $p<0.001$), it is in line with the reality that if your friends are all active on a certain network platform, you will have a higher willingness to share.

TABLE III.　RESULT OF STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODEL

Structural equation model path			Estimate	P	Hypothesis test
Individual character	→	Willingness of online word-of-mouth communication	0.343	***	Accept all hypothesis
Professional skills and knowledge level	→		0.332	***	Accept all hypothesis
Marketing involvement	→		0.426	***	
Network platform credibility	→		0.721	***	
Ease of use of network platform	→		0.773	***	
Network involvement of social relationships	→		0.821	***	
Social benefits	→		0.564	***	
Helping the media platform	→		0.312	***	
Self-improvement	→		0.293	***	
Emotion sharing	→		0.701	***	
Altruism	→		0.913	***	
Opinion leader responsibility	→		0.576	***	
Seeking for support	→		0.585	***	

a. $P<0.001***$, $p<0.05**$

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Seeking for support motivation and social benefits needed by information senders can influence their willingness of online word of mouth positively. In order to maintain their activity, the network community has extended a lot of value-added services, which promote the interests of information senders. Some information disseminator will study a variety of information on network with a learning attitude to ensure that they are in a state of self-improvement. The emotional relationship between the sender and the recipient of the information makes the online word-of-mouth communication runs on auto-pilot. When their relatives and friends need certain destination information, the senders will actively collect, organize and send the information to them. At the same time, the altruistic motivation makes some senders actively publish information for more people to make their right decisions. Opinion leader is such an important role in the Internet platform as often has countless followers and will impact lots of people. When mentioned marketing involvement, the destination management department will have a significant influence on many tourists and potential tourists, if the department has certain incentive measures with marketing activities and extension for

destination. Finally, network involvement required the network platform reliable, credible and easy to use, in order to encourage tourists sharing information easily.

In terms of theoretical contribution, this research combines sociological theory, communication theory, consumer behavior theory and marketing theory to construct a new comprehensive theoretical model based on different variables and answers practitioners' calls for empirical research investigating more comprehensive factors which impact willingness of online word of mouth. In terms of practical contribution, this research suggests destination managers should notice that the more effective online word-of-mouth communication is based on multiple influencing involved factors.

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