Analyzing International Tourists' Functional Information Needs: A Comparative Analysis of Inquiries in an On-Line Travel Forum

Author(s)
Dev Jani
Ho Kyun Jeong
Yeong-Hyeon Hwang

Abstract
On-line travel forums inform tourists' trip decisions; however, little is known about their information needs. Using international tourists' inquiries from an on-line travel forum, this study examines tourists' functional information needs, their relationship with prospective destinations, and the timing of posting. This study examines samples of Lonely Planet inquiries made about Japan (n=123) and South Korea (n=97). Using content analysis, three judges rate postings by the messages' functional information needs. Statistical tests of aggregate ratings find international tourists tend to use on-line travel forums to gain product knowledge rather than to reduce risks or to make travel plans more efficient. Tourists' functional information needs also vary significantly by travel destination. The association between the postings' timing and functional information needs appears to be marginal.

Keywords
Functional information needs;
On-line travel forum;
South Korea;
Japan