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Query Titles in Travel Forums: Nature and Impacts on Responses

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Despite travel forums being an influential source of electronic word of mouth in the tourism context, the nature of interaction between information inquirers and contributors is yet to be appraised. This study attempts to fill the knowledge gap by exploring the inquiry titles in a travel forum in terms of its nature and influence on viewers' responses. For empirical examination, thread titles for queries on South Korea and Japan that were posted in the Lonely Planet Thorn tree forum between March 2009 and February 2010 were collected (n = *220) and analyzed. The results reveal that search by location is prevalent when potential tourists post a query in a travel forum. Search by interest is more likely at the city or regional level, while search by general (SBG) topic is prevalent in national-level search. The nature of inquiry title also reflects the intended length of stay at a destination. SBG in title significantly outweighs other categories in terms of the number of views and replies. Implication of findings and directions for future study are discussed.*

Key words: travel forum, query title, number of views, number of replies, search by location, search by interest, search by general topics

Introduction

The significance of travel forums in the context of tourism can be attributed to the fact that it is a typical platform to generate electronic word of mouth (eWOM) about a destination. WOM is one of the most influential information sources in travel decision-making (Bronner & de Hoog, 2011; Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008) and assumed to give more credible information to tourists than other information sources (Brown, Broderick,

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& Lee, 2007). Marketers have recognized the importance of WOM and argue that WOM affects many aspects of a trip decision (Kozinets, de Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner, 2010). The development of information and communication technology (ICT), particularly the Web 2.0/3.0 and social media, has taken WOM into a different level of eWOM where tourists can share information with others regardless of the time and location. An online travel forum is a typical unobtrusive communication space where potential tourists and those with direct experience exchange travel-related information. It is thus a typical example of user-generated contents in e-space and plays an important role in generating eWOM on a tourism destination (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004).

Previous studies have reported notable findings about the characteristics of eWOM and its users. First, people's attentions and reactions to e-messages vary depending on the type or content of information (Thelwall, Byrne, & Goody, 2007), and they selectively obtain information in order to satisfy their needs (Case, 2007). The selectivity of message relates to the power of the message that derived from either positive or negative valence and perceived value (Dellarocas, Zhang, & Awad, 2007; Parra-Lopez, Bulchand-Gidumal, Gutierrez-Tano, & Diaz-Armas, 2011). Specifically, studies revealed that negative valence, as compared to positive valence, tends to attract more attention from audiences. Second, individuals assess the information relevance by information cues like author, title and keywords before selecting and assimilating that information (Case, 2007). That is, information seekers are mainly influenced by the peripheral cues as a counterpart concept of the nature of message and argument.

The effect of cues is yet to be affirmed in the tourism context where information is a key factor for tourists' decision-making. Given the selectivity of information by receivers and the nature of title associated with e-message being the first cue exposed to receivers, it appears logical to research the influence of the title on receivers' response behaviors. The influence of information cue on viewers' responses has been researched within different contexts including mass media (Thelwall *et al.*, 2007) and consumer information exchange (Poddar, Mosteller, & Ellen, 2009). Poddar *et al.* (2009), in particular, pointed out that the nature of information cues does influence viewers of online information and brings about different decisions regarding subsequent information exchange. Within the tourism context, Hwang, Xiang, Gretzel, and Fesenmaier (2009) upon researching the sequence of tourist information search noted a defined pattern regarding location- and interest-based search. Even though these findings have contributed to better understand potential tourists' information exchange behavior, so far there has been little empirical research targeting the influence of information cues on information exchange behavior in the tourism context.

Understanding the nature of information exchange, in general, and responses to information cues, in particular, is critical in designing an appropriate information system to cater to tourist information needs (Choi, Lehto, & O'Leary, 2007). In an endeavor to fill the knowledge gap, this study aims at answering the following questions: (a) what are the nature of the keywords used in the title of inquiry made by potential tourists in a travel forum? and (b) do the keywords in the title influence the response of viewers? This study focuses on the communication messages in a travel forum with the recognition that travel forum is a representative online platform of user-generated contents in the tourism

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context (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004). The research setting for this study is South Korea and Japan with their geographical and cultural proximity and significant contribution to the world tourism market. The study adopts the stimuli-organism-response (S-O-R) perspective (Belk, 1975; Jacoby, 2002) and classification schema suggested by Pan and Fesenmaier (2001) (i.e. search by location (SBL) and search by interest (SBI)). Throughout this paper the term "a thread" will be used to refer to a set of responses associated with an inquiry in a travel forum.

Literature Review

Information search is an indispensable stage in tourists' decision-making, and the credibility of the information source is one of the key influencing factors of information exchange and decision-making (Gartner, 1993; Kerstetter and Cho, 2004). Gartner (1993) upon classifying travel information sources on the scale of credibility showed information from friends and relatives to be a highly credible source together with autonomous information from popular culture and media. Information from friends and relatives is typical word-of-mouth information (Almeida, Silva, Mendes & do Valle, 2012) that pertains to the verbal communication between an independent supplier and the prospective client who is the receiver of that information (Almeida *et al.*, 2012). WOM is a crucial source of information for tourists to make their travel arrangements (Bieger & Laesser, 2004; Fodness & Murray, 1999). Fodness and Murray (1999) further asserted that WOM information from friends and relatives is decisive in nature as it influences much of the travel decisions. This finding was echoed by Bieger and Laesser (2004) who concluded that informal information from personal sources such as friends, relatives and other consumers is intensively used by tourists. These arguments place WOM information from personal sources at the center of tourist information search and use.

Recently, the development of ICT, particularly Web 2.0/3.0 and social media, has revolutionized the conventional WOM into eWOM by allowing a completely different information space for exchanging personal opinions (Cheung, Luo, Sia, & Chen, 2009). Arsal, Backman, and Baldwin (2008) defined WOM as informal communications concerning evaluation of products and services between private parties. With the rapid development, ICT allows potential tourists to pursue WOM not only from direct personal sources but also from e-sources (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008; O'Connor, 2008). A travel forum such as Lonelyplanet.com is a typical eWOM platform in the sense that it provides online space where potential tourists to a destination and those who have direct experience of the destination share travel-related information in the form of inquiries and answers. In addition, travel forums are usually equipped with referral function and allow a two-way communication with similar tourists (Schindler & Bickart, 2005). These advantages enable the potential tourists to actively seek specific information related to their planned trip and get vivid WOM opinions from others' direct experience in a forum space.

Clicking a title in a travel forum represents a response to the cues found in the title and is a process of selective exposure to the information associated with the title. With the development of ICT, potential tourists are exposed to abundant information that might lead to information overload (Hwang *et al.*, 2009). Such a drawback of information technology is reduced by selective information

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exposure (Case, 2007) with which tourists respond only to seemingly valuable information in the situation, instead of paying attention to all the information retrieved. Travel forums are usually organized chronologically, and the main page contains the title of inquiry and some of the content but not all. This structure implies that the viewer of inquiry list has an option to ignore or to proceed reading the content by clicking the title (Adkins & Grant, 2007). Once individuals click the title, they can either only view the content or even reply to that inquiry.

One of the common perspectives to explain how people react to information cues is the stimuli-organism-response (S-O-R) perspective (Belk, 1975). This perspective typifies the behaviorist research view where the focus is on observable response behaviors with respect to the stimulating factors (Steinbauer & Werthner, 2007). Stimuli refer to any unit of input to any of the senses (Shiffman & Kanuk, 2005). Within the context of information exchange on a travel forum, the title of inquiry posted by potential tourists is a solid example of stimulus to those who come across that post, the organism in the S-O-R model. The response components include ignoring the title, viewing the message or responding to the message (Figure 1).

Regarding the stimulus components of S-O-R model in travel forums, potential tourists are known to use SBL and SBI/activity strategy (Hwang *et al.*, 2009; Pan & Fesenmaier, 2001) to search for travel-related information. Tourists use simple heuristics in searching travel information instead of describing in detail the issues at hand. This pattern is especially prevalent in online platforms because online platforms usually provide limited space, such as keywords in the search engine and title in the travel forum, for search and query. Pan and Fesenmaier (2001) upon examining the patterns of travel queries made to a call center entailed SBL and SBI/activity to be dominant heuristics. Hwang *et al.* (2009) further asserted the existence of "zooming-in" patterns in SBL search and suggested that the nature of interest search significantly varies depending upon the level of location searched. Potential tourists posting their inquiry in a travel forum with the hope to bring more attention from those with answers are selective in using words in the title and are likely to use the location and/or interest heuristic. The nature of keywords of the query title in a travel forum is yet to be explored and thus subjected to examination through this study.

The response components of the S-O-R framework in a travel forum entail the selectivity of information by including the decisions to ignore the message, view the contents and reply to the contents. Response to information cues could be defined differently depending on the scope of research. Recent research on a travel forum has utilized intention to follow posted opinions as a response component and has attributed its variations to different stimuli such as usefulness, attitude and trustfulness of opinions (Casalo, Flavian, & Guinaliu, 2011) and valence between positive and negative contents (Sparks & Browning, 2011; Ye, Law, Gu, & Chen, 2011). Behavioral intention to follow others' opinion is an important response category in that it obviously represents the impact of messages communicated in the travel forum space. However, it is a post hoc response in the sense that the notion can only be applied to those who expose themselves to the messages, while ignoring those who decide not to read the messages. Without delving into a message, intention to or not to follow other people's opinion cannot be generated. The first reaction to information cues embedded

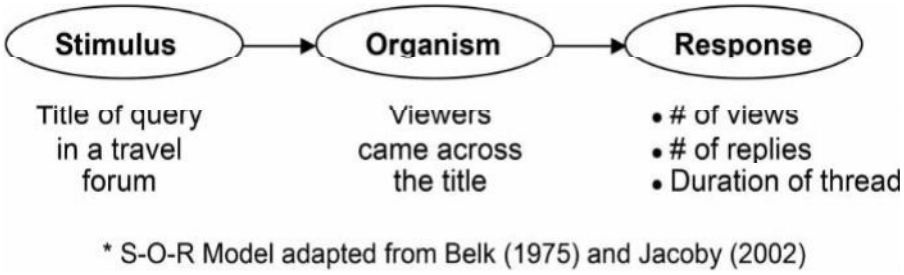


Figure 1 Research Framework.

in the title of a thread is thus an important piece of puzzle for the full picture of travelers' information behavior in online space. Despite its importance, this response category has not earned enough attention. Opinion seekers and opinion leaders (Yoo, Gretzel, & Zach, 2011) are likely to respond first to the title of the thread either by ignoring the message or by clicking the title to delve into the contents. Once they have read the contents, they make a decision to or not to respond to the contents. The number of views and the number of replies of a thread are well reported in most of the travel forums and well represent opinion seekers' reaction to the information cues embedded in the title of a thread. Variations in the number of views and replies with regard to the nature of the query title are yet to be elucidated and thus subjected to exploration in this study.

Method

Instead of using the survey method, this research collected and analyzed unobtrusive conversations in a travel forum to capture information in its natural settings and to minimize biases of self-reporting (Dellarocas *et al.*, 2007). Data for this study were collected from the Lonely Planet Thorn tree forum (www.thorntree.lonelyplanet.com) which is an online travel community under the umbrella of the Lonely Planet that is among the common electronic travel forums (Munar, 2011). The forum allows registered members to participate in initiating a thread related to travel as well as replying to other threads posted by other participants. A non-registered person can have the liberty of only viewing the contents posted by registered participants.

This study focuses on the threads regarding Republic of Korea (South Korea hereafter) and Japan as target destination countries because of their significance in the world tourism market and geographical and cultural similarities. The UNWTO pegs Asia as one of the fastest growing tourism regions in the 2020 forecast, being second to Europe in tourist arrivals (UNWTO, 2001). North East Asia within Asia and the Pacific region led in tourist arrivals by capturing 54.1% of the market in the year 2009 (UNWTO, 2012). In the North East Asia region China leads by having 28.0% of the market share, and South Korea and Japan also have a significant contribution with about 4% of the market share. China could be a potential study area but its vastness and diversity render it to be problematic in analysis (Enright & Newton, 2005). Furthermore, proximity in location and cultural distance were taken into account in choosing the destination countries. Cultural (Crotts, 2004; Imm, Lee, & Soutar, 2007) and physical distance (McKercher, 2008; Nicolau & Mas, 2006) between origin

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and destination are known to influence travelers' behaviors and thus deem different interests at hand by destinations. Contextual destination effect in tourist communication was controlled by selecting two countries with similar tune of market share, proximity in location and similarity in culture.

Threads pertaining to South Korea and Japan posted in the Lonely Planet Thorn tree forum between March 2009 and February 2010 were collected. The threads were purposively selected in order to capture those related to tourism. Threads related only to working (e.g. looking for jobs) were disregarded from further consideration. It was noted that threads pertaining to Japan were substantially larger (500 threads) than those relating to South Korea. In order to create a manageable and comparable sample size, all pre-selected threads for Korea were considered for the study, while a systematic sampling with selection of every fourth thread was applied to those for Japan. The decision to select every fourth thread for Japan was deemed necessary to have a sample size relatively comparable to that of South Korea. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2003) provide a formula for systematic sampling where the sampling fraction is obtained by dividing the actual sample size required with total population. In the current study particularly for the Japan sample, the applicable total population was 500 pre-selected threads with the actual sample being 100 threads to reflect the South Korea sample. Upon dividing 100 threads by 500 total Japan threads, a fraction of .20 was obtained, which was elated to .25 for convenience that yields a total of 125 threads. Due to the nature of threads having a longer discussion time, 2 extra threads for Japan were selected that emanated from the time period just before March 2009. As a result, a total of 97 and 123 threads pertaining to South Korea and Japan, respectively, were collected and subjected to coding.

Titles of threads were reviewed and coded according to predetermined cording schema. Within the context of the discussion forum, either the thread or the post can be regarded as a sampling unit depending on the research interest (Boush & Kahle, 2005). Since the focus of this study was to explore the nature of keywords used in a title and the responses to the title, a thread was regarded as the unit of analysis. Titles of threads were saved and content analyzed by two judges. Pan and Fesenmaier's (2001, 2006) classification that categorizes SBL and SBI was employed with an addition of search by general (SBG) information (e.g. weather, culture, etc.) where the thread title does not fit in either of the categories. Furthermore, SBL was subdivided into search by location at national (SBLN) level and search by location at other (SBLO) level including city and region in order to incorporate different levels of location search (Hwang *et al.*, 2009). Judges were asked to code "1" if any of SBL, SBI and SBG keywords appears in the title of the thread, allowing multiple appearance of different keywords in a title, and "0" otherwise. The contents of the thread were also coded in terms of days left to departure at the time of inquiring (planning horizon) and duration of intended stay at the destination. For each thread, the number of views, days between first and last posting (duration of thread), and number of replies were identified. To ensure validity of coding, two independent judges who are conversant with tourist information behavior were opted for. After independent coding, the judges ironed out the discrepancies by agreeing upon their differences in coding. The coded data were subjected to a set of statistical analyses including independent sample *t*-tests, chi-squared test and *F*-tests to examine the nature of query title and its impacts on responses.

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Results

The nature of inquiries and responses to a thread are depicted in Table 1. Independent sample *t*-tests and chi-squared tests were applied to examine any possible differences by destination country. It appears travel information inquirers of South Korea and Japan start their inquiry about two months before the departure date. Intended length of stay in Japan is slightly longer, albeit there is no significant difference with that of South Korea. In terms of the nature of keywords in titles, SBL appears to be dominant followed by SBG, while SBI is the least frequent way to ask a question. Within the SBL context, search at city and regional levels is dominant than SBL at national level. There is no statistical difference in the use of keywords by destination country. Each thread generates about five replies on average. Duration of the thread for South Korea is much longer (14.4 days) than that for Japan (5.7 days) ($t = 3.477$, sig. = .001). A similar pattern is also observed in the number of views. The average number of views for inquiries pertaining to South Korea (521 views) is greater than that for Japan (405 views) ($t = 3.732$, sig. = .000). In general, it is observed that there are no differences in the nature of keywords used in the title, while notable differences exist in the response components by destination country. The huge imbalance between the number of views and the number of replies is of interest, indicating the majority of information viewers are opinion seekers rather than opinion leaders.

Table 1 Nature of Inquiry and Response Components

	Destination country		
	South Korea	Japan	t/χ^2-value (sig.)
Nature of inquiry			
Planning horizon	67 days ($N = 54$)*	74 days ($N = 87$)*	−.570 (.569)
Intended duration of stay	13.1 days ($N = 55$)*	15.9 days ($N = 75$)*	−1.090 (.278)
Keywords in title			
SBL	62.9%	65.0%	.109 (.741)
SBLN	22.7%	20.3%	.179 (.672)
SBLO	40.2%	44.7%	.451 (.502)
SBI	29.8%	30.1%	.133 (.716)
SBG	55.7%	51.2%	.431 (.511)
Response components			
Duration of thread	14.4 days	5.7 days	3.477 (.001)
No. of views	521	405	3.732 (.000)
No. of replies	4.6	4.9	−.631 (.528)

SBL, search by location; SBLN, search by location at national level; SBLO, search by location at other (city, region) level; SBI, search by interest and SBG, search by general topic.
*Missing cases were excluded.

In order to incorporate the idea that different keywords could be used simultaneously in a query title (Hwang *et al.*, 2009), concurrence of keywords in thread title were further explored. Data of South Korea and Japan were pooled and used for further analyses. The procedure is applicable since the focus was on the titles of the inquiries for both countries rather than differences by country (Bass & Wittink, 1975). The results given in Table 2 indicate that simultaneous use of different types of keywords is prevalent. About 54% of the cases represent single-keyword search, while the rest are the cases with multiple types of keywords in the title. As for single-keyword search, SBG is dominant representing 25% of total cases, followed by SBL (19%) and SBI (18%). It is apparent from the table that concurrence of SBI and SBG is very scant and thus implies simultaneous search for interest and general topics are not likely.

For the purpose of examining the difference in the use of keywords by planning horizon and intended duration of stay, classification of threads was made based on the discrete boundary close to median value (45 and 10 days for planning horizon and duration of stay, respectively). The percentages of keywords classified into different categories with respect to the total number of threads classified into different planning horizons and durations of stay were calculated and the chi-squared tests were applied (Table 3). Cases with the combination of SBI and SBG were excluded from the analyses because of the small number. The chi-squared test did not show a significant difference in the use of keywords by the planning horizon group ($\chi^2 = 2.793$, sig. = .593) (Table 3). Meanwhile, the use of keywords varies significantly ($\chi^2 = 10.306$, sig. = .036) by the intended duration of stay. SBG is much higher when the intended length of stay is 11 days or longer, while the portion of SBL only and SBL with SBI is substantially higher when the duration of stay is less than 11 days.

The last set of analyses examines the response components of travel forum threads, including duration of thread, the

Table 2 Keywords Used in the Title of Threads

	Keywords		
Type of search	Location (SBL)	Interest (SBI)	General (SBG)
SBL only	42 (19.1%)	–	–
SBI only	–	22 (10.0%)	–
SBG only	–	–	55 (25.0%)
SBL + SBI	39 (17.7%)	39 (17.7%)	–
SBL + SBG	59 (26.8%)	–	59 (26.8%)
SBI + SBG	–	2 (0.9%)	2 (0.9%)
SBL + SBI + SBG	1 (0.5%)	1 (0.5%)	1 (0.5%)
Total (%)	141 (64.1%)	64 (29.1%)	117 (53.2%)

SBL, search by location; SBI, search by interest and SBG, search by general topic.

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Table 3 Keywords in Title by Planning Horizon and Duration of Stay

	Planning horizon		Duration of stay	
Keywords in title	−45 days	46 + days	−10 days	11 + days
SBL only	21.4%	27.9%	27.7%	19.4%
SBL + SBI	21.4%	11.8%	24.6%	8.1%
SBL + SBG	28.6%	29.4%	24.6%	35.5%
SBI only	11.4%	10.3%	9.2%	9.7%
SBG only	17.1%	20.6%	13.8%	27.4%
N	70	68	65	62
χ^2-value (sig.)	2.793 (.593)	10.306 (.036)		

SBL, search by location; SBI, search by interest and SBG, search by general topic.

number of views and the number of replies, by keywords appeared in the title. Each thread lasts 9.5 days on average. Results in Table 4 show no difference ($F = 1.035$, sig. = .390) in the duration of thread by keywords in the title. On the other hand, the number of views significantly ($F = 4.110$, sig. = .003) varies depending upon the keywords that appear in the title. On average, each thread generates 456 views, and more views result when keywords of general topic appear in the title of query. The number of views decreases as the title of the thread contains location keywords and reaches the least views when keywords of interest appear in the title. Results of Duncan's *post hoc* test indicate that the differences in the number of views by SBG and SBI are substantial. The number of replies made

Table 4 Response Components of Threads

	Responses		
Keywords in title	No. of Views	No. of Replies	Mean duration of thread (days)
Overall	456	4.8	9.5
SBL only	$393^{a,b}$	$4.4^{a,b}$	8.0
SBL + SBI	$439^{a,b,c}$	3.5^{a}	8.4
SBL + SBG	$524^{a,c}$	$5.2^{a,b,c}$	12.6
SBI only	338^{a}	3.3^{a}	4.8
SBG only	$483^{a,b,c}$	$6.1^{a,c}$	9.1
F-value (sig.)	4.110 (.003)	4.720 (.001)	1.035 (.390)

^{a,b,c}Represent homogeneous mean groups according to Duncan's *post hoc* analysis.

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to threads significantly changed ($F = 4.720$, sig. = .001) with keywords in the title. Those keywords that captured general topics (e.g. itinerary, safety, money matters, transportation and logistics) compared to those focusing on activities and attractions are likely to generate more replies.

Discussion of Findings and Implications

The results indicate that the use of location keywords in the title is prevalent when potential tourists post a query in a travel forum. Frequent use of locational keywords emanates from the fact that they represent destinations in the tourism context and thus are regarded as one of the most crucial concerns at the early stage of travel decision process (Hwang, Gretzel, Xiang, & Fesenmaier, 2006). In order for an intended-to-go visitor to draw more attention from those who have relevant information, it is natural to first narrow down the scope of query by specifying geographical information at the top. Within the SBL context, SBL at city or regional level than national level appears to be dominant. This result seems to reflect the general structure of travel forums targeted to attract potential tourists from all over the world. A common practice that directs potential inquirers and contributors in travel forums is to organize communication platforms according to geographical location like continent and country. Since the Lonely Planet Thorn tree forum is laid out by country, those ready to post a message are already at the national level and are less likely to use location keywords at the national level.

SBI and SBG are not likely to co-occur. Activity-oriented interest search is more likely at city or regional level, while SBG topic is apt for national-level search. The results are in line with Hwang *et al.* (2009) who noted "zooming in" pattern of location search in callers' inquiries. They further entailed search for general topic diminishes as the scope zooms down into the local level, while search for interest increases as the locational scope of search becomes narrower. Examination of cases in which SBL is used compared with either SBI or SBG ($n = 99$) further supports the argument. SBG comprises about 87% of cases with SBL at the national level, while about 52% of SBLs at city or regional level are associated with SBI. SBI and SBG also reflect the intended duration of stay at the destination. SBG is more prevalent when the intended length of stay is longer, whereas SBI is substantial for shorter trips. These findings suggest SBI and SBG represent different levels of specificity of a travel decision at the time of inquiry and reflect the typical consumer decision-making models where the consumer proceeds from generality at initial stages to specifics in the later phase of decision-making (Hudson, 1999). Tourists focus on general information in order to be acquainted with the destination at the early stage of travel arrangements and start to pay more attention on what-to-do information within the framework of the planned trip at a later stage. They opt for general living environment as the length of stay at the destination becomes longer, while the focus is more on the information needed to better organize their planned trip for shorter trips.

Imbalance between the number of views and the number of replies indicates those who surf travel forums are likely to be opinion seekers than opinion leaders where the former only "take in" information compared to the latter who also "give out" information through their replies. On average, the ratio of replies to the views of a thread is one over one hundred, and this huge gap suggests travel

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forum space is an important platform where eWOM on a destination can spread out quickly. Opinion leaders influence opinion seekers' decision through sharing their knowledge and expertise (Bertrandias & Goldsmith, 2006). By the same token, those who have direct experiences on the inquired subject in a travel forum influence information seekers' decision by posting the answer to the question, and the answering post is exposed to one hundred other opinion seekers. This environment is advantageous for destination marketing organizations (DMOs) in the case of positive eWOM, whereas it is not desirable in the case of negative or false eWOM. Given the tendency of negative opinions having more impact on information seekers' decision than positive opinions (Lee, Park, & Han, 2008; Papathanassis & Knolle, 2011), it is suggested that DMOs need to recognize the impact of eWOM generated in travel forum space and put conscious efforts to correct negative and false eWOM.

The results show that the number of views and replies of a thread in a travel forum varies depending upon the nature of keywords in the title. Keywords of general topics in the title significantly outweigh other categories in terms of the number of views and replies. This finding is contrary to Hwang *et al.*, (2009) who noted SBI of accommodation, attraction and event to be dominant compared to other categories. This disparity can be attributed to difference in the scope of research. The current research targeted international travelers who planned to travel to other countries with different cultures and logistics, compared to Hwang *et al.* (2009) who researched inquiries made to a call centers by domestic travelers who are well accustomed to the general environment of the local destination that they are about to visit. This argument is further supported by the dominance of SBI at city and regional levels in the result.

Findings of the study can be used to better design a communication platform that aims to distribute travel information to potential tourists by using question and answer (Q&A) format. Q&A or frequently asked question (FAQ) is a typical format to provide a quick glimpse on issues at hand by answering the anticipated questions in advance (Moreo, Romero, Castro, & Zurita, 2012). In order to be efficient, FAQ needs to be presented with highly relevant questions to inquirers' needs instead of laying out all the possible questions. The findings suggest that topics regarding travel arrangements such as accommodation, attraction and event need to be prioritized to topics related to general living environment such as safety, transportation and logistics at the city level. Click on questions for travel arrangements is an indication of high interest in actual visit to the destination. Marketing efforts thus need to target those information seekers who conduct SBI in order to nudge them from viewers to visitors.

This study by nature was exploratory of the influence of the query title on the successive communication behaviors within the context of travel forums. Since the current study utilized data constructed from directly observable variables from a travel forum, personal characteristics of information seekers and contributors were not identified. Research focusing on the role of individuals' characteristics in the decision to post an inquiry and a response in travel forum space would extend the current study. Studies can also be undertaken to see how different role players in a travel forum like tourists, minglers, devotees and insiders (Kozinets, 2002) are influenced by the contents of the inquiries posted by potential tourists. Results of this study can also be complemented by future studies focusing on different destinations.

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