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CONSUMER COMMUNITY ON TOURISM SOCIAL MEDIA AND CONSUMER PERCEIVED VALUE: REVIEW PAPER

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Abstract

The rapid development of social media technology has revolutionized the business environment in tourism industry. User generated reviews on the social media platforms are believed to create an incredible effect on customer's purchase behaviour of tourism product and services. The ongoing concern among the researchers over the presence of consumer community on tourism social media (TSM) to influence tourists' consumption behaviour is substantially evident. Some of the scholars believe social media community have negative consequences on consumer perceived value (CPV) and behaviour such as inducing trust crisis and jealousy; while others found it to improve consumer's perceived value. Existing mixed findings and ongoing debate clearly suggest the need for further research. This article conducted a literature review of the consumer community on tourism social media and customer's perceived value. An integrated conceptual model of consumer community on TSM and CPV is proposed. Consequently, empirical research and practical implications are discussed.

1. Introduction

In the current tourism business environment, customers are strongly influenced by social media generated electronic word of mouth (e-WOM). This is mainly because tourism products are relatively expensive and not frequently consumed such as tourism attractions, destinations, hotel, airlines and other hospitality related products and services (Barcelos et al., 2019; Filieri et al., 2015; Leung et al., 2019). Furthermore, tourism products are categorized as services which are intangible, making it harder to evaluate before purchasing unlike other physical products (Filieri et al., 2015; Leung et al., 2013). Thus, customers are strongly influenced by TSM sites as they rely on various sources to evaluate the tourism products of interest (e.g. hotels, accommodation, vacation place) before they finally purchase (Barcelos et al., 2019; Hays et al., 2013). One of the most trusted sources of information in this regard is the consumer community which shares reviews, experiences, ratings, photos and others. Potential consumers or tourists see the other consumer community on TSM as non-biased since their information are non-dominated by service providers' or marketers' interests (Hashim & Ariffin, 2016; Litvin & Dowling, 2018).

Besides, several previous studies examining the effect of social media on CPV in tourism have reported mixed and inconclusive findings (e.g., Harrigan et al., 2017; Litvin & Dowling, 2018; So et al., 2014). Therefore, there is an important need to further examine the effect of social media (SM) on the consumer community in enhancing CPV towards a particular tourism provider since many service organizations lack proper knowledge and strategies on how to make use of their existence in SM platforms and communities (Martínez-López et al., 2017; Huber et al., 2010). Besides that, there is a dearth of research offering comprehensive explanation on how the presence of tourism brands on TSM sites oriented consumer community to foster greater level of engagement among the member of such virtual SM communities that can enhance the CPV for the tourism businessess. Therefore, it is also needed to provide a clearer understanding of the practitioners on the potential effects of social media-based consumer community on tourists' CPV. This is vital for them to craft more competent marketing strategies as superior CPV is one of the best indicators of business sustainability in modern competitive tourism industry (Aydin, 2019; Wong, 2017). In doing so, we consider and adapt the perspective of 'social media-based brand community' model proposed by Laroche et al. (2013) based on customer brand community model developed by McAlexander et al. (2002). Hence, we first proposed a model to depict how TSM-based consumer community model, which consists of four core elements and the relationship among them (relationships between the customer and the product, company, and with the other customers) could influence CPV in the tourism sector. Furthermore, the findings of this study can shed light to the tourism business practitioners to make proper decisions while crafting SM-based marketing strategies as the available literature and findings are inadequate and inconclusive.

1.1. Social Media and Consumer Communities

Social media has been well accepted among the business organization as the most convenient communication channel for business promotion, marketing communication and to improvise the relationship between customers and organizations (Leung et al., 2013; Ramanathan et al., 2017). In addition, organizations have enjoyed the benefit of competitive advantages of improved customer relationship and positive business performance through marketing cost reduction, building brand image and

efficiency improvement (Ainin et al., 2015; Leung et al., 2013). One of the essentials is the people's avid need for social interaction and build relationship (Budeanu, 2013). Pursuit of entertainment value, self presentation and identification in an online social community context are among some other incentives for engaging in the social media community (Jahn & Kunz, 2012; Vivek et al., 2012). Therefore, social media has profound impact on business organizations to influence and alter consumers' value perception.

A consumer community in social media fundamentally consists of two focal elements which are virtual consumer community and social media (Laroche et al., 2013). SM allows social individuals or consumers to interact with each other in a virtual environment (Martínez-López et al., 2017). These interactions happen through the creation and sharing of CGC, photos and videos (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010; Tajvidi & Karami, 2017). Users of SM enjoy the freedom to create and share their own CGC and it implies on the main features of SM platforms. Numerous researches have highlighted and examined the effects of CGC in different contexts concerning various forms of SM, especially Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube. On the other hand, there are some other specific SM sites built upon the interest of connecting, especially the tourism providers and consumers. These are TSM sites such as Trip Advisor, Lonely Planet and Airbnb, Booking.com. Unlike other SM platform (e.g., Facebook) these TSM sites allow tourists to create and spread user generated contents such as comments, service reviews and suggestions that are even available in search engine results, for example, Google, MSN and Yahoo (Harrigan et al., 2017; Munar & Jacobsen, 2014). The continuous evolution of tourism social media sites has connected social, cultural, and economic spheres of the society by giving a tremendous drive for tourism and hospitality business development and expansion in the current era (Aydin, 2019; Budeanu, 2013; Hays et al., 2013).

With regard to the conceptualization of consumer community in offline context, McAlexander et al. (2002) defined that a consumer community is formed based on its commonly identified elements and the relationship between them. These entities are main customer, company, brand product, and other customers. Through consumer community people share their essential emotional, cognitive and material resources. Whereas, Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) argued that consumer community is defined within the triad relationship realm among customers to the brand only. McAlexander et al. (2002) further argued that the most important thing in a community is the formation and negotiation of meaning among the elements of such community. Thus, the community brings the members into a highly engaged and meaningful interactive environment. During the interaction in the community, they can enjoy the benefits of sharing information among them, providing assistance from the company to customers and customers to customers reciprocally. This ultimately strengthens the relationship between the entities or the elements of the consumer community model (e.g., the relationship among consumer, product, brand and other consumers) that can influence the consumer perceived value towards the company's product or service (McAlexander et al., 2002; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001).

Although consumer community is bounded both geographically and non-geographically, due to the technological advancement their existence in non-geographical form via internet is tremendously evident such as in social media platforms. With this in view, Laroche et al. (2013) argued that social media similarly are able to provide such high-context meaningful interaction among the elements and member of the virtual consumer brand community that was conceptualized as "social media based consumer brand community". For instance, in tourism, TSM has emerged as a storage of WOM for the present and potential tourism and

hospitality consumers (Litvin & Dowling, 2018). Compared to the traditional SM consumer community (Laroche et al., 2013) for a single company or brands, TSM has integrated multiple service providers and consumers in a single community and act as a wide-ranging store for e-WOM and comprehensive reviews (Filieri et al., 2015; Harrigan et al., 2017). Customers can easily compare the service providers based on the information to choose their preferred ones. This not only affects tourists' whole tourism planning process from pre to post consumption stages of selecting the appropriate service provider, but also has made vulnerable for the brand and the company to maintain superior CPV (Leung et al., 2013; Leung et al., 2019). As e-WOM on TSM can influence a consumer's decision of brand choice due to the vast amount of available alternatives. Therefore, joining of tourism brands, consumer and social media arise a new concept that we adapt from Laroche et al. (2013) and will call as 'TSM-based consumer community'.

1.2. Elements of social media-based consumer community

The initial concept of SM based customer community is derived from the previous research on offline brand community (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001) and consumer community (McAlexander et al., 2002). Laroche et al. (2013) further extended the models in the online context and proposed a SM based consumer community which comprises of mainly five elements or entities and the relationship within them. According to the authors, these elements are namely: product, brand, company, customers and SM, where SM is the fundamental basis for the community to exist and causes high context collaboration among the entities of the virtual community on SM. Consumers play an active role in the SM community to share valuable consumption experience, appreciation and reviews (negative or positive) for the brands, products and the company (Martínez-López et al., 2017; Tsai et al., 2012). Thus, SM facilitates the firm to understand their strengths and weaknesses to improvise business strategies as well as to build meaningful relationships with customers (McAlexander et al., 2002). Further, Laroche et al. (2013) posits that customers interaction and engagement in social media community platform to share their experience through the visual (e.g., photo, videos), CGC forms for the welfare of the other members can enhance CPV by strengthening the relationship among them (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2015; Laroche et al., 2013).

The virtual interactive relationship among the community members over the SM sites further spurs value co-creation through the exchange of resources, information and value among the members of the community (Martínez-López et al., 2017; Tsai et al., 2012). SM-based consumer community is denoted by the embedded cement between and among the elements of the SM community model. For instance, the relationship between customer,company, brand and among other customers of the SM community (Laroche et al. (2013). With this view, we believed that when tourism customers log on into TSM media sites or community, for example, in Trip Advisor, browse to seek and exchange information with other travelers and interact with the service provider in the platform, this interactive relationship environment of the SM-based travel consumer community can enhance CPV.

1.3. Consumer Perceived Value and Consumer Community

Perceived value is conceptualized as consumer's psychological valuation of the benefits or value that they receive compared to the sacrifice of time and other resources to acquire a certain service and products (Zeithaml et al., 1990). It is the overall assessment that customers draw based on the trade-off between perceived quality and perceived cost while consumers compare, select and purchase goods or

services (Deng et al., 2013). On the other hand, Chitty et al. (2007) argues that quality is not only the factor, but also the price of the service is also a great concern in customers' perception of the perceived value, because services with outstanding quality still could be rated as poor value by the consumers if the price is apparent too high. According to Zeithaml et al. (1990) perceived value can be conceptualized in four ways: firstly, perceived value means lower price; secondly, value is whatever customers expect to contain in a product or service package; and thirdly, value refers to the benefits received against the money forgone ; fourthly, value means something that the customer gets for what they give (e.g., time, price). In relation to this, Petrick and Backman (2001) found that majority of tourism researches focused on the fourth option which is, in brief, the value tourists get for what they pay for such as price and time.

Given the differences between customers' perception of perceived value based on different circumstances and customer characteristics, in previous literature CPV is widely recognized as a multidimensional construct. Therefore, various dimensions of perceived value have been discussed in the literature (Chen & Chen, 2010; Scaglione & Mendola, 2016). For instance, Sweeney and Soutar (2001) posited perceived value to include multiple value such as social, emotional, performance quality and value for price dimensions. Babin et al. (1994) conceptualized perceived value, including both hedonic and utilitarian value, while Venkatesh et al. (2003) identified perceived value to include social image value dimension only.

However, in the modern era of technological revolution, social media has transformed the approach of communication in the society and paved new challenges for the business to attract and retain customers (Zhang et al., 2016). In the present scenario of social media based marketing business environment, Zhang et al. (2016) and Jahn and Kunz (2012) has considered CPV as a multi-dimensional construct in regards to both product and service sector. According to the authors, Functional value refers to the functional and instrumental aspects of social media sites such as the practicality and usefulness of information seeking and updating UGC by the customer or the member of a SM based community. Hedonic value represents the benefits directly related to the user's personal feelings and emotions such as, interesting, innovative and entertaining contents on social media. While Social value specifies to the value derived from the interaction among customers, and between the customer and the firm itself, such as sharing product or service experience, benefits, positive or negative feedback related to the brand or the firms on social media. According to Bowden (2009) and Amersdorffer et al. (2012) when customers engage with various brands or company on social media platform, it plays an important role on enhancing CPV proposition related to the brand and the company. In this regard CPV is predicted to have a more superior effect on customer behaviour compared to customer satisfaction which is a widely used antecedents of customer retention in the marketing literature (Bowden, 2009; Kam et al., 2016). While some researchers have argued that superior CPV is considered as a significant factor in enhancing customer retention for the organization, which has been examined in different service context (e.g., Coelho & Henseler, 2012; Eid, 2013; Yap et al., 2018). Similarly, considering TSM platforms act as social media-based consumer community to create a positive effect on tourist perceived value, we argue that TSM-based travel consumer community can enhance CPV towards a particular service provider.

2. Problem Statement

The emergence of web 2.0 offering consumer generated content (CGC) on social media have extended the customers' retention nexus beyond customer satisfaction, particularly the tourism sector (Litvin & Dowling, 2018; Prayag & Ryan, 2012).Sharing of information on consumer communities on social media has become a powerful tool to influence consumer value perception towards tourism products and service brands without being constrained by one-sided information propagated from the marketers (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2015; Leung et al., 2013; Sotiriadis, 2017). In a way, the social media have enabled consumers to become an active producer of value for other customers by actively engaging on tourism social media (Hashim & Ariffin, 2016; van Asperen et al., 2017). Besides marketers, customers now has become the co-marketer and co-value producer of company's product and services, which provides endless opportunities as well as new challenges for business to maintain their customers (Gomes, 2016; Zhang et al., 2016).

Many industry experts and researchers have strongly suggested that businesses need to be present on social media to ensure their survival and sustainability, considering that the presence of empowered consumer community on social media has tremendously transformed the communication landscape in the tourism and hospitality industry (Harrigan et al., 2017). Thus, a considerable amount of tourism operators are engaging with current and potential customers through social media platforms to market their product and service brands (Leung et al., 2013; Sotiriadis, 2017). While some researchers agrees that consumer community on social media has a positive effect on consumers' consumption behaviour such as forming of perceive value and loyalty (Litvin & Dowling, 2018; van Asperen et al., 2017), others have highlighted the need for caution and suggested that marketers need to establish strategies to face the potential market challenges as a result of this communication transformation (Amersdorffer et al., 2012; Kam et al., 2016; Kim & Fesenmaier, 2015; Leung et al., 2019). However, the justification of the existence of TSM-based consumer community to enhance customer perceived value has remained less attended in tourism service sector (Filieri et al., 2015).

3. Research Questions

How does consumer community on TSM influence CPV in tourism sector?

4. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to propose a conceptual framework to depict the effect of customer community based on TSM towards CPV in tourism sector. Therefore, based on the review of literature, this study intend to identify existing issues for future research in order to investigate the relationship between TSM based consumer community (considering the relationship between: product and customer; brand and customer; company and customer; customer to another customers) and CPV in the tourism sector.

5.   Research Methods

This article discussed the significance of consumer communities on TSM sites and their influence on CPV of tourism products based on the review of the literature. Previous articles reviewed were from three categories: firstly, the consumer community literature. Secondly, TSM related studies that concentrated on both tourism, consumer behavior and its relation to social media. Thirdly, the potential impact of consumer communities on TSM in shaping CPV was discussed and a conceptual framework was proposed for further examination and future empirical investigations. In order to examine this model in subsequent empirical study and to advance the literature in this line of research, we propose the following methodological procedure:

Although identification for the measurements of the constructs in the model would need greater efforts, which depends on the related literature and suitability of the context of the study. The available measurement in the current literature might be able to reflect the proposed model in order to examine the relationship between SM-based community and its elements (McAlexander et al., 2002; Laroche et al.,2013), for CPV (Jahn & Kunz, 2012; Zhang et al., 2016) towards a tourism brand. The targeted respondent for the study is proposed to be selected through random sampling procedure, comprising the travelers who are the member of the travel community, have exposure to use tourism CGC web platforms (e.g., Trip Advisor) to consume and recommend tourism related services and products (e.g. restaurants, accommodation). The proposed data collection instrument is structured self-administrative survey questionnaire. The questionnaire could be sent through online media such as email, Facebook and Twitter. This procedure is consistent with the previous research on online social media context (Filieri et al., 2015; Jahn & Kunz, 2012; Laroche et al., 2013). However, data also could be collected from the targeted population in various tourism locations through survey questionnaire.

6.   Findings

Based on the literature review, it is revealed that the majority of the research studies related to social media, especially in tourism context have mainly focused on the narrative descriptions, capabilities in leveraging business performance, consumer's attitude and behaviour towards the acceptance of social media sites, except a few exceptions. The purpose of this study is to shed light and understanding about the phenomenon under study. The modest approach attempted by the researchers of this paper is firstly to depict the relationship between TSM-based consumer community and CPV in a single framework. Secondly, to investigate how CPV plays a mediating role to strengthen the relationship between them. Therefore, a conceptual research framework (Refer to Figure 01) is proposed to present the relationship between TSM based consumer community (considering the relationship between: product/customer; brand/customer; company/customer; customer to another customer) and CPV in the tourism sector. The relationship between TSM-based travel consumer community and CPV is drawn from The Affect Theory of Social Exchange. The theory suggests that the value formation in service context can be broadly understood as a social exchange process (Lawler, 2001). When members of the SM community shares their experience, views and reviews, it creates a sense of shared responsibility in consumer's mind, it is believed that service is

inseparable in nature that can influence their emotions and perception of value (Lawler, 2001). With this view, TSM-based consumer community will influence CPV in the context of the study.
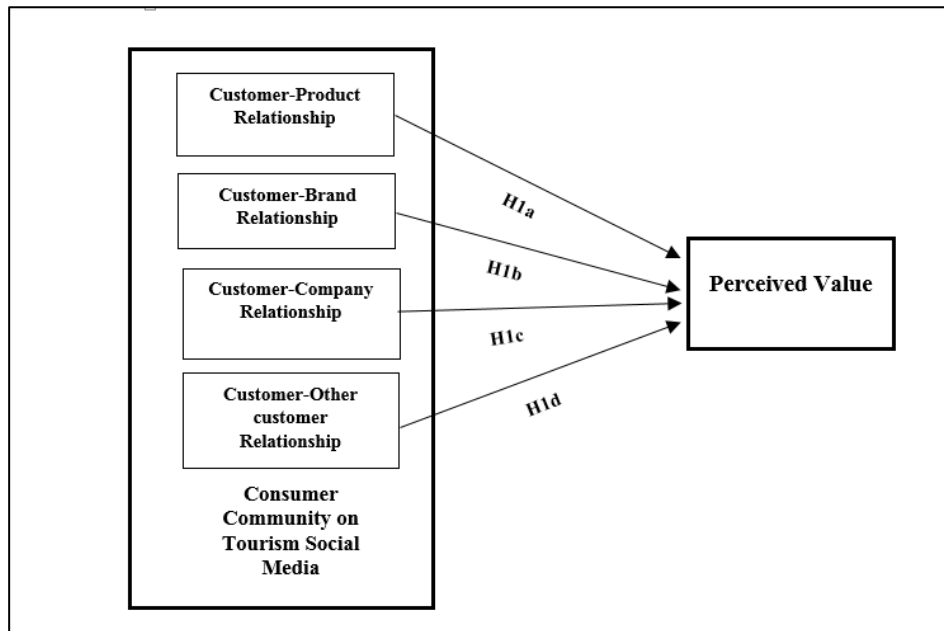
Figure 01. Conceptual Framework. Source: adapted from Laroche et al., (2013) and McAlexander et al. (2002)

Based on the extent literature discussed, we propose the following hypotheses:

- H1: TSM-based consumer community (considering the relationship between: product and customer; brand and customer; company and customer; and customer to another customer) is positively associated with CPV.Please replace this text with context of your paper.
- H1a: Relationship between customer and product has a direct effect on CPV.
- H1b: Relationship between customer and brand has a direct effect on CPV.
- H1c: Relationship between customer and company has a direct effect on CPV.
- H1d: Relationship between customer and the other customer has a direct effect on CPV.

7. Conclusion

Based on the findings, this paper has both academic and practical implications. For the academic disciplines this study offers a comprehensive explanation on how the presence of tourism brands on TSM based consumer community foster greater level of engagement among the member on the virtual communities that can enhance their CPV towards the tourism businessess. Subsequently, a conceptual framework is proposed to depict the effect of customer community based on TSM towards CPV in tourism sector for future studies as a dearth of reseach in this aspect is strongly evident. Thus, this study is expected to contribute to the existing marketing literature and ongoing discussion in regards to the importance of CPV orientation on TSM, by proposing an integrated model in tourism context. From the practical perspective, in future research the proposed model could be tested empirically to see whether the presence of consumer communities on TSM is able to enhance CPV towards the tourism firms. Such valuable

findings will be helpful for the service providers, especially tourism marketers to properly understand the effect of engaging with customers in TSM-based consumer community to attract more customers and retain the loyal ones. The empirical insights from the model would assist and guide the managers to devise effective TSM-based marketing strategies to allocate efficient and appropriate resources to enjoy sustainable business growth. However, future research is also suggested to consider other variables such as trust, consumer demographic traits, types of the TSM-based consumer community on service specialization as mediating or moderating variable to examine how the relationship between the constructs of the social media-based consumer brand community model could be varied in different context to get more insights and understandings about the dynamic relationship effect among the constructs.

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