Chapter 22
Tourists' Mobile Information Seeking Behavior:
An Investigation on China's Youth

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ABSTRACT

The Internet is considered to be one of the most effective search channels for people to get a variety of information. This is especially true, for young tourists within the 18-30 year range, who prefer free independent travel tours. Many tend to have strong information needs about their travel destinations and the use of mobile technology for information search is rapidly becoming a popular trend, especially with this demographic. This study aims to investigate the associations between the mobile device usage preference and information search behavior of young travelers, between the ages of 18 and 30, in the People's Republic of China (PRC). For this purpose, a sample of 133 respondents is used. Results of the survey are provided and followed by a discussion of the overall context. Study limitations and directions for future development are suggested.

INTRODUCTION

With mobile technology widely adopted in people's daily lives, information seekers can search anywhere and anytime and, mobile technology is turning into an important marketing platform for many businesses. As such, mobile technology has been penetrating into the tourism industry and gradually changing the deliver each step of related products and services (Edensor, 2013). Notably, tourist information timeliness has improved due to the achievement of simultaneous search and action. At the same time, travelers' adoption towards mobile services has been increasing, leading to an even greater market of tourist online services. It is obvious that mobile technology, with the help of social media, has significantly change the way of how tourists seek for information, which leads to a significant decrease of the demand of tourist information centers (Lyu & Hwang, 2015).

In recent years, due to the rapid development of the economy of the People's Republic of China (PRC), the number of middle class Chinese citizens who can afford traveling within or out of the countries increases rapidly (Li, Harrill, Uysal, Burnett, & Zhan, 2010). Due to the cultural differences and the lack of information to understand their tourist behavior (Pearce, Wu, & Osmond, 2013), such as their tourist satisfaction and loyalty (Lee, Jeon, & Kim, 2011) and expectations (Li, Lai, Harrill, Kline, & Wang, 2011), the academia is interested to gain a better understanding of this enormous group of tourists (Sparks & Pan, 2009). In this research, we are in particular interested in gaining a better understanding of the young Chinese tourists, as they are the major outbound group (Tourism Review, 2013).

Thus, the objective of this research is to explore tourist information seeking behavior with the use of mobile technologies. Therefore, the research questions aim to provide an overview of the practical use of mobile devices or tourist apps by youth between the ages of 18 and 30 in the PRC. This is done in order to investigate (1) The motivations and preferences toward the use of mobile technologies for tourism purposes; (2) The factors and barriers that affect such adoptions in terms of information seeking behavior on tourism; and (3) To study and evaluate the services or resources that are provided by mobile technologies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourist Information Seeking Behavior

According to Pizam and Mansfeld (2000), information search is defined as the expressed need to consult plenty of sources in advance in order to make a purchase decision. This concept includes three main factors that are emphasized among tourism literature, i.e., motivation, determination and resource. Therefore, the definition of travel information reflects on various types of information in terms of the activities and situational variables that occur related to tourism (Fodness & Murray, 1997). From the travelers' aspect, tourist information refers to the kinds of information that could affect them to make decisions of the travel destinations, for example, the weather, transportation, accommodation, tourist attractions, etc. Many literatures are based on the theory of Fodness and Murray (1999), which regards tourist information seeking behavior as a process for consumers to obtain certain information, searching by their own related knowledge (internal resource search) or the external environment (external resource search). However, there are still no unified definition towards tourist information seeking behavior.

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