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Exploring the influence of electronic word-of-mouth on tourists' visit intention: A dual process approach

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A dual process approach

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to explore the influence of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) on outbound tourists' intention to visit a destination through a dual-process perspective – the central route of argument quality (AQ) and the peripheral route of source credibility (SC). With the pervasion of Web 2.0 and information and communication technology, user-generated content (UGC) has become popular in the online environment, and it affects consumers' decisions greatly.

Design/methodology/approach – A structural model based on Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) and theory of planned behavior (TPB) is proposed in this study to explore the influence of eWOM on outbound tourists' intention to visit a destination. Empirical data were collected among Chinese outbound tourists via an online survey. The data were analyzed using structural equation model with SPSS Amos 22.0.

Findings – The research results indicate that tourist's attitude toward a destination was positively influenced by AQ of eWOM, and intention to recommend the destination before travel was positively influenced by attitude toward destination and SC of destination-related eWOM. Outbound tourists' intention to visit a destination was positively determined by AQ, attitude toward destination and WOM intention. Several practical and theoretical implications are also discussed in the study.

Originality/Value – This study contributed to the understanding of individual's decision-making through a dual-process perspective. Findings indicate that the dual influence process delineated in theory of ELM is also applicable to explain individual's decision in complicated information source.

Keywords Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), Online information source, Online travel information, Visit decision

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

With the expanding use of Web 2.0 technology and the prevalence of social media, user-generated contents (UGCs) are playing an increasingly central role in supporting customers' purchase decisions. Such as in the travel industry, travelers rely heavily on UGCs to make their travel decisions, including hotels and travel destinations. Travel service providers mainly offer services to customers, which are difficult to evaluate prior to their consumption and experience (Litvin *et al.*, 2008). Travelers produce large amounts of UGC/electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) via various social media platforms to share their experience with others and help other travelers to support their travel decision (Li and Liu, 2014).

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EWOM offers travelers more travel-related information, and it is likely to generate persuasive effects on travelers' travel decisions and behavior (Shih *et al.*, 2013b; Scott and Orlikowski, 2012). According to a report by Pew Research Center in August 2014, 81 per cent of Internet users in the USA indicate they are better informed about products and services today than they were five years ago. In addition, travelers tend to rely more on UGCs created by individual travelers, rather than commercial providers (Standing *et al.*, 2014). Nowadays, it seems that travelers are increasingly turning to eWOM to support their travel planning and travel-related decisions (Tham *et al.*, 2013; Standing *et al.*, 2014; Amaro and Duarte, 2013).

Recently, eWOM has attracted the attention of researchers, and there is a considerable amount of literature focused on eWOM in tourism (Cantallops and Salvi, 2014; Litvin *et al.*, 2008; Jiang *et al.*, 2010; Jeong and Jang, 2011). These studies can be classified into two research streams: one stream focuses on exploring the factors determining eWOM behavior (Bronner and De Hoog, 2011; Munar and Jacobsen, 2014; Li and Liu, 2014); the other stream concentrates on the impacts of eWOM on user's behavior (Cheung *et al.*, 2008; Verhagen *et al.*, 2013). Nevertheless, research on how eWOM influence tourists' decision-making and visit intention is still scant. Thus, the primary research question in this study is:

RQ1. How eWOM influences tourist's attitude toward destination? And how eWOM influences tourist's visit intention and recommendation intention?

A structural model based on Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) and theory of planned behavior (TPB) is proposed in this study to explore the influence of eWOM on outbound tourists' intention to visit a destination. Empirical data were collected among Chinese outbound tourists via an online survey. The results indicate that tourist's attitude toward travel destination is influenced by eWOM via a central route of argument quality (AQ) of eWOM. Tourist's visit intention is influenced by eWOM via a central route, while their recommendation behavior is influenced via a peripheral route of the source credibility (SC) of eWOM. This study contributes to the understanding of how destination-related eWOM affects outbound tourists' leisure travel destination decision-making with empirical evidence.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows: In Section 2, theory of elaboration likelihood is introduced and incorporated in the TPB, holding that behaviors are influenced by intentions and intentions by attitudes (Ajzen, 1991, 2001). Nine hypotheses are proposed based on the selected theories. Research method is delineated in Section 3, including data collection, descriptive analysis of the sample characters and measurement model. In Section 4, structural equation model is used to analyze data with AMOS 22.0. In Section 5, we give implications for both academic and practice. Finally, the limitations of the current research and future research suggestions are discussed.

2. Theoretical foundation and hypotheses

2.1 Elaboration Likelihood Model

ELM originates from social psychology, which suggests that attitude changes in two distinct routes: central and peripheral routes (Petty *et al.*, 1983). ELM illustrates that the way individuals are persuaded varies according to the extent to which they are willing to engage in elaboration of the persuasive issue. In the *central route*, individuals think more critically about issue-related arguments in an informational message and

scrutinize both pros and cons as related to those arguments prior to forming their target behavior (Bhattacherjee and Sanford, 2006). In contrast, in *peripheral route* of attitude change, a relatively less cognitive effort is needed. A person may simply rely on cues related to target behavior, such as prior users, prior related personal experience and credibility. The central route is message-related and argument-oriented, while the peripheral route is process cues-oriented.

"Elaboration" is defined as "the extent to which the individuals engage in information contained in the communication, and mentally modify or process the issue" (Priester and Petty, 2003). The term "likelihood" illustrates whether elaboration is likely or unlikely (Priester and Petty, 2003), and it is also used to describe that individuals would add something of their own to a given information source in a specific communication process (Petty *et al.*, 1983; Bhattacherjee and Sanford, 2006). In the research context of the current study, people in high likelihood of having an outbound travel are more likely to be persuaded by destination-related eWOM through a central route; thus, they think more critically about the destination-related message of eWOM. On the contrary, people in a low likelihood would refer to peripheral cues, such as the credibility of the information source. It is suggested that individuals' degree of elaboration forms a spectrum of message-related thinking, which could vary from low to high extent. What is more, the attitude change may happen at any extent of elaboration (Bhattacherjee and Sanford, 2006), that is, both central route and peripheral route can lead to attitude change, as shown in Figure 1.

In the context of outbound tourism in this study, *SC* refers to the credibility of Web site and/or online community in which eWOM of travel destination is disseminated. *AQ* refers to the quality of content/message contained in the destination-related eWOM published in the travel sites. In the research context of this study, Chinese tourists are selected as survey sample, and Finland is set as an outbound travel destination. Examples of top travel Web sites on which tourists can generate their reviews and experiences on particular travel product/service like travel experience forum on Ctrip.com, daodao.com (TripAdvisor in China) and mafengwo.cn (travel experience sharing Web site) were listed in the survey to remind correspondents' latest travel decision-making process influenced by eWOM published on those travel sites.

ELM offers a useful perspective on understanding the influence of eWOM on tourist's visit intention and their WOM intention afterwards. Prior information systems research on user behavior has been dominated by the theory of reasoned action (TRA) (Fishbein

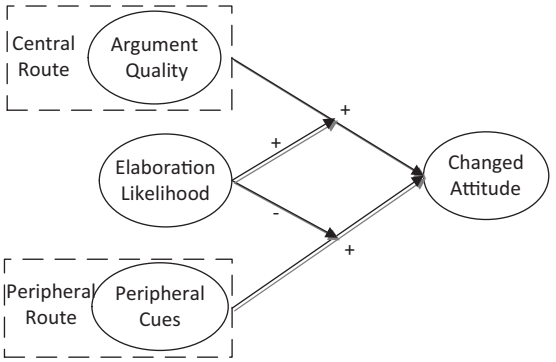


Figure 1.
Elaboration likelihood model

and Ajzen, 1975) and the TPB (Ajzen, 1991). These theories highlight the importance of user perceptions and attitude in predicting intention and behavior. Nonetheless, prior research based on TRA/TPB seldom explains how attitude changes will influence intention and behavior. In this study, the dual-process theory of ELM will be used to investigate how the attitude changes influence intention in the research context of tourism industry.

ELM has been used to examine user behavior in several information systems research, especially in exploring the influencing process of persuasive communication. Sussman and Siegal (2003) used ELM to investigate the influencing process of information adoption in knowledge management context. Tam and Ho (2005) drew on ELM to investigate the persuasion process of communicating persuasive messages to customers by firm. Bhattacherjee and Sanford (2006) applied ELM to information technology (IT) acceptance context and theoretically specified the role of influence process in IT acceptance. Ho and Bodoff (2014) integrated ELM with consumer search theory, providing a model of attitude formation toward a personalization agent and explaining how attitude relate to consumer behaviors. Lee *et al.* (2008) used ELM to investigate the effects of negative online consumer reviews on consumer product attitude.

In prior research, SC and AQ of social media material are empirically tested to be related with attitude formation in the context, such as outbound studying destination choice (Shu and Scott, 2014) and adoption of accommodation-related online review (Filieri and McLeay, 2014). Thus, we propose that AQ and SC of destination-related eWOM have positive influence on tourists' attitude toward the destination. Thus, the following two hypotheses are proposed:

H1. AQ of destination-related eWOM will positively influence tourists' attitude toward leisure travel destination.

H2. SC of destination-related eWOM will positively influence tourists' attitude toward leisure travel destination.

2.2 Incorporating ELM with TPB

In this research, we explore user's IT-related behavior via an influence process lens. As discussed above, the dual-process theory of ELM is adopted to illustrate individual's attitude change. The dependent variable of attitude change in ELM is extended to behavior intention based on the TPB. Intentions to perform different kinds of behaviors can be predicted from attitude toward the behavior in one of the most researched and reputational psychological theory – TPB (Ajzen, 1991).

Prior studies applied TPB to explore the relationship between tourists' attitude and behavior intention (Lam and Hsu, 2006; Hsu and Huang, 2012; Song *et al.*, 2014). We follow the logic in TPB that attitudes toward a behavior can predict individuals' behavior intention and propose that tourist's attitude toward destination will positively influence their behavioral intention toward the destination, including visit intention and recommendation intention. WOM intention refers to tourist intention to recommend a destination to others according to their knowledge gained from destination-related eWOM before their own travel.

H3. Tourist's attitude toward destination will positively influence visit intention.

H4. Tourist's attitude toward destination will positively influence WOM intention.

TPB suggests that a person's likelihood behavior can be dictated to his/her available resources, which is reflected by the construct of perceived behavioral control in the model. Ajzen (1991) also pointed out that a set of beliefs, based on prior experience with the behavior or second-hand information about the behavior from acquaintances and friends and by other factors, will ultimately determine intention (Ajzen, 1991). However, in TPB, Ajzen (1991) has not indicated what types of available resources or information are most effective in influencing individuals' behavior and whether these influence effects are persistent or temporal. To solve this puzzle, we refer to the aforementioned ELM, which explains the influencing process using a dual-process perspective. Therefore, we incorporate the central route of AQ and the peripheral route of SC to TPB. SC states that individuals are more likely to be influenced if the source is credible. Several studies examined the effect of SC on information seekers' attitude and behavior, indicating that information sources with high credibility would produce a positive attitude and induce positive behavior intention (Cacioppo and Petty, 1983). Thus, we propose *H5* and *H6* as follows:

H5. AQ of eWOM regarding travel destination will positively influence potential tourist's visit intention.

H6. SC of eWOM regarding travel destination will positively influence potential tourist's visit intention.

AQ describes the persuasive strength embedded in the eWOM related to a leisure travel destination. The dependent variables of intention imitated from the TPB are intention to visit an outbound leisure travel destination and the intention to recommend the destination (WOM intention). Prior research has focused on predicting WOM adoption from information receiver's perspective (Cheung *et al.*, 2009; Jin and Phua, 2014; Fang, 2014); few studies are focused on exploring WOM intention from information distributor's perspective (Shih *et al.*, 2013a; Wang, 2014). Thus, this research will address the intention to distribute WOM based on their different routes of perception of travel-related information source. *H7* and *H8* are proposed based on the combination of ELM and TPB:

H7. AQ of eWOM regarding travel destination will positively influence potential tourist's WOM intention before actual travel behavior.

H8. SC of eWOM regarding travel destination will positively influence potential tourist's WOM intention before actual travel behavior.

EWOM has facilitated travel information searching behavior and influenced tourists' travel planning behavior (Cox *et al.*, 2009; Li and Liu, 2014). After information searching behavior, an initial destination image will be formed in the mind of potential tourists (Fodness and Murray, 1997). As indicated in prior literature, WOM behavior include positive attitude and loyalty, which was tested to influence consumer's purchasing behavior (Prendergast *et al.*, 2010; East *et al.*, 2008). It is also proposed that positive attitude will lead to WOM before practical travel experience, and the recommendation behavior will induce their visit intention *per se*:

H9. Tourist's WOM intention will positively influence visit intention.

Figure 2 presents the research model and hypotheses in our study.

3. Research method

3.1 Data collection

A structural questionnaire was designed to collect empirical data among the potential Chinese tourists to visit Finland. Prior to data collection, we made a pilot study among the experts and professionals in tourism from both the University of Turku and some staff in Finnish Tourist Board to test the logistics, validity and construct of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was then translated into Chinese after that and proofread by some bilinguals capable of speaking Chinese and English to ensure the consistence of our questionnaire. Another pilot survey of Chinese questionnaire was done among 15 Chinese people to make sure the language and logic of questionnaire in Chinese. The final version was obtained after all the interviews, pilot survey and discussion with experts were completed.

Our data were collected through online survey due to its advantage of faster, cheaper and easier use for both participants and researchers compared to offline survey. In this research, we target those who are interested in Finland, so the survey was conducted among followers of official VisitFinland social media account. Thus, we selected the social media channel of Finnish Tourist Board (VisitFinland) in China to distribute the questionnaire, such as the official accounts of Tourist Board VisitFinland on WeChat and Weibo in China (two of the most popular social media in China). In this way, potential respondents will mostly be the followers of Finnish tourist board. As being the followers of the official social media account of Finnish tourist board, it is true that they are the most potential group who paid attention to Finland as a travel destination. Because respondents can get information via multiple online information sources prior to their travel destination decision, we asked informants to recall the most influential online UGC related to their destination choice. We also listed the most famous UGC platforms for their reference. The questionnaire was distributed to respondents in June 2014. Totally, 959 responses were collected in two weeks. In this study, the research aims to investigate the influence process of potential tourists' visit intention to Finland, so only respondents who have never traveled to Finland were included. Excluding invalid respondents and those who have traveled to Finland before, the final sample for analysis consists of 195 respondents.

3.2 Sample characteristics

The demographic profile of our sample is presented in Table I. More than 80 per cent are between the age of 20 and 40 years, and nearly half of them are singles. Most (89.7 per

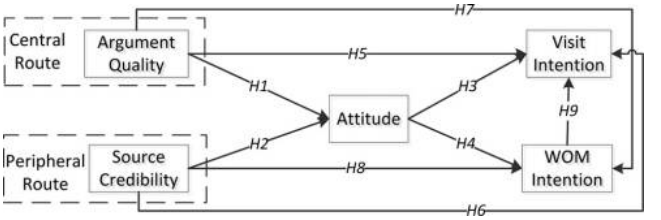


Figure 2.
Research model and hypotheses

Sample characteristic	Category	Frequency	(%)
Gender	Male	54	27.7
	Female	141	72.3
Age	Less than 20	6	3.1
	20-30	94	48.2
	31-40	76	39.0
	41-50	15	7.7
	51-60	4	2.1
Education	Undergraduate degree	22	11.3
	Bachelor's degree	130	66.7
	Master's degree	40	20.5
	Doctoral degree	3	1.5
Family size	Single	95	48.7
	Couple without children	44	22.6
	Couple without children at home	5	2.6
	Couple with children at home	48	24.6
	Other	3	1.5
Monthly income	Less than 5,000	41	21.0
	5,001-10,000	69	35.4
	10,001-20,000	51	26.2
	20,001-30,000	20	10.3
	More than 30,000	14	7.2
Outbound travel frequency (in recent three years)	1	95	13.8
	2	44	17.9
	3	5	26.2
	4	48	8.2
	5 or more	3	33.8

Table I. Sample characteristics (N = 195)

cent) of them received relatively high education from a university with a bachelor's degree or above. Of all, 79 per cent have a monthly income of more than 5,000 Yuan, and 43.7 per cent of them earn more than 10,000 Yuan per month, which confirmed their likelihood of taking an outbound travel in recent three years. In addition, nearly 87 per cent of the respondents have outbound travel experience in recent three years, and 60 per cent of them have traveled abroad for at least three times in recent three years.

3.3 Measurement

Five factors were included in the current research model (Table II): AQ, SC, attitude toward destination, WOM intention and visit intention. Each construct was measured with multiple items adapted from previous studies to validate the content. Necessary modifications have been made according to the current research context of travel decision-making. Five-scale Likert scale anchored from "Disagree" to "Agree" was used to measure each item, and no reverse item was used in the survey.

4. Data analysis and results

4.1 Reliability and validity

The data were analyzed using structural equation model with SPSS Amos 22.0. First, the reliability and validity of the scales used in our measurement model were tested. The

Constructs	Items (five-score Likert scale)	References
Argument quality (AQ)		
AQ1	Information offered is helpful	Bhattacherjee and Sanford (2006)
AQ2	Information offered is persuasive	
AQ3	Information offered is valuable	
Source credibility (SC)		
SC1	The Web site(s) for the online travel experience or review is an expert in tourism	Bhattacherjee and Sanford (2006)
SC2	The Web site(s) for the online travel experience or review is trustworthy	
SC3	The Web site(s) for the online travel experience or review has (have) good knowledge on tourism	
Attitude		
ATT1	Your overall attitude toward travel to Finland is (very unenjoyable . . . very enjoyable)	Han *et al.* (2011)
ATT2	Your overall attitude toward travel to Finland is (very bad . . . very good)	
ATT3	Your overall attitude toward travel to Finland is (very unpleasant . . . very pleasant)	
WOM intention		
WOM1	According to my knowledge about Finland, I will recommend my friends to travel to Finland	San Martin *et al.* (2013)
WOM2	I will share my knowledge about Finland with my friends	
WOM3	I will recommend Finland as a destination if my friends are planning a travel to Europe	
Visit intention		
INT1	In recent years, if I plan for an outbound travel, I will visit Finland	Han *et al.* (2011)
INT2	If I plan a trip to Europe, I will visit Finland	
INT3	In short, I think Finland is a good place deserving visit	

Table II.
Constructs and measurement items

validation of our measurement model was investigated in both convergent validity and discriminant validity. We investigated convergent validity by computing all factor loadings, composite reliabilities, Cronbach's alpha and the average variance extracted (AVE). As shown in Table III, all the factor loadings exceeded the recommended value of 0.70, composite reliabilities exceeded 0.8 and all AVEs exceeded 0.5, which show a good convergent validity of the current research instrument (Fornell and Larcker, 1981b). All Cronbach's alpha values are higher than 0.7, which implies good reliability (Nunnally *et al.*, 1967).

In addition, we compared the square root of the AVE and factor correlation coefficients to examine the discriminant validity of our constructs. As recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981a), if the square root of AVE for each construct should exceed the correlations between it and all other constructs, then the discriminant validity between constructs will be supported. As shown in Table IV, all factors' latent variable correlations with other factors are smaller than the square root of its AVEs; the highest correlation between any pair of constructs was 0.6741 between visit intention and WOM

Item	Mean ($N = 195$)	Factor loading	Composite reliability	Cronbach's alpha	AVE
AQ1	4.09	0.8867	0.8790	0.7952	0.7081
AQ2	3.73	0.8151			
AQ3	3.90	0.8208			
SC1	3.89	0.7844	0.8855	0.8591	0.7211
SC2	3.84	0.8909			
SC3	3.99	0.8686			
ATT1	4.51	0.8828	0.9143	0.8591	0.7809
ATT2	4.52	0.9361			
ATT3	4.58	0.8289			
WOM1	4.29	0.9356	0.9381	0.9012	0.8349
WOM2	4.46	0.8730			
WOM3	4.27	0.9313			
INT1	4.23	0.9142	0.9538	0.9273	0.8731
INT2	4.35	0.9539			
INT3	4.45	0.9346			

Table III. Convergent validity: factor loading, composite reliability, Cronbach's alpha and AVE

Construct	AQ	SC	ATT	WOM	INT
AQ	*0.8415*				
SC	0.5987	*0.8492*			
ATT	0.1750	0.1480	*0.8837*		
WOM	0.1281	0.1768	0.6563	*0.9137*	
INT	0.2400	0.1525	0.5903	0.6747	*0.9344*

Note: Square root of AVEs in the main diagonal

Table IV. Discriminant validity: latent variable correlations and the square roots of AVEs

intention. This figure was lower than the lowest square root of AVE among all construct, which was 0.8415 for AQ. The figure in Table IV shows a good discriminant validity of this research (Fornell and Larcker, 1981b; Gefen *et al.*, 2000).

4.2 Hypotheses testing

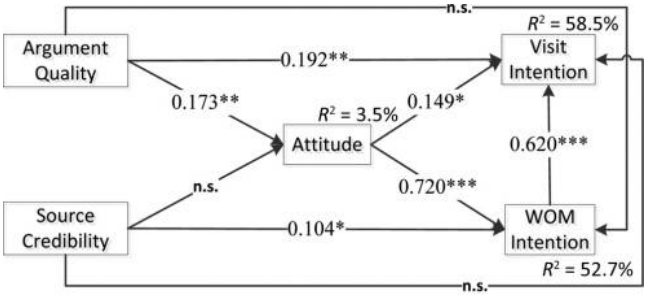
Before exploring the path coefficient, the goodness of model fit was tested in AMOS. The results of model fit were shown in Table V. According to the rules of thumb, the values of GFI, NFI and CFI all proved a satisfactory structural model fit to the data (Tanaka and Huba, 1985).

Figure 3 graphically presents our path coefficient results and variance explained. Six out of nine hypotheses were supported in this research (Table VI). The results indicate

Chi-square	Degrees of freedom	GFI	NFI	CFI
199.890 (0.000)	81	0.891	0.853	0.937

Notes: p-value in parentheses; GFI = goodness of fit; NFI = normal fit index; CFI = comparative fit index

Table V. Goodness-of-fit measures for original model



Notes: n.s.= not significant; ***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$

Figure 3.
Results of analysis

Hypothesis	Result
H1: Argument quality → attitude towards destination (+)	Supported
H2: Source credibility → attitude towards destination (+)	Not supported
H3: Attitude → visit intention (+)	Supported
H4: Attitude → WOM intention (+)	Supported
H5: Argument quality → visit intention (+)	Supported
H6: Source credibility → visit intention (+)	Not supported
H7: Argument quality → WOM intention (+)	Not supported
H8: Source credibility → WOM intention (+)	Supported
H9: WOM intention → visit intention (+)	Supported

Table VI.
Summary of hypotheses testing

that tourist's attitude toward destination was positively influenced by AQ ($\beta = 0.173$, $p < 0.01$); WOM intention was positively influenced by attitude ($\beta = 0.720$, $p < 0.001$) and SC ($\beta = 0.104$, $p < 0.01$); visit intention was positively influenced by AQ ($\beta = 0.192$, $p < 0.01$), attitude toward destination ($\beta = 0.149$, $p < 0.05$) and WOM intention ($\beta = 0.620$, $p < 0.001$). The proposed research model explains 58.5 per cent of its variance of visit intention, 52.7 per cent of WOM intention and 3.5 per cent of attitude.

5. Conclusions and discussion

5.1 Main results

UGC has become the most important information source for travelers to support their travel decisions. The results of this study demonstrate a combination of dual process attitude change theory – ELM with TPB. In this study, we found that tourist's attitude toward travel destination is formed via a central route, that is, positively influenced by AQ of destination-related eWOM. However, AQ of eWOM only influences tourists' own attitude and visit intention, but not their recommendation behavior.

Out of our expectations, in this study, SC of eWOM was found to affect tourist's recommendation intention, but not their visit intention (*H6* was rejected). What is more, the SC will not significantly influence tourist's attitude (*H2* was rejected). It indicates that during tourist destination decision process, tourists are more motivated by AQ, and they are able to cognitively elaborate on the arguments contained in the online reviews (Petty *et al.*, 1983). They will scrutinize thoroughly about the destination based on the quality of available

online reviews. Thus, information sources will only influence their decision through a central route.

There is a high correlation between attitude and WOM intention (0.720), which indicates that tourists' recommendation behavior will strongly depend on their own attitude toward the destination. Individual's own positive attitude toward a vacation destination is the main motivation for their recommendation behavior compared to other construct, for instance the SC.

Contrarily, tourist's visit intention is influenced by eWOM through a central route of AQ, but the influence of SC is not significant as implicated by our empirical results. Consistent with prior research results, visit intention and recommendation intention were positively influenced by attitude (Wang and Ritchie, 2012).

5.2 Theoretical implications

This research also has theoretical implications in information system user behavior research. As illustrated, our study is based on ELM, which enriches the user intention and behavior research from the dual-process perspective. This sheds light on our understanding of antecedents attitude change via a dual process lens with empirical validation in the context of eWOM in tourism industry. TPB illustrates the relationship between attitude and intention, but does not explain the influence process before attitude formation. ELM supplements TPB in the influence process before the very initial attitude change. Thus, our research contributes a predictive model of influence process of information system on user's intention in the context of tourism industry.

Second, the findings indicate that the dual influence process delineated in the theory of ELM is also applicable to explain individual's decision in complicated information source. As shown in the findings, individual's visit intention is influenced by UGC via a central process, while recommendation intention is influenced more through a peripheral process. These results help to understand the predictors of the persuasive communication of online reviews among users. With a focus on information rather than technology, it is able to apply the well-developed theory to the problem of understanding antecedents of the influence power of IT. However, as suggested by prior researchers, this integrative model still needs to be tested, whether it can also contribute to our understanding of technology adoption process (Sussman and Siegal, 2003) .

5.3 Practical implications

As an information-intensive industry, increasing amount of new ITs have been penetrating into the tourism sector (Zelenka, 2009). The findings in this study contribute to the knowledge regarding the tourist behavior intention to visit a leisure travel destination and a better understanding of tourists' decision-making behavior. The findings in this study offer some practical suggestions for travel stakeholders.

First, this study offers empirical evidence that traveler's intention to visit a travel destination is mainly influenced by the content quality of UGC, whereas their intention to recommend a destination is influenced by the credibility of UGC. The result proves that in tourist's destination decision-making process, tourist will think critically about destination-related arguments and scrutinize the relative merits and relevance of those arguments prior to forming a positive attitude toward travel destination and further visit intention. The finding implies that for travel service providers, especially for travel destination managers and marketers, they should raise good strategies to encourage

travelers to make UGC with high quality of content to attract potential customers, such as with more details about destinations and more story-like experience. With more quality information available, it will be more likely for tourist to form a positive destination image during their decision-making process.

In addition, the AQ of travel destination-related eWOM did not influence tourist's recommendation intention prior to their own travel experience (*H7* was rejected), but the SC would influence recommendation intention even before their own travel experience. It implies that individuals' recommendation behavior before their own travel experience is determined more by the credibility of the source they obtained, but requires less scrutinize of the information and content contained in the eWOM itself. Thus, eWOM will influence tourist's recommendation behavior through a peripheral route, which is cues-oriented. The result is consistent with prior study, as recommendation intention is a loyalty intention which is based on tourist satisfaction with travel experience (Valle *et al.*, 2006). It indicates that if companies or destination managers want to take the advantage of the strength of customer's WOM even before their own travel experience, then they should offer more credible information sources related to destination. In addition, they should also use the social media or online channels with high credibility for UGC source, as customers will be more likely to recommend the destination to others if the UGC source is more credible.

It is out of expectation that the credibility of travel destination-related eWOM did not influence tourist's visit intention significantly (*H6* was rejected). Several explanations can help to understand this result. First, the judgment of SC is a relatively complex process taking a plurality of criteria into consideration. While using information sources from strangers to make decisions or gain knowledge, information seekers will judge the information value through information provider's current and past behaviors. In addition, information seeker's goal orientation for a particular information seeking also affects their objective judgments of information sources (Weiss *et al.*, 2008). Third, as larger and more complex information sources are being collected, decision-makers will also gauge information quality on their own, subjectively and contextually assessing the usefulness of the information. The characteristics of the decision-maker and the context play a significant role in the assessment process (Watts *et al.*, 2009). In this research, measurement for the construct SC was designed based on an objective assumption, and subjective variables of information seekers were not measured.

5.4 Limitation and future research

Some limitations exist in this research. Exploring outbound tourist behavior is challenging, not only due to the difficulties in data collection, but also due to uncertainty influence of multi-culture value, especially for an empirical research. Thus, data collection could be conducted through wider channels in future study. In addition, the impact of culture values should be taken into consideration in future research.

This study explored potential tourist's visit intention through a general dual influence process perspective, which limits the explanation power of attitude in our model. Therefore, research in the future could decompose attributes of AQ of eWOM to identify the decomposed attribute of AQ. In addition, the *locus* of dual process was limited to the explanation of the dependent variables in the model – visit intention and WOM intention. For instance, the social influence of subjective norms and perceived behavioral control were not taken into consideration in this model. The model can be completed in predictors of behavior intention in the future research.

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