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# Which User-generated Content Should Be Appreciated More? - A Study on UGC Features, Consumers' Behavioral Intentions and Social Media Engagement

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# WHICH USER-GENERATED CONTENT SHOULD BE APPRECIATED MORE? – A STUDY ON UGC FEATURES, CONSUMERS’ BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

*Complete Research*

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## **Abstract**

*Despite researchers have made a great deal of effort on exploring the reasons of travel consumers’ participation in UGC sites and the roles of these sites in different phases of their travel, knowledge on what factors influence travel consumers’ behavioral intentions in social media still remains largely unknown to both scholars and practitioners. With the attempts to find out this, we conducted a two-phase study on Chinese consumers. Utilizing the two sets of data we collected ( $n_{post} = 65$ ;  $n_{ratings} = 1668$ ), we develop a multiple linear regression model to assess the influential factors in UGC sites on consumers’ behavioral intentions. Our results indicate that travel consumers’ purchase intention, word-of-mouth (WOM) intention, and attitudes towards destination brands are positively affected by the UGC features (credibility and interestingness) and consumers’ social media engagement (comment, retweet, and like). Further, inconsistent with the previous finding that credibility is a major concern in consumers’ information search processes, the interestingness of UGC is found to be more important.*

*Keywords: UGC features, travel consumers, behavioral intentions, and social media engagement*

## **1 Introduction**

Social media have become vitally critical to travel consumers all over the world. In early 2014, a report of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) indicated that, in addition to rapid urbanization, increased disposable income and relaxing of travel restrictions, the aggressive promotions of destinations on social media are also one of the essential elements that encourage more and more consumers to travel domestically and abroad. Today, by exploiting social media, travel consumers can coproduce and share a huge amount of information and knowledge, which is widely known as ‘user-generated content’ (UGC). Gradually, they become co-marketers, co-designers, co-producers and co-consumers of the travel and tourism experiences (Sotiriadis and Zyl, 2013).

Given the growing importance of UGC in social media, a great deal of research effort has been made to find out why travel consumers participate in social media and how UGC facilitates services for consumers in many aspects of their travel. These findings include, for instance, travel consumers’ participation in social media is associated with their functional, social-psychological and hedonic needs (Chung and Buhalis, 2008; Gretzel and Yoo, 2008; Parra-López et al., 2011; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004); as tourism-related products are generally high-priced, high-involvement, well-differentiated in nature and the quality can hardly be evaluated before being consumed, modern travel consumers tend

to rely on UGC in collecting travel information in the early stage of their travel to minimize the perceived risk of making wrong decisions (Gretzel and Yoo, 2008; Schmallegger and Carson, 2008). Besides, because UGC is also known as “electronic word-of-mouth” (eWOM) that offers non-commercial, detailed, and experiential information generated by any consumers, those travel consumers who collect it can be better informed as a result (Ahuja et al., 2007; Litvin et al., 2008). Moreover, UGC plays a pivotal role in assisting consumers to decide destinations, accommodations, and activities during their travel. With the help of UGC, consumers can compare prices, schedules, and services. This, on the other side, may induce consumers’ purchase decision and influence their attitudes toward destinations (Gretzel and Yoo, 2008; Sotiriadis and Zyl, 2013).

Despite the role of UGC to travel consumers have been well strengthened, few studies are conducted to explore what factors impact travel consumers’ behavior intentions, such as the purchase intention, WOM intention, and attitudes of destination brands in social media. Further, modern social media come along with functions of ‘comment’, ‘like’, and ‘retweet’ that allow their participants to convey their opinions or ratings towards the content (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Will the UGC that achieves the maximum ‘comment’, ‘like’ or ‘retweet’ have different effects on consumers’ behavioral intentions or the same? With the attempts to find out these questions, we carried out a two-phase study. In Phase 1, we had 65 travel consumers generate travel-related posts about one of the most impressive travel experience they had during the past 12 months. Then, under the assistance of ‘Qualtrics’ ([www.qualtrics.com](http://www.qualtrics.com), the industry-leading provider of Online Survey Software and Insight Platform), these 65 participants were randomly divided into three groups: participants who aim to obtain a maximum of ‘comments’ (22); participants who aim to obtain a maximum of ‘likes’ (24) and participants who aim to obtain a maximum of ‘retweet’(19). In Phase 2, another 278 Chinese consumers participated in and each of them was asked to rate 6 different posts, which were generated in Phase 1 (randomly assigned by the Qualtrics), according to their perceptions.

Our study intends to extend the previous findings by contributing to an understanding of the factors in UGC sites that influence travel consumers’ purchase intention, WOM intention, and attitudes of destination brands and their social media engagement. In addition, for travel and tourism practitioners, the study attempts to provide an effective way to manage and manipulate UGC sites. The paper proceeds as follows: in the second section, it briefly reviews the literature on UGC features, social media engagement and travel consumers’ behavioral intentions of interest, and develops hypotheses accordingly. In the third section, it introduces our methods. In the fourth and the fifth section, it presents results, makes conclusions, and discusses the marketing implications and research limitations respectively.

## **2 Background and Research Hypotheses**

### **2.1 UGC features: credibility and interestingness**

In contrast with the traditional forms of media, user-generated content (UGC) is often deemed as the sum of all means by which consumers exploit social media (Cox et al., 2009). Research conducted by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) implies that UGC can be individually or collaboratively created, modified, shared and consumed. In the context of different travel phases, consumers appreciate UGC as the manifestation of individual travel experience, which includes unique insights from their close friends, family members, co-workers, or even a certain stranger locates around the world who consumed a particular tourism product, visited a certain destination, or patronized a property (Law and Cheung, 2010; Pan et al., 2007). Therefore, consumers feel they are provided with non-commercial, detailed, and experiential information (Litvin et al., 2008), which can assist them in the evaluation of alternative stage and purchase decision stage (Cox et al., 2009).

In general, UGC presents many forms in social media, from Twitter tweets, Facebook status updates, videos published on YouTube to consumer-produced reviews, advertisements and etc. (Smith et al.,

2012). However, in this research, we emphasize the travel consumers' postings. The travel-related posts published on social media usually comprise of general depicts on destinations, activities, foods, overall impressions of the attractions and etc. They were found influential on the images of tourism products in the mind of potential travelers, who trust amateur reviews more than professional guides that published by tourism service providers (Akehurst, 2009; Mack et al., 2008).

As UGC is crucial to modern travel consumers, it is natural that we begin to question what features that influential travel-related UGC holds to attract consumers. In our research, we propose that credibility and interestingness are two of the essential features that the influential UGC holds, and the reasons of proposing so will be explained as follows:

*Credibility*: can be understood as the judgments applied by perceivers that concerns the believability of communicators (O'keefe, 2002). In the information processes, credibility has been found significantly changing a recipient's opinion in the direction advocated by the communicator when the material is built on the highly credible source (Hovland et al., 1953). In real practice, lots of consumers tend to be cynical about the information that attempts to promote the interests of the generators. Study done by Cheong and Morrison (2008) found that, compared to the content that originates with the products/services providers, consumers consider information created by other consumers more credible, because they believe that other consumers convey not just positive information about the products/services but more comprehensive one. A survey done by Nielson (2012) confirmed this point by reporting the fact that, after recommendations from friends and family, consumers' reviews in social media are the second most-trusted resource of the brand information. Travel consumers would exploit UGC sites with the purposes of selecting accommodations, destinations and/or activities. The degree of credibility allotted by these consumers will determine how influential the UGC is to their travel plans (Ayeh et al., 2013). In other words, influential UGC must hold the feature of credibility.

*Interestingness*: on one hand, most people prefer making choices on the popularity of a certain object. We must have witnessed the situation that people would rather wait in a queue at a crowded restaurant than making a try of an empty one. Research done by Ung (2011) found that the attractiveness of popularity significantly rely on the belief that the 'popularity' implies the quality of the product/service and/or the interestingness of the information. In UGC sites, the rankings of the content and products are often based on the metrics such as the times of downloads, purchases, quantity of views, interestingness (e.g. Flickr) and etc. The motivation of such arrangements is to facilitate their participants/consumers to realize what is the most attractive, interesting and relevant of all. On the other hand, Hidi and Baird (1986) considered 'interestingness' as one of the crucial variable that affects readers' reactions. Interesting content will be easily accepted, while the dull one will lose its readers before any messages can be delivered; and also the interestingness of content will influence readers on their evaluative judgments. Further, travel consumers prefer engaging in activities depicted interestingly in UGC (Burgess et al., 2009). Therefore, we can conclude that the influential UGC must hold the feature, interestingness.

## 2.2 Travel consumers' social media engagement

For the reasons of monitoring, evaluating and encouraging consumers' social media engagement, most of UGC sites come along with the functions of 'comment', 'like' (thumbs up) and 'retweet' that allow their participants to convey their opinions or ratings towards the content (Kietzmann et al., 2011). As the functions are different in nature, the motivations and purposes that participants have while offering 'comment', 'like', and 'retweet' must vary. In general, participants offer 'comment' indicate that they expect to make discussion, conversation, and interaction among multiple parties (Zarrella, 2009); 'retweet' implies that participants publicly agree with someone or validate his/her thoughts, or participants intend to spread information to new audiences and attract followers, or just shows their attitudes of friendship and loyalty (Boyd et al., 2010); 'like' stands for the appreciation and support to the participants who share the content (Beevole, 2014). Hence, the activeness of the consumers' social media engagement can be easily interpreted, as the more 'comment', 'retweet', and 'like' that certain piece of

UGC obtains implying the more travel consumers are involved in it. Furthermore, those more popular and influential UGC will attract more consumers to engage in social media. Hence, we have the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: The UGC features (credibility and interestingness) positively influence consumers' social media engagement (comment, like, and retweet)

## **2.3 Travel consumers' behavioral intentions**

### **2.3.1 Purchase intention**

Social media exert great influence on participants' purchase behaviors, which makes many potential consumers choose products/services that had not been in their original consideration set (Floyd et al., 2014). This phenomenon can be explained by the facts that the subjectivity and polarity of the ratings in the reviews have significant impacts on the sales of products online, and certain types of online reviews will reduce the cognitive load of a viewer, accordingly generate high sales (Ghose and Ipeiritis, 2006). Survey done by Channel Advisors (2010) found that, among all of the consumers they studied, 92% of them committed that they went through the product reviews generated by other consumers before making any decisions, and 83% of all the holiday shoppers were significantly affected by the reviews from different perspectives. In addition, recommendations of friends and online reviews from strangers were also considered to be the most significant factors that influence travel consumers' online hotel booking (Dickinger and Mazanec, 2008), as consumers consider the generators of content in social media more credible and have 'nothing at stake' (Cheong and Morrison, 2008). Moreover, the interestingness of UGC will draw consumers' attentions to notice the travel products/services.

Hypothesis 2.1: The UGC features (credibility and interestingness) positively influence the travel consumers' purchase intention.

### **2.3.2 WOM intention**

Word-of-Month (WOM) is defined as the "communication between consumers about a product, services, or a company in which the sources are considered independent of commercial influence" (Litvin et al., 2008). In fact, WOM had been deemed as vitally important to travel consumers since long time ago. In the typologies of tourists categorized by Cohen (1984), the 'theory of allocentricity and psychocentricity' proposed by Plog (1974) and the 'tourists area life cycle model' presented by Bulter (1980), those innovative and adventurous tourists were deemed not only as the pioneers who discovered the new destinations and travel products/services, but also as the 'opinion leaders' who prefer sharing their travel experiences with others (Litvin et al., 2008). In digital age, WOM is also known as eWOM, which occurs when consumers generate content in order to share their experiences and views on the products/services they bought online (Cox et al., 2009). The widespread adoption of social media has empowered WOM with a wider range of communication channels, which make travel consumers more freely and swiftly share their travel-related experiences and opinions with peer travel consumers without geographic and time restrictions (Sotiriadis and Zyl, 2013). On the other hand, Travel consumers in UGC sites were found to appreciate social benefits, which implies that they are willingly to discuss their views or provide assistance to others (WOM intentions) (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004). Further, 'WOM intention' is also regarded as one of the factors that can reflect the influence of UGC (Li-Shia Huang et al., 2008), and the interestingness of UGC can attract more travel consumers to disseminate and discuss the information.

Hypothesis 2.2: The UGC features (credibility and interestingness) positively impact the travel consumers' WOM intention.

### 2.3.3 Attitudes of destination brands

Since the last decade, prospective travel consumers have been referring to the advice and recommendation from other experienced tourists online in exploring the destination information (Marchiori et al., 2013). Today, the reputation of tourism destination brand is significantly impacted by the aggregation of UGC (Ana Mar í Munar, 2011). On the other side, the existence of the destination brand often depends on the image information of that destination, which is the sum of beliefs, attitudes, and impressions that owned by travel consumers and diffused by the social-cultural and economic changes (Ana Mar í Munar, 2011; Cai, 2002; Nadeau et al., 2008). In social media, travel consumers use formal elements of destination such as, taglines, slogans, logos in their various postings, by which the peer consumers' attitudes towards the destinations will be influenced (Ana Mar í Munar, 2011; Volo, 2010). Additionally, the research results of Chu and Kamal (2008) revealed that the highly credible UGC has significant effects on the consumers' attitudes of brands, and the influential UGC will easily attract consumers altering their opinions on a destination.

Hypothesis 2.3: The UGC features (credibility and interestingness) positively impact the travel consumers' attitudes of destination brands.

At last, we propose that consumers' social media engagement positively impact their behavioral intentions. First, the study done by Hung (2010) pointed out that consumers' social media involvement can influence their intention to purchase tourism products/services. This is mainly due to the fact that when consumers are particularly interested in a product/service, their personal association with the product/service grows closer. Second, consumers' engagement in social media can affect their attitudes towards destination brands. Research done by Tham et al. (2013) indicated that consumers' social media engagement has significant influence on their destination images and choice, and the more they are involved in social media, the more likely they will change their destination options. Third, as consumers in social media desire to establish and maintain social relationship, the more they engage in social media means the more they want to discuss and share the travel information with other participants (WOM intention) (Chu and Kim, 2011). Therefore, we have the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3.1: The travel consumers' social media engagement (comment, like, and retweet) positively influences their purchase intention.

Hypothesis 3.2: The travel consumers' social media engagement (comment, like, and retweet) positively influences their WOM intention.

Hypothesis 3.3: The travel consumers' social media engagement (comment, like, and retweet) positively influences their attitudes of destination brands.

## 3 Research Methods

In order to test our hypotheses, a two-phase study was conducted between April and May 2014 in China. The procedure includes inviting one group of travel consumers to generate travel-related posts and another group of consumers to rate these postings based on their perceptions.

In Phase 1, for recruiting participants, we sent emails to 40 MBA students in Fundan University in China and another 40 Chinese adult consumers who may or may not hold the equivalent education backgrounds but enjoy posting on social media. They were first invited to answer the questions on 'Qualtrics' ([www.qualtrics.com](http://www.qualtrics.com), the industry-leading provider of Online Survey Software and Insight Platform), which related to their most impressive travel experiences in the past 12 months. With the attempts to obtain real travel-related posts, couples of items were asked to guide them (*see Table 1*). In addition, each of them was told that he/she holds a very chance to win a bottle of red wine on the condition that the content he/she generates can obtain the maximum 'comments', 'likes' or 'retweets' (only need to fit one criterion, for instance, "to obtain the maximum comments"). Hence, under the help of the platform, the participants were randomly divided into three groups: Group 1, participants who aim to obtain a maximum of 'comments'; Group 2, participants who aim to obtain a maximum of

‘likes’; and Group 3, participants who aim to obtain a maximum of ‘retweets’. At last, we obtained 65 valid answers. Among them, 39 are MBA students, and the rest are Chinese adult consumers.

Then in Phase 2, another 300 Chinese consumers were invited by email. With the purpose of obtaining their peer ratings, they were informed that they would confront 6 different real travel-related’ posts (from all the postings in Phase 1, randomly assigned by the platform) regarding to some travel consumers’ very recent travel experiences. What they need to do is just to offer their ratings towards these posts based on their perceptions. Still, items were asked into guide them finish the survey (see Table 2). Finally, 278 valid answers were obtained.

To be more specific, regarding to the unit of analysis that we intend to conduct, data in our study follows a nested structure. Ratings (of each post) are nested in posts, just resembles that students are nested in certain classes. In Phase 1, the 65 participants received one of the three experimental treatments and created posts, correspondingly. In Phase 2, each of another 278 participants rated 6 different posts randomly assigned to them. Thus, posts generated under each of the three experimental treatments in Phase 1 has equal probability to be exposed to each participant in Phase 2. Alternatively, for each participants in Phase 2, the probabilities for him/her to read a post generated under one of the three experimental treatments are equal. Hence, the 6 posts are drawn from all three groups in Phase 1 even though not necessarily always 2 posts from each group. The sets of the 6 posts vary across the 278 participants in Phase 2.

Phase 1: UGC of Travel	Phase 2: UGC Peer Rating
<p>1.1. Among all the places you traveled during the last 12 months, which one impresses you the most?</p> <p>1.2. How long did you stay there?</p> <p>1.3. Were you happy with the stay? (scale 0 = not happy at all, 100 = extremely happy)</p> <p>1.4. Do you think this place is good value for money? (scale 0 = not good value for money at all, 100 = extremely good for money)</p> <p>1.5. In general, are you satisfied with the travel? (scale 0 = not satisfied at all, 100 = extremely satisfied)</p> <p>1.6. Compared with all the places you had traveled to, how good this place is; what’s ranking of it? (much smaller number means the ranking is higher; lager numbers means the ranking is lower )</p> <p>1.7. Assuming a friend of yours is planning a travel, how much would you like to recommend this place to him/her? (scale 0 = not at all, 100 = very much)</p> <p>1.8. In terms of travel, do you consider yourself as a green hand or an expert? (scale 0 = totally a green hand, 100 = totally an expert).</p> <p>1.9. Assuming the tourism department in charge is about to marketing the place (Item 1) by facilitating social media (e.g. Mircoblogs, WeChat, travel communities/blogs, etc.). You are kindly invited to join the other tourists to generate a content depicting your experiences and feelings about the place. The content will later be published on one of the social media applications, and your aim is to obtain more ‘comments’ (or ‘likes’, or ‘retweets’, randomized by the system). Once your post obtains the maximization of ‘comment’ (or ‘like’, or ‘retweet’), you will be rewarded</p>	<p>2.1. A tourist generated a post related to the place (same as presented in 2.1) as follows (.....), do you think it is credible? (scale 0 = not credible at all, 100 = extremely credible)</p> <p>2.2. Do you think the post (presented in 2.2), which depicts the travel experiences and feelings, is interesting? (scale 0 = not interesting at all, 100 = extremely interesting)</p> <p>2.3. If you notice this post (presented in 2.2) appearing on social media applications (e.g. Microblogs, WeChat, travel communities/blogs), what is the likelihood that you will retweet it? (scale 0 = totally no, 100 = very much )</p> <p>2.4. If you notice this post (presented in 2.2) appearing on social media applications (e.g. Microblogs, WeChat, travel communities/blogs), what is the likelihood that you will comment on it? (scale 0 = totally no, 100 = very much )</p> <p>2.5. If you notice this post (presented in 2.2) appearing on social media applications (e.g. Microblogs, WeChat, travel communities/blogs), what is the likelihood that you will give it a ‘like’? (scale 0 = totally no, 100 = very much )</p> <p>2.6. If you have no idea where you intend to travel, will you seriously take this place (same as presented in 2.1) as your alternative? (scale 0 = definitely not, 100 = definitely will)</p> <p>2.7. If one of your friends is planning a travel, yet he/she has no idea where to be, will you recommend he/she go to the place (same as presented in 2.1)? (scale 0 = definitely not, 100 = definitely will)</p>

with a bottle of wine (2011 Chateau Fleur Cardinale, values approx. 30€).	2.8. The place (same as presented in 2.1) is an ideal travel destination (scale 1= totally disagree, 7 = totally agree).
*Our study adopts two different scales: 1. the study adopts a scale of 0~100 (item 2.1 ~ 2.7) because: 1) it can better observe the variations across the individuals under the different treatments; 2) in real practice, the expression of ‘likelihood’ resembles the ‘probability’, and people tend to use percentage to interpret it. 2. To test consumers’ attitudes, a 1~7 Likert scale (item 2.8) is employed to measure either the negative or positive response to the statement.	

Table 1. Items and scales in the study

## 4 Results

In Phase 1, the staying period of each of the 65 participants varies from minimum half day to maximum 40 days. According to the content of these posts, travel consumers’ activities can be categorized into one of the headings such as recreation, holiday, health, study, religion and sport, business, family, mission, or meeting, and they were in the mood of seeking the rational goal of educational improvement, the moral path of spiritual renewal, the scientific and/or imperialistic exploration of unknown territories. Hence, literally, these consumers are entitled as ‘tourists’ (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2009). In general, most of the participants considered the destination they traveled were good value for money ( $M = 85.82$ ); most of them showed highly degree of happiness ( $M = 87.09$ ) and satisfaction ( $M = 87.60$ ) with their travel; and most of them are very willingly ( $M = 80.32$ ) to recommend the destinations to their friends. In Phase 2, because each of the 278 participants was asked to rate 6 different posts, we obtained a total of 1668 sets of ratings regarding to the 65 consumers’ travel experiences. Then we employed multiple linear regression analysis to test the hypotheses and explore the interaction effects of the variables from the overall point of view and also different groups that we divided.

The results (see Table 2) of test **H.1** show the fraction of the explained variance in ‘likelihood of retweet’ by the ‘credibility’ and ‘interestingness’ of the posts is 45%. The ‘interestingness’ of the posts is found positively impact consumers ( $\beta = 0.66, p = 0.000$ ), which implies the more interesting a post is, the more likely that consumers will retweet it. However, the ‘credibility’ of the posts presents negative values ( $p > 0.05$ ), which means the ‘credibility’ of a travel post cannot impact consumers’ likelihood to retweet it. Results of Group 1 ( $R^2 = 53.6\%$ ) shows that it tops Groups 2 ( $R^2 = 43.1\%$ ) and Group 3 ( $R^2 = 39\%$ ) with the regard to the ‘likelihood of retweet’, which implies posts with the intention to acquire the maximum ‘comments’ can attract more people to retweet them. In addition, the participants’ appreciation of ‘interestingness’ of the posts varied as well. Participants consider the Group1’s posts ( $\beta = 0.78, p = 0.000$ ) were more interesting than the rest two groups. Second, results present the fraction of the explained variance in ‘likelihood of comment’ by the ‘credibility’ and ‘interestingness’ of the posts is 45%. Still, the credibility of the posts ( $p > 0.05$ ) cannot influence consumers on their likelihood of comment. However, the interestingness of the posts ( $\beta = 0.66, p = 0.000$ ) is found positively affect the participants’ likelihood to comment on what they read. Moreover, according to the results, Group 1’s posts ( $R^2 = 45.8\%$ ) impact more on participants’ likelihood of comment than the posts in Group 2 ( $R^2 = 44.5\%$ ) and Group 3 ( $R^2 = 44.9\%$ ). Further, Group 1’s posts ( $\beta = 0.69, p = 0.000$ ) were also found more interesting in the depiction than the rest groups’. Third, the fraction of the explained variance in ‘likelihood of like’ by the ‘credibility’ and ‘interestingness’ of the posts is 53%. Both interestingness ( $\beta = 0.67, p = 0.000$ ) and credibility ( $\beta = 0.078, p = 0.000$ ) of the posts can positively influence consumers’ likelihood to offer ‘like’ to these travel post. Again, Group 1’s posts ( $R^2 = 57.2\%$ ) was considered as the most impactful on the participants’ likelihood of offering ‘like’. Opposite to Group 1 ( $p > 0.05$ ), posts from Group 2 ( $\beta = 0.14, p = 0.000$ ) and Group 3 ( $\beta = 0.16, p = 0.000$ ) were considered as credible. However, still Group 1’s posts ( $\beta = 0.77, p = 0.000$ ) were regarded as the most interesting of all.



Group 1 = participants attempt to achieve a maximum of comment; Group 2 = participants attempt to achieve a maximum of like; Group 3 = participant attempts to achieve retweet; D.V. = Dependent Variable; ID.V. = Independent Variable						
D.V. = Likelihood of Retweet						
Group	ID.V	B	Std. Error	$\beta$	t	p
1	Credibility	-.112	.040	-.095	-2.780	.006
	Interestingness	.880	.039	.779	22.700	.000
2	Credibility	.019	.044	.017	.427	.669
	Interestingness	.675	.041	.646	16.533	.000
3	Credibility	.045	.051	.042	.877	.381
	Interestingness	.639	.051	.596	12.485	.000
D.V. = Likelihood of Comment						
Treatment	ID.V	B	Std. Error	$\beta$	t	p
1	Credibility	-.036	.041	-.032	-.870	.385
	Interestingness	.743	.040	.694	18.697	.000
2	Credibility	.096	.044	.084	2.183	.029
	Interestingness	.645	.041	.611	15.830	.000
3	Credibility	-.025	.049	-.023	-.510	.610
	Interestingness	.744	.049	.685	15.115	.000
D.V. = Likelihood of Like						
Treatment	ID.V	B	Std. Error	$\beta$	t	p
1	Credibility	-.036	.039	-.031	-.939	.348
	Interestingness	.872	.037	.773	23.456	.000
2	Credibility	.170	.042	.142	4.033	.000
	Interestingness	.705	.039	.637	18.117	.000
3	Credibility	.188	.051	.163	3.665	.000
	Interestingness	.650	.051	.565	12.696	.000

Table 2. Results of impacts of UGC features in different groups on participants' social media engagement

The results (see Table 3) of testing H.2 indicate that UGC features positively impact consumers' behavioral intentions. The fraction of the explained variance in 'purchase intention', 'WOM intention' and 'ideal brand' by the 'credibility' and 'interestingness' is 45%, 49%, and 23% respectively. First, on one hand, the credibility ( $\beta = 0.32, p = 0.00$ ) and the interestingness ( $\beta = 0.43, p = 0.000$ ) of a post can positively affect consumers' purchase intentions that they will take the destinations depicted in the post as alternatives (H.2.1). On the other hand, results of Group 3 ( $R^2 = 48.4\%$ ) showed their posts have more influence on the participants' purchase intentions than Group 1 ( $R^2 = 46.7\%$ ) and Group 2 ( $R^2 = 42.2\%$ ). In addition, participants considered posts from Group 1 ( $\beta = 0.36, p = 0.000$ ) are more credible and posts from Group 3 ( $\beta = 0.49, p = 0.000$ ) are more interesting than the rests groups. Secondly, the credibility ( $\beta = 0.29, p = 0.000$ ) and the interestingness ( $\beta = 0.49, p = 0.000$ ) of a post positively affects consumers' WOM intention that they will recommend the destination to other consumers (H.2.2). Still, results indicated that Group 3 ( $R^2 = 54.3\%$ ) tops Group 1 ( $R^2 = 47.6\%$ ) and Group 2 ( $R^2 = 46.1\%$ ) with the regard to the impacts on the participants' WOM intentions. Participants considered posts from Group 1 were more credible ( $\beta = 0.31, p = 0.000$ ) and posts from Group 3 ( $\beta = 0.53, p = 0.000$ ) were more interesting than the posts from the other two groups. At last, the credibility ( $\beta = 0.31, p = 0.000$ ) and the interestingness ( $\beta = 0.22, p = 0.000$ ) of a post positively impact consumers' attitudes of destination brands that they will consider the recommended place as their idea travel destina-

tions (H.2.3). Once again, compare to other groups, participants found posts from Group 1 were more credible ( $\beta = 0.31, p = 0.00$ ) and posts from the Group 3 ( $\beta = 0.28, p = 0.000$ ) were more interesting than the posts from the other two groups.

D.V. = Purchase Intentions						
Group	ID.V	B	Std. Error	$\beta$	t	p
1	Credibility	.386	.039	.362	9.827	.000
	Interestingness	.426	.038	.416	11.313	.000
2	Credibility	.353	.043	.322	8.167	.000
	Interestingness	.403	.040	.398	10.097	.000
3	Credibility	.278	.045	.269	6.133	.000
	Interestingness	.499	.045	.486	11.061	.000
D.V. = WOM Intentions						
Group	ID.V	B	Std. Error	$\beta$	t	p
1	Credibility	.338	.040	.308	8.439	.000
	Interestingness	.499	.038	.473	12.983	.000
2	Credibility	.285	.042	.259	6.798	.000
	Interestingness	.496	.039	.486	12.782	.000
3	Credibility	.274	.043	.265	6.413	.000
	Interestingness	.549	.043	.533	12.903	.000
D.V. = Attitude of Destination						
Group	ID.V	B	Std. Error	$\beta$	t	p
1	Credibility	.016	.002	.313	6.881	.000
	Interestingness	.008	.002	.170	3.733	.000
2	Credibility	.015	.002	.299	6.557	.000
	Interestingness	.010	.002	.227	4.988	.000
3	Credibility	.015	.003	.292	5.613	.000
	Interestingness	.014	.003	.281	5.400	.000

Table 3. Results of impacts of UGC features in different groups on participants' behavioral intentions

In addition, we ran *F-test* to examine the equality of the regression coefficients for the three treatments groups. All the results indicated that the coefficients of the credibility and interestingness are different. In other words, they can be compared.

The results of testing (H.3) present that the fraction of the explained variance in ‘purchase intention’, ‘WOM intention’ and ‘ideal brand’ by the participants’ social media engagement is 37%, 45%, and 17% respectively. On one hand, consumers’ social media engagement positively impact their purchase intention (H.3.1) and WOM intention (H.3.2) ( $p < 0.005$ ). However, though the results show the consumers’ ‘likelihood of like’ has impact on their brand attitudes ( $\beta = 0.32, p = 0.000$ ), it appears that their ‘likelihood of retweet’ ( $p > 0.05$ ) and ‘likelihood of comment’ ( $p > 0.05$ ) cannot take effects (H.3.3). To be specific with the regard to different groups, 1) in testing participants’ social media engagement on their purchase intentions, posts from Group 1 ( $R^2 = 40.3\%$ ) were found have more im-

pacts than Group 2 ( $R^2 = 34.9\%$ ) and Group 3 ( $R^2 = 36.2\%$ ). In addition, posts from Group 1 ( $\beta = 0.44$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) tended to induce participants' likelihood to offer 'like' and posts from Group 3 ( $\beta = 0.23$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) attracted participants to retweets more than the rest of the groups'. 2) In testing participants' WOM intention, posts from Group 1 ( $R^2 = 48.2\%$ ) were found more influential than Group 2 ( $R^2 = 42.9\%$ ) and Group 3's ( $R^2 = 42.3\%$ ). Compared to the other two groups, posts from Group 1 ( $\beta = 0.43$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) succeeded in luring participant's likelihood to offer like more; posts from Group 2 ( $\beta = 0.24$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) could more easily attract participants to comment; and post from Group 3 ( $\beta = 0.23$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) more easily attracted participants to retweet. 3) In exploring the participants' social media engagement on their attitudes of the destination, posts from Group 2 ( $R^2 = 17.6\%$ ) have more effects than Group 1 ( $R^2 = 16.7\%$ ) and Group 3 ( $R^2 = 15.1\%$ ). And posts from Group 1 drew participants' attentions ( $\beta = 0.39$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), and they were more likely to offer 'like' to these posts than the rest.

## 5 Conclusion, marketing implications, and limitations

It is not a novelty that social media can provide practical implications to consumers in different aspects of their travel. As the primary component of social media, UGC allows people all over the world to share information, and this remarkably change our communication patterns and interpersonal relationships (Sotiriadis and Zyl, 2013). On the other side, despite the role of social media in travel consumers' planning process has been widely studied, the successful practice of managing and manipulating these UGC sites still stays largely unknown to the practitioners and scholars (Chung and Buhalis, 2008; Leung et al., 2013). Our paper took a travel consumers perspective and investigate the interactions among the UGC features, consumers' behavioral intentions, attitudes of destinations and social media engagement. The study has some findings that should come into the scholars and practitioners' notice.

First, the credibility and interestingness of the travel-related posts were both found influential on consumers' purchase intention, WOM intention, and attitudes of destination brands. Our findings indicate that the more incredible and interesting the UGC is, the more likely consumers will purchase and/or tell the peer consumers about the travel products/services, and/or take the destination as an alternative. However, compared to the credibility of UGC, travel consumers' social media engagement (comment, retweet, like) and behavioral intentions are more impacted by the interestingness of the postings. This is somehow inconsistent with the previous studies (e.g. Ayeh et al., 2013) which considered 'credibility' as the major concern of travel consumers while they attempt to search travel information in UGC sites. Third, as the intentions of generating these postings were divided into 3 groups, UGC with the attempts to obtain the maximum comments were found more credible and interesting, and consumers are more likely to comment, retweet and offer 'like' to them. In addition, these posts have more impacts on consumers' WOM intentions and their attitudes of destination brands.

Additionally, what is worth mentioning, we offered a reward to the participants in the Phase 1. This an incentive design we conducted on purpose. Social media (or eWOM) can be a breeding ground of referral rewards, which has not been well studied and exploited. As discussed earlier, social media possess innate referral function, which allow their participants to rate the content or make referrals. When a certain post is interesting, credible and impactful, there is a great possibility that participants will share and/or recommend it (BundlePost, 2012; Fouts, 2012; Mueller, 2010). Therefore, marketing practitioners can offer referral rewards to UGC generators with the purpose of generating content fit the criteria (credible and interesting) to attract participants' social media engagement and acquire more consumers. Simultaneously, travel postings with influential elements may increase peer consumers' purchase intention, WOM intention, and affect their attitudes toward destination brands.

Our study comes with some limitations. First, due to the fact that this is our very first attempt towards understanding the UGC factors that affect travel consumers' behavioral intention, the features of UGC were limited to two of the essential ones, and the behavioral intentions were restrained to purchase intention, WOM intention. We expect that the future study can explore more features of UGC and other behavioral intentions. Second, we did not clarify which social media applications that the post-

ings were exactly published, as the travel-related content is not only posted on travel-centered UGC sites but also other social media sites (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010). However, study (Burgess et al. 2011) indicate that the greater trust of UGC is placed on specific travel websites than those on a more generic social networking site. Third, regarding all the participants in Phase1, both Chinese MBA student and Chinese adult travel consumers generated the posts. We did not intend to imply that the demographics in social media study are less important. The arrangement was based on the fact that social media allow anyone (above certain age) to engage in and be the content generator, and traveling is such an activity that everyone can perform. Therefore, a mix arrangement of such will enhance the veracity in real practice. However, this makes our study have difficulties to find out if the most influential posts are related to the generators' education background. At last, our study focuses on Chinese consumers and Chinese social media. Early studies (Chung and Buhalis, 2008; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004) already pointed out that participants from different cultural backgrounds may have different reasons for engaging in social media. Therefore, whether our findings could affect all travel consumers in the world needs to be further examined and discussed as well.

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