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The Influence of eWOM Source Credibility and Product Involvement on Travel Product Purchasing Intention of Malaysian Chinese

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Abstract

Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) has become one of the important reference before purchasing. Through sharing the use of experience and reference to online consumer evaluation, it enhances the autonomy of purchase decision-making. This study attempts to investigate whether eWOM source credibility and product involvement affect travel product-purchasing intention by using the international website, TripAdvisor, as the research scope. An online structured questionnaire is designed for Malaysian Chinese online users or whoever visits https://cn.tripadvisor.com/ to search destinations or travel information with random sampling method. The purposes of this study are listed as follows: (1) To study the influence of eWOM source credibility on the purchase intention of Malaysian Chinese. (2) To study the influence of product involvement on the purchase intention of Malaysian Chinese. (3) To study whether the degree of product involvement interfere with eWOM source credibility. Hope the result of this study can help Taiwan Tourist industry to understand the consumption patterns and to make effective marketing strategies before entering the Chinese tourism market in Malaysia. It also attempts to provide a reflection of the tourism-related combination of industry, official, and university to develop marketing strategy toward the 'new southward policy' while facing the rapid growth of global mobile commerce.

Keywords: eWOM, source credibility, product involvement, purchase intention, Malaysian Chinese

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1. Introduction

Malaysia has a population of more than 30 million. If calculated in terms of gross domestic product (GDP), Malaysia has a per capita income of approximately US$10,000 and is the third-largest economy in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Among them, Malaysian Chinese are the second largest ethnic group in the country, and most of them are middle class or wealthy. Statistics from Malaysia's Statistics Department in 2012 show that the average monthly income of Malaysian

Chinese families is 1.2 times that of Aboriginal people and 1.4 times that of Indians. The results of the survey conducted by WeAreSocial in January 2017 (http://wearesocial. com/sg/blog/2017/02/digital-southeast-asia-2017) show that The network penetration rate in Malaysia has reached 71%, ranking behind Brunei and Singapore and third in the ASEAN market. In addition, the penetration rate of mobile devices in Malaysia has reached 137%, the penetration rate of smart phones has reached 71%, and the percentage of people using the Internet to search for goods and services accounted for 64%, and the proportion of online shopping accounts for 54%, which is higher than the global average.

Today's society is affected by the popularity of the Internet, and people use the Internet for data search and information sharing to achieve the goal of expanding interpersonal relationships. "Information exchange, resource sharing" has become a common trend in today's society and it has hit the global business model. With the continuous expansion of countries' migration to Southeast Asian countries, Malaysia's highly networked and mobile devices have made Malaysia a major destination for countries to compete and seize the market. Companies have responded to this trend and have used the Internet to provide new marketing communications platforms. The rise of e-commerce and the radiative development of e-marketing platforms directly or indirectly affect consumer behavior patterns.

Tanimoto and Fujii (2003) points out that potential consumers get sharing information about the experience of the use of goods in the computer-mediated environment to reduce the perceived risk and uncertainty of consumption and as a reference source for the purchase of goods. The company provides commodity information, purchasing channels, real-time online customer service and other functions on its self-constructed website to enhance interaction with consumers and provide a platform for consumers to consult and express opinions. The popularity of the Internet has prompted the Internet to become a communication tool and communication medium of word of mouth. Consumers use e-mail, e-forums, chat rooms, blogs and other text, video, and audio/video to obtain product information on the Internet platform, and then share their experience on the Internet platform. This voluntary and non-commercial delivery process is electronic word of mouth (eWOM), which provides web browsers, as a reference before purchasing goods (Gelb and Sundaram, 2002).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Electronic word-of-mouth

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), also known as online word-of-mouth or word-of-mouse, refers to the Web user spread word of mouth to another Web user by Internet (Gelb and Sundaram, 2002). Online word-of-mouth can be delivered through various electronic forms of resources such as e-mail, online communities, and chat rooms, etc.(Hanson, 2000). Hennig-Thurau et al. (2003) proposed that electronic word-of-mouth has the characteristics of anonymity, convenience, unlimited by the time and space, permanent preservation, one-to-many and the like, which are summarized as follows:

1. On the one hand, the anonymity of electronic word-of-mouth makes potential consumers more willing to believe that this comment is less commercial; on the other hand, it is easy for operators to comment on their own or on behalf of others, and disrupt the credibility of electronic word of mouth.

2. Features of unlimited by the time and space and permanent preservation can strengthen the depth and breadth of the influence of electronic word-of- mouth on information recipients through the internet.

3. The one-to-many makes the effect of electronic word-of-mouth communication among people quickly and widely.

Hanson (2000) proposed in the study that in the physical environment, a customer with low consumer satisfaction would convey his feelings to five people, while through the Internet platform, there will be at least 6,000 information hitters, and the number and scope of the affected people will be far more significant than the traditional word-of-mouth. Based on the above, it can be seen that electronic word-of-mouth is undoubtedly an important basis for influencing consumers to purchase products and services (Wang, 2011).

With the optimization of network technology, the number of tourists using the Internet to find information on travel destinations and conduct online travel related affairs has gradually increased. Data from the Travel Industry Association of America (TIA) in 2005 shows that 67% of U.S. passengers use the Internet to search for information, search prices and travel plans of tourist destinations. What impressively is that over 41% of U.S. passengers use the Internet to set some travel plans. The internet has promoted a new communication platform which enables tourism product providers and consumers to use this medium as a two-way vehicle for sharing information

and ideas between business owners and consumers, consumers and consumers, and electronic word-of-mouth communication (Litvin et al., 2008).

Electronic word-of-mouth communication can be divided into two types, synchronous and asynchronous, which can be applied to the tourism industry, as shown in Figure 1 description.
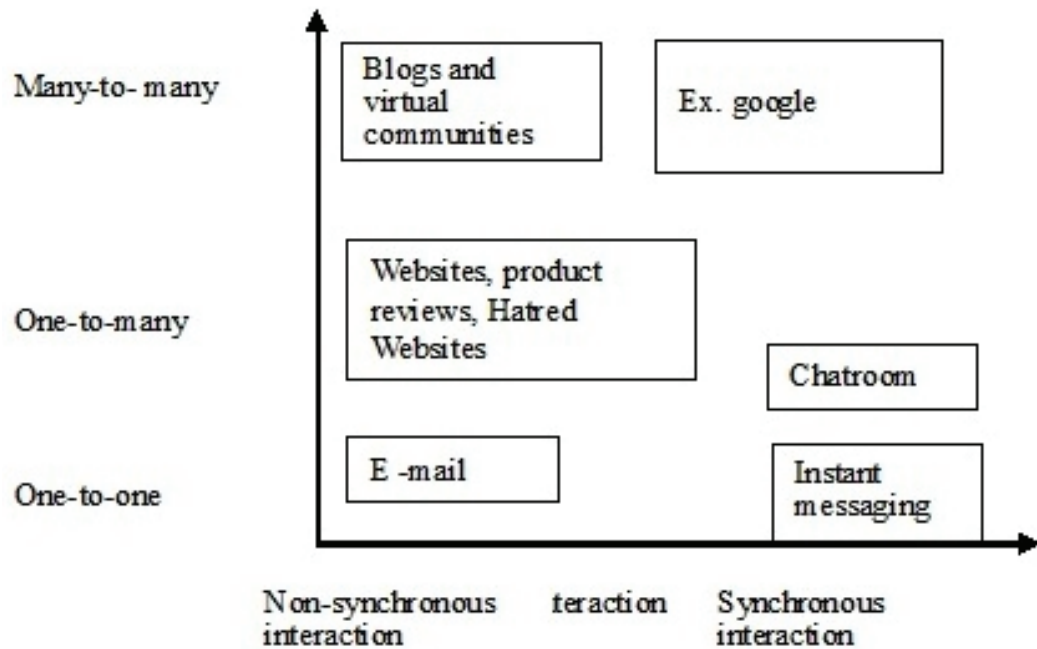

Figure 1: The different types of electronic WOM pathways.

2.1.1. The credibility of the information source

Many domains use the research on the credibility of the information source, and the definition of credibility of the information source is quite extensive. Table 1 summarizes the scholars' viewpoints and definitions on the credibility of the information source.

2.2. Product involvement

Batra and Ray (1985) define involvement as "In some cases, the degree of mental effort is deeply influenced by the depth and quality of cognitive reactions." Zaichkowsky (1985) pointed out that involvement is "the degree to which an individual feels about things based on their own interests and their interests. That is, the degree to which consumers place importance on products, or the extent to which consumers are interested in and driven by products. " Goldsmith and Emmert (1991) believe

TABLE 1: Aggregated definitions on the credibility of the information source.

Scholars	Definition
Singletary (1976)	Refers to the extent that the information is believed by the interviewees.
Devito (1986)	Refers to the extent to which information recipients were convinced.
Gunther (1991)	Refers to the general public's attitude toward information sources.
O'Keffe (1992)	Subjective evaluation of information recipient's trust process of information source in the process of information delivery and reception.
West (1994)	Refers to the extent to which the respondent believed in the information regardless of the authenticity of the information.
Date: Chen, YuRen (2004)	

that involvement is consumer's interest and fanatic in a product, profoundly affecting consumer behavior, information processing, and purchasing decisions. The research product involved in the facets uses the results of Bauer et al. (2006), with importance, pleasure, and symbolic value as the main measures.

2.3. Purchase intention

The consumer's purchase process is composition of five steps, which are demand confirmation, information search, selection evaluation, purchase, and post-purchase behavior. A study from Schiffman and Kanuk (2000) and Blackwell et al. (2000) pointed out that willingness to buy is the internal driving force of the consumer, driving consumers to take action through purchasing goods to meet their demand and to release pressure and reduce tension. Lin (2010) explained that "purchase intention" is a perceptual response from a viewer to a branded product or attitude, which including: (1) Refers to the possibility that the viewer is "willing to" consider purchasing; (2) on behalf of the viewer "hopefully" that it will be purchased in the future; (3) The viewer indicates the decision to purchase or repurchase a company's product.

As far as tourism products are concerned, after evaluating the quality of tourism websites, information search, and product evaluations, visitors generate purchase intentions (willingness to participate in tourism), which is an important indicator of actual purchase behavior (Poddar et al., 2009) and also a possibility for viewers to purchase the tourism product after evaluation.

2.4. Malaysian Chinese ethnic group

Located in Southeast Asia and between the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean, Malaysia is a country with multi-racial, language, and cultural. According to the statistics of the Malaysian Bureau of Statistics in 2016, the total population is estimated at 31.7 million people, and the population growth rate has increased by 1.5 compared with the same period of last year. Among them, Malays have the highest proportion, accounting for 68.6%, followed by Chinese (23.4%), Indian (7%) and other races (10.3%). The Malaysian Chinese, also known as the Malaysian-Chinese, refer to descendants of immigrants migrating to Malaysia from Fujian, Guangdong, Guangxi and Hainan provinces from the Ming and Qing Dynasties to the Republic of China. Malaysian Chinese have been educated in Malay, English and Mandarin since childhood and have used Mandarin and mixed dialects as the main communication methods in their daily lives.

The average monthly income of Malaysian Chinese families is the highest in Malaysia. Their economic advantages and their language, living habits, cultural background, and dietary style are similar to those of Taiwan, making Malaysia the largest potential market for tourism in Taiwan. The number of Malaysians who came to Taiwan in 2016 was 47,420 million, an increase of 9.95% over the previous year, of which 33.71 million were tourists who came to Taiwan with "tourism" purposes. Malaysia has risen to become the country with the largest number of tourists from Southeast Asia to Taiwan. This study defines Malaysian Chinese as "Malaysian Chinese is fluent in Mandarin and can recognize simplified Chinese characters."

Based on the above literature exploration, the three hypotheses of this study are extended and deduced:

H1: The credibility of electronic word-of-mouth information sources known to Malaysian Chinese consumers influences their purchase intentions.

H2: Malaysian Chinese consumers' product involvement will affect their purchase intentions.

H3: The extent of product involvement will interfere with the impact of the credibility of the electronic word-of-mouth information source on the purchase intention.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research methods

3.1.1. Research framework

Using Malaysian Chinese consumers as the survey object, this study mainly discusses whether the credibility of electronic word-of-mouth messages affects their willingness to purchase tourism products. Whether consumers' involvement in tourism products will affect the purchase intention; and examines the interference impact of the degree of product involvement.
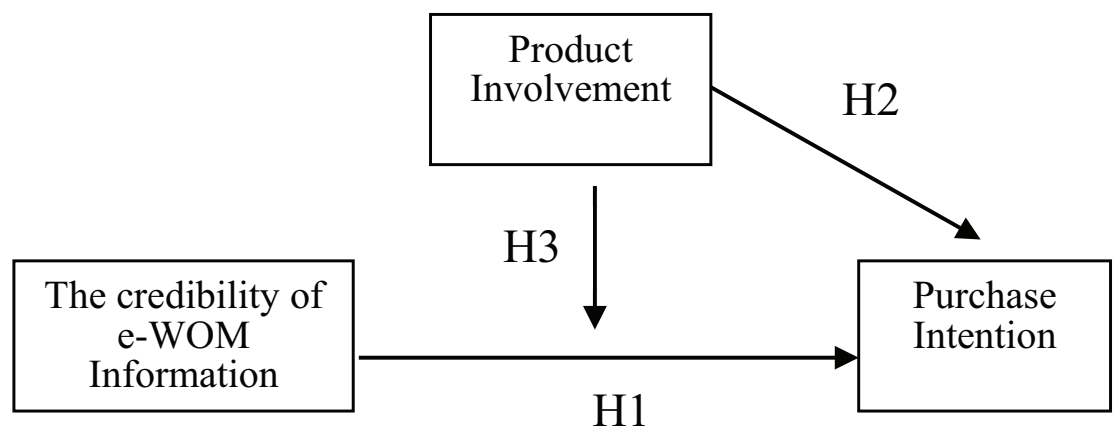

Figure 2: Research Framework.

3.1.2. Questionnaire design

This study conducted a questionnaire survey of New Era College, Malaysia, a sister school of China University, and Malaysian Chinese students enrolled in this school. It is expected that the New Era College, Malaysia will be invited to assist in the distribution of the questionnaire. The questionnaire content includes the use of computer networks, pre-tourism planning, credibility of electronic word-of-mouth sources, product involvement, purchase intentions, and personal data, and it uses the measurement table of Likert five-scale to measure the credibility of electronic word-of-mouth sources, product involvement, and purchase intention research. (1 = strongly disagree ~ 5 = strongly agree).

1. The credibility of the source of electronic word-of-mouth information

   This study defines the credibility of the source of electronic word-of-mouth information as the perceived level of consumer trust in the Tripadvisor review. In

this study, questionnaires are used to measure the credibility of the sources of information, using the four major aspects proposed by Dickinger (2011): informativeness, integrity, benevolence, ability.

TABLE 2: Measure of credibility of sources of electronic word-of-mouth information.

No.	Framework	Original item	Question item
1.	Informativeness	It's a good source of information	Tripadvisor.com is a good source of information
2.		It supplies relevant information.	Tripadvisor.com supplies relevant information.
3.		It provides timely information.	Tripadvisor.com provides timely information.
4.	Integrity	Promises made by the tourist board/reviewer/service provider are likely to be reliable.	Promises made by the tourist board/reviewer/service provider on TripAdvisor.com are likely to be reliable.
5.		I do not doubt the honesty of the tourist board/the reviewer/service provider.	I do not doubt the honesty of the tourist board/the reviewer/service provider on TripAdvisor.com.
6.		I expect that the advice given by the tourist board/reviewer/service provider is their best judgment.	I expect that the advice given on TripAdvisor.com by the tourist board/reviewer/service provider is their best judgment.
7.		I expect that the tourist board/reviewers/service providers will keep promises they make.	I expect that the tourist board/reviewers/service providers on TripAdvisor.com will keep promises they make.
8.		I can count on the tourist board/reviewer/service provider to be sincere.	I can count on the tourist board/reviewer/service provider on TripAdvisor.com to be sincere.
9.	Benevolence	I expect that the tourist board/reviewer/service provider is ready and willing to assist and support me.	I expect that the tourist board/reviewer/service provider on TripAdvisor.com is ready and willing to assist and support me.
10.		I expect that the tourist board/reviewer/service provider has good intentions toward me.	I expect that the tourist board/reviewer/service provider on TripAdvisor.com has good intentions toward me.
11.		I expect that the tourist boards'/reviewers'/service providers' intentions are benevolent.	I expect that the tourist boards'/reviewers'/service providers' intentions on TripAdvisor.com are benevolent.
12.		I expect that the tourist board/reviewers/service providers put customers' interests before their own.	I expect that the tourist board/reviewers/service providers on TripAdvisor.com put customers' interests before their own.

No.	Framework	Original item	Question item
13.	Ability	I expect that the tourist board/reviewer/service provider is well meaning.	I expect that the tourist board/reviewer/service provider on TripAdvisor.com is well meaning.
14.		The tourist board/reviewer/service provider is a competent information provider.	The tourist board/reviewer/service provider on TripAdvisor.com is a competent information provider.
15.		The tourist board/reviewer/service provider understands the market they work in.	The tourist board/reviewer/service provider on TripAdvisor.com understands the market they work in.
16.		The tourist board/reviewer/service provider knows about restaurants/museums.	The tourist board/reviewer/service provider on TripAdvisor.com knows about restaurants/museums.
17.		The tourist board/reviewers/service provider knows how to provide excellent service.	The tourist board/reviewers/service provider on TripAdvisor.com knows how to provide excellent service.

Date source: Xiao Hanzhong (2013)

2. Product involvement

According to Bauer et al. (2006)'s research results, with importance, pleasure and symbolic value as the framework of product involvement, this study defines product involvement as the importance, pleasure, and sense of value that consumers feel as a result of travel products.

3. Purchase intention

This study defines purchase intentions as consumers' willingness to purchase travel products because of reading the content of TripAdvisor reviews. This scale was revised using the purchase intention scale of Huang et al. (2010).

3.2. Research process

By studying relevant literature at home and abroad, this study clarifies the research direction and theme, and completes the work of document collation and exploration. The relevant theoretical foundations and concepts provided by the previous literature were used to develop the framework and assumptions of the study, and based on the context of the study, the measurement items were modified to design the initial

TABLE 3: Product Involvement Scale.

No.	Framework	Original item	Question item
1.	Sign Value	This product tells other people sth about me.	Other people think of me when they think of tourism
2.		It helps me express my personality.	Tourism can convey my personal qualities.
3.		It does not reflect my personality.	Tourism does not reflect my personal qualities.
4.		It is part of my self-image.*	Tourism is part of the self-image.
5.		It is not relevant to me.*	Tourism is irrelevant to me.
6.	Importance	It does not matter to me.*	Tourism is insignificant to me.
7.		It is of no concern to me.*	I don't care much about tourism.
8.		It is important to me.	Tourism is important to me.
9.	Pleasure	This product is fun.	Tourism is a pleasure for me.
10.		I find it fascinating.	I found that tourism is fascinating.
11.		I find it exciting.	I found that tourism is exciting.
12.		I am interested in it.	I am very interested in tourism.

Date: Xiao Hanzhong (2013) Note: * is a reverse question

TABLE 4: Purchase intention scale.

No.	Framework	Original item
1.	I like spend time in browsing travel blogs.	I like to spend time looking at travel reviews on TripAdvisor.com.
2.	I'd like to purchase credible and worthwhile travel products posted in travel blogs.	I want to buy reliable and worthwhile travel products posted or introduced in TripAdvisor.
3.	I'd like to recommend other people for the credible travel products posted in travel blogs.	I would like to recommend others to refer to reliable travel products posted or introduced on TripAdvisor.
4.	Next time to purchase similar travel products, I'd like to take the same credible travel blogs into account.	Next time I want to buy similar travel products, I will also consider the introduction of TripAdvisor.

Date: Xiao Hanzhong (2013)

questionnaire in line with the study. Advance testing was conducted through network distribution, and adjustments and revisions of the preliminary questionnaire were conducted based on the results of the advance testing. Again, formal questionnaires were sent over the Internet to complete data collection and sample design and data analysis. Based on the results of this study, practical and academic recommendations will be made. The research process developed in this study is shown in Figure 3:
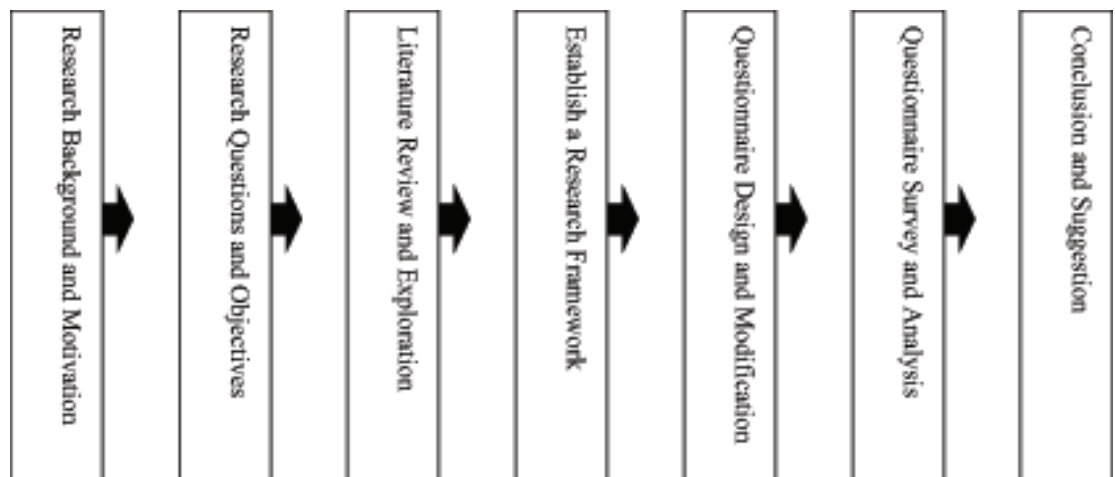
Figure 3: Research Flow Chart.

3.3. The progress of implementation

This study was conducted using an online questionnaire survey and made into a google form that was transmitted as a link. It is expected that New Era College, Malaysia and Malaysian Chinese students enrolled in this school will assist in completing the online questionnaire. It is estimated that 400 online questionnaires will be collected.

3.3.1. Research scope

In 2005, TripAdvisor stated on its website that this site is the largest travel website in the world, offering real stories and unbiased tourism reviews of restaurants, sightseeing spots, restaurants around the world. Every two minutes, real travelers will upload a commentary on their personal experiences and real experiences (tripadvisor.com, 2005). Therefore, the study chose TripAdvisor as a research scope to take into consideration both the scale and international versatility.

3.3.2. Research object

TripAdvisor offers discussion forums on the three themes of sightseeing spots, hotels and restaurants around the world, and also provides TripAdvisor for Business service, which provides visitors with a platform for product display. The content of the webpage itself does not directly involve sales, and a great deal of effort has been devoted to identifying and preventing fraudulent acts on the web site. Therefore, the evaluation mechanism of the web site is quite credible and is deeply loved by collectors of travel

materials. In addition, through this website, visitors are provided with positive and negative evaluation opinions, experience and product evaluation ratings shared by actual users of travel products, and gather the opinions of the general public on the product. Therefore, the site's evaluation results are representative. (Ricci and Wietsma, 2006). Due to the high penetration rate of internet and mobile devices, and the relatively high average annual income of Chinese people, Malaysia has become a highly potential consumer market for tourism products. Therefore, this study will explore Malaysian Chinese users who are visiting TripAdvisor.

3.3.3. Sampling method

The questionnaire survey of this study was divided into pretest questionnaires and formal questionnaires. In the pretest questionnaire stage, Taking Malaysian Chinese students who have visited the TripAdvisor Network and studying at a university in Taiwan are the research scope, the study adopts a convenient sampling of transmission of google form links, and tests for the description of the questionnaire, title rhetoric, and typesetting. Based on the interviews and basic analysis, it will be revised into a formal questionnaire, and the Malaysian New Era Academy will be invited to assist in the distribution of the questionnaire. During the testing process, after the subject receives a link to the google form, he/she clicks on the link of the questionnaire and then begins to answer. The response sequence is as follows: (1) Overview of the use of computer networks; (2) Pre-tourism planning; (3) The credibility of electronic word-of-mouth sources; (4) Product involvement; (5) purchase intention (6) Demographic Statistics. After the subject completes the questionnaire survey, this web link was forwarded to others in the form of snowballs in order to obtain more than 400 valid samples.

In the description and analysis of the data, the incomplete questionnaires were regarded as invalid questionnaires, and the rest of the questionnaires that were correctly answered were checked by the assumptions and statistics of the study. And, using the SPSS 17.0 for Windows Evaluation Version computer statistical software package as an analysis tool for data statistics, the study uses descriptive statistical analysis, project analysis, reliability analysis, correlation analysis, complex regression analysis, hierarchical regression analysis and other related inferences to verify multiple research hypotheses. The reliability coefficient used in this study was Cronbach's alpha coefficient to check the consistency and stability of the scale.

4. Expected Results

4.1. Projects expected to be completed

Tourism Highlights announced in 2016: The number of global travelers has reached 1.186 billion since 2012, and the annual tourism revenue is 1.26 trillion. It is estimated that by 2030, the number of global travelers will reach 1.8 billion. The development of the tourism industry in the Asia-Pacific region is the most striking, and the number and income of international tourism in the Asia-Pacific region account for 24% and 33% of the global market, respectively. Since 2013, according to statistics from the Tourism Bureau of Taiwan's Ministry of Transport, there is an average of 20,000 Malaysian tourists visiting Taiwan each month, and the number of travelers is among the top 10 countries in Southeast Asia. Therefore, the work items expected to be completed in this study are as follows:

1. To complete the analysis of the credibility of the source of electronic word-of-mouth information affects the Malaysian Chinese's purchase intention of tourism products

2. To complete the analysis of product involvement affects the Malaysian Chinese's purchase intention of tourism products

3. To comprehensive analyze results to find ways to advocate and promote Taiwan's tourism by using online marketing to attract people's attention and interaction.

4. To summarize and interpret the results of the study and to make specific and constructive suggestions.

5. To write research results into academic papers and participate in the publication process.

4.2. The expected contribution

The connotation and essence of sightseeing, tourism, leisure and recreation remain unchanged, but the marketing methods have changed with the times. Affected by the global popularity of the Internet, the use of mobile devices has become an important part of the public life, and it also affects consumer's habits and patterns of consumption. This study will propose the following four online marketing strategies to attract Malaysian Chinese visitors to Taiwan:

1. Use Facebook to do differential marketing: Since Facebook has personal information about the applicants, practitioners may select ethnic groups with specific ages, genders, occupations, and interests to differentiate themselves. According to the characteristics of different ethnic groups, it can launch a wide range of tourism products, deliver events and advertisements, and use the essence of "interaction" of Facebook fans to become the best marketing tool, thus deeply rooting in the life circle of consumer.

2. Strengthen the image of the Taiwan tourism brand: In Taiwan, pop culture, idol drama, movies, and food culture are deeply rooted in the life of Malaysian Chinese, and singers or idol stars are used as spokespersons for sightseeing and tours in Taiwan. and it uses micro-films to broadcast to major media networks and online video and audio platforms to increase the exposure of Taiwan's tourism promotion and strengthen Taiwan's tourism brand image.

3. Use live broadcast of Internet celebrity to make travel recommendations: The live broadcast emphasizes timeliness. Because it cannot be edited by post-production, it is more likely to show authenticity. The Internet celebrities familiar to Malaysian Chinese are using webcasts to introduce travel features through travel and replying to netizens' comments in live broadcasts. This can eliminate some doubts about tourism products and reduce the risk and uncertainty of consumers' purchase of tourism products. The actions initiated by Internet celebrity are not to be underestimated in terms of appeal, impact or network adhesion.

5. Conclusion

With the rapid development of information technology and the advent of the Web 2.0 era in recent years, How to use the Internet community to establish electronic word of mouth to win business opportunities has attracted much attention in the industry. All Southeast Asian countries are less than five hours away from Taiwan. Tourism personnel must combine the development of e-commerce, and begin to deploy the Southeast Asian market and become Taiwan's biggest new challenge, before the construction of logistics and financial flows in Southeast Asia are mature. This study is expected to propose the use of an effective online marketing strategy to attract Malaysian Chinese tourists to Taiwan for tourism, and to deepen and strengthen the Taiwan tourism brand image in the international market.

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