Communication in Virtual Community at TripAdvisor: A Case on Heritage Destination of Palembang-Indonesia

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. Author LWE contributed to the design of the study and wrote the first draft of manuscript. Authors AS and AM provided suggestions to author LWE for improvements the manuscript. All Authors read and approve the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this Research is to construct the communication behaviour of virtual travelers on TripAdvisor. TripAdvisor is a tourist advisor site, that operates in 48 countries around the world and also the largest tourism community in the world. Theory used in this study is social interaction theory that consist of three things: (1) the existence of morality. It is a kind of a dealing with the mutual agreement; (2) the orientation of specified feelings and emotions and (3) orientation that regulated the culture. The social interaction theory combined by the theory of Computer-Mediated

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Communication (CMC) which study about how human behaviour is shaped and modified through the exchange of information with the use of computer. The Paradigm for this research is interpretive. The Research methods are with participatory approach and Netnography method which analyse text on TripAdvisor site. This method use to inform the patterns of communication, used by traveller communities. Source of Data obtained from online observation.

The result shows that these studies reveal the differences between communication patterns in the real world and the virtual world. In This research, the findings of this study reveal that Palembang as the oldest city in Indonesia having so many historical destinations which are interesting to visit. The change of communications Behaviour in the community in the real world and the virtual community are using a low context. It means, that information is transparent, opened and honest. Communication pattern of member communities should follow the rules and to use language understood in global technology internet users. The result of this research could be a contribution for Government tourism of Palembang City to help updating their website.

1. INTRODUCTION

Base on the Journal Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing, the social media industries open up opportunities for people who have the same interest to get together in a virtual world. In the middle of 1970, McLuhan predicted that there will be a change in people's lives because of a tribal influx of computer technology. People connect and socialise using computers to form new communities in the virtual world even though they are in their own place [1].

According to Association of Indonesian Internet Service Providers (APJII) in 2017, the number of internet users in Indonesia reached 143.26 million. These figures increased compared to the previous year. In 2016 reached 132.7 million with the growth of internet users is more than 7% from 2016. In 2017, internet users in Indonesia recorded 54.68% of Indonesia's total population, 262 million. Most of the internet user is a new users, they started from 2014 to 2016, 37.12% [2].

According to the total of internet users, 87.13% of people using the internet to interact on social media, the actual amount is not too fantastic because it turns out that in 2017 the majority of internet users are in the productive age, 19-34 years of 49.52%, and then the second group is the age of 35-54 that is 29.55%, 65.98% using the internet access every day more than 7 hours in a day.

Social media is one of the most known internet products. The existence of Facebook in 2004 and become more popular in 2006 for anyone who states that they are over 13 years old, they consider that it is the era of the success of social media. The community uses social media to expand their social interactions. They can socialise with people from other places, reconnect with old friends and establish new friendships in the virtual world by sharing stories, information, photos and videos.

In line with the increasing of using new media, it is finally forming an own culture. The existence of internet technology changed a way of people to communicate, having a different behaviour with their reality. This is named Virtual Community forming a culture of communication via internet. It will be explored through this study.

1.1 Problem Formulation

Problem formulation from the data above as follow:

(1) What is the different between communication behaviour in the community of the real world and the virtual community? (2) How does the interaction of virtual community on TripAdvisor travelers? (3) How is the communication pattern of virtual community in TripAdvisor Travelers?

1.2 Objectives of this Study

(1) To analyse the changes of communication behaviour in the real world community and communication in virtual community; (2) to find out the interaction of virtual community at TripAdvisor travelers; (3) To find out a communication pattern of virtual community at TripAdvisor.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are some communication theories used to discuss the issue of this study. Those are Social Interaction Theory and Computer Mediated Communication Theory and also some other concepts such as Virtual Communities and behaviours in group of communication.

2.1 Social Interaction Theory

The main theory used in this study is the theory of social interaction. Social interaction theory discusses the relationship that occurs in some communities that forming a new culture.

At the first time, social interaction was written in *A Theory of Social Interaction* book in 1988. In that theory, there are 3 (three) things: (1) the rationale that creates standards of morality and also a consensus of agreement; (2) influence or orientation determined by feelings and emotions and (3) traditional or orientation dictated by its culture [3].

According to this study we can assume that social interactions taking place within the virtual traveler community must have a moral standard which have to be agreed by the managers of TripAdvisor with its member.

There are two types of relationships in social interactions: communal and associative. Communal relations are relationships based on influence or tradition. While associative relationships are on the "rational" that motivates the group to establish unity and solidarity [3].

Theory of Social interaction is defined as a situation where the behaviour of one individual consciously influences the behaviour of the other individual and vice versa (Turner, 1989: 14) [3]. Meanwhile, according to Gilin and Gillin social interaction is the relationship between people individually, between groups of people, and individuals with groups [4].

In line with Bonner's opinion that social interaction is a relationship between two or more persons, so that one individual's behaviour affects, alters, or improves the behaviour of the other, and vice versa [5].

So, social interaction occurred because of the relationship between people individually, between groups of people and individuals in groups that consciously influence each other.

2.2 Computer-Mediated Communication Theory

Literature on Corporate Mediated Communication discusses technology and social interaction explaining the impact of technology on social interaction and interpersonal communication.

John December in [6] defines CMC as:

> *"A process of human communication via computers, involving people, situated in particular contexts, engaging in processes to shape media for a variety of purposes"*

The definition could be interpreted that CMC is a process of human communication through the computer, involving some people, in a special context, involved in the process that could form media for various purposes.

Communications that occur on the internet are synchronous (same time), a multi-user (accessed by multiple users), text-based chat technology [6]. In CMC, Technology is designed, created, used for the exchange of data and information [6].

March Smith [7] describes four important aspects of virtual interaction that shape communication behaviour in the cyber world:

Firstly, Virtual interaction is spatial. Communication or interaction in the cyberspace does not require existence and similarity between users (spatial) as long as there is an interaction function through the cyber. It means interaction does not need to happen at the same time. Sender and receiver should not be in the same location as happens in two-way communication through face-to-face.

Secondly, Virtual interaction via system is predominantly asynchronous. It explains that in cyber media, the interaction can be conditioned based on the users' schedule. Communication can occur in the same place and time (synchronous) and also can be in different place and time (asynchronous). It means the communication that occurs when people want to have a communication at the same time and place can be called *synchronous*. On the other hand, if the time and place are different, communication may occur but the message will be delayed, it is *asynchronous*.

Thirdly, CMC is corporeal because of it primarily. It describes the interactions that occur in the cyber world by texting. People can use text and some symbols (icons) in the communication. In the cyber world, the expression and intonation of face-to-face communication are represented from the content of the text (the diatic expression). Expressions are represented with symbolic emoticons.

Fourthly, CMC is astigmatic. It explains that interaction does not see your status in society or your knowledge (astigmatic). Texting in cyberspace does not involve the visualisation like in the real world. Social status, rank, position making stratification in class in real society (offline) are unimportant in cyber media. The highest position is the Administrator, but it is only technical and administrator of communication is also determined by other users [7].

This study was a discussion of communication using a communication network that connects people in various countries into virtual communities. The community interacted with the conversation about Palembang tourist destinations in Indonesian.

2.3 Virtual Communities

The phrase *online community* refers to some people that have the same interest in the virtual world that eliminates geographic boundaries and demographic [2]. Rheingold said that virtual communities can be shaped by some people via internet based on their own choice or them only responds to something on the internet. Lindlof and Schatzer added that some people deliberately build a visual community because they had same interests that are to react with to certain phrases on the internet [8].

Some Characteristics of the virtual community are people share for the common good, interact, share information, develop understanding and build relationships. However, in the virtual community everyone can be everything that they want and they can duplicate their identity (cloning).

This virtual community is temporary, temporal and fragmented compared to the offline community [9]. The virtual community is an independent community. They will not change only because of lifestyle such as consumerism that can make their community unstable.

The characteristics of the virtual community are formed based on the real community such as interaction, common purpose, awareness of identity and ownership, multiple norms and unwritten rules (netiquette) with the possibility of rejection and exclusion. There are also rituals in forms of expression.

However, there are some things that differentiate between real-world communities and virtual communities. Virtual communities are accessible and open while real-world communities tend to be limited and closed.

In fact, the communities connected to the computer tend to have lack awareness with others. Moreover, online identity sometimes was not original and designed to hide the real identity, such as age or gender [8].

It is hard to know the real identity of online participation (anonymous), the characteristic of the virtual community is lack of transparency, the authenticity of the members and lack of commitment among the members. However, communication by using the computer provides new opportunities to know more about other socials and cultures.

2.4 Behaviour in Community Communication

In studying of culture in society, there are some factors of behaviour with four conditions, namely (1) achieve certain goals; (2) occurs in certain situations; (3) governed by certain rules; (4) driven by a certain motivation [10].

According to Ruben and Stewart some aspects grow naturally such as some words that appear from a group and only they themselves can understand the words, symbols, rules that they produce systematically. They did it as their identity that can differentiate them from others groups [11].

Culture takes an important role in group dynamics. Ruben and Stewart said that culture will give members of the group feelings as individuals as well as collective identities, and they need to contribute to developing their group.

Values are the basic concepts and beliefs of a group. Cultures and groups often have heroes who increase group values. The person becomes a role model for group members to follow.

In addition, the consensus is also required to arrive at one decision that all members agree on, for example through discussions. Here are some rules to help the group reach a consensus: (1) members do not have to join the majority of groups if only to avoid conflict; (2) groups should not use many rules for decision-making so that they can avoid conflicts such as winning majority rule; (3) the group should see dissent among members as natural and beneficial; (4) members should have a preliminary consideration, that a quick agreement should be doubted and considered temporarily decision [11].

Based on the explanation, it can be understood that each group member has a role in group communication and there are rules to reach an agreement (consensus) among group members. While culture here plays a role in group dynamics as group identity.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The methodology used Netnography. Netnograhy is an ethnography communication research in the internet. Ethnography communication defined as an analysis of the role of language in the communication people behaviour. Its also define as a way to use language among the people who have the different cultures [12].

Netnography studying a behaviour of communities on the internet. Further on to study traveller communities at TripAdvisor. Characteristics of netnography has the following: (1) focus of describing and interpreting the evolving culture that takes place within the virtual community on TripAdvisor website; (2) Unit of analysis is the communication behaviour of the traveler community on the TripAdvisor website [13].

In Netnography, researchers see the interaction of community members behaviour or habits. It will be motivated by certain contexts, such as emotional factors such as disappointment, pride, satisfaction and other feelings of the virtual traveler community.

3.1 Data Processing and Analysis Techniques

All data obtained, it will be processed and interpreted by researcher. Data analysis in Netnography method was done in the following stages as follow:

First stage *Coding*: Data grouping taken from field notes, interviews, documents, or, in the case of Netnographic data, other cultural material such as newsgroups, discussion forums, photographs and so on, extracted from online sources.

Second stage *Noting*: Reflecting the data or giving notes on the edge of the data; as a form of explanation known as called "memoing".

Table 1. Data collection activities in Nethnography method

No.	Data collection activity	Netnografi method
1	*Locating sites or individuals* What do you learn? Places (sites) or individuals	Virtual Community on TripAdvisor sites
2	*Access and rapport* How do you get the access to join the community?	Obtain data from community members or gain trust from community members as interviewees.
3	*Purposeful sampling strategies* How do you select the interviewee and the location?	Discover the members of the virtual traveler community and the guest entity that become an interviewee
4	*Forms Data* What kind of data will be collected?	Observation results as participants Online observations
5	*Recording Information* How do you record are the data?	Using notes and save the data in computer.
6	*Field Issues* What are the issues that arise during the data collection?	Problems in the field, such as disclosure of personal information, slow response, excessive reactions.
7	*Storing Data* How do you save the data?	Online observation by capturing data and if necessary do an interview to complete the data.

Source: (Nasrullah, 2017: 95) [9]

Third stage *Abstracting and comparing*: Selecting the material to identify similar phrases, dividing sequences, relationships, and distinguishing differences. This abstract process can sequence the highest order, conceptual construction, pattern or process; comparing equations and data differences.

Fourth stage *Checking and Refinement*: Back to the field to collect and examine the data, and improve understanding of patterns, processes, similarities, and differences.

Fifth Stage *Generalizing*: Developing or explaining consistent data.

Sixth Stage *Theorizing*: Combining data collected with the knowledge or theory used; build a new theory with data analysis as well as relevant knowledge (Kozinets, 2010: 119) [13].

4. RESULT OF STUDY AND DISCUSSION

This study was done by discussing the interactions between member traveler community and interaction admin with member community at TripAdvisor. TripAdvisor was founded by Stephen Kaufer and Langley Steinert Needham, Massachusetts, United States. Kaufer, founded TripAdvisor Inc in February, 2000 and has served as Chief Executive Officer and President Director since February, 2000. He built the Media Group of TripAdvisor consisted of 19 renowned travel service provider brands and has expanded to 30 countries including France, Germany, Greece, Italy, India, Japan, Russia, Spain, United Kingdom, Indonesia, Argentina, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Egypt.

At the first time, TripAdvisor is a B2B (business to business) site that aims to bring producers together with non-producers with consumers, as time goes by the site is being used by the traveler community to share their experience from where it turned into a review site for tourism.

TripAdvisor's site operates in 48 countries around the world as the largest world travel community, reached 390 million unique visitors every month, and showed 435 million reviews and opinions on 6.8 million accommodations, restaurants and attractions. The site operates in 49 markets around the world. TripAdvisor: site for Better Information, Booking, and Travel.

Palembang, South of Sumatera of Indonesia becomes an interesting city to be studied because Palembang is the oldest city in Indonesia. Many historical relics from the capital of South Sumatra starting from the maritime kingdom of Sriwijaya, Sultanate and the Dutch and Japanese era. However, until now, Palembang has not entered into the top 10 favorite tourist destinations for local tourists and foreign tourists.

There are some travel destinations to visit such as "Ampera" Bridge, a dutch heritage. Museum of Sriwijaya Kingdom, Main Mosque of Palembang Sultan, Museum of Giant Al Qur'an. Pulo kemaro is popular as the love legend between Palembang princess with Chinesse Trader. There are also Jakabaring Sport City, a sport facilities for Asian Games 2018 and Sea Games previously.

This study will have a benefit for branding of Palembang city with knowing the culture of virtual communication community. There are so many of heritage destination in Palembang but as a destination, it is not too popular than Bali. to surrounding people and also the promotion of Palembang city itself to give positive impact overall of that city. Some of the benefits are economically benefit with selling of souvenirs and development of Palembang culinary. It will also giving impact to public education.

4.1 Behaviour Changes in Real Communication and Virtual Communication

Internet has changed the pattern of communication in real world and virtual world. In real world communication, there is a difference of status, talking in the same times and the same location. While, in the real world communication, done by face to face with texts, no status and the same levels.

At TripAdvisor website, the contributor giving a rating and review which really are not the real name. Also their social status and economic status. About timing of chating are not always answered directly. It is possible due to archive system.

Communication is not always done at the same time called asynchronous. It means the question and answer can take place at different time and when connected to the internet. For Example when respons questions in the forum travel.

There are some differences in real world community world and virtual communities, the

characteristic of communication done in low context, means information and words are transparent, open and honest. Writing sentences on the review is not necessarily complete (5 W + 1 H). It can be seen from the following example on the tourist destinations history Museum Sultan Mahmud Badarudin II:

Interesting Building Form:

> *"Not far from the "Ampera" Bridge, you can visit this museum. Very Interesting place and still becoming an object to observed" (written by @rommyroperta – Bogor/ 23-01-18)*

Another opinion from the other reviewer such as

Local culture "if you want to know the history of the city and community in Palembang, this museum should be visited because the area is not far from Ampera Bridge" (written by @energixdusun -Palangkaraya)

Communication can be done asynchronous means with the storage system (archive), the response can take place with the time difference. Communication will take place when community members are connected to the internet.

4.2 Interaction Patterns in Communications Virtual Traveler

Nowadays, most of young people are interested to find references from the internet than asking to the people. TripAdvisor becomes a travel website, trusted to making a travel planning. Traveller will see a rating and result of review of travel destination according to their hope.

In the form of rating with symbols of circles, post reviews and responses to posts and responds to questions in the forums of other members who can help traveler community members to tourist destinations Palembang.

Evaluation is used to inform readers about the impression of a member of TripAdvisor about the tourist object. All evaluations are displayed on top of each destination page, and each rating is displayed next to each review. The overall circle rating displayed on TripAdvisor reflects the aggregate value of each circle rating for a particular destination. The ratings will still be displayed on tripAdvisor website limitless time.

There is only little interaction happened in tourist destinations in Palembang. For review, it is only slightly visible from those who give a symbol that indicates useful reviews. For example, for the history of the Palembang, Grand Mosque which is a relic of the Kesultanan Palembang, visitors did not have any entertainment, can be seen from only one or two reviews that provide a valuable review.

Another visitors posting such as

'interaction was exchange information on the Travel forum with the topic *Things to do in Palembang* are as follows:

"Palembang is a nice city, especially for culinary. There is so much delicious food there. There are pempek, martabak, pindang, e.t.c if you want to go Palembang you can go by plane, until Sultan Mahmud Badarudin airport, you can call taxi, or you can get on busway. Taxi Fare is about Rp 300.000 or its about $30, and busway fare it's about Rp5.000 or $0.5. So, I think better you can stay nearby mosque or Ampera Bridge, there are some hotels there, like Sriwijaya Hotel, Ambassador Hotel, etc. All the things in Indonesia are cheaper than Singapore, or Malaysia. Only Rp 300000 or $30 you can rent a car and walk around Palembang. There are ampera bridge, BKB, Kemaro Island, Great Mosque, etc and for the food, all of them are delicious and cheap, lime pempek is just $0.4, martabak, meatballs, sate, etc just about $2 (Written by @Dani A)

Another response is most people come to Palembang to experience its local culinary, maybe there is some sightseeing spot like Ampera Bridge (written by @hau h contributor level 3).

4.3 Virtual Communication Pattern

Virtual communication pattern are different with real communication pattern. There is a pattern in the virtual communication. First, we should join as a member of the community by registering or sign up via email account or Facebook. Each member may participate in communication in the form of rating, review, comment, and FAQ in the travel forum. All members who are actively involved must follow the norms and values set by the TripAdvisor administrator.

Members giving a review based on their experience when their visit the destination in Palembang. Their review are positively and negatively depends on their experience along

they stay at the travel destination. Some positive and negative things as follow:

A positive review that used denotative meaning like *Must Visit Palembang*: Really nice view especially in the evening because the lights in the bridge are so colorful, must visited if you are in Palembang. While reviews that use connotative meanings like the example of Historic Place but Does not Look Good. If the night will turn into a night market and not feel the history.

Reviews that use connotative meanings such as reviews on the Grand Mosque tourist destinations entitled Places of Worship such as the Palace, Beauty of the 18th Century.

Another sample is Kemaro Island destination: Peace Island. This island seems not really clean and manage by a good management but it feel so peace since the first time I went there. The Pagoda and temple are closed for public but you can see it is well cared.

Moreover, review also using denotative meanings such as review on the Ampera Bridge: Must Visit Palembang. Really nice view especially in the evening because the light in the bridge are so colorful, must have visit if you are in Palembang. (written by @Tyara).

And then review on another detinations is Benteng Kuto Besak:

"Good Place to taking photos. This is a historical site, you may read the history from the internet before you visit. The Location is

in the "musi" riverside, and very near to "Ampera" Bridge. In front of this site you can view a" musi" river, and find out 3-4 star restaurant near location (written by @Imam Maulana)".

The communication pattern in this virtual community will create a Virtual Traveler Communication Culture information control model like the following picture:

The first stage to become a member of TripAdvisor must register by Sign up via email or Facebook. Membership on this TripAdvisor community is free. To become a member of the Traveler community must first sign up to the TripAdvisor page, then click on the "Register Now!" Link. at the top of almost every TripAdvisor page.

The second stage we should follow the standard set by the admin and the values applicable to the site. The standard to follow is the rules for posting reviews and photos, filing and answering questions in a travel forum, and creating a travel planning folder. There are also rules for getting badges.

The Third stage is interact using global language that can be understood by users from all countries for example: people's names are replaced with accounts and one person can have more than one account, share opinions through typing text and emoticons, storage system in timeline while in the real world using the minutes, the discussion can be asynchronous means the question and answer can take place with the time
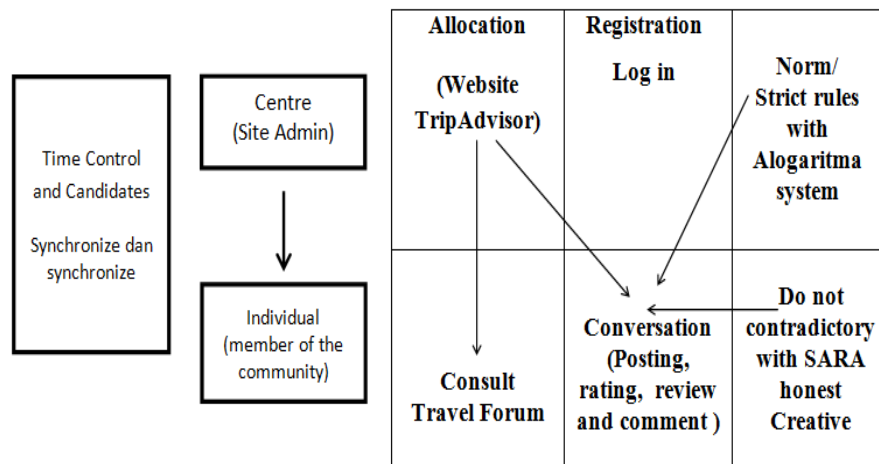

Fig. 1. The virtual traveler communication information control model
Adapted from Information Control Model [8]

difference and must be connected internet. Giving evaluation with non-verbal assessment of the form of circle symbols with the scale from 1 to 5 circles. Circle 1 is terrible, circle 2 is poor, circle 3 is average, circle 4 is very good and circle 5 is the best.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDA-TION

The findings of this study revealed that people who have the same interests can meet in cyberspace, although they are geographically and demographically in different places. In this study, it can be concluded that there is a change of communication behaviour in the real world community with the virtual community.

Virtual communication using low context culture. It means, texts and information are transparent, opened and honest. The specific of texts on the virtual communities are not using 5 W +1 H completely. This will push a reaction from the readers to involve in the conversation. That's finally creating interaction that is communication is low context meaning information and words are transparent, opened and honestly. Writing sentences on incomplete reviews such as news writing must complete with the 5 W + 1 H principle. Communication can take asynchronous means using the archive system, the response can take place with the time difference. Communication will take place when community members are connect with the internet.

There is special terminology used by the virtual traveler community which is understood by all users around the world, for example, emoticon for describe their felling of the situation or their feel of some experience. Also, traveller communities having a specific words to describe a travel destination, such as: good, very poor, dirty, very nice etc.

Interaction on the virtual community in the form of rating with a symbol of circle and post review and response from other members who can help travel community members to tourist destinations of Palembang. Another interaction was exchanging information on the Travel forum. Event though, there is still less community member interaction for text history tour in Palembang. Its impacts to their traveller, they believe in rating and post review of Tripadvisor to arrange their traveling.

The pattern of virtual communications among members should be follow the rules, which is determined by the Site admin and using a global technological language, accept by internet users.

The communication pattern in the virtual community are as follow (1) must register by sign up via email or Facebook, (2) must follow the administrator's norm and the values applicable to the site; (3) communication is done in global language technology that can be understood by all internet users such as English and emoticons and also rating.

Recommendations to virtual community members are recommended to read in detail through the help center to find out the norms and values applicable to the site. In addition, visitors have to write responses that suitable with the real because it will get a reprimand from the manager of the Tourist destination.

For administrator should add special features to develop interaction among the members and administrator so that when there is unclear information can be asked personally.

For Public Relations Palembang tourism office needs to use storytelling on historical tourist destinations that are published on the website and government social media in English so it appeals to tourists to visit and recount it to the members of the community.

These research will give some recommendation to Local Government Bodies especiall tourism offices to always update all information of heritage destination on their online sites and social medias. They also need to activate through local community events on that tourist location. So, the communities will make story telling about the destination. All activations will give some impact economically for Palembang residents and also giving education to the public.

This research based on interpretative perspective and only describe the behaviour of virtual communities. Conversation texts (usually called artefact) use as primary data and interview as secondary data. For next research, I will study more about power of virtual traveler community the internet to people trust and influence planning a trip.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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