Customer-to-Customer Real-Time Value Co-creation in Tourism Live Streaming: A Live Streamer Perspective

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Abstract. Live streaming has emerged as a new medium for the creation and dissemination of travel experiences, product marketing and destination promotion. Empirical studies on live streamers' motivations and travel behavior in tourism live streaming are currently under-explored. This study adopted a live streamer perspective and followed a qualitative approach to 1) explore the motivations and travel behaviour of live streamers in tourism, and 2) investigate the process of customer-to-customer real-time value co-creation of the live streamer with other stakeholders by drawing on the Porter-Lawler model. Findings provide in-depth understanding of live streamers' motivations for engaging in tourism live streaming and the influence of viewers on live streamers. Recommendations are also offered to tourism live streaming platforms regarding how to develop a better incentive strategy for live streamers.

Keywords: Live streamer · Travel behavior · Co-creation · Value · Customer to customer

1 Introduction

Live streaming has been increasingly used by online influencers, travel bloggers, travel agencies and tourism destination marketing organisations [1]. This is becoming an emerging channel for creating and disseminating travel experiences, selling products and promoting destinations [2]. Through live streaming platforms, anyone can live stream self-created content (i.e., become a streamer) or watch other people's live streams (i.e., become a viewer) in real time. Live streaming is becoming a new tool for content creators to share the scenery of the destination, interact with viewers and enrich their travel experiences in real time [3]. The integration of live streaming technology into the tourism sector is a major advancement in tourism experience development. Previous studies indicated that live streaming can provide the public with immediacy, intimacy, authenticity and interactivity by sharing online tourism experience [4]. However, empirical studies on live streamers' motivations and travel behavior are currently under-explored. This study

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This paper is an adaptation of the lead author's thesis.

adopted a live streamer perspective and followed a qualitative approach to 1) explore the motivations and travel behaviour of live streamers in tourism, and 2) investigate the process of customer-to-customer real-time value co-creation of the live streamer with other stakeholders by drawing on the Porter-Lawler model.

2 Literature Review

Social media has significantly transformed the way people interact and communicate with each other [5]. Social media can be seen as an extension of Web 2.0 concepts and technologies, facilitating the creation and distribution of user-generated content [5]. Traditional social media plays its part in the pre-travel, during-travel and post-travel stages of the traveler's journey [6]. For example, when travelers make pre-trip decisions, online information search channels consist of search engines such as Google, independent websites of tourism stakeholders, OTA websites such as Ctrip and travel user generated content (UGC) platforms such as TripAdvisor [6]. During and after the trip, individuals share their experiences through social media in the form of pictures and text descriptions [7].

Driven by 5G technology, travelers are beginning to flock to new media platforms that are more vivid, instant, shared and interactive, such as short video platforms and tourism live streaming platforms [8]. Tourism live streaming accompanies travelers throughout their whole travelling experience with its timely dissemination and real-time interaction [9]. The unanticipated pandemic became a booster for the growth of live streaming in the tourism industry [1]. Live streaming bridges the gap between on-the-go travelers and their family members and friends who are still quarantine at home to deliver virtual travel experiences in real time [3]. The unique and immersive scene in live streaming allows even non-travelers to follow the camera changes from the first-angle of view, as if they were visiting the destination themselves [4]. The subject of tourism live streaming is also becoming abundant, including but not limited to ordinary residents, tourists, key opinion leaders, tour guides, travel agencies, online travel companies and tourism destination governments. In response to the motivation and intention to share travel experiences in the form of texts and photos on social media, scholars have conducted studies using various theories, such as theory of reasoned action [10], self-determination theory [11], social influence theory [7], flow theory [12] and interaction ritual chain theory [9]. Existing research has been started shifting the focus from social media in general towards live streaming. The research is mainly concerned with three aspects of live streaming, live streamers and viewers. In terms of live streaming, existing research has mainly discussed the definition [4], characteristics [12], types [13], and stakeholders of live streaming [3]. In terms of viewers, scholars have mainly examined viewers' stickiness of live streaming platforms [12], motivations to watch [14] and shop [15], the influence of tourism live streaming on viewers' travel intention [16], psychological well-being [17] and trust and incentives of e-commerce live streaming platforms [18]. For live streamers, related studies have discussed the definition [2], motivations of live streamers [19], and sustainability of live streamers [20]. In the tourism sector, research on understanding the live streamers is still in its infancy. As a representative real-time value co-creation activity, the specific process of tourism live streaming has not yet been fully

revealed. Hence, the motivation of live-streamers to engage in tourism live-streaming activities and the process of customer-to-customer real-time value co-creation in tourism live streaming needs to be studied.

3 Methodology

This study aims to understand live streamers' travel behaviour and explore the customer-to-customer real-time value co-creation process in tourism live streaming. The current study followed a qualitative research approach, using a semi-structured interview to explore an in-depth individual experience. China is the pioneer of the live streaming industry [1]. All informants were recruited through purposive sampling method from Wechat Live Streaming, Douyin, Ctrip.com, and Mafengwo.com which are the leading and well-established tourism live streaming platforms in China. An inclusion criterion was set that informants had done tourism live streaming at least once in the past two years to ensure the depth of their experience. Data collection was undertaken between March 2023 and August 2023. In total, 36 semi-structured interviews were conducted. The average length of interviews was 50 min. The informants included 20 females and 16 males, aged between 20 and 50 years. On average, all informants did tourism live streaming twice a year. The interview protocol mainly comprised four parts: the motivation of doing tourism live streaming; the process of tourism live streaming; the experience of interacting with viewers during live streaming; and the differences in travel behaviour between do tourism live streaming and don't do tourism live streaming. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis.

4 Preliminary Results

The process of customer-to-customer real-time value co-creation in tourism live streaming is shown in Fig. 1. Tourism live streamers make live streaming preparations based on their own motivations, such as selecting a live streaming location and creating a live streaming script. Viewers interact with the live streamer by sending real-time comments based on the scene, content and voice presented in the live streaming. At the same time, based on real-time feedback from viewers, the live streamer senses whether the pre-live expectations are being met. If viewers send positive real-time comments to the live streamer and the live streaming statistics, such as the number of current viewers, minutes watched and total number of likes, meet the live streamer's expectations, the positive value is co-created through the real-time interaction between the tourism live streamer and the viewers. The tourism live streamer would do the enhancement for the live streaming according to the viewers' real-time positive comments. The positive value would contribute to the motivation of the live streamers for the next tourism live streaming. If viewers send negative real-time comments to the live streamer and the live streaming statistics don't meet the live streamer's expectations, the negative value is co-created through the real-time interaction. Some tourism live streamers have been able to reflect on negative comments from viewers in order to improve their live streaming. There are also some live streamers whose motivation to live streaming may be influenced by negative values, thus causing them to stop live streaming.
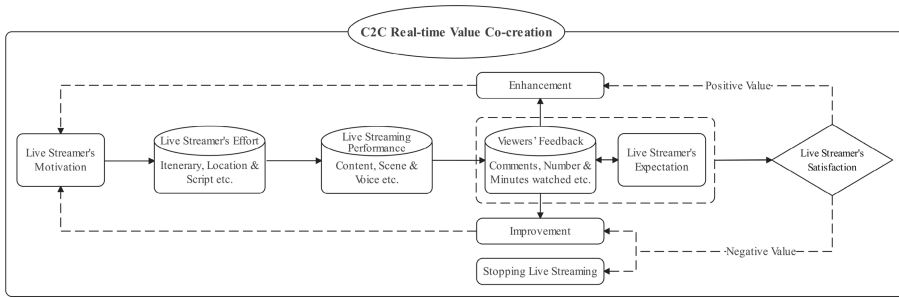
Fig. 1. Customer-to-customer real-time value co-creation in tourism live streaming

5 Discussion and Conclusion

This study explored live streamers' travel behaviour and delineated the process of customer-to-customer real-time value co-creation in tourism live streaming from the perspective of live streamer. Theoretically, this study extended the knowledge of live streamers' motivations for engaging in tourism live streaming. It not only demonstrates the real-time interactions between live streamers and viewers, but also reveals the influence of viewers on live streamers' travel behaviour. Previous research has only explored the motivations of live streamers to share their travel experiences on live streaming platforms [19]. This study further depicts the live streamers' motivation to engage in tourism live streaming as a dynamic, developing and flexible orientation or disposition, which is responsive to the inputs of viewer feedback. Practically, this study provided suggestions for tourism live streaming platform, which can develop a better incentive strategy for live streamers. For example, tourism live streaming platforms can offer virtual medals to be worn while live streaming for live streamers who interact positively with their viewers. The limitation of this study is that it only explores the process of customer-to-customer real-time value co-creation in tourism live streaming from the perspective of live streamers. Future research could consider exploring this phenomenon from the viewers' perspective, or from both live streamers' and viewers' perspectives.

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