

# An empirical study into tourists' adoption of live streaming video in sharing travel experience

Wang Jin

Zhengzhou University of Aeronautics, Zhengzhou, China  
wangjin@zua.edu.cn

**Abstract:** *With the development of high technology, especially the information technology, the majority of developed and developing countries have stepped into the digital era and the innovations based on the information technology have been regarded as the elements of the Third Industrial Revolution. The Internet has made the world smaller and smaller, and it is possible for everyone to communicate with people from each single corner in the world with the access to the Internet. In one word, both the whole business world and people's life have been greatly changed in the digital era. Social media is one of these new-created service concepts and become popular in remarkable speed. Social media has emerged along with the rise and spread of the Internet. This term is used with varying definitions by different scholars and researchers. The author's topic was clearly been exposed through live streaming video in sharing travel experience.*

**Keywords:** *live streaming; sharing travel experience; Self-satisfaction*

## 1. Introduction

Since the emergence of the first social media network, it has passed almost 20 years, and the improving technology has been supporting the continuous innovation and progress of the social media industry. And the year of 2016 has witnessed an explosion of a new type of social media function in the whole world, the live streaming video. And in Chinese market, the live streaming social media has become one of the most popular and profitable Internet sub-industries since 2016. It has been reported that there are more than 80 live streaming apps competing in this area. According to China Internet Network Information Center, the number of live-streaming users reached 325 million by June 2016, which is half of China's Internet users (Chen, 2016a) <sup>[1]</sup>. Chen (2016a) from CNBC reports some reasons among the fast popularity (Chen, 2016a) <sup>[1]</sup>. A big reason is that it offers a simple channel for people to express themselves and to spy into the lives of other people. A critical reason is that live streaming video offers a means for people to make easy money (Brant, 2016) <sup>[2]</sup>. As reported by Chen (2016a), one top streamer makes an income of nearly \$30,000 in less than one month <sup>[1]</sup>. Streamers first attract fans and followers via streaming their life, and then make money via selling goods and services to these fans and followers.

As mentioned before, the combination of the new techniques and the existing business or living activities is the most common application of Information technology, and there is a new trend of using live streaming service to share tourism experience on social media platforms. With the increase of the living quality, there are more and more Chinese people choosing tourism as their main activities for entertainment with their family and friends. And there are also an increasing number of Chinese people who are interested in the tourism and even become semi-professional tourists. Therefore, among the various topics of live streaming videos, tourism is one of the most popular topics and there are more and more video makers who would like to do the live streaming shares of their tourism experiences. And the online viewers on the live streaming platforms also have great passions on viewing the live tourism. Therefore, some tourism attractions and businesses would like to use the live streaming as the new tool for marketing communication purpose.

## 2. Motives of posting about travel experiences on social media

It is common for tourists to share their travel experiences in social media. There have been studies about why people uses social media (Vogel, 2016) <sup>[3]</sup>.

Travel selfies are common contents shared by tourists in their social media. Lyu (2016) examined

why tourists post selfies on social media<sup>[4]</sup>. Lyu (2016) finds that travel selfies are shared deliberately to create intended and desired impressions on viewers<sup>[4]</sup>. According to Lyu (2016), women tourists usually carefully select selfies and even edit them before posting on social media<sup>[4]</sup>. This is a process of self-objectification, where tourists objectify their outer appearances as objects reviewed and even rated by others. Tourists engage in strategic self-presentation so as to maintain high level of self-esteem and for feeling good (Fox & Rooney, 2015)<sup>[5]</sup>. In fact, selfie is found to carry cues of the personalities of those postings (Qiu & Zhu, 2015)<sup>[6]</sup>. What is more, when peers of a girl are showing attractive and beautiful selfies on social media, the girl is under peer pressure and peer comparison to post similar selfies. Sharing selfies helps obtaining peer recognition and a form of compliance with peer norms, which may be not healthy but are usually unavoidable (Chua & Chang, 2016)<sup>[7]</sup>. Sharing selfies is an effective tool for impression management, which is a key motive for using social media (Krämer & Winter, 2008)<sup>[8]</sup>.

Based on a sample of 543 tourists and the social influence theory, Kang and Schuett (2013) seeks to find out why tourists share their experiences on social media via using the tests a conceptual framework which examines why travelers share their travel experiences<sup>[9]</sup>. Kang and Schuett (2013) found that identification and internalization increases the contents and frequency of travel experience sharing on social media<sup>[9]</sup>. Under the social influence theory, identification occurs when a customer adopts a behavior to form a self-defined satisfying behavior with others. Internalization is that a customer accepts a behavior because this behavior itself is rewarding and satisfying.

### 3. Live-streaming for Tourism Industry

It has been reported that there are more than 200 live streaming apps competing in this area. According to China Internet Network Information Center, the number of live-streaming users reached 325 million by June 2016, which is half of China's internet users (Chen, 2016a)<sup>[1]</sup>.

Chen (2016a) from CNBC reports some reasons among the fast popularity<sup>[1]</sup>. A big reason is that it offers a simple channel for people to express themselves and to spy into the lives of other people. A critical reason is that live streaming video offers a means for people to make easy money (Brant, 2016)<sup>[2]</sup>. As reported by Chen (2016a), one top streamer makes an income of nearly \$30,000 in less than one month<sup>[1]</sup>. Streamers first attract fans and followers via streaming their life, and then make money via selling goods and services to these fans and followers. It could be seen that the popularity of live streaming in China is backed by strong economic motives of streamers. Thus, when it comes live streaming tourist experiences, there could be two types of live streamers, profiting and non-profiting.

As mentioned before, being inspired by the concept of Experience Economy, increasing the involvement and interaction of tourists during the tourism process has become one of hot trends in the tourism business, which has been regarded as the effective tool to improve the tourists' tourism experiences and increase their satisfactions on the tourism services. And the new technique of live-streaming video provides a new type of tool for enhancing the tourists' experiences during the tourism process. In current, although the tourism industry has been continuously increasing in recent 10 years, the competition between the main players who are providing the tourism services and products in the Chinese market has also become increasingly intense (Zhang & Li, 2017)<sup>[10]</sup>. Though the tourism service providers are ones of the earliest traditional businesses who started to use the Internet as their useful tools for selling products and conducting marketing communications, the resources and capabilities of existing Internet contents services have been occupied and fully used (Prebensen & Uysal, 2014)<sup>[11]</sup>. Therefore, it is necessary to develop new tools for further sales improvement, especially to enhance the involvement of the tourism experiences. And live-streaming tourism is one of the most promising and proper ones. By inviting the social media celebrities to have the tourism experiences and making live streaming videos on the popular live streaming platforms, the online users are expected to have more alive and entertaining understanding of the tourism services, which would attract their own interests in have the tourism experiences by themselves (Couture & Ouellet, 2015)<sup>[12]</sup>.

### 4. Research methods

There are two typical approaches for theory development, namely deduction and induction. The inductive approach seeks to build generalizations based on a few cases (Gill & Johnson, 2002)<sup>[13]</sup>. By comparison, the deductive approach is to apply generalizations to individual cases (Mitchell & Jolley, 2010)<sup>[14]</sup>. Currently, live streaming is new for tourists, and there are no mature theories about the

impacts of live streaming on tourist experiences. Thus, this dissertation research is inductive. It seeks to develop generalizations about the impacts of live streaming on tourist experiences on the basis of the sample tourists who are surveyed in this dissertation research.

## 5. Findings

### 5.1 Reasons Behind

When asked about why doing live streaming video online, the six participants who have had making live streaming tourism experiences provided similar reasons. Firstly, the live streaming makers who choose the tourism as the topic of their live streaming videos have abundant or unique resources of tourism experiences in general. For example, Ziyun and Xiaohua are living in the UK that is far away from China, and it is much easier for them to access the exotic sights, foods or even living style that would probably be attractive and interesting for Chinese online users. While Gang Liu is a professional tourist and Yuan Tian is a stewardess who is both travelling around and visiting different cities and countries quite frequently. Secondly, the live streaming makers stated that they would like to share. Sharing is very common as the main initial reason mentioned by the participants and they feel it valuable and interesting to provide the detailed and alive information for others on the tourism experiences. For example, Prisella said, "There are many Chinese online live streaming users who have not yet come to the United States, and I hope to share my experiences of living and travelling here", which is supported by Ziyun's answer. As a long-term resident living in Bournemouth, he also would like to introduce and promote it to the Chinese tourists by doing the live streaming videos. Thirdly, the live streaming is an "In" trend. Mentioned by several participants, another important reason for them to do the live streaming tourism is because that it is quite popular and they would like to be with the trend. "At the very beginning, I did the live streaming just because it is popular," said by Gang Liu and supported by Yuan Tian.

These findings supports that social media also meets the basic and fundamental needs of people, such as need for bonding and connections, and need for status and significance according to the work of [15].

Similar with the live streaming makers, the main reasons for watching the live streaming videos about tourism are also clear and commonly accepted by the live streaming views. There are also three main aspects about why they watch live streaming tourism provided by the participants. Firstly, it provides useful and alive information about the tourism attractions, foods, living style and so on. Seeking for new information and knowledge about the tourism destinations that they have not yet visited is the first important reason mentioned by the participants. Being interested in the tourism or the tourism fans, they would like to know more about the potential tourism destination for next trip, which could be the references in their own tourism plans. Weili Chen said, "it could feed my curiosity by watching the live streaming tourism in the places I have never been to," agreed by Liwei and Feifei, "what's more, I really got more information about the tourism destination, such as geographic, cultural and synoptic information." Secondly, it is more entertaining with the combination of interesting factors, such as beautiful tourism sights, good-looking live streaming makers and exotic foods. Apart from the contents of the live streaming tourism, the format of this new online entertainment is another reason mentioned by the participants why they are happy to watch the live streaming videos about tourism. Feifei said, "It is much more interesting to follow a handsome guy travelling around and could even talk to him, it is just so alive and real." And Weili agreed, "what could be more entertaining than the video with the alive host, beautiful sights and yummy foods?" Thirdly, it is much useful for killing time. Compared to the former more "meaningful" reasons that live streaming viewers choose to watch the live streaming videos, the last reason seems to be less positive but quite common. For great numbers of live streaming viewers, killing the boring spare time is the main initial reason for them to watch and participate the live streaming. In the past, they may be find some one-way entertainments, such as watching films or sitcoms, and now they choose the live streaming, as there are more resources and more interactive compared to the old ones, answered by Liwei, Feifei and Xi Chen.

These findings supports that social media was important for 27.9% of the tourists when searching for information about their upcoming trip. Pabel and Prideaux (2016) observed that the increase of social media as a tour information source is the result of growing popularity of smartphones and mobile Internet connectivity [16].

### **5.2 Effects of Tourism Live Streaming**

Regarding to what making the live streaming tourism videos brings to them, the participants commonly mentioned three aspects. The first one is the sense of accomplishment. Being attractive and popular among a certain group would help the person increase the sense of self-esteem, which could explain the fast development and penetration of different kinds of social media platform. By doing the live streaming tourism, the participants attract numbers of online viewers staying with them, listening to and watching them, which brought remarkable sense of accomplishment and made them feeling valuable for others. "I felt more confident and happier when I was doing live streaming videos in my tourism trips, as I would achieve so many positive and encouraging feedback from the online viewers. Although I do not know who they are and where they are," said by Ziyun. The second one is the economic achievement. As the main business mode, "Dashang" or sending virtual gifts to the live streaming makers is quite common and popular. While the virtual gifts need to purchased by real money and could be exchanged back to practical currency as well. Great amounts of online viewers would like to send the gifts to the live streamers to show their attitudes or feelings. Therefore, if the live streaming videos or the makers are attractive enough, they would probably obtain considerable economic achievement only by accepting the viewers' gifts. "I am glad to receive the gifts or the 'money' given by the viewers or my 'fans'," said by Prisella. The third one is that doing the live streaming would also enhance the impressions and feelings of the makers' own tourism experiences. "I really found doing this could help me to know and feel more about the tourism destinations, as I have to prepare for the live streaming contents before I start the trips, and what's more during the trip, I would be more open-minded and curious to find interesting things." Said by Xiaohua, and supported by Jinhui and Ziyun. This help builds social esteem according to Minazzi and Mauri (2015) [17].

As for the viewers of live streaming, the participants also claimed that they have achieved several things from the live streaming. And the most commonly mentioned ones are listed as follows. Firstly, the most upgraded information about the tourism destination or attractions could be achieved from the live streaming videos. Although there are great amounts of knowledge and information about the tourism attractions and places provided online, the timeliness of this information is questionable and in many cases, the out-of-data information has brought troubles and inconveniences for the tourists. For example, the sudden traffic tie-up because of unexpected events could not be informed to the tourists. On the contrary, the live streaming videos could provide the live information for the viewers. Secondly, the inter-personal communication with the live streaming makers as well as other online viewers is another interesting "gain" for them. "Although I have not had very frequent communications with the makers, it is interesting enough to see how others talk to the live streaming makers. Usually the viewers are also tourism fans, sometimes I would like to communicate with them about the feelings and attitudes towards the tourism attractions." Said by Liwei. Thirdly, it is an effective company for the online viewers. As mentioned before, for the live streaming viewers, the live steaming video is the new type of online entertainment for killing lonely time and the real-time interaction with a group people makes them feel being accompanied. People use social media social for interaction, information seeking, pass time, entertainment, relaxation, communicatory utility, convenience utility (Whiting & Williams,2013) [18].

### **5.3 The reason of why live streaming different**

As mentioned before, live streaming is a new format of online social media and it focuses on the loose social network. Before the emergence of live streaming social media platforms, there have already been several types of social media being used as the sharing platform of tourism experiences, such as photo-sharing social media and tourism forums. The key factors distinguished live streaming social media from other types of social media is another key research question in this research. And both the makers and the viewers of live streaming have been asked in the interviews.

Compared to the photo-sharing social media or video-sharing social media, such YouTube and Instagram, the live streaming social media have significant advantages from the makers' perspective. Firstly, the live streaming video is real time, which is the most important feature of live streaming. Because of its timeliness, the information provided in the video would be more valuable for the viewers, or it just makes them feeling good because of "being" with the makers at the moment. "For example, I could let the online viewers know, see and find out how things are exactly going on at this moment in the tourism attractions thousands of miles away from them." Said by Jinhui, agreed by Ziyun, Gang Liu and Prisella.

Secondly, the information in the live streaming video is more trustworthy and reliable. Compared to the edited photos, videos and articles about the tourism attractions and experiences, the live streaming videos are more real. Because when the authors edit the photos, videos and write the articles, they may try to make the tourism attractions or experiences more attractive and interesting, which may reduce the reliability of these contents. While for the live streaming, the contents cannot be edited or rewritten. "Live streaming could be more real, because we cannot just delete the bad side of the tourism attractions and keep the good parts, as everything is live." Said by Ziyun.

Thirdly, the live streaming is much more direct in communication. In the past, viewers on social media platforms have to wait for the responses from the contents makers who posted the photos or videos online and they cannot communicate in direct way. However, in the live streaming videos, viewers can directly express their attitudes or feelings about the videos by making comments or sending gifts, and the makers could also see the comments timely and could respond to the viewers directly. Xi Chen said, "the viewers could ask questions to the video makers directly and the video makers would also respond to these questions directly."

As for live streaming viewers, the participants also mentioned several differences distinguished from the photo sharing or video-sharing social media and the most important aspect is the sense of participation. In the past, the social media contents created and shared by the makers are well-edited and designed by the maker themselves, and the viewers could only view or watch the contents and make comments behind the contents. It makes the viewers feel far away from the makers and their tourism experiences. While in the live streaming videos, the viewers could not only see and listen to the makers, but also ask questions and make suggestions on the live contents directly and timely, which makes the viewers feel more sense of participation. "I think the live streaming is more entertaining cause there are more chances to participate into the topics and discussions." Said by Xi Chen. These findings supports that the difference of live streaming platforms with previous social media is that live streaming platforms allows one-side live video interaction between live streamers and their followers. The interaction between streamers and viewers are real-time, and like face-to-face without delays.

## 6. Suggestions on Further Research

As an exploratory research on the live steaming tourism that is a relevant new research field, this dissertation have achieved several reliable findings for further researches in this field, and several suggestions on the directions for further researches made as follows:

1) As mentioned before, the interactions among the video makers and video viewers are important for enhancing the effects on both sides, therefore what the specific features of the interactions are and how they have impacts on the video makers and viewers could be further researched.

2) Another important aspect in the live streaming tourism is the video content. The further researches could also focus on how the video contents could be improved to achieve better results.

3) In addition, because this dissertation is qualitative research and the research findings are not conclusive. Therefore, further quantitative researches could be conducted to verify the research findings by using a larger amount of quantitative data.

## References

[1] Chen, Q. (2016a) *China's live-streaming explosion: a game changer for all?* CNBC. 1 Dec. Available from: <http://www.cnbc.com/2016/12/01/chinas-live-streaming-explosion-a-game-changer-for-all.html> [Accessed: 20 December 2016].

[2] Brant, T. (2016) *China Censors Online Video Streaming*. PC Magazine. 5 June. Available from: <http://www.pcmag.com/news/349330/china-censors-online-video-streaming> [Accessed: 20 December 2016].

[3] Vogel, E. A. & Rose, J. P. (2016) *Self-reflection and interpersonal connection: Making the most of self-presentation on social media*. *Translational Issues in Psychological Science*. 2 (3), pp.294-302.

[4] Lyu, S. O. (2016) *Travel selfies on social media as objectified self-presentation*. *Tourism Management*. 54 pp.185-195. Available from: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0261517715300388>.

[5] Fox, J. & Rooney, M. C. (2015) *The Dark Triad and trait self-objectification as predictors of men's use and self-presentation behaviors on social networking sites*. *Personality & Individual Differences*. 76

pp.161-165.

[6] Qiu, L., Lu, J., Yang, S., Qu, W. & Zhu, T. (2015) *What does your selfie say about you? Computers in Human Behavior*. 52 pp.443-449. Available from: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0747563215004720>.

[7] Chua, T. H. H. & Chang, L. (2016) *Follow me and like my beautiful selfies: Singapore teenage girls' engagement in self-presentation and peer comparison on social media. Computers in Human Behavior*. 55, Part A pp.190-197. Available from: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0747563215301424>.

[8] Krämer, N. C. & Winter, S. (2008) *Impression Management 2.0: The Relationship of Self-Esteem, Extraversion, Self-Efficacy, and Self-Presentation Within Social Networking Sites. Journal of Media Psychology Theories Methods & Applications*. 20 (3), pp.106-116.

[9] Kang, M. & Schuett, M. A. (2013) *Determinants of Sharing Travel Experiences in Social Media. Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*. 30 (1-2), pp.93-107. Available from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2013.751237>.

[10] Zhang, J., Ito, N., Wu, W., & Li, Z. (2017). "Don't Let Me Think!" Chinese Adoption of Travel Information on Social Media: Moderating Effects of Self-disclosure. In *Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism 2017* (pp. 639-653). Springer, Cham.

[11] Prebensen, N. K., Chen, J. S., & Uysal, M. (Eds.). (2014). *Creating experience value in tourism*. London: Springer.

[12] Couture, A., Arcand, M., Sénécal, S., & Ouellet, J. F. (2015). *The influence of tourism innovativeness on online consumer behavior. Journal of Travel Research*, 54(1), 66-79.

[13] Gill, J. & Johnson, P. (2002) *Research methods for managers*. 3rd edn. London: Sage.

[14] Mitchell, M. L. & Jolley, J. M. (2010) *Research design explained*. 7th edn. London: Wadsworth.

[15] Toubia, O. & Stephen, A. T. (2011) *Intrinsic vs. Image-Related Utility in Social Media: Why do People Contribute Content to Twitter? Ssrn Electronic Journal*. 32 (3), pp.368-392.

[16] Pabel, A. & Prideaux, B. (2016) *Social media use in pre-trip planning by tourists visiting a small regional leisure destination. Journal of Vacation Marketing*. 22 (4), pp.335-348. Available from: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1356766715618998>.

[17] Minazzi, R. & Mauri, A. G. (2015) *Mobile Technologies Effects on Travel Behaviours and Experiences: A Preliminary Analysis*. In: TUSSYADIAH, I. & INVERSINI, A. (eds.) *2015 Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism 2015*. London: Springer.

[18] Whiting, A. & Williams, D. (2013) *Why people use social media: a uses and gratifications approach. Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*. 16 (4), pp.362-369.