TITLE: Does the Listener Matter? The Effects of Capitalization on Storytellers' Evaluations of Travel Memories

ABSTRACT

Despite existing studies on memorable tourism experiences that often involve interpersonal sharing, the broader question of how a *listener* could influence tourists' memories, including their evaluations of post-travel experiences and destination image, remains relatively unexplored. Interpersonal sharing with a listener could elicit a process called capitalization in which an individual (re)constructs details of an experience to make it more memorable. To address this gap, this research examines the effects of capitalization on travel memories (Study 1), and the influence of listener responsiveness on tourists' destination image (Study 2). This research reinforces the notion that separating the act of remembering from the act of sharing is difficult, and contributes to research on the malleability of travel memories by highlighting the influence of the listener's feedback in shaping tourists' memorable experiences. This research also provides relevant implications for tourism practitioners involved in service experiences and tourist relationship building.

KEYWORDS: tourism experience; destination image; impression management; storytelling; memorable experience; memory

INTRODUCTION

Facilitating memorable experiences for tourists is a fundamental characteristic of the tourism phenomenon (Ritchie and Crouch 2003). For destination marketing organizations (DMOs) and tourism planners, helping tourists construct, recollect, and share their memories is crucial for maintaining competitiveness and sustainability (Kim, Ritchie, and McCormick 2012). For tourists, sharing memories is an important aspect in enhancing the memorability of their trip as they remember, (re)create memories of their experiences, and (re)tell these memories to others through word-of-mouth (Tung and Ritchie 2011). As a result, a number of studies have investigated how tourists recollect their experiences in an effort to measure or identify elements that enabled those experiences to be particularly memorable (e.g., Cutler, Carmichael, and Doherty 2014; Tung et al. 2017). These studies often involved interpersonal sharing, where participants share stories of their travel memories to a listener or researcher.

Despite the breath of existing studies on memorable tourism experiences, the broader question of how a *listener* could affect tourists' memories, including tourists' evaluations of post-travel experiences and destination image after interpersonal sharing, remains relatively unexplored. The role of the listener is an important consideration as listeners, in their respective capacities as researchers or service providers, including tour guides, hotel staff, and other frontline marketers, frequently ask tourists to share their experiences and then provide immediate verbal and nonverbal (e.g., facial expressions and body language) feedback as an active audience. Research in social psychology suggests that the nature of such interpersonal sharing could elicit a process called capitalization in which an individual (re)constructs details of an experience to make it more memorable to the self and let others know about them to maximize the significance of the memory (Hirst and Echterhoff 2012; Reis et al. 2010). In this regard, the listener's

interaction with the tourist during interpersonal sharing could potentially affect the tourist's recollection of the travel experience and subsequent word-of-mouth.

In light of this gap, this research contributes to the tourism literature by examining the role of the listener and the effects of capitalization on tourists' travel memories through two experiments. To begin, the objective of Study 1 is to investigate whether interpersonal sharing with the presence of a listener could affect tourists' broader and overall post-trip evaluations of past experiences. In doing so, Study 1 seeks to assess whether capitalization increases tourists' perceived significance of their memories, in contrast to simply recollecting travel memories without the presence of a listener (e.g., a tourist could write a diary or reminisce about the experience in private).

After seeking initial evidence on the effects of capitalization from Study 1, the aim of Study 2 is to further examine three research questions that are more specific in nature. First, from the role of the listener: "how would the listener's responsiveness (i.e., generic or specific responsiveness) influence tourists' memories?" During interpersonal sharing, listeners could respond to the tourist with largely generic responses by showing basic appreciation, or they could convey more specific responses by tracking the narrative enthusiastically through paraphrasing and active listening. The extent to which capitalization occurs could potentially be affected by the nature of the listener's responsiveness during interpersonal sharing (Bavelas, Coates, and Johnson 2000).

Second, from the tourist's perspective: "would tourists also maximize the details of negative travel experiences?" While Study 1 seeks to demonstrate that capitalization occurs for positive memories, the question of whether tourists would also maximize the details of a negative experience during interpersonal sharing is unexplored. Finally, Study 2 adds another

measure to investigate the causal effects of capitalization by assessing tourists' post-trip evaluations of destination image (Stylos et al. 2016). The theoretical significance of this additional perspective lies in demonstrating that capitalization through interpersonal sharing influences more than just general impressions of the trip. While Study 1 assesses rather broad-based evaluations of post-travel experiences (e.g., overall experience was memorable and exciting), Study 2 examines whether capitalization could also influence tourists' evaluations of highly-specific details in memory, including cognitive destination attributes and affective elements. Taken together, Study 1 and Study 2 seek to contribute to the literature by highlighting the dynamics involved in interpersonal sharing with practical implications that are relevant for DMOs and tourism practitioners involved in service experiences and tourist relationship building.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Memorable experiences and malleability of travel memories

The essence of tourism is the development and facilitation of memorable tourism experiences (Ritchie, Tung, and Ritchie 2011). For tourism practitioners, understanding how tourists recollect and share their memories is crucial given the implications of remembered experiences on desires to repeat an experience, satisfaction, and positive word-of-mouth (Barnes, Mattsson, and Sørensen 2016). Previous studies that have investigated tourists' memories often involved interpersonal sharing where participants shared stories of their travel memories to a listener or researcher (Tung and Ritchie 2011). Cutler, Carmichael and Doherty (2014) explored the experience of hiking the Inca Trail in Peru along with the experience of Machu Picchu by using post trip in-depth interviews to capture tourist memories. Park and Santos (2017) adopted a sequential data collection process using interviews and observation field notes from pre-travel to onsite and post-travel to explore the elements comprising memorable experiences of Korean backpackers in Europe.

Research in memory recollection suggests that acts of remembering and sharing could be subjected to distortions as travel memories are highly malleable. For example, tourists' memories could be altered by information they receive after their trip. Using a false memory paradigm from cognitive psychology, Braun-LaTour, Grinley and Loftus (2006) assessed whether external information sources could distort how tourists remember their past. The authors found that post-experience information from advertising or word-of-mouth could change tourists' personal memories of their visit as well as their overall semantic knowledge of the destination.

Recent studies further suggest that the act of sharing tourism experiences could affect tourists' post-trip evaluations of their experiences. For instance, Kim and Fesenmaier (2017) investigated the effects of sharing travel experiences on social media on tourists' post-trip evaluations, and examined the causal relationships between sharing, and the moderator (i.e., positive versus negative experience) on tourists' emotions and trip evaluations. Their results suggest that sharing positive post-trip experiences on social media could increase tourists' positive affect but decrease negative affect, thereby leading to more positive overall evaluations. Additionally, the authors found that sharing unsatisfactory tourism experiences through social media reduces negative views of the trip and enhances post-travel evaluations.

Despite this breadth of existing literature, the role of the listener during the act of interpersonal sharing on tourists' subsequent evaluations of post-travel memories remains relatively unexplored. Research in social psychology suggests that interpersonal sharing in the presence of a listener could elicit a process called capitalization in which individuals may alter their memories when they retell their experiences to others (Hirst and Echterhoff 2012; Reis et al. 2010). In this regard, the present research extends the above line of inquiry into the malleability of travel memories by accounting for an important way in which travel experiences are shared (i.e., through interpersonal sharing) and its effects on tourists' recollections, including their post-trip evaluations, and cognitive and affective images of the destination.

Capitalization of travel memories

There are several theoretical concepts that are relevant in the process of capitalization: impression management, self-perception theory, and social comparison theory. Impression management refers to the tendency for individuals to establish and present themselves positively

in front of others (Leary and Kowalski 1990). In the presence of others, individuals may maximize the significance of their experience to enhance self-evaluations and desired social identities (Crocker and Park 2004). Impression management can also motivate individuals to alter their behaviors to present themselves in a positive light (White and Dahl 2007). Additionally, self-perceptions may influence the degree to which individuals maximize the significance of a memorable experience. Self-perception theory suggests that individuals could evaluate their attitudes towards an experience by observing their own behaviors towards it (Bem 1972). For example, individuals could evaluate memories of their past tourism experiences more positively or negatively because they chose to share those memories with a listener (e.g., "I chose to describe this travel memory; therefore, this experience must be truly wonderful or terrible").

The extent to which capitalization occurs from impression management and self-perceptions could be affected by the listener's response. The response could be verbal and/or nonverbal, and could depend on whether the listener is engaged with the tourist in a real, physical space or represented through an online presence. In a strict online presence as per typical social media platforms, facial expressions and body language from both the listener and tourist are usually removed from the interpersonal interaction. In these cases, a listener could be engaging nonverbally with a tourist in the capacity of a marketer or service provider when tourists provide positive or negative comments about their experiences. These listeners or marketers could respond with generic, prepared feedback to enhance the effects of positive memories, or attempt to reduce the impact of negative experiences. For example, Wang, Kirillova, and Lehto (2017) investigated the effects of different marketing messages and the role of counterfactual thinking for improving tourists' attitudes towards a destination in the case of

unsatisfying tourism experiences. In their experiment, participants were exposed to a scenario of a negative experience and presented with three different counterfactual thinking conditions (i.e., upward, downward, and none) and one of the four different message types. User-generated messages, and in particular, messages with emotional appeal, were more effective than destination-generated or rational messages. These results demonstrated the effects of planned communication messages from the listener on the malleability of tourists' memories.

In contrast to the above, facial expressions and body language are critical during face-to face, interpersonal sharing (Bavelas, Coates, and Johnson 2000). During this type of interpersonal sharing, a listener may respond unenthusiastically, showing benign disinterest in the story, or respond with specific interest, which could be perceived by the tourist as recognizing and appreciating the experience. Real-time, specific, and constructive responses from both verbal and nonverbal cues could reinforce the efforts taken by tourists as they try to establish and maintain a positive social identity in the physical presence of others. Furthermore, the identity of the listener in relation to the tourist also matters during this interaction as this relationship could influence the tendency for the individual to maximize an experience and present themselves in a positive light. This relationship is informed by social comparison theory (Festinger 1954).

According to social comparison theory, individuals often evaluate themselves by comparing themselves to others especially to those they perceive as sharing similar characteristics. Individuals could (re)assess their own experiences, beliefs, and abilities based on the responsiveness they receive from listeners, who are seen as important peers during interpersonal sharing (Suls, Martin, and Wheeler 2002). Social comparison theory further suggests that individuals have two opposing needs that they strive to retain in balance:

assimilation and similarity with others, and differentiation and distinctiveness from others

(Festinger 1954). Optimal distinctiveness can be achieved by identifying with an in-group, and

individuals are likely to seek validation from others who are expected to approve of their views

(Reis et al. 2010). Since validation from individuals is oftentimes a critical motivation for social

comparison, tourists could be motivated to enhance their memorable experiences by sharing and

initiating an interaction with another person where acknowledgement, responsiveness, and

feedback are expected and reciprocated between them (Gable et al. 2004).

METHODOLOGY

The goal of this research is to examine the role of the listener and the effects of capitalization on tourists' travel memories. Study 1 begins by investigating whether interpersonal sharing with the presence of a listener could affect tourists' broader and overall post-trip evaluations of past experiences. Study 1 posits that interpersonal sharing with a listener – instead of recollecting a travel memory via writing a diary or reminiscing the trip in private – enhances post-trip evaluations of the experience.

Hypothesis 1: Tourists who share a positive travel memory with a listener will evaluate their post-trip experience more favorably than tourists who write a diary or reminisce about their trip in private.

Study 1

Participants and design

65 participants were recruited to participate in a between-subjects experimental design with three levels: sharing, diary, and reminisce (i.e., 43 females, 22 males; 56.9% of participants between the age of 18-24, and 36.9% between the age of 25-34; 75.4% undergraduates). Participants also had recent travel experience (i.e., 78.5% took four or more trips in the last three years). They were primarily recruited at a large university in Asia across various locations on campus; for example, participants were approached at a cafeteria while others were invited outside lecture halls. Participants mostly included students, faculty, and general and administrative staff of Chinese ethnicity. They were told that the study involved listening and learning about their memorable tourism experience. A gift card, equivalent to approximately US $3, at a coffee shop was offered as an incentive for participation, and the proportion of those

approached who agreed to participate was approximately 80%. Participants shared their memorable experience at various settings, such as cafeteria and coffee shops, that they considered more comfortable than a formal office environment. Two members of the research team (i.e., one younger female and one older male who both speak English and Chinese, and of Chinese ethnicity) acted as the listeners, and each member made an effort to recruit participants with demographics similar to themselves as the listener's characteristics, such as gender, age, and ethnicity, could influence how participants see themselves and share their stories (Reis et al. 2010; Suls, Martin, and Wheeler 2002).

Procedure

At the beginning of the study, all participants were provided with the following instructions to recollect a positive travel experience based on an autobiographical memory recall procedure. This procedure was informed by psychology research on interpersonal sharing (Reis et al. 2010) but modified to suit the context of this study.

> "Please take a moment to think about three positive, memorable trips that you took within the last 2 years. These trips can include leisure or business trips, long haul or short haul, individual or group tours, and so on."

Participants were then asked to rank how well they remember each trip (i.e., rank 1 as the most memorable). To avoid ceiling effects from memory recall (Reis et al. 2010), only the second ranked experience was selected and participants were asked to evaluate their post-trip experience based on the scale from Kim and Fesenmaier (2017). This scale included eight items

rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) (e.g., my experience was entertaining; my experience was memorable).

Next, participants were randomly assigned to one of the three conditions. All conditions were arranged to last for about 10 minutes. Participants in the "sharing" condition were asked to discuss the focal event with a listener (i.e., a member of the research team). The listener responded with active and enthusiastic feedback, including non-verbal cues such as nodding, acknowledging, and making eye contact with participants while keeping an open posture. Participants in the "diary" condition were asked to write an essay diary about their focal trip that no one is expected to see. Participants in the "reminisce" condition were asked to recollect about their focal trip without writing or discussing the event with anyone.

After completing the activities, participants were asked to reassess their post-trip experience, and their current mood based on the Brief Mood Introspection Scale (BMIS) (Mayer and Gaschke 1988) that consists of eight positive (i.e., happy) and eight negative (i.e., grouchy) mood adjectives scored from 1 (definitely do not feel) to 4 (definitely feel). The purpose of measuring mood is to control for mood-based explanations such as emotional contagion that may affect the results after the interaction. Emotional contagion refers to the transfer of emotional states between individuals, leading one individual (e.g., the storyteller in the context of this research) to experience similar positive or negative emotions as another individual (e.g., the listener) given that the listener in the sharing condition responded with active and enthusiastic feedback (Kramer, Guillory, and Hancock 2014). By including measures of mood as covariates, this study intends to demonstrate that the effect of capitalization goes beyond elevated affect that may occur between individuals during interpersonal sharing.

Participants in the "sharing" condition were also asked to rate the listener with an adapted version of the 12-item Perceived Responses to Capitalization Attempts (PRCA) scale (Gable et al. 2004). This scale assesses four response types to capitalization attempts: the first and second types reflect constructive responses from the listener (i.e., active-constructive, expressing enthusiastic/positive support, and passive-constructive, showing benign disinterest) while the third and fourth types reflect destructive responses (i.e., active-destructive, expressing derogatory responses, and passive-destructive, distancing and otherwise failing to respond). Each item was rated from 1 (not at all true of our interaction) to 7 (very true of our interaction).

Results

The composite reliability of the eight-item measure of post-trip experience from Kim and Fesenmaier (2017) are .826 (pre-manipulation) and .784 (post-manipulation), which are greater than .70 (Nunnally 1978). This suggests that the scale is acceptable both before and after the manipulation in this experiment.

To compare the effects of the manipulations on post-trip evaluations of the focal experience, three change scores were computed by subtracting the composite pre-manipulation rating (sharing condition $M = 5.32$; diary condition $M = 5.50$; reminisce condition $M = 5.95$) from the composite post-manipulation rating (sharing condition $M = 5.92$; diary condition $M = 5.72$; reminisce condition $M = 6.08$). This difference served as the dependent variable, with positive values indicating greater increases in positivity from pre-manipulation to post-manipulation for the travel memory (see Table 1). By calculating change scores, the results took into account the potential post-manipulation biases (e.g., participants who tend to rate higher in a pre-test would likely rate higher in the post-test while others who tend to rate closer to the

midpoint in a pre-test would continue to rate closer to the midpoint in the post-test) that extended from the pre-manipulation responses such that the differences between them would reflect the actual effects of the specific manipulations on travel memory despite differences in pre-manipulation group means.

--- Insert Table 1 here ---

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to assess the effects of the manipulations with post-hoc comparisons using Fisher's LSD (see Figure 1). Significant differences were found among conditions, $F(2, 62) = 8.800$, $p < .001$, and the change score of the sharing condition ($M = .60$) was significantly higher than the change scores of the diary ($M = .22$) and reminisce conditions ($M = .13$). However, the difference between the change scores of the diary and reminisce conditions was insignificant.

--- Insert Figure 1 here ---

Participants in the "sharing" condition also rated the listener with the PRCA scale (Gable et al. 2004) (see Table 2). They perceived the listener as responding significantly more constructively ($M = 5.78$, $SD = .75$) than destructively ($M = 3.30$, $SD = .72$), $t(23) = 14.490$, $p < .001$. Participants' evaluation of the listener's active-constructive responses was further compared with each of the three other feedback types. Participants evaluated the listener as responding with higher ratings on active-constructiveness (e.g., enthusiasm) ($M = 5.83$, $SD = .63$) and passive-constructiveness ($M = 5.72$, $SD = 1.00$) than active-destructiveness ($M = 4.92$, $SD =$

1.10) and passive-destructiveness (M = 1.68, SD = .76). These result suggests the presence of constructive capitalization attempts in the "sharing" condition.

--- Insert Table 2 here ---

Finally, one-way ANOVA was also conducted with post-hoc comparisons using Fisher's LSD with participants' responses to the BMIS measure to examine possible differences in mood among conditions (Mayer and Gaschke 1988) (see Table 3). The results indicate insignificant differences among the conditions for both positive (i.e., sharing condition M = 3.26; diary condition M = 3.04; reminisce condition M = 3.01; F (2, 62) = 1.916, p = .156) and negative mood (i.e., sharing condition M = 1.46; diary condition M = 1.55; reminisce condition M = 1.69; F (2, 62) = 1.245, p = .295). The effects of these conditions on travel memory change remained significant after covarying for overall mood, F (2, 61) = 9.328, p < .001. Furthermore, the results remained significant when controlling separately for positive mood, F (2, 61) = 7.892, p = .001, and negative mood, F (2, 61) = 8.706, p < .001.

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Brief discussion of Study 1 and introduction to Study 2

Study 1 provides initial evidence that interpersonal sharing with a listener – instead of recollecting a travel memory via writing a diary or reminiscing the trip in private – enhances post-trip evaluations of the experience. The participant perceived the listener as responding

constructively, and capitalization occurred as the participant retold a travel experience that influenced his/her later impressions of the memory.

While Study 1 examined the sharing of a positive experience, Study 2 investigates whether the effects of capitalization on post-travel evaluations would differ if tourists share a negative travel experience instead. Capitalization suggests that individuals would seek to maximize an experience to a listener during interpersonal sharing, and while such maximization could enhance positive memories, it could potentially heighten emphasis on the details of a negative experience as well.

Additionally, Study 2 examines the influence of listener responsiveness during interpersonal sharing under which capitalization occurs. During interpersonal sharing, listeners could respond with largely generic responses to the story (e.g., "great" and "sounds fun") by showing basic and polite appreciation to the tourist, or they could convey much more specific responses by tracking the narrative enthusiastically and actively reflecting on the individual's experience through paraphrasing and asking follow-up questions (Bavelas et al. 2000).

Finally, while Study 1 assessed broader evaluations of post-travel experiences (e.g., overall tourism experience was entertaining and memorable), Study 2 adds another measure to investigate the causal effects of capitalization and posits that capitalization could also influence tourists' evaluations of highly-specific details in memory, including cognitive destination attributes and affective elements (Stylos et al. 2016).

Hypothesis 2a: Tourists who share a positive experience with a listener will seek to maximize the favorable aspects of their travel memory while tourists who share a negative experience will seek to emphasize the negative details of their trip.

Hypothesis 2b: Listeners who provide specific responses will enhance tourists' positive memories (or worsen tourists' evaluations of negative experiences) than listeners who simply provide generic responses during interpersonal sharing.

Hypothesis 2c: Tourists will enhance (or worsen, in the case of negative experiences) their evaluations of highly-specific details in memory, including cognitive destination attributes and affective elements, during interpersonal sharing.

Study 2

Study 2 examines the effects of capitalization on overall post-trip evaluations as well as destination image (e.g., cognitive and affective images) by considering the influence of the listener's responsiveness and focal memory via a 2 (focal memory: positive versus negative) x 2 (listener responsiveness: generic versus specific) between-subjects experimental design.

Participants and design

108 participants were recruited to participate in this experiment (i.e., 52 females, 56 males; 66.7% of participants between the age of 18-24 and 32.4% between the age of 25-34; 48.1% undergraduates). Participants also had recent travel experience (i.e., 39.8% took four to six trips while 38.9% took more than six trips in the last three years). Similar to Study 1, participants were recruited at a large university in Asia across various locations on campus and mostly included students, faculty, and general and administrative staff of Chinese ethnicity. They were told that the study involved listening and learning about their memorable tourism experience. A gift card of approximately US $3 at a coffee shop was offered as an incentive for participation.

Participants shared their memorable experience at various settings, and again, members of the research team (i.e., the listener) made an effort to recruit participants with demographics similar to themselves as the listener's characteristics could influence how participants see themselves and share their stories (Reis et al. 2010; Suls, Martin, and Wheeler 2002).

Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions (see Figure 2). Participants in the "focal memory: positive" condition were asked to recollect a positive travel experience based on the autobiographical memory recall procedure as per Study 1. Participants in the "focal memory: negative" condition followed similar instructions albeit the recollection of a negative experience. Again, participants were asked to rank how well they remember each trip, and only the second ranked experience was selected for this experiment to avoid ceiling effects from memory recall. All participants were asked to evaluate their overall experience as per Study 1 as well as their cognitive and affective images of the destination (i.e., pre-interaction evaluation). Affective image included four items: unpleasant to pleasant, gloomy to exciting, distressing to relaxing, and sleepy to arousing, each anchored from 1 to 7, respectively (Stylos et al. 2016). Cognitive image covered a total of 13 items, reflecting destination attributes such as culture, infrastructure, climate, and nature on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) (Baloglu and Mangaloglu 2001).

Next, participants were asked to share their experience with a listener (e.g., a member of the research team). They were randomly assigned to receive generic or specific responsive feedback throughout the interaction following the procedures in Bavelas et al. (2000). For participants in the "Listener responsiveness: generic" condition, the listener responded with

verbal feedback that contained largely generic responses such as "this sounds fun" (i.e., in response to a positive experience) or "I am sorry to hear that" (i.e., in response to a negative experience). In a sense, these generic responses are not particularly specific or connected to participants' tourism experiences as they could be appropriate to a wide range of stories. Nonverbal feedback in this condition also included nodding and an open posture.

For participants in the condition, "Listener responsiveness: specific", the listener showed deeper interest in the story and tracked the participant's narrative very closely. In addition to providing enthusiastic non-verbal feedback such as nodding and maintaining eye contact with participants, the listener also actively reflected on the participant's story by commenting on the details of the narrative. For example, the listener reflected on the tourist's experience: "the (name of the destination) you mentioned sounds different from what I would expect", and "I would like to try out (the activity mentioned by the participant) and see for myself." The listener also paraphrased during the interaction (e.g., "it sounds like you took this trip to escape from routine life") and asked follow-up questions to better connect to the content of the story (e.g., "why did you choose (name of the destination)?") While the specificities of these responses could vary among interactions, the above examples were conveyed to participants to present the researcher as an active listener.

After sharing their narratives, all participants were asked to re-assess their overall experience as well as their cognitive and affective images of their destination experience (i.e., post-interaction evaluation). Participants also evaluate their current mood based on the BMIS measure (Mayer and Gaschke 1988) to control for mood-based explanations and rated the listener with an adapted version of the 12-item PRCA scale as per Study 1 (Gable et al. 2004).

--- Insert Figure 2 here ---

Results

Manipulation check

Several assessments were used to triangulate the manipulation of listener responsiveness. First, participants' post-interaction PRCA ratings of the listener's perceived constructiveness (e.g., enthusiastic responses) ($\alpha = .79$) versus destructiveness (e.g., derogatory and distancing responses) ($\alpha = .78$) were compared. Participants perceived the listener as responding significantly more constructively ($M = 5.28$, $SD = .87$) than destructively ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 1.09$), $t(107) = 19.345$, $p < .001$. Second, participants' evaluation of the listener's active-constructive response was compared with each of the three other feedback types. Participants evaluated the listener as responding with higher ratings on active-constructiveness (e.g., enthusiasm) ($M = 5.61$, $SD = .88$) than passive-constructiveness ($M = 4.95$, $SD = 1.18$), active-destructiveness ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 1.51$), and passive-destructiveness ($M = 2.31$, $SD = 1.30$). Third, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) indicated no significant differences in evaluations of these response types between focal memory conditions (i.e., positive or negative memories), but significantly higher ratings of active-constructiveness for participants in the "Listener responsiveness: specific" condition ($M = 5.90$, $SD = .76$) than participants in the "Listener responsiveness: generic" condition ($M = 5.29$, $SD = .88$), $t(106)$, $p < .001$. Taken together, the results provide support to the responsive feedback manipulation as participants perceived the listener as responsive in both focal memory conditions (i.e., positive and negative experiences), as well as more active and constructive in the "listener responsiveness: specific" condition than

the "generic" condition.

Post-trip evaluations of the overall experience

The composite reliability of the eight-item measure of post-trip experience from Kim and Fesenmaier (2017) are .89 (pre-interaction) and .94 (post-interaction), which are greater than .70 (Nunnally 1978). This suggests that the scale is acceptable both before and after the interaction.

To compare the effects of the interaction (i.e., generic versus specific) on post-trip evaluations of the focal experience, change scores were computed for both positive and negative memories by subtracting the composite pre-interaction rating from the composite post-interaction rating. The results indicate significant differences in the change scores for positive memories between the generic and specific responsiveness conditions from pre-interaction (Generic M = 5.63; Specific M = 5.85) to post-interaction (Generic M = 5.55; Specific M = 6.00), t (57) = 2.403, p = .020. However, there were insignificant differences in the change scores for negative memories between the generic and specific responsiveness conditions from pre-interaction (Generic M = 4.40; Specific M = 3.85) to post-interaction (Generic M = 4.30; Specific M = 3.84), t (47) = -.458, p = .649.

Assessment of measurement structure for destination image

Participants were asked to assess the cognitive and affective destination image components of their focal memory before and after sharing their experience with the listener. Participants evaluated three factors of cognitive image: comfort/security, cultural attractions, and natural state (Baloglu and Mangaloglu 2001). The composite reliability for cognitive image is .89 (pre-interaction) and .93 (post-interaction) (e.g., the reliability scores for each factor of

cognitive image, pre-interaction are: comfort/security α = .85, cultural appeal α = .82, natural

state α = .82; post-interaction: comfort/security α = .89, cultural appeal α = .89, natural state α

= .85). The composite reliability scores for the affective component are .91 (pre-interaction)

and .94 (post-interaction). These reliability scores are greater than .80, suggesting acceptable

reliability for both composite measures of cognitive and affective image, before and after the

interaction.

Changes in pre- and post-evaluations of destination image

To compare the effects of the listener responsiveness manipulation on pre- and post-

evaluations of destination image, change scores were computed by subtracting the pre-interaction

rating from the post-interaction rating separately for both cognitive and affective components.

The differences served as the dependent variables, with positive values indicating greater

increases in positivity from pre-interaction to post-interaction in cognitive and affective image

for the focal memory.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to assess focal memory and

listener responsiveness on the change scores (post minus pre) of cognitive and affective image

(see Table 4).

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The results indicate a significant effect for the focal memory condition (i.e., positive or

negative) on cognitive and affective image (Wilks' λ = .838), $F(2, 103) = 9.978$, $p < .001$.

Participants who shared a positive memory conveyed increases in change scores for both

cognitive ($M = .151$) and affective images ($M = .245$); in contrast, participants who shared a

negative travel experience reported decreases from pre- to post-interaction for both cognitive (M = -.071) and affective components (M = -.028) (see Figure 3). However, there is an insignificant effect from the listener responsiveness conditions (i.e., generic versus specific) on cognitive and affective image (Wilks' λ = .955), F (2, 103) = 2.286, p = .107.

--- Insert Figure 3 here ---

Finally, a 2 (focal memory: positive versus negative) x 2 (listener responsiveness: generic versus specific) ANOVA was conducted with participants' responses to the BMIS measure to examine possible differences in mood among the four conditions (Mayer and Gaschke 1988). The results indicate insignificant main effects for focal memory (i.e., positive memory M = 2.27; negative memory M = 2.33; F (1, 104) = 1.737, p = .190), and listener responsiveness (i.e., generic responsiveness M = 2.30; specific responsiveness M = 2.30; F (1, 104) = .010, p = .920). The results suggest that participants among the four conditions were not in significantly different moods, positively or negatively, after the interaction. The effects of focal memory condition (i.e., positive or negative) remained significant after covarying for overall mood on both cognitive image change, F (1, 103) = 16.132, p < .001, and affective image change, F (1, 103) = 9.789, p = .002. The results remained significant for cognitive image change when controlling separately for positive mood, F (1, 103) = 15.157, p < .001, and negative mood, F (1, 103) = 14.883, p < .001. They also remained significant for affective image change when controlling separately for positive mood, F (1, 103) = 8.841, p = .004, and negative mood, F (1, 103) = 9.978, p = .002. These results suggest that the effects of capitalization were not simply due to elevated mood.

Follow-up mediation analysis

A follow-up mediation analysis was conducted to demonstrate that storytellers' evaluations of travel memories could be mediated by the extent to which they perceived capitalization attempts to be active and constructive (as measured by the PRCA scale). The effects of listener responsiveness (i.e., coded 0 = generic and 1 = specific) on changes in post-trip evaluations through capitalization were examined with bootstrapping of 1,000 iterations (Preacher and Hayes 2008). The effect of listener responsiveness on capitalization was significant, $\beta = 0.61$, $t\,(106) = 3.84$, $p < .001$). Additionally, capitalization significantly predicted changes in post-trip evaluations of the experience ($\beta = 0.17$, $p < .005$) (CI: .0304 – .2269). The effect of listener responsiveness on post-trip evaluations was no longer significant in the mediated analysis ($\beta = .06$, p = .57). Overall, the results suggest that capitalization mediates the relationship between listener responsiveness and changes in tourists' post-trip evaluations after interpersonal sharing.

Brief discussion of Study 2

Study 2 demonstrates that the effects of capitalization on post-trip evaluations of destination image depends on whether tourists share a positive or negative travel memory. Interestingly, the findings show that tourists not only enhanced their evaluations of a positive memory, but they also maximized the details of a negative experience, thereby worsening their subsequent assessments of the cognitive and affective images of the destination. The findings also highlight the role of the listener, demonstrating that listeners who provide specific feedback and active responses during interpersonal sharing could significantly enhance tourists' impressions of their overall positive experiences. In contrast to broader evaluations of post-

travel experiences, the type of listener responsiveness (i.e., generic versus specific) did not significantly improve or worsen individuals' memories of more intrinsic details related to cognitive and affective destination image.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

This research shows that the act of sharing a memory with another individual could elicit a process called capitalization, and the two experiments provided causal evidence of the effects on tourists' post-travel memories when they sought to maximize the significance of their experiences to a listener. Study 1 began by broadly showing that recounting a positive travel memory to a listener could lead to increased ratings of the positivity of that experience. In contrast, recalling the travel memory by writing a diary or reminiscing in private did not produce a comparable increase in post-trip evaluations. Study 2 delved further, and demonstrated that interpersonal sharing could also influence tourists' recollections – both positively and negatively – of more specific details in memory, including their cognitive and affective images of the destination. Study 2 also contrasted an active and specific listening type with a more passive and general style of listener feedback. The results indicate that specific responsiveness could enhance broader memories of positive tourism experiences. However, listener responsiveness did not boost (or reduce, in the case of negative experiences) memories of highly-specific details of destination image after the interaction.

Theoretical contributions

The findings of this research are theoretically important because observing increases in post-travel evaluations, as well as declines in the case of sharing negative experiences in cognitive and affective destination images, shows that the sincere and simple act of listening to tourists' stories can help them savor their travel memories. These findings are related, yet distinct, from prior consumer behavior research that investigated how language could influence storytellers' evaluations of and intentions to repeat, recommend, and retell stories about their

experiences (Moore 2012). By assessing different levels of explanatory language from reviews of books and written stories, Moore (2012) found that explanatory language in WOM dampened evaluations of hedonic experiences, but increased individuals' intentions to retell stories about positive utilitarian experiences. Moore (2012) highlighted the importance of WOM and demonstrated its impact on storytellers for different types of consumption experiences. In this regard, the present research reinforces the notion that the act of remembering is difficult to be separated from the act of sharing (Hirst and Echterhoff 2012), and also extends from consumer behavior research on written WOM by demonstrating that through interpersonal storytelling, tourists are remembering and sharing memories of their trips while simultaneously (re)creating and (re)evaluating their post-travel experiences in the presence of a listener (Tung et al. 2017).

This research also adds to the existing line of research on the malleability of travel memories by highlighting the influence of the listener's feedback in shaping tourists' memorable experiences (Braun-LaTour, Grinley, and Loftus 2006; Kim and Fesenmaier 2017). Further to Study 1, which provides initial evidence that the presence of a listener can positively benefit post-trip recollections, the findings in Study 2 demonstrates that listeners who provide "specific" responses during an interaction could enhance tourists' overall post-trip evaluations of their experiences compared to listeners who only exhibit "generic" responsiveness. The findings also suggest that listeners who provide only "generic" responses during an interaction may actually do harm and worsen tourists' overall post-trip evaluations. Listeners who actively reflect on tourists' experiences by commenting on the details of the story could potentially shape tourists' post-travel memories from a broader perspective.

A third contribution of this research lies in the statistically insignificant, yet important, results that suggest the effect of listener responsiveness on post-travel evaluations could be

bounded by the nature of the travel memory itself; that is, while specific responses from the listener could maximize tourists' overall evaluations of the experience, the findings showed that the difference between providing specific or generic-type responses may not be sufficient to influence tourists to re-interpret highly specific details in memory (i.e., their recollections of the cognitive and affective attributes of the destination). Finally, Study 2 provides general support that overall evaluations of post-travel experiences could be more susceptible to change than finer details in memory, such as cognitive and affective destination image, after interpersonal sharing.

This research also contributes to the growing area of study in unsatisfactory tourism experiences. In contrast to recent tourism research that suggest sharing unsatisfactory travel experiences through social media could help reduce negative perceptions of the trip, and thus, enhance post-trip evaluations (Kim and Fesenmaier 2017), this research found that tourists who shared an unsatisfactory experience through interpersonal sharing instead maximized the details of the negative experience and worsened their post-trip evaluations of destination image. In Kim and Fesenmaier (2017), participants were asked to write a hypothetical review on Tripadvisor.com after reading either a positive or negative travel experience. In this research, participants were asked to recollect either a positive or negative travel experience based on an autobiographical memory recall procedure, and then tell the story to a listener in-person. The differences in the findings from Kim and Fesenmaier (2017) and this research points to interesting theoretical implications on the essence of platform and communication on travel memories; participants in this research had to act (and react) to the listener's responsiveness simultaneously during storytelling while participants in Kim and Fesenmaier (2017) who posted on social media were less likely to expect real-time responses (or body gestures and facial expressions) from readers. This could further suggest different effects from capitalization for

tourists who post on social media, including their perceived need to manage their impressions, self-perceptions, and social comparisons to a less related audience worldwide, compared to tourists who share their travel experiences to a listener, face-to-face.

Managerial implications

The findings from this research can have important managerial implications in service experiences in tourism and hospitality settings. From a service perspective, service staff in tourism and hospitality environments such as tour guides and hotel employees often asks tourists and guests about their past and current experiences. This reflects the growing importance towards a high degree of customer orientation in which well-traveled tourists have an expectation that employees are responsive to their stories, feedback, and comments during interpersonal interactions (Susskind, Kacmar, and Borchgrevink 2003). The results of this research provide empirical support on the potential benefits of listeners' (i.e., employees') constructive responses for enhancing tourists' post-travel experiences.

Additionally, employees' responsiveness should strive to be specific rather than generic. While specific responsiveness may enhance tourists' overall post-trip evaluations, the findings also demonstrate that listeners may actually do harm by worsening tourists' memories if they provide only generic feedback. For example, the use of generic service scripts by employees are common in many organizations, such as hotels and attractions, that are designed by the organization to formally guide and control the service delivery (Testa and Sipe 2012; Victorino et al. 2012). Service scripts have been conceptualized as an organizational control activity designed to increase the probability of desired outcomes, and consequently, many organizations have implemented generic scripts as a strategy for ensuring consistency during service delivery

(Jaworski and MacInnis 1989). Yet, experienced customers are oftentimes able to detect the presence of generic scripts, and instead, they value authenticity, recognition, and individualized treatment during a service experience (Victorino et al. 2012). In this regard, service staff need to be mindful and respond sincerely, attentively, and specifically, as customers can detect employees (i.e., listeners) who have little genuine interest in creating a positive interpersonal interaction (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2006).

There are also a number of implications for service training in tourism and hospitality settings based on the findings from this research. This research suggests that individuals can tell if listeners are constructive during interactions, or if listeners are simply providing generic responses. To engage in active and constructive listening during interpersonal sharing, employees can provide enthusiastic non-verbal feedback, such as nodding and maintaining eye contact, and by reflecting on customers' stories by commenting on the details of their narrative. Additionally, staff can be trained to better paraphrase customers' narratives and ask follow-up questions to further connect to the content of their stories. The key is to minimize the overt use of scripted service responses, but instead, enable employees to vary their responses to maintain a sense of genuineness with customers in different service interactions.

The findings from this research can also have important marketing implications for tourist relationship building. From a marketing perspective, tourists oftentimes share their experiences online and a growing number of studies are exploring tourist reviews on social media (Xiang and Gretzel 2010). To build relationships with tourists, marketers are encouraging tourists to share their stories on social networks and are evaluating their posts to gauge tourists' past experiences, level of satisfaction, and electronic word-of-mouth (Litvin, Goldsmith, and Pan 2008). Despite current research trends towards such 'high-tech' or 'digital' sharing, the essence

of the present research reminds tourism practitioners not to forget that interpersonal sharing or 'high-touch' experiences that occur between one individual and another, in real-life and in-person, still matters and remains one of the important and intimidate forms of relationship building that enriches tourists' experiences.

Limitations and future research

There are limitations and opportunities for future research that should be acknowledged. First, this research focused on the process of capitalization based on active-constructive feedback from listeners during interpersonal sharing. The premise is that listeners who approach a tourist and ask him/her to share a travel memory are likely to be genuinely interested in the individual, the experience, and/or both, so they are unlikely to convey unenthusiastic feedback. The chosen listener is likely to reciprocate with at least general and polite responses rather than fully disengage from the story. However, there is a possibility that a listener could convey disinterest and disengage from the tourist through closed body language or even destructive verbal feedback, and in doing so, the listener could potentially offend the tourist during the interaction. Future research could investigate the influence of disruptive listeners on evaluations of travel memories.

A second limitation of this research pertains to social distance. Social distance refers to an individual's subjective perceptions of distance from other individuals (Stephan, Liberman, and Trope 2011). It involves aspects such as distinction between one's own and others' social group identity, unfamiliarity with others, and degree of perceived closeness with others (Magee and Smith 2013). In the context of this research, the storyteller's perceived degree of social closeness with the listener could depend on the extent of their interdependence as interpersonal sharing involves repeated interactions between the individuals. In other words, storytellers are

motivated to minimize the social distance during interpersonal sharing (i.e., they need affiliation with the listener), and they have expectations of closeness in their interaction (i.e., they expect the listener to affiliate with them). While the condition of specific responsiveness sought to demonstrate reciprocal 'investment' into the interdependent relationship from the listener compared to generic responsiveness, a limitation of this research is that it did not specifically measure perceived interpersonal closeness post-interaction, which could influence the results.

Indeed, the cultural context of the research participants in Asia could influence the findings, especially since social distance could be affected by perceptions of power relationships between individuals (Magee and Smith 2013). Power relationships could be particularly sensitive in this cultural context, and while efforts were made to minimize the influence of power in this research (e.g., by asking participants to share their memorable experience at comfortable settings, such as cafeteria and coffee shops, instead of at the researcher's office; recruiting participants with demographics similar to the listener in terms of gender, age, and ethnicity; allowing participants to share their travel memory in their native language), it is nevertheless possible that power relationships could have influenced the results, especially if participants felt motivated to impress their high-power listener (i.e., researcher). This is a limitation of the present research, and future studies could extend the findings in this research by measuring the influence of power relationships, both within and beyond the present cultural context, by varying the perceived power of the storyteller/listener dyad in different capacities (e.g., storyteller as customer or employer – high power versus listener as employee or subordinate – low power, and vice versa).

Since the studies involved members of the research team as listeners rather than staff members in transactional scenarios, this research facilitated a context where the effects of

capitalization could have been potentially more salient, potentially due to storytellers'

motivations to connect with the listener/researcher. Yet, it is still worthwhile to consider how

practitioners may enhance consumer experiences in tourism and hospitality settings via

"listening" because the listener's responsiveness is highly relevant for service environments as

consumers may better connect with staff who genuinely care about them, reflecting an extent of

closeness beyond mere transactional relationships. Nevertheless, a limitation of this research is

that it did not measure the extent of 'closeness' between storytellers and researcher-as-listener

compared to the relationship between tourists and employee-as-listener across generic versus

specific responsiveness conditions in service interactions, which could limit the generalizability

of the research findings.

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