Are You Happy for Me? How Sharing Positive Tourism Experiences through Social Media Affects Post-Trip Evaluations

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Abstract: Social media has changed travelers' behavior in many aspects, including tourism experience sharing. This study examines the influence of tourism experience sharing on travelers' post-trip evaluations, by considering three facets of experience sharing on social media: expressive writing, sharing on social media, and audience response on social media. Through an experimental design, this study reveals that (1) travelers' post-trip evaluations increase when they write expressively about their positive travel experiences in a private setting; (2) travelers' post-trip evaluations also increase when they share their positive travel experiences on social media, although the increase shows no significant difference between sharing and expessively writing about their experiences; and (3) constructive responses from online viewers increase travelers' positive moods when they share positive travel experiences, thereby enhancing their post-trip evaluations.

Keywords: tourism experience sharing, social media, post-trip evaluation, viewer response, expressive writing

1. Introduction

Tourists are co-creators of their own experiences (Yoo and Gretzel 2011). With the rapid development of social media and technology, tourists' co-creation of their experiences has become increasingly salient. An important characteristic of social media is user-generated content, which has transformed users from passive recipients into active content producers (Nov, Naaman, and Ye 2010). Studies have found that en-route and post-trip travel activities have changed substantially with the proliferation of social media (Kim and Fesenmaier 2017; Wang, Park, and Fesenmaier 2012). One essential behavioral shift via social media is tourism experience sharing. On one hand, companies have begun to provide incentives as a promotional tool for consumers to share brands' products on social media; for example, some hotels reward guests with a free night's stay if patrons post a photo of their stay in the hotel on Instagram (Newman 2013). On the other hand, a growing number of tourists have started to voluntarily share their travel experiences on social media via text, photos, audio, and/or voice podcasts (Kang and Schuett 2013). Sharing has become an integral part of consumption experiences; sharing that combines text and photos is one of the most common ways to showcase one's experiences due to the technological advances in camera phones and social media (Barasch, Zauberman, and Diehl 2016).

Scholars in social psychology (e.g., Gable et al. 2004; Langston 1994) and tourism management (Tung, Cheung, and Law 2018) have identified an association between face-to-face interpersonal positive experience sharing and positive moods/other benefits. Furthermore, sharing experiences may help individuals build and extend social bonds, elicit feedback to promote self-knowledge, and acquire performance advantages (Tamir and Mitchell 2012). For instance, Gable et al. (2004) found that when participants shared their most positive personal events with others, they experienced significantly higher daily positive

affect and life satisfaction compared to the effects of the positive event itself. Ko and Kuo (2009) reported that blogging improves perceived social capital, which positively influences positive affect. Based on a four-week journal experiment, Lambert et al. (2013) demonstrated a causal relationship between positive event sharing and increased positive mood; specifically, participants who kept a journal of positive events and shared them with others experienced greater positive affect, happiness, and life satisfaction. In tourism, Tung, Cheung, and Law (2018) found that face-to-face interpersonal sharing of travel experiences can lead tourists to evaluate their post-trip experiences more favorably than individuals who write a diary or reminisce about their trip in private.

The extant literature reveals limited investigation on tourism experience sharing through social media and demonstrates several limitations. First, most research on tourism experience sharing through social media has focused on motivations behind sharing. Only limited research has assessed the effect of travel experience-sharing behavior, and most studies only involved correlational methods. One exception is Kim and Fesenmaier's study (2017) on the causal relationship between travel experience sharing and post-trip evaluation using a hypothetical scenario in an experiment. One limitation of their study was that the treatment sharing group spent more time on a positive travel experience by recalling and writing about it, and this activity (rather than sharing) may have been responsible for the observed effect on post-trip evaluation. According to Emmons and McCullough (2003) and Burton and King (2004), simply reliving a positive experience can boost positive affect. Second, few studies have investigated the uniqueness of experience sharing in tourism and hospitality setting, especially with online viewers' responses. As an exception, Tung, Cheung, and Law (2018) considered the face-to-face interpersonal sharing context and found that specific listener responsiveness (vs. generic listener responsiveness) can improve tourists' post-trip evaluations after interpersonal sharing through increased capitalization.

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Different from face-to-face interpersonal sharing, social media enlarges an individual's audience and eliminates physical distance as a barrier to experience sharing, thus enabling the shared content to be seen and commented on by others around the world. Furthermore, social media allows immediate interaction between posters and viewers; such interactivity takes various forms such as comments, asynchronous discussions, and voting (Dunne, Lawlor, and Rowley 2010). Given the omnipresence of social media, the role of viewers' responses is especially salient and deserves more examination.

To fill the above research gaps, this study intends to investigate the influence of sharing tourism experiences via social media on travelers' post-trip evaluations. The post-trip evaluation refers to tourists' reflection and perception about a particular tourism experience (Kim and Fesenmaier 2017). In particular, we consider three important facets of travel experience sharing on social media: 1) expressively writing about positive travel experiences only; 2) sharing positive travel experiences on social media; and 3) online viewers' responses. Specifically, this study aims to test whether post-trip evaluation can partially increase from reliving a positive experience by expressively writing about it. Moreover, the current study plans to test the influence of sharing positive travel experiences on social media, as well as online viewers' reactions and feedback about the positive travel experience sharing, on travelers' post-trip evaluations, along with the internal mechanism responsible for the above effect.

2. Literature Review

In this study, travel experience sharing refers to "behaviors or activities ccurring when an individual disseminates travel-related experiences to other members through social media" (Kang and Schuett 2013, 94). Currently, two major research streams surround travel experience sharing via social media. The first stream focuses on *who* shares travel experiences through social media. Ip, Lee, and Law (2012) investigated relationships between user demographics and intentions to share tourism experiences. Based on a large-scale telephone survey in Hong Kong, they found that approximately one fourth of the respondents had shared tourism experiences on travel websites; most were affluent young generation with high education. The intention to share travel experiences declined with age. Moreover, an inverse U-shaped relationship existed between sharing intention and education, with university-educated individuals exhibiting maximum sharing intentions. Amaro, Duarte, and Henriques (2016) clustered social media users and found two segments with higher social media creation, namely, consumers who were younger and who exhibited higher perceived enjoyment when using social media for travel-related aims. Most recently, Huang and Wei (2019) compared profiles of Chinese tourists who shared travel experiences offline (i.e., face-to-face) and online, noting that women shared more frequently than men, and that elderly individuals preferred face-to-face sharing. People who were more accustomed to sharing via online platforms tended to be young, single, well-educated, and having a relatively high income.

The second research stream pertains to *why* users share travel information and experiences through social media (i.e., motivations underlying travel experience sharing). Huang, Basu, and Hsu (2010) took an initial step in this direction by describing tourists' motivations behind travel knowledge sharing on social media through a review of extant literature. They identified seven motivation factors: obtaining travel information; information

documentation; social support; friendship; recreation; status; and personal documentation. Later, Kang and Schuett (2013) proposed a conceptual framework based on social influence theory, using three concepts (identification, internalization, and compliance) to explain why people share travel experiences on social media. Their empirical results revealed that internalization and identification positively influenced tourism experience sharing on social media, and the relationship was mediated by perceived enjoyment. Based on a destination-specific survey of Mallorca with 353 social media users, Munar and Jacobsen (2014) explored summer holidaymakers' motivations for sharing content through social media. The findings offered insight into motivation factors such as personal benefits, community-related benefits and social capital. Wang et al. (2014) further divided these motivation factors into intrinsic motivations such as pleasant feeling and extrinsic motivations such as monetary rewards. Their study results revealed stronger effects of intrinsic motivation on sharing intentions than extrinsic motivation. Bilgihan et al. (2016) examined reasons for knowledge-sharing behavior on travel-related online social networks; the findings indicated that subjective norms, specifically users' significant others' performance expectations, positively influenced knowledge sharing on such sites. When investigating Korean travel-related social media users, Hur et al. (2017) found that sharing intentions were stronger for users demonstrating high information-seeking, entertainment, and relationship maintenance motives.

In summary, despite the popularity of social media research in hospitality and tourism, most studies on travel experience sharing via social media have not yet investigated an important area: the impacts/benefits of travel experience sharing through social media. Therefore, this topic and its internal psychological mechanism require further exploration.

3. Hypotheses Development

3.1 Impact of Expressive Writing on Post-trip Evaluation

According to Tung and Richie (2011, 1369), a tourism experience is defined as "an individual's subjective evaluation and undergoing (i.e., affective, cognitive, and behavioral) of events related to his/her tourist activities that begin before (i.e., planning and preparation), during (i.e., at the destination), and after the trip (i.e., recollection)". Similarly, Larsen (2007) stated that a tourism experience consists of three parts: the planning process, the actual trip, and memories of the trip. Therefore, a tourism experience depends on trip activities, pre-trip information searching and dreaming, and post-trip recall and sharing (Kim and Tussyadiah 2013).

Based on the consumer storytelling theory, individuals tend to think narratively and often retrieve memory in the format of story with loosely connected experiences, evaluations and relationships (Hsu, Dehuang, and Woodside 2009). Tourists are strongly motivated to tell their tourism experiences that are memorable (Zhong, Busser, and Baloglu 2017). By retelling the stories, tourists are likely to improve the meaning of the travel and go through a delightful emotional experience (Kim and Fesenmaier 2017; Pera 2017; Woodside, Sood, and Miller 2008), as stories could invoke people's implicit awareness, comprehension and empathy (Woodside 2010). Thus, consumers' storytelling plays an important role in destination marketing and is regarded a powerful co-creative behavior with the destination (Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier 2008; Tussyadiah, Park, and Fesenmaier 2011).

Regarding positive travel experience sharing, an important step before sharing on social media is expressively writing about the positive experience. Bosangit, Hibbert, and McCabe (2015) suggested that an emotional process is embedded within constructing meaningful experiences about what to write. In previous studies, expressively writing about

positive experiences were found to engender numerous interpersonal and personal benefits, presumably because expressive writing creates the reflection opportunity and promotes improvement, thus simply reliving a positive experience is enough to boost positive affect (Burton and King 2004; Emmons and McCullough 2003; Lambert et al. 2013). Revisiting positive experiences during expressive writing can inspire enjoyment and positive affect about a trip while enhancing the traveler's memory of the experience. Moreover, due to self-presentational motives, people often choose well-composed or high-quality photos to share along with textual comments that capture the positive aspects of their experiences without mentioning less-compelling points. Therefore, these texts and photos can reshape travelers' recollection by helping them focus on positive moments of a trip (Reis et al. 2010). It is thus conceivable that simply reminiscing about a travel experience before the sharing activities (i.e., by writing about the experience) may fundamentally alter the memorized travel experience or even create new tourism experiences after a trip by reinforcing or recasting a trip's meaning. On this basis, the following hypothesis is proposed:

> *Hypothesis 1: Individuals will demonstrate better post-trip evaluations when they write expressively about their positive travel experiences.*

3.2 Impacts of Experience Sharing and Viewers' Responses on Post-trip Evaluation

Sharing a positive experience on social media involves more than simply recalling and expressively writing about it. Lambert et al. (2013) pointed out that positive experience sharing influences affect more strongly than writing about an experience or having a neutral interaction. Lambert et al. (2013) and Reis et al. (2010) also discussed why sharing experiences is unique from and extends beyond simply writing expressively about an experience. First, compared to keeping a positive experience to oneself, sharing an experience with others may enhance the social reality of that experience and corresponding

assessments of worth, as people gain validation when viewers agree on the value of an experience and respond supportively (Lambert et al. 2013). Furthermore, self-evaluation theories have suggested that viewers' validation and approval can boost self-evaluation along with the sharer's desired identity (Leary and Baumeister 2000). Second, viewers' feedback can reshape an experience in the sharer's mind; enthusiastic responses from viewers are more likely to compel the sharer to focus on the most exciting and positive aspects of an experience, thus boosting positive emotions and experience evaluation (Reis et al. 2010). Feedback from viewers may also generate greater positive implications of the event that the sharer has not previously considered. Third, perceptions that others are pleased with a sharer's experience will improve the sharer's self-esteem and make him/her feel better about the self, which increases positive affect (Lambert et al. 2013). Fourth, sharing experiences with others is likely to spark interaction, especially in the case of enthusiastic responses. Based on social interaction theory (Reis et al. 2010), such communication can build social resources, such as social connections, trust, perceived friendship and liking, and a sense of belonging between the sharer and viewers. For example, Baker and Moore (2008) found blogging to be positively associated with perceived social support and friendship satisfaction. Ko and Kuo (2009) discovered that blogging can improve perceived social capital, which promotes positive affect.

One uniqueness of experience sharing on social media lies in the presence of a large number of audiences and the social effects of observing viewers' responses and conversing with these audience members (Lambert et al. 2013; Reis et al. 2010). Individuals may expect others to validate the positivity of their travel experiences (Lambert et al. 2013). Online viewers' reactions will presumably influence the extent of an individual's positive emotions relative to his/her positive travel experience. Moreover, although people are likely to expect positive reactions from audiences when they share good news, this expectation is not always

fulfilled. For instance, online viewers may respond with negative emotions such as envy or disinterest; such responses would not benefit sharers as positive responses do (Reis et al. 2010).

Research in social psychology has considered the importance of audience's responses in the context of face-to-face interpersonal sharing. Gable et al. (2004) found that supportive and enthusiastic responses were positively associated with intimacy, trust satisfaction, and commitment. Reis et al. (2010) compared the consequences of enthusiastic listening to those of passive listening. The results showed that the act of recounting a positive experience was insufficient in elucidating the increased rating of the experience; rather, the interaction process itself was essential. In a daily diary study, Reis et al. (2010) noted that individuals' ratings of temporally delayed experiences were more positive when these experiences were shared with others and received enthusiastic responses. Similarly, Lambert et al. (2013) reported that when sharing a positive event, study participants who received active-constructive responses from their partners demonstrated much stronger positive affect than the control participants. On this basis, the following hypotheses are proposed:

> **Hypothesis 2**: Compared to writing expressively about positive travel experiences, individuals will demonstrate better post-trip evaluations when they share their positive travel experiences on social media.
>
> **Hypothesis 3**: Individuals will demonstrate better post-trip evaluations when they receive constructive responses (vs. destructive responses) to their posts from online viewers.

3.3 Role of Mood on the Impact of Viewers' Responses

Mood is defined as a mild, transient and generalized affective state which reflects one's feeling at any particular moment (Sirakaya, Petrick, and Choi 2004). Though mood received relatively less research attention (Baker and Crompton 2000) and was used interchangeably with emotion in research, these two concepts distinct from each other (Huang et al. 2012). Moods are dissociated from any particular objective or event (i.e. state-focused) rather than object-focused emotions, and can be affected by others' actions and environment in the service encounter (Kim and Mattila 2010). Moreover, moods are usually expressed as positive or negative (Fiske and Taylor 2013). Based on mood-maintenance and mood-management theories, people would maintain their positive mood or seek ways such as retrieve positive memories to repair negative mood (Kim and Mattila 2010; Rusting and DeHart 2000). Thus, people's mood states could be influenced by receiving others' feedbacks. Furthermore, based on the social interaction theory, positive social interaction leads to elevated positive affect (Vittengl and Holt 1998). More specifically, while positive feedback induces more positive mood, negative feedback leads to more negative mood.

A few scholars have investigated the role of mood in travel experience evaluation. For example, Sirakaya, Petrick, and Choi (2004) demonstrated that mood moderates tourists' overall satisfaction level, which highlighted the importance of differentiating and managing tourists' mood when conducting evaluations. Furthermore, by examining mood both before and after consumption, Huang et al. (2012) found that visitors' pre-mood influences their satisfaction judgements both directly and indirectly through post-mood. Travel experience evaluations may therefore depend on tourists' real-time mood. In addition, positive mood exerts more favorable evaluations and negative mood shows the opposite effect (Kim and Mattila 2010). Based on the extant literature, the following hypotheses are proposed:

> **Hypothesis 4**: *Positive mood mediates the impact of online viewers' responses on travelers' post-trip evaluations.*

Hypothesis 5*: Negative mood mediates the impact of online viewers' responses on travelers' post-trip evaluations.*

4. Method and Results

To address the above research objectives, an experimental design was employed to gain a comprehensive understanding of individuals' travel experience-sharing behavior and its influences. Three experiments were conducted to empirically test the proposed hypotheses. Experiment 1 aimed to examine the direct effect of expressively writing about a positive travel experience on people's post-trip evaluations (Hypothesis 1). Experiment 2 was used to test the direct effect of sharing positive travel experiences on social media on post-trip evaluations (Hypothesis 2). Experiment 3 was designed to test the influence of online audience's responses on post-trip evaluations (Hypothesis 3) along with the mediating effect of travelers' mood (Hypotheses 4 and 5).

To increase the validity of these experiments, different from the prior research (e.g., Kim and Fesenmaier 2017) involving hypothetical travel experience scenarios, we referred to participants' real-life travel experiences. We also measured travelers' positive/negative moods and travel experience evaluations using a pre- and post-scenario approach in the experimental design, so as to rule out some plausible explanations. Failing to control participants' moods before exposing them to scenarios would make it difficult to determine whether participants' better post-trip evaluations in the enthusiastic response condition could be attributed to more positive moods at the start of the experiment.

4.1 Experiment 1

4.1.1 Design and Participants

Experiment 1 employed a 2-group (expressively writing about a positive travel experience vs. activity control) between-subjects design. In this study, a sample of 101 useful and complete responses was collected through Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) in exchange for a nominal payment. Specifically, there were 50 participants in the activity

control group and 51 in the expressive writing group. All participants were residents of the U.S. or Canada, native English speakers, and had taken an overnight leisure trip within the past 3 years. We used MTurk given its advantages such as demographic diversity and reduced cost, and its similar reliability as other data collection approaches.

In our sample, 49 participants were male (48.5%), 66 were between 18 and 44 years old (65.3%), and most were Caucasian (81.2%). In terms of education, a high proportion of participants had either completed a bachelor's degree (39.6%) or some college or an associate degree (35.6%). Most participants reported having used at least one social media platform (93.1%), and 68.3% had shared travel/vacation experiences via Facebook or other social networking sites in the past. Chi-square tests revealed that there were no significant differences between the expressive writing group and the activity control group in terms of gender, age, ethnic group and education.

4.1.2 Stimuli and Procedures

Participants in this experiment recalled their own positive travel experiences that had occurred within the past 3 years. At the beginning of the experiment, all participants were provided with the following prompt to select three of their most positive travel experiences: *Please take a moment to think about the memorable travel/vacation experiences that have made you happy in the past 3 years. Please list below the location of 3 of these positive travel experiences that stand out to you, based on your happiness with the experience.*

Participants then rated each travel experience's positivity. To avoid a ceiling effect, travel experience selection was manipulated so that the highest-rated experience was not chosen (Reis et al. 2010). The third most positive travel experience was selected as the focal event for all participants purposefully, but no participants indicated an awareness of the intentionally excluded top two rated events. After selecting the focal travel experience,

participants were required to evaluate this experience and were then randomly assigned to one of the following two scenarios:

(1) Expressively writing about, but not sharing, their travel experience. Participants in this condition were asked to recall and write down the details and their feelings about the travel experience (Reis et al. 2010), so as to examine the direct effect of expressively writing about the positive travel experience on one's post-trip evaluation. Participants in this group only engaged in the writing task. They were required to write a short essay (no less than 50 words) that no one was expected to see. In other words, participants held the memory but did not plan to share it on social media (see Appendix A).

 (2) Activity control. All participants in this activity control scenario was required to look for words in a puzzle during the allotted time (see Appendix B).

Both conditions were controlled to span a similar duration. After completing the above activity, all participants were asked to answer a number of questions about their post-trip re-evaluation of the travel experience and their demographics.

4.1.3 Measurement

Post-trip evaluation was measured using eight items adopted from Kim and Fesenmaier (2017). These items (e.g., "My experience was entertaining") were rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). The measurement for post-trip evaluation appears in Table 1. Each participant's average score of post-trip evaluation items was calculated before and after the treatment. Cronbach's alpha for the post-trip evaluation scale was 0.752 at Time 1 (pre-treatment) and 0.777 at Time 2 (post-treatment), demonstrating good reliability.

<Insert Table 1 Here>

4.1.4 Experiment 1 Data Analysis Results

An independent samples t-test was used to analyze the data. The grouping variable was the treatment variable (expressively writing about a positive travel experience vs. activity control), and the testing variable was the change in post-trip evaluation (i.e., $Evaluation_{change}$ = $Evaluation_{posttreatment}$ - $Evaluation_{pretreatment}$). The result revealed a marginally significant difference of the change in participants' post-trip evaluations ($t = -1.931$, $p = 0.056$) between expressive writing group ($M_{change} = 0.19$; $M_{pretreatment} = 5.34$, $M_{posttreatment} = 5.52$) and activity control group ($M_{change} = 0.04$; $M_{pretreatment} = 5.29$, $M_{posttreatment} = 5.33$). Figure 1 presents the mean of the experience evaluation change between these groups, indicating that expressively writing about a positive travel experience significantly improved tourists' post-trip evaluations; therefore, H1 was supported. In addition, the result of paired t-test within each group revealed that the activity control group did not show a significant difference between the pre- and post-measure on post-trip evaluations ($t = -.731$, $p = 0.468$); for the expressive writing group, there was a significant difference between the pre- and post-measure ($t = -3.552$, $p = 0.001$).

<Insert Figure 1 Here>

4.2 Experiment 2

4.2.1 Design and Participants

The goal of Experiment 2 was to empirically test if social media sharing (vs. expressive writing but not sharing) could influence tourists' post-trip evaluations. This experiment employed a 2-group (expressively writing about a positive travel experience vs.

sharing a positive travel experience on social media) between-subjects design. In this experiment, 102 native English-speaking respondents who had taken an overnight leisure trip within the past 3 years were recruited through CloudResearch from TurkPrime. Specifically, there were 52 participants in the expressive writing group and 50 in the experience sharing group.

Among those respondents, 54.9% of participants were male (N = 56). The majority of the participants were in the age group of 25-34 (40.2%) and 35-44 (25.5%). Most respondents were Caucasian (81.4%), and 41.2% of the respondents had a bachelor's degree. A total of 92.2% of the participants reported having used at least one social media platform, and 76.5% had shared travel/vacation experiences via Facebook or other social networking sites in the past. Chi-square tests revealed that there were no significant differences between the expressive writing group and the sharing group on social media in terms of gender, age, ethnic group.

4.2.2 Stimuli and Procedures

Similar to Experiment 1, participants were asked to recall, rate and rank three most positive travel experiences within the past three years, and to avoid ceiling effects, the 3rd travel experience was selected (without participants' awareness) for participants to evaluate. Then, they were randomly assigned to one of the following two conditions:

(1) Expressively writing about, but not sharing, their travel experiences. Participants in this condition were asked to write a short essay (no less than 50 words) about the details and their feelings about the 3rd most positive travel experience (see Appendix A).

(2) Sharing the positive travel experience on social media (i.e., Facebook in this study). Participants in this group were presented with a screenshot of a Facebook sharing

page and the following written scenario: "*Imagine that you just arrived back home from your vacation and wanted to share your travel experience with others. You decided to post this travel experience on Facebook.com - one of the leading online social media. Please take a moment to think about what you've experienced in this trip and write about the trip in the text field on the Facebook page"* (Kim and Fesenmaier 2017, 32). Participants were asked to share their travel experiences with a short post of no less than 50 words and list five Facebook friends' names who would see this post (see Appendix C), They were then told that they received overall positive feedback from the audience about their shared travel experiences.

Both groups spent relatively equal time in the scenario when they took the experiment. After that, participants re-rated their post-trip experience of this travel experience and were asked about their demographics.

4.2.3 Measurement

As in Experiment 1, we adopted the eight-item measurement for post-trip evaluation from Kim and Fesenmaier (2017) and calculated the average score of post-trip evaluation items for each participant before and after the treatment. Cronbach's alpha for the travel experience evaluation scale was 0.831 at Time 1 (pre-treatment) and 0.858 at Time 2 (post-treatment), demonstrating good reliability.

4.2.4 Experiment 2 Data Analysis Results

An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine the effect of sharing positive travel experience through social media (vs. expressive writing) on post-trip evaluation change. The grouping variable was the treatment (expressively writing about a positive travel experience vs. sharing a positive travel experience on social media); the testing variable was the post-trip evaluation change. As shown in Figure 2, the evaluation change for the sharing

group (M_{change} = 0.10; $M_{pretreatment}$ = *5.55, $M_{posttreatment}$ = 5.65*) and the expressive writing

group (M_{change} = 0.12; $M_{pretreatment}$ = 5.57, $M_{posttreatment}$ = 5.69) were not significantly different (t

= 0.236, p = 0.814). The result demonstrated that sharing a positive travel experience on

social media did not significantly improve tourists' post-trip evaluations compared to just

writing down the experience privately but not sharing; therefore, H2 was not supported.

However, the result of paired t-tests within each group revealed that both groups showed

significant differences between the pre- and post-measure on the post-trip evaluations

(expressive writing group, t = -.2.427, p = 0.019; sharing group, t = -2.242, p = 0.03).

Therefore, respondents' post-trip evaluations can be increased by both expessively writing

about their positive travel experiences and by sharing it on social media, although the roles of

sharing and expessive writing in increasing the post-trip evaluation showed no significant

difference.

<Insert Figure 2 Here>

4.3 Experiment 3

4.3.1 Design and Participants

Scholars have extensively examined the effects of writing expressively about positive

travel experiences without considering viewers'/listeners' unique responses to shared

experiences (Tung, Cheung, and Law 2018). Individuals may expect others to validate the

positivity of their travel experiences, and online viewers' reactions could influence the degree

of a person's positive emotions in relation to his/her travel experience. The objective of

Experiment 3 was to examine how online viewers' reactions affect travelers' post-trip

evaluations. Based on prior studies of face-to-face interpersonal experience sharing (Gable et

al. 2004; Lambert et al. 2013), online viewers' responses were manipulated, and participants

were randomly assigned to one of the following response conditions: 1) active-constructive response; 2) passive-constructive response; 3) passive-destructive response; or 4) active-destructive response. Research (Gable et al. 2004; Lambert et al. 2013) has shown that enthusiastic support is the most effective response to another's positive experience, being labeled an "active-constructive" response; providing understated or minimal support is the second effective response and is called "passive-constructive" response; ignoring or quashing the event constitutes "passive-destructive" and "active-destructive" response, respectively, which are tied to undesirable relationship outcomes.

Based on the rules of thumb for determining sample size (Cohen, 1988; VanVoorhis and Morgan, 2007), a cell size of 30 ensures 80% power if the sample is used to measure group difference. Therefore, in this experiment with four groups/conditions, 200 native English-speaking respondents who had taken at least one overnight trip for leisure purposes within the past 3 years were recruited through Qualtrics, which sufficed the required sample size. Specially, participants were randomly assigned to 1) active-constructive response group (N=47); 2) passive-constructive response group (N=52); 3) passive-destructive response group (N=51); or 4) active-destructive response group (N=50), respectively.

Regarding the sample demographics, male and female respondents accounted for 50%, respectively. About 20% of respondents were 35-44 years old, and 16% were 25-34. Most respondents were Caucasian (83%). The majority of participants had either a bachelor's degree (34%) or some college/associate degree (34%). Most participants used at least one type of social media (87.5%), and 56.5% of respondents reported having shared their travel/vacation experiences on Facebook or similar platforms. Demographics equivalency was tested and there was no signfiicanct differences among the four groups in terms of gender, age, ethnic group and education.

4.3.2 Stimuli and Procedures

After a general introduction, participants followed the same procedures as in Experiments 1 and 2. They rated their current moods, selected and ranked three of their most positive travel events, and the third most positive travel experience was chosen purposefully for participants to evaluate. Then participants were presented with a screenshot of a Facebook page and the same written scenario as in Experiment 2 (see Appendix C).

Next, participants were randomly assigned to one of the following four online viewer response scenarios: 1) active-destructive response, in which participants' experience-sharing posts received no "Like" but some negative comments on Facebook; 2) passive-destructive response, in which participants' posts received no "Like" or comments on Facebook; 3) passive-constructive response, in which participants' experience-sharing posts received 20 "Like"s but no comments on Facebook; 4) active-constructive response, in which participants' experience-sharing posts received 120 "Like"s on Facebook, and 40 audience members who liked the post wrote positive comments such as "Wow! Impressive, I will try it out in the future." (see Appendix D).

Following the above scenarios, all participants responded to a number of questions on their positive and negative mood, post-trip evaluation, demographics, and manipulation check questions on viewers' feedback.

4.3.3 Measurement

Mood. We employed the Brief Mood Introspection Scale (Mayer and Gaschke 1988), which consists of eight positive (i.e., lively, happy, caring, content, peppy, calm, loving, and active) and eight negative (i.e., sad, tired, gloomy, jittery, drowsy, grouchy, nervous, and fed up) mood adjectives. Items were measured ranging from 1 (i.e., definitely do not feel) to 4 (i.e., definitely feel). For the positive-mood measure, Cronbach's alpha was 0.846 at Time 1 (pre-treatment) and 0.896 at Time 2 (post-treatment); for the negative-mood measure,

Cronbach's alpha was 0.865 at Time 1 (pre-treatment) and 0.875 at Time 2 (post-treatment). The mood scale thus demonstrated good reliability.

Post-trip evaluation. Similar to Experiment 1 and 2, post-trip evaluation was measured using eight items from Kim and Fesenmaier (2017). Each participant's average score of post-trip evaluation items was calculated before and after the treatment. Cronbach's alpha of the scale was 0.838 at Time 1 (pre-treatment) and 0.872 at Time 2 (post-treatment), showing good reliability.

Manipulation check. Manipulation check items for viewers' responses were drawn from Gable et al. (2004) using 12 questions scored on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = untrue at all, 4 = neutral, 7 = very true). Cronbach's alpha values indicated that the measure was reliable (see Table 2).

<Insert Table 2 Here>

4.3.4 Experiment 3 Data Analysis Results

Manipulation check. To verify the effectiveness of the manipulation of perceived viewers' responses, participants were asked to answer the questions shown in Table 2. Six questions (Q. 7-12) for active-destructive and passive-destructive were reverse coded; then the mean score of all twelve items was computed for each participant, with higher score indicating more positive response. One-way ANOVA was then employed to compare the four groups of participants' feelings about their respective assigned viewer response scenario. The result showed that the manipulation of the stimuli was effective [$F(3,196) = 39.46, p < .001$]. Specifically, participants who were assigned to the active-constructive feedback condition rated support from their friends more favorably ($M = 5.42, SD = .69$) than those who were

assigned to the passive-constructive feedback ($M = 4.85$, $SD = .85$), passive-destructive feedback ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 1.19$), or active-destructive feedback ($M = 3.20$, $SD = 1.36$) condition. In addition, the post hoc test results revealed that the difference between each level was also significant.

Main result. First, we conducted a one-way ANOVA analysis. The grouping variable was viewers' responses (an active-destructive response was coded as 1; passive-destructive response was coded as 2; passive-constructive response was coded as 3; and active-constructive response was coded as 4); the testing variable was the change in respondents' post-trip evaluations. Although the overall ANOVA analysis was insignificant ($F = 1.773$, $p = .15$), there was a significant difference on the change in post-trip evaluations ($t = -2.21$, $p = .028$) between travelers who received constructive responses ($M_{constructive} = 0.08$) vs. destructive reponses ($M_{destructive} = -0.05$) for sharing positive travel experiences on social media; therefore, H3 was partially supported.

Next, we used Model 4 in Hayes's (2017) PROCESS procedure with bootstrapping (5,000 samples) to examine the mediation model, where viewers' responses to a shared positive travel experience served as the independent variable, positive and negative mood changes (i.e., $Mood_{change} = Mood_{posttreatment} - Mood_{pretreatment}$) were the respective mediators, and post-trip evaluation change was the dependent variable. Participants' gender and age served as covariates. Estimation results appear in Figure 3.

Consistent with previous ANOVA result, there was no direct effect of viewers' response on the change of participants' post-trip evaluations. However, viewers' responses positively influenced travelers' positive mood changes ($\beta = 0.05$, $t = 2.37$, $p = 0.02$), which led to positive changes in participants' post-trip evaluations ($\beta = 0.35$, $t = 3.77$, $p = 0.0002$). Bootstrapping results revealed a significant mediating effect of positive mood changes on the

influences of viewers' responses on post-trip evaluation change (indirect effect = 0.02; 95% CI: [0.003, 0.043]); in other words, viewers' responses affected travelers' post-trip evaluation change through positive mood changes, supporting H4. However, the influences of viewers' responses on travelers' negative mood changes (β = -0.02, t = -1.09, p = 0.28) and the effects of such mood changes on travelers' post-trip evaluation change (β = -0.06, t = -0.50, p = 0.62) were insignificant. Furthermore, the bootstrapping results revealed an insignificant mediating effect of negative mood changes on the influences of viewers' responses on post-trip evaluation change (indirect effect = 0.001; 95% CI: [-0.0036, 0.0143]). Therefore, H5 was not supported.

<Insert Figure 3 Here>

5. Discussion and Implication

This study sheds new light on the influence of tourism experience-sharing behavior via social media and its underlying mechanism. Based on three designed experiments, we examined the influences of three facets of travel experience sharing through social media (i.e., expressive writing, sharing on social media, and viewers' responses) on post-trip evaluation. Findings show that expressively writing about and sharing a positive travel experience could significantly improve travelers' post-trip evaluations, although the effects of sharing on social media and expessive writing in increasing the post-trip evaluation show no significant difference. Moreover, when travelers share positive experiences on social media, viewers' responses and feedback to their posts also influence travelers' post-trip evaluations. Specifically, when travelers received constructive responses, their post-trip evaluations increased. Additionally, we identified a full mediating role of positive mood for the effect of viewers' responses on travelers' post-trip evaluations; that is, online viewers' responses only appeared to influence travelers' evaluations of their travel experiences through a change in positive mood. This finding echoes that of Munar and Jacobsen (2014), who noted that individuals may share tourism experiences via social media to seek sociability and emotional support, with less focus on tourism information itself for others' decision making.

5.1 Theoretical and Managerial Implications

This study makes several theoretical contributions to the literature. First, a novel framework was proposed to examine the influence of tourism experience sharing on travelers' post-trip evaluations by considering three facets of experience sharing on social media: 1) expressive writing; 2) sharing on social media, and 3) online viewers' responses. This approach overcomes a limitation of Kim and Fesenmaier's (2017) study, in which it was unclear whether an increase in post-trip evaluation was derived from expressively writing about a positive experience or simply sharing and receiving feedback from online viewers.

By designing three different experiments, we determined the aspects of experience sharing on social media which contribute to the improvements in post-trip evaluation.

Second, this study extends prior literature on the influence of travel experience sharing via social media by examining the roles of viewers' responses to the focal post. While scholars have suggested that enthusiastic responses to good news during face-to-face interpersonal sharing fosters trust (Reis et al. 2010), there was a lack of studies examining the influence of enthusiastic feedback to positive travel experience sharing through social media on the sharer's post-trip evaluation. Our findings provide evidence to support the hypothesis that constructive responses from online viewers can increase tourists' post-trip evaluations.

Third, this study provides empirical evidence related to the mechanism behind the relationship between online viewers' responses and post-trip evaluation. Constructive viewer responses were found to increase travelers' positive mood when sharing positive travel experiences, which then enhanced their post-trip evaluations; specifically, a change in the sharer's positive mood plays a full mediating role in the above relationship. This finding extends the study conducted by Kim and Fesenmaier (2017), who noted that online travel experience sharing can increase post-trip evaluation through the mediating role of positive and negative moods.

The findings of this study also have practical implications for destination marketers. First, results indicate that writing expressively about positive travel experiences would increase travelers' post-trip evaluations; therefore, tourism destination marketers should encourage travelers to write expressively about their travel experiences. Moreover, the study also showed that travelers will demonstrate better post-trip evaluations when they share their positive travel experiences on social media. As Reis et al. (2010) suggested, people's sharing of positive news plays a significant role in enhancing trust and prosocial orientation. On this basis, destination marketers and managers should encourage tourists to share their positive

travel experiences on social media. The sharing behavior will not only expose the destination to more other potential tourists and thus increase the destination awareness, but also will increase tourists' post-trip evaluations.

Second, this study revealed that online viewers' constructive responses to travelers' social media posts would increase travelers' post-trip evaluations. Therefore, destination marketers and managers are highly encouraged to respond enthusiastically to individuals who share posts about their tourism destinations. Given potential challenges in identifying travel experience-sharing posts, destination managers should encourage travelers to include destination hashtags in their posts to more easily identify visitors' reactions and engage with those tourists by providing constructive responses. This practice could further enhance travelers' experience evaluations along with their attachment and loyalty to the destination, which constitute major tourism destination priorities (Hosany et al. 2017).

Third, the study results showed that online viewers' responses only influence travelers' evaluations of their experiences through the change in positive mood. This finding highlights the important role of mood in tourists' post-trip travel experience sharing on social media. Therefore, in addition to taking care of tourists' mood and its change in the destination/attraction, practitioners should show empathy to the tourists through social media, and try to enhance tourists' mood after the trip by providing them with more enthusiastic replies to their travel experience sharing on social media. In summary, we suggest practitioners to pay more attention to tourist mood change from offline (in the destination/attraction) to online (i.e., on social media), and from during-the-trip to after-the-trip.

5.2 Limitations and Future Research

This research is subject to several limitations. First, although potential factors that could influence participants' moods and post-trip evaluations were ruled out through a pre- and post-scenario design and a real-life travel experience scenario, future research should examine this study's research questions in greater detail via field experiments and real-world data to increase the validity of these findings. Second, responses to travel experience sharing can occur either face-to-face or on social media, and travelers may receive responses from both online and offline audiences. Might these two types of responses contribute to similar or different moods and changes in post-trip evaluation? A comparative study could provide meaningful insights for researchers and destination practitioners. Third, this study's scope is limited to the influence of travel experience sharing via social media on post-trip evaluation. Scholars have found that face-to-face sharing carries several intrapersonal and interpersonal benefits, such as trust, social connections, and life satisfaction; therefore, it would be interesting to test other benefits of travel experience sharing through social media in the future. Last, this study only focused on positive travel experience sharing but excluded the negative travel experience sharing on social media. Future research should examine how expressive writing and/or sharing negative travel experiences on social media would influence tourists' post-trip evaluations.

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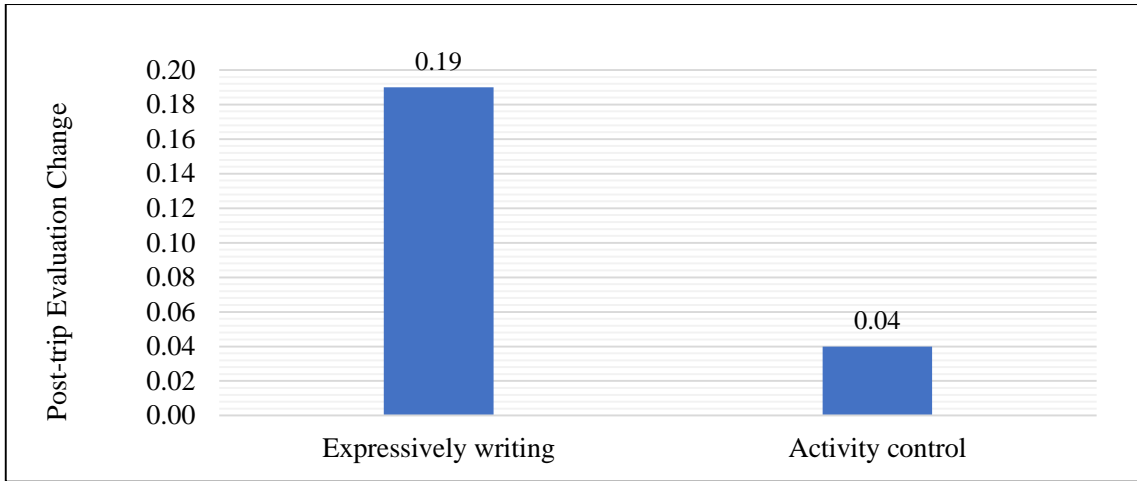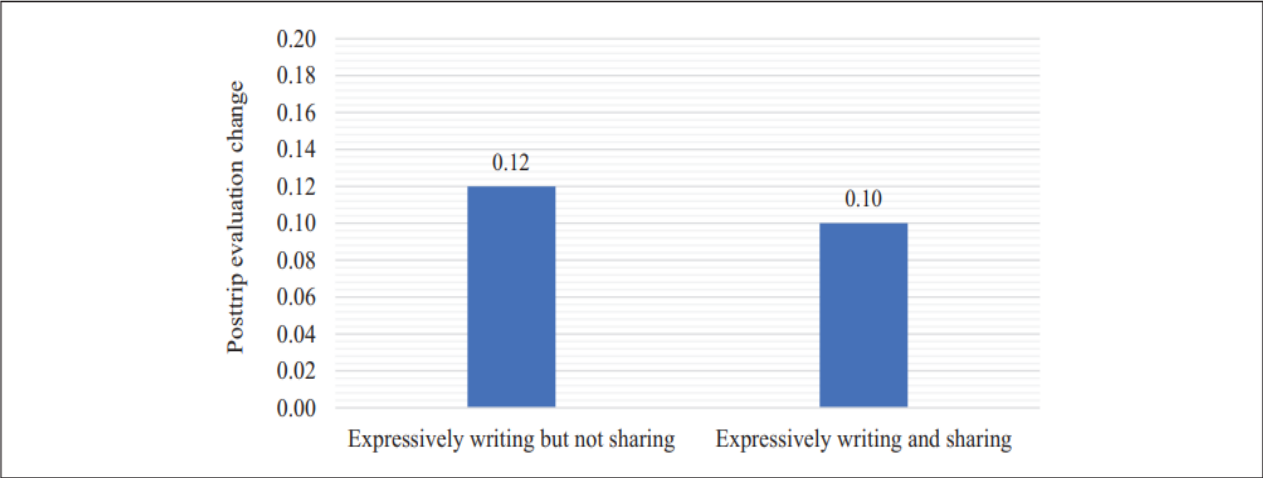
Figure 1. Post-trip Evaluation Change in Experiment 1

Figure 2. Post-trip Evaluation Change in Experiment 2
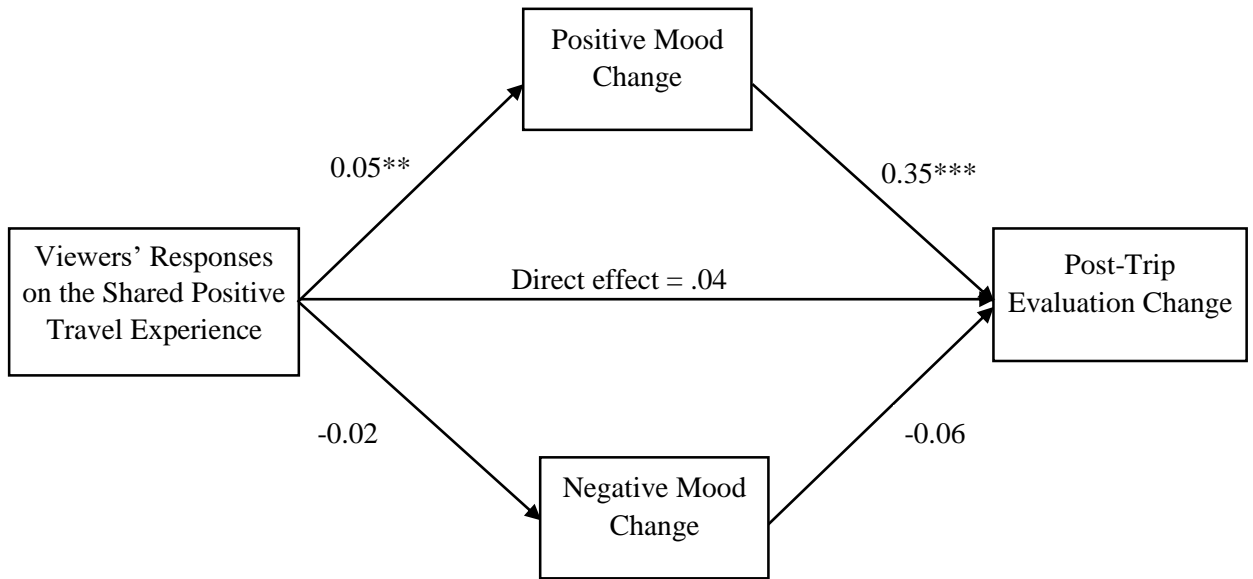
Figure 3. Mediation model

Table 1. Measurement Items of Post-trip Evaluation

1. My experience was entertaining.

2. My experience was memorable.

3. My experience was exciting.

4. I felt like I was doing something new and different.

5. I felt a sense of comfort.

6. The experience was highly educational to me.

7. I felt a sense of beauty.

8. I felt safe.

Table 2. Manipulation Check Items for Viewers' Responses

	Items	Cronbach's α	Composite Cronbach's α
Active-Constructive	1) My friends reacted to my happy experience enthusiastically. 2) I get the sense that my friends were even happier and more excited than I was. 3) My friends showed genuine concern about my happy experience.	0.930	
Passive-Constructive	4) My friends tried not to make a big deal out of it, but were happy for me. 5) My friends were silently supportive of the good experience that occurred to me. 6) My friends said little, but I know they were happy for me.	0.835	
Active-Destructive	7) My friends found a problem with it. 8) My friends reminded me that most good experiences have their bad aspects as well. 9) They pointed out the potential downsides of the good experience.	0.858	0.905
Passive-Destructive	10) I get the impression that they did not care much. 11) My friends did not pay much attention to me. 12) My friends seemed disinterested.	0.949	

Appendix A. Stimuli for Expressively Writing in Experiments 1 and 2

Imagine that you just got back home from your vacation. You wanted to keep your travel experience in memory, so you decided to write this travel experience in a diary. Please **take a moment** to think about things that you've experienced in this trip and write about the trip in the text field below.
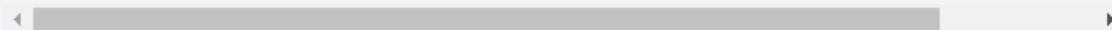
You are required to write at least 50 words.

Appendix B. Stimuli for Activity Control in Experiment 1

In this section, you will spend a few minutes to play on the following word puzzle game.

You can find the words (related to Christmas) in the grid by looking Diagonal, Forward, Backward, Up, and Down. Please write down the words you find in the following text box.

```
P A S T O C K I N G N A
M I S T L E T O E S F X
N N W T S A N T A L I M
A U C V N J Y Y L E F E
M E C A L E G N A I C H
W Y G H N W M N C G Q E
O T L G I D R A N H F L
N L M L N M Y E N V J H
S V X Q O O N C A R L T
T M Y R R H G E A T O E
H P L O D U R H Y N H B
N L L E S N I T M Q E E
```

Word 1

Word 2

Word 3

Word 4

Word 5

If in case you cannot recognize all the five words, you can put "none" to replace some words.

Appendix C. Stimuli for Travel Experience Sharing in Experiments 2 and 3

Appendix D. Stimuli for Viewers' Reponses in Experiment 3

(1) Condition 1: Active-destructive response
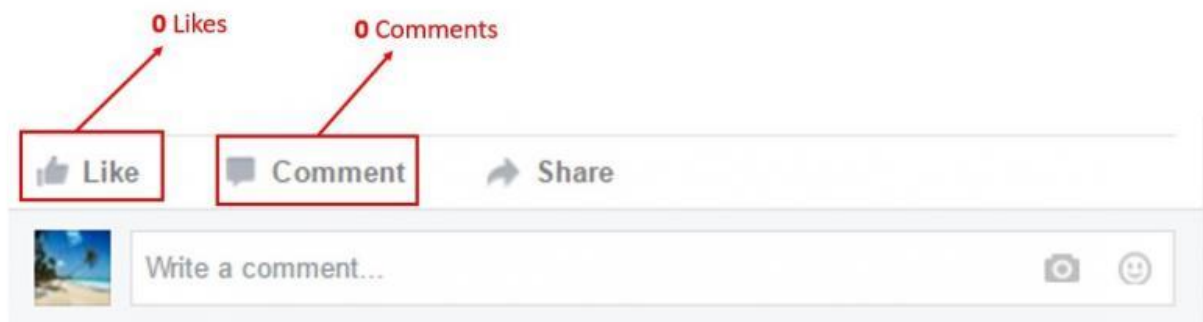
Assume that you have 200 Facebook friends.

Imagine that you frequently check on Facebook to see how your friends would respond to your shared travel/vacation experience. However, after three days, you find that there are still **No "Likes"** but some **Negative "Comments"** following your travel post.

(2) Condition 2: Passive-destructive response

Assume that you have 200 Facebook friends.

Imagine that you frequently check on Facebook to see how your friends would respond to your shared travel/vacation experience. However, after three days, you find that there are still **No "Likes"** and **No "Comments"** following your travel post.

(3) Condition 3: Passive-constructive response

Assume that you have 200 Facebook friends.

Imagine that you frequently check on Facebook to see how your friends would respond to your shared travel/vacation experience. After three days, your post receives **20 "Likes"** from your Facebook friends. However, there are **No "Comments"** following your travel post.

(4) Condition 4: Active-constructive response

Assume that you have 200 Facebook friends.

Imagine that you frequently check on Facebook to see how your friends would respond to your shared travel/vacation experience, and you find more likes and comments each time. After three days, your post receives **120 "Likes"** from your Facebook friends. More importantly, there are another **40 Positive "Comments"** following your travel post.