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Part I

Tourist behavior in social media use: A review

Part II

**A short discussion about research philosophy, approaches to
reliability and validity, and ethical considerations**

Module | Approaches to Research Academic Communication (LCDB7000)

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Part I

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Abstract

The rapid development of Internet technology is reshaping tourists' behavioral patterns. Travelers' behavior in social media and its influence mechanism have been concerned by researchers. The related previous literatures are analyzed in this study and a conclusion is drawn that this topic is becoming increasingly popular. The previous researches of travelers' behavior using social media mainly focus on the information searching, decision making, knowledge sharing and the application of user-generated contents. From my perspective, in the future, attention should be paid to attracting more visitors to use social media and creating more high-quality content. Furthermore, another important research direction is tourism virtual network society.

1 Introduction

Social media refer to a series of web applications on the basis of Web 2.0 technology, which supports people to create and exchange user-generated content (UGC)(Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). The main forms of social media include social networks (like Facebook, YouTube, Myspace), information sharing sites (like Wiki Travel), blogs (like Travelblog), Weibo (like Twitter), online review (like TripAdvisor), etc. Customers, both of organizations and individuals, could share, cooperate, and exchange equally a large amount of information. In addition, people's actual behavior and real life have been influenced by virtual communities(Zeng and Gerritsen, 2014), which are built on the basis of the cross-platform. This study is aimed at reviewing the previous researches on tourists' behavior based on social media, to identify the research topics and contents in this field, and to explore future research directions.

2 Method and bibliometric analysis

2.1 Method

Keywords as “social media” or “tourist” or “traveler” or “social networks” or “web 2.0” or “user-generated content” were used for searching literatures. On 4th December 2019, these two main database “ProQuest (all databases)” and “ScienceDirect” were searched.

After deleting duplicates and less relevant literatures, 403 publications about social media using in tourism and hospitality industry were found, including 239 journal articles, 130 dissertations, 24 conference papers, and 10 reports.

2.2 Results of bibliometric analysis

From the perspective of the publication numbers by year (Figure 1), the topic of tourist behavior in social media use started from 2006. With the emergence of Web 2.0 and numerous related social media platforms, the topic has shown a rapid development after 2008. From the perspective of the related research fields, it mainly includes leisure science and tourism, management, computer science and business.

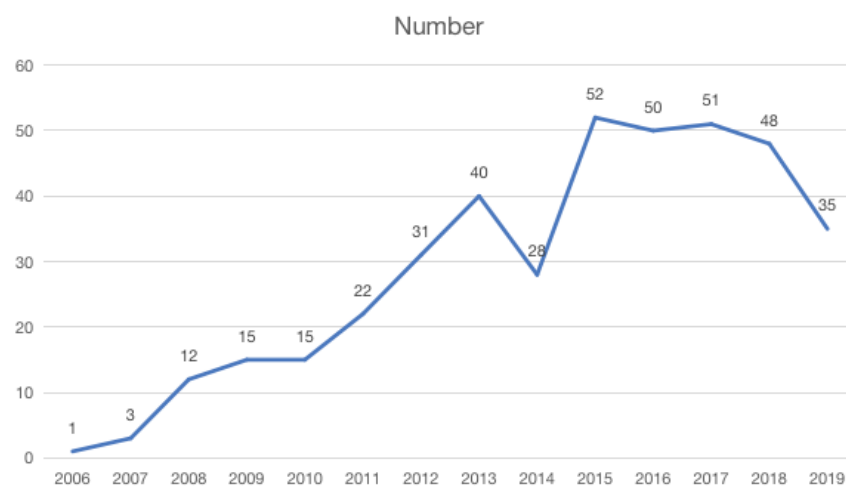


Figure 1. Publication numbers by year (to December 2019)

According to the analysis from these databases, except these keywords I used to search for, the top 10 frequency keywords in journal papers were: Blog, Travelers' information search, Online reviews, Travel planning, Electronic word-of-mouth, Online marketing, Online marketing trust, Travel, Tourist behavior, decision making. From the perspective of word frequency statistics (Figure 2), user-generated content, especially blogs and online reviews were the significant data to be used in previous researches. Travelers' information search, electronic word-of-mouth, online marketing, and online marketing trust were topics that were discussed frequently. From the perspective of published time, early researches focused on how tourists using social media. While, in recent years,

more attention has been paid to the effect of social media on travel planning and information sharing.

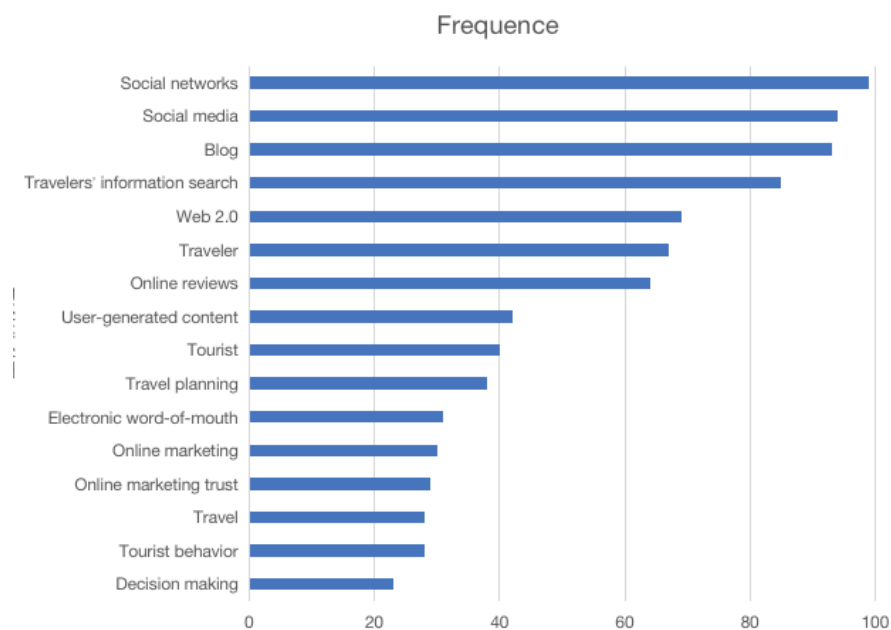


Figure 2. Frequency of keywords in journal articles

3 Research process of tourist behavior in social media use

In general, there are two major concerns about this research topic, 1.how travelers use social media and 2.how social media assists travelers. The relationship of these two is reflected in tourists' activities, from consulting information before the tour, to experiencing the travel process, to feedback after the tour. Besides, social media, a significant platform for the opinions and appeals of tourists, has become a new source where the data of tourist's behavior collected from for academic researches. Given that, this study aims at analyzing these representative literatures to summarize the research progress in this field.

3.1 How tourists use social media

A numerous study indicate that social media could affect the whole process of travel activity. However, purpose of social media use in different phase of people' trip is various. An online survey of Fotis et al.(2012) showed that most of travelers who lived in Soviet Union preferred to use social media to share experience after travel. 49.1% of

travelers kept in touch with friends with social media on the tour and 44.5% of people would be inspired to go for a trip. Cox et al.(2009) pointed out that 21% of Australian tourists would be encouraged by others via social network before trip. 22% of them used social media to narrow down the choice of destination, and 21% of travelers sought for accommodation with assistance of social media. A research on US customers of TripAdvisor presented that 64.7% of users would browse online reviews before travel to choose their travel destinations, while more than half (account for 63.7%) of them would be inspired by these reviews. Almost one-third of TripAdvisor US users would go for comment to feedback to others after trip. Besides, the majority of US customers considered that online review was an important factor in making decision on accommodation, catering and entertainment (Gretzel and Yoo, 2008). The different purpose of social media use was caused by the distinct level of information technology application in the areas where the samples are collected, as well as the differential tourists' habits of search.

3.2 Influential factors of social media use by travelers

The social network use in tourism is restricted by the level of information technology of region, including the penetration rate of Internet, cell phone and PC. Furthermore, the high price of communication equipment(Kenteris, Gavalas and Economou, 2011), the lack of privacy in social network(Young and Quan-Haase, 2009), the control of government, and the limitations of websites could influence the social media use in tourism, particularly going abroad. Gretzel et al.(2008)compared these travelers who were from US, UK, Germany and China to find out that differences in culture, social condition, infrastructural development and information requirement made social media use in travel distinguished from one another. At individual level, the perception and usage of social network was determined by travelers' personality, age, gender and other demographic factors. Correa et al.(2010) tested 959 cases of American adults who used social media daily. The regression analysis showed that personality of extroversion and openness had a significant positive impact on social media usage when controlling the demographic variables and life satisfaction variable. While, emotional stability had a

significant negative effect on the use of social network. Additionally, these influences were largely depended on people' gender and age. Schroeder's(2015) research finding demonstrated that demographic features of international travelers, tourism experience, user experiences and risk perceptions made an important impact on whether they asked for help though social media when crisis happened on tour.

Moreover, travelers' mental factor plays a significant role in social media use. Tourists get involved in sharing information with social media to benefit from entertainment and function no matter what types they are(Nusair *et al.*, 2013). High level of inner happiness brought by the interaction on social media could determine users' view about the website, encourage them to browse the website(Ahn, Ryu and Han, 2007), predict their willingness to on trip(Chen, Shang and Li, 2014). Parra-López(2011) examined that benefit perception, cost perception, technology availability, and social technology condition could affect travelers' willingness to use social network.

Based on the review of above literatures, there are many factors affecting the social media use by tourists, and four of them are outstanding, namely techniques, social conditions, individual personalities and psychological characteristics of tourists.

3.3 Effect of social media on tourism information search behavioral patterns

3.3.1 Social Media as a new source of tourism information

Social media is a new source of information, which is different from these traditional search channels of television, newspaper, friends or family and personal experience(Pudliner, 2007). Social media has some advantages over traditional “top-down” mode, but this does not mean that social network could replace these traditional methods in seeking for information. Research finding of Jacobsen and Munar(2012)presented that only 24% of holidaymakers who came from Denmark and Norwegian used social media on travel. Compared with social network, they prefer to get information from family members or friends, hotel websites and personal experiences. This preference was associated to the habit of information seek, limitations

of using social media, or tourists' perception of social media. Furthermore, down side in using social media to get tourist information, including long consumption time, excessive materials, subjective content and false information were found in the research of Rodríguez(2009). Moreover, the usage of social media is also connected with travelers' style(Mendes, 2011; Verma, Stock and McCarthy, 2012), features of trip, personality of visitors, and motivation on travel (Hyde, 2008).

3.3.2 Information search pattern of traveler using social media

Tourism information search includes online modes and offline modes. The previous knowledge and searching practices, online seeking approaches, processing and storing information, restriction of online seeking, reasons for ending an online seeking, outlining and changing information, and seek for more information via other channels are common concerns(Ho, Lin and Chen, 2012). An interaction diagram among tourists, search engine and online travel business using social media was put forward by Xiang and Gretzel(2010), and the tourism destinations searching process was simulated in the study. Research finding showed that information published on social media accounted for 11% of all search outcomes, and travelers were likely to be directed to these tourism websites by search engine, which testified the significance of social media in travel information search.

The risk preference affects customers' tourism information searching behavior. Taking Belgians and Americans as samples, Jordan(2013) conducted a research that participants were in an experimental environment where they made a travel plan using network. The empirical research indicated that the Belgian, who preferred avoiding high-risk events, spent more time searching for tourism information. While, the American were in favor of "one-stop shop" search method, that all the reservation of transportation, accommodation, tourist activities, and travel products could be done on one website. In addition, tourism information search patterns are significantly varied according to different roles of social network users(Vrana and Zafiropoulos, 2010). The opinion leaders and the opinion seekers, both young and well-educated, are proficient

in computer communication technology and travel planning using social networks. However, the opinion leaders with more travel experience, are more trust in official tourism information, and make positively contribution to information sharing.

3.4 Social media effects on traveler to make decision

Social media has helped travelers to express experiences on multiple platform with text, image, photo and video, which could be referred for determining tourist destinations, accommodations, and entertainments. Sharda and Ponnada(2008) visualized the traveler's blog to help other visitors designing travel plan. Papathanassis and Knolle(2011) examined deeply on the processing and adopting online reviews of visitors to find out the relationship between these two, and the cognitive alteration of visitors in the process of handling with information elements (e.g. photos and texts) . Exploratory researches testify the positive effect of online reviews in holidays choice making. Williams(2010) conducted in-depth interview with some customers of hotel, discovered that those who browsed hotel's website paid attention to the basic information of hotel, and the reviewers' qualification, opinions, and expectations.

As Qualman(2011) pointed out, using social media has changed our communication pattern from the form of “word of mouth” to the form of “world of mouth”. It has reached a wider border beyond the restriction of traditional pattern, which named Interpersonal Circle, getting weak connected consumers involved in. Because of the certain risks to purchasing tourism products, travelers commonly dependent on the user-generated contents to compose product images(Litvin, Goldsmith and Pan, 2008). As online review system of hotel has been widely applied, therefore, the related researches mainly focused on hotel industry. For instance, the effect of hotel online review on consumer decision-making was examined in an experimental research of Vermeulen and Seegers(2009). The result presented that online reviews could influence consumer's consideration of hotels, both positively and negatively. Moreover, the positive comments could increase the popularity of hotels within potential customers. Ye(2011) worked with hotel review data in 10 cities of China from Ctrip.com which is

one of most popular online travel agency of China. Regression analysis indicated that user's review could positively predict online sales of hotels.

3.5 Social media effects on traveler to share information

There is an increasing number of visitors using social network to express themselves and share experience. From social media platform, travelers could not only feel happier, but also could keep in touch with their family members and friends, so as to retain and accumulate social capital. Tourists want to express satisfaction of the travel process(Jiang, Scott and Ding, 2019), acquire tourism information and increase personal experience(Amaro, Duarte and Henriques, 2016), prevent others from unqualified products(Munar and Jacobsen, 2014). These are main motivations for information sharing among tourists. While, lack of time(Munar and Jacobsen, 2014) and being concerned about privacy(Hur *et al.*, 2017) make travelers unable or unwilling to share. Inner factor like personality of tourists could affect individual's perceptions of sharing content, sharing motivations, and specific sharing behaviors(Yoo and Gretzel, 2011). Lodha and Philip(2019)further conducted a comparative study between webloggers and videobloggers and found that the motivation of video sharing users was to seek for fun and pass time. Wilson(2012) suggested that the tourism industry should take different marketing strategies corresponding to various sharing behavior of target customers.

Previous researches focused on testing the relation between social media and tourists' behavior with relevant theories. Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) has been testified by major researcher to explain the reason that visitors adopt tourism information from social media. The model indicates that adopting a new technology is determined by behavior intention, which depends on the attitude towards the new technology, as well as its convenience and usefulness(Bilgihan *et al.*, 2016). On the basis of this, Ayeh(2013) confirmed the significant influence of perceptual pleasure in receiving social media. Additionally, tourists tended to look to the contents which could attracted them. Besides, Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), a theoretical framework,

is commonly applied to give reason for usefulness of social media. Filieri and McLeay(2014) analyzed influential factors of using online reviews by travelers, indicating that the highly involved tourists applied central and peripheral approach in the process of dealing with online reviews. In addition, source credibility is core concept when explaining the impact of social network. Kang and Schueet(2013) investigated the roles of three external factors of identification, internalization, and compliance played in getting rise to the tourism information sharing. He also pointed out the mediating effect of perceived pleasure in this procedure.

3.6 User-generated content as a research source of travelers' behavior

Valuable data, such as the cognition of tourism destination and tourism products, emotional evaluation, and behavioral tendency of tourists, could be acquired by researchers, via analyzing numerous related user-generated content of texts, pictures, and videos. A statistics approach was applied in research of Mak(2017), to investigate travelers' blogs published at different times to assess these reviews on specific products or services, which could help managers improve service quality. Volo(2010) selected 103 bloggers who had been to South Tyrol and analyzed their blogs. The result showed that these blogs had a greater impact on potential visitors to make decision, due to a large amount of recommended comments and detailed descriptions of willingness to travel in these user-generated contents.

Furthermore, user-generated content also can be used to elaborate and interpret specific behaviors in tourist market segment. Wu and Pearce(2014) applied a netnographic method to survey blogs of Chinese recreational vehicle customers traveling around Australia to identify their tourist motivations. In addition, for some certain research questions, it calls for professional interpretation of user-generated content. On the TripAdvisor website, Lu and Stepchenkova(2012) collected reviews about accommodation facilities of ecotourists from USA who traveling in Costa Rica. They identified seven factors that influence the satisfaction of ecotourists and used a two-phase statistics analysis approach to categorize these ecotourists into 4 different types

according to their travel experience. The study testified the previous research findings from an empirical perspective.

4 Discussion

4.1 Overall picture of tourist behavior in social media use

This review presents a general picture of the studying of social media use in tourism. From above discussion, there are two main kinds of researches and one is quantitative researches, and another is related to qualitative approach. Quantitative researches emphasize on mechanism of traveler's behavior in social media use, from the perspective of management or economics, via regression analysis, Structural Equation Model (SEM), Partial Least Squares (PLS), Social Network Analysis (SNA) or other quantitative analysis methods. Qualitative researches aim to exploratory analyze tourists' behavior and influence mechanisms using social media, on the basis of sociology, psychology, anthropology, etc. with the form of in-depth interview, focus group, netnography, grounded theory, etc. The former could help managers assess the value of social network, improve service quality, and optimize online tourist commodity. While, the latter could inspire new thinking and construct new theory of tourist behavior in the research of social media use by drawing on other disciplines.

4.2. Recommendations for future research

We are in the fast-changing world, and new technology and information revolution are emerging one after another. Besides, the behavioral research of tourists has the complexity of factors and the diversity of consumption patterns. However, research on social media use in tourism industry is few and a widely recognized theoretical framework has yet formed. Therefore, there is wide space for further study in the field.

Attention should be paid to attracting more visitors to use social media and creating more high-quality content. Studies have shown that the proportion of information publisher and browser on travel social network basically follow the Law of two-eighth(Casaló, Flavián and Guinalíu, 2010), mainly because of the concerns about time,

energy, psychological costs and privacy. Khan(2017) tested the existence of Pareto Optimality in user-generated content and found that a small part of users created a large amount of contents, while a large number of users only made a litter contributions. Therefore, how to maintain the long-term enthusiasm of tourists for social media using and promoting the sustainable development of social network is an important issue that needs to be solved.

Another important research direction is tourism virtual network society. The virtual network of tourism projected from the real society, and its integration of various existing social entity networks, which is an essential technical structure of the real society. The information sharing behavior of tourists would step their social relations into virtual network community, which makes their tourism network space expanded and deepened. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the features of tourism virtual network society and the relationship with the real society according to the social network analysis method. In addition, the controlment and management of tourist behavior in virtual network is also a key issue, because of the characteristics of virtual network society, like anonymity, openness and autonomy.

Part II

**A short discussion about research philosophy, approaches to
reliability and validity, and ethical considerations**

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1 Introduction

In this study, one of the literatures is chose from Part I¹, and then the role of philosophy is to be analyzed, focusing on ontology, epistemology and methodology. Moreover, the approaches to reliability and validity is to be discussed. Furthermore, the ethical considerations in social research is to be examined.

2 Research Philosophy

The term research philosophy refers to a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge(Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2016). It is the foundation of our research and by which our research question, research aim and objective, our research method are determined. Although research philosophy sounds rather profound, developing knowledge in a particular field is exactly what we are doing when being engaged in a study. Whether we are consciously aware of this or not, we make many kinds of assumptions in each phase within research(Burrell and Morgan, 1979), involving ontological assumption, epistemological assumption, and methodological assumption.

2.1 Ontology, Epistemology and Methodology

Ontological considerations refer to our understanding of what reality is when we are seeking to in study(Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2018). It is concerned about the nature of reality and how it is operated(Chen, 1999). Epistemological considerations, which seek for the relationship between researcher and what can be knew, can help us understand how we come to know what we know(Reed, 2005). Epistemology is affected by ontology, as our understanding of what reality is should determine how we go about researching reality. Methodology considerations present the way we go about discovering knowledge in a systematic way(Watson, 2011),which is influenced by the other two assumptions discussed above. Generally speaking, research philosophy should be taken seriously, as these assumptions inevitably shape how we understand

¹ The chose paper: Ho, C. I., Lin, M. H. and Chen, H. M. (2012) 'Web users' behavioral patterns of tourism information search: From online to offline', *Tourism Management. Elsevier Ltd*, 33(6), pp. 1468–1482.

our research question, what research approach we choose and how we interpret our findings(Crotty, 1998).

2.2 Objectivism and Subjectivism

There are two opposing extremes of these philosophic assumptions, namely objectivism and subjectivism. Objectivism is an ontology position implying that social and physical phenomena exist independently as an external fact beyond our reach and cannot be influenced of how we think of them, whether we are aware of them. In other words, objectivists have one true reality independent of our role as a social actor. Subjectivism, an alternative ontological position, regards objective phenomena as socially-constructed entities, which are made real by consequent actions of social actors(Ormston *et al.*, 2014).

2.3 Four major philosophies

There are four major philosophies in business and management, including positivism, post-modernism, critical realism, and interpretivism(Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

2.3.1 Positivism

Positivists believes that social phenomena and their meanings is an objective existence, which could not be affected by value, knowledge and theory(Coleman, 1982). The subject and the object have separated each other; therefore, the subject can use a series of research approaches to understand the object. In term of the understanding of object, positivists regard that social phenomena or events have to be perceived by experience. That is, all the concepts come from direct experience, and the truth of theory must be tested by experience(Wicks and Freeman, 1998). Positivism paradigm points out that there must be logical causal relations between and within things. The purpose of positivism research is to find out these relationships and examine them through rational tools(Schlick and Rynin, 1948).

2.3.2 Post-modernism

Post-modernists believe in the existence of reality, but the truth cannot be wholly cognized and be proved by people completely. The reality is just like a mountaintop which is sheltered in clouds. We cannot easily know whether we arrive here when we are standing on the top, as we cannot see the surrounding clearly (Popper, 1968). What we know as reality is always only part of objective. Furthermore, we cannot testify a theory to be right by the induction of experience, but we can prove it is wrong by its falsifiability. Rational critique is the only way to acquire knowledge (Joyce and Kelly, 1991), and it is possible to gradually approach the truth through constant guessing and refutation.

2.3.3 Critical realism

Critical realism is a philosophical approach which also admits the existence of reality. However, critical realist researchers believe that the so-called reality is the product of history and is influenced by society, polity, culture, economy, race, and gender in the process of history (Fournier and Grey, 2000). Therefore, the value of researchers has an inevitable effect on subjects. The critical realist research aims to transcend the research objects' ignorance and misunderstanding of the reality through the dialogue and interaction (Kilduff and Mehra, 1997), awakening their real consciousness which has been suppressed in the history, and gradually relieving those prejudices which brought them pain, changing the way in which they finding and solving problems.

2.3.4 Interpretivism

From the perspective of interpretivism, there are many so-called realities and they are shaped by different factors of history, region, situation, and personal experience. Therefore, whether the reality constructed by interpretivist approach is true or not, interpretivists is concerned about suitability (Gadamer, 1994). In other words, constructivist researchers focus on whether a certain action or an idea meets their expectations, and it is impossible to know whether they are real (Von Glasersfeld, 1993). Moreover, the interpretivist research is a process of constructing understanding by the

continuous dialogue. The research aim is not to control or predict the reality, nor to transform the reality, but to comprehend and construct an understandable bridge to connect individual with the world(Ormston *et al.*, 2014), and the past with the present. Interpretivists believe that our cognitive ability of describing and explaining things would be expanded through mutual understanding. Therefore, the constructivist research result is a consensus made by different subjects through interaction.

2.4 Discussion

The chose paper was underpinned by a subjectivist ontology and an interpretive epistemology. It was thought that the social world was constructed by individuals(Burrell and Morgan, 1979) and the online and offline search behavior of web users was shaped by their prior knowledge and searching experience. To interpret the Web users' engagement in tourism information search, the researcher interacted with these participants comprehensively and seek for understanding from the perspective of these web users.

3 Validity and Reliability

3.1 Validity

Validity is a criterion for traditional quantitative positivist research to seek a universal rule through objective measurement and quantitative deduction(Guba and Lincoln, 1994). That is, the validity is about whether the research findings reflect the truth of the research objects. While, it is generally believed that the term of validity used in qualitative research is different from quantitative research (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, 1994; Maxwell, 2012).Validity used in qualitative research is regarded as a relationship, and a kind of consistency between the findings and other parts of research(Martin and Turner, 1986).

3.2 Five approaches to Validity

3.2.1 Detective Method

Researchers apply Detective Method to continuously search for all levels and links of

the research, according to the nature, purpose, and theory, attempting to find out the threats to validity and then trying to eliminate them(Chen, 1999). This method covers a wide range, but it is labor intensive and time consuming.

3.2.2 Falsifiability

After establishing a hypothesis, researchers try their best to proving that the hypothesis is untrue or not completely true, and then modify or exclude it until finding out the most reasonable hypothesis under the existing conditions(Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, 1994). That is Falsifiability. Thus, in order to proof that a certain hypothesis is the most reasonable at present, researchers have to consciously seek for the evidence that may make the hypothesis impossible in the collected data. This method requires researchers to focus on the details during the research process.

3.2.3 Triangular Test

Relevant test method (also known as triangular test) refers to examine the same finding in different ways, or in different situations and time, or selecting different participants. Triangular test is used to investigate the outcomes through various channels, so as to obtain the maximum truth of the research(Neuman, 2007). However, applying this method may fall into the misunderstanding of test for the sake of neglecting the research itself.

3.2.4 Feedback

Feedback method refers to researchers deeply discuss findings and widely exchanges views with their colleagues, friends and family members. Feedback method can provide researchers with different perspectives to help them examine the validity of the research from different levels(Li, 2007). In addition, researchers may obtain unexpected feedback from lay people, making them refreshed.

3.2.5 Participant Test

Researchers would also give feedback of outcomes to participants to test validity(Li,

2007). But this work needs to be done as early as possible. If the subjects have different opinions on the result made by the researcher or consider that the researcher has misunderstood what they did and said, the researcher should respect them and modify the conclusions.

3.3 Reliability

Reliability means that under the same or similar conditions, the same outcome is repeated or reproduced. Conversely, if lacking reliability, the outcome would be erratic, unstable, or inconsistent in one research (Neuman, 2007). The term of reliability comes from quantitative research and refers to the repeatability of outcome.

In qualitative research, researchers act as the research tools, and the uniqueness is emphasized (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2016). Thus, even if the research is conducted with the same participants, in the same place, at the same time, about the same question, the findings would be different. Everything is constantly changed with the research progress and rebuilt in interaction with the researcher. Therefore, the majority of qualitative researchers consider that it is not necessary to discuss reliability in the qualitative research (Chen, 1999).

3.4 Three approaches to Reliability

3.4.1 Test-retest Method

The test-retest method is used to test whether the outcomes are consistent through applying the same measurement tool or indicator in different time. Researchers can apply this method to check the degree of reliability of the indicator (Li, 2007). If the measurement is stable and the indicator has stability reliability, the same result should be obtained every time.

3.4.2 Subpopulation Analysis

Subpopulation analysis can answer the question of whether the same outcome would be obtained using the same measurement tool or indicator to test the different

groups(Babbie, 2013). It measures representative reliability, which is the reliability across subpopulations or subgroups.

3.4.3 Split-half Method

Researchers usually use the split-half method to check the equivalence reliability of long-form questionnaires(Neuman, 2007). If several different indicators measure the same conception, as long as these indicators are reliable, the same outcome should be obtained. This approach involves comparing indicators to different subpopulations or subgroups and requires independent knowledge about the subpopulations.

3.5 Discussion

The researchers implemented some measures to ensure the validity in the chose paper. For one thing, the second author and other two independent research workers conducted a word-by-word, open-coding process separately, which is followed by a mutual comparative and negotiable method. For another thing, subjects' own words and phrases were used in the descriptive coding. Furthermore, the researchers went back and forth between the raw data and categories with constant comparison analysis until reaching the theoretical saturation point.

4 Ethics

4.1 Definition

All the researchers are concerned about ethics issue, even the strict positivists(Sieber and Tolich, 2013). Ethics defines what is legitimate, what is illegitimate, and what is ethical research procedures(Peel *et al.*, 2006). Most of the ethics issues involve how to compromise between competing values, and the choices are made on a case-by-case basis(Borne, 2007). Though it is difficult to evaluate the ethical dilemma appropriately at the beginning of a study, researchers need to take ethical issues into account in the research design (Neuman, 2007).

4.2 Five ethical considerations in social research

4.2.1 Voluntary participation

Social research often involves the lives of others. A sent questionnaire to the doorstep marks that a time-consuming and labor-intensive activity would begin without the respondent's request(Soltis, 1989). Furthermore, if the experimental subjects or survey respondents are voluntary, the generality required by science is threatened. For example, in a descriptive survey of a quantitative study, unless the respondent is selected by scientific sampling and includes volunteers and non-volunteers, researchers cannot infer the results of the sample survey to the overall population(Bell and Bryman, 2007). Voluntary participation is an important principle, but it is often difficult to really following.

4.2.2 Avoidance of harm

Social researchers must not do harm to research subjects, whether they participate voluntarily or not. In social researches, participants are often required to disclose their abnormal behaviors, attitudes that are not recognized by the general public, or personal characteristics that degrade status such as low income and receiving social assistance(Eysenbach and Till, 2001). Disclosure of these information may make research subjects uncomfortable. Social researchers may also force research subjects to evoke the past that were unjust and immoral. As a result, the research itself may become the endless source of pain to these participants.

4.2.3 Confidentiality and Anonymity

Researchers need to keep the information of participants strictly confidential. Before the research begins, the researcher should proactively promise participants the principle of confidentiality, and never to expose their names and identities. Moreover, all names related to them would be used anonymously and sensitive material should be removed if necessary(Madikizela-Madiya, 2017). During the research process, researchers should also pay attention to reminding themselves not to mention the situation of the interviewee to others. In fact, it is not easy to keep completely confidential(McAreavey

and Muir, 2011). For instance, in qualitative research, if the author explicitly lists the participants' names in acknowledgement, the effort to make anonymity would have been in vain.

4.2.4 Justice

The principle of justice can be expressed in the researcher's attitude and evaluation to the participants (Cavan, 1977). For example, if the researcher and the research subjects are different in culture, race, and gender, the former may be discriminatory in attitude toward the latter. If the researcher is engaged in an evaluation-type study which would directly affect the living conditions of the participants (such as loss of work, demotion, and salary reduction), then the researcher needs to know exactly whether the evaluation is accurate (Peel *et al.*, 2006). If the purpose of research is to intervene and transform reality, the ethical issues to be faced may be more difficult.

4.2.5 Payment

Some researchers consider that neither gifts nor sincere verbal expressions can repay the help given by research subjects. Research itself implies an unequal relation between researcher and research subjects (Maxwell, 2012). Researchers can often benefit from paper publication, promotion, fame, etc. While, these participants may be utilized, rather than getting reward (Borne, 2007). In my opinion, research subjects should be paid for their contributions and it is their right to require reward. However, we should consider the degree of reward seriously. In addition, If the researchers are not going to provide reward, participants should be informed in advance.

4.3 Discussion

Some ethical considerations were discussed in that paper. At the beginning of the research, all the participants were informed of the research objectives and interview procedure, and then sign the written consent for agreement. During the interviews, the tape-record could only be made with the participants' permission and the record was only accessible to members of the research team. Also, participants could freely end

whenever they wanted to do so. Furthermore, semi-structured in-depth interviews were carried out in a flexible and dynamic style to make subjects more comfortable. Finally, all participants were paid for sharing their opinions.

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