The Influence of Gender and Age on the Persuasability of Travel Articles and Travel Brochures

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Introduction

- Challenge for DMOs = designing effective methods to create awareness

- Popular persuasive - promotional techniques
  - Advertising - Any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods, or services by an identified sponsor
  - Publicity - Editorial space, rather than paid space, in print and broadcast media, to promote a product, place or person
Introduction Cont.

- Research exists – use of tourism promotional communications
- Research is lacking – how travelers process promotional communications is lacking
- Past research = persuasability differs based on demographics
  - Gender & Age

- Do participants differ based on their demographic characteristics – gender & age
  1. The degree to which participants’ were able to be transported by a narrative (the process)
  2. Participants’ level of perceived skepticism concerning travel articles and travel brochures
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative Transportation</th>
<th>Skepticism Towards Advertising</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stories transport – get lost – involve – entertain readers</td>
<td>Readers’ sense of disbelief in ads</td>
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<tr>
<td>Link between degree of transportation &amp; persuasion</td>
<td>How believable or truthful readers perceive an ad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation = Persuasion</td>
<td>Link between skepticism &amp; persuasion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Skepticism = Persuasion</td>
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Subjects & Design

- Population
  - Individuals who had contacted the CACVB &
  - Requested monthly e-newsletters

- Online format - Zoomerang
Procedure & Key features of Study

- 6 web-based surveys
- Identical except for message cue & presentation format

1. Travel article message cue with narrative format
2. Travel article message cue with list format
3. Travel brochure message cue with narrative format
4. Travel brochure message cue with list format
5. No message cue with narrative format
6. No message cue with list format
While I was reading the travel narrative, I could easily picture the events in it taking place.
Narrative Transportation  (Green & Brock, 2000)

1. While I was reading the travel narrative, I could easily picture the events in it taking place.
2. While I was reading the travel narrative, activity going on in the room around me was on my mind.
3. I could picture myself in the destination described in the travel narrative.
4. I was mentally involved in the travel narrative while reading it.
5. After finishing the travel narrative, I found it easy to put it out of my mind.
6. I found my mind wandering while reading the travel narrative.
7. The places described in the travel narrative are relevant to my interests in travel.
8. The information in the travel narrative changed my perception of Charleston, SC as a travel destination.

Not at all 1  2  3  4  5  6  7 Very much
Skepticism Towards Advertising (SKEP)  
(Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1998)

1. I can depend on getting the truth from most travel articles (travel brochures).
2. Travel articles aim to inform the traveler.
3. I believe travel articles are informative.
4. Travel articles are generally truthful.
5. Travel articles are a reliable source of information about the quality and options available at a destination.
6. Travel writing is truth well told.
7. In general, travel writing presents a true picture of the destination being highlighted.
8. I feel I’ve been accurately informed after reading most travel articles.
9. Most travel articles provide travelers with essential information.

Strongly Agree  1  2  3  4  5  Strongly Disagree
Discussion of Findings
Gender & Skepticism

- Females less skeptical
- Supports past research
  - Females easier to persuade (Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1998)
  - Females more heavily influenced by brochures (Andereck, 2005)
  - Females as gatekeepers for holiday decision-making (Mottiar & Quinn, 2004)

- Frequency in use of information sources for trip planning influences effect of skepticism for females?
  - Female participants indicated using 11 information sources more often than male participants.
  - Statistically significant use of Internet, brochures, travel articles, guidebooks, WOM, friends/family, and magazines
What does this mean?

- Practitioners designing tourism promotional materials should re-examine target audience
  - Seek to better target/meet needs/interests of female trip planners
  - Research needed to better understand the female traveler as a gatekeeper
Age & Skepticism

- 27-35 more skeptical of travel articles than 45-62
- 27-35 more skeptical of travel brochures than 45-53

Frequency in use of information sources for trip planning influences effect of skepticism for age?
- 45-62 used travel articles more often than 27-35
- 45-53 used travel brochures more often than 27-35

- Relationship to past research...
- Importance to practitioners – younger travelers possibly more skeptical of travel-related information sources
  - Tourism promoters may need to work harder and/or create new ways to reach/persuade younger travelers
Age & Narrative Transportation

- 27-35 more skeptical of travel articles & travel brochures AND experienced lower narrative transportation than 45-71

- Influence of skepticism & experience on narrative transportation…
  - Experience → less skepticism

- Influence of surrounding environment & narrative transportation – 27-35 were
  - More influenced by activity in room
  - Less involved mentally
  - More likely to find mind wandering
Additional Findings

- More skeptical of travel brochures
- Lower narrative transportation when cued excerpt from a travel brochure

Supports past research
- Skepticism leads to less attention to advertising (Obermiller, Spangenberg, & MacLachlan, 2005)
Something to Consider…

- Perception of communication channels
- Demographics of those using chosen channels
- Reading print vs reading online?
- Opinions
  - Written by someone else = news
  - Written by business = advertising
Tips for Garnering Free Publicity...
Working with Media

- NC CVB/DMO and neighboring counties/states
  - FREE event listings
  - Get to know Media/PR dept.
- Local and regional newspapers
  - Get to know travel journalists
- Magazines
  - Southern Living
  - Our State, Carolina Scene, city-specific

www.helpareporterout.com
Tips for Working with the Media

- Less is more
- Make each pitch specific
- Establish a great working relationship
- Do not send blanket emails – Personalize
- Provide online press room/press kits
  - Provide story ideas/Picture
  - Keep updated
  - Provide contact information!
Writing a Press Release

- 1 page typed
- Inverted pyramid style
  - Most important info first (5 W’s)
  - All pertinent info in first 2-3 paragraphs
- Provide web links
- Include contact information
- Be Creative
  - Link to current trends/packages
  - Traveling singles; Romantic Getaway
- Make their job easy
Working with Freelance Writers

- Increase in Freelance writers
- Not on staff – free to write for any publication
- Verify the writer
  - Check writing history
  - Don’t be afraid to question
  - Memberships – SATW ASJA

www.lynnselfdon.com
Working with travel writers...

- 15+ pitches to editors everyday
- Give them a reason to write
- Subject line crucial
- Place info. in body of email – not attachment
- Don’t include pics but note if available
- Stay in touch but not obtrusive – and do so via email
Garnering Free Publicity

- Sponsor Charities – Get Involved in your Community
- Be a Guest
  - Guest columnist
  - Guest on TV/Radio show
- Spread the Word
  - Send a photo – brag about yourself/event
Tourists Don’t Know County Lines

- The region is the destination.
- Work to create the entire tourism experience or the tourism “package”.
- Similar businesses or nearby communities aren’t competition, they are part of your tourism product!
  - The more there is to do, the more appealing a place becomes.
THANK YOU!

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