

# Travel User-Generated Content

Toward Understanding The Role of Travel-Related UGC

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### **Abstract**

*This study bridges the studies of Web 2.0, user-generated content, and tourism to give a more holistic picture of how all three are interconnected and interdependent in sharing travel-related content and information. Tourism is an information-intense industry; therefore, it is important to study the technological and consumer-behavior changes that impact the circulation and accessibility of travel information. The data in this study is collected through an online questionnaire, interviews, and content analysis. The data is used to find what travel-related UGC is created and shared, where this UGC is shared, why it is created and shared, and also how it is used as a travel-information resource. This study focuses on English as a Second Language Teachers in Seoul, South Korea as they are highly networked and travel often. The results of this study find that the most common forms of travel-related UGC created and shared are photographs and blog posts. Also, Facebook is heavily used as a platform to post travel-related UGC. The strongest motivations for creating and sharing UGC are to keep family and friends updated, to keep a personal archive of travels, and to provide information to help other travelers. ESL teachers use UGC as a travel-information resource mostly for inspiration and in the initial stages of travel.*

## **Declaration of Authorship**

I declare that this master thesis is my own work.

I have not included any material or data from other authors or sources, other than those acknowledged by citation.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The ability to network with others and the opportunity for self-expression are increasingly characterizing the Internet. The new era of the internet, termed “Web 2.0”, marks a significant transformation in how people use the internet, and has laid the foundation for the evolution of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) and user-generated content (UGC) (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Part of Web 2.0’s appeal is that it has the capability to be a platform for users to express themselves through UGC (blogs, video content, photographs, etc). UGC posted and shared online is catching the eyes of academics and professionals in a variety of fields because of the impact it can have on industries. UGC acts in a way, as a super-charged, online version of word-of-mouth communication, owned and controlled by the consumers. It is therefore important to understand what kinds of UGC are being produced, why users produce UGC, and how users use UGC created by others.

Industries that rely heavily on information flows are especially affected by the production and circulation of UGC. Tourism and travel is one of these information-intense industries (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010), as it is dependent on quick and current information flows covering a range of industrial sectors. UGC shared online is becoming increasingly influential as information resources for travelers; it has fundamentally changed the way that travel information is circulated and the way people plan and consume travel (Buhalis & Law, 2008). In an information intensive situation such as travel, consumers actively seek others' opinions as a means of managing perceived risks (Smith, et al., 2005). This means that travelers are increasingly turning to each other’s UGC, making the understanding of the phenomenon incredibly useful to both consumers and marketers.

Web 2.0 sites are beginning to tap into the possibilities of travel-related UGC. For example, Facebook, the largest SNS with over 500 billion members, has recently teamed up with TripAdvisor, a travel social media website enabling user comments and reviews of hotels, attractions, services, etc. Facebook users now have a personalized experience on TripAdvisor, with direct access to friend’s information on where they’ve been, what they’ve reviewed, photos, and other content. Facebook recognizes the role

of travel-related UGC on its website in conjunction with this partnership when it says, “Don't just look through your friends' vacation photos on Facebook; get tips from them and go on your own adventure” (Black, 2010). The conjunction is calling for Facebook users to make the leap from admiring travel-related UGC to getting more information and booking a trip themselves. The personalization of TripAdvisor through Facebook means that the information people receive is more impactful because it is coming from people in their own network. This example, among others, demonstrates that the link in this study between Web 2.0, UGC, and tourism is on the cutting edge of the evolution of these three themes.

To better understand the role of UGC in relation to travel, this study will focus on a specific community, English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers living and teaching in South Korea. I have personal experience as a member of this group, and therefore have experiential knowledge of the inner workings of the community. This target group was also chosen because of the high level of networking that occurs, as well as the high level of traveling. ESL teachers are required to be a citizen of a native English speaking country, removing any language barriers between them. This increases their ability to communicate and to network with each other. Also, due to the native English-speaking countries' cultural proximity, especially in contrast to the Eastern culture of South Korea, a bond among ESL teachers is formed. The social identity among ESL teachers is strong, as they associate themselves with other foreigners living in South Korea to teach English. Another reason this target group was chosen is that most ESL teachers are in their 20's – early 30's, making it more likely they are engaged with UGC (Karahasanovic et al., 2009).

The research question to guide this study is:

***What is the role of travel-related user-generated content shared online among ESL teachers in South Korea?***

Since tourism is an information-intense industry, it is important to study the technological and consumer-behavior changes that impact the circulation and accessibility of travel information (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Knowing what information is created, where it is shared, why it is created, and how it is used, will create a better understanding of how

the tourism industry is evolving, and make tourism more manageable and enjoyable for both consumers and marketers. This research study bridges the studies of Web 2.0, user-generated content, and tourism to give a more holistic view of how all three are interconnected and interdependent in sharing travel related content and information.



## Chapter 2: Theory & Previous Research

### 2.1 Tourism

Before delving into specifics regarding Web 2.0, user-generated content, and travel, it is important to reflect upon research that has been done on tourism and the tourist in general. Tourism has been researched in a number of different fields and perspectives, as it has multiple definitions and approaches. Butler and Wall (1985) underscore the importance of a multi-disciplinary approach in the study of tourism when they state that the components of tourism “need to be examined not only together, but also in a much broader context of the other aspects of the global environment” (p. 292). Tourism, which includes human, geographical, and industrial elements, requires a definition that encompasses the entire concept (Leiper, 1979). Neil Leiper, an influential tourism scholar, defines tourism as

...the system involving the discretionary travel and temporary stay of persons away from their usual place of residence for one or more nights, excepting tours made for the primary purpose of earning remuneration from points en route. The elements of the system are tourists, generating regions, transit routes, destination regions and a tourist industry. These five elements are arranged in spatial and functional connections. Having the characteristics of an open system, the organization of five elements operates within broader environments: physical, cultural, social, economic, political, technological with which it interacts (Leiper, 1979, p. 404).

This definition denotes tourism as an elaborate system of different elements operating within multiple broader contexts. This definition is quite complex and therefore, for this study, a working definition of tourism is needed. For this study, “tourism” will be defined with a focus on the aspect of the tourist, emphasizing the importance of the agent in this research. The working definition comes from the World Tourism Organization (WTO), who defines tourism as, “The activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes” (World Tourism Organization, 1995, p. 1). This definition emphasizes the traveling persons, as well as a change in environment. The one-year time limitation in this definition is a pragmatic limiting period, which is quite appropriate for the group being studied in this research, as many ESL teaching contracts are one-year contracts. This means that ESL teachers are engaging in “tourism” and are “tourists” for the entirety of their contracts.

There are many theoretical approaches to the study of tourism, including, but not limited to, economical, industrial, geographical, ecological, developmental, technological and managerial. This diversity makes tourism a difficult concept to explore in its entirety, rendering a complete literature review of the concept impossible. This study will therefore focus on the sociological and technological frameworks to reflect the traveling agent (tourist) and technological advancements.

### **Tourist Experience**

Early research depicts all tourists as comprising of one category, with the same objectives and motivations for engaging in tourism. Cohen (1979, 1984) rejects this idea of the tourist as a unitary role-type, and finds that tourists differ significantly in their motivations, traveling styles, activities, etc. Cohen therefore developed five different modes of tourist experience, recreational, diversionary, experiential, experimental, and existential (1979). Still, academics continue to unpack the tourist experience into sub-modes, demonstrating that the tourist experience is complex, and difficult to categorize.

Conceptualization of the tourist experience has also undergone a shift, developing from modern theorizing to postmodern theorizing on the subject (Uriely, 2005). Uriely (2005) documents four conceptual developments in the study of the tourist experience. The four developments are *i)* a shift from differentiation to de-differentiation, which will be discussed more below; *ii)* a shift from generalizing to pluralizing conceptualizations, which acknowledge the diversity of tourist experiences, such as those of ESL teachers; *iii)* a focus on the tourist subjective negotiation of meaning, indicating that meanings are determined by the tourist themselves and are a determinant of the experience, as opposed to the displayed objects provided by the industry; and *iv)* a movement from contradictory and decisive statements to relative and complementary interpretations, meaning that post-modern tourism discourse now includes the emergence of alternatives to the conventional mass tourism (p. 199).

One of these developments is of key importance in terms of exploring the experience of ESL teachers working abroad, the shift from differentiation to de-differentiation. Earlier approaches stress the significance of the difference between tourism and everyday life (Cohen, 1979; Leiper, 1979), “tourism is essentially a temporary reversal of everyday activities - it is a no-work, no-care, no-thrift situation” (Cohen, 1979, p. 181). Re-conceptualizations, however, have de-differentiated everyday life and tourism, and have

taken into account different situations which blur the lines between everyday life and tourism.

One example of a situation that blurs the lines between everyday life and tourism is the concept of “traveling workers” (Uriely, 2001). “Traveling workers” are characterized by two sets of criteria. The first, termed “traveling professional workers,” are defined as people who combine work and tourism in the way that they are more likely to travel for work than to work for travel. They are typically skilled, and career oriented (Uriely, 2001, p. 2). The second, “migrant tourism workers,” are defined as skilled or semi-skilled workers in tourism oriented occupations, who see touristic pursuits as the main focus of their working abroad (Uriely, 2001, p. 3). These conceptualizations are particularly useful when describing the experience of ESL teachers abroad. ESL teachers at first glance, may be considered “travelling professional workers” since they work in the field of education rather than tourism; however, the experience of ESL teachers falls more into the category of “migrant tourism workers.” Most ESL teachers who are teaching abroad are not professional teachers in their home countries and are therefore not seeking professional advancement, but the opportunity to travel and experience another culture. Their work can be considered “seasonal” as contracts are usually for a maximum of one year. This contract length also indicates, according to the WTO’s definition of tourism used in this study, that ESL teachers are considered “tourists” for the entire working period. Another characteristic of “migrant tourism workers” is that they tend to seek out the same employment in different destinations. Many ESL teachers have experience in multiple countries, and use the opportunity of teaching ESL to explore multiple destinations. According to Uriely (2001), migrant tourism workers tend to use the money earned by their employment to fund travel excursions. ESL teachers often use vacation opportunities to cheaply travel within their teaching country, or countries nearby, which would otherwise be much more expensive journeys from their home country.

### **Technological Advancements and Tourism**

The term “technology” can be used to describe a number of advancements that affect tourism such as transportation, architecture and design, safety equipment, etc. (Stipanuk, 1993). This study, however, will focus mainly on the computer and information technology advancements that have revolutionized the industry in a variety of ways.

Since the 1980's the use of information communication technologies (ICTs) have been transforming tourism (Buhalis & Law, 2008). Rice (1984) defines ICTs as "those communication technologies, typically involving computer capabilities...that allow or facilitate interactivity among users or between users and information" (p. 35). ICTs deal with storing, retrieving, transmitting or receiving information in digital form. They alone have not transformed the industry, but the mutual shaping process between ICTs and social practices (Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2006) have led to the strong correlation between the development of the technology and the development of the tourism industry. Social Shaping Theory (SST) of technology focuses on how technologies are created through a combination of social forces and processes. Rather than seeing technology as a separate and independent force with its own "inevitable logic and motives," SST emphasizes "the importance of human choices and action in technological change" (Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2006, p. 248). In this way, technological possibilities have been socially adapted to apply to tourism, and also needs in tourism have shaped the advancement of technologies to improve the industry. The way tourists engage in tourism has changed significantly with the rise of ICTs and the Internet, and is now one of the most important application domains of the World Wide Web (Werthner & Klein, 2001).

The development of ICTs and the internet, specifically within the last ten years, has provided countless new tools for both tourism consumers and tourism providers. They empower consumers to select and purchase tourism products, while also supporting the globalization of the industry by enabling tools for tourism providers to expand and administer the products globally (Buhalis, 1998).

Increasingly ICTs will provide the "info-structure" for the entire [travel] industry and will overtake all mechanistic aspects of tourism transactions. It is evident, however, that the future of eTourism will be focused on consumer-centric technologies that will support organisations to interact with their customers dynamically (Buhalis & Law, 2008, p. 619).

The empowerment of the tourist through information is of particular interest in the context of this study. Tourists are now able use tools provided by the Internet and ICTs to pursue the best values with regards to time and money (Buhalis & Law, 2008). Buhalis (1998) found that potential tourists have become much more independent due to the variety of tools made accessible to them via the Internet and ICTs. The tools this study will focus on are Web 2.0 and UGC.

## 2.2 Web 2.0

The Internet was not always as interactive as it is today. The web has undergone a significant transformation since the early years, from “Web 1.0” to “Web 2.0.” This transformation signaled a new chapter in how people use the internet, and laid the foundation for the evolution of SNSs and UGC (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). O’Reilly, (2005) describes Web 2.0 as,

...the network as platform, spanning all connected devices; Web 2.0 applications are those that make the most of the intrinsic advantages of that platform: delivering software as a continually-updated service that gets better the more people use it, consuming and remixing data from multiple sources, including individual users, while providing their own data and services in a form that allows remixing by others, creating network effects through an "architecture of participation," and going beyond the page metaphor of Web 1.0 to deliver rich user experiences (*abstract*).

This explains the key differences between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0, including more user interaction with information, creation of information, and also much higher user participation and networking. Web 2.0 explores the possibilities of the Web in more interactive and collaborative ways, putting emphasis on social interaction between users and harnessing collective intelligence (Murugesan, 2007). Pierre Lévy, a French cyberspace theorist, uses “collective intelligence” to describe the large-scale information gathering and processing that has emerged online. Lévy argues that people harness their individual knowledge and expertise towards shared goals and objectives on the internet (Jenkins, 2004). The basic idea behind collective intelligence is that, “No one knows everything, everyone knows something, all knowledge resides in humanity” (Lévy, 1997, as cited in Jenkins, 2004, p. 35).

Web 2.0 is both a usage and technological paradigm. It comprises of technologies, business strategies, and social trends (Murugesan, 2007). Although the term “Web 2.0” encompasses more than just websites, key features and elements included in Web 2.0 sites illustrate the shift. Some of these key features include being participatory, collaborative, inclusive, creator / user centric, unsettled, and information intensive (Dearstyne, 2007). UGC thrives on Web 2.0 sites, something that was much less frequent in the era of Web 1.0.

The manifestation of Web 2.0 serves as the ideological and technological foundation where UGC “can be seen as the sum of all ways in which people make use of Social

Media” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). Web 2.0 democratizes the web and embraces the amateur, creating ideologies centered on the sharing, networking, and collection of information and knowledge. These ideologies combine with technological drivers, such as increased broadband availability, hardware capacity, and software development; economic drivers, such as increased availability of tools for the creation of UGC; and social drivers, like the rise of a generation familiar with and willing to share information online (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), to form the platform upon which UGC and social media thrive. The world of Web 2.0 was the beginning of the evolution of social media and UGC, “...a world in which ‘the former audience’, not a few people in a back room, decides what’s important” (O’Reilly, 2005, pp. 26, 27). In this statement, O’Reilly is comparing the freedom and accessibility of media on the web to the gate-keeping system of traditional media.

The concept of Web 2.0 has been adapted to various industries. “Travel 2.0” is the term used to describe the travel and tourism industry’s uses of Web 2.0 features (Conrady, 2007). Travel 2.0 encourages travelers to create content online to be shared with others. Web 2.0 features, specifically UGC, promote information exchange among travelers (Grossman, 2007). Examples of prominent Travel 2.0 websites include WikiTravel, TripAdvisor, TravBuddy, and TravellersPoint.

The goal of WikiTravel is to “create a free, complete, up-to-date and reliable world-wide travel guide” (“WikiTravel,” n. d.). WikiTravel uses wiki technology that lets any reader create, update, edit, or illustrate any article on the site. The more users who contribute their UGC to the site, the better and more informative the site becomes. TripAdvisor’s main function is to collect and disseminate UGC - reviews, ratings, photos, and videos (O’Connor, 2008) in order to help people plan and have the ‘perfect’ trip. The site boasts over 45 million travel reviews and opinions from real travelers around the world, and over six million candid traveler photos (“TripAdvisor,” 2011). This makes it one of the most popular travel sites on the web (O’Connor, 2008). TravBuddy incorporates more social networking features than *WikiTravel* and *TripAdvisor*. Through the “find a travel buddy” feature, users can share their future travel plans and dream destinations. The site then matches them with other users who will be traveling to the same destinations at the same time (“TravBuddy,” 2011). The site also allows for the sharing of photos, reviews, and blogs to help fellow travelers connect. TravellersPoint is similar to

TravBuddy, using many UGC tools (free blogs, unlimited photo uploads, etc.) and knowledge sharing to “create more understanding for different cultures and countries and ultimately a better world for everyone to travel in” (“TravellersPoint,” 2011).

### **Rise of Online Communities**

Online communities are a direct result of the increased networking and interaction capabilities of Web 2.0. The ubiquity of the internet and the human desire to connect with others (which will be discussed further in section 2.5) has led to collaboration among internet users who share common interests or aim to solve a common problem. Plant (2004) defines online communities as “a collective group of entities, individuals or organizations that come together either temporarily or permanently through an electronic medium to interact in a common problem or interest space” (p. 54). Information sharing and grouping among people through the internet and ICTs indicate a long-term shift to communities founded upon shared interests rather than geographical spaces such as neighborhoods (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2001). They can have many purposes, including facilitating interaction and information sharing among travelers and tourists.

Online communities may seem similar to SNSs, however online communities differ from SNSs in that the focus is on the interest or the issue around which the community is formed, rather than on specific individual identities. In the former, people are more likely to interact with strangers in imagined spaces and contexts. In a SNS, the individual’s profile ostensibly represents his or her offline identity, and is more likely to engage with previous social contacts (Song, 2010). However, some online communities have elements of SNSs such as a user profile page, and some SNSs are founded upon specific interests. Many Web 2.0 sites are difficult to categorize as they include elements from several categories.

### **2.3 SNSs**

Since the first SNS, Six Degrees, debuted in 1997, many others, including Facebook, MySpace, CyWorld, Hyves, and Twitter, followed suit (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). This online social phenomenon has captured the attention of internet users worldwide. SNSs have digitalized human social connections. What fundamentally separates these sites from previous technologies is the “articulated social network,” which allows users to digitally represent their social connections, by accepting and requesting “friends” (Ellison, et al.,

2009, p. 6). SNSs are now a fundamental way to maintain social connections (Haythornthwaite, 2005).

Boyd and Ellison (2008) define social network sites as

...web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (p. 211).

“Networking” would be the purported purpose of these sites, “using one’s chain of connections to make new friends, dates, business partners, etc” (Donath & Boyd, 2004, p. 71). The “networking” aspect of these sites is particularly relevant to this study, as people use the UGC of their connections for travel information, but also their connection’s connections. Via SNSs, there are direct connections (with ones “Friends”) and indirect connections (with ones “Friends” of “Friends”). For example, when planning a trip to Chiang Mai, Thailand, one could contact a direct connection (Friend) via an SNS who has also been to Thailand. This direct connection (Friend), however, has not been specifically to Chiang Mai, although *they* know someone in *their* direct network who has traveled there. They then, may give you the information to contact this “Friend of a Friend” (indirect connection) for information and UGC in relation to Chiang Mai.

### **SNSs as a Platform for UGC**

SNSs have become key platforms where users can create, upload, and share their own content (Beer, 2008; Boyd & Ellison, 2008; Guo et al., 2009; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Lussier et al., 2010; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Even websites that originally focused on UGC have added SNS components to increase content sharing on the site and networking between users,

Furthermore, as the social media and user-generated content phenomena grew, websites focused on media sharing began implementing SNS features and becoming SNSs themselves. Examples include Flickr (photo sharing), Last.FM (music listening habits), and YouTube (video sharing) (Boyd & Ellison, 2008, p. 216).

This illustrates the close link that UGC and SNSs have in the networking and sharing of information. There are a few key components that distinguish SNSs from other sites. All SNSs have “Friends” (requesting and accepting), comments, and private messaging features, and some allow for video and photo sharing, or built-in blogging (Boyd &



Ellison, 2008). SNSs often link together as well. For example, a Facebook user can post a link to a YouTube video they created on their profile, notifying all of their Friends about the content. Also, the Facebook user can upload the video directly to Facebook. In either instance, Friends can click “share” to then have the video posted on their profile, spreading the content quickly throughout the social networks. This interlinking and sharing of UGC is what makes SNSs so influential in the sharing of information.

### **2.4 UGC**

Since its debut, scholars have defined UGC in a variety of similar, yet slightly different ways. For this study, UGC is defined as i) content made publicly available via the internet; ii) content that reflects a certain amount of creative effort; and iii) content that is created by the general public (rather than by professionals) (Vickery & Wunsch-Vincent, 2007). UGC encompasses a plethora of media forms and is found on most Web 2.0 sites (Gretzel, 2006). This section will explore how UGC is a powerful version of electronic word-of-mouth, how it mediatizes the tourist experience, motivations regarding the use of UGC, as well as UGC’s explicit relationship with tourism and travel.

### **eWOM**

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) stems from the original term word-of-mouth (WOM), which has been cited by many (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Burgess et al., 2009; Litvin, et al., 2008; Munar, 2010; O’Connor, 2008; Simpson & Siguwaw, 2008; Werthner & Klein, 2001; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010; Yoo et al., 2009) to be an important aspect of the tourism industry. WOM is defined as “the communication between consumers about a product, service, or a company in which the sources are considered independent of commercial influence” (Litvin et al., 2008, p. 3). An example of WOM would be a friend telling you about a great new restaurant in town; the friend has no vested interest in the prosperity of the restaurant, but is rather sharing a positive consumer experience. Also credibility of the message is established because you know the friend personally.

eWOM brings communication between consumers into the expansive realm of the internet and ICTs. Based on the previous definition of WOM, eWOM is defined by Litvin et al. (2008) as, “all informal communications directed at consumers through Internet-based technology related to the usage or characteristics of particular goods and services, or their sellers” (Litvin et al., 2008, p. 10). This definition includes communication between marketers and consumers on an informal level, since marketers

have utilized more informal marketing techniques online that blur the lines between professional marketing and content created by consumers. For example, the owner of a hotel could write a favorable review of his/her hotel online to simulate a positive experience of a guest in order to market the hotel. First seen as a threat to the credibility of user reviews, the “power of the crowd” reduces this threat. As the number of reviews grows, the impact of fake reviews falls as they are “overwhelmed by genuine consumer generated content” (O’Connor, 2008, p. 53). The vast majority of eWOM and UGC is therefore unsolicited, unfiltered, and outside of the marketers ability to influence or control it (Blackshaw & Nazzaro, 2006). For this study, a broader definition of eWOM is used, which eliminates communications between marketers and consumers. eWOM is thus defined as “any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet” (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004, p. 39).

Although WOM and eWOM share fundamental similarities, three key aspects differentiate them. First, WOM is an immediate conversation, whereas eWOM usually occurs between consumers who are separated by both time and space (Steffes & Burgee, 2009). People from around the world can now disseminate opinions of travel experiences to others looking into the same types of experiences, even though they may be thousands of miles apart. Also, eWOM has a degree of permanence as it “lives” online, is often easily searchable, and archived. Due to this, eWOM is seen as essential to industries concerned with reputation management - a large part of the tourism and travel industry (Jansen et al., 2009). Second, WOM is traditionally interpersonal communication, or communication between small groups. eWOM is facilitated by the internet, which has an unlimited reach enabling one-to-world communication (Dellarocas, 2003),

The Internet has transformed the intimacy of word-of-mouth behavior into a broadcast-like ability to communicate with the masses, whether a group of friends or hundreds of thousands of online-but-connected strangers at computer keyboards (Blackshaw & Nazzaro, 2006, p. 3).

Third, in WOM communication the message is from someone known to the receiver, establishing credibility. In eWOM, the sender can be known or he/she can be a digital stranger.

eWOM is also an important aspect of UGC. Although UGC and eWOM are distinct concepts, they are closely related. eWOM depends on the dissemination of content, including user-generated, to be successful, and UGC has less influence without eWOM (Cheong & Morrison, 2008). Cheong and Morrison (2008) discuss eWOM and its relation to UGC,

Although UGC has been closely aligned and often confused with eWOM, the two differ depending on whether the content is *generated* by users or the content is *conveyed* by users. For example, footage on YouTube that is generated and posted by users is UGC. However, an Internet user who sends her friends a link to a YouTube site is engaging in eWOM. If the content conveyed has been generated by users, it can be both UGC and eWOM (p. 3, emphasis in original).

UGC, including posts, videos, pictures, audio, blogs etc, may intentionally or unintentionally send messages related to the usage or characteristics of particular goods and services, or their sellers. This makes eWOM in the form of UGC an important concept in the travel and tourism industry, as the industry is highly visual and experimental (Litvin et al., 2008), and because information is accessed, viewed, and shared by countless people around the globe. Many of the products and services are intangible and cannot be evaluated prior to purchase and consumption; information from eWOM or UGC can give unique and valuable insight into these products and services. Also, many of the products are seen as high-risk purchases, for which consultation with others is a large part of purchase decisions (Goldsmith & Horowitz, 2006).

### **Mediatization of the Tourist Experience**

Representations of tourist experiences through media often come before direct experiences by tourists themselves. Web 2.0 and UGC have expanded these representations to a global scale, providing access to mediatized travel information and content to anyone with internet access,

These advances allow people to benefit from being able to use multimedia features including text, images, video streaming, and virtual reality to enhance and add value to their tourism experiences. The images, videos, and films available through the various systems provide various messages that represent destinations and serve as mediators of tourist experiences (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009, p. 25).

This is particularly interesting because tourist practices are heavily (in)formed and heralded by mediatized representations of travel and destinations (Thurlow & Jaworski,

2011). This idea links with the previously discussed concept of eWOM. eWOM is a large part of these mediatized representations, guiding tourist practices with the spreading of information. Facilitating the sharing of touristic experiences through mediatized avenues, namely UGC, can be seen as an expansion of access to both realistic and imaginative tourist experiences and places (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009).

Mediatization of tourist experiences familiarizes images and representations of foreign lands and experiences. However, instead of making consumers of travel-related UGC complacent with the mediated experience,

The mediatization process generates a regime of imaginative hedonism, in which people's desires for new first-hand experiences are intensified. This implies that the longing to appropriate landscapes and socioscapas on location increases... (Jansson, 2002, p. 441).

This means that the mediatized experience creates an imagined pleasure, by which the desire to experience that pleasure without mediatization grows stronger. Many have argued that mediatized travel visuals appearing in the form of UGC on Web 2.0 sites such as YouTube, Flickr, and Facebook help viewers to imagine, intend, and plan travel experiences (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009). Three popular UGC categories in which tourists mediate their experiences and share them are through photographs, videos, and travel blogs.

### ***Photographs***

Taking photographs has long been a common practice in travel and tourism. Markwell (1997) argues that,

The stereotypic image of a tourist weighted down by cameras, lenses, tripods and other photographic paraphernalia, although a cliché, nevertheless highlights the strong, almost inseparable connection between modern recreational travel and photography (p. 131).

Urry (2003) suggests that photography can be a way to record reality by proving the visit to show to others, and to provoke personal memories. Travel photography images serve as a way to construct memories into travel narratives, which are important in re-counting tourist experiences. Photographs transform something intangible into something tangible (Osborne, 2000), allowing the tourist to own the experiences, as well as to structure them (Schroeder, 2005). As still images capturing specific moments in time, photographs fragment both time and space (Markwick, 2001). "The fragmentation of time and space in photography is 'mirrored by the tourist experience in which fragments are

incorporated into a unified experience which, from beginning to end revolves around images” (Edwards, 1996, as cited in Markwick, 2001, p. 422). In this way, the experience of the tourist, and the photographs taken to reflect the journey, are both seen as brief moments, encapsulated by time and space.

Sharing travel photographs traditionally occurred in private domains. Printed photos were put into albums where small audiences of family and friends could see a visual compilation of a trip. This has changed dramatically with the internet and Web 2.0 platforms. Photo-sharing platforms such as websites featuring online photo-albums, SNSs, and travel blogs, ingress the experience of photo sharing into the public domain (Miller & Edwards, 2007). This transformation into the public realm has also democratized image creation and dissemination (Lo et al., 2011). Photographic images of destinations were traditionally in the hands of destination marketers aiming to create iconic images for promotion; the most explicit example is the traditional postcard (Markwick, 2001). Now, image creation and dissemination are also in the hands of travelers themselves. Although many images help to reinforce traditional marketers visual images of destinations, sometimes tourist photographs have a negative effect by portraying images that stand in contrast to the desired image of the destination (Schmallegger et al., 2010).

### ***Videos***

Sharing amateur video content, much like photographs, has shifted from the private domain to the public domain. Videos have exploded onto the web via Web 2.0 video-sharing platforms such as *YouTube* and *Vimeo* (Cha et al., 2007). Videos have been found to be a powerful means of “transportation” to destinations (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009). According to Jansson (2002), the modern media culture allows people to travel mentally and emotionally, and experience tourist activities whilst not moving geographically. This gives the viewer a kind of virtual gaze. Videos portrayed by authentic travelers, meaning they are not meant to be marketing tools, have been found to have a “strong social significance in the act of sharing, enabling others to derive the travel enjoyment from the mobility in these mediascapes” (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009, p. 28). Videos, as opposed to photographs and still images, can be especially captivating in this sense as they incorporate other elements true to reality such as sound and motion.

In a study of travel videos by Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier (2009), the authors find that the underlying messages viewers interpreted from the videos imply that the video-takers wish to provide tourist experiences to viewers, including imaginative access to foreign landscapes and socioscapes. The videos are taken then, as a way to share the tourist experience in an animated way, and to transport the viewers to foreign scapes by visually showing a clip of their personal experiences in those scapes. “The narratives on the videos provide viewers what they may actually see, do, touch, feel, and think” in the foreign landscape and socioscape (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009, p. 35-6). The videos can signify certain sights, activities, sensations, and ways of thinking as worth experiencing in particular places, as other tourists portray them as things to be experienced. In this way, videos are quite compelling forms of UGC in regards to travel and tourism.

### ***Travel Blogs***

Travelers for many centuries have used journaling to chronicle their experience. In recent times, ICTs and the internet have become significant mediums in which travelers chronicle experiences. Traditional forms of travel narratives have given way to digital storytelling through web blogs, or as they are commonly known, blogs. The evolution of technology has taken this online form of expression from static web pages, which first appeared in 1998, to sites capable of hosting a vast variety of multimedia in the modern era (Pudliner, 2007). Blood (2002) defines blogs as, “The compilation and construction of lists of relative links, personal commentary, observations and filtering of pertinent web content by the website author” (Pudliner, 2007, p. 47). In the context of travel, a travel blogger constructs an account of his or her travel experiences and individual perspectives through text, pictures, videos, and/or links to related travel content. Each travel blog is distinctive because it exhibits the unique interpretive viewpoint of each blogger and their journey into the places and spaces of the globe (Pudliner, 2007).

Due to the growing popularity of travel blogging, various public blog hosting websites have specialized in hosting individual travel blogs. Examples include TravelPod, TravelBlog, YourTravelJournal, RealTravel, and TravelPost. Also, online travel communities (i.e.: RealTravel, Igougo, VirtualTourist), travel customer review sites (i.e.: TripAdvisor), and other travel related companies (i.e.: LonelyPlanet, Frommers) publish a substantial number of individual blogs by travelers (Schmallegger & Carson, 2008).

A common misconception about blog authors is that they create and share their opinions and experiences due to egotistical motives. A study by Hsu and Lin (2008), however, finds that people actively participate in a blog to try to increase the welfare of others; “participating in blogs was not expected to produce direct rewards” (p. 72). This means that people actively involved in blogs may not only be motivated by egotistical motives; some may be motivated to share knowledge with others because they enjoy helping others.

### **Motivation**

As UGC becomes more prevalent, it is important to understand the motivations behind production and consumption, especially as the media landscape becomes more user-centric. Many scholars have begun to investigate motivations in relation to UGC.

Shao (2009) proposes an analytical framework in which to examine *how* and *why* users use UGC. First, the framework separates *how* individuals use UGC into three ways: consuming, participating, and producing.

Consuming refers to the individuals who only watch, read, or view but never participate. Participating includes both user-to-user interaction and user-to-content interaction (such as ranking the content, adding to playlists, sharing with others, posting comments, etc.). It does not include one’s actual production. Producing encompasses creation and publication of one’s personal contents such as text, images, audio, and video (Shao, 2009, p. 9).

These distinctions are analytically separate, but highly interdependent. Shao (2009) then discusses *why* in terms of gratifications of consuming, participating, and producing UGC. The author finds that “consumers” of new media consume for two main reasons, information seeking and entertainment; “participants” participate for social interaction and community development; and “producers” produce for self-actualization and self-expression.

Wang and Fesenmaier (2001) studied motivations of users to contribute UGC to an online community. They found that efficacy is a major factor affecting contribution in online communities. Efficacy includes motivations such as satisfying other members’ needs, being helpful to others, seeking/providing advice and sharing enjoyment. This

further confirms the strong social aspects of online communities and SNSs (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2001).

Murphy et al. (2010) find an interesting differentiation in terms of motivations for *where* travelers post their travel-related UGC. The differences occur between motivations to share UGC on commercial or specialized review sites, and motivations to share UGC on SNSs. Motivations for posting content on commercial sites, such as official destination websites, airlines, travel suppliers, as well as specialized review sites like *TripAdvisor*, include “warning, comparing & sharing, promoting and expressing satisfaction,” whereas motivations for posting content on SNSs include reflection/reliving of the experience, comparing and sharing, expressing satisfaction, promoting the experience, and displaying knowledge about the trip or destination (p. 475-6). The former motivations are functional/explicit, whilst the latter motivations are more functional/hedonic.

Gretzel and Yoo (2008) study motivations of *why* users consume online UGC in regards to travel. They find that the most significant reasons why users read online travel reviews are because reviews i) are a good way to learn about a travel destination, product or service; ii) help to evaluate alternatives; iii) help to avoid places/services that would not be enjoyed; and iv) provide ideas.

### **2.5 Social Identity**

Social identity is important to discuss in the context of this study, as the studied group consists of Westerners living and traveling in an Eastern country, South Korea. Due to this unique situation, ESL teachers bond easily with each other, and therefore are also highly networked.

ESL teachers are required to be a citizen of a native English speaking country. The majority of ESL teachers are from the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Ireland, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Since the cultures of these countries resemble each other more closely than the culture of South Korea, a social bond is more likely to occur. Belongingness Theory and Social Identity Theory provide a deeper understanding of this phenomenon.



### **The Need To Belong**

The need to belong is a fundamental human motivation (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Baumeister and Leary (1995) explain Belongingness Theory as the common and inescapable drive that human beings have to form and maintain interpersonal relationships. When someone is displaced from their relationships, for instance when a person moves to a different country to teach ESL, there is a desire to form social relationships in the new place and to feel a sense of belonging. Although the person may keep in touch with relationships back home, the need for frequent personal contacts and interactions drives the formation of new relationships in the new place. These relationships form most often between people who have something in common, those who share common experiences, or those in close proximity with each other (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

The need for these new bonds is explained through the concepts of satiation and substitution, “Satiation refers to the diminished motivation that ensues when the need to belong is already well satisfied, and substitution refers to the replaceability of one social bond with another” (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 515). When a person moves to another country to be an ESL teacher, their need to belong is unsatiated until they make bonds in the new place, therefore, they experience increased motivation to fulfill their need to belong, make new connections, and to become satiated. Substitution occurs when the person replaces efforts previously devoted to building relationships with people back home with efforts in building new relationships in the new place. Building these new relationships enhances coping, and helps to build a buffer against the stress of moving to and living in a different culture (Cohen & Wills, 1985).

Failure to build new relationships may cause psychological withdraw and hinder performance in both social and professional situations (Farh et al., 2010). This is because the person lacks the emotional support to facilitate the adjustment to a new place. Often, peers are expected to provide emotional support due to their greater empathy for cultural adjustment challenges and cultural similarity (Johnson et al., 2003).

The need to belong and the potential consequences of a failure to build new relationships explain why ESL teachers seek to form new relationships in their new environment. Because peers, in this case fellow ESL teachers, are expected to provide

the emotional support needed for a healthy adjustment, ESL teachers commonly seek out relationships with each other. Social Identity Theory explains the aspects and impacts of these new relationships.

### **Social Identity Theory**

A social identity is a person's knowledge that he or she belongs to a category or group (Stets & Burke, 2000). A social group is "a set of individuals who hold a common social identification or view themselves as members of the same social category" (Stets & Burke, 2000, p. 225). Social categories are created through a social comparison process; people seen as similar to the self are categorized with the self, in the "in-group," whereas people seen as dissimilar from the self are categorized as the "out-group" (Stets & Burke, 2000).

These principles are applicable to Western ESL teachers in South Korea. For example, the Orient, or the East, has historically helped define the West as its contrasting image, idea, personality, and experience (Said, 1978). This historical dichotomy between East and West inherently separates Eastern and Western cultures as being fundamentally different from each other. The cultures and customs of the West, where the majority of ESL teachers are from, are more similar to each other than to those of the East, more specifically, South Korea. This leads to the creation of a social category reflecting differing cultures and customs. Also, many ESL teachers look different from the highly homogeneous population of South Korea (although some ESL teachers have South Korean or other Asian ancestry). This creates a social category regarding different appearances. Another aspect upon which a social category is created is language. Due to their very purpose of living in South Korea as an ESL teacher, English is an ESL teachers' native language, eliminating any communication barriers between them, and in many cases, creating communication barriers with the local South Koreans. These are just a few examples of the social categories ESL teachers might use to compare themselves with others and formulate a social identity.

"Similarity breeds connection" (McPherson et al., 2001). McPherson et al. (2001) explore the principle of homophily in regards to one's social connections. "Homophily is the principle that a contact between similar people occurs at a higher rate than among dissimilar people" (p. 416). Studies of various types of relationships, from the intimacy of

marriage to the distant “knowing about someone,” indicate that patterns of homophily are quite significant across the board (McPherson et al., 2001). This includes the relationships created and maintained by ESL teachers living in South Korea. This is not to say that Western ESL teachers exclusively socialize with each other, but that contact with other Westerners may occur more frequently than contact with others.

Due to this enhanced social connection between Western ESL teachers as indicated by Belongingness Theory and Social Identity Theory, this group is appropriate for this study in that they are highly networked.

### **2.6 Linking UGC, Tourism, and Web 2.0**

This chapter has reviewed relevant concepts and theories in order to give proper background and context to this research. By reviewing ideas and concepts already studied in this area, this research hopes to go beyond previous research by linking UGC, tourism, and Web 2.0. Previous research has focused on three main areas. The first is the production of UGC on the internet in general terms (Blackshaw & Nazzaro, 2006; Burtch & Hong, 2010; Casoto et al., 2010; Gretzel, 2006; Guo et al., 2009; Vickery & Wunsch-Vincent, 2007). These studies have provided a solid background on which to expand and specify this research. The second area focuses on motivations for creating UGC (Daugherty et al., 2008; Guo et al., 2009; Murphy et al., 2010; Nov et al., 2009a; 2009b; Shao, 2009). Motivations make up a portion of this study, and previous research provides valuable insights from which to expand. The third area focuses on one form of UGC in relation to tourism (Akehurst, 2008; Gretzel & Yoo, 2008; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Hofstaetter & Egger, 2009; Hsu & Lin, 2008; Jansen et al., 2009; Mack et al., 2008; Miller & Edwards, 2007; Munar, 2010; O’Connor, 2008; Pan et al., 2007; Pang et al., 2011; Pudliner, 2007; Schmallegger & Carson, 2008; Syed-Ahmad et al., 2010; Thurlow & Jaworski, 2011; Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009). As this study addresses multiple forms of UGC in relation to tourism, previous research in this area provide in-depth information on specific forms of UGC from which connections can be drawn. Previous research in all of the above areas informs this study in it’s aims to find *what* travel-related UGC is created, *why* it is created, *where* it is posted/shared and *how* UGC is used as a travel information resource.

## Chapter 3: Research Design & Method

This research is designed to inquire about the role of travel-related UGC using the target group of ESL teachers in South Korea. The research question and sub-questions to be answered by this research are as follows:

### **Research Question:**

***What is the role of travel-related user-generated content shared online among ESL teachers in South Korea?***

### Sub-questions:

1. *What forms of travel-related UGC do ESL teachers create?*
2. *On which online platforms do ESL teachers post their UGC?*
3. *Why do ESL teachers create UGC in relation to travel?*
4. *How do ESL teachers use travel-related UGC created by others as travel information resources?*

To fully address these questions, three methods of data collection were performed, an online questionnaire, interviews, and content analysis.

ESL teachers in South Korea were chosen as a unit of analysis since it would be nearly impossible to study the role of travel-related UGC in its entirety. This group was chosen because of the high level of online networking and the high level of travel. This group was also chosen because the age range is generally 20's – early 30's, making it more likely they use and produce UGC (Karahasanovic et al., 2009). This group is highly involved in each of the main areas of study (UGC and travel), resulting in a solid picture of how this group interacts with and creates travel-related UGC.

### **3.1 Questionnaire**

The first method of research conducted was an online questionnaire. Questionnaires have long been used as data collection tools in the social sciences, and can yield insights into people's knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and opinions, behavior, or attributes (Taylor-Powell, 1998). A questionnaire is a set of questions where most have choices of designated answers. This allows the data to be recorded systematically and analyzed

statistically, giving insights into the research question in terms of numbers and values.

The questionnaire was conducted online for a variety of reasons. First, this research focuses on UGC found and shared on the internet. Online questionnaires are often used in studies regarding internet use because it allows the researcher to access a population with internet experience (Selm & Jankowski, 2006). Also, ESL teachers can be considered a group of respondents with a unique interest, for which consultation of specific internet environments can be valuable. Virtual communities and online forums “offer a mechanism through which a researcher can gain access to people who share specific interests, attitudes, beliefs, and values regarding an issue, problem, or activity” (Wright, 2005). In this research, the link to the questionnaire was distributed to individuals directly through Facebook, and was also posted in online ESL forums and groups in order to target respondents with the correct criteria for the research. Also an important factor was the ability of people to access the questionnaire from various locations, as online questionnaires are especially attractive when the targeted respondents are located in various geographic regions (Selm & Jankowski, 2006). Many of the respondents were located in South Korea, however the criterion for the research also includes ESL teachers who have taught in South Korea up to two years prior. These respondents had moved to various places around the globe after their teaching experience.

Although online questionnaires have many advantages, there are also many potential disadvantages to this form of data collection. One potential disadvantage is that due to the questionnaire’s open availability online, researchers have less control over who exactly is responding to the questionnaire. To account for this, the questionnaire used in this research uses a screen-sample method (Medlin et al., 1999), meaning the questionnaire includes relevant screening questions in the questionnaire so only responses from the required sample are analyzed. A preliminary question in the questionnaire reads, “To be eligible to take this survey, you must be an ESL teacher in South Korea, or have been an ESL teacher in South Korea within the past two years. Are you an ESL teacher in South Korea, or have been within the last two years?” The respondents could answer either “yes” or “no,” eliminating ambiguity and allowing only questionnaires with a response of “yes” able to be analyzed in the research. Another possible disadvantage of online questionnaires is that the sample can be self-selected

(Wright, 2005). This research aimed at minimizing self-selection by not only sending the questionnaire to known ESL teachers via Facebook, but by also encouraging those people to forward the questionnaire onto ESL teachers they knew, etc, creating a snowball effect. Also, the link to the questionnaire was posted in online ESL forums, giving a more random group of ESL teachers access to the survey. The results of the questionnaires are analyzed using statistical analysis in the computer statistical program SPSS. The full questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1.

### *3.1.1 Demographics*

The survey begins with the screening question, determining if the respondent is or has been an ESL teacher in South Korea within the past two years. It then asks demographic questions such as age, education level, ethnicity, etc. These questions will help determine if there are patterns among demographic categories in the research. The survey then asks basic questions about the respondent's internet use, and travel experience. These questions will help determine if there are differences between inexperienced and experienced internet users, and between inexperienced and experienced travelers.

### *3.1.2 UGC*

The UGC section of this survey uses closed Likert-scale questions to investigate five aspects of travel-related UGC, i) what travel-related UGC is created; ii) where the travel-related UGC is posted; iii) motivations to create and share travel-related UGC online; iv) how often travel-related UGC made by others is used in comparison to other sources of travel information; and v) why travel-related UGC is consulted. The questions regarding what travel-related UGC is created and where travel-related UGC is posted are adapted from a questionnaire instrument used in a study by Murphy et al. (2010). These behavioral variables (what and where) are assessed with a frequency measure, a five-point Likert-scale consisting of never (1), rarely (2), occasionally (3), rather frequently (4), very frequently (5). UGC types are broken into categories (pictures, videos, podcasts, etc), while UGC websites are also broken into categories (SNSs, commercial review sites, blog sites, video/picture-sharing sites, etc). This section of the survey will help to answer the research question by giving insights into what sorts of travel-related UGC ESL teachers in South Korea create, as well as the main areas online where they choose to post this content.

The motivations to create and share travel-related UGC are assessed using closed Likert-scales as well, however respondents are asked to respond to a list of possible motivations and determine how important each motivation is to them when creating and posting travel-related UGC online. The scale is from 1-7, 1 being “unimportant” to 7 being “very important.” A study by Wang and Fesenmaier (2001) determines that these specific motivations are able to assess five motivational constructs, instrumental, efficacy, quality control, status, and expectancy. This section of the questionnaire will help answer the research question by providing insights into the reasons why ESL teachers in South Korea create and share travel content online.

The next section of the questionnaire inquires about how travel-related UGC is used in comparison with other sources of travel information. Using the same 5-point frequency Likert-scales as described earlier, respondents were asked how often they consult various forms of travel information such as travel guidebooks, travel agencies, different kinds of websites, travel-related UGC etc. These categories of travel information content are based on a study by Prestipino (2006) that analyzes the sources and strategies used in information-seeking behaviour by independent travelers. This section of the questionnaire will help to answer the research question by giving perspective to how travel-related UGC is used as a travel information resource compared to other resources.

The concluding part of the UGC section of the questionnaire asks respondents about reasons why they consult travel UGC. A list of statements about travel-related UGC such as UGC “are a good way to learn about a travel destination, product or service,” and UGC “help me save time in the travel planning process,” are evaluated by respondents using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 as “strongly disagree” to 7 as “strongly agree.” These statements are used in a study by Gretzel and Yoo (2008) when they investigate the influence of online travel reviews. These statements can be generalized from travel reviews to all UGC because of the similar ways in which UGC provides travel information in terms of eWOM. This section of the questionnaire will help to answer the research question by providing insights into the influence of others’ travel-related UGC as a resource.

### *3.1.3 Social Identity*

The final section of the questionnaire concerns the social identity of ESL teachers in South Korea. This section is important to include in this research because of the respondents' specific situation of living in a foreign country and teaching English. Analyzing the strength or weakness of social identity is important to find if ESL teachers are highly networked and bonded with each other, or not, and if these identifications have any effect on the creation and sharing of travel-related UGC.

Using the same 7-point Likert-scale ranging from 1 as “strongly disagree” to 7 as “strongly agree,” respondents were presented with a list of statements regarding their identification with being an ESL teacher in South Korea. Examples of a few statements include, “I have a lot in common with other ESL Teachers in South Korea,” “I often think about the fact that I am an ESL Teacher in South Korea,” and “I often regret that I am an ESL Teacher in South Korea.” These statements are based on a study by Cameron (2004), which finds that social identity can be represented in terms of three factors: centrality, in-group affect, and in-group ties. The efficacy of the model was tested and confirmed in a variety of group memberships including membership to a university, membership to a gender, and membership to a nationality. Since these memberships cover a diversity of membership types, it is reasonable to extend this tripartite model to the membership of being an ESL teacher in South Korea. This section will help answer the research question by providing insights into patterns and trends of UGC creation/sharing in terms of strong or weak social identifications.

### *3.2 Interviews*

This research strives for a deeper understanding of ESL teachers' creation and use of travel-related UGC, therefore explorative qualitative semi-structured interviews were chosen as appropriate method in addition to the online questionnaire. This method allows interviewees to describe these themes unrestricted. This approach gives a more holistic analysis, and assists in answering the research question in-depth. The questions used in the interviews were informed by a study by Prestipino (2006), who uses interviews to study independent travelers' information behavior. Information behavior includes information seeking and unintentional information acquisition, in addition to activities such as sharing, storing or transforming information. This is highly applicable to this research, as this study's research question focuses on ESL teachers' creation,



sharing, and use of UGC, a type of online information. The main themes addressed in the interviews are travel experience, interviewee's use of the internet in regards to travel, and UGC experience. The interview guide with exact phrasing can be found in Appendix 2.

The interviews were held via Skype, due to the fact that the interviewees were located all over the world. They were semi-structured in that respondents were guided by certain questions, however were able to respond unrestricted and also engage in a dialogue with the interviewer to freely explore the concepts. The interviewees were recruited from a section of the questionnaire, which gave interested questionnaire respondents the opportunity to volunteer for the fifteen-minute interview by providing their contact information. Of those who responded, twelve were selected randomly and contacted via Skype. This method of recruitment was chosen deliberately to ensure the quality of the interviews, as the respondents volunteered their time for the research and were interested in further participation.

The results are analyzed using the Constant Comparative Method (CCM) (Boeije, 2002). Boeije (2002) explicitly outlines this inductive method, which compares interviews with each other on several key points. For this research, Boeije's Step 1 and Step 2 are used. Step 1 is a comparison within a single interview, meaning each individual interview is coded using open coding to develop categories and appropriately code them. This enables the core message of the interview to be determined, while also bringing out difficulties, highlights, or inconsistencies (Boeije, 2002). Step 2 is a comparison among interviews in the same group. ESL teachers in this sense are of the same group, and can therefore be adequately compared using this method. This step involves axial coding, which compares fragments from different interviews that were given the same code (from Step 1), meaning they address the same theme. This step helps to develop the conceptualization of the themes, and to discover different combinations of codes that exist, giving way to patterns or typologies (Boeije, 2002). In this research, a comparative method is appropriate because the research question focuses on potential trends and patterns of creation and use of UGC, which are highlighted through comparison.

### **3.3 Content Analysis**

In addition to the online questionnaire and interviews, a content analysis of ESL teachers' UGC is performed. The content analysis shows the type of UGC, where it is

posted, along with the major themes and actors present. The major themes and actors are important because they are a large part of what communication and information exchange is occurring between the UGC and the viewers of the UGC. For instance, a photograph of a landscape sends the viewer different information than a photograph of the local cuisine or a local activity. Holsti (1969) defines content analysis as "any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages" (p. 14). This definition includes the traditional text analysis, but also allows for a broadening of the methodology to apply to other types of analysis, such as the coding and analysis of visual or audiovisual texts (Stemler, 2001). According to Harwood and Garry (2003), content analysis "enables the reduction of phenomena or events into defined categories so as to better analyse and interpret them" (p. 479). In this way, content analysis is an appropriate method to code both the text and visual aspects of UGC created by ESL teachers to reduce the UGC's themes and actors into categories that can be analyzed and interpreted.

Four samples of UGC from each interviewee were coded using a coding form. The samples consisted of the four most recent pieces of UGC posted by the interviewee (according to the interviewee). Four samples of UGC from each interviewee (48 total) were enough to provide a solid representation of UGC for this research. Since it would be difficult, if not impossible to track down the four most recent pieces of UGC by each interviewee on the web, each interviewee provided links to their UGC to the researcher.

The coding form categories used in this content analysis are based on Jenkins' (2003) study of travel photography and brochures. This study performs a content analysis of travel photographs using common themes of travel photography. These themes are extended for this research to incorporate not only common themes of travel photography, but also common themes of travel blogs, travel videos, or other travel-related UGC. The categories of the main themes and actors in the UGC found in the coding form are a result of collaborative brainstorming among a small group of travelers, to ensure a thorough list of possible themes and actors that could be present travel-related UGC. Neither the list of themes or actors could possibly be exhaustive, which is why on the coding form there is a place to mark "other" and write-in the theme or actor not displayed in the list. This prevents the lists of common themes or actors from limiting the data. To enhance reliability of the coding process, two coders were used in coding

the data of this research. If there were differences between the coders, the coders discussed them and came to an agreement, decreasing coder bias. The data from the coding process is analyzed through descriptive statistics on SPSS.

***A Multi-Method Approach***

The data in this study was collected using three distinct methods, an online questionnaire, interviews, and content analysis. A combination of methods used to study the same phenomenon is called triangulation, “The effectiveness of triangulation rests on the premise that the weaknesses in each single method will be compensated by the counter-balancing strengths of another” (Jick, 1979). By combining both quantitative and qualitative methods, a more holistic analysis of travel-related UGC is possible, while minimizing methodological weaknesses or potential for bias. The various data sets collected from the online questionnaire, interviews, and content analysis are compared and contrasted, enabling consistencies or inconsistencies regarding travel-related UGC to be observed.

## Chapter 4: Results

### 4.1 Questionnaire Results

This section will display the results of the statistical analysis of the data from the online questionnaire. The questions included in the online questionnaire were designed to address each of the four sub-questions of this study. Following demographic statistics, the four sub-questions will guide the main structure of this section. Following the four-sub-questions, the findings regarding social identity will be discussed.

In total there were 90 completed questionnaires. All 90 respondents marked “yes” indicating that they are or have been an ESL teacher in South Korea within the past two years. A demographic breakdown of respondents indicates that 50% (n=45) of respondents are male, and 50% (n=45) are female, mostly (68.4%, n=57) between the ages of 24-27. This group is highly educated, with 96.5% (n=87) having received their bachelor degree or higher. In terms of internet use, respondents are highly engaged online with 86.7% (n=78) of respondents going online seven days a week, and most (78.9%, n=71) spending between one and four hours actively engaged online everyday. The internet technology proficiency of respondents is also emphasized by the fact that 60% (n=54) consider themselves “highly experienced” or “expert” internet users. In terms of travel, this group packs their bags often with nearly three-quarters of respondents (74.4%, n=67), traveling often, traveling frequently, or traveling very frequently. Over half (62.2%, n=56) of respondents are originally from the United States, while a quarter (25.6%, n=23) of respondents are originally from Canada. The next top nationalities represented were significantly less, with South Africa representing 4.4% (n=4), and the United Kingdom representing 3.3% (n=3).

#### 4.1.1 What forms of travel-related UGC do ESL teachers create?

Table 1.0 (see Appendix 3) displays the frequency in which respondents create certain forms of UGC. According to this data, the most common form of travel-related UGC are pictures, with over half of respondents (63.4%, n=57) indicating they create pictures frequently or very frequently. The least frequent form of travel-related UGC are podcasts or audio UGC, with 86.7% (n=78) having never created this type of UGC. Videos as well

as Comments/Reviews seem to be rare or occasional forms of UGC created. Rare and occasional creation of videos accounts for a combined 68.9% (n=62) of respondents, while rare and occasional creation of Comments/Reviews makes up 63.4% (n=57) of respondents.

*4.1.2 On which online platforms do ESL teachers post travel-related UGC?*

Table 2.0 – Which websites UGC is posted to

|   | Never | Rarely | Occasionally | Frequently | Very Frequently |
|---|-------|--------|--------------|------------|-----------------|
| On what websites do you post your travel UGC? |       |        |              |            |                 |
| Social Network Sites*                         | 2.2%  | 1.1%   | 17.8%        | 32.2%      | 46.7%           |
| Travel Supplier Sites*                        | 71.1% | 15.6%  | 12.2%        | 1.1%       | 0%              |
| Online Booking Sites*                         | 58.9% | 14.4%  | 15.6%        | 6.7%       | 4.4%            |
| Commercial Review Sites*                      | 54.4% | 24.4%  | 13.3%        | 4.4%       | 3.3%            |
| Picture/Video Sharing Sites*                  | 34.4% | 21.1%  | 22.2%        | 11.1%      | 11.1%           |
| Blog-Hosting Sites*                           | 38.9% | 23.3%  | 21.1%        | 14.4%      | 2.2%            |

Table 2.0 displays the frequency respondents post their travel UGC on particular websites. The types of websites most frequently used to post travel-related UGC are Social Networking Sites (SNSs), such as Facebook, MySpace, Cyworld, etc, with 78.9% (n=71) of respondents saying they post on these sites frequently or very frequently. Travel Supplier websites, such as official Hilton or KLM sites, receive the least frequent posting, with 71.1% (n=64) of respondents having never posted travel UGC to these sites. More than half (55.6%, n=50) of the respondents rarely or never post travel UGC on Picture/Video sharing websites such as YouTube and Flickr. This may be an indication that travel-related UGC, in terms of picture and video sharing, occurs more on SNSs than on specialized websites for pictures or video uploads.

\* Social Network Sites (ie: Facebook, Myspace...); Travel Supplier Sites (ie: Hilton, KLM...); Online Booking Sites (ie: Orbitz, Travelocity...); Commercial Review Sites (ie: Tripadvisor...); Picture/Video Sharing Sites (ie: YouTube, Flickr...); Blog-Hosting Sites (ie: Blogger, Wordpress...).

### *4.1.3 Why do ESL teachers create travel-related UGC?*

The motivations are split up into the motivational constructs that they measure. The motivational constructs measured are *Instrumental*, *Efficacy*, *Quality Assurance*, *Status*, and *Expectancy* (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2001). The mean of each motivation individually as well as the mean of each motivational construct are calculated. Since the means represent the average response among all respondents, means closer to “1” indicate unimportance, while means closer to “7” indicate importance. All means are displayed in Table 3.0, which can be found in Appendix 3.

The motivational construct with the highest mean is *Efficacy* with a mean of 4.37. This construct consists of motivations to share and be helpful to others. Particularly important to respondents is the specific motivation of “Sharing enjoyment,” with a mean of 5.59. This is the only motivation where over three-quarters (76.6%, n= 69) of respondents answer with a “5” or above. Also considered as an important (“5” or above) motivation by over half of the respondents (61.1%, n=55) is “Expressing my identity,” with a mean of 4.74. The next two most important motivations are “Being helpful to others,” and “Seeking/Providing advice.” Of the respondents, 57.8% (n=52) indicate these are important motivators; however “Seeking/Providing advice” receives a slightly higher mean of 4.40, as opposed to “Being helpful to others,” which receives a mean of 4.38.

### *4.1.4 How do ESL teachers use travel-related UGC created by others as travel information resources?*

#### **Travel Information Resources**

Descriptive statistics find how often respondents use a particular travel-information resource. Frequencies of each resource can be found in Table 4.0 (see Appendix 3). The findings indicate that Word of Mouth (WOM) is a highly popular resource, with 75.5% (n=68) of respondents consulting it frequently, or very frequently. The next most popular resource is travel guidebooks, with 58.9% (n=53) of respondents consulting them frequently or very frequently. The results can also be split between non-UGC

resources and UGC resources.\* The average percentage of respondents who consult non-UGC resources frequently or very frequently is 52.4%. The average percentage of respondents who consult UGC resources frequently or very frequently is only 21.8%, meaning that respondents, on average, consult non-UGC information resources 2.4 times as often as UGC information resources. The least consulted information resource is UGC on official Travel Supplier websites. This may be due to the lack of places/freedom of UGC to exist on these particular sites. These findings suggest that respondents use UGC as a supplement to other, more traditional resources of travel information, such as WOM and travel guidebooks.

Table 5.0 – When UGC is consulted

| When during the travel process do you typically consult UGC? | Frequency (n) | Percentage of respondents |
|--|---------------|---------------------------|
| To find ideas on where to go                                 | 50            | 55.6%                     |
| Once I have a destination in mind                            | 60            | 66.7%                     |
| While I'm traveling  | 27            | 30%                       |
| Once I return, to compare my experience with others'         | 7             | 7.8%                      |

**When travel-related UGC is used as a travel information resource**

Table 5.0 displays the frequencies and percentages of respondents who consult UGC in different phases of the travel process. The phase in which most respondents consult UGC is once they have a destination in mind and want to learn more about it. Sixty of the 90 respondents (66.7%) indicate that they consult UGC in this particular phase. Also common (55.6%, n=50) is consulting UGC to find ideas on where to go. Overall it is the two initial stages in which most respondents consult UGC as opposed to the later stages of while they are traveling, or once they return from a trip.

**Reasons why travel-related UGC is used as a travel information resource**

The means for each reason to consult UGC are calculated. The means and percentage of respondents who indicate agreement can be found in Table 6.0, located in Appendix 3. "UGC provide me with ideas" is the most agreed-with reason to consult UGC. This reason had the highest mean of 5.30. This reason also has a high percentage of

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\* Non-UGC resources include WOM, Travel Guidebooks, Travel Agencies/Tourist Boards, Non-UGC Websites; UGC-resources include UGC found on SNSs, on Travel Supplier Sites, on Online Booking Sites, on Commercial Review Sites, on Picture/Video Sharing Sites, or on Blog-Hosting Sites

respondents responding with a “5” or higher, 73.3%. The reason with the most respondents responding with a “5” or higher, however, is “UGC make me feel excited about traveling.” This reason also had a high mean of 5.26. The reason with the lowest mean (4.30) was “UGC help me to visualize my trips more vividly.” The reason with the lowest percentage of respondents responding with a “5” or higher is the reason of “UGC help me save time in the travel planning process.”

*4.1.5 Social Identity of Respondents*

Table 7.0 – Three-factor model of social identity

|                      | Minimum/Maximum | Mean |
|----------------------|-----------------|------|
| Cognitive Centrality | 2.43/6.86       | 4.89 |
| In-group Ties        | 1.33/7          | 4.43 |
| In-group Affect      | 2.33/7          | 6.03 |

Table 7.0 displays the minimum, maximum, and mean of the social identity constructs measured in the questionnaire. Cameron (2004) argues that social identity is based on three main factors. The three main factors are cognitive centrality, in-group ties, and in-group affect. The questionnaire asked respondents a variety of questions proven to measure these factors (Cameron, 2004). The cognitive centrality questions addressed the amount of time spent thinking about being a group member, the in-group ties questions addressed perceptions of similarity, bond, and belongingness with other group members, and the in-group affect questions addressed the positivity of feelings associated with membership in the group. The factor with the highest mean (6.03) is in-group affect. This means that respondents feel strongly and positively about their similarity to other ESL teachers in South Korea, the ability to bond with other ESL teachers in South Korea, and feel like they belong amongst other ESL teachers in South Korea.

These findings are important because although they do not answer the research question directly, they are able to inform interpretations of other data by demonstrating that this group is highly bonded and networked.



### *4.2 Interview Results*

This section displays the results of the interviews. The guiding questions included in the interviews were designed to address each of the four sub-questions of this study. Following a brief demographic overview of the respondents, the four sub-questions will guide the main structure of this section.

In total 12 interviews were conducted. Seven of the respondents are male and five are female. All respondents are current or former (within the past two years) ESL teachers in South Korea. Also, all of the respondents have travel experience, some extensive, others minimal. All respondents create some form of travel-related UGC, as well as use the internet as a resource for travel information.

#### *4.2.1 What forms of travel-related UGC do ESL teachers create?*

In terms of types of UGC interviewees create and share, the most dominant are travel photos and travel blogs. Significantly, all 12 respondents have created and shared travel photographs. Ten respondents also keep a blog in which they chronicle their travels. These two forms of UGC dominate, while other forms such as comments/reviews are more rare occurrences. One respondent states her reason for why she usually does not review or rate places,

*'We would sometimes review or rate places, but I don't like to have to sign up onto websites – it's a mission!'*

Videos are also a more rare occurrence, with only a few respondents citing that they post videos with travel-related content. Podcasts/audio were the least frequent form of UGC mentioned, with only one respondent stating he's made a few podcasts about some of the places he's visited. Two respondents also mention contributing to sites such as WikiTravel.

#### *4.2.2 On which online platforms do ESL teachers post travel-related UGC?*

All 12 respondents post travel-related UGC to Facebook, the world's largest social networking site. The most popular form of travel-related UGC respondents post to

Facebook are photographs, although the respondents who mention videos also upload their videos to Facebook. Three respondents also mention other platforms to post photos such as Blogger, Flickr, or Webshots, however these platforms are always in addition to sharing the travel photographs on Facebook. These respondents clarify their decisions to post travel photographs to two or more places, usually citing Facebook as being the place to post photos to reach the most people, with an aim toward family and friends. Photos posted to other websites have different purposes, such as complementing a written story in a blog post or making the photos accessible to everyone online (not just their Facebook network). Another reason for Facebook's popularity is that it is so easy to use. It is, as one respondent said, "made for that stuff." This ease of use combined with the large networks most people have on Facebook account for why it is so attractive to publish travel-related UGC.

*'Especially with Facebook, its great being able to upload images within days, even hours, for your friends who are both overseas and in the same place as you to comment on...Also the fact that people log onto Facebook daily anyway, and automatically get updates of your pictures/other UGC is very convenient.'*

Blogger is by far the most common blog-publishing website interviewees use, accounting for seven of the ten blogs. Wordpress accounted for two, and a privately owned blog accounted for one. Being 'easy to use' is the most cited reason interviewees chose to publish their blog via Blogger.

Comments/Reviews weren't prevalent or specific enough to correspond with any particular website, although two interviewees mention participating in WikiTravel or discussion boards on Lonely Planet forums.

### *4.2.3 Why do ESL teachers create UGC in relation to travel?*

Among all interviewees, sharing their travels with others was a key reason why they create and post UGC. Particularly important is the aspect of keeping family and friends up to date on what they are doing and seeing while being far from home. Another main reason is the aspect of keeping a personal log, an archive of sorts, of their travels, to remember and reflect on them later. Other interesting themes that emerge are:

1. To put home in perspective,

*'Rick Steves has a good book called Travel as a Political Act where he talks about using travel to better contextualize home, and for me creating the content, writing and producing it, is a way to do that.'*

2. To help out other travelers,

*'And being part of a community of travelers, it is a great way to help others out with their travels.'*

3. To express identity,

*'...its like sharing your favorite music or favorite books. I'm just sharing another aspect of me.'*

4. To expose others to different cultures and ideas who may not have the chance,

*'I think that many people are never even exposed to other places in the world, other cultures, or other people. By creating and posting about my experiences, I hope I will expose some people, who may not have been exposed otherwise, to new people, new places, and new ideas.'*

### *4.2.4 How do ESL teachers use travel-related UGC created by others as travel information resources?*

The interviewees have the most to say about how they use the internet, and more specifically, UGC made by others in regards to travel. A few of the main themes will be explored in this section.

#### ***Travel Information Resources***

In the interviews, interviewees were asked what sorts of travel information resources they use. Among the answers are UGC, but also other websites on the internet, WOM, and travel guidebooks. Most interviewees claim to consult a combination of two or three types of information.

*'We use a combination. Embassies and official tourism sites. Lonely Planet newsletters and website. Travel forums like TripAdvisor, Thorn Tree, Travel Bug. And then blogs.'*

Also, most respondents explain that different resources are good for different types of information,

*'Guidebooks are better for nuts and bolts travel. Off the beaten-path though, should always come from the source. When I say nuts and bolts I mean where to catch the right bus or knowing the visa situation...the logistics of travel - not the experience. No book can ever give you the experience of travel, but other travelers can.'*

Overall, it is clear that UGC are influential, but most interviewees don't base entire trips on information they find in UGC,

*'I do take others' travel experiences into consideration, but I don't base my decision solely on other people's photos/blogs. I like to collect information from a variety of sources before deciding on where to go and what do to or see.'*

One respondent mentions that UGC isn't equal for all destinations. The destinations that are popular among tourists have a lot, whereas places that may not be traveled so often have very little (if any) quality UGC. Depending on where someone travels, this could be a reason for consulting a variety of different travel information resources. So how exactly is UGC uniquely influential as travel information? Most interviewees claim the value of UGC is to gain inspiration or narrow down travel choices,

*'UGC mostly gives me ideas or affirms my wanting to go somewhere. I like to see how awesome others are and try to be equally, if not more, awesome.'*

*'If you see photos of some beautiful place or a blog post of a fantastic story related to a country...it gives you ideas, it makes you want to go. There are just so many places to see in the world, sometimes you need to see other people's experiences to know where you want or could go.'*

This is also reflected in the fact that most respondents state they consult UGC at the initial phases of their travel process,

*'The initial stages [are when I consult UGC]. When I am picking a destination or just picked one. I use it for skeleton ideas.'*

*'For my around the world trip, I used bits and pieces of information from anecdotes over the years, then did research online through BootsNAll, blogs, and Facebook, and then factored in price and logistics to choose the general places I wanted to go. But once I got on the ground, I had only the faintest outline of a plan.'*

UGC is hence a clearly influential piece of the puzzle to respondents when they research for travel purposes. A few interviewees also mention the importance of UGC in the form of reviews, specifically when looking for hostels or hotels to book,

*'Reading reviews of hostels is something that I personally do before I travel and really appreciate others' opinions about hostels.'*

*'Anyone can take a picture of one room that's just been cleaned. Only another traveler will ever tell you if the place had bed bugs, or if the staff was knowledgeable or not.'*

### **UGC Made by Friends vs. Strangers**

One of the questions guiding the interviews asked if UGC made by friends was more influential than UGC made by digital strangers. The vast majority of interviewees claim that UGC made by friends is more influential than UGC made by digital strangers. The reasons for this are because friends are familiar; temperaments, likes, dislikes, are all extra information one can factor into their consideration of the UGC to help make a decision. For example, as one respondent put it,

*'With friends, I know – okay, you like luxury and shopping, so you "hated" this place...whereas another friend, she is happy to take public transport and stay in backpacking dorms and eat street food. So they would like or dislike a place based on these aspects so [UGC made by friends] is a better, more accurate way to get a feel for the place, and then to gauge whether its something I'd be interested in.'*

Another reason why UGC made by friends is appealing to some interviewees is because you can ask that person questions and get more out of their experience than just viewing the UGC,

*'...you automatically have more of an interest when its content made by people you know, particularly because you can ask them questions and basically get more about their experience. Whereas with strangers...it might look cool but it's so detached, you know?'*

Some interviewees, however, also emphasize the value of UGC made by digital strangers,

*'I spend more time with UGC from people I know. But I like to get a wide range of perspectives, which is why looking at strangers' things can be interesting. With friends I have a good idea of what they are like and how they perceive things. With strangers I'm not as sure. But the UGC from strangers sometimes gives me insights into something that might test my limits, or be something friends or I never would have come up with.'*

### **4.3 Content Analysis Results**

This section will display the results of the 48 pieces of travel-related UGC that were coded and analyzed using statistical analysis in SPSS. The four most recent pieces of

travel-related UGC created and shared by each of the twelve interviewees make up this data set. The purpose of the content analysis is to see what forms of travel-related UGC are created, where they are posted/shared, and what major themes and actors are present. This portion of the research, then, aims to give insights into the first two sub-questions only.

#### *4.3.1 What forms of travel-related UGC do ESL teachers create?*

Table 8.0 – Forms of UGC (Frequency)

| Form of UGC | Frequency % |
|-------------|-------------|
| Photograph  | 52.1%       |
| Video       | 6.3%        |
| Blog post   | 39.6%       |
| Other       | 2.1%        |

Table 8.0 illustrates that photographs are the dominant form of UGC created and shared. Over half (52.1%, n=25) of the most recent travel-related UGC created and posted by respondents is photographs. Blog posts are the second most common form, making up 39.6% (n=19) of the most recent travel-related UGC. The “other” form of travel-related UGC (2.1%, n=1) is an Adobe Flash slideshow, which is the only element posted to a privately owned blog. It therefore is difficult to categorize, but incorporates the two most popular forms represented here, photographs and blog posts.

#### **Themes and Actors**

Each piece of UGC was coded according to the major theme and the minor theme represented. The most frequent major theme is ‘Landscapes’ (35.4%, n=17). Not too far behind (29.2%, n=14) is ‘People.’ The minor theme most represented is ‘People’ (33.3%, n=16), closely followed by ‘Landscapes’ (31.3%, n=15). From this data it is clear that the vast majority of travel-related UGC represent ‘Landscapes’ and ‘People’ as either a major or a minor theme. Table 9.0 in Appendix 3 displays the percentages of major and minor themes.

Each piece of UGC was also coded according to the major actor and the minor actor represented. The most frequent major actor represented is ‘The creator of the UGC himself/herself’ (41.7%, n=20). The second-most frequent major actor is ‘Scenery’

(22.9%, n=11). The minor actor most represented is ‘Scenery’ (33.3%, n=16), followed by ‘Friends of Creator’ (27.1%, n=13). It is clear from this data that the actors most represented in respondent’s travel UGC are the creator and/or his or her friends, and scenery. Table 10.0 in Appendix 3 displays the percentages of major and minor actors.

Overall, this data signifies that ‘People’ (creator, or friends of the creator) and ‘Landscapes’ (scenery) dominate the general themes and actors represented in respondents travel-related UGC.

#### *4.3.2 On which online platforms do ESL teachers post their travel-related UGC?*

Table 11.0 - Platforms of UGC

| Platform  | Frequency % |
|-----------|-------------|
| Facebook  | 50%         |
| YouTube   | 0%          |
| Flickr    | 2.1%        |
| Blogger   | 27.1%       |
| WordPress | 18.8%       |
| Other     | 2.1%        |

Table 11.0 displays the platforms respondent’s UGC is posted to. Facebook is the most dominant platform (50%, n=24), followed by Blogger (27.1%, n=13). No piece of UGC was found on the popular video sharing site YouTube, while Flickr was also represented minimally (2.1%, n=1).

### ***4.4 Connecting The Dots – Linking Results with Previous Theory***

This study aims to explore travel-related UGC created and shared by ESL teachers in South Korea. In this section, the results of all three methods will be discussed and linked with previous research.

#### *4.4.1 What forms of travel-related UGC ESL teachers create, where they post them, and why*

The results of the questionnaire, interviews, and content analysis reveal that the most common form of travel-related UGC that ESL teachers in South Korea create and share are photographs. This could be due to the fact that the act of taking photographs is

almost synonymous with travel itself (Markwell, 1997). Taking pictures while traveling to show friends and family has long been a common practice, and, as this data shows, has continued into and thrives in the digital age. The fact that 90.1% of questionnaire respondents, and 100% of interviewees create and share travel photographs online underscores the fact that the internet has democratized travel image creation and dissemination (Lo et al., 2011). Photographic images of destinations are now in the hands of users. Image promotion is no longer contained to the 4”x6” glossy canvas of a postcard, but is now in the millions of photographs taken and shared by travelers themselves. The content analysis of recent travel-related UGC by ESL teachers finds that the main theme represented is ‘Landscapes,’ while the main actor, apart from the creator themselves, is ‘Scenery.’ This means that information regarding a destination’s image, namely landscapes and scenery, is often communicated through ESL teachers’ UGC. Since the main form of UGC created by this group are photographs, the conclusion can be drawn that photographs communicate a large portion of this information.

Urry (2003) suggests that photography is a way to record reality by proving the visit to show to others, and to provoke personal memories. This research also finds these reasons to be key motivations for creating and posting travel-related UGC. The interviews were particularly insightful in this respect, as each of the 12 interviewees cited these two elements as motivations to create and share. Other motivations were present but sharing with family and friends and keeping a personal archive were the two strongest motivations among respondents.

Motivations can also be linked to where ESL teachers choose to post their travel-related UGC. If sharing with friends and family are an important motivation, it makes sense why Facebook is the overall dominating platform for travel-related UGC to be posted. Since Facebook, the world’s largest SNS, acts as a digital representation of a user’s social life (Ellison et al., 2009), the users social and familial connections are located in one place, making it easy to update everyone at the same time. The data supports this notion. In the questionnaire, 46.7% of respondents responded ‘very frequently’ when asked how often they post travel-related UGC to SNSs; 32.2% responded ‘frequently.’ Only 3.3% of respondents ‘never’ or ‘rarely’ upload travel-related UGC to SNSs. When asked where she posts her UGC, one interviewee responded, *“Facebook is a given – all my friends*



*are there.*” Another interviewee responded similarly with, *“I definitely post a lot to Facebook. It tends to be the most easily accessible to friends and family as almost everyone has a Facebook account nowadays.”* The themes represented in these interviewee’s answers are echoed in all the other interviews as well, demonstrating how Facebook has evolved into the platform of choice for travel-related UGC made by ESL teachers in South Korea.

Another form of travel-related UGC created and shared by ESL teachers is travel blogs. Although not as common as photographs, the data shows that more than half (55.6%) of ESL teachers in South Korea keep a blog to document their experiences. In the content analysis, 45.9% of the 48 samples of recent travel-related UGC are blog posts. Like taking photographs, journaling while traveling has also been a long and common practice. The data from this research shows that travel journaling is also thriving in the digital era.

In addition to keeping family and friends updated and keeping a personal archive, another significant motivation to create and share travel-related UGC, according to the data in this study, is to help others. Hsu and Lin (2008) found that this was a significant motivation in the creation and sharing of information in blogs. The data in this study supports their findings, as the motivational construct with the highest mean is *Efficacy*. Within this motivational construct, over half (57.8%) of respondents consider ‘Being helpful to others,’ and, ‘Seeking/Providing Advice’ as important. One interviewee states, *‘I also hope that my posts will be a resource to other travelers.’* Other interviewees agree when they say, *‘It’s the code, always help out fellow travelers,’* and *‘Being part of a community of travelers, it is a great way to help others out with their travels.’* These interviewees, among others, consider helping out other travelers by means of travel-related UGC to be a highly important motivation for them to create and share their travel-related content.

Interestingly, the sharing of comments or reviews is a rare form of travel-related UGC created and shared in these data sets. Only 16.6% of respondents in the online questionnaire claim to ‘frequently’ or ‘very frequently’ post comments or reviews. This is a bit surprising, as review sites such as TripAdvisor are such significant travel resources; TripAdvisor itself is one of the most popular travel sites on the web (O’Connor, 2008).

Also, of the interviewees, only two of the twelve mentioned *creating* comments or reviews, while almost all of them mentioned *using* the reviews posted by others as a travel information resource.

Notably, videos are not a large part of the travel-related UGC represented in the data. In the online questionnaire, 57.8% of respondents claim to ‘never’ or ‘rarely’ create and share travel videos; in the interviews, only one interviewee mentions videos, and in the content analysis, videos make up only 6.3% of the most recent forms of travel-related UGC. This is surprising given the motivations respondents cited for creating UGC. Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier (2009) find that travel videos have a “strong social significance in the act of sharing, enabling others to derive the travel enjoyment from the mobility in these mediascapes” (p. 28). The motivation of ‘Sharing Enjoyment’ is the highest rated motivation in the online questionnaire, and sharing experiences is mentioned in many of the interviews as a key motivation. Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier (2009) also find that videos are usually taken as a way to share experiences in an animated way, transporting viewers to the surroundings experienced by the creator. In this way, it seems videos would be a highly compelling way to share enjoyment with others, and to keep family and friends up-to-date on travels and experiences. The lack of videos could be due to the fact that videos, depending on if they are small clips or more elaborate works, require more effort than still photographs. If an ESL teacher wanted to use a video to communicate their experiences, a video or series of videos would be more difficult and time-consuming to produce in terms of a story or a full experience. Better suited for these tasks would be a blog supplemented by pictures, or a full picture album that takes the viewer through the experience. This could be why pictures and blogs are the most popular forms of travel-related UGC among ESL teachers in South Korea.

#### *4.4.2 How ESL teachers use UGC made by others*

According to the data collected in the online survey, the most popular information resource for travel information is WOM, meaning actual face-to-face conversations with friends and family. This is followed by travel guidebooks and non-UGC websites. This data shows that ESL teachers in South Korea are still relying heavily on their close networks, the advice of travel guides, and official travel websites for travel information. This is not to say that UGC does not have a role in the travel information seeking

process. According to the online questionnaire as well as the interviews, travel-related UGC is more a way to get inspiration at the beginning of the travel information seeking process. The results of the online questionnaire reveal that 55.6% of respondents consult UGC for travel information to find ideas on where to go, while 66.7% consult UGC after they have a destination in mind to find inspiration of what to do there. One interviewee states, *'I remember the only reason I went to Varanasi, India was because a friend of a friend had some photos on Facebook of the city and it intrigued me. It ended up being one of my favorite places in all my travels.'* In this case, UGC was the inspiration; the pictures gave the interviewee information about a place he was unfamiliar with, and this inspired his trip.

When asked for which specific aspects of travel planning he relied on UGC the most, one interviewee responds,

*'For my around-the-world trip, I relied on UGC for the preliminary planning stages...I left a lot of the details to figure out when I got on the ground. Now, I still do a lot of dreaming with UGC...I'll surf some travel blogs every once in a while to get more ideas on where I might go when I scrape some cash together.'*

Results of the online questionnaire regarding why ESL teachers consult travel-related UGC support the idea that travel-related UGC is used more as inspiration in the preliminary stages of the travel information seeking process. The most 'important' reasons to consult travel-related UGC, according to the data in this study, are 'UGC are a good way to learn about a destination, product, or service,' 'UGC provide me with ideas,' and 'UGC make me feel excited about traveling.' All of these reasons reflect how travel-related UGC is most important in the initial phases of travel information seeking. These findings support and extend Shao's (2009) findings that users consume new media (such as travel-related UGC) for two main reasons: information seeking and entertainment. Information seeking in terms of inspiration for a destination, or for things to do and see once a destination is determined, and entertainment also for inspiration, to see what others are doing and to get excited to experience such things themselves.

Travel-related UGC, therefore, are consulted for more of the creative and inspirational aspects, while other resources, namely travel guidebooks and non-UGC websites, may account for more of the logistical information regarding travel. One interviewee explains,

*'Guidebooks are better for nuts and bolts travel... where to catch the right bus or knowing the visa situation...the logistics of travel - not the experience.'* Due to how much travel information consists of logistics, UGC may be consulted less frequently; once inspiration is found on where to go, or things to see, the rest of the information needed to make the trip happen is logistical, and thus, sought from different resources.

According to the analytical framework of Shao (2009), the data suggest that ESL teachers in South Korea are more consumers and producers of travel-related UGC, rather than participants. This is evident when looking at the amount of travel-UGC produced and consumed in comparison to the lack of participatory elements, such as comments and reviews, created and shared by ESL teachers. This is an important element in understanding behavior of ESL teachers in South Korea in regards to their engagement with travel-related UGC.

All UGC is not created equal – at least, not according to the results of this study. In previous literature, scholars differentiate between WOM and eWOM. Steffes and Burgee (2009) define three aspects that distinguish WOM and eWOM. First, WOM is an immediate conversation, whereas eWOM usually occurs between people separated by both time and space. Second, WOM is traditionally interpersonal communication, while eWOM is facilitated by the internet, allowing one-to-world communication. Third, in WOM the message is from someone known to the receiver, while eWOM can be known, or a digital stranger. The data in this study suggest that this third distinction may need to be defined even further. In the interviews, almost all interviewees state that there is a difference between travel-related UGC made by friends or people known to them, and travel-related UGC made by digital strangers. Although travel-related UGC made by known persons found online wouldn't be considered WOM, as it is not immediate conversation or interpersonal communication, it is still characterized differently from travel-related UGC made by digital strangers. Since UGC communicates travel-related information to the viewers, and according to the data in this study, many ESL teachers are using travel-related UGC as inspiration for destination ideas or things to do and see, the source of this information impacts how the information is received, processed, and considered. For example, knowing a friend's personal preferences, temperament, personality, and views regarding travel are all extra information that can be factored into the message being communicated in the UGC. One interviewee explains,

*‘With friends, I know – okay, you like luxury and shopping, so you “hated” this place...whereas another friend, she is happy to take public transport and stay in backpacking dorms...so [UGC made by friends] is a better, more accurate way to get a feel for the place, and then to gauge whether its something I’d be interested in.’*

Another interviewee states, *‘UGC from strangers is more taken with a grain of salt. I don’t know their personality or their likes and dislikes...’* This data indicates that travel-related UGC (considered eWOM) from friends or known persons is weighted much more heavily in decision-making than travel-related UGC made by digital strangers. Therefore, there must be a distinction made not only between WOM and eWOM, but between eWOM created and shared by friends or known persons, and eWOM created and shared by digital strangers. These findings are significant because eWOM and UGC are important concepts in the travel and tourism industry (Litvin et al., 2008), as many of the products and services in the industry are intangible and cannot be evaluated prior to purchase. eWOM in the form of travel-related UGC are able to give unique insights into these high-risk purchases, for which consultation with others is a large part of the purchase (Goldsmith & Harowitz, 2006). As these results show, consultation with others, specifically in the form of travel-related UGC made by people who are known, impact purchase decisions more than consultation via travel-related UGC made by digital strangers.

Social Identity also plays a significant role in the themes discussed above. How strongly ESL teachers identify themselves with others based on social categories related to being an ESL teacher determine who they consider to be similar (in-group) or different (out-group). Their associations impact how they use UGC created by “in-group” members or “out-group” members. The data collected in the online questionnaire shows that respondents feel strongly and positively about their similarity to other ESL teachers in South Korea, the ability to bond with other ESL teachers in South Korea, and feel like they belong amongst other ESL teachers in South Korea. This connection means that ESL teachers may seek out travel-related UGC from other ESL teachers, as they are considered to be part of the “in-group” and their advice may be more relevant. According to McPherson et al. (2001), “similarity breeds connection.” The data collected in the interviews support McPherson et al.’s (2001) claim, and reflects the impact of a strong social identity. As one interviewee states,

*'We've got a lot of friends we've made while in Korea and while traveling and they always give good advice because they are in the same mindset of saving and easy travel. So we know that they will give us the right kind of advice for things that we are looking for.'*

This quote illustrates that the interviewee identifies with fellow ESL teachers and travelers, and therefore their travel-related UGC and advice is 'good.' Another interviewee states that he has 'yes, definitely' made a lot of "in-group" connections and travel resources by being an ESL teacher in South Korea. He then talks about an example of when he used their travel-related UGC explicitly,

*'When I was planning my Southeast Asia tour I used at least, like, ten different friend's pages, notes, blogs, to take it all in and figure out what I'd like and why...once you collect enough fellow travelers you can learn about a place just from pictures and status updates.'*

Similarity among ESL teachers encourages a connection, which then makes the UGC of these connections influential as travel information resources. From the data, it seems that the most important similarities in the context of travel-related UGC, are similar lifestyles and travel styles due to being in the same country, with more-or-less the same job. This is supported by Baumeister & Leary (1995) who find that people who are displaced from their relationships (for example, when they leave home) often form new relationships with people they have something in common with, who share common experiences, and who they are in close proximity to. Being Westerners in an Eastern country seems to be more of a circumstantial factor, rather than a deciding factor of why ESL teachers bond with each other. However, the language barrier with locals might increase the frequency with which ESL teachers communicate, along with other minor factors related to being Western in an Eastern country.

Overall, the social identity of ESL teachers increases their network with others who have the same lifestyle and travel style, which increases their exposure to travel-related UGC made by people known to them. As discussed above, this affects travel purchases in that travel-related UGC made by friends is more influential than travel-related UGC made by digital strangers.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

### *5.1 Discussion: Implications for the Tourism Industry*

The results of this study show that photographs and blogs are the main forms of travel-related UGC created and shared. These photographs and blog posts share information about a destination, product or service in relation to travel, and therefore have an impact on the tourism industry. Marketers must be aware of the communication occurring online regarding their destination, product or service, to better serve travelers wants and needs.

SNSs are the most frequent place where travel-related UGC is posted; this means SNSs are becoming increasingly influential in the flow of travel information. Therefore, SNSs are an ideal place for marketers to help transition the traveler from seeking inspiration to making a travel purchase.

How travelers use the travel-related UGC of other travelers is arguably the most important aspect to understand, because information found through travel-related UGC may eventually lead to a purchase decision. Marketers will benefit from understanding when UGC is consulted, why it is consulted, the relationship between the consulter and the creator, etc. Knowing how travelers use travel-related UGC can lead to better marketing strategies that improve travel by being more attuned to what travelers want and need in terms of information and services. Travelers usually consult travel-related UGC in the early stages of travel planning, and mostly for inspiration. Knowing this, marketers or other professionals in the industry might strategize on how to capitalize on travelers' desire for inspiration by finding the best ways to integrate themselves more effectively into those stages.

The results of this study regarding motivations behind creating and sharing travel-related UGC indicate that UGC made with different motives may have different effects in regards to how travelers interpret and consider the information when making a travel purchase. Understanding the motives to create and share travel-related UGC along with how potential consumers use travel-related UGC created by different motivations will help marketers understand purchase decisions.

Knowing how travelers identify themselves within certain groups (social identity) is essential to understanding how they seek out and consider travel-related UGC when making a purchase decision. Understanding the lifestyles or travel styles of different groups of travelers can help marketers understand specific wants and needs of particular groups. This already exists to a certain extent, as there are specific and different travel destinations, products, and services marketed to backpackers as opposed to luxury travelers, for example. However, collecting further and more specific information about a traveler's social identity, lifestyle, and travel style can help marketers and the industry in general to provide destinations, products, and services better suited to lifestyle, budget, or preference.

### **5.2 Conclusion**

Web 2.0 sites have revolutionized the way travelers get information. They provide travelers opportunities to express themselves, share contents, ideas, and experiences, all of which other travelers can use as travel information resources. Tourism is an information-intensive industry, and therefore it is important to study the technological and consumer-behavior changes that impact the circulation and accessibility of travel information (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). This study analyzes what travel-related UGC is created, where it is shared, why it is created and shared, and how it is used as a travel information resource; it aims to establish a better understanding for how the tourism industry is evolving, making travel more manageable and enjoyable for both consumers and marketers. The main research question of this study, *'What is the role of travel-related user-generated content shared online among ESL teachers in South Korea?'* has been adequately addressed through the analysis of data in regards to the four sub-questions. In sum, travel-related UGC shared online among ESL teachers in South Korea serves as a supplement to other travel information resources. It is used for inspiration and preliminary stages of travel information seeking. Travel-related UGC, specifically photographs and blog posts, is produced mainly to update family and friends, but also to be a resource for other travelers. ESL teachers in South Korea mainly post their content to Facebook and Blogger, but when seeking travel information through others' UGC, they find it from varying resources.



### Limitations and Further Research

This research has a few limitations. One is that due to the time and resources available to conduct the research, a specific community for analysis was needed. The community chosen for the research was ESL teachers in South Korea. Therefore, this data cannot make significant claims about travel-related UGC in general, and cannot be generalized to all types of travelers. A limitation regarding method is that since the pool of potential interviewees is composed of questionnaire respondents who were eager and willing to volunteer to participate further in the research, they may be more active in UGC creating and sharing. These issues may have led to a slight bias in the results; however, previous research in the field argues that since very specific and selective communities are used, the results provide a valuable framework for professionals in the tourism industry (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004).

Furthermore, this study provides the basic data for what, where, why, and how regarding travel-related UGC in general, however does not connect specific forms of travel-related UGC to specific motives or specific platforms, etc. Studying more specific relationships between each aspect investigated in this study may provide details on how particular types of travel-related UGC may be posted in different places, or created by different motives. For example, perhaps photographs are mainly made and shared to keep an online personal archive, while blog posts are most often created to help other travelers. These kinds of relationships would be interesting and beneficial to explore further and more in-depth.

This study features a limited statistical analysis. The study focuses on descriptive statistics, to provide a broad foundation upon which further, more specific research can be done. The strength of the overall analysis of this research is in the triangulation of different methods featuring both qualitative and quantitative data. Although simple, the descriptive statistics analyzed in comparison to the interview analysis and content analysis reveal important findings upon which further research can build upon.

Travelers are increasingly turning to each other's UGC to make purchase decisions regarding travel and tourism. This study helps to understand this phenomenon by exploring key concepts such as what information is created, where it is shared, why it is

created, and how it is used. This research aims at providing a better understanding of how the tourism industry is evolving, so that tourism becomes more manageable and enjoyable for both consumers and marketers alike.

## Chapter 6: References

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## Chapter 7: Appendix

### Appendix 1 – Online Questionnaire

# What you make, What you share: User-Generated Content by ESL Teachers

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## Page One

Hello everyone! My name is Meghan Kane and I am currently writing my Master Thesis about User-Generated Content (content produced and shared online, such as pictures, videos, blogs, or audio clips) among English as a Second Language teachers. I would sincerely appreciate about 10-15 minutes of your time to take a short survey. The more data I collect through these surveys, the stronger my thesis will be, so thank you in advance for helping me to make my research richer!

Before the survey commences, I would like to make sure that everything is clear. The answers you provide will be entirely anonymous. I will not distribute your answers nor will I publicize your any of your information to others. If this information is clear to you, please proceed to the questionnaire!

---

## Demographics

**To be eligible to take this survey, you must be an ESL teacher in South Korea, or have been an ESL teacher in South Korea within the past two years.**

Are you an ESL teacher in South Korea, or have been within the last two years?

- Yes
- No

2.) How long have you been/How long were you an ESL teacher in South Korea?

- less than 1 month
- 1-4 months
- 4-8 months
- 8-12 months
- 12-16 months
- 16-20 months
- 20-24 months
- 24+ months

3.) What is your home country?

4.) What is your gender?

- male
- female

5.) What is your age?

- 20 or under
- 21
- 22
- 23
- 24
- 25
- 26
- 27
- 28
- 29
- 30+

6.) What is your level of education?

- Some high school
- High school/GED
- Some college
- Associate's degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctorate degree
- Law degree



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- Medical degree
- Trade or other technical school degree

My father was born in \_\_\_\_\_  
I was born in \_\_\_\_\_

7.) I would now like to determine your ethnicity:  
My mother was born in \_\_\_\_\_

8.) Have you taught ESL in any other countries besides South Korea? If so, which countries?

### **Internet Use**

9.) How many days per week do you go online?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7

8+ hours

11.) Based on your internet use, how do you see yourself?

- New or inexperienced User
- Somewhat experienced user
- Experienced user
- Highly experienced user
- Expert user

10.) For each day, how many hours per day do you spend actively engaged online? (for example, leaving email open while cooking dinner does not count).

- 0-1 hours
- 1-2 hours
- 2-3 hours
- 3-4 hours
- 4-5 hours
- 5-6 hours
- 6-7 hours
- 7-8 hours

12.) Based on your knowledge of your friends' internet use, how do you compare yourself?

- I use the internet MUCH LESS than my friends
- I use the internet SOMEWHAT LESS than my friends
- I use the internet about the SAME AMOUNT as my friends
- I use the internet SOMEWHAT MORE than my friends
- I use the internet MUCH MORE than my friends

---

### **Travel**

13.) How would you classify your travel behavior?

- I travel rarely or never
- I travel sometimes
- I travel often
- I travel frequently
- I travel very frequently

- I travel MUCH LESS than my friends
- I travel SOMEWHAT LESS than my friends
- I travel about the SAME AMOUNT as my friends
- I travel SOMEWHAT MORE than my friends
- I travel MUCH MORE than my friends

14.) Based on your knowledge of your friends travel behavior, how would you classify yourself?

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### **UGC**

**This section is about content that you generate and share online. Specifically, I want you to focus on TRAVEL RELATED content you create. Travel photos, videos, comments/reviews relating to travel/traveling,**

**podcasts/audio of travel related content. Please specify how often you create the following TRAVEL RELATED content:**

15.) Pictures/Photographs

- Never
- Rarely
- Occasionally
- Rather Frequently
- Very Frequently

- Occasionally
- Rather Frequently
- Very Frequently

16.) Videos

- Never
- Rarely
- Occasionally
- Rather Frequently
- Very Frequently

18.) Comments/Reviews

- Never
- Rarely
- Occasionally
- Rather Frequently
- Very Frequently

17.) Podcasts/Audio

- Never
- Rarely

19.) Blog posts

- Never
- Rarely
- Occasionally
- Rather Frequently
- Very Frequently

**Below there are 6 categories of websites listed. Please indicate how often you share your content on each type of site.**

20.) 1. Social Networking Sites: eg. Facebook, MySpace, CyWorld

- Never
- Rarely
- Occasionally
- Rather Frequently
- Very Frequently

- Very Frequently

21.) 2. Official Sites of Travel Suppliers: eg. Hilton, KLM

- Never
- Rarely
- Occasionally
- Rather Frequently
- Very Frequently

24.) 5. Picture/Video Sharing Sites: eg. YouTube, Flickr

- Never
- Rarely
- Occasionally
- Rather Frequently
- Very Frequently

22.) 3. Online Booking Sites: eg. Orbitz, Travelocity

- Never
- Rarely
- Occasionally
- Rather Frequently
- Very Frequently

25.) 6. Blog Sites: eg. Blogger, Wordpress

- Never
- Rarely
- Occasionally
- Rather Frequently
- Very Frequently

23.) 4. Commercial Review Sites: eg. TripAdvisor,

- Never
- Rarely
- Occasionally
- Rather Frequently

26.) Is there a website that does not fall into any of the 6 Categories above where you post UGC? If so, please specify:

\_\_\_\_\_

27.) If so, please indicate how often you post content to this website.

- Never
- Rarely
- Occasionally
- Rather Frequently
- Very Frequently

## **UGC continued...**

**Below are listed different motivations for creating/sharing travel content online. Please indicate how important these elements are to you when creating/sharing travel content online. 1=unimportant, 7=very important.**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 28.) Seeking/Providing emotional support | 37.) Sharing enjoyment                                |
| 29.) Finding friends/peers               | 38.) Controlling products/service Quality             |
| 30.) Relationship building               | 39.) Enforcing service excellence                     |
| 31.) Group attachment/commitment         | 40.) Product suggestions/evaluations                  |
| 32.) Expressing my identity              | 41.) Gaining prestige                                 |
| 33.) Increasing self esteem/respect      | 42.) Attaining status in the community                |
| 34.) Satisfying other members' needs     | 43.) Seeking future exchange from anybody             |
| 35.) Being helpful to others             | 44.) Seeking future exchange from whom I provide help |
| 36.) Seeking/Providing advice            |   |
- 

## **UGC continued...**

**When planning a trip, please indicate how often you consult each travel information source.**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 45.) Word of mouth recommendation (asking family/friends)<br>( ) Never<br>( ) Rarely<br>( ) Occasionally<br>( ) Rather Frequently<br>( ) Very Frequently | 48.) Websites (not user-generated information)<br>( ) Never<br>( ) Rarely<br>( ) Occasionally<br>( ) Rather Frequently<br>( ) Very Frequently |
| 46.) Travel Guidebooks<br>( ) Never<br>( ) Rarely<br>( ) Occasionally<br>( ) Rather Frequently<br>( ) Very Frequently                                    | 49.) Social Networking Sites: eg. Facebook<br>( ) Never<br>( ) Rarely<br>( ) Occasionally<br>( ) Rather Frequently<br>( ) Very Frequently     |
| 47.) Travel Agencies/Tourist Boards<br>( ) Never<br>( ) Rarely<br>( ) Occasionally<br>( ) Rather Frequently<br>( ) Very Frequently                       | 50.) UGC located on official sites of Travel Suppliers: eg. Hilton, KLM<br>( ) Never<br>( ) Rarely<br>( ) Occasionally                        |

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- Rather Frequently
- Very Frequently

51.) Online Booking Sites: eg. Orbitz, Travelocity

- Never
- Rarely
- Occasionally
- Rather Frequently
- Very Frequently

52.) Commercial Review Sites: eg. TripAdvisor

- Never
- Rarely
- Occasionally
- Rather Frequently
- Very Frequently

53.) Picture/Video Sharing Sites: eg. YouTube, Flickr

- Never
- Rarely
- Occasionally
- Rather Frequently
- Very Frequently

54.) Blog Sites: eg. Blogger, Wordpress

- Never

- Rarely
- Occasionally
- Rather Frequently
- Very Frequently

55.) Is there an travel information source not mentioned that you use when planning a trip? If so, please specify:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

56.) If so, please indicate how often you consult this information source:

- Never
- Rarely
- Occasionally
- Rather Frequently
- Very Frequently

57.) If you consult websites with UGC, when during the travel process do you typically consult them? (multiple answers possible)

- To find ideas on where to go and what to do
- After I already have a destination in mind
- While I'm traveling
- After I return from my trip to compare my experience to others'

---

### **UGC continued...**

#### **Why do you consult travel UGC?**

**Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements, 1= strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree:**

58.) UGC are a good way to learn about a travel destination, product or service

59.) UGC help me evaluate alternatives

60.) UGC help me avoid places/services I would not enjoy

61.) UGC provide me with ideas

62.) UGC increase my confidence in the decisions I make

63.) UGC make it easier to imagine what a place will be like

64.) UGC reduce the risk/uncertainty involved in making travel decisions

65.) UGC make it easier to reach decisions

66.) UGC help me plan my trips more efficiently

67.) UGC reduce the likelihood that I will later regret a decision

68.) UGC make travel planning more enjoyable

69.) UGC make me feel excited about traveling

70.) UGC add fun to the travel process

72.) UGC help me imagine my trips more vividly

71.) UGC help me save time in the travel process

---

## **Social Identity**

**Below are statements regarding the social identification of being an ESL teacher. Please indicate your agreement with each statement. 1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree. \*\*If you have since left South Korea, please answer the questions as to how you felt while being an ESL teacher in South Korea.**

73.) I have a lot in common with other ESL Teachers in South Korea.

85.) In my everyday life, I often think about what it means to be an ESL Teacher in South Korea.

74.) I feel strong ties to other ESL Teachers in South Korea.

86.) In general, I'm glad to be an ESL Teacher in South Korea.

75.) I find it difficult to form a bond with other ESL Teachers in South Korea.

87.) I often regret that I am an ESL Teacher in South Korea.

76.) I don't feel a sense of being "connected" with other ESL Teachers in South Korea.

88.) I don't feel good about being an ESL Teacher in South Korea.

77.) I really "fit in" with other ESL Teachers in South Korea.

78.) In a group of ESL Teachers in South Korea, I really feel that I belong.

79.) I often think about the fact that I am an ESL Teacher in South Korea.

80.) Overall, being an ESL Teacher in South Korea has very little to do with how I feel about myself.

81.) In general, being an ESL Teacher in South Korea is an important part of my self-image.

82.) The fact that I am an ESL Teacher in South Korea rarely enters my mind.

83.) I am not usually conscious of the fact that I am an ESL Teacher in South Korea.

84.) Being an ESL Teacher in South Korea is an important reflection of who I am.

## Appendix 2 – Interview Guide

### Interview Guide

1. Introduction – How are you today? Thank you for taking the time to interview. This study is confidential and none of your answers will be revealed. This research is about user-generated-content and ESL teachers in South Korea. The interview will take about 15-30 minutes.
2. ESL Status
  - Are you a current ESL teacher in South Korea or former? Which city do you/did you teach in? How long have you been teaching/how long did you teach?
3. Travel experience of interviewee
  - How many times have you traveled inside or outside of South Korea while you were an ESL teacher? Where did you go?
  - Do you have any other travel experience?
  - How would you rate your international experience among those of your friends? More than? Less than? Broader than? Narrower than?
  - What influences you to take a trip?
4. Internet Use
  - Do you ever use the internet when planning a trip? If so, how exactly? (What sites, or resources, and for what purposes?). Please be specific.
5. UGC
  - Have you ever made and shared any form of user-generated content in relation to your travels? (pictures, videos, blog posts, comments/reviews, etc) If so, what exactly?
  - If so, why do you decide to create UGC? Why do you decide to post UGC? (what is the value of creating/posting?)
  - Where do you usually post your UGC? Why do you decide to post your UGC in those particular places?
  - Does travel UGC made by other influence you at all? If so, in what ways? If not, why not?
  - What specific aspects of travel/travel planning do you rely on UGC?
  - Is there a difference between the impact and influence of UGC made by close friends vs. UGC made by online strangers? If so, what? Why?
6. Social Connections
  - Have you made/did you make many friends who are/were ESL teachers in South Korea?

**Appendix 3 – Results Tables**

**Table 1.0 – Forms of travel-related UGC**

|   | Never | Rarely | Occasionally | Frequently | Very Frequently |
|---|-------|--------|--------------|------------|-----------------|
| What types of travel UGC do you create? |       |        |              |            |                 |
| Pictures                                | 3.3%  | 6.7%   | 26.7%        | 27.8%      | 35.6%           |
| Videos                                  | 20%   | 37.8%  | 31.1%        | 8.9%       | 2.2%            |
| Podcasts/Audio                          | 86.7% | 10%    | 3.3%         | 0%         | 0%              |
| Comments/Reviews                        | 20%   | 25.6%  | 37.8%        | 12.2%      | 4.4%            |
| Blog posts                              | 44.4% | 18.9%  | 20%          | 16.7%      | 0%              |

**Table 3.0 – Motivations to create and share travel-related UGC\***

| How important are these motivations to create/share travel UGC? | Mean (on a scale of 1-7)<br>1=unimportant, 7=very important | Percentage of Respondents who answered “5” or above |
|---|---|---|
| <b><i>INSTRUMENTAL</i></b>                                      | <b><i>INSTRUMENTAL overall mean = 3.97</i></b>              |   |
| Seeking/Providing emotional support                             | 3.36  | 33.3%   |
| Finding friends/peers   | 3.61  | 34.4%   |
| Relationship building   | 4.13  | 41.1%   |
| Group attachment/commitment                                     | 4.02  | 40%   |
| Expressing my identity  | 4.74  | 61.1%   |
| Increasing self esteem/respect                                  | 3.97  | 45.6%   |
| <b><i>EFFICACY</i></b>  | <b><i>EFFICACY overall mean = 4.37</i></b>                  |   |

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\* On the 7-point scale, 1-3 indicate a motivation’s lack of importance, 4 indicates neutrality, while 5-7 indicate a motivations importance. The means represent the average response of all respondents. The percentages represent the percentage of respondents who ranked that particular motivation with a “5,” “6,” or a “7,” indicating importance.

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|  |  |       |
|--|--|-------|
| Satisfying other members' needs                  | 3.12   | 25.6% |
| Being helpful to others                          | 4.38   | 57.8% |
| Seeking/Providing advice                         | 4.40   | 57.8% |
| Sharing enjoyment                                | 5.59   | 76.7% |
| <b>QUALITY ASSURANCE</b>                         | <b>QUALITY ASSURANCE overall mean = 2.70</b> |       |
| Controlling products/service Quality             | 2.66   | 17.8% |
| Enforcing service excellence                     | 2.55   | 19.1% |
| Product suggestions/evaluations                  | 2.94   | 23.6% |
| <b>STATUS</b>                                    | <b>STATUS overall mean = 3.03</b>            |       |
| Gaining prestige                                 | 3.09   | 30.3% |
| Attaining status in the community                | 2.98   | 27%   |
| <b>EXPECTANCY</b>                                | <b>EXPECTANCY overall mean = 3.25</b>        |       |
| Seeking future exchange from anybody             | 3.43   | 32.6% |
| Seeking future exchange from whom I provide help | 3.08   | 23.6% |

**Table 4.0 – What travel information resources are consulted**

|  | Never | Rarely | Occasionally | Frequently | Very Frequently |
|--|-------|--------|--------------|------------|-----------------|
| How often do you consult these travel information resources? |       |        |              |            |                 |
| Word of Mouth (talking with friends/family)                  | 0%    | 4.4%   | 20%          | 25.5%      | 50%             |
| Travel Guidebooks  | 11.1% | 11.1%  | 18.9%        | 31.1%      | 27.8%           |
| Travel Agencies/Tourist Boards                               | 23.3% | 32.2%  | 24.4%        | 16.7%      | 3.3%            |
| Websites (not UGC)*  | 2.2%  | 10%    | 33.3%        | 34.4%      | 20%             |
| UGC on Social Networking Sites                               | 8.9%  | 13.3%  | 48.9%        | 20%        | 8.9%            |

\* Official tourism websites, any website with information made by a company, rather than another user



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|                                    |       |       |       |       |       |
|------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| UGC on Travel Supplier Sites       | 40%   | 28.9% | 21.1% | 7.8%  | 2.2%  |
| UGC on Online Booking Sites        | 13.3% | 17.8% | 34.4% | 20%   | 13.3% |
| UGC on Commercial Review Sites     | 15.6% | 30%   | 24.4% | 14.4% | 15.5% |
| UGC on Picture/Video sharing sites | 26.7% | 31.1% | 24.4% | 13.3% | 4.4%  |
| UGC on Blog-Hosting Sites          | 32.2% | 33.3% | 23.3% | 8.9%  | 2.2%  |
|                                    |       |       |       |       |       |

**Table 6.0 – Why travel-related UGC is consulted\***

| To what extent do you agree with the following reasons to consult UGC regarding travel? | Mean (on a scale of 1-7)<br>1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree | Percentage of respondents who answered "5" or above |
|---|---|---|
| UGC are a good way to learn about a destination, product, or service                    | 5.17  | 72.2%   |
| UGC help me evaluate alternatives   | 5.02  | 68.9%   |
| UGC help me avoid places/services I would not enjoy                                     | 4.98  | 70%   |
| UGC provide me with ideas   | 5.30  | 73.3%   |
| UGC increase my confidence in the decisions I make                                      | 4.99  | 68.9%   |
| UGC make it easier to imagine what a place will be like                                 | 5.06  | 67.8%   |
| UGC reduce the risk/uncertainty involved in making travel decisions                     | 4.92  | 63.3%   |
| UGC make it easier to reach decisions   | 4.64  | 64.4%   |
| UGC help me plan my trips more efficiently  | 4.64  | 63.3%   |

\* The means provide the average level of agreement for each reason among all respondents. The percentages represent the percentage of respondents who responded with a "5," "6," or a "7," indicating agreement.

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|   |      |       |
|---|------|-------|
| UGC reduce the likelihood that I will later regret a decision | 4.39 | 53.3% |
| UGC make travel planning more enjoyable                       | 4.52 | 55.6% |
| UGC make me feel excited about travelling                     | 5.26 | 75.6% |
| UGC add fun to the travel planning process                    | 4.48 | 55.6% |
| UGC help me save time in the travel planning process          | 4.33 | 45.6% |
| UGC help me imagine my trips more vividly                     | 4.30 | 56.7% |

**Table 9.0 – Major and minor themes\***

| Major Theme      | Frequency % | Minor Theme   | Frequency% |
|------------------|-------------|---------------|------------|
| Iconic Landmarks | 4.2%        | Landscapes    | 31.3%      |
| Landscapes       | 35.4%       | Animals       | 2.1%       |
| Animals          | 4.2%        | People        | 33.3%      |
| People           | 29.2%       | Sports        | 2.1%       |
| Sports           | 4.2%        | The Arts      | 2.1%       |
| Food             | 2.1%        | Food          | 4.2%       |
| Language         | 2.1%        | Education     | 6.3%       |
| Tradition        | 14.6%       | Religion      | 4.2%       |
| Accommodation    | 4.2%        | Tradition     | 12.5%      |
|                  |             | Accommodation | 2.1%       |

**Table 10.0 – Major and minor actors\***

| Major Actor                               | Frequency % | Minor Actor                               | Frequency % |
|---|-------------|---|-------------|
| The Creator of the UGC<br>Herself/Himself | 41.7%       | The Creator of the UGC<br>Herself/Himself | 2.1%        |
| Friends of Creator                        | 18.8%       | Friends of Creator                        | 27.1%       |
| Locals/Regular                            | 6.3%        | Locals/Regular                            | 16.7%       |

\* This table does not account for all themes or actors represented on the coding form, just those themes or actors that made an appearance in the data, therefore there are several themes or actors that were not present in any of the UGC samples.

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|                   |       |                   |       |
|-------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|
| People            |       | People            |       |
| Inanimate Objects | 10.4% | Inanimate Objects | 12.5% |
| Scenery           | 22.9% | Scenery           | 33.3% |
|                   |       | Animals           | 4.2%  |
|                   |       | Food              | 4.2%  |

