Exploring the Formation and Representation of Destination Images in Travel Vlogs on Social Media

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Abstract

This paper is an exploratory study of how destination images are projected in online travel vlogs. Destination image plays a significant role in influencing tourists' purchase decision, therefore building and maintaining a desired image is important for destination marketing organizations (DMO). However, with the prevalence of social media, tourists' perceived destination image is largely affected by the user-generated contents (UGC) or e-word-of-mouth (eWOM). As one type of UGC particularly suitable for conveying tourism information and increasingly popular online, travel vlogs are currently overlooked in tourism researches. Therefore, this paper intends to investigate the relationship between destination image formation and travel vlogs. In an inductive manner, this qualitative paper employs content analysis as a major research method. Through analyzing ten vlog samples of one destination, Chongqing, 84 concepts in 20 categories are identified and seven themes are recognized. Among them, 18 categories constitute the cognitive destination image and two themes constitute the affective destination image. The overall destination image is presented by two other themes and is impacted by both cognitive and affective images. Six factors that influence destination image formation and representation in travel vlogs are also indicated: destination experiences, travel purposes, information sources, language and culture, vlog actors, and video format and social media features of the vlog. This paper innovatively regards travel vlog as a tourism information source and examines its projection of destination images, thus contributing to tourism studies and providing practical implications for DMOs.

Keywords: destination image, travel vlog, information source, UGC, social media, DMO

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1. Introduction

1.1   Research background: tourism in the age of Internet economy

In a rapidly changing world, the development of science and technology, especially the computer science and information technologies, changes how people think, how people live and how the society works. In the era of Internet economy, opportunities and challenges coexist for everyone and every industry. First of all, information is exploding, so you can find almost anything you want to know on the Internet but be aware of its credibility. Secondly, social media give us a platform to connect and communicate with people all around the world, but the conflicts are also following (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Thirdly, E-business is prospering and innovative ways of making money are emerging, forcing traditional industries to transform (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Israeli, Ravichandran, & Singh, 2018; Wang & Pizam, 2011).

From the supply side, tourism industry is also evolving to catch up with the trends. Applying the Web 2.0 technologies, which are referred as Travel 2.0 in tourism sector, online travel agencies (OTA) and online marketing are prevalent now (Schmallegger & Carson, 2008). In general, tourism companies or destinations have three channels to market themselves online: creating their own websites, opening accounts on social media like Facebook and Instagram, and cooperating with the tourism e-mediators (TEM) like Booking and Expedia (Jacobsen & Munar, 2012; Molinillo, Liébana-Cabanillas, Anaya-Sánchez, & Buhalis, 2018; Munar, 2011; Sotiriadis, 2018). Compared to the past, the distribution channels and marketing tools are expanded for tourism companies and destinations. However, with numerous information available online, tourists again turn to TEMs for help and the first two online marketing channels are found less influential (Jacobsen & Munar, 2012; Sotiriadis, 2018). Moreover, with Travel 2.0 and especially the social media, the information sources for tourists are also increased and the voice of other tourists are greatly amplified: the e-word-of-mouth (eWOM) has huge impact on tourists' purchase intention and behavior (Israeli et al., 2018; Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008). Thus, the marketing strategies of tourism companies and destinations must adapt to the change.

From the demand side, two new features of current tourists should be addressed. One is the need for experiential products and personalized services. Tourism products or services in essence are stimuli for positive, memorable and hedonic tourism experience (Prebensen, Chen, & Uysal, 2014; Sundbo & SËrensen, 2013). While experience is very subjective and contextual, tourists are no longer satisfied with the packaged products or standardized services offered by tourism agencies, but more in favor of planning travels by themselves. However, as tourism products are intangible, perishable, heterogeneous

and inseparable of production and consumption, it is hard to know what they are like before travel (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1985). To reduce the risk brought by the uncertainty, tourists must collect enough information before making purchase decisions. Hence comes the other new feature: changed tourism information search strategy (Gursoy, 2011). Information search strategy can be explained as the mix of information sources, which can be divided into internal sources and external sources. Currently, the external sources are largely increased and easily accessed via Internet, thus tourists' ability of gathering information is improved, and based on it, they can make travel decisions more strategically.

1.2   The knowledge gap

In this context, destinations are put into an intensely competitive market where destination marketing organizations (DMO) seem to play an important role in marketing and managing a destination to attract tourists (Gowreesunkar, Séraphin, & Morrison, 2018). While DMOs have multiple roles and various functions, external marketing is found to be the focus point of both academic research and business practice. An essential task of external marketing is formulating and maintaining a desired destination image because it influences all stages of tourism: (1) tourists' visiting intention in the pre-travel stage; (2) perceived quality, value and satisfaction in the on-site stage; and (3) re-visiting and recommendation in the post-travel stage (Bigne, Sanchez, & Sanchez, 2001; Birdir, Dalgic, & Birdir, 2018b; Chen & Tsai, 2007; K. S. Chon, 1990). However, what matters the most is how destination image is perceived by tourists instead of how it is projected by DMOs (Govers, 2005). As stated above, the information on social media is more influential than destinations' own websites, probably because the user-generated contents (UGC) are deemed to be more trustworthy (Jacobsen & Munar, 2012; Llodra-Riera, Martínez-Ruiz, Jiménez-Zarco, & Izquierdo-Yusta, 2015).

According to Vickery and Wunsch-Vincent (2007), UGC can be classified into different categories based on content types or distribution platforms. Texts and pictures are most common, whereas audios and videos are less emphasized. However, there is a rising trend of video social networks while videos are more and more considered as a reliable tourism information source (O'Connor, Wang, & Li, 2011). Due to the fast development of broadband and 5G technology, videos are supposed to be a prevalent and dominant online media in the near future (Cisco, 2020). As a combination of texts, pictures and audios, the multimedia features of video make it effective and efficient in delivering information, engaging audience, and mediating experiences (Trinh & Nguyen, 2019; Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009). Speaking of tourism marketing, though all categories of UGC have the word-of-mouth effect,

videos are found to be most influential in creating better destination attitude and positive destination image (Huertas, 2018). Videos shared on social media can also influence audience's destination choice and other decisions about tourism behaviors (Huertas, 2018; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

As a special sub-type of video, vlog is regarded as the upgraded version of blog, a combination of video and blogging (Peralta, 2019). Commonly, travel vlogs are vloggers showing around in a destination and telling about their travel stories and experience. Differentiated from other video clips and resembling traditional blogs, vlogs are highly original and informative (Trinh & Nguyen, 2019). As one of the most popular contents on YouTube, the largest online video platform that has billions of videos and users, tourism videos are an important reference for users who are seeking travel ideas. And nearly half of those users prefer travel vlogs in terms of subscriptions, which means they value this type of tourism contents and have the intention to continue watching more (Crowel, Gribben, & Loo, 2014). Moreover, destination names constitute 71% of tourism content searches on YouTube, implicating users' focus on destinations and the potential for those videos to affect destination images and viewers' travel decisions.

At present, researches about how UGCs shared on social media influence destination image are around one thousand as exhibited on google scholar, yet video-focused and particularly vlog-focused researches are less than one hundred. In other words, with the development of information and communication technologies (ICT) and the prevalence of online video sharing, travel vlogs are going to play a major role in shaping perceived destination image while lacking knowledge about it. Therefore, a research gap is possibly identified here.

1.3   Research importance and research aim

As illustrated above, in the information age, online tourism marketing is a must for destinations or DMOs to work on and the social media is their main battlefield. Adopting the advice by Munar (2011), DMOs should take an analytic strategy of marketing and branding: (1) to monitor the UGCs about the destination shared on social media, and (2) to gain enough knowledge about how can UGCs modify destination images perceived by tourists. In this vein, this paper picks travel vlog, a particular type of UGC, as research object, and to see how destination image of a certain destination is communicated within the travel vlogs. The reasons for choosing vlog are its superiority as a tourism information carrier, its increasing popularity among tourists who seek tourism information online, and its lack of research in tourism academia. In addition, as pointed by Beerli and Martin (2004); Chen and Tsai (2007); K.-S. Chon (1991); Hanlan and Kelly (2005), the actual visiting of a destination and destination

reality can modify tourists' image of the destination. Although the audience may not have been to the destination, watching the vlogs may create a vicarious experience of the destination for them, which makes travel vlogs more important and interesting to be investigated together with destination images (H. Kim & Richardson, 2003).

To help narrow down this possible research gap and consequently contribute to the tourism marketing practice, this paper will review some classic theories of destination image formation, information sources and information search strategies, social media as well as UGC. Relevant and significant concepts like the role of DMO and eWOM will be discussed as well. Then, the characteristics of videos and especially travel vlogs will be examined. Next, how destination images are represented in the travel vlogs will be researched. While destination images can be measured holistically by qualitative method or partially by quantitative method, travel vlogs can also be regarded as an entirety or a composition of many elements (Birdir et al., 2018b; Govers, 2005; A Shani & Wang, 2011; Trinh & Nguyen, 2019). Therefore, the research aim of this paper is to explore how travel vlogs can communicate destination images on social media, and what perspectives of a destination are selected to form its images. The research question of this paper is given as:

How are destination images formed and represented in travel vlogs that published on social media?

2.   Theoretical framework

Aiming to explore the influence of travel vlogs posted on social media to destination image, the relevant concepts need to be explained and a connection among them needs to be drawn. In this section, first the role of DMO is described and the theories of destination image, an important concept for destination marketers to consider, are discussed. While both two concepts involve the relationship between destination and tourists, this relationship is moderated by many factors, a major one of which is social media. As a platform of plentiful information, social media becomes new information sources for potential tourists who are searching for tourism and plays a significant role in influencing destination image. Thus, the discussions of tourists' information searching strategies and social media as an information source are followed. Findings show that UGC is the core of social media, but video as one type of UGC is often overlooked in tourism researches. Besides the advantages of video format to contain rich tourism information, travel vlogs should receive more attention also for its increasing

popularity online. Therefore, discussions about the characteristics of travel vlog and how it can influence destination images are highlighted as well.

2.1 Destination marketing and destination image

2.1.1 Destination marketing: researches and organizations

The studies of destination marketing are a major part of tourism researches. Destinations, as defined by Leiper (1979), are "locations which attract tourists to stay temporarily, and in particular those features which inherently contribute to that attraction" (p. 397). They can be either clearly defined geographical and political areas, or subjectively defined perceptual concepts by tourists, or regarded as a combination of all products, services and experiences offered locally (Buhalis, 2000). As the fundamental unit of tourism, destinations are where most tourism activities take place: from both the tourist's side and the tourism business's side (Leiper, 1979). With the discovery and development of destinations, the competition among thousands of destinations is intense (Birdir, Dalgic, & Birdir, 2018a). To obtain competitive advantage, destination marketing and branding are both important for every destination. While destination branding strategies aim at differentiating a destination from others, destination marketing strategies aim at attracting new customers and sustaining them (Sinclair-Maragh, 2018; Tasci, 2011).

However, as destination is a complex entity which consists of multiple stakeholders, the marketing strategies and practices are various and potentially against each other (March & Wilkinson, 2009). While the collaboration within a destination is regarded as an antecedent to reach destination competitiveness in the globalization context, it is not automatically achieved, but trust, commitment and legitimacy are required to build it (Dredge & Jenkins, 2003; Larson & Gyimóthy, 2013). Therefore, a leading organization is desired to coordinate the conflicts and optimize the common interests of the stakeholders: that is DMO (Gowreesunkar et al., 2018).

Destination marketing organizations has many definitions from both theory perspective and practice perspective, but a most common description is about its role as a marketer and its function of attracting tourists (Gretzel, Fesenmaier, Formica, & O'Leary, 2006; Pike & Page, 2014; Wahab, Crampon, & Rothfield, 1976; Youcheng Wang, 2011; World Tourism Organization, 2007). For instance, Youcheng Wang (2011) defines DMO as "the organization responsible for the marketing of an identifiable destination" (p. 6). DMOs have different operating levels for that they can be national, regional or local organizations under either public, private, or both sectors (Gowreesunkar et al., 2018; Youcheng Wang, 2011).

Although DMOs are varied in terms of level, terminologies, funding, structure, roles and activities, they all have a common and critical task: marketing (Gowreesunkar et al., 2018; Hays, Page, & Buhalis, 2013). Leaning on the rich researches of marketing in general, destination marketing is a broad concept which includes and relates to plenty of theories and practices. For example, adapting from the classic marketing mix 4Ps, namely, product, price, promotion, and place, Buhalis (2000) proposes the destination marketing mix: (1) formulating the destination product, which is the mixture of public resources and private offerings; (2) pricing the destination, which is affected by international economic situation and the pricing strategy of mediators and consorted by DMO; (3) distributing tourism destinations, which determines whether and how the target market is reached; and (4) promoting the destination, which consists of both above-the-line advertisements and below-the-line communications. Even though the original concept of marketing mix dates back to 1960s, this use of 4Ps paradigm is still dominant in destination marketing (Pike & Page, 2014).

However, in practice, failing to control every stakeholder's marketing practice, DMOs can only guide marketing strategies for the destination product, and perhaps facilitate the cooperation among all stakeholders to develop and deliver an integrated marketing mix of important and manageable marketing elements (Buhalis, 2000; Constantinides, 2006; Pike & Page, 2014; Y Wang, 2011). Nevertheless, as tourism industries and destinations turn to focus on co-creating enjoyable and memorable experiences with tourists in the destination setting, the marketing activities DMO take should be more tourists-oriented while the role of experience are also highlighted in tourism and destination marketing studies (Cifci, Cetin, & Dincer, 2018; Gowreesunkar et al., 2018; Gretzel et al., 2006; Sundbo & SËrensen, 2013). For instance, Cifci et al. (2018) claim that in experiential tourism marketing, the traditional 4Ps should be transformed into a new marketing mix: (1) memories and feelings as destination product, which emphasize human interaction, innovation, and customization; (2) tourists perceived value as pricing foundation, aiming at price premium instead of low price competition; (3) using multi-sensory ways of promotion to create unique theme and provide clues of authentic experiences; and (4) using only selective distribution channels to enable customer communication, brand awareness, and consistent experience.

Noticeably, social media and OTA as e-intermediary are gaining more share in destination marketing channels due to the development of ICT and especially Travel 2.0 (Buhalis, 2000; Cifci et al., 2018). In fact, marketing practices of DMO are widely impacted by ICT, which demands human and financial resources to deal with corresponding challenges (Gretzel et al., 2006; Hays et al., 2013; Molinillo et al., 2018). Moreover, it is noticed that the adaption to Internet does not replace the old marketing

techniques, on the contrary, because the total exposure of destinations is increased, the demands of call inquiries and brochure outgiving are also increased (Gretzel et al., 2006). Furthermore, facing the questioning of cost-effectiveness from funders and contests with other profitable enterprises, DMOs are suggested to focus on creating interesting contents and engaging potential tourists on social media rather than act as a seller (Hays et al., 2013). All in all, it indicates the need for innovative marketing strategies and acknowledging the vital role of social media in destination marketing.

2.1.2 Destination image: formation models and influencing factors

A classic definition of destination image is stated by Crompton (1979) as "the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has of a destination" (p. 18). While this definition stresses the tourists' perspective, World Tourism Organization (2007) takes a destination perspective and regards image as a basic element of the destination that composed by uniqueness, sights, scenes, environmental quality, safety, service levels, and the friendliness of people. In their combination, destination image can also be described as subjective perception or interpretation of the destination reality (Bigne et al., 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007). Through the review of previous studies, Gallarza, Saura, and García (2002) state that definitions of destination image usually contain three dimensions, namely, subject's perception, destination as object, and certain attributes of destination. Their findings also show that tourism destination image in its nature is complex, multiple, relativistic and dynamic, which implies the need for more structed and analytical models of destination image formation. Accordingly, an example is given by Gartner (1993), illustrating the three components of destination image as: (1) cognitive image, explained as known attributes, facts or sum of beliefs of the destination; (2) affective image, which relates to motives of visiting a destination; and (3) conative image, which is an action component dependent on the former two images. In his model, cognitive image is formed through receiving and reacting to external stimuli whereas affective image more upon internal needs. Similarly, Baloglu and McCleary (1999) divide destination image into cognitive, affective, and overall images, and further claim that while cognitive image has impacts on affective image, both of them influence the overall image.

When reviewing the literature of destination image formation models, a tendency to classify influencing factors into two sorts is found (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Crompton, 1979; Gallarza et al., 2002; Gartner, 1993; MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997). For example, firstly, Crompton (1979) states two schools of thoughts which debate on whether the image is person-determined or destination-determined. Then, MacKay and Fesenmaier (1997) suggest that both personal variables (such as

demographic status and familiarity with destination) and visual variables established by destination marketers can modify destination image. Thirdly, Baloglu and McCleary (1999) claim that both personal factor and stimuli factors can influence destination image. And lastly, Govers (2005) distinguish destination imaged between which is projected via planned marketing and communication and which is perceived and personally re-constructed by individuals. However, there are also plenty of different yet important voices. For instance, induced from previous researches, Echtner and Ritchie (1991) propose a three-dimension model of destination image: (1) the first dimension ranges from holistic view to attribute-based view; (2) the second dimension ranges from functional characteristics to psychological characteristics; and (3) the third dimension ranges from common image to unique image. Moreover, even if there is no consensus of destination image formation process, this three-dimension model is highly valued, often employed or discussed by a number of researchers in related fields (Birdir et al., 2018b; Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Gallarza et al., 2002; Govers, 2005; B. Pan & Li, 2011; A Shani & Wang, 2011).

The concept of destination image does not stand alone but is linked to all aspects and stages of tourism process. For instance, Gunn (1988) integrates the destination image formation and modification processes into tourism stages and develops a seven-step model: (1) tourists create a mental image of travel experience, (2) search for more information and modify image, (3) decide to visit the destination, (4) travel to the destination, (5) participate at the destination, (6) return home, and (7) refresh image based on actual experience. In a way, destination image and tourism process are interrelated and interdependent. In the pre-travel stage, destination image plays an important role in influencing destination positioning, destination selection or tourists' purchase intention (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martin, 2004; Govers, 2005; Molinillo et al., 2018; Tasci, Gartner, & Tamer Cavusgil, 2007). It is suggested that people make decisions upon images instead of reality or the actual features of the destination (K.-S. Chon, 1991; Crompton, 1979; Gallarza et al., 2002; MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997; Snyder, Bruck, & Sapin, 1954). In addition, it implies the reason why destinations need to consciously project their images, which can be termed as projected destination image (Govers, 2005). Nonetheless, it is argued that if the projected destination image as an expectation cannot match the reality, it will lead to dissatisfaction and possibly negative feedback (Beerli & Martin, 2004). Therefore, destinations are also advised to improve their product and service quality to bring positive experience to tourists as well as to constantly monitor and manage their images (Bigne et al., 2001; K.-S. Chon, 1991; Munar, 2011). In the post-travel stage, destination image can successively impact the quality of the trip, perceived value of tourists, the satisfaction level, and the behavioral intention to

revisit the destination or recommend it to others (Bigne et al., 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007). As the concepts mentioned here are significant in tourism studies, the significant position of destination image is also confirmed in destination researches and marketing practices.

Based on the complex, multiple, relativistic and dynamic nature of destination image and various theories discussed above, it can be induced that "the destination image" does not exist and when being referred to, it usually means "a dominant image" of the destination (Gallarza et al., 2002; Govers, 2005). It is also suggested that destination image formation is dependent on where and how the subject obtain information about the object, which underlines the importance of information sources and tourists' information search strategies (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Gartner, 1993; Govers, 2005; Gunn, 1972; Phelps, 1986). Traditional information sources, like previous experience, word-of-mouth and Web 1.0, are resilient and influential in assessing famous destinations (Jacobsen & Munar, 2012). In the Internet era, however, the situation for both destinations and tourists in regard to destination images and related behaviors become more complicated due to the development of ICT and Web 2.0 technologies (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Israeli et al., 2018). On the one hand, destination marketing go through dis-intermediation and re-intermediation of distribution channels, which implies TEM's effects on destination images (Sotiriadis, 2018). On the other hand, both the amount and type of information about the destination are largely expanded by accessing to Internet, and then inevitably impact on destination image formation (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Jacobsen & Munar, 2012). The importance of virtual tourism communities, social media and UGC are also highlighted because the enabled two-way and many-to-many communications facilitate the information exchange as well as eWOM effects (Govers, 2005; Israeli et al., 2018; Munar, 2011). Consequently, the destination image and travel intention are also modified (Kladou & Mavragani, 2015).

2.2 Information and social media

2.2.1 Information search and information sources

Different from products, tourism services in their nature are intangible, perishable, heterogeneous and inseparable of production and consumption, which implies a high uncertainty of the quality and high risk of purchase decision (Levitt, 1981; Zeithaml et al., 1985). What's more, as tourism can also be regarded as experiences which are determined by external stimuli but elaborated via mental awareness, the evaluations of the tourism services are also related to personal characteristics and varied from individual to individual (Prebensen et al., 2014; Sundbo & SËrensen, 2013). Therefore, to reduce the

decision risk, tourists tend to search for information in advance, and this behavior is also a mediator of destination image formation (Gunn, 1988).

Tourists' search for destinations information have three major components: motives, determinants, and sources (Fodness & Murray, 1997). Firstly, the motives generally include potential tourists' desire to select destination, make proper plan, improve travel quality and avoid risks (Fodness & Murray, 1997; Gursoy, 2011; Gursoy & McCleary, 2004; Jacobsen & Munar, 2012; Vogt & Fesenmaier, 1998). Secondly, the determinants of information search can be categorized into four: the structure of travel group, the existence of friends or relatives at the destination, previous experiences, and the degree of novelty associated with the destination (Gitelson & Crompton, 1983; Snepenger, Meged, Snelling, & Worrall, 1990). This also indicates the importance of the third component, information sources. To begin with, information sources can be divided into primary sources, which are tourists' own experiences with the destination, and secondary sources, which consist of internal and external sources (Gursoy, 2011; Marine-Roig, 2017; Phelps, 1986). Internal sources include previous experiences and knowledge, whether destination specific or tourism experiences in general (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Fodness & Murray, 1997; Jacobsen & Munar, 2012; Vogt & Fesenmaier, 1998). External sources, however, can be further divided into many sub-types and each of them has unequal effects on destination images (Jacobsen & Munar, 2012; Molinillo et al., 2018; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

For example, organic image is formed by external information not related to marketing promotions while induced image is formed by external information delivered on commercial purposes (Gunn, 1972; Lin, 2011). Accepting this classification, Gartner (1993) lists eight image formation agents combing both sources: (1) overt induced I, referring to traditional advertisement via TV, radio, brochures and print media; (2) overt induced II, referring to marketing information offered by a third party such as travel agencies; (3) covert induced I, referring to a spokesperson like a celebrity or an influencer; (4) covert induced II, referring to articles or reports about the destination from an seemingly unbiased source; (5) autonomous, referring to independent media or popular culture such as literatures and movies; (6) unsolicited organic, referring to unrequested information from other individual; (7) solicited organic, referring to information actively required from friends and relatives; and (8) organic, referring to previous travel experience at the destination. Moreover, according to Baloglu and McCleary (1999) and Fodness and Murray (1997), the amount and type of information sources are two separate variables when assessing their influence on destination image, but both of them mainly exercise impact on cognitive image and rarely on affective images.

In fact, tourists rarely use only one information source or conduct the information search only once, but usually will develop an information search strategy, which can be seen as a mix of information sources usage (Snepenger et al., 1990). Information search strategies employed by tourists are influenced by many factors yet three main approaches are summarized by Gursoy (2011) that strategy utilization is determined by: (1) psychological or motivational factors such as beliefs, attitudes, and involvement; (2) economics factors such as cost-benefit assessment; and (3) information processing factors such as one's memory and ability of information analysis. Gursoy (2001) and Gursoy and McCleary (2004) further suggest that the perceived cost in combination with tourists' involvement level has a direct impact on the preference between internal sources and external sources, whereas prior knowledge, previous visits, familiarity, expertise and way of learning the information have an indirect impact.

With the rise of Internet, online information search becomes universal for tourists. A research result shows that around 85% of American tourists use Internet for tourism information search, and most of them are familiar and satisfied with it (Xiang, Wang, O'Leary, & Fesenmaier, 2015). In assessing the influence of Internet use on tourists information strategies and consequently on destination images and decisions, some researches pay attention to analyzing the tourism information search pattern and results returned by search engine (i.e. Google) (Marine-Roig, 2017; B. Pan & Li, 2011; Xiang, Wöber, & Fesenmaier, 2008). Others concentrate more on the effects of social media (e.g. Facebook, YouTube) in particular, of travel review websites (e.g. TripAdvisor, Yelp) in particular, of specialized tourism websites (e.g. hotel websites, official destination websites) in particular, and of tourism blogs, or comparing them (Hays et al., 2013; Hyun, Lee, & Hu, 2009; Inversini & Buhalis, 2009; Jacobsen & Munar, 2012; Jeong, Holland, Jun, & Gibson, 2012; Kladou & Mavragani, 2015; Molinillo et al., 2018; Schmallegger & Carson, 2008; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Nevertheless, both categories of researches show that destination names are the most frequently used as keywords when people searching for tourism information online (Crowel et al., 2014; B. Pan, Litvin, & Goldman, 2006; Xiang et al., 2008).

However, with the rich amount of information sources and diverse types, there must be discussions about importance weights and credibility for tourists. While the weights of different information sources are subjective to individual tourists, researches tend to compare the utilization frequencies, measure the information quality, and evaluate the activity conversion rates (Inversini & Buhalis, 2009; Jacobsen & Munar, 2012; Molinillo et al., 2018; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). A competition is observed between information provided by official websites and UGC in terms of reaching more tourists and better achieving effective marketing, yet some researches complement that UGC can also be employed by DMOs to benefit (Hanlan & Kelly, 2005; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). In practice, tourists' information

search behaviors are complex whilst the online information sources can be shared and linked to each other. In this sense, the discussion of credibility becomes more necessary and crucial (Kerstetter & Cho, 2004; Wathen & Burkell, 2002). As indicated by Marine-Roig (2017), the credibility, a combination of trustworthiness and expertise, of the destination information is negatively corelated to the degree of destination control. However, investigations show that with or without prompting and advertising effects, the word-of-mouth as an organic information source ranks highest in terms of trustworthiness (Hanlan & Kelly, 2005; Jacobsen & Munar, 2012; The Nielsen Company, 2015). Furthermore, with Travel 2.0 technologies, eWOM, a digital, large-scale and anonymous version of word-of-mouth, becomes widespread on social media as UGC that may include comments, reviews, and other informal communication about the tourism providers, products or services, and experiences (Israeli et al., 2018; Litvin et al., 2008). Therefore, the following parts are going to discuss the characteristics of social media and UGC, as well as their influences on tourists' information search and destination image formation.

2.2.2 Social media as tourism information sources and marketing tool

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media is defined as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (p. 61). Broadly speaking, social media include blogs, social networking sites (SNS) (i.e. Facebook), content communities (i.e. YouTube), collaborative projects (i.e. Wikipedia), virtual social worlds and virtual game worlds: whichever online platforms that help users to create, publish and share contents and information with others (Ghosh, Varshney, & Venugopal, 2014; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Clearly, with the Web 2.0 technologies as fundamental supports, UGC is at the heart of social media (Hays et al., 2013; Obar & Wildman, 2015). Hays et al. (2013) complement that UGC as trustworthy reviews are one reason why social media is popular among tourists seeking destination information. Here, due to the relevance of this paper, only blogs, content communities, and SNS are considered when referring to social media and UGC.

Firstly, the blogs are frequently modified webpages in a reverse chronological order, providing personal journal with commentary information, thoughts and hyperlinks of particular subjects, in the forms of texts, images, audios and videos, and allowing comments from readers (Kelleher & Miller, 2006; Schmallegger & Carson, 2008; Vickery & Wunsch-Vincent, 2007). The interactive nature and informative feature make blogs and particularly tourism blogs prosper. Usually, tourism blogs are posted on virtual travel communities (e.g. realtravel.com, igougo.com) or on specialized tourist review

sites (i.e. tripadvisor.com), but tourism corporates and individuals can also establish their own blogs (Schmallegger & Carson, 2008).

Secondly, SNSs can be defined as web-based services that allow users to create profiles, develop connections with other users, and view the connection maps (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). While there are hundreds of SNSs, they vary a lot in terms of features, functional capacities, user base, profile visibility, relationship labels, connection transparency, commenting and private messages. Resembling blogs, SNSs are also used as tourism information sources for potential tourists and strategic communication tools for DMOs, yet with even further reach, higher interactivity and lower cost (Hays et al., 2013; Kiráľová & Pavlíčeka, 2015). Nevertheless, it is also indicated that DMOs must employ SNS in a good manner: to evoke interests, improve creativity and increase interaction level, rather than simply regard it as a marketing billboard (Hays et al., 2013).

Thirdly, content communities are designed for sharing media contents between users (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Usually, they have differently specialized media types, for example, YouTube is specialized in video sharing whilst Flickr in photo sharing. Content communities, as a channel of content marketing, are helpful in branding because the attracted community members are more loyal to the brand and deeply engaged in creating UGCs that generates trust and credibility (Du Plessis, 2017). However, they are often overlooked in examining how social media as information sources can influence destination image formation.

For the tourists, social media act as a combination of various information sources. Nonetheless, while supposed to facilitate destination decisions for tourists, information accessed on social media has relatively low weights compared to other sources such as conventional word-of-mouth, hotel and airline websites, reports, OTA and travel guidebooks (Jacobsen & Munar, 2012). Moreover, some researches reveal that the credibility of blogs, which are deemed as a tech-enabled online word-of-mouth, is lower than the conventional word-of-mouth, probably because trust is developed within strong tie relationships (i.e. families) rather than weak tie relationships (i.e. netizens) (Mack, Blose, & Pan, 2008; B. Pan, MacLaurin, & Crotts, 2007; Wirtz & Chew, 2002).

For tourism corporates and especially DMOs, it is indicated that social media utilization among them is still largely experimental and their strategies vary significantly (Gretzel et al., 2006; Hays et al., 2013; Molinillo et al., 2018). In the meantime, however, researches also suggest that tourism corporates and DMOs should embrace social media as a flexible, creative, and cost-effective communication tool for its advantages in reaching potential customers, obtaining authentic tourists feedback, assessing service

quality, and monitoring destination images (Buhalis, 2000; Israeli et al., 2018; Mack et al., 2008; Molinillo et al., 2018; Munar, 2011; B. Pan et al., 2007; Schmallegger & Carson, 2008; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). What's more, the core of social media in contributing to marketing is the high user involvement empowered by interactive features (Ghosh et al., 2014; Hays et al., 2013; Litvin et al., 2008; Molinillo et al., 2018). In addition, whilst people tend to judge preferred information sources as more credible, the credibility of online information sources like social media is estimated to increase with the ICT development, wider population and more intensive use of Internet (Greer, 2003; Johnson & Kaye, 2002, 2004; Perrin, 2015).

As different types of social media have diverse characteristics, unequal impacts on tourists' information search strategies and ultimately on destination image formation, this paper only focus on a rising yet less studied one: video blog, which is discussed in next part.

2.3 Videos and travel vlogs

2.3.1 Video format and features

The participatory and interactive nature of Web 2.0 has encouraged the rapid growth of UGC, an online content that has low cost and viral diffusion (Liu-Thompkins & Rogerson, 2012). In the era of Web 1.0, Internet surfers can only access information but hard to have their voices. With the application of Web 2.0, however, social media allow users to freely express their own opinions and easily communicate with each other (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Lange-Faria & Elliot, 2012; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). In tourism sector, as sated above, it leads to a series of reforms in both supply side and demand side (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Gursoy & Chi, 2018; Hays et al., 2013; Wang & Pizam, 2011). While the importance of UGC shared on social media is recognized, the video as an essential type of contents also receives increasing attention and researches about it are conducted from various perspectives (Hautz, Füller, Hutter, & Thürridl, 2014; Heath, Hindmarsh, & Luff, 2010; Huertas, 2018; D. Kim, 2017; Y. Lim, Chung, & Weaver, 2012; Lodha & Philip, 2019; Miles, 2014; Mowat, 2017; Peralta, 2019; See-To, Papagiannidis, & Cho, 2012; Amir Shani, Chen, Wang, & Hua, 2010; Trinh & Nguyen, 2019; Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009; Zhumadilova, 2016).

For example, See-To et al. (2012) explore how to absorb online video viewers and enhance their satisfactions in different watching environments. It is found that on mobile devices, sensory experience, video sequences and mobile experience have a positive effect on engagement and enjoyment level, whilst interruption extent has a negative effect. In comparison, under desktop environment these factors

are not significant, but the genre and length of the video, resulting in emotional response and attention span separately, can affect the satisfaction level.

In the meantime, Liu-Thompkins and Rogerson (2012) investigate the diffusion of user-generated videos on YouTube, and identify three major factors that impact the popularity of videos: (1) network structure, the amount of subscribers is more important than the connections of each subscriber; (2) content characteristics, user ratings, entertaining and educational values are relevant whereas video quality is not; (3) author characteristics, the past success matters and young authors are preferred.

Furthermore, as showed by Amir Shani et al. (2010), the promotional videos can exercise a positive influence on destination images and consequently increase viewers' visiting intension. By watching the promotional videos, the viewers are moved from a stage of unawareness to a stage of awareness towards the destination, which favors this destination in terms of destination selection or competition (MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997; Yüksel & Akgül, 2007). Besides, Purwadi, Novianty, Nugraha, and Lestari (2017) add that the languages presented in the videos can also make a difference. The multilingual travel vlogs can help promote the destination as well as enhance the cultural identity of locals and understanding from foreigners.

Moreover, Zhumadilova (2016) also confirms that travel vlogs, containing the information about a destination and related services, can affect viewers' attitude, perception, cognitive image and the purchase behaviors of the destination. While variations are exhibited among different genders and age groups, in general it is revealed that viewers are willing to watch and trust the travel vlogs, and consequently to try the destination as well as services recommended. What's more, when exploring what characteristics of vlogs help influence destination images, Trinh and Nguyen (2019) uncover that information usefulness, information reliability, source uniqueness and auditory effects have a positive effect.

In addition, some studies also put up that employing researcher-created videos as research technique is an innovative method in tourism research fields (Pocock, Zahra, & Mcintosh, 2009; Rakic, 2010). They claim that visual techniques, in combination with an interpretive approach, can facilitate deeper understandings towards the objects under study, such as tourists' motivation, perception, experience and practice during traveling. This implicates the possibility for tourists-created videos or vlogs to become information sources for potential tourists and study materials for destination marketers.

Regarding the influences of tourism videos on destination images, researches seem to have a debate. While Amir Shani et al. (2010) state that promotional videos made by the officials have positive influence on overall destination image, Zhumadilova (2016) agrees and extends the scope to include reality travel shows and tourists-created vlogs, which can affect both cognitive and affective images of a destination. However, Y. Lim et al. (2012) suggest that tourists-created vlogs may conflict with the marketer-generated videos, and the former have little positive impact on a destination image. Nevertheless, Peralta (2019) holds a relatively neutral opinion, saying that vlogs can effectively strengthen the perceived destination image.

Most recently, two trends are identified in relation to videos: one is the shift to mobile devices, another is the emerging of live videos (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Huertas, 2018; Israeli et al., 2018). Both two are originated in the fast development of ICT and exercise influences on destination marketing researches and practices. For instance, Israeli et al. (2018) state that mobile devices and technologies can bring better connectivity, communication, content access as well as content creation in tourism, and allow tourists to deal with unforeseen situations more easily. As for video lives or real-time video streams that are empowered by faster Internet connections and lower cost, they are found capable to shorten the psychological distance between users and to enhance co-experiences and interactions on social media (S. Lim, Cha, Park, Lee, & Kim, 2012). Besides, according to Huertas (2018), tourism video lives can introduce a destination to viewers more experientially and emotionally, leading to a better attitude, positive image, and stronger visit intension of this destination. In this paper, however, as it is not the focus point to discuss the new trends in videos, the following part will concentrate on video blogs or vlogs and their influences upon destination image, regardless the accessing devices or real-time types.

2.3.2 Travel vlog and its influence on destination image

Video blog, or vlog, is a kind of UGC combing storytelling and audio-visual contents, published by vloggers on video sharing platforms (D. Kim, 2017; Safko, 2010). The platforms can be either social media or websites owned by corporates and individuals, but typically are virtual content communities and SNSs, particularly YouTube (D. Kim, 2017; Mamula & Ćoso, 2015; Miles, 2014). From the content's point of view, vlogs resemble traditional textual blogs but are constructed in video format (Peralta, 2019). From the viewpoint of sharing platforms, vlogs rely more on content communities and SNSs. Thus, vlogs have mixed characteristics from blog, SNS, and content community.

In general, travel vlogs are vloggers showing around in a destination or attraction, explaining the situation, commenting to some objects and expressing their feelings. Studies reveal several advantages

of travel vlogs in conveying tourism information and marketing destination. First of all, compared to traditional textual blogs, vlogs help audience to learn and remember information faster and more easily due to its multisensory feature and straightforward way of presentation (Mamula & Ćoso, 2015; Trinh & Nguyen, 2019; Zhumadilova, 2016). While body language, facial expression and accent are included in the vlog for seen, audience can use them to enhance understanding (D. Kim, 2017; Safko, 2010). Secondly, vlogging is growing significantly and the use of vlog for destination inspiration or planning is huge (Crowel et al., 2014; Vickery & Wunsch-Vincent, 2007). Every month YouTube receives 100 million of visits from travelers seeking for information, and travel vlogs are their most favorite type of videos to engage with for receiving 4 times more social engagement than other types of tourism videos on YouTube (Crowel et al., 2014; Mowat, 2017). Thirdly, vlogs are more superior in conveying emotions and experience than other formats (Huertas, 2018). As tourism is experience-intensive and experiences involve emotion aspects, vlogs as filmed videos can stimulate fantasies and arouse mental pleasure, and then intensify audiences' interest of visiting the showed destination (H. Kim & Richardson, 2003; Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009; Zhumadilova, 2016). Lastly, travel vlogs are UGCs representing authentic tourism experiences, in the same time pursuing high quality and creativity (Crowel et al., 2014; Hautz et al., 2014; D. Kim, 2017; Miles, 2014). These features not only help gain popularity and competitiveness for vlogs themselves, but also help potential tourists to make destination decisions and help tourism corporates as well as DMOs to collect useful feedback.

One vlog is one story, one narrative, while people tend to organize information and their experiences in the format of stories, narratives are argued to be the basis for formulating destination images and can be enhanced by photographic materials (Dhar & Wertenbroch, 2000; Govers, 2005; Padgett & Allen, 1997). Whilst photographic materials can be extended to visuals and videos, it implicates the utilization of travel vlogs in a narrative approach to construct and present destination images (Govers, 2005; Hoffman & Novak, 1996; Hyun et al., 2009; O'Connor et al., 2011; Padgett & Allen, 1997; Pocock et al., 2009). On the one hand, vlogs act as an external information input that intervene audiences' cognition, affect, and behaviors, resulting in mediated destination images and consumption decisions (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; H. Kim & Richardson, 2003). In addition, while photos are more efficient in influencing affective destination image than texts, it can be inferred that vlogs can even do better for their high capacity in reflecting complex dimensions of social structure, cultural identity, and local customs of a destination (Mak, 2017; S. Pan, Lee, & Tsai, 2014; Pocock et al., 2009; Rakic, 2010). Vlogs are suitable for delivering the experiential aspect of tourism consumption, because both verbal and nonverbal communications contained in vlogs are offering clues for authentic tourism

experiences (Cifci et al., 2018; Fesenmaier & MacKay, 1996; Govers, 2005). What's more, integrated by the vloggers and interpreted by the audiences, the vlogs are actually eWOM that function as credible information sources and facilitate social interactions (Israeli et al., 2018; D. Kim, 2017).

On the other hand, as tourism can also be viewed as a commodity, in marketing and promotion practices the expression of it is more important than the actuality (Fesenmaier & MacKay, 1996; Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). In the past, DMOs or other authorities have the power to project the destination image, and selected visuals are used to construct symbolic meanings for tourists who have low experience or knowledge about the destinations (Birdir et al., 2018a; Gowreesunkar et al., 2018; MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997). Despite the fact that the voices from tourists are amplified by Internet and social media these days, symbolic elements are still effective in stimulating imageries in audiences' minds, which is also reflected in the attribute-based way of forming destination images (Birdir et al., 2018b; Padgett & Allen, 1997; B. Pan & Li, 2011; Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009). However, as UGCs are competing with official information in terms of sources for destination image formation, UGC can either reinforce projected image or resist it (Cohen-Hattab & Kerber, 2004; Hanlan & Kelly, 2005; Y. Lim et al., 2012; Mak, 2017; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). In a research by Mak (2017), it is depicted that independent UGC covers interesting and helpful information about infrastructure and supporting services like transportation and accommodation, which is not exhibited in the official contents generated by DMO but contributing to modify the cognitive destination image. Moreover, in terms of credibility, user-generated videos are better than agency-generated videos, regardless the technical quality of the videos (Hautz et al., 2014). Besides, independent videos are also found to be more powerful than advertising videos in arousing audiences' interest (Zhumadilova, 2016). Therefore, DMO marketers should not ignore the vlogs created by tourists, rather they can utilize those vlogs to facilitate branding, monitor tourists' feedback and learn for improving, as well as encourage popular vloggers to film vlogs for them (Y. Lim et al., 2012; Liu-Thompkins & Rogerson, 2012).

3. Methodology

From the previous section, it is clear that travel vlogs as a particular type of UGC are important sources of tourism information for tourists. However, the contents of travel vlogs remain unclear in terms of what aspects of a destination are included and what images are presented in the vlogs. The existing researches of destination image mainly take a tourists' perspective or try to provide a formation model

which covers lots of factors. In contrast, this paper departs from the contents of travel vlogs and they are assumed to be the sole information source of destination image formation.

As a research in the social science field, this paper mainly takes an inductive approach to generate knowledge, which means to develop theory from data (Bryman, 2016). This is based on its research philosophy position: a constructionism viewpoint to understand social entities and an interpretivism viewpoint to understand knowledge. A multiple case study is developed to investigate the possibility of travel vlogs to depict destination images and how similar or different they are. In other words, this research design allows not only an integrated view of travel vlogs, but also comparisons among them. Content analysis is the major technique of data analysis because this qualitative method is suitable for investigating meanings and emphasizes the role of investigator in construction of meanings (Bryman, 2016; May, 2011). It is also coherent with the philosophy position and inductive approach taken by this study. In this section, those methodological choices will be discussed in depth, as well as the procedure of data collection and data analysis. At last, ethical considerations and limitations will be put forward as well.

3.1   Research philosophy and research approach

The research philosophy is the cornerstone of every study. According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2009), it is defined as "a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge" (p. 124). In general, it encompasses two dimensions, ontology and epistemology.

Ontology deals with the questions of what defines reality, in social science what is the nature of social entities, and in this research context what is to be studied (Bryman, 2016; Saunders et al., 2009). While this paper aims to find out how destination images are presented in the travel vlogs, it certainly follows a constructionism position which asserts that social phenomena and social meanings are constructed through interactions with social actors (Bryman, 2016). The destination image as a social entity is not independent from tourists and other social actors, so as the travel vlog.

Epistemology deals with the questions of how can we know anything about the reality, what counts as acceptable, valid and legitimate knowledge in a discipline, and what is considered to be relevant knowledge in a research (Bryman, 2016; Saunders et al., 2009). This paper follows an interpretivism position which addresses the distinctiveness between the subjects of social science and that of natural science, and requires a different approach to generate knowledge (Bryman, 2016). As this paper is

designed to examine the destination image formation in travel vlogs, it must involve subjective understanding of the meanings.

In addition, Saunders et al. (2009) propose a third dimension of research philosophy, axiology, which deals with the role of values in research. This paper takes a viewpoint which recognizes and acknowledges that social researches are hardly value-free, but researches can be self-reflective to reduce the possible impinges of own beliefs and assumptions on studied objects (Bryman, 2016; May, 2011). However, as destination image itself is defined as the sum of beliefs and impressions people hold for a destination, the values hidden behind the vloggers should also be considered when analyzing the travel vlogs (Crompton, 1979). At the same time, the existence of affective image implies that interpreting vloggers' subject perception of a destination is also a necessary part of understanding how destination image is communicated in vlogs (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Bigne et al., 2001; Gartner, 1993; Tasci et al., 2007).

As for the research approach, this paper tends to be inductive. Although theoretical framework provides the basis for this research, neither assumption is pre-given nor hypothesis to be tested, but knowledge will be generated from collecting and analyzing the data (Bryman, 2016). While this study is exploratory in nature, it is trying to explore and explain how destination images are represented in travel vlogs, and to provide additional knowledge of this topic. To some extent, this study embraces a grounded theory approach, which suggests an iterative process in data collection and analysis to develop theory (Bryman, 2016; Charmaz, 1996).

3.2 Research design and research strategy

Departing from the research aim and research philosophy, this study employs content analysis or document analysis as a major research method. The "document" or "content" in this study is vlog, since Bryman (2016) states that content analysis can be flexibly applied to various kinds of media, including vlog as video media. In term of research strategy, this study is qualitative as it seeks to interpret the construction of the meanings in contents. Qualitative methods are good at taking a micro lens to examine rich, deep data in the natural setting and getting contextual understanding from the participants' perspective (Bryman, 2016; May, 2011). Furthermore, the qualitative content analysis developed in this study is unobtrusive, which means that the researcher does not have direct influence on or interaction with the participants, so no reactive effect is entailed (Bryman, 2016). Nonetheless, this method can also lead to misunderstanding when researchers interpreting the contents based on their own knowledges and value judgements (May, 2011).Meanwhile, it is also criticized as too subjective,

hard to replicate, hard to generalize and lack of transparency. Therefore, the author keeps self-reflection in mind to reduce misunderstanding and elaborates the analysis process in detail to increase transparency and replication.

In addition, in this study where travel vlogs published online are the "documents" to be studied, special issues should be concerned, for example, the possible changes and disappearances of the Internet documents (Flick, 2009). Fortunately, the travel vlogs in video formats are less edited after uploaded and can be legally saved as a copy.

Speaking of the research design, this paper adopts a multiple case study that allows data analysis under each situation and across different situations (Gustafsson, 2017). Noticeably, though one destination is selected for study, the studied cases or analyzed units is each vlog instead of the place. In this study, not only the common views of destination image expressed by vlogs will be summarized, but comparisons among vlogs are also enabled. As discussed above, "the destination image" does not exist, but "a dominant image" is often referred to (Gallarza et al., 2002; Govers, 2005). Therefore, the findings from multiple cases can better illustrate what is the popular view of destination as represented in online travel vlogs.

3.3   Research quality

Although reliability and validity are criteria more often used for measuring the quality of quantitative researches, they can also be adapted to measure qualitative researches (Bryman, 2016). However, those criteria are also argued to be problematic in qualitative researches (Schwandt, Lincoln, & Guba, 2007). Thus, this study turns to an alternative proposed by Guba and Lincoln (1994): trustworthiness and authenticity.

In their explanation, authenticity is connected to the wider political impacts. This study displays and respects different opinions from both theories and cases, is unobtrusive so that no reactive effect is entailed, and will contribute to understandings of both destination images and travel vlogs in tourism fields. As for trustworthiness, it includes four dimensions that can parallel reliability and validity: (1) credibility, (2) transferability, (3) dependability, and (4) confirmability (Bryman, 2016; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Firstly, a theoretical framework is developed as a guide for interpretation to improve credibility or internal validity. And a thick description of data will be given later to improve the transferability or external validity. Furthermore, while the samples are internet documents that openly available, which means the data sources are traceable, the author will also provide the materials and

drafts relevant of this study if required. It is to raise the dependability or reliability. Lastly, to increase the confirmability or objectivity, the author will stay as neutral and objective as possible. Moreover, the reflexivity is also concerned in this study, which suggests that the researchers should always be aware of and critically examine the influences of their own values, biases, research methods and decisions on data analysis and knowledge generation (Bryman, 2016).

3.4   Sampling and data collection

The destination selected for study is Chongqing, a municipality located in the southwest of China that has about 30 million residents and rich tourism resources (Wikipedia, n.a.). The selection is based on several considerations: (1) the reputation of the destination in tourism sector, (2) the popularity of the destination on social media, (3) the number of domestic tourists and international tourists, (4) the diversity of the destination attributes, and (5) the knowledge of the destination held by the author.

As mentioned before, the unit of analysis (UoA) here is vlog, instead of the destination. The sampled media are travel vlogs of Chongqing, and YouTube is appointed as the sole social media platform covered in this study. As one of the largest online content community of video sharing, YouTube provides a large user base and good environment for travel contents to emerge, especially for travel vlogs related to a destination (Cheng, Dale, & Liu, 2008; Crowel et al., 2014). This is also to reduce the influence of different social media on destination image formation.

The sampling technique adopted here is purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling method aiming at sampling cases in a strategic way to cater the research purpose (Bryman, 2016). The sample size is predetermined as ten. Using the keywords "Chongqing vlog" to search in YouTube, this study picks the top ten results that filtered by several conditions. To begin with, the search results are rearranged by YouTube filter "view count". It assumes that the more views a vlog receives, the more influential and representative it may be. However, since the procedure is done by YouTube automatically, it is uncertain whether different results may show in different settings including locations, languages, and dates. So to specify, the language setting is "English (US)", location is "Sweden", and the date is April 18th, 2020. Then, due to language barrier and research relevancy, the samples are in either Chinese or English. Next, a time frame for the sampling is exercised in consideration of the consistency of a destination, so that a latest three-year frame is used as a sampling condition. Since the sampling and data collection is conducted during April 2020, the eligible samples should be published from March the 1st 2017 to March the 31st 2020. Lastly, only one vlog per author is eligible in sampling to increase diversity and representativeness. The final result of sampling is

depicted in table 1. In the rest of this paper, # plus its number will be used to refer to each vlog. For example, #1 means the first vlog sample.

Table 1

The list of general information of samples

No.	Author	Title	Published date	View count	Number of comments	Number of likes	Video length
1	Monkey Abroad	Chongqing, China: China's Hidden Travel Gem	Nov 1, 2018	212,066	756	5814	10'34
2	Luke Martin	CHINESE DUMPLINGS : Street Food in Chongqing, China	NEVER-BEFORE-SEEN Chinese Street Food tour	Apr 8, 2018	156,496	336	2567	18'00
3	annbition	安妮周末中国行#1 重庆	热辣山城 火爆来袭! ChongQing vlog	ANNBITION	Apr 20, 2018	149,665	622	2112	35'38
4	The China Traveller	CHONGQING The Most Incredible City in the World (According to Bob)	Dec 4, 2019	136,180	972	4486	10'58
5	Blondie in China	Experience CHONGQING!	Feb 18, 2019	113,524	624	3914	7'02
6	Jas'talk	重慶 Vlog 一座充滿溫情與辣椒的城市｜Jasmine	Jan 14, 2019	91,708	649	1444	25'14
7	JASON BILLAM TRAVEL	CHONGQING, CHINA - FINDING THE BEST SKYLINE CN	Mar 2, 2017	43,132	121	623	8'06
8	Naick & Kim	EXTREMELY Spicy Chinese Food: First Time Chongqing Hotpot (China Vlog 2019 麻辣火鍋)	30 Sep 2019	25,254	263	804	9'51
9	Anna Ge	CHONGQING VLOG	胖死在重庆这座抖音网红 8D 山城！必打卡小吃街+轻轨穿楼+九宫格火锅+掏耳朵体验	20 Jul 2019	18,999	42	100	12'01
10	Trevmonki	Explore Chongqing! - WE SAW RABBIT HEADS?! (Part 1)	22 Feb 2018	16,909	40	178	5'41

Note. The data is accessed and recorded by the author on April 18th, 2020.

In this study, both travel vlogs and related information are the sources of data, but the video format of the vlog makes the data collection more complex than treating other formats of contents. The general

information is gathered directly from the YouTube webpage, including the title, introduction, author name, upload date, view count, numbers of like and comments. The video itself is broken into two parts: visual elements and auditory elements. The visual elements remain in video format whereas the auditory elements, mainly the speeches of vlog actors, are converted into textual transcripts by the author. This procedure takes several rounds of watching all the vlogs to record and correct data.

3.5   Data Analysis

After collecting and extracting data from the original video, the author starts coding the data, which is a crucial stage of data analysis in inductive research and grounded theory (Bryman, 2016; Charmaz, 1996). The coding is exercised through reviewing the data, labeling some elements that seem to have high relevance of the study, and organize them in coding sheets. This is not a one-time process but an iterative and fluid one that consists of several rounds and lots of revisions. Moreover, during analyzing the data, sometimes it is found that some significant elements marked in some vlogs are ignored in others, so that a re-collection of data is entailed. The coding and re-collection of data are entailed several times until reaching the theoretical saturation (Bryman, 2016; Flick, 2009).

Specifically, the difficulty in coding the video data should be illustrated here. As mentioned above, the visual elements are not converted into texts but remain in video format. This is to increase the efficiency of data collection and accuracy of coding (Flick, 2009; Rose, 2016). Meanwhile, the vlogs are divided into continuous parts with a theme rather than individual pictures to keep their contexts and logical coherence. For each continuous part, only the theme will be coded. The same principle is applied when coding the transcripts of speeches. If the visual theme and speech theme are inconsistent in one part, however, the latter is priorly coded. Aiming to improve the replication and reliability of coding, this clarification may increase the research quality as well (Bryman, 2016).

Speaking of the type of coding, this study mainly employs a selective coding or focused coding, which underlines the most relevant codes in an analytic sense (Bryman, 2016). This suggests that the coding attempts to be exclusive and enlightening but not exhaustive (Rose, 2016). The core codes are built on data most relevant to destination images, and the judgement of relevancy is based on both theoretical framework and opening coding, which refers to the labeling of elements or identifying the concepts that later grouped into categories (Bryman, 2016).

After coding, 84 concepts are counted and induced into 20 categories (see table 2). While the concept names are directly translated from the perceived elements in vlogs, the categories are named by the

author and defined with the help of dictionary and literature. In addition, part of the analysis is facilitated by a computer software for content analysis: MAXQDA, which makes data management more convenient.

Table 2

The list of coded concepts and categories

Categories	Concepts
Local food and drinks	Street food/ food store, haochijie (Chongqing food street); tripe; hot pot; lianggao (cake made of glutinous rice), douhua (soaking tofu), bingfen (ice jelly), chaoshou (spicy wontons), xiaomian (spicy noodles), fried crispy meat, hot and sour vermicelli, ciba (soft rice ball with brown sugar), spicy rabbit head.
Chinese cuisine	Food stalls; twist, fritters, baozi, spicy chicken feet, dumplings, Chinese style barbecue, pidan (century egg/ pickled egg), potato noodles, Chinese noodles, pork pie, minced shrimp.
Historical and cultural attractions	Ciqikou Old Town, Dazu Rock Carvings/ Dazu County, Fishing Town, Huguang Guild Hall.
Modern attractions	Eling Park/ Testbed 2 Arts Center, Yangtze River Cableway, Hongya Cave.
Natural attractions	Yangtze River, Chongqing South Mountain/ Yikeshu viewing platform, Wulong.
Animals	Panda, dogs and cats.
Landmark	Qiansimen Jiangling River Bridge, Liziba Station, Jiefangbei (People's Liberation Monument), Crown Escalator.
Architectures	Antique-style buildings, skyscrapers, viaducts.
Culture	Chongqing China Three Gorges Museums, People's Assembly Hall and the square, the Third Footpath, Huangjueping graffiti district/ Sichuan Fine Arts Institute; ear cleaning, dialect, Sichuan Opera (face change); street graffiti, chopsticks, pottery.
Accommodation	Hotel room, hostel room, homestay.
Transportation	Light rail/ metro, taxi, aviation.
Local life	Passerby, people conducting certain activities; markets.
Entertainment and nightlife	Bar, café, book club.
Shopping	Shopping streets and shopping malls.
Climate	Rainy weather, cold weather, hot weather.
Crowdedness	Crowdedness in non-touristic areas, crowdedness in touristic areas, long queue.
City view	Day city view, night city view.
Street view	Day street view, night street view.
Human interactions	With companion(s), meeting local friend(s), with stranger(s).
Commentary	Opening remarks/ context explanation and purpose of traveling, planning, summary, complaining.

As suggested by Bryman (2016), what to be counted in content analysis is dependent on the requirements of research question. In general, it encompasses significant actors, words, subjects and themes, and dispositions. In this part, the figures of vlog actors, vlog popularity, and coded concepts

and categories are to be evaluated, yet the assessment of words and dispositions will be given in the next section

To start from, the vlog actors identified in ten samples are the vlogger(s), travel companion(s) of the vlogger(s), local friend(s), and the stranger(s) interacted with the vlogger(s). The presences of last three actors are also counted under the category "human interactions". In seven samples existed at least one companion of the vlogger, who accompanied the vlogger during the entire travel (except #5 #7 #8). Only in #5 the vlogger met local friends, yet #6 and #8 depicted the interaction with strangers. Notably, in #7 the vlogger is the sole actor whereas #6 has the most human interactions among all samples.

Next, the popularity as an important index of vlog influence is evaluated. In this study of travel vlogs on YouTube, vlog popularity consists of three parts: the view count, number of likes, and number of comments. The ten samples received 963,933 views in total, and many of them also received high numbers of comments and likes. For instance, #4 received 972 likes and 4486 comments, which is the highest among all samples. As indicated by Liu-Thompkins and Rogerson (2012) and See-To et al. (2012), the length of the video and subscriber number of the author may also influence the popularity. The lengths of vlogs range from 5 minutes and 41 seconds to 35 minutes and 38 seconds. The average length, 856.5 seconds, exceeds 99.1% of the videos on YouTube, which means the samples have a bigger opportunity to deliver information and engage viewers (Cheng, Liu, & Dale, 2013). The numbers of subscribers range from 1.1 thousand to 784 thousand (data recorded on April 18th, 2020), which suggests they can reach relatively a large amount of people. However, those figures also indicates that the samples are not necessarily representative for most travel vlogs with lower popularity.

Finally, concepts and categories are also assessed in terms of frequency, but "human interactions" and "commentary" are excluded for being discussed elsewhere. A weighted sum is adopted to measure frequencies because simple sum can cause misunderstandings of the dominant image of Chongqing as depicted by travel vlogs. In video format, the appearances of each concept in each sample differ greatly in terms of duration, they are unequally important for the formation of destination images, but equally count once in the frequency table. Therefore, the author further sorts the data into two groups: concepts appear in a sample for less than ten seconds and those more than ten seconds. That is to say, each concept displayed in a sample will be counted within different frequency groups according to the length of its appearance. The second group of longer duration then has a higher weight, three, whilst the weight of first group is one. In summary, concepts "Hongya Cave" and "hot pot" have the highest

frequency while five concepts show only once. The two most frequent categories are "local food and drinks" and "modern attractions" whilst the two least ones are "shopping" and "architectures".

3.6   Ethics

Ethical considerations are important in social science since it often involves human interactions and impacts on social practices (Silverman, 2013). The major ethics encompass voluntary participation, doing no harm, participants protection, informed consent and risk assessment. However, in this unobtrusive study no human interaction is entailed and the vloggers do not directly participate, so the ethical consideration is mainly connected to the online data collection process. Following an ethical framework of online research, the collected data is guarded by the researcher and only for research purpose and legitimate use (Flick, 2009).

Since the travel vlogs are uploaded on YouTube, an open video-sharing platform, and have existed for a period of time, it is assumed that they are freely accessible to the public. One possible ethical issue is with the anonymity. However, this study only uses data from what is shown in the vloggers' public profile and in vlogs themselves and involves no private information. What's more, as this study is transparent in data collection, the vlogs and related information are easily searchable, it is meaningless to hide author names (Bryman, 2016). Therefore, displaying the nicknames of vloggers is not regarded as a problem here.

3.7   Limitation

The methodology of this paper has certain limitations. The first limitation is from the content analysis as research method. As an unobtrusive method, qualitative content analysis cannot dig deep into the reasons behind the phenomena if they are not explicitly shown in the contents (Bryman, 2016). This may be overcome by interviewing the vloggers, but the time difference between the vlog production and this study can cause deviations as well. The second limitation is with the sample size and sampling technique. While the inductive approach relies on the data to generate theory, more samples are preferred to provide more data. However, this study is limited by time and energy, so that only ten samples are picked via manual selection, which may reduce the representativeness and possibility of generalization (Silverman, 2013).

4.   Results

The adoption of coding in content analysis can be criticized for loss of contexts and fragmentation of data (Bryman, 2016). However, in this study, those shortcomings are overcome. On the one hand, the general context of data is fixed as traveling in Chongqing. And the contexts of each concept and category are well concerned by combining the words with visuals when interpreting their meanings. On the other hand, vloggers' attitudes and a holistic view of the vlogs' themes and are also taken into consideration, which relate to the affective image and overall image of the destination.

An universal way of qualitative data analysis is thematic analysis, a search for themes within the contents (Bryman, 2016). The themes are mainly derived from analyzing the speech transcriptions whilst the codes from visuals. The sources of themes include but not limited to repetitions, metaphors, similarities and differences, missing data, and theoretical concepts. In this study, seven major themes identified are: "keywords of the destination", "comparison with other destinations", "purposes of traveling and vlogging", "attitudes towards objects", "emotions and feelings", "information sources" and "language and culture". In this section, the first five themes will be discussed together with concepts and categories, and the last two themes will be further discussed in the next section.

4.1   Representations and comparisons

In every sample, the vlogger may use some representative words to describe the destination: the keywords of the destination. From the samples, four sets of keywords used to represent Chongqing are identified: "spicy food", "hilly terrain", "foggy weather" and "massive population". The exact descriptions are diverse, but they can be thematized into those four sets. For instance:

> "Chongqing may be known as the city of hills, fog, and spicy foods, but there is much more to it than that…Most of the city's terrain is composed of steep hills and mountains…" (#1)

> "Today I'm in Chongqing, China, so this is the land of some of the spiciest food in the world and this is our first time here…Chongqing is a massive massive city, maybe you've never even heard of it, but there is millions and millions of people that live here…" (#2)

> "I don't know if you know this, but Chongqing has a reputation for having very very spicy food, particularly when it comes to the hot pot." (#5)

> "Chongqing, capital of fog, a hilly city full of tenderness." (#6)

"Because Chongqing is so hilly, the metro is elevated which is really cool, so when you go around the city on the metro, you can see some really good views of Chongqing, and River Yangtze, and some of the bridges that go across the skyscrapers on the other side." (#7)

"This is Chongqing, one of China's biggest cities with a population of over 30 million people." (#8)

Those repeating keywords are often found in the beginning or ending part of the vlog, serving as an introduction or conclusion of Chongqing, and reveal how the vloggers see the destination from a holistic perspective. Although they contribute to build an overall and unique image, they may also become stereotypes of this destination in the viewers' mind. What's more, some samples also use keywords in their title: #3 and #9 refer Chongqing as "city of hills", and #3, #6, #8, #9 mention the word "spicy" in title. This is the most obvious and efficient way of presenting the image of Chongqing in travel vlogs.

Some vloggers also compare Chongqing or one dimension of Chongqing to other destinations. For instance, #1 stated that Chongqing is sort of like Hong Kong for it is mountainous. While being surprised for how much Chongqing is like Sydney for the river view and opera house, #5 also compared Chongqing with New York for both are concrete jungle. As for the iconic night view or lightened skylines of Chongqing, #7 supposed that it was comparable to the Bund (of Shanghai). The foods of Chongqing were also compared to the similar food in other destinations in #6 and #9. What's more, #10 expressed the similarity between Chongqing and Singapore for having luxury brands and shopping malls in the city center. By using these comparisons, the vloggers actually offer an easily understandable way for the audience to imagine how the destination is like, and potentially create a sense of familiarity of this destination if the audience has been to the compared destinations.

As for the representations of the destination in visuals, from data analysis, concepts "Hongya Cave" and "hot pot" are found most frequently shown in samples. In a way, they are also two significant "keywords" of Chongqing, so that some narratives related to them are quoted here as well. For "Hongya Cave":

"After the sun goes down, Chongqing skyline lights up the city and nowhere is this more evident than in the Hongya Dong shopping area. Far away, it's like a bright riverside flame that drew me in like a moth. Up close, it's an elaborate maze of shops and stalls selling trinkets gifts and specialty snacks." (#1)

"So this behind me, this is Hongya Dong, full of street snacks, foods, drinks, everything. Really quite special to see from distance, right now I'm standing on the bridge, a really good advantage point, a lot of photographers here, getting the best shots of Hongya Dong." (#5)

"We are now at Hongya Cave, need to find out how to go down to the place where we can shot the best views, later we will go down there, and then from down there to see the buildings here, yes, a very classic scene." (#6)

"- Hongya Cave is pretty popular, a must-go for all the tourists.
- Really? I feel the architecture of Hongya Cave is quite special, very spectacular!
- It is built leaning on the mountain. So it's quite unique on its own.
- Very special! I'm really happy that I'm here to experience this." (#10)

From these samples, it is shown that Hongya Cave is a representative attraction of Chongqing or a must-go for tourists. In this meaning, it is an important and special component to construct the image of Chongqing. The classic view of it in distance at night was often displayed in samples, thus may leave a deep impression in viewers' mind and be reminded when mentioning Chongqing. As a scene, it is even more convenient to construct the image of the destination.

For the "hot pot":

"No trip here will be complete without the authentic Chongqing hot pot experiences. Take raw local delicacies and submerge them into a pot of boiling spicy goodness until cooked. But be warned, your mouth will be set ablaze after one bite." (#1)

"Hot pot is such a big topic in Chongqing, I'm actually dedicating a whole episode to it, so I'm not touch on that now." (#5)

"...the best place to try hot pot is actually right here in Chongqing, because they really make it into a theme, wherever you go they always have hot pot restaurants...really curious to see what it is gonna be like...I am not the biggest fan of spicy food, I'll eat it if it's something like super local because I wanna to try it, but, I'm gonna do it, gonna do it!" (#8)

Hot pot is the most famous spicy food of Chongqing, so this concept is coherent with the keyword "spicy food" under theme "keywords of the destination". Samples #3, #6, #8 and #9 have long descriptions and comments about the hot pot restaurants, which means they think it is a necessary and vital component of Chongqing. The narratives quoted here suggest the reason: they regard eating hot

pot as an authentic or local experience that must have. In other words, hot pot goes beyond food and becomes an experience specifically associated with Chongqing.

Both two concepts serve to construct the unique image of Chongqing in an attribute-based way, so do the four concepts under the category "landmark". Firstly, Qiansimen Jiangling River Bridge is usually exhibited together with Hongya Cave since they are close in location. Secondly, the vlogs explain that Liziba Station is a famous attraction online for its uniqueness. For example,

> *"This is the famous place to mark on Douyin (a social media application), everyone will take a photo of the light rail goes through here (the sixth floor of a building), and then we are going to this place as well." (#9)*

Thirdly, Jiefangbei (People's Liberation Monument) is directly introduced as the landmark and center of Chongqing, for example in #7. Lastly, though rarely mentioned, Crown Escalator is also a distinguishing attraction of Chongqing, and #3 describes that "it is a unique scenery of Chongqing for the geographical reasons". These landmarks uncover how the vloggers regard as the representative and unique attractions of Chongqing based on their information sources, but "hot pot" and "Hongya Cave" are the new components of unique image of Chongqing derived from the travel vlogs.

4.2   Purposes of traveling and vlogging

The purposes of traveling or vlogging were not all explicitly stated, some could be inferred whilst others could not be defined. For instance, the information about travel motivations was absent in #4 and #6. Four samples showed a general purpose like "exploring Chongqing"," traveling around China" or "seeking for new travel experiences" (#5 #7 #9 #10). Two samples demonstrated a vlogging motivation specifically related to tasting local food: #2 was exploring local street food, and #8 was experiencing hot pot. #3 had a complex motivation of traveling and vlogging: traveling around china, showing around the city, visiting the attractions and restaurants popular online, and shooting fashion films. And #1 was the most special one for it was a promotional video in collaboration with local government to facilitate tourism.

It can be argued that, for different purposes, different dimensions of the destination were selected to construct the vlogs. It is reasonable that to fulfill complex purposes, #3 has the longest duration and covers most concepts and categories among all samples. On the contrary, #8 is specialized in hot pot experiencing so that it covers the least dimensions. Moreover, it may also explain why #1 contains the most concepts that only appear once among all samples, namely, "panda" "Fishing Town" "dialect"

"pottery" "Sichuan Opera (face change)" and "night street view". From the perspective of international tourists, panda and Sichuan Opera are what this region and even China famous for, so is pottery. Simultaneously, dialect is one kind of culture that differentiates Chongqing from other regions in China, and Fishing Town as a historical attraction makes Chongqing more mysterious. It then can be assumed that the choice of those concepts included in #1 had been well-considered to open targeted market. And it is more interesting to think about the absent categories in #1, especially the architectures, Chinese cuisine, transportation, crowdedness and climate: probably because Chongqing has low reputation on those dimensions, or they are not supposed to attract targeted market. Additionally, the purposes of traveling and vlogging may also affect the attitudes and feelings vloggers hold towards certain objects or entire destination, which will be further elaborated in next part.

4.3   Attitudes and feelings

As most of the codes are conceptual and objective nouns, a subjective perspective is prone to be overlooked. Consequently, a search for expressions of emotions and attitudes is conducted on the speech transcripts.

The theme "attitudes towards objects" refers to how an object is described and evaluated by the vlogger. The attitudinal expressions are sorted into three groups: positive attitudes, negative attitudes, and neutral attitudes. The neutral attitudes are commonly held when describing the objects, so they are not the focus here. While positive attitudes are found in all samples, negative attitudes are absent in four samples: #1, #4, #5, #10. The case of #1 can be explained by its promotional nature. Unlike the speeches in other samples, the narratives in #1 were more introductive, informative, and positive. For instance, it used plenty of words to describe and praise face change, which is merely found here.

> *"Now we are about to watch some Sichuan Opera, and, LEGEND has it! These folks can wear these masks and change instantly! Chinese mask changing…is the crown jewel of Sichuan opera. It's the art performance, but with the touch of magic, the performer changes masks at lightning speeds, and till these days, no one knows the secrets behind the changing of the masks, making the performance as mysterious as it is entertaining." (#1)*

#10 is very short in length and few in words, only two positive expressions of attitude are recognized, so no wonder negative expression is missing. #4 has the similar situation of having few positive attitudes as well, because the most words were conversations between the vlogger and his companions and did not involve many descriptive comments. #5 is the most special one for its extreme positive

expressions, such as "brilliant" "spectacle" "full of character" "charming" and "world's most interesting". From the vlog, one of reasons is inferred to be the optimistic and cheerful character of the vlogger herself. In addition, the total positive attitudes are five times more than the negative attitudes, which is implicating a trend of travel vlogs to positively present the destinations.

Similarly, "emotions and feelings" is a theme referring to personal and subjective expressions of inner feelings, such as happy, excited and disappointed. Those expressions, however, are diverse and hard to categorize, so only the typical ones are elaborated here: "excited" "happy" "disappointed" and "tired". Being excited is the most frequent emotions vloggers expressed and largely associated with the new experiences or challenges they were going to face. For example, #2 stated that "I'm so pumped to try this (spicy wontons)". The last three feelings are also connected to the experiences but are generated during or after experiencing instead of before. For example, #10 stated that "I'm really happy that I'm here to experience this" when visiting the Hongya Cave, and #3 said that "I'm so tired, I only climbed 1/10" while going uphill at the Third Footpath. Moreover, the negative feelings like "disappointed" are derived if the reality does not live up to the expectations. For instance,

> *"I've been walking around for, nearly two hours, and I cannot find a hot pot restaurant ANYWHERE on this road, I must be in the wrong place. This is just the highway, there's nothing…I'm pretty disappointed, Nanbin Lu, I thought there will be something here, something crazy, maybe there is somewhere else, I can't find it…" (#7)*

Therefore, it can be summarized that, to some extent, the feelings built upon the experiences are dependent on the features of objects. The expectation or the imaginary is also influential, especially when the factual quality of the products, services, or the destination cannot reach it. In this sense, the attitudes and feelings should be interpreted together instead of separately.

The overall affections or atmospheres shown in vlogs are found to be positive in #1, #2, #4, #5, #9, #10, negative in #7, and neutral in #3, #6, #8. The neutral affection means both positive and negative evaluations appeared in the vlog, and few strong emotions were expressed. For example, in #8 the two vloggers held opposite feelings towards the spicy hot pot so that the overall affection is neutralized. The judgement is not only based on the themes, but also facilitated or confirmed by: (1) purpose of traveling and vlogging; (2) body language, facial expression and accent of the vlog actors; and (3) the auditory effects like music use (Gursoy, 2011; D. Kim, 2017; Safko, 2010; Trinh & Nguyen, 2019). For instance, in #5 the overall positive affection is reflected by the usage of strong positive adjectives, smiling faces and cheerful tone of the vlogger, and cheerful background music. On the contrary, #7 is

considered negative for the negative evaluations on unpleasant experiences, unhappy faces, and some uncomfortable music use. In a way, those body languages and facial expressions as non-verbal communications reflect the subconscious cognitions and affections of the vloggers, and may leave stronger psychological suggestions to audiences who are good at interpreting the meanings visually.

5. Discussion

Travel vlogs can offer clues for authentic tourism experiences of a destination (Cifci et al., 2018; Fesenmaier & MacKay, 1996; Govers, 2005). In this stance, they serve as an information source, an eWOM, for their audience who are potential tourists of the destination (Gartner, 1993; Gursoy, 2011; Jacobsen & Munar, 2012; Litvin et al., 2008; O'Connor et al., 2011; Trinh & Nguyen, 2019; Zhumadilova, 2016). This can be further assessed in combination with their role as social media contents. However, as indicated in the samples, the attitudes and behaviors of the vloggers are also influenced by their information sources, especially the online information or their friends. Thus, in this section, discussions about the relationship will be provided among information sources, destination images, as well as travel vlogs. Moreover, the language use displayed in samples can be connected to the cross-cultural understanding of meanings, which is also a possible influencing factor of destination image (Gursoy, 2001; Gursoy & McCleary, 2004; MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997, 2000).

Then, the findings from data analysis will be summarized into a theory about the representation of destination image in travel vlogs. Although this study is an inductive investigation to generate knowledge from data, it also has a preliminary theoretical framework to base on. Through analyzing the empirical data and corresponding to the research question, a model of how destination images are projected within online travel vlogs is developed, which also draws on previous studies (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martin, 2004; Buhalis, 2000; K.-S. Chon, 1991; Crompton, 1979; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Gallarza et al., 2002; Gartner, 1993; Govers, 2005; Gursoy & Chi, 2018; MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997; Molinillo et al., 2018; Amir Shani et al., 2010; Trinh & Nguyen, 2019; Wang & Pizam, 2011).

5.1 Travel vlogs and information source

The information sources explicitly mentioned in the samples are word-of-mouth and Internet. For example,

> *"Come to try Yizhisuannainiu (a yogurt drink shop)! We saw on the Internet that there are many untrue versions…anyway it has to Yizhisuannainiu."*

> *"When I come to an unfamiliar restaurant, the first thing I do is open Dianping (a mobile app that offers customer reviews), and follow the top recommendations to order food, usually they are quite delicious". (#6)*

Those descriptions confirm that online information, especially the eWOM from netizens, plays a vital role in sharing information and changing buying behaviors (Israeli et al., 2018; Litvin et al., 2008). The vlogger learned from the eWOM and adapted their behavior accordingly. The same is true for the traditional word-of-mouth. For instance,

> *"The hotel we live in this time is recommended by a friend. The location is very good, at Yuzhong District, newly opened in 2016 and the decoration is still new, and very clean I think." (#3)*

> *"At the suggestion of my friends, we are here at the Liziba Station…and it's quite spectacle, there are a lot of people here to see it. (laugh)" (#5)*

> *"We are now near the Jiefangbei, to eat Dahu Hot Pot, which is recommended by a local of Chongqing we encountered on the plane…Super delicious!" (#6)*

The recommendations from friends directly changed their buying decisions and behaviors and were highly valued in followed feedbacks. Thus, this finding supports the high trustworthiness and effective impact of conventional word-of-mouth as an organic information source of tourism (Hanlan & Kelly, 2005; Jacobsen & Munar, 2012; The Nielsen Company, 2015). As for the eWOM, its effectiveness is confirmed but its trustworthiness is not very high (Jacobsen & Munar, 2012; Mack et al., 2008; B. Pan et al., 2007; Wirtz & Chew, 2002). For instance, #3 commented that "I think I've found my new job, which is Internet-famous food spots investigation team" to indicate that not all eWOM is credible.

Travel vlogs also serve as a tourism information source for their audience. Usually, they are the autonomous or unsolicited organic image formation agents according to Gartner's (1993) classification, or eWOM (Israeli et al., 2018; Litvin et al., 2008; Zhumadilova, 2016). However, how much effect they can exercise upon the audience are unknow from the findings of this study. Because even though the comments under each sample could give some inspiration, there are several issues about this analysis. To begin with, most of the viewers did not leave comments, and lots of comments were irrelevant to the destination image or how this vlog influenced them. At the same time, people have

different tourism information search strategies and the audience may not regard travel vlogs as a (credible or significant) information source for them. Moreover, the longitudinal impacts on perceptions and attitudes are nearly impossible to assess, not mentioning the difficulty to distinguish and separate the impact of vlogs from that of other factors. Furthermore, travel vlogs as social media contents, are not only about offering information, but also socializing and interaction (Israeli et al., 2018; D. Kim, 2017). The same vlog can be uploaded on different social media platforms, accessed through different channels, and communicated or interpreted diversely: so that different influences are resulted (Molinillo et al., 2018; Peralta, 2019; Trinh & Nguyen, 2019).

5.2   Travel vlogs and language and culture

Language use is largely ignored in previous studies on travel vlogs and destination images. However, it is considered a theme relevant to interpret how destination images are presented in the travel vlogs. The language use can be assessed in two communication levels, one is the communication at the destination, another is on the Internet.

The destination of this study is Chongqing, China, where Chinese is official language and average level of English is low. Even though people can travel without any knowledge of Chinese, it can be troublesome when interacting with local people, especially the front-line personnel in service or tourism industries. For example, in #8, the foreign vloggers had issues when ordering food at hot pot restaurant where has neither English menu nor English-spoken personnel.

> *"All right, we just received this, menu, obviously it doesn't have English, it's purely Mandarin…my Mandarin is so isn't that good, so, I'm gonna try to be my own version of Google Translate…since we can't really communicate well to each other, I just pick some stuff based on what looks good, and sometimes what looks a little, interesting, let's see." (#8)*

Compared to samples that also elaborated hot pot experiences with details (#3 #6 #9), #8 showed a different choice of hot pot type and dishes. It can be explained by individual differences or experience differences, but interestingly, #3, #6 and #9 have the Mandarin-spoken vloggers with cultural background like that of Chongqing. Since animal offal is not a common dish in western food culture, the dissimilar comments of it suggest culture as a factor influencing how people evaluate their hot pot experiences.

In contrast, in #2 the foreign vlogger spoke fluent Chinese with local people when purchasing street food, thus their interaction was smooth. In #4, #5, #10, the foreign vloggers also showed good

knowledge about Chinese language and Chinese culture, and the latter is even more important. The knowledge of local culture can shift people's attitudes and behaviors while traveling and experiencing new things, usually towards a positive direction (Evans, 1976; Pizam & Jeong, 1996; Raymond & Hall, 2008; Reisinger & Turner, 1998; Weiermair, 2000). It is supported by the finding that in #2, #4, #5 and #10, the vloggers held a positive overall attitude towards the destination.

The cross-lingual communication on Internet, facilitated by the translation technologies, is much easier and convenient. However, unlike the textual or visual contents, the foreign language in video contents is hard to translate, so that the barrier for cross-lingual communication is raised again. Perhaps that is one reason why the search results on YouTube are different for different language settings: the videos should be in understandable language for users. Nevertheless, among ten samples, four employed both Chinese and English (whether spoken or in subtitles), whereas six mainly employed one language (four English and two Chinese). Accordingly, two samples in Chinese received comments mostly in Chinese (#6 #9), and three out of four samples in English received comments mostly in English (#2 #7 #8). This implies that language use in travel vlogs are correlated to their audience. It makes sense because people with different culture backgrounds have different perceptions of images, words, and meanings (MacKay & Fesenmaier, 2000; Reisinger & Turner, 1998). Moreover, since bilingual samples received plenty of comments in both Chinese and English, it suggests that language use is an influencing factor of the vlog popularity and communication effectiveness (Purwadi et al., 2017). In addition, from the comments under #1, a promotional video, it is also confirmed that promotional videos can improve the destination image and increase visiting intention by moving the viewers to a stage of awareness (MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997; Amir Shani et al., 2010; Yüksel & Akgül, 2007).

5.3 Travel vlogs and destination image formation

Based on results from data analysis and previous studies on destination image formation (especially Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martin, 2004l; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, 1993; Gartner, 1993), a theory of how destination images are formed and represented in online travel vlogs is proposed here. Firstly, in an attribute-based way of forming destination image, the cognitive image is discussed with regards to coded concepts and categories. Next, in a holistic perspective, the affective image is discussed in connection with the overall attitudes displayed in the travel vlogs. Then, the overall image is discussed in relation to the typical and unique words used to describe the destination. Lastly, the factors that affect the image formation process are reviewed as well.

5.3.1 Cognitive image: concepts and categories

In terms of online travel vlogs, the cognitive attributes of a destination are transformed from the coded concepts and categories in content analysis. Excluding "human interactions" and "commentary", 18 categories means 18 general attributes regarded significant to form a cognitive destination image in travel vlogs. According to the weighted frequency from high to bottom, they are "local food and drinks", "modern attractions", "Chinese cuisine", "city view", "landmark", "culture", "historical and cultural attractions", "local life", "street view", "transportation", "crowdedness", "animals", "natural attractions", "entertainment and nightlife", "climate", "accommodation", "architectures" and "shopping". Some of those attributes can be further synthesized if needed. For example, "local food and drinks" and "Chinese cuisine" can be integrated into "different foods and drinks" for international tourists. To indicate urbanization level, "street view", "city view", and even "architectures" can be considered together. Besides, "street view" can also join "local life" to assess the authenticity of the destination.

They are mainly derived from the visual elements of travel vlogs and reflect what functional dimensions of this destination are regarded important by the vloggers to introduce to their audiences. On the one hand, these categories are more like functional characteristics that can be directly observed or measured (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, 1993). Simultaneously, the concepts and categories with higher frequencies are closer to construct the unique image of destination. On the other hand, these categories are suitable to form the cognitive image of destination since they are about beliefs, knowledge or known attributes of a destination that derived from facts (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Gartner, 1993). While those proposed attributes are also supported by previous studies, such as Beerli and Martin (2004); Birdir et al. (2018b); Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993); A Shani and Wang (2011), it can be argued that they can be generalized to indicate how travel vlogs form the cognitive images of a destination in an attribute-based manner.

5.3.2 Affective image: attitudes and feelings

In this study, both attribute-based and holistic perspectives are adopted when assessing the attitudes and feelings people have towards certain products and services or the destination as an entirety. From an attribute-based viewpoint, two relevant themes are derived from qualitative content analysis of travel vlogs. One is "attitudes towards objects", which is more functional and consisting of three sub-attributes: "positive", "negative" and "neutral". The other is "emotions and feelings", which is more psychological and composed by various sub-attributes, among which the typical ones are "excited",

"happy", "disappointed" and "tired". From the holistic viewpoint, the overall affection or atmosphere is the general attitude or feeling vlogger holds towards the destination, or the atmosphere of the entire vlog. It can be positive, negative, or neutral. In overall, the atmosphere of destination shown in travel vlogs tends to be positive. This is determined by the two themes and complementarily confirmed by travel motivation, non-verbal communications and auditory effects (Gursoy, 2011; D. Kim, 2017; Safko, 2010; Trinh & Nguyen, 2019). Sometimes the words do not represent the actual attitude or feeling of the speaker, yet body languages and facial expressions may reveal it.

On the one hand, the two themes and the overall affection can be regarded as psychological characteristics that are intangible, abstract, and hard to measure (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, 1993). On the other hand, they are suitable to form the affective image of destination, because they are about motivations for traveling, feelings attached to objects, and atmosphere of the destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Gartner, 1993). Since the attitudes and feelings are built upon experiences at the destination, it agrees with the proposition that affective image is influenced by cognitive image (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martin, 2004; Birdir et al., 2018b; A Shani & Wang, 2011).

The affective images are hard to measure and prone to be influenced by factors like cross-individual and cross-culture understandings of meaning. Thus, a precise understanding requires the knowledge about the contexts of the travel vlogs, about the vloggers, and even about different languages and cultures, which go beyond the vlog contents. Fortunately, the video format offers more clues for viewers to interpret the meanings and affections, and the interactive nature of social media allows the communication between authors and viewers to facilitate common understandings.

5.3.3   Overall image: representation and uniqueness

In this study of travel vlogs, the overall image of a destination is formed by the keywords used to describe the destination. Taking Chongqing as an example, the keywords are "spicy food", "hilly terrain", "foggy weather" and "massive population". On the one hand, these keywords are derived from assessments of individual attributes, whether functional or psychological. Thus, it confirms that overall image is dependent on cognitive image and affective image of the destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). On the other hand, those keywords are also like labels of the destination that serve to distinguish this destination from others. In this sense, the representative words are reflecting the uniqueness of the destination (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, 1993). And to some extent, they can even lead to stereotyped image of a destination (Fesenmaier & MacKay, 1996; MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997; B. Pan & Li, 2011).

In addition, the most frequently shown concepts, namely "Hongya Cave" and "hot pot", as well as the category "landmark", also illustrate the uniqueness of a destination. They are the iconic symbols that strongly and exclusively associated with the destination and elaborated in detail in travel vlogs. While the vloggers tend to visit the special attractions of the destination based on their own images, their travel experiences displayed in vlogs will then influence the unique image of the destination as perceived by the audiences. That is to say, the unique image and representative attractions are enhanced by each other in a circular manner.

5.3.4 Factors influencing destination image formation

From the findings of this study, six factors that significantly influence destination image formation in travel vlogs are recognized. The first factor is the travel experiences at the destination that influence all three images. For instance, in #2 the vlogger described the tastes of street foods after eating, and this knowledge of food helps build at least one aspect of cognitive image. In #7 the vlogger felt disappointed after visiting Nanbin Road with high expectation, which implies a change in affective image due to on-site experiences. And in #5 a positive overall image was expressed after the whole day's good traveling experience in Chongqing. This proposition is consistent with the claim that destination images are constantly modified by experiences during traveling (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Bigne et al., 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007; K.-S. Chon, 1991; Zhumadilova, 2016).

The second factor is purposes of traveling and vlogging, different purposes will lead to various affective images and diverse selections of attributes to form the cognitive image. Although Baloglu and McCleary (1999) claim that travel motivations merely impact on the affective image, this study suggests that purposes can also impact on cognitive image through dissimilar combinations of cognitive attributes. The most obvious case is #1, as mentioned above, which displays a special selection of attributes due to its promotional aim of attracting international tourists.

The third factor is information sources, in particular the conventional word-of-mouth and eWOM. They can influence both cognitive and affective images via the comparison between expectation and reality (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Hanlan & Kelly, 2005). Moreover, it is also found that information sources can directly impact on people's attitudes and purchasing behaviors, which is in line with Israeli et al. (2018); Jacobsen and Munar (2012); Litvin et al. (2008); Zhumadilova (2016). For instance, in #3 the vlogger was disappointed by the factually low quality of a restaurant that she found very popular online and tried because of it. Furthermore, compared to eWOM, the conventional word-of-mouth is noticed

to be more credible and effective, aligning the assertation of Hanlan and Kelly (2005); Jacobsen and Munar (2012); The Nielsen Company (2015).

The fourth factor is language and culture. Dissimilar with the former three factors, this factor influences how the destination images are perceived by vloggers and the audiences. On the one hand, it influences the on-site experiences of vloggers that results in different cognitive and affective images. On the other hand, it influences how the viewers interpret the elements in vlogs and turn those elements into images of destination (Evans, 1976; MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997, 2000; Reisinger & Turner, 1998; Weiermair, 2000). Besides, in line with Purwadi et al. (2017), the multilingual feature of travel vlogs is also demonstrated to be effective in facilitating cross-cultural communication and increasing vlog popularity.

The fifth factor is vlog actors that are divided into four groups: vlogger, travel companion of the vlogger, local friends, and local strangers. The first group suggests that personalities of the vlogger can influence the perceived attributes and attached feelings of objects or the destination (see case #5). Meanwhile, the more actors or human interactions shown in the travel vlog, the less possible the holistic affective image of destination is negative (see cases #1 #4 #6 #10 in contrast to case #7). And case #8 also implies that actors with different opinions towards same objects may lead to a more comprehensive or neutralized holistic cognitive image. Additionally, the existence of companions or local friends can also influence tourists' information search strategy (Gitelson & Crompton, 1983; Snepenger et al., 1990).

The last factor is the features of online travel vlogs that mainly affect the formation process of destination images. On the one hand, the video format influences how destination images are constructed within the vlogs. Thanks to the advantages of video format, travel vlogs containing both visual and auditory elements can be efficient and creative in conveying objective information and subjective feelings (Hautz et al., 2014; Huertas, 2018; D. Kim, 2017; Mamula & Ćoso, 2015; Trinh & Nguyen, 2019; Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009; Zhumadilova, 2016). On the other hand, the social media features of travel vlog make it easier to spread and engage audiences, and consequently more powerful to shape a dominant destination image perceived by audiences (Crowel et al., 2014; Du Plessis, 2017; Liu-Thompkins & Rogerson, 2012; Miles, 2014; Mowat, 2017; Vickery & Wunsch-Vincent, 2007).

6.   Conclusion and implication

6.1   Concluding remarks

Destination image is an important concept in tourism fields and recently often discussed in combination with social media marketing (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Gretzel et al., 2006; Gursoy & Chi, 2018; Hays et al., 2013; Kladou & Mavragani, 2015; Molinillo et al., 2018; Munar, 2011; Wang & Pizam, 2011). Identifying videos and especially travel vlogs as trending social media contents, however, the researches investigating the relationship between travel vlogs and destination images are new and scarce (D. Kim, 2017; Peralta, 2019; Trinh & Nguyen, 2019; Zhumadilova, 2016). Therefore, this paper aims to explore it and raises the research question: how destination images are formed and represented in travel vlogs.

This study follows a constructionism ontology and an interpretivism epistemology as research philosophies. Accordingly, it mainly takes an inductive approach to generate knowledge, but also reviews previous studies to build a theoretical framework. A multiple case study is conducted on sampled YouTube videos. The sample size is ten and employed technique is purposive sampling. Next, the empirical data is collected from the samples in an iterative manner. Then, content analysis as the major method of data analysis is conducted. Through coding, 84 concepts in 20 categories are identified, and 18 categories are then transformed into attributes of the cognitive image. Meanwhile, from thematic analysis of the data, seven themes are recognized, which connect to cognitive, affective, and overall images, as well as the influencing factors of destination image formation.

In summary, three types of images are presented within online travel vlogs. The cognitive image is related to 18 functional attributes of a destination contained in travel vlogs. The affective image is associated with attitudes and feelings that reflected by both psychological attributes and an overall affection displayed in travel vlogs. An impact from cognitive image on affective image is also observed. The overall image is linked to representative words of the destination and affected by the former two images. In addition, those keywords, together with the most frequently exhibited attributes and a special attribute "landmark", serve as distinguishing factors and exhibit the uniqueness of a destination. At last, six factors are identified for influencing images or image formation process: (1) travel experiences at the destination; (2) purposes of traveling and vlogging; (3) information sources, specifically conventional word-of-mouth and eWOM; (4) language and culture; (5) vlog actors; and (6) the features of online travel vlogs, referring to its video format and social media characteristics.

In conclusion, the research question is answered by those theoretical findings. Travel vlogs are created by the vloggers based on their experiences and images of the destination, and social media is the platform for travel vlogs to spread and serve as information sources for their audiences as potential tourists. The visuals and words displayed in travel vlogs are attributes for the viewers to construct their own images of the destination. These images can be cognitive, affective and overall, and can be assessed in three dimensions: holistic/attribute-based, functional/psychological, and common/unique. And their formation process is modified by various factors.

6.2   Theoretical contributions and practical implications

This study has several contributions to the tourism research fields. First, travel vlog is found to be a new information source for tourists, which adds to the studies of tourist information strategy. The relationship among information sources, travel vlogs, and destination images are also depicted. Second, it investigates the features of travel vlogs as a rising social media content and a special type of UGC. While video sharing is found to be more and more prevalent, this study helps to explain the phenomenon and reasons why it is important for tourism industries and researches. Third, this study innovatively associates the destination images with travel vlogs and generates knowledge about their relationship from empirical data analysis. This may contribute to narrow a research gap in related fields of tourism studies. Forth, this study offers an example of how to assess destination image formation on social media and in video format. The comprehensive analysis of both visual and auditory contents in vlog and its popularity information suggests an integrated way to interpret the formation and representation of destination images within it.

Besides, this paper provides practical implications for DMOs. To start from, it reveals a possibility for DMOs to employ travel vlogs as a marketing tool. This study further suggests that promotional videos made by vloggers in collaboration with destination officials can also receive positive feedback. Moreover, while travel vlogs are conveying certain destination image to plenty of viewers who are potential tourists, they can enhance it in either positive or negative directions. This implicates that DMOs should constantly monitor and analyze how their images are formulated online via social media, then respond and react accordingly to maintain a desired image. Furthermore, while cognitive attributes are proved to be the foundation of all three images of a destination, improving the actual quality of tourism products and services is crucial for developing and keeping a good image to constantly attract tourists.

6.3   Limitations and future research

This paper is not of perfection but has certain limitations as well. First of all, constrained by time and energy, this study merely adopts two research methods and takes ten vlog cases of one destination. Future researches could consider a third method, like interviewing vloggers to facilitate a deeper interpretation of destination images projected in travel vlogs. More cases and comparison among different destinations may also lead to new perspectives and more concrete conclusions. Besides, this study only assessed travel vlogs on YouTube. Investigating travel vlogs shared on other social media platforms, like Facebook, is also a direction of future studies. Lastly, a cross-cultural perspective of online communication via travel vlogs is identified in this paper without in-depth review. Therefore, future tourism researches can also take it into consideration and go deeper into its influences on destination image formation or interpretations of travel vlogs on social media.

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Appendix

Appendix I. *General information of ten samples.*

No.	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10
Link	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YkEd_aorIiI&t=89s	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y45KWb2Kplo	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g5qG-JCXjYE	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ebykQCZcX2g&t=165s	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lxhUrAy6-g0	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cpj35S3IStA	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0UB-W6VEmYM&t=404s	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PHQElfMMdeA&t=337s	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2AnX0X9sB_U&t=53s	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LLZ6u8_ERmI&t=243s
Title	Chongqing, China: China's Hidden Travel Gem	CHINESE DUMPLINGS: Street Food in Chongqing, China | NEVER-BEFORE-SEEN Chinese Street Food tour	安妮周末中国行#1 重庆｜热辣山城 火爆来袭！ChongQing vlog | ANNBITION	CHONGQING The Most Incredible City in the World (According to Bob)	Experience CHONGQING!	重慶Vlog 一座充滿溫情與辣椒的城市｜Jasmine	CHONGQING, CHINA - FINDING THE BEST SKYLINE CN	EXTREMELY Spicy Chinese Food: First Time Chongqing Hotpot (China Vlog 2019 麻辣火鍋)	CHONGQING VLOG 🌶｜胖死在重庆这座抖音网红 8D 山城！必打卡小吃街+轻轨穿楼+九宫格火锅+掏耳朵体验	Explore Chongqing! - WE SAW RABBIT HEADS?! (Part 1)
Date	Nov 1, 2018	Apr 8, 2018	Apr 20, 2018	Dec 4, 2019	Feb 18, 2019	Jan 14, 2019	Mar 2, 2017	30 Sep 2019	20 Jul 2019	22 Feb 2018
View	212,066	156,496	149,665	136,180	113,524	91,708	43,132	25,254	18,999	16,909
Comment	756	336	622	972	624	649	121	263	42	40
Like	5814	2567	2112	4486	3914	1444	623	804	100	178
Length	10'34	18'00	35'38	10'58	7'02	25'14	8'06	9'51	12'01	5'41
Category	Entertainment	Travel and Events	People and Blogs	Comedy	People and Blogs	People and Blogs	Travel and Events	Travel and Events	Travel and Events	Comedy

Author	Monkey Abroad	Luke Martin	annbition	The China Traveller	Blondie in China	Jas'talk	JASON BILLAM TRAVEL	Naick & Kim	Anna Ge	Trevmonki
Subscribers	160k	784k	109k	66.4k	93.2k	143k	392k	20.3k	1.1k	203k
Sex	male	male	female	male	female	female	male	both	female	male
Actors	the vlogger himself (has companions)	the vlogger himself (has a companion)	the vlogger herself (has a companion)	the vlogger and his parents (no other companion)	the vlogger herself (meeting friends who are not companions)	the vlogger herself (has a companion)	the vlogger himself (no other companion)	two vloggers (no other companion)	the vlogger herself (has a companion)	two vloggers (has a companion)
Motivations	promoting tourism, collaborating with local government, offering travel tips	showing the local street food	showing around the city, visiting the attractions and restaurants popular online, fashion filming	not stated in the vlog	seeking for new tourism experiences in China	not stated in the vlog	exploring china	exploring hot and spicy food	traveling around China	exploring Chongqing
Spoken language	English	English & Chinese (communicating with locals)	Chinese	Chinese & English	English	Chinese	English	English	Chinese	Chinese & English

Subtitle language	English (auto-generated)	English (auto-generated)	English	Chinese & English	Chinese	Chinese	English (auto-generated)	English (auto-generated)	no but textual effects are added	Chinese & English
Overall affections	positive	positive (towards the food but not tourism attractions)	neutral	positive (explicitly showed in introduction)	positive about almost everything displayed in the vlog	neutral	more of negative	neutral	more of positive	more of positive

Appendix II. *Frequency table of concepts and categories.*

categories	weighted sum	concepts	weighted sum	#1 x1	#1 x3	#2 x1	#2 x3	#3 x1	#3 x3	#4 x1	#4 x3	#5 x1	#5 x3	#6 x1	#6 x3	#7 x1	#7 x3	#8 x1	#8 x3	#9 x1	#9 x3	#10 x1	#10 x3
animals	15	panda	6	3	1																		
		dogs and cats	9	1						1		1		3	1								
local food and drinks	115	hot pot	23	3	1				2			1			1				1	1	1		
		street food	21	3		2				1	1			1		2	1			1	3		
		lianggao	3						1														
		haochijie	6						1											1			
		douhua	7			1	1		1														
		bingfen	6						1											1			
		chaoshou	6				1								1								
		xiaomian	14					2	2						1		1						
		fried crispy meat	7						2											1			
		hot and sour vermicelli	6												1					1			
		tripe	7					1	1									1					
		ciba	6												1					1			
		spicy rabbit head	3																				1

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architectures	11	antique-style buildings	3												1					
		skyscrapers	5												4	1				
		viaducts	3												2					1
modern attractions	49	Eling Park	4				1							1						
		Yangtze River Cableway	14			1		1	1		1	1						1		
		Hongya Cave	31	2	1		2		5	1	1	1		1	3			2	1	1
historical and cultural attractions	30	Ciqikou Old Town	18	2	1				1		1			1				1		1
		Dazu Rock Carvings	8	2	1															1
		Fishing Town	3		1															
		Huguang Guild Hall	1																1	
local life	29	passerby	14	2			1				5			1	3				2	
		people conducting certain activities	9	4	1						1			1						
		markets	6			1						1								
culture	40	ear cleaning	3															1		
		People's Assembly Hall and the sqaure	7					1							1				1	
		the Third	7					1						1	1					

		Footpath																			
		Sichuan Opera	4	1	1																
		street graffiti	4	3								1									
		Huangjueping graffiti district	4		1			1													
		dialect	1	1																	
		chopsticks	4			1				1											
		pottery	4	1	1																
		Chongqing China Three Gorges Museums	2										1								1
shopping	5	shopping streets and shopping malls	8	1								1	1								1
landmark	41	Qiansimen Jiangling River Bridge	14	1				1		3		1				3		3		2	
		Liziba Station	15	3	1				1			1							1		
		Jiefangbei	9					1				1			1				1	1	
		Crown Escalator	3						1												
city view	41	day city view	21	3		4		1				3		1		7			2		
		night city view	20	2				2		5			1	2		2					4

street view	18	day street view	17	2		5		4			2				3	1					
		night street view	1	1																	
Chinese cuisine	42	twist	3											1							
		fritters	1			1															
		baozi	3				1														
		spicy chicken feet	6						1								1			
		food stalls	3				1														
		dumplings	1			1															
		Chinese style barbecue	6						1					1							
		pidan	3							1											
		potato noodles	3							1											
		Chinese noodles	6							1				1							
		pork pie	3																1		
		Minced shrimp	4										1						1		
natural attractions	15	Yangtze River	8								1	1		1			1			
		Chongqing South Mountain/ Yikeshu viewing platform	4						1				1								
		Wulong	3																	1
commentary	72	opening remarks	21		1			1	1			1				1		1		1
		planning	18						3							1		1		1

Category	n	Subcategory	Count																		
		summary	21		1		1		3				1			1						
		complaining	12													2	1	1				
human interactions	76	with companion	67	4	1	1		1			2			8				1	2		7
		meeting local friend	3									1										
		with stranger	6											1				1				
Transportation	17	metro	5			1		2				1						1				
		taxi	7					2	1				1							1		
		aviation	5					1				1								1		
crowdedness	17	crowdedness in non-touristic areas	6				1					1										
		crowdedness in touristic areas	5								2	1										
		long queue	6					1											1			
accommodation	13	hotel room	7					1						1						1		
		hostel room	3									1										
		homestay	3																1			
climate	14	rainy weather	7			3		1	1													
		cold weather	4																	1	1
		hot weather	3															1				
entertainment and night life	15	bar	7						1					1	1							
		café	4					1							1							
		book club	4									1			1							

Note. Blank means zero.