

What motivates international tourists' positive word-of-mouth? The effect of individualist and collectivist cultural orientations

Lina Zhong, Mengyao Zhu, Xiaonan Li, Alastair M. Morrison and Mark Anthony Camilleri

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this research paper was to determine which needs for incentives influence positive word-of-mouth (PWOM) among international tourists and how these needs differ based on the cultural orientation toward individualism and collectivism.

Design/methodology/approach – This research used online surveys to gather data from 959 Australian, US, UK, Japanese and Korean respondents who had visited Beijing. A random sampling method was used, and data were analyzed using SmartPLS 4.0. By adopting the existence relatedness growth theory, the findings explain how cultural orientation affects the impact of needs for incentives in generating PWOM.

Findings – Three hypothesized relationships were significant for Australia/UK/USA and Japan/Korea – the effect of needs for incentives on motivation, the effect of motivation on PWOM and the effects of needs for incentives on PWOM were significant and positive for Australia/UK/USA and Japan/Korea. The effect of needs for incentive type on motivation varied across national populations, and the intensity of the effects of needs for incentive type on PWOM was also different. For Australian, UK and the US tourists, the honorary title was the most influential need to stimulate word-of-mouth motivation. The need for cultural learning was the most influential for Japanese and Korean tourists.

Originality/value – This research contributes to the literature by exploring and comparing the needs for incentives that influence PWOM among tourists from the perspective of individualism and collectivism. The results also increase the understanding of the relationships among needs for incentives, motivation and PWOM.

Keywords ERG theory, Incentives, Word-of-mouth (WOM), Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), Positive word-of-mouth (PWOM), Individualism-collectivism

Paper type Research paper

Lina Zhong

and Mengyao Zhu are both based at the Institute for Big Data Research in Tourism, School of Tourism Sciences, Beijing International Studies University, Beijing, China. Xiaonan Li is based at the Asia-Pacific Academy of Economics and Management, Department of Integrated Resort and Tourism Management, Faculty of Business Administration, University of Macau, Macau, S.A.R., China.

Alastair M. Morrison is based at the School of Management and Marketing, University of Greenwich Business School, London, UK. Mark Anthony Camilleri is based at the Department of Corporate Communication, Faculty of Media and Knowledge Sciences, University of Malta, Msida, Malta and Medill School of Journalism, Media and Integrated Marketing Communications, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, USA.

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是什么激发了国际旅游者的积极口碑？个人主义与集体主义文化取向的影响

摘要

研究目的 – 本研究旨在确定哪些激励需求会影响国际旅游者的积极口碑 (PWOM)，以及这些激励方式的影响在个人主义和集体主义文化取向的群体中有何不同。

设计/方法/途径 – 本研究通过在线调查收集了 959 名曾到访北京的澳大利亚、美国、英国、日本和韩国的国际游客数据。研究采用了随机抽样的方法，使用 SmartPLS 4.0 对数据进行了分析。基于 ERG 理论，本研究解释了文化如何影响激励类型对积极口碑的影响。

研究结论 – 研究结果显示，三个假设关系在澳大利亚/英国/美国和日本/韩国两个群组中均显著，即激励需求对动机的影响、动机对积极口碑的影响、以及激励需求对积极口碑的影响在澳大利亚/英国/美国和日本/韩国群组中都是显著和正向的。激励需求类型对动机和积极口碑的影响在不同国家群体中存在差异。对于澳大利亚、英国和美国的国际游客，满足名誉需求的激励对产生积极口碑动机的影响更大。对于日本和韩国的国际游客，满足文化学习需求的激励对产生积极口碑动机的影响更大。

原创性 – 本研究从个人主义和集体主义的角度, 探讨比较了影响国际旅游者积极口碑的激励需求, 为相关领域研究做出了贡献。研究结果加深了对激励需求、动机和积极口碑之间关系的理解。

关键词 *erg*理论, 激励, 口碑, 电子口碑, 积极口碑, 个人主义-集体主义

文章类型 研究型论文

Qué motiva el boca a boca positivo de turistas internacionales? El efecto de las orientaciones culturales individualistas y colectivistas

Resumen

Objetivo – El objetivo de esta investigación era determinar qué necesidades de incentivos influyen en el boca a boca positivo (PWOM por sus siglas en inglés) entre los turistas internacionales y cómo difieren estas necesidades en función de la orientación cultural hacia el individualismo y el colectivismo.

Diseño/metodología/enfoque – Esta investigación utilizó encuestas en línea para recopilar datos de 959 encuestados australianos, estadounidenses, británicos, japoneses y coreanos que habían visitado Pekín. Se empleó un método de muestreo aleatorio y los datos se analizaron con SmartPLS 4.0. Adoptando la teoría del Crecimiento de la Relación con la Existencia (ERG por sus siglas en inglés), los resultados explican cómo afecta la orientación cultural al impacto de las necesidades de incentivos en la generación del PWOM.

Resultados – Tres relaciones hipotetizadas resultaron significativas en los dos grupos de Australia/Reino Unido/Estados Unidos y Japón/Corea: el efecto de las necesidades de incentivos en la motivación, el efecto de la motivación en la PWOM y los efectos de las necesidades de incentivos en la PWOM fueron significativos y positivos para Australia/Reino Unido/Estados Unidos y Japón/Corea. El efecto del tipo de necesidad de incentivos sobre la motivación varió entre las poblaciones nacionales, y la intensidad de los efectos del tipo de necesidad de incentivos sobre la PWOM también fue diferente. Para los turistas australianos, británicos y estadounidenses, el título honorífico fue la necesidad más influyente para estimular la motivación WOM. La necesidad de aprendizaje cultural fue la más influyente para los turistas japoneses y coreanos.

Originalidad/valor – Esta investigación contribuye a la bibliografía al explorar y comparar las necesidades de incentivos que influyen en la motivación boca a boca entre los turistas desde la perspectiva del individualismo y el colectivismo. Los resultados también aumentan la comprensión de las relaciones entre las necesidades de incentivos, la motivación y el PWOM.

Palabras clave Teoría ERG, Incentivos, Boca a boca (WOM), Boca a boca electrónico (eWOM), Boca a boca positivo (PWOM), Individualismo-colectivismo

Tipo de papel Trabajo de investigación

1. Introduction

Word-of-mouth (WOM) is a powerful communication channel in the marketplace, and positive word-of-mouth (PWOM) is particularly beneficial for the tourism sector, especially during times of uncertainty and risk such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Šerić *et al.*, 2023). PWOM can enhance the effectiveness and outcomes of communication efforts by generating more awareness, interest and desire among potential tourists (Khan *et al.*, 2023). Additionally, PWOM can foster engagement, generate greater satisfaction and more recommendations and increase loyalty (Litvin *et al.*, 2008, 2018; Rasoolimanesh *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, understanding the factors that affect WOM is critical for tourism managers.

Generating PWOM requires that people be willing to share their opinions and experiences online and offline with others. However, the question of what motivates individuals to engage in WOM remains an area of interest for researchers (Jiang and Chen, 2019). Previous studies have suggested that various incentives drive WOM, including social rewards, self-enhancement, altruism, economic benefits and reciprocity (Yoo and Gretzel, 2011; Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004). Cultural factors are also thought to influence WOM, and previous studies have identified some cultural causes related to electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Choi and Kim, 2019; Lee and Choi, 2019). Prior research has shown that collectivist customers exhibit shared beliefs, values and social norms, making them more homogeneous (Leonhardt *et al.*, 2020). However, studies have yet to consider how cultural differences affect the types and functions of needs for incentives on PWOM motivation.

Based on prior research, incentives can be defined as one aspect of motivation and have a goal-oriented focus (Wang *et al.*, 2022). In this research, the “needs for incentives” was viewed as the goal-oriented means to satisfy a need. This research aimed to contribute to the literature by exploring and comparing the needs for incentives that influence PWOM among tourists from the perspective of individualism and collectivism. This investigation focused on how a specific dimension of culture, from the perspective of individualism and collectivism, relates to tourist motivation and PWOM. The primary research purposes were to determine which needs for incentives influence PWOM among tourists and how these needs for incentives differ based on the cultural orientation of individuals toward individualism and collectivism. The research objectives were to explore the types and functions of needs for WOM incentives and determine which needs for incentive type matter most from the perspective of individualism and collectivism.

2. Conceptual background and hypotheses

2.1 *Word-of-mouth in tourism*

It is widely acknowledged that WOM is highly influential in tourism (Andersen *et al.*, 2023; Cofente, 2015; Jalilvand, 2017; Litvin *et al.*, 2008; Pourfakhimi *et al.*, 2020). Generally, there is an acceptance that WOM is more trusted and powerful in influencing potential travelers than traditional advertising and promotions (Cofente, 2015). The impact of WOM has intensified with the greater use of social media platforms that produce eWOM through user-generated content (Cantalops and Salvi, 2014; Jalilvand and Samiei, 2012; Litvin *et al.*, 2018; Mukhopadhyay *et al.*, 2023; Yadav *et al.*, 2022).

The seemingly increasing market power of WOM is attracting more scholarly investigations of the phenomenon. A bibliometric analysis of 398 publications on eWOM in hospitality and tourism identified the three thematic areas of eWOM and behavior, eWOM and social media and eWOM as a marketing tool (Mukhopadhyay *et al.*, 2023). An earlier review article identified 46 items on WOM and tourism up until 2013 and noted a steady upward trend in publications on the topic (Cofente, 2015). The author suggested that:

Future researchers might also enrich their findings via cross-cultural studies (Jalilvand and Samiei, 2012). Another issue that could be further developed is investigation into other characteristics, such as trip type, family life cycle, cultural differences and the travel motivation of different people (Cofente, 2015, p. 620).

This research was designed to fill this identified gap in WOM and its relationship with cultural differences and motivations.

2.2 *Existence relatedness growth theory, motivation and positive word-of-mouth*

Consumer engagement in WOM communication is influenced by personal motivations such as the need to belong (Breazeale, 2009), the desire to help others (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004) and self-enhancement (Okazaki *et al.*, 2014). Alderfer's existence relatedness growth (ERG) theory posits three categories of needs: existence (physiological and safety needs), relatedness (relationships) and growth (creativity, productivity and personal achievement) (Alderfer, 1969). ERG theory has been used in various studies to investigate motivational factors in the workplace (Wiley, 1997), consumer satisfaction with mobile value-added services (Yang *et al.*, 2011) and knowledge-sharing behaviors in gamers (Hau and Kim, 2011).

Existence needs refer to basic physiological and safety needs that must be met for survival. Based on previous research, existence needs are related to money and benefits (Arnolds and Boshoff, 2002). Coupons, souvenirs and discounts are tangible rewards that can incentivize customer behavior and fulfill these needs. For example, Suttikun and Meeprom (2021) explored how tourists perceive the quality of authentic souvenirs and how it affects

satisfaction and loyalty, while [Zhang and Xu \(2019\)](#) proposed a novel discount strategy called the influence-based discount that is proportional to customers' influence in the WOM network. These incentives reflect motivation for fulfilling survival needs by providing customers with immediate benefits that can improve their quality of life.

Relatedness is the need to feel connected and belong to others ([Kim and Drumwright, 2016](#)). These needs reflect the motivation for building connections and feeling a sense of belonging within a community. Making friends and socializing is a travel motivation that influences preferences and satisfaction ([Rita et al., 2019](#)). Key opinion leaders (KOLs) strongly influence others' opinions and behaviors, playing a valuable role in shaping people's sense of relatedness by providing guidance and support ([Valente and Pumpuang, 2007](#)). KOLs influence the consumer decision-making process with digital technologies and social networks ([Casaló et al., 2020](#)). The personal environment, including social relationships and interactions, also affects tourist motivations, emotions and intentions ([Pearce and Caltabiano, 1983](#); [Lin and Nawijn, 2020](#)). The current research measures relatedness needs from friends, KOLs and the interpersonal environment.

Growth needs refer to psychological needs associated with realizing an individual's full potential and the need to self-actualize. Knowledge needs stem from a desire to grow and achieve one's full potential. Reputation motivates people to achieve higher levels of personal development and self-actualization ([McLeod, 2007](#)). Reputation can influence tourist motivation because individuals may seek life-changing experiences, personal growth and challenge, accomplishment and achievement, gratitude and mindfulness or transformation through travel activities ([Yousaf et al., 2018](#)). The previous literature has discussed reputation needs (such as status, self-fulfillment and knowledge enhancement) and their influence on travel motivations (such as escape, leisure, adventure and socializing) ([Chi and Phuong, 2022](#); [Maghrifani et al., 2022](#)). Missions refer to an individual's personal goals and aspirations. [Wright \(2007\)](#) proposed that organizational missions increase employee work motivation. [Caillier \(2014\)](#) posited that employees are motivated to perform well when attracted to their employing agency's mission. These needs reflect motivation for personal growth through learning new skills, gaining recognition and accomplishing meaningful goals. By satisfying growth needs through incentives such as knowledge needs, reputation and missions, companies encourage PWOM. Based on this framework, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H1. Needs for incentives have a positive influence on WOM motivation.

H2. Needs for incentives have a positive influence on PWOM.

2.3 Motivations and word of mouth

WOM communication is an essential and influential channel for consumers to share information about products and services. WOM can take various forms, including offline and online interactions ([Lin et al., 2021](#)). Research shows that consumers consider WOM more reliable than traditional media such as television, radio and print advertisements ([Cofente, 2015](#)). WOM is one of the most influential sources of information about products and services because users tend to trust other consumers more than sellers ([Nieto et al., 2014](#)). As a result, WOM can influence many people and is seen as a consumer-dominated marketing channel where the senders are independent of the market, giving them credibility ([Brown et al., 2007](#)). In tourism, where products are intangible and difficult for customers to evaluate before purchasing, WOM is often the most critical source of information when making buying decisions ([Litvin et al., 2008](#)). Research on the relationship between WOM and motivation has identified cultural influences as a significant aspect ([Parry et al., 2021](#)). More recently, there have been publications that focus on triggering multiple types of tourist motivation to drive positive eWOM ([Alarcón-del-Amo et al., 2023](#); [Strickland and Williams, 2022](#); [Huy et al., 2022](#)).

Marketing managers recognize WOM's vital role in their products' success and strive to promote and maintain PWOM for their brands. Research has shown that WOM can increase customers' intention to buy and willingness to pay (Ismagilova *et al.*, 2020; Phillips *et al.*, 2013), build trust and loyalty (Gauri *et al.*, 2008), increase sales (Babić Rosario *et al.*, 2016), enhance a company's reputation and performance (Nisar *et al.*, 2020) and attract new customers (Trusov *et al.*, 2009). Previous research has identified several factors that drive WOM from a customer perspective, and the psychological antecedents include self-enhancement, self-efficacy, altruism, the need for social interaction and support and identity signaling (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004; De Angelis *et al.*, 2012; Berger, 2014). Abubakar and Mavondo (2014) determined that people factors and emotions predicted customer satisfaction and PWOM. Thus, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H3. Needs for incentives have a positive influence on PWOM in tourism.

2.4 Influence of culture

The value of cultural influence has been highlighted and linked to eWOM communication in destination marketing studies (Izogo *et al.*, 2022; Setiawan *et al.*, 2021). Previous research has indicated that eWOM is valued differently across cultures (Hoz-Correa and Muñoz-Leiva, 2019). The importance of cultural orientation in eWOM cannot be overstated (Lee *et al.*, 2018). Cultures differ in their level of collectivism and individualism, where individualism appears dominant in Western countries, such as the UK and Australia, and collectivism is stronger in Eastern countries, including Japan, Korea and other Asian nations. Individualistic people value uniqueness, tend to present themselves as distinctive and self-reliant and emphasize being direct in communication (Singelis, 1994). In contrast, consumers high in collectivism see themselves as highly embedded in their social groups. As a result, they value belonging to in-groups, interdependence and relational harmony (Triandis and Gelfand, 1998).

Prior research has explored WOM in different countries by individualism and collectivism. One study found that Chinese customers in Singapore shared more on the social networking site Renren than on Facebook (Qiu *et al.*, 2013). Chu and Choi (2011) found that Chinese undergraduates with higher collectivism ratings were likelier to share eWOM than the US undergraduates with lower collectivism ratings. Additionally, Lin and Kalwani (2018) found that Amazon Japan had fewer reviews than Amazon US; the authors suggested that this difference may be related to the fact that Japanese consumers are more collectivist than their US counterparts. Thus, the following hypothesis was proposed about the relationship between individualism, collectivism and WOM:

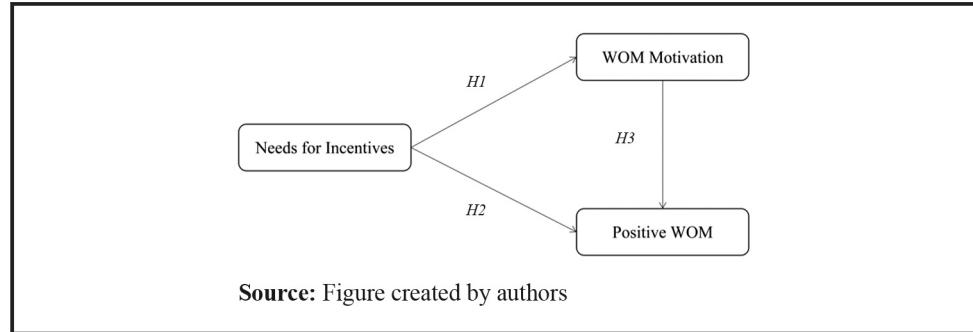
H4. The influence of needs for incentives on WOM motivation is different between Australia/UK/USA and Japan/Korea consumers.

The conceptual model for this research is presented in Figure 1.

3. Methodology

Online surveys gathered data from Australian, US, UK, Japanese and Korean respondents who had visited Beijing. Participants were selected from the survey companies Qualtrics, Credamo and Mturk from May 29 to July 26 in 2022. All items were adapted from existing scales in the literature to match the context of the study and translated to match the language of the survey respondents. The survey consisted of two parts. The first part involved the motivations to recommend Beijing as a destination and incentives influencing recommendations and PWOM. Needs for incentives were adapted from Arnolds and Boshoff (2002). Based on the research of Berger (2014), WOM motivation was measured. PWOM was measured through a scale adapted from Zhang and Xu (2019). The second part was the respondent characteristics, including gender, age, country, education,

Figure 1 Conceptual research model



occupation, marital status, income and ethnicity. Five-point Likert-type was used to measure scales. The survey items were initially designed in English and translated into the language relevant to the surveyed country. The reverse translation method was used to verify that the meaning of the statements remained the same in the translation (Brislin, 1970). A random sampling method was used and data were analyzed using SmartPLS 4.0. To better understand the differences between the two groups of international tourists, the validity and reliability of two groups of data were analyzed. The reliability of the scales was assessed using multiple indicators, including factor loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's α .

4. Results

4.1 Demographic profiles

A total of 959 tourists from four countries participated in the research (105 for Australia, 202 for the USA, 110 for the UK, 216 for Japan and 326 for Korea). These countries were divided into two groups. Most respondents were female for the Australia/UK/USA grouping (52.3%). The age group 31–40 years was the most numerous; 53.2% were university-educated; the majority of participants were employed (73.1%); more than 50% (51.1%) were married and had children; most had incomes (43.4%) above \$70,000; and more than half were Caucasian (66.4%).

For the Japan/Korea group, most were male (57.9%), 21–50 years old and 68.5% held undergraduate degrees. Like the first group, most were employed (71.6%); more than 50% were married and had children. Unlike the Australia/UK/US respondents, the Japan/Korea participants' income mainly was \$50,000–\$69,999 (30.6%), and up to 90% were Asian (Table 1).

4.2 Measurement model

Measurements for the two models were tested using SmartPLS 4.0 software. A confirmatory composite analysis procedure was conducted to evaluate convergent and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2020). As a guideline, item loading, CR and AVE values must exceed 0.70, 0.70 and 0.50, respectively, to ensure item reliability, structural reliability and convergent validity (Hair et al., 2017). Table 2 shows the item loadings for each construct of the two groups, and the factor loadings for both were higher than 0.7. The AVEs of every item were greater than 0.5, and the Cronbach's alphas and CRs of every item were higher than 0.7 (Table 3). Thus, the hypothesized model was reliable and satisfied the requirements for convergent validity.

Table 1 Respondent profiles

<i>Demographic characteristics</i>	<i>Australia/UK/USA</i> (n = 417)		<i>Japan/Korea</i> (n = 542)	
	No	%	No	%
<i>Gender</i>				
Male	199	47.7	314	57.9
female	218	52.3	228	42.1
<i>Age</i>				
18–20 years old	11	2.6	15	2.8
21–30 years old	70	16.8	117	21.6
31–40 years old	132	31.7	128	23.6
41–50 years old	112	26.9	145	26.8
51–60 years old	50	12	91	16.8
61–80 years old	30	7.2	45	8.3
>80 years old	12	2.9	1	0.2
<i>Education</i>				
Less than high school	4	1	9	1.7
High school	62	14.9	80	14.8
Bachelor	222	53.2	371	68.5
Masters and higher	129	30.9	82	15.1
<i>Occupation</i>				
Employed	305	73.1	388	71.6
Self-employed	53	12.7	58	10.7
Unemployed	23	5.5	13	2.4
Homemaker	5	1.2	31	5.7
Student	24	5.8	21	3.9
Retired	6	1.4	15	2.8
Other	1	0.2	16	3
<i>Marital status</i>				
Single	96	23	141	26
Married with children	213	51.1	320	59
Married without children	40	9.6	48	8.9
In a relationship	60	14.4	33	6.1
Other	8	1.9	0	0
<i>Income</i>				
Under \$10,000	19	4.6	15	2.8
\$10,000–\$19,999	24	5.8	24	4.4
\$20,000–\$29,999	29	7	70	12.9
\$30,000–\$49,999	75	18	132	24.4
\$50,000–\$69,999	89	21.3	166	30.6
\$70,000 or more	181	43.4	135	24.9
<i>Ethnicity</i>				
Caucasian	277	66.4	14	2.6
African American	34	8.2	1	0.2
Asian	75	18	513	94.6
Latino or Hispanic	17	4.1	2	0.4
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	0.2	2	0.4
Other	13	3.1	10	1.8

Source: Table created by authors

The Fornell–Larcker criterion and heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) technique were used to analyze discriminant validity. Table 4 shows that the square root of the AVE for each construct was above 0.7 and greater than its correlations with other constructs (Hair *et al.*, 2019). Table 5 shows that the HTMT values were less than 0.9 (Henseler *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, the above PLS indicators supported the convergent and discriminant validity of the measurement models.

Table 2 Convergent validity

Construct/ reliability	Item		Australia/ UK/USA	Japan/Korea
IN	IN1	I will be given some shopping coupons	0.707	0.776
	IN2	I will be given some souvenirs about Beijing	0.768	0.769
	IN3	I will be offered discounts on my next trip to China	0.723	0.788
	IN4	KOLs will keep me informed about Beijing	0.704	0.766
	IN5	My recommendation will increase my friendship with my Chinese friends	0.775	0.784
	IN6	People will talk to me about Beijing after my trip	0.702	0.792
	IN7	I will have the chance to be regarded as the important role between my country and China	0.771	0.771
	IN8	I will get free courses about Beijing, such as language and culture	0.715	0.795
	IN9	I will be given an honorary title	0.778	0.782
MO	MO1	I plan to recommend Beijing because I can exchange information with others	0.776	0.786
	MO2	I plan to recommend Beijing because I can keep a close relationship with my friends	0.791	0.846
	MO3	I plan to recommend Beijing because I can help others better understand China	0.756	0.774
	MO4	I plan to recommend Beijing because it will give me enjoyment	0.790	0.823
	MO5	I plan to recommend Beijing because I can gain respect from others	0.746	0.789
PWOM	PWOM1	I will talk up Beijing to others	0.863	0.849
	PWOM2	I will recommend Beijing to others	0.882	0.927
	PWOM3	I will encourage others to visit Beijing	0.866	0.918

Notes: IN = incentive; MO = motivation; PWOM = positive word-of-mouth

Source: Table created by authors

Table 3 Reliability statistics

Construct	Australia/UK/USA			Japan/Korea		
	α	CR	AVE	α	CR	AVE
IN	0.840	0.897	0.546	0.920	0.920	0.609
MO	0.896	0.831	0.596	0.863	0.864	0.646
PWOM	0.831	0.840	0.758	0.881	0.888	0.808

Notes: IN = incentive; MO = motivation; PWOM = positive word-of-mouth

Source: Table created by authors

Table 4 Discriminant validity assessment (Fornell and Larcker)

	IN	MO	PWOM
<i>Australia/UK/USA</i>			
IN	0.739		
MO	0.742	0.772	
PWOM	0.588	0.608	0.870
<i>Japan/Korea</i>			
IN	0.780		
MO	0.800	0.804	
PWOM	0.668	0.653	0.899

Notes: The diagonal elements are the squared roots of AVE. IN = incentive; MO = motivation; PWOM = positive word-of-mouth

Source: Table created by authors

Table 5 Discriminant validity assessment (HTMT)

Variables	Country	In	MO	PWOM
IN	Australia/UK/USA			
	Japan/Korea			
MO	Australia/UK/USA	0.857		
	Japan/Korea	0.897		
PWOM	Australia/UK/USA	0.677	0.728	
	Japan/Korea	0.739	0.748	

Notes: IN = incentive; MO = motivation; PWOM = positive word-of-mouth

Source: Table created by authors

4.3 Structural model: Group comparison

Figure 2 and Table 6 show the results for the two groups. For the Australia/UK/US group, the need for incentives significantly influenced motivation ($\beta = 0.742$, t -value = 26.961, $p < 0.001$) and PWOM ($\beta = 0.304$, t -value = 4.584, $p < 0.001$). WOM motivation significantly influenced PWOM ($\beta = 0.382$, t -value = 5.772, $p < 0.001$). Specifically, the effects of growth needs (recognition and reputation) for incentives were more than others. This implies that for international tourists from Australia/UK/USA, incentives that meet relatedness and growth needs have a greater impact. This is a comparable result to Berger's (2014) study, which demonstrated that self-serving (such as relatedness and growth needs) incentives tended to drive tourists to transmit PWOM. Additionally, prior research also provides evidence that the US residents are individualistic and focus on aspects of relatedness (Oyserman *et al.*, 2002), which might explain why the incentive effect of relatedness needs was more than other incentives. The tendency for individuals to value self-actualization and self-respect is reflected in the importance placed by international tourists from individualistic cultures on reputation and recognition (Gambrel and Cianci, 2003).

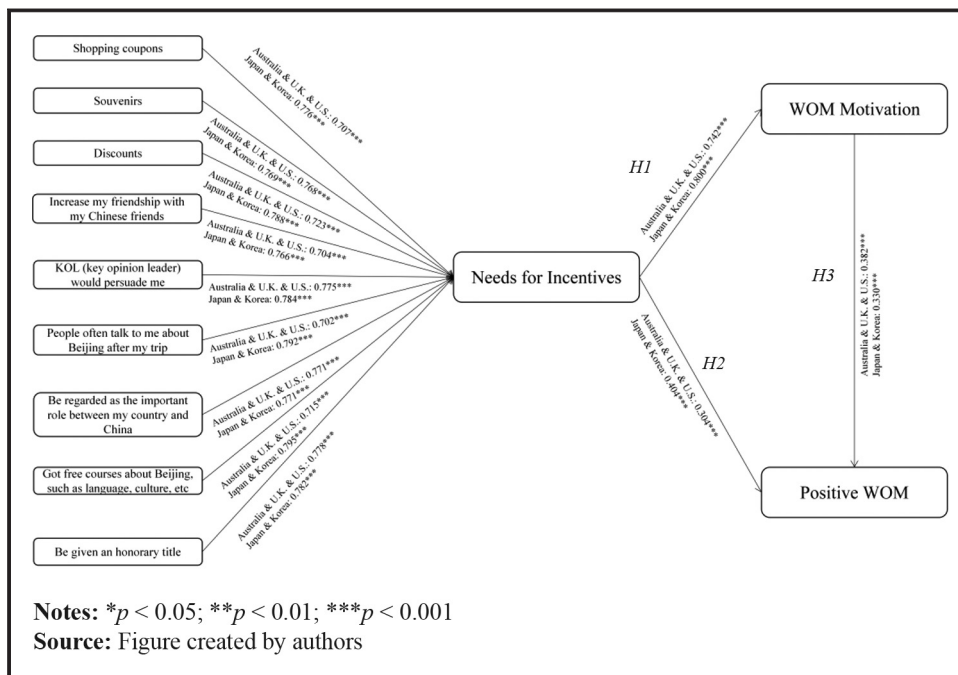
Figure 2 Results for Australia, Japan, Korea, the UK and the USA

Table 6 Results of direct relationships

Hypothesis	Australia/UK/USA			Japan/Korea		
	Coefficient	S.D.	t-value***	Coefficient	S.D.	t-value
H1: IN→MO	0.742	0.028	26.961***	0.800	0.021	38.740***
H2: MO→PWOM	0.382	0.066	5.772***	0.330	0.071	4.671***
H3: IN→PWOM	0.304	0.066	4.584***	0.404	0.067	6.030***

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$. IN = incentive; MO = motivation; PWOM = positive word-of-mouth

Source: Table created by authors

Concerning Japan and Korea, the needs for incentives significantly influenced motivation ($\beta = 0.800$, t -value = 38.740, $p < 0.001$) and PWOM ($\beta = 0.404$, t -value = 6.030, $p < 0.001$), and motivation ($\beta = 0.330$, t -value = 4.671, $p < 0.001$) also significantly influenced PWOM. Therefore, *H1*, *H2* and *H3* were supported. The influence of growth needs for incentives (courses about destination) was the most. The incentive effect of relatedness need (social connection) was the second, and the incentive effect of existence need (discounts) was the third. This reflects that of the three types of incentives, the incentive effect of growth needs was the most pronounced for Asians. Collectivist tourists see themselves as integrated into their group and place more importance on interdependence and relational harmony (Hofstede *et al.*, 2005). They rely more on a holistic mindset and are more susceptible to collective decision-making (Leonhardt *et al.*, 2020). That is why the incentive effect from social connections was more than other incentives.

4.4 Multigroup analysis

The purpose of *H4* was to confirm whether there were differences in the hypothesized relationships between Australia/UK/USA and Japan/Korea. PLS-multigroup analysis (PLS-MGA) was used to determine if there were significant differences between the two groups (Cheah *et al.*, 2020). Before using PLS-MGA, MICOM was used to assess dimension invariance (Hair *et al.*, 2019). The MICOM procedure includes three steps: configural invariance, compositional invariance and the equality of composite mean values and variances (Cheah *et al.*, 2020).

According to the MICOM approach (Table 7), MGA was conducted after confirming compositional invariance. Table 8 reports the differences in the relationships between the models of the two groups. The effect of incentives on motivation was more significant for Japan/Korea ($\beta = 0.800$) than for Australia/UK/USA ($\beta = 0.579$); thus, *H4* was supported.

5. Conclusions and implications

5.1 Conclusions

This study investigated how incentive needs drive the WOM motivation of international tourists with individualist and collectivist cultures in transmitting PWOM. Three hypothesized relationships were significant for Australia/UK/USA and Japan/Korea. The effect of incentives on motivation, the effect of motivation on PWOM and the effects of incentives on PWOM were significant and positive for Australia/UK/USA and Japan/Korea. This suggests that the nine different incentive needs motivated individualist and collectivist tourists. Comparing the Australia/UK/USA and Japan/Korea groups demonstrated that the nine incentive needs more significantly influenced WOM motivation for Japan/Korea than for Australia/UK/USA.

The results contribute to understanding the relationship between incentives, motivation and PWOM. First, the incentives directly affecting WOM motivation and PWOM were tested, and

Table 7 Measurement invariance test using MICOM

Constructs	Configurational invariance (step 1)		Compositional invariance (step 2)		Partial measurement invariance	Equal variance assessment (step 3a)			Equal variance assessment (step 3b)		
	Yes	Original correlation	5.00%	Original correlation		Original differences	Confidence interval	Original differences	Confidence interval	Original differences	Confidence interval
PWOM	Yes	1.000	1.000	1.000	Yes	0.264	[-0.122; 0.137]	-0.346	[-0.174; 0.169]	No/No	
IN	Yes	1.000	0.999	0.999	Yes	-0.205	[-0.13; 0.121]	-0.198	[-0.194; 0.186]	No/No	
MO	Yes	0.999	0.999	0.999	Yes	-0.196	[-0.138; 0.128]	-0.278	[-0.201; 0.183]	No/No	

Notes: IN = incentive; MO = motivation; PWOM = positive word-of-mouth

Source: Table created by authors

Table 8 Comparative results between Australia/UK/USA and Japan/Korea

	<i>Original (Australia, UK and USA)</i>	<i>Original (Japan and Korea)</i>	<i>Bootstrap MGA</i>	<i>Permutation test</i>	<i>Supported</i>
Incentive \geq Future	0.299	0.404	-0.105	-0.105	No/No
Incentive \geq Motivation	0.579	0.800	-0.221***	-0.221***	Yes/Yes
Motivation \geq Future	0.424	0.330	0.094	0.094	No/No

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$
Source: Table created by authors

WOM motivation directly affected PWOM. All incentives significantly affected the Australia/UK/USA and Japan/Korea groups. To be given an honorary title, persuasion from KOL, and be regarded as important role influenced the Australia/UK/USA respondents the most. Free courses about the destination, social connections and discounts on the next trip to China were more influential incentives for the Japan/Korea group. Relatedness incentives were more important for the Asian group, implying that those from collectivist cultures tend to prefer building and strengthening relationships (Kitirattarkarn *et al.*, 2019); therefore, they tend to be more driven by relatedness needs. Finally, based on individualism and collectivist orientation, this research compared the models for both groups, and the results showed the critical role of cultural influence. Specifically, tourists from individualist and collectivist cultures were driven by nine incentives to communicate PWOM; however, incentives influenced tourists from collectivist cultures more.

The findings revealed that the effect of incentive type on motivation varied across national populations, and the intensity of the effects of incentive type on PWOM also varied. This extends the use of ERG theory to investigate whether tourism transmits PWOM. As for tourists from collectivist cultures, growth needs (*If I got free courses about Beijing, such as language and culture, I would be more likely to recommend Beijing.*) were more influenced WOM motivation than other incentives.

5.2 Theoretical contributions

Theoretically, the research contributes to the understanding of the needs for incentives driving motivation and PWOM among international tourists in light of their cultural orientations toward individualism and collectivism. Several contributions are made to the literature as a result of the research.

First, these results add new perspectives to the literature on the antecedents of WOM based on ERG theory. Knowing which incentives motivate different types of consumers to transmit WOM is essential for improving the understanding of the WOM phenomenon (Godes *et al.*, 2005). These results add new perspectives to the literature on the antecedents of WOM based on ERG theory. In addition to the motivations for spreading WOM mentioned in previous articles, including self-involvement (Dichter, 1966), altruism (Sundaram *et al.*, 1998), self-enhancement (Sundaram *et al.*, 1998) and economic rewards (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004), this research extends the study of WOM by adding new incentives in existence, relatedness and growth needs, and reviews the incentives that drive travelers to spread PWOM from the perspective of ERG theory.

Second, this research confirmed that examining the cultural differences that impact PWOM can provide insight into tourist behavior. Individualism and collectivism were compared, and the findings indicated that Hofstede's (1980) national cultural theory was applicable to the study of PWOM in tourism. This analysis compared individualism and collectivism, and its findings confirm the applicability of Hofstede's (1980) national cultural theory to WOM research. Tourists with a more collectivist culture tend to be more driven by the incentives covered in this research than those with an individualist culture. The possible reasons are that people with a more robust individualist culture base their decisions on their perceptions

(e.g. judgments of the one-sidedness of information) and are less susceptible to external drives. In contrast, those with a collectivist culture rely more on the community/group and are more susceptible to external drives.

Third, this study demonstrated that international destinations can further benefit from tourists' needs to cultivate secure cultural capital. According to Bourdieu (2018), cultural capital can be divided into three types: embodied, objectified and institutionalized. In this research, international tourists from Japan and Korea tended to give higher priority to the cultural courses about destinations, which reflects their tendency to secure embodied cultural capital. Embodied cultural capital can be identified in the form of embodied competencies or dispositions that carry cultural value (Crossley, 2001), like knowledge and skills. For international tourists from Western countries, the tendency to achieve institutionalized cultural capital, such as imposing recognition and reputation, was higher. This might reflect their tendency to secure institutionalized cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2018).

5.3 Practical implications

The findings provide critical practical implications for companies that adopt WOM marketing strategies to improve business performance. International marketers tend to segment global markets and consumers based on the country or culture to which the consumer belongs. This research shows that international destination managers should focus more on how to design incentives for honorary titles and KOL. The results indicate that managers should pay greater attention to international tourists' growth needs, such as awarding them honorary titles and recognizing them as important contributors.

This research supports the view that incentives influence motivation and behavior context-dependently (Etter, 2023; Fang *et al.*, 2013). The results suggest that marketers must identify and focus on individual cultural orientations to use different incentives to motivate tourists to communicate PWOM based on cultural backgrounds. Relatedness needs should be addressed more for Japanese and Korean tourists, and social connections should be effectively used for them. A relationship marketing approach might be a more effective method of promoting PWOM about international destinations (Samaha *et al.*, 2014).

5.4 Limitations and future research needs

This research inevitably had some limitations. First, it included only one cultural dimension, individualism-collectivism orientation, in the research model to explore the relationship between drivers of WOM motivation and future behavior (PWOM). This does not mean that other cultural dimensions do not influence the impact of incentives on WOM motivation. Other researchers should investigate the impacts of other cultural dimensions on WOM motivation in subsequent studies. Second, the design of this study focused on the effects of different types of motivations for PWOM cross-cultural differences. Therefore, the study did not statistically control individual differences, including personality traits (e.g. cognitive demand) and socioeconomic factors. Future research should consider controlling these respondent characteristics. Third, this study examined only the differences between two groups of countries but not the differences among countries within each group. It may be worthwhile to examine the differences between groups of countries as well as the differences among countries within a group.

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Further reading

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About the authors

Lina Zhong, PhD (Peking), is a Professor at the Institute for Big Data Research in Tourism, Beijing International Studies University. Her research interests are tourism big data analysis and regional planning for destinations.

Mengyao Zhu, is an MS Student at the Institute for Big Data Research in Tourism, Beijing International Studies University. Her research interests are consumer behavior, destination management and technology applications to tourism.

Xiaonan Li, is a PhD Student in the Asia-Pacific Academy of Economics and Management; Department of Integrated Resort and Tourism Management, Faculty of Business Administration, University of Macau, Taipa, Macao, S.A.R., China. Her research interests are smart tourism, smart hospitality and website evaluation.

Alastair M. Morrison, PhD (Purdue) is a Research Professor in the School of Management and Marketing, Greenwich Business School, University of Greenwich. His research interests include destination management and marketing, Internet marketing in tourism, consumer behavior and market segmentation. Alastair M. Morrison is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: a.morrison@greenwich.ac.uk

Mark Anthony Camilleri, PhD (Edinburgh) is an Associate Professor at the Department of Corporate Communication, University of Malta, Malta. His research interests are related to business strategy, sustainable development, corporate social responsibility reporting, tourism and technology adoption, among other topics.

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