What Matters to Travel Bloggers before the Trip? The Malaysian Travel Blogger and Tourist Perspective

N Alia Fahada W Ab Rahman, Monizaihasra Mohamed, Farizah Sulong, Mohd Roslan Rosnon, Azreen Jihan Che Mohd Hashim

What Matters to Travel Bloggers before the Trip? The Malaysian Travel Blogger and Tourist Perspective

N Alia Fahada W Ab Rahman[1], Monizaihasra Mohamed[2], Farizah Sulong[3,] Mohd Roslan Rosnon[4], Azreen Jihan Che Mohd Hashim[5]

[1,2,3]School of Business, Economics and Social Development, Universiti Malaysia Terengganu,21030 Kuala Nerus, Terengganu, Malaysia. [4]Department of Social & Development Sciences, Faculty of Human Ecology, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 UPM, Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia [5]Faculty of Economics and Muamalat, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, Bandar Baru Nilai, 71800, Nilai, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia
Email: n.alia@umt.edu.my

Abstract
Social media, particularly travel blog are increasingly relevant in tourism practices affecting destination and business. With the growth of internet-based social media technologies, tourists are able to communicate, interact and establish relationship with destinations, business and other tourists. Pre-visit stage of tourist experience involves activities that focussed on travel planning, in which travel blogs is considered as a rich sources of travel information. Through interviewing 19 travel bloggers, this study aims to understand travel bloggers behaviour and strategies at the pre-visit stage of tourist experience. The findings show that, travel bloggers engage with travel blogs with different behaviour which influenced by different motivations. It is also highlighted that interaction in blogosphere serves an important role in influencing travel bloggers engagement with travel blogs before the travel. The implication of the study and suggestion for future research are explained.
Keywords: Travel Blog, Blogging Motivation, Blog Engagement, Pre-Trip, Qualitative.

Introduction
Blogs are the social media equivalent of online diaries that presented in various mediums such as texts, photos and videos (Huang, Chou & Lin, 2010). Unlike traditional diaries, blogs offer a two-way communication between the blogger (the writer of the blog) and readers (Litvin, Goldsmith & Pan, 2008). The term 'blogger(s)' refers to the people, either an individual or a few

authors, who run and manage the blog and post an entry or comment. The activities and communities of blogs and bloggers are referred to as the 'blogosphere' (Carson, 2008). 'Entry' refers to one episode of travel stories, whereas 'comments' are the remarks in response to an entry or blog (Volo, 2010). Travel blogs are usually presented in a chronological order in a webpage interface that has a specific structure (Wenger, 2008): (1) header: information about the blogger, title and date of the entry; (2) body of the blog: may contain textual, visual and other files; and (3) comment boxes: a place where the audience can give feedback and interact with the author and other readers. Travel blogs are hosted by travel blog website providers.

Blogs have developed in tandem with technological advancement. The activity of updating a blog through a mobile device is known as *moblogging* (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2008). Moblogging allows a tourist to share the events or scenery that they capture through their mobile phone immediately rather than waiting until they arrive home. This advancement has enabled tourists to update their travel plans whilst still at their destination (Gretzel & Fesenmaier, 2009). The recounted travel stories assist tourists to remember and recollect the experience at the post-visit stage. This is due to; travel bloggers reported every aspect of their trips, including anticipation, planning and tourist activities (Pan et al., 2007). Thus, travel blog is part of tourist practise when they get home, where tourists recollect, evaluate, store and enhance their experience (Bosangit et al., 2012). Similarly, Jannson (2007) highlights the importance of sharing tourist experiences in blogs because in this way the magic of a trip can be extended through the construction of ideal ensembles of representation and through the immediate sharing of multi-sensory impressions. Narratives, photographs or videos shared on blogs can be revised and reordered into a logical context for a touristic memory-scape in a website, photo-sharing site or weblog which are then viewed by an extensive audience (Jansson, 2007).

Most of the previous studies into engagement with travel-related social media, including travel blogs, merely focus on the active engagement (such as producing content) and the motivation behind the active engagement (Bronner & Hoog, 2011; Munar & Jacobsen, 2014; Wang & Fesenmaier, 2003). Little work, however, has been done focusing on the other activities on blogs, such as replying or leaving comments and simply lurking. Van Dijck (2009) mentions that distinguishing different levels of engagement is crucial because it also enables an understanding of the engagement activities. Travel blogs also has been acknowledge as an alternative sources to understand tourist experience (Banyai & Glover, 2011; Banyai & Havitz, 2010; Carson, 2008). While travel blogs has been used extensively to understand many aspects in tourism including destination image (Li & Wang, 2011; Tse & Zhang, 2013), tourist experience construction (Bosangit et al.,2012; Bosangit et al.,2015) and as destination marketing tools (Pan et al., 2007; Sun, Ryan, & Pan, 2014), it is relatively little work has been done to understand the behaviour of travel bloggers in blogosphere, specifically at the pre-visit stage of tourist experience. Therefore, how travel bloggers as the consumers and producers of tourist experience engage in travel blogs remains important to explore to assurance the successful application of travel blogs as a marketing tools for tourism and hospitality environment. This study therefore aims to capture the behavior taken by travel bloggers at the pre-trip stage of tourist experience which unfold the motivations behind such behavior and also the underlying strategies of the blogging behavior before the trip.

Literature Review

Motivation

A common understanding among researchers is that a blogger engages within the blogosphere to gratify their information needs – their need to gather and disseminate information (Liu, Liao & Zhen, 2007). Researchers noted blogging is a multi-motivational activity (Nardi et al., 2004). Huang et al. (2007) proposed a research model that demonstrates that blogging behaviour and motivation are related to each other. The model identifies two blogging behaviours: interaction-oriented and information-oriented. Interaction-oriented behaviour is associated with self-expression, life-documenting and providing comments on other blogs, whereas information-oriented behaviour is related to commenting on other blogs, information searching and forum participation. Table 1.1 below presents the blogging motivations enumerated by prior researchers.

Table 1.1 Blogging Motivations

Authors	Motivation	Participants
Nardi et al (2004)	Life documentation	US bloggers
	Comment and give opinion	
	Express passions or obsessions	
	Communicate idea through writing	
	Form and maintain community	
Schmidt and Wilber (2005)	Fun	US bloggers
	Archive experience	
	Express own feelings	
	Exchange experience with others	
	Personal status and achievement	
Lenhart and Fox (2006)	To keep in touch with family and friends	US bloggers
	To document and share personal experience with others	
	To express themselves creatively	
	To motivate other people to action	
Huang et al. (2007)	Self-expression	Taiwanese bloggers
	Life documenting	
	Commenting	
	Community forum participation	
	Information seeking	
Miura and Yamashita(2007)	Benefit to self	Japanese bloggers
	Relationship with others	
	Skill in handling information	
Hsu and Lin (2008)	Ease of use	Taiwanese bloggers
	Reputation	
	Expected benefit	
	Enjoyment	
	Altruism	

(Summarised by the author, 2017)

As shown in Table1.1, sharing emotions, opinions (Nardi et al., 2004), personal experience (Lenhart & Fox, 2006), and information or knowledge (Lenhart & Fox, 2006) are the main motivations for blogging. There are also other motivations that relate to documenting or archiving one's personal life details (Huang et al., 2007; Lenhart & Fox, 2006; Nardi et al., 2004). These two motivations affected the bloggers themselves as the owner of the blog. In addition, some blogs could also affect others, for example by influencing, motivating or entertaining their readers (Hsu & Lin, 2008; Lenhart & Fox, 2006; Nardi et al., 2004; Schmidt, 2007). Another motivation for people to blog is to manage and support relationships within the blogosphere (Huang et al., 2007; Miura & Yamashita, 2007; Nardi et al., 2004). Focusing on the psychological and social influences of blogging behaviour in the Japanese context, Miura and Yamashita (2007) identified that benefits to self, relationship with others and skill in handling information significantly encourage bloggers to continue blogging. Their study also notes that the positive feedback gained through the interaction with readers motivates the bloggers to continue blogging.

Blogging motivation also can be understood from various perspectives and depends on the diverse topics and contents of the blogs. In this regard, the motivations for blogging can be further understood by distinguishing the functions or the purpose of blogs. For example, Bosangit (2012) emphasises that understanding blog's function shed some lights of the motivation for engaging with blogs. Adapted from Bosangit (2012), table 1.2 below presents the different functions of blogs and how they can motivate travel bloggers to engage with travel blogs in consuming and producing the tourist experience.

Table 1.2 Purposes and Motivations for Blogging

Purposes	Motivations	Authors
Self-identity Construction	Self-expression	Hsu and Lin (2008), Papacharissi (2004)
	Self-representation	Nardi et al. (2004)
	Build and enhance reputation	Lenhart and Fox (2006)
Life Documenting	Online record of an event or experience	Lenhart and Fox (2006); Nardi et al. (2004), Schmidt and Wilber (2005)
Social Networking	Meeting new people with the same interest	Hsu and Lin (2008), Lenhart and Fox (2006), Liu et al. (2007)
	Establishing network with people with the same interest	
	Maintaining the network by providing support to the people within the network	
Information Sharing	Sharing knowledge and communicate ideas	Huang et al. (2007), Hsu and Lin (2008), Liu et al. (2007), Nardi et al (2004), Schmidt and Wilber (2005)
Communication	To keep family and friends updated	Lenhart and Fox (2006)
Entertainment	Entertain oneself and others	Schmidt and Wilber (2005) Kaye (2005)

(Adapted from Bosangit, 2012)

As show in Table 1.2, blogs are widely used as a means for the bloggers to construct self-identity, document life, connect with others, share information, communicate, improve one-self and be entertained. Bloggers aiming to construct their self-identity are motivated by self-expression and self-representation with the objective of building and enhancing their reputation. Via blogging, they are able to show their inner selves to the world through expression of opinions, video casting and photography (Shao, 2009). In addition to constructing self-identity, people who blog to update and inform others of their activities are motivated to record their lives and experiences (Lenhart & Fox, 2006; Nardi et al., 2004). In this sense, they use a blog as a communication medium to keep family and friends updated of the events in their life (Lenhart & Fox, 2006). People also use blogs as a social networking tool and are motivated to meet new people with the same interests and maintain the established network by providing support to the people within the network (Hsu & Lin, 2008; Lenhart & Fox, 2006; Liu, Liao, & Zeng, 2007). The other function of blogs is information sharing, whereby bloggers who utilise this function are

motivated to share knowledge and communicate their ideas (Hsu & Lin, 2008; Huang et al., 2007; Liu et al., 2007; Nardi et al., 2004; Schmidt, 2007). Blogs are also used as a source of entertainment, whereby bloggers engage in various activities, such as gathering information and communicating with others, which enables them to fulfil various emotional needs, such as relaxing, being entertained and being excited (Kaye, 2005).

Engagement

Social media engagement including blogs, can be understood by examining the users' behaviour and activities (Shao, 2009; Nonnecke & Preece, 2001; Tedjamulia et al., 2005). Huang et al. (2007) highlight that, other than motivation, an understanding of bloggers' engagement through examining their blog activities is another aspect that needs to be considered to provide a holistic understanding of the blogging phenomenon. Unlike other media, such as television and radio, where audiences can choose to be a passive or active recipient of the messages, internet-based communication demands attention and activity (Kaye, 2005). Blogs may function either as either one-way or two-way communication, whereby the audience may choose to passively browse blogs or actively participate within the blogosphere. Both modes are used for different purposes to fulfil specific needs (Johnson & Kaye, 2004).

There has been limited work done to understand blogging behaviour further than the socio-demographic profile. For instance, an empirical study by Lenhart and Fox (2006) on US bloggers reveals what bloggers actually do: about 84% of bloggers go online daily, while the rest go online several times a day from home. Most of them spend five hours per week maintaining their blogs. Of these, almost half considered blogging as a hobby and 13% considered blogs as part of their lives, which indicates that blogging is important to them. Half of them own and maintain one blog and do not share authorship with anyone. They are also concerned about privacy as most of them use pseudonyms to keep their online life separate from their offline life. In terms of reading content, they prefer to read online news and to gather news from various sources. Further, the findings reveal that bloggers have a great interest in communication, as they took nearly every opportunity to communicate via blog. In terms of sharing, 77% of bloggers revealed that the content they shared was original work, including their own stories, photos or videos. Their sharing was mostly rooted in personal experience, and things that they had read or observed inspired them to blog.

Scholars have noted that people's engagement with online groups can be broken down into three levels: passive, moderate, and active. Table 1.3 presents and summarises these different levels of engagement (Baym, 2010; Nonnecke & Preece, 2001; Shao, 2009; Van Dijck, 2009). The different types of engagement identified are based on previous research on many types of social media, such as online communities, and internet engagement, and based on communication behaviour (Nonnecke & Preece, 2001; Shao, 2009; Tedjamulia et al., 2005; Van Dijck, 2009). As some of this research involved observing virtual communities (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004), it is assumed that the results and findings are also relevant to blogging in general. The engagement level is defined based on the activities performed by the individuals in the communities. The performed activities imply how bloggers use blogs, which can also be

another way of understanding their engagement. Table 1.3 provides the blogging behaviour which reflects the level of engagement.

Table 1.3 Types of Engagement within Online Communities

Level	Activity	Description	Authors
Passive	Consuming/ lurking	Browses and consumes available information but never posts.	Baym(2010), Nonnecke and Preece (2001; 2000) Shao (2009)
Moderate	Participating	Engagement in the provision of the content and with other users but the participant does not produce any content.	Shao (2009)
Active	Posting	Posts own content and responds to questions asked by other people.	Shao (2009), Van Djick, (2009)

(Summarised by the author, 2017)

Table 1.3 illustrates the three different types of engagement: consuming/lurking, participating and posting. Consuming/lurking (passive engagement) indicates that the individual only browses and consumes the available information but does not make any contribution to the blogs. Nonnecke and Preece (2000; 2001) describe an individual who only consumes information but never posts in the virtual community as a 'lurker' – a passive recipient consuming the content (Baym, 2010). In comparison, Shao (2009) defines a participating individual as one who engages in the provision of the content and interacts with other users but who does not produce any content themselves. This engagement can be classified as moderate, as the behaviour is between the passive and active engagement. The third type, posting, refers to an individual's active production of content and response to questions asked by others (Shao, 2009; Van Djick, 2009).

Previous studies on blogging specifically describe the users' behaviours in many ways (Gretzel, Kang & Lee, 2008; Lenhart & Fox, 2006; Schmidt, 2007; Wenger, 2008). Gretzel, Kang and Lee (2008) described the blogging behaviours in terms of adoption and use, for example time spent on blogs and how potential tourists use blogs for travel planning. Lenhart and Fox (2006) described blogging behaviour in terms of frequency of posts, hours spent on blogging and location of blogging. Schmidt (2007) reported on blogging behaviour by highlighting three issues: information management (reading blogs, providing RSS feeds, categories or tags), identity management (regularity of updating blogs, blog content and confession of personal information), and relationship management (network within the blog community, posting comments). Wenger (2008) described blogging practices by outlining the demographic characteristics, including the types of blogged trips, location of the posts, and the communicated aspects of their experience in blogs, such as transportation, attractions and accommodation. Hence, there is a need to understand blogging behaviour, in terms of the role of tourists (frequency of travel and travel information such as group or single traveller) and bloggers (blogging experience, number of

followers and types of content). These behaviours can influence the experience of blogging and engagement with the readers. Distinguishing the different types of blogging behaviours is significant for this study. Although it is understood that to be a blogger one must produce their own entries, it is also important to consider different types of engagement (i.e. consuming, participating and posting) when examining blogging behaviours.

Tourist Blogger and the Pre-visit Stage of Tourist Experience

The pre-visit stage is important as tourist bloggers explore, search for inspiration and communicate with others about the destination. Hence, Huang et al. (2010) highlight the opportunity for destinations to use new media, such as online tourist experience sharing (e.g., travel reviews and travel blogs), to assist in creating immersive virtual environments which enhance the tourist's experience even before their actual journey begins. Furthermore, online narratives (e.g., travel blogs) and digitised media, such as photographs and videos posted by tourists, can evoke jealousy so that potential tourists are stimulated to have the same experience. Compared to conventional promotional media (e.g., travel brochures and guidebooks), narrative that is created by tourist bloggers has a greater capacity to allow the potential tourist to experience a destination, thus making narrative an effective tool for influencing potential tourists' decision-making (Tussyadiah, Park & Fesenmaier, 2011; Volo, 2010) and facilitating potential tourist attention and stimulation (Grabe, Lang & Zhao, 2003).

Wang (2012) explores the way travel blogs influence the audience's behavioural intention to travel through affecting their perceived destination images. He suggests that travel blogs have assisted in building affective images (e.g., generating empathy and experiencing appeal) and cognitive images (e.g., providing guides), and facilitating interpersonal interactions (e.g., social influence) which create a strong impact on how a destination is perceived, and therefore enhance the intention to travel to the destination. Focusing on hotel and resort stays, Zehrer, Crotts and Magnini (2011) demonstrate that travel blogs have a strong influence on expectation creation. This is due to the blogs' readers considering the posting to be useful; both positive and negative perspectives of the experience are perceived to be helpful as they unfold a more trustworthy picture of a tourism product. The study also suggested that multiple posts that are congruent with each other are most influential, and that negative postings do not necessarily lead to bad perception if followed by a positive counter reply.

While the above mentioned studies emphasise consuming activities, the engagement with travel blogs at the pre-visit stage is not limited to only that type. Instead, engagement with blogs also provides a means for communicating experience between the content creators (bloggers) and the readers (Tussyadiah &Fesenmaier, 2009); bloggers encourage comments through links and comments boxes (Sorapure, 2003). Most importantly, the participatory and interactive features of blogs enhance their authenticity (Sorapure, 2003).

Methodology

This article is part of a wider research that examines the tourist experience constructed in travel blogs. The travel bloggers were selected through blog-specific search engines which are www.technorati.com, Google blog search, and IceRocket, using key words 'Malaysia', 'travel' and

'blog'. Researchers in travel blog research widely use search engines for their research (Banyai, 2009; Bosangit et al., 2009; Carson, 2008; Pan et al., 2007). The selection of travel blogs needs to meet certain criteria, which are:1) the blogs are written in English and Bahasa Melayu, 2) the bloggers are Malaysian who resides in Malaysia 3) the blogs at least have entries that posted within one-year period. The selection of only blogs written in English and Bahasa Melayu is due to researchers' familiarity with those languages. The collection of travel blogs written in a language accustomed to the researchers has also been a criterion of previous studies (see, for example, Bosangit, 2012; Mura, 2014; Volo, 2010).

Based on the selection criteria, 332 travel blogs were acknowledged. Then, the blogs content were screen. Their blogs had to contain multimedia (i.e texts, photos and videos), or at least a combination of texts and photographs. This criterion took down the sample to 40 bloggers. They bloggers (authors of the blogs) were contacted and 32 of them show the willingness to participate in this study. The recruitment of participants completed when the theoretical saturation had been accomplished. To confirm that saturation had been reached, the researcher applied a constant comparative method, in which data were collected and analysed contemporarily (Morrow, 2005). The researcher selects the first sample, analyses the data and then chooses a following sample to nurture the developing categories. This process is repeated until it reaches a point where no new insights would be expanded from growing the sample further (Ritchie, Lewis & Glam, 2003). For this reason, 19 participants were considered suitable for this study.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis involves categorising framework, which comprises taking steps to categorise the data into codes and themes to develop a pattern (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2005) which is also known as thematic analysis framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006). According to Braun and Clark (2006), to conduct thematic analysis, researcher should follow, which are (1) become familiar with the data; (2) generate initial codes; (3) search for themes; (4) review the themes; and (5) define and name the themes.

Results and Discussions

Table 1.4 describe the the participants included 10 males and 9 females. Most of the participants were between 25 and 39 years, two participants were between 40 and 54 years, and only one participant was aged below 24. They were employed in various fields: education, law, engineering, information technology, communication and advertising. Some of them were self-employed, running their own business, while two were full time bloggers. Full time bloggers refer to those who make a living through their blogs. On certain occasions, they were invited to travel to certain sites, and then promote the sites in their blogs. However, for this study purpose, the selection destination was strictly based on non-sponsored vacations. It appears that all the participants were well educated. A majority of the participants hold a bachelor degree, while six had completed postgraduate degrees. The rest were high school leavers.

Table 1.4 Bloggers profile and blog's usage

No	Participant	Gender	Age	Occupation	Education	Years of blogging	Number of followers	Travel frequency in a year (trips)	Frequency of blog usage
1	Adam	Male	25-39	Engineer	Postgraduate	2	891	1-4	2-3 hours a day (mostly at work)
2	Amin	Male	25-39	Engineer	Undergraduate	3	682	1-4	Everyday
3	Daniel	Male	25-39	Journalist	Undergraduate	5	1,021	4-8	9 hours a day (mostly at work)
4	Mimi	Female	25-39	Marketing executive	Undergraduate	3	617	4-8	Everyday
5	Farah	Female	25-39	Bakery owner	Undergraduate	6	311	1-4	Everyday
6	Johan	Male	25-39	IT consultant	Undergraduate	3	603	4-8	Everyday
7	Mariah	Female	25-39	Stay at home mother	High school	8	216	1-4	Once in a while
8	Faris	Male	25-39	Engineer	Postgraduate	6	2,461	4-8	2-3 hours a day (after work)
9	Ani	Female	-	Journalist	Undergraduate	8	1,105	4-8	Everyday
10	Sarah	Female	25-39	Student	Postgraduate	4	415	1-4	Everyday
11	Haries	Male	18-24	Full time blogger	High school	6	926	4-8	All the time
12	Ramli	Male	40-54	Full time blogger	Undergraduate	6	2,318	4-8	Everyday
13	Fasha	Female	25-39	Advertising agent	Postgraduate	4	582	1-4	8 hours a day (mostly at work)
14	Fatimah	Female	25-39	Lawyer	Undergraduate	3	1,180	1-4	2-3 hours a day

									(after work)
15	Laili	Female	25-39	IT consultant	Undergraduate	4	741	4-8	Everyday
16	Maryam	Female	25-39	Graphic designer	Undergraduate	2	300	4-8	2-3 hours a day (mostly at work)
17	Hazel	Male	40-54	Lecturer	Postgraduate	3	510	1-4	1-2 hours a day (mostly after work)
18	Kamal	Male	25-39	Lawyer	Undergraduate	6	338	1-4	1-2 hours a day (mostly at work)
19	Khairy	Male	25-39	Public relations executive	Undergraduate	3	3,205	4-8	Everyday

Blogging Behavior and Strategies

This research aims to provide insight of bloggers behavior in engaging with travel blog at the pre-visit stage. It is found that travel bloggers have different behavior that lead by different motivation at the pre-visit stage of tourist experience. Engagement with travel blogs is related to an individual's motivations for blogging. At the pre-visit stage, the instrumental motivation influenced their engagement. Seven participants expressed that they only consumed travel blogs and did not interact any further. In this regard, they completely agreed that their motivation related to gratify informational needs and therefore they only had a limited activity performed on blogs before a trip. This suggests that the behavior of merely browsing and reading blogs enabled the tourist to fulfil their informational needs. Eight of them extended their engagement with travel blogs by not only reading travel blog content, but at the same time commenting on the read content. Interestingly, they shared the same motivation with those who merely read blogs – primarily to gratify informational needs. In this regard, they initially started their engagement by only reading the blogs. The initial behavior was driven by the information seeking, during which they felt that by only reading the blogs, their needs were not able to be fulfilled, therefore they extended their engagement to a moderate level. They interacted with the bloggers through commenting on posts. They perceived that through travel blogs, they could gain instrumental benefits (i.e., solving their information-seeking problems). In this regard, they received instrumental support from 'experienced people' who were knowledgeable in specific destinations and could help them solve problems and give them travel tips. To fully understand travel blogging behavior and motivations related to browsing and commenting, this section

expanded the discussion by highlighting what participants searched for in blogs. Also, although only four participants produced their own content before travelling, it is important to highlight and discuss this behavior by specifically looking at what they produced and when the posts were produced.

Content Referred to in Blogs
It was found that participants looked for detailed information in blogs. Travel blogs were considered a primary site for them to search for information. For example, for information seeking and gathering, Fatimah mentioned that she rarely referred to blogs before travelling. Even though she considered herself to be among the pioneers of Malaysian bloggers, due to her involvement in the Malaysian Blogging Community and blogging experience, she only made limited reference to blogs while preparing for her travel. In this sense, travel blogs appeared to be the last choice for obtaining desired information. This however highlights the important role play by travel blogs in supplying travel information. In contrast, however blogs were used when it is impossible to find the desired information elsewhere. Travel blogs became a source of information which was impossible to obtain elsewhere. The type of content and information referred to in blogs at the pre-visit stage of tourist experience is obviously related to the instrumental motivation. The below statement from Fatimah illustrates how travel blog satisfied her information seeking needs even though they were not her primary information searching source.

> I normally asked friends who had been there, and who stay there. It would be much easier to ask friends who are staying there because they would recommend places that less people go. My aim is to uncover infamous attraction. The locals would know that. Next, I do research via google map to know about transportation and location. It's all depends on what the attraction there. Thus, I would refer many sources. I do refer to blogs but I seldom do that. I only do that in case I could not get them. So I have no choice. Like Pulau Karimujawa, I have not heard of that Pulau before and I knew it from my blogger friend. He mentioned about that and included some pictures and I was so curious to know more about that Pulau. When you google, you don't really know how to get there (Fatimah)

Based on her statement, fulfilling her information seeking needs was highlighted as she specifically disclosed the types of information that she looked for in blogs. It is suggested that travel blogs are relevant sources for potential tourists from which to access personalized and off the beaten path information, especially to unpopular destination. Fatimah perceived that a travel blog was an appropriate site at which to dig for the information that she needed to travel to an unpopular destination.

Other than that, to clearly explain the relationship between instrumental motivations with participants behavior before at the pre-visit stage of tourist experience, the influence of blogging to their pre-visit behavior. The influence of blogging on participants' decision-making before travelling was also studied. This was important to clearly explain the relationship between

instrumental motivation and participants' behaviour at the pre-visit stage of the tourist experience. Participants used blogs to assist them with creating their travel itinerary. They specifically searched for other itineraries, because the narratives in blogs usually contain detailed descriptions of the trip, from departure until they reach home (Pan et al., 2007; Volo, 2009). For this reason, a storytelling style was preferred, as it gave them more pleasure to read, as suggested by Haries in the statement below:

> I like texts been told in dramatic way and it is sort of reading a novel but in a more relaxing way. I think because it speaks more about that person's experience and if we are searching for facts, there are many websites about it. Facts are more like a "dry" statement and yes they are more straightforward. When reading travel stories, it is like you are communicating with the writer… By referring to blog, it is easy to duplicate. I mean, it is nice to do it your way (Haries)

Similar to Fatimah, Haries's statement suggests that blogs were referred to only because of the nature of information offered. He preferred blogs as his information source as he enjoyed reading about others' experience and it seemed to replicate the traditional storytelling mode. A well-crafted story allowed him to imagine himself talking to the narrator. He highlighted that others' experiences led to much easier travel planning, as the storytelling assisted him to digest the experience and influenced his decision-making. Storytelling allowed him to 'follow' the experience and in the end it assisted his decision-making – he could adapt others' itineraries to his own preferences.

Travel blogs appeared to be the basis of potential tourists' decision-making. As travel bloggers' narration is based on personal stories, travel blogs were considered as a guide for travel planning. It was found that travel blogs provided personalized information that was similar to the participants' interests and needs, as mentioned by Maryam in the below statement.

> I search for personal stories, usually to study their itinerary. There are many types of travel blog; one is narrative and also facts. By referring to their stories, I will come out with my own itinerary. I usually travel alone and I will look for more information. I am a lady thus I need to find a safer route. There are many female bloggers out there that travel by themselves, so it is quite easy to find such information. (Maryam)

A clear link between motivation and the browsing contents is presented by Sarah. Like Maryam, Sarah, with regards to her long-awaited trip in 2013, explained that she did not get involved in any other travel blog activities except for reading and gathering information to prepare for the trip, as described in this statement below:

> I browse and search for information and travel guide before I travel. Normally I do not post anything at this stage, as my main focus is to gather information and plan for my travel…I always search for logic, reliable information and how to move from one place to another in blogs. (Sarah)

It is highlighted that instrumental motivation controlled and influenced her blogging behaviour before the travel. This is because browsing and reading satisfied her needs and therefore she did not have any interest in undertaking any other activities, such as posting content or commenting on others' blogs. To justify the motivation behind her engagement, she further explained that her active consumption of travel blogs was to fulfil her information searching needs. Her motivation was then emphasized as she mentioned the characteristics of the information that she sought from the travel blogs. The fact that she purely consumed travel blogs and did not engage in further, such as comments or post contents any other activities in the blogosphere suggests that by consuming travel blogs, the information seeking desire can be fulfilled. This also reflects the activities that occur in the pre-visit stage, which is tourists prepare themselves for the travel. Sarah further conveyed her thoughts about her motivation to merely read travel blogs before she travelled:

> When I browse blogs, it is enough for me to only read what they shared. As long as I understand it, it is enough for me. (Sarah)

The findings suggested that most of them view the consumption of information as more important than producing content prior to their actual trips. This is consistent with what Nonnecke and Preece (2001) have highlighted when explaining the browsing behaviour, which is characterized at the pre-visit stage by information searching and travel preparation rather than producing their own content. The most common mentioned reason for not posting or commenting on blogs was that just browsing or reading was enough (Preece, et al., 2004). In the travel blog context, for the participants who were motivated by information seeking, there was no reason for them to extend their engagement at the pre-visit stage, as they got what they wanted through browsing and reading.

Types of Content Post

The types of content posted at the pre-visit stage of the tourist experience were influenced by the participants' posting behaviour, strategies and motivation. It was found that two distinct strategies were adopted. First, for Johan, although he posted before he travelled, he tended to keep the travel destination a secret. He gave a hint that he would be travelling soon, but the destination remained unknown. The 'secret' strategy adopted by him was designed to attract readers' attention and encourage them to follow his travel. This was considered as a tactic to make the readers eagerly wait for his update:

> To some extent, I am a secretive guy (laugh). So you can see from my blog, no picture of me, right? I prefer to put something that attract readers' attention and encourage them to comments, like what I did in my blog for Myanmar's trip which I let them guessing where I am travelling to. (Johan)

The second strategy was that the participants openly shared their upcoming trips. They openly revealed their destinations, including the travel itinerary and the progress of their travel preparation.

Usually, I used travel blog for an extensive information searching. In addition to that, I also shared entries related to travel preparation for example, the visa application, passport, itinerary, accommodation, transportation, and may more. I put all this things for them (the readers) to refer before they start their journey. At the same time, I share my travel enthusiasm actually. The readers also seemed to be excited, by suggesting me to do this and that, crazy ideas come, and it was fun. (Adam)

Based on Adam's comments, the detailed sharing of his travel preparations at the pre-visit stage of the tourist experience was aimed at helping his readers to prepare for their own travel. At the same time, he shared his travel excitement with the readers. Interestingly, was found that the instrumental motivation that related to information seeking not only influenced the browsing behaviours, but also drove the participants to produce their own content and participated with the others' content. Jeong and Jang (2011) suggest that the electronic environment serves as an innovative medium for people to search for reliable information. This study has discovered that reliable information can be obtained through a posting contents and interacting with others' posts, bloggers were able to gain reliable information from those who had already travelled to that destination. Asking for suggestions through posting content was generally a strategy to gather more information from various sources, including the readers. The following accounts illustrate how Mimi considered the instrumental motivation as one of the motivations for blog posting before the travel.

I need quick and instant information. So I welcome any suggestions that made my information searching easier. Some of them are very helpful by giving links to reasonable rate of hotel booking, and some left their personal tips, such as what things that should not be missed. I know it sounds cliché, but I really taking them seriously as the fellow bloggers really explore something that worth doing it. (Mimi)

Considering that the participants as potential tourists are exposed to a variety of information sources (including mainstream websites, and other promotional media, such as destination marketing websites and brochures), their instrumental motivation not only highlights the importance of travel blogs in helping them in their travel preparation, but also emphasizes the unique characteristics of travel blogs that make potential tourists choose them over any other source. These include the convenience, usefulness and reliability of travel blogs. This is consistent with Johnson and Kayne (2004) who conclude that blogs are more trustworthy than traditional media.

Conclusion
The travel blog engagement and motivations shaped and influenced tourist activities and their interpretation and subjective perceptions, which are vital parts of the tourist experience (Jennings & Weiler, 2006). Tourist activities refer to those activities at the pre-visit, on-site and post-visit stage. At the pre-visit stage, most of the participants stated that travel preparation was easier than ever before, because of their engagement with travel blogs. Some of them associated

travel blogs with: (1) ease of use – due to travel blogs covering a wide range of travel information; (2) trustworthiness – due to the fact that travel bloggers have been acknowledged as sharing unbiased and real experiences compared to other promotional media, such as official destination websites; and (3) accurate and realistic information – due to being able to communicate with other readers and the content creators as well, from whom they can seek clarification on unclear information.

Also, some participants highlighted that engaging with travel blogs had impacted on their travel planning. Travel patterns, accommodation, destination and activities could all be influenced and shaped by blogs and interaction within the blogosphere. Travel blogs offered various and detailed information, including suggested travel itineraries, and specific information (such as the best time to be at certain destination to avoid crowds), hot tips, things to avoid and so on. This influenced their expectations about the destination, and as a consequence, their travel planning became more thorough. Information acquired through the interaction is often perceived as more credible compared to conventional marketing (Akehurst, 2009). Thus, this study highlights that travel blog interaction appears to be the fastest and most convenient way for potential tourists to evaluate a destination prior to visiting, and is more influential in shaping their expectations compared to traditional media. In addition, because travel blogs provide off the beaten path information, different to conventional media, this also increased potential tourists' travel planning. They undertook more travel planning than before because they wanted to discover a 'hidden' attraction. Also, communication with other travel bloggers who had been to the same destination increased planning effort because they suggested some interesting activities to do and spots to visit. As a result, the participants tended to do more travel preparation than before.

Travel blog engagement also influenced the affective tourist experience. For example, by obtaining personalized information and gaining a more realistic image and perception of the destination, they were able to properly equip themselves and feel confident about travelling. They highlighted that as they were well informed, they could fully enjoy the travel without worrying unnecessarily. Also, communicating with readers who had already been there gave them more excitement and created a desire to have the same experience. The hedonic motivation therefore changed their affective tourist experience.

Conclusion and Implication

At the pre-visit stage, travel blogs is highlighted to be as a place where the bloggers seek for inspiration, expectation creation and travel planning assistance. This is due to, travel bloggers engagement with travel blogs merely limited to browsing and participating with the blog content, and only a few of them produce their own contents before the travel. It is also interesting to discover that although most of the travel bloggers are active bloggers, they tend to be a "lurker" at the pre-visits stage. Oliveira et al, (2020) posit that it is important to unfold the behaviours of "lurkers", who travel but do not share their experience. Thus, this study provides insight of understanding this lurker behaviour in travel blogs context. This study has contributed to both theoretical and managerial implication. The theoretical contribution of this studies lies in its attempts to provide an understanding of the individual's behaviour and strategies of travel blogs

engagement at the pre-visit stage of tourist experience. Past research on travel blogs merely focus on the behaviour and motivation of sharing tourist experience after the trip is completed (Yoo & Gretzel, 2008, Rahman et al., 2017). By addressing this gap, this study, therefore provides a holistic understanding of how travel bloggers engage with travel blogs before the trip. The findings also shows that their engagement in travel blogs before the travel not only influence their travel planning activities, but also shape their behaviour in sharing tourist experience when the trip is completed. This is evidence by their desire to provide and share more exciting and different experience to the audience.

The results of this study are consistent with previous studies on social media (see for example, Choe, Kim, Fesenmaier, 2017) that demonstrate that tourist use of social media is very dynamic, as the nature of the social media change throughout the stages of tourist experience. In travel blog context, it is found that its function blocks the bloggers to engage with it particularly at the pre-visit stage. However, for some of them who engage with travel blog by posting content, it is discovered that there are interesting strategies behind their behaviours. As such their behaviour is related to their obligation and excitement to "be" in the blogosphere. The results of the study demonstrate that bloggers usage of travel blog is significantly dynamic and depends not only on the decision context they are facing at the time, for example, the other options of availability of travel information to help them in travel planning, but also related to the features of the blogs itself. The findings therefore provide a persuasive information, by outlining who accesses what content at the pre-visit stage of tourist experience. This study also contributes to managerial implication. DMO particularly can develop an effective marketing plan that fits with the need of user in assisting tourists travel planning. For instance, the application provider can create an application that is more mobile friendly for bloggers, in which they can write, store and share their experience simultaneously while the tourists are travelling. This study provides insight of the blogging behaviour and strategies at the pre-visit stage of tourist experience. Further research, should therefore investigate travel blogging behaviour at the other stages of tourist experience, for instance at the on-site and post-trip visit. By doing so, a holistic understanding of blogging behaviour in tourism context can be achieved.

Reference
Akehurst, G. (2009). User generated content: the use of blogs for tourism organisations and tourism consumers. *Service Business 3*, 51-61. doi: 10.1007/s11628-008-0054-2
Bosangit, C., Dulnuan, J., & Mena, M. (2012). Using travel blogs to examine the postconsumption behavior of tourists. *Journal of Vacation Marketing, 18*(3), 207-219. doi: 10.1177/1356766712449367
Bosangit, C., Hibbert, S., & McCabe, S. (2015). "If I was going to die I should at least be having fun": Travel blogs, meaning and tourist experience. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 55, 1-14. doi:10.1016/j.annals.2015.08.001
Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology, 3*(2), 77-101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Carson, D. (2008). The 'blogosphere' as a market research tool for tourism destinations: a case study of Australia's Northen Territory. *Journal of Vacation Marketing, 14*(2), 111-119. doi: 10.1177/1356766707087518

Carson, D. (2008). The 'blogosphere' as a market research tool for tourism destinations: a case study of Australia's Northen Territory. *Journal of Vacation Marketing, 14*(2), 111-119. doi: 10.1177/1356766707087518

Choe, J. Kim, D. R., Fesenmaier. (2017). Use of social media across the trip experience: An application of latent transition analysis. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, *34* (*4*) (2017), pp. 431-443

Gretzel, U., & Fesenmaier, D. (2009). Information Technology: Shaping the Past, Present and Future of Tourism. *Handbook of Tourism Studies*.

Huang, C. Y., Shen, Y. Z., Lin, H. X., & Chang, S. S. (2007). Bloggers' motivations and behaviors: A model. *Journal of Advertising Research, 47*(4), 472–484.
doi: 10.2501/S0021849907070493

Huang, C. Y., Chou, C. J., & Lin, P. C. (2010). Involvement theory in constructing bloggers' intention to purchase travel products. *Tourism Management, 31*(4), 513-526. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2009.06.003

Hsu, C. L., & Lin, J. C. C. (2008). Acceptance of blog usage: The roles of technology acceptance, social influence and knowledge sharing motivation. *Information & Management, 45*(1), 65-74. doi:10.1016/j.im.2007.11.001

Jansson, A. (2007). A sense of tourism: new media and the dialectic of encapsulation/decapsulation. *Tourist Studies, 7*(1), 5-24. doi: 10.1177/1468797607079799

Jeong, E., & Jang, S. S. (2011). Restaurant experiences triggering positive electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) motivations. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 30*(2), 356-366. doi:10.1016/j.ijhm.2010.08.005

Kaye, B. K. (2005). It's a blog, blog, blog world: Users and uses of weblogs. *Atlantic Journal of communication, 13*(2), 73-95. doi:10.1207/s15456889ajc1302_2

Kim, J., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (2015). Sharing tourism experiences: The post-trip experience. *Journal of Travel Research*. doi:10.1177/0047287515620491

Lenhart, A., & Fox, S. (2006). *Bloggers: A portrait of the internet's new storytellers*. USA: PEW Internet and American Life Project.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry* (Vol. 75). Beverly Hills Sage.

Liu, S.-H., Liao, H.-L., & Zeng, Y.-T. (2007). Why people blog: an expectancy theory analysis. *Issues in Information Systems, 8*(2), 232-237.

Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative Reserach Design: An Interactive Approach. Thousand Oaks* (2nd ed.). California: Sage Publications.

Miura, A., & Yamashita, K. (2007). Psychological and social influences on blog writing: An online survey of blog authors in Japan. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 12*(4), 1452-1471. doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00381.x

Nardi, B. A., Schiano, D. J., Gumbrecht, M., & Swartz, L. (2004). Why we blog. *Communications of the ACM, 47*(12), 41-46.

Nonnecke, B., & Preece, J. (2001). *Why lurkers lurk*. Paper presented at the Seventh Americas Conference on Information Systems, Boston.

Oiveira,T., Araujo, B.,& Tam,C. (2020). Why do people share their travel experiences on social media?*. Tourism Management,78(2020). In press.*

Pan, B., Maclaurin, T., & Crotts, J. C. (2007). Travel blogs and the implications for destination marketing. *Journal of Travel Research, 46*, 35-45. doi: 10.1177/0047287507302378

Pearce, P. L. (2005). *Tourist behaviour: Themes and conceptual schemes* (Vol. 27). Clevedon: Channel View Books.

Rahman, W. A. (2017). Why we blog? The Malaysian travel blogger and tourist perspective. *Journal of Tourism, Hospitality and Environment Management*, 2(4), 12-18.

Ritchie, J., & Lewis, J. (2003). *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. London: Sage Publications.

Schmidt, J. (2007). Blogging practices: An analytical framework. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 12*(4), 1409-1427. doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00379.x

Shao, G. (2009). Understanding the appeal of user-generated media: a uses and gratification perspective. *Internet Research, 19*(1), 7-25. doi 10.1108/10662240910927795

Tedjamulia, S. J. J., Dean, D. L., Olsen, D. R., & Albrecht, C. C. (2005). *Motivating content contributions to online communities: Toward a more comprehensive theory.* Paper presented at the 38th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences.

Tse, T. S., & Zhang, E. Y. (2013). Analysis of Blogs and Microblogs: A Case Study of Chinese Bloggers Sharing Their Hong Kong Travel Experiences. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 18(4), 314-329.   doi: 10.1080/10941665.2012.658413

Tussyadiah, I. P., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (2008). Marketing places through first-person stories: an analysis of pennsylvania roadtripper blog. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing 25*(3-4), 299-311. doi: 10.1080/10548400802508358

Tussyadiah, I. P., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (2009). Mediating tourist experiences. access to places via shared videos *Annals of Tourism Research, 36*(1), 22-40. doi: 10.1016/j.annals.2008.10.001

Teijlingen, V. E. R., Rennie, A. M., Hundley, V., & Graham, W. (2001). The importance of conducting and reporting pilot studies: the example of the Scottish Births Survey. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 34*(3), 289-295.

Wang, Y., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (2004). Modeling participation in an online travel community. *Journal of Travel Research, 42*(3), 261-270. doi: 10.1177/0047287503258824

Wang, Y., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (2003). Understanding the Motivation of Contribution in Online Communities :An Empirical Investigation of an Online Travel Community. *Electronic Markets*, 13, 33-45.

Wenger, A. (2008). Analysis of travel bloggers' characteristics and their communication about Austria as a tourism destination. *Journal of Vacation Marketing, 14*(2), 169-167. doi: 10.1177/1356766707087525

Zehrer, A., Crotts, J. C., & Magnini, V. P. (2011). *The perceived usefulness of blog postings: An extension of the expectancy disconfirmation paradigm.* Paper presented at the

International Conference on Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism Innsbruck, Austria.