

# The Effects of Self-Congruity and Functional Congruity on e-WOM: The Moderating Role of Self-Construal in Tourism

Qin Yang\* · Young-Chan Lee\*\*

## 〈Content〉

I. Introduction	III. Results
II. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development	IV. Conclusion
2.1 Self-Congruity and Functional Congruity	4.1 Academic Implications
2.2 Electronic Word of Mouth(e-WOM)	4.2 Managerial Implications
2.3 Moderating Effects of Self-Construal	4.3 Limitations
	References
	<Abstract>

## I. Introduction

From the tourism literatures, it describes that psychological (e.g. self-concept) and functional variables positively impact tourists' loyalty to a destination. Through review of previous literature it found that self-congruity and functional congruity are important elements to predict customers' behavior. In tourism area, self-congruity refers to the match or mismatch between tourist self-image and perceived destination image, on the other hand,

functional congruity deals with the match or mismatch between perceived utilitarian benefits of a destination and tourists' expectations to utilitarian benefits of a destination. Tour firms spend huge sums every year to attract foreign tourists. It is not surprising since previous researches linked self-congruity and functional congruity to customer attitude/intention, repurchase intention and loyalty. Especially by reviewing a number of consumer behavior studies, we found that many scholars have explained the

\* Ph.D. Student, International Business Cooperative Course, Graduate School of Dongguk University, yangqin9900@126.com

\*\* Professor, Dept. of Business Administration, Dongguk University, chanlee@dongguk.ac.kr, Corresponding Author

role of self-concept in determining consumer behavior intentions in different perspectives of products and services (Sirgy and Su, 2000). Surprisingly, few of the past studies focused on the reasons that re-purchase or recommend some products or services to others. Owing to the limitations of the current research area, there is a need to find out the reasons behind the psychological phenomenon in tourism industry. In the past few years, with the advance of technology, social network services become a core platform for users to share and exchange consumption related opinions. This new type of word-of-mouth communication (electronic word-of mouth: hereafter e-WOM) got much attention from both managers and scholars. However, there were few empirical studies for investigating psychological determinants on e-WOM practice in social network service until now, especially in tourism field. Therefore, this study tries to explore self-congruity and functional congruity that affect tourists' e-WOM behavior. In this study, we seek to gain a deeper understanding of psychological factors driving positive e-WOM, we emphasize e-WOM due to wide use of internet and mobile contents, and e-WOM is a powerful tool which can influence consumers. Particularly, tour is a kind of intangible service, as a result, psychological factors play an important role in determining tourists' word of mouth, and here we focus on e-WOM. With the help of those previous

studies, in our study, the psychological phenomenon behind why tourists recommend (e-WOM) can be explained through self-congruity and functional congruity.

In online community, e-WOM involvement can be triggered by how consumers regard themselves in relation with others in their friend circle. The relation can be characterized as notion of independent self-construal and interdependent self-construal. Depend on different dimensions of self-construal, in the process of participating e-WOM, people who emphasize individual value will have the intention to distinguish themselves from other people and focus on internal features and uniqueness. If there is congruity between self-concept and a target product or service, in order to reflect bounded, unitary and stable self, people will naturally pass on their inner value to others to differentiate themselves from out groups. On the other side, some other people those with interdependent self-construal are tend to have a more dependent notion of self that emphasize cooperative and supportive behavior and social connection. After consumption, people with interdependent self-construal would like to convey their experience to others to help them make decision in the future. In this paper, we argue that according to degree of congruity between expected functionality and actual functionality of a destination, tourists with interdependent self-construal are likely to help others by

passing along travel experiences. Hence, the notion of self-construal should be regarded as an essential factor evoking e-WOM. For the discussions above, people have chronic differences in the relative strength of two dimensions of self-construal. In particular, this study discusses the importance of tourists' self-construal, as a moderating role, to moderate the relationship between self-congruity and e-WOM, between functional congruity and e-WOM. We raise these questions: is the relationship between self-congruity and functional congruity also can be proved in tourism? Does self-congruity positive affect tourists' positive e-WOM? Does functional congruity positive affect tourists' positive e-WOM? How self-construal will moderate these relationships? Arguably, this is the first study of its kind which has been performed in Korea tourism context. The results provide implications for management strategies for developing and improving destination facilities.

## **II . Literature Review and Hypotheses Development**

### **2.1 Self–Congruity and Functional Congruity**

Self-congruity deals with the concept of the cognitive matching between value-expressive

particularity of any given product or service and consumer self-concept (Sirgy et al., 1991). In tourism area, more specifically, self-congruity refers to the match between tourists' self concept and perceived image of a given destination (Hung and Petrick, 2011). Sirgy et al. (1991) conducted four studies and found that consumer behavior is predicted by self-congruity and functional congruity. Furthermore, functional congruity is influenced by self-congruity. The congruence between perceived image of products or services and self-concept can result in favor for the products or services, in turn, it will lead to recommendation, in other words, people tend to connect their self-images to products' or services' image (Hung and Petrick, 2011). From previous customer behavior literatures, there were two main types of congruity: self and functional congruity and self-congruity contains four dimensions---actual self, ideal self, social self and ideal social self. Actual self and ideal self have been studied most frequently in most related researches and the current study also focuses on actual self-congruity and ideal self-congruity. Moreover, self-congruity and functional congruity have been recognized as important psychological determinants of consumer behavior (He and Mukherjee, 2007). For instance, a store illuminated by soft light may create a luxurious image of the store and provide customers with the image of affluence (Sirgy et al., 2000). It

is necessary and persuasive to use value expressive evaluative criteria and utilitarian criteria for estimating consumer behavior. In addition, it would be quite useful for marketing managers to understand these psychological factors behind consumer behavior since it can help them to promote their products and services.

On the other hand, in customer behavior research functional congruity refers to “the match between consumers’ ideal utilitarian expectations of specific products or service and their perceived utilitarian benefits of the products or services”. That is to say, functional congruity describes the differences between customer perception towards some products or services before the consumption and their evaluation after the consumption (Kang et al., 2012). For example, in the study of Kang et al. (2015), it showed that customers seek to match some diverse functional attributes with their expectations and actual experience such as gourmet coffee drinks, premium prices, a relaxed store atmosphere. In tourism area the utilitarian attributes of a destination include natural landscape, historic places, monuments, hotels, restaurants, building designs, and transportation facilities, availability and quality of the destination services etc. (Ahn et al., 2013). In some previous marketing literatures, it proved that the greater the degree of congruence, the higher the probability of intention to consumption (Usakli and Baloglu,

2011). Tourism is one of the new areas that self-congruity theory has been examined (Hung and Petrick, 2011). Until now, some previous studies proved that the greater the match between the destination’s image and the tourists’ self-concept, the more likely that the tourists’ have a favorable attitude toward that destination, in turn, this will bring some future behavior, this matching process is what we called self-congruity. Sirgy and Su (2000) also proposed that self-congruity can be a useful approach to explain why people visit a particular destination. In addition, because lack of empirical studies, it is necessary to conduct studies in the relationship between self-congruity and tourist behavior (Usakli and Baloglu, 2011). Functional congruity has often been examined together with self-congruity in prior marketing studies and functional congruity also affects destination travel behavior and may be related to self-congruity (Sirgy and Su, 2000). Furthermore, some other studies indicate that self-congruity and functional congruity have a direct effect on customer behavior (Hung and Petrick, 2011; Kumar and Nayak, 2014; Kang et al., 2015; Sirgy et al., 2005; Beerli et al., 2007). Due to the relationship between self-congruity and functional congruity has been discussed in previous studies already, this paper raises a question that is their relationship generalized to other areas, other behavior variables or other consumer population?

## 2.2 Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM)

The importance of WOM and e-WOM in marketing has been widely discussed, particularly since the development of Internet technologies (Jalilvand et al., 2012), positive and negative reaction to consumption experiences formed inner tension and then resulted in expression in the form of WOM or e-WOM (Litvin et al., 2008). Nowadays the social network services can provide a platform for consumers to spread e-WOM widely, which attracts many scholars to focus on the research of e-WOM effect (Wang et al., 2012). Several previous studies in tourism area also proved that self-congruity or functional-congruity is related with tourist's behavior intention which include word of mouth (Usakli and Baloglu, 2011; Hung and Petrick, 2011; Kumar and Nayak, 2014). Social network services have created many opportunities for electronic word of mouth communication. This phenomenon impacts destination managers' consideration of e-WOM as a kind of easy accessible information which may greatly affect consumption decision in tourism industry (Wang et al., 2012). In addition, recently, compare to traditional social network sites, mobile network sites play a more essential role in our daily life. With regard to the current trend for social networking websites, such as Facebook, has created mobile

apps to give their users instant and real-time access from their device. Compare to other traditional market oriented information, e-WOM is considered to be more influential because e-WOM generated from consumers' consumption experiences which is more credible. Based on the reasoning, the following hypotheses are formally stated:

- H1: Self-congruity will have a positive effect on tourists' functional congruity to a destination.
- H2: Self-congruity will have a positive effect on e-WOM.
- H3: Functional congruity will have a positive effect on e-WOM.

## 2.3 Moderating Effects of Self-Construal

Self-construal refers to how an individual considers self as an independent identity or a member of that community when he or she interacts with others. Self-construal contains independent self and interdependent self. Individuals with independent self-construal will concern separately rather than consider them within a group when organizing their thoughts, feelings, and actions. On the contrary, individuals who with interdependent self-construal will consider themselves as a part of the external social environment when interpreting their thoughts, feelings, and actions (Wang et al., 2015). As a result,

individuals are more willing to demonstrate an independent self-construal if they emphasize self-knowledge. In contrast, individuals are likely to regard themselves as interdependent when some aspects of self-knowledge relating to others are in dominant place (Agrawal and Maheswaran, 2005). As a relatively new psychological construct, self-construal turns out to be more frequent in some marketing literature (Hackman et al., 1999). In some marketing literature, the independent or interdependent self-construal could affect consumers' judgment about a product and their future behavior (Gardner et al., 1999). The study of Kwon and Mattila (2015) offers us important references for our research since it discusses the effect of self-construal on the relationship between self-brand connection and consumers' positive WOM in hospitality. In the present study, it explores how consumers perceive themselves in relation to other members within a social network and the moderating role it plays in predicting their future behavior such as e-WOM (Lee et al., 2012) because independent or interdependent self-construal have been proved to have effects in the process of advice seeking and giving (Komissarouk and Nadler, 2014).

The effects of self-construal on brand relationship have been studied for several years but seldom in tourism area (Jain, Desai and Mao, 2007; Swaminathan, Page and Canli, 2007; White, Argo and Sengupta, 2012). For

instance, Agrawal and Maheswaran (2005) conducted two studies to exam effects of self-construal on persuasion. Bettman and Escalas (2005) indicated that consumers show higher self brand connections if the brand images are consistent with the image of an in-group. In the study of Sung and Chio (2010), it shows that brands with distinct personality traits are evaluated more positively if these brands are congruent with consumers' self-concepts than those brands which are incongruent with consumers' self-concepts. Moreover, since individuals are likely to pass along information to others to help them make some consumption decisions since people who with an interdependent self-construal are psychologically and emotionally to have a preference for relationship with others. By evaluating destination environment, infrastructure etc. all the utilitarian experiences of their consumption can be shared within social network. Since online community, online friend circle or online social network is a public platform where people can have discussion and share their opinions or experiences, different people will definitely have different intentions to share or not share consumption related information. Some of them focus on inner features and want differentiate themselves from others, rest of them emphasize connection with others. Through studies of self-construal we can conclude that people with independent

self-construal and interdependent self-construal act much differently. For these reasons, in this study, we suppose that self-construal moderates the impact of self-congruity and functional congruity on positive e-WOM. We argue that the tourists with different dimensions of self-construal will act differently in social network services after visiting a destination. Based on the reasoning, the following hypotheses are formally stated:

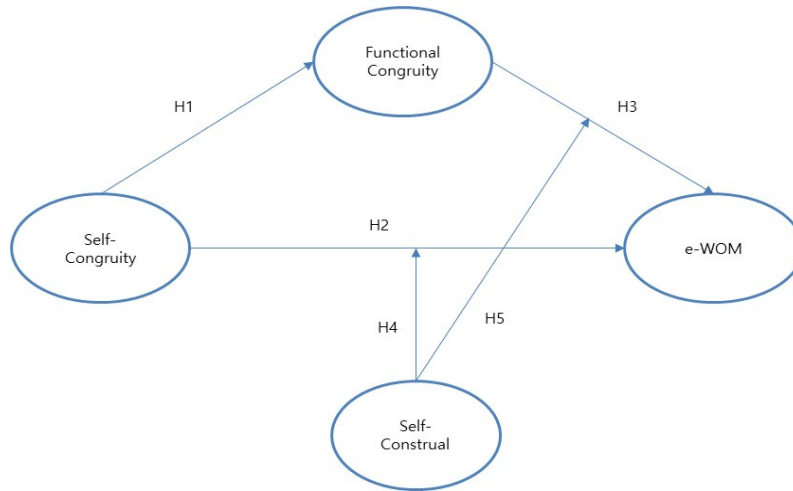
H4: Self-Construal moderates the relationship between self-congruity and e-WOM.

H5: Self-Construal moderates the relationship between functional congruity and e-WOM.

The variables used to operate our study which included in the investigated model are mainly adopted from previous studies and modified to fit the target context. The conceptual and operational definitions are given out in the Table 1.

<Table 1> Conceptual and Operational Definition

Variable	Conceptual Definition	Operational Definition	Sources
Self-congruity	Cognitive matching between value-expressive particularity of any given product or service and consumer self-concept	The degree to which tourists who have visited Korea incorporate the typical visitors into their self-concept.	Sirgy and Su (2000) Escalas and Bettman (2005) Beerli et al. (2007) Heand Mukherjee (2007) Kang et al. (2012) Ahn et al. (2013)
Functional congruity	Matching between consumers' ideal utilitarian expectations of specific products or service and their perceived utilitarian benefits of the products or services	The degree to which tourists who have visited Korea incorporate the perceived utilitarian benefits into their expectations.	Sirgy et al. (1991) Kumarand Nayak (2014) Kang et al. (2015)
e-WOM	Any statement consumers share via the Internet or mobile contents about a product, service, brand, or company.	Tourists who have visited Korea share their travel experiences and recommend Korea to others.	Litvin et al. (2008) Jalilvand and Samiei (2012) Lee et al. (2012) Wang et al. (2012)
Independent self-construal	Individuals concern separately rather than consider them within a group when organizing their thoughts, feelings, and actions.	The degree to which individuals keep separateness and uniqueness from others within SNS.	Gardner et al. (1999) Agrawaland Maheswaran (2005) Swaminathan et al. (2007) Kwon and Mattila (2015)
Interdependent self-construal	Individuals consider themselves as a part of the external social environment when interpreting their thoughts, feelings, and actions	The degree to which individuals concern about others within SNS.	Hackman et al. (1999) Jain et al. (2007) White et al. (2012) Komissaroukand Nadler (2014)



<Figure 1> Research Model

Based on the established theories and prior empirical findings, we proposed a research model shown as follows.

### Ⅲ. Results

According to the research purpose and research questions, by reviewing literature in related field and fully understanding previous research achievements, we propose research hypotheses and conduct empirical analysis. Questionnaire survey is the main method of this study and sample size is 218. The first part of questionnaire survey is the demographic information of the visitors who have travel experiences to Korea. The rest parts of the questionnaire adopt Likert 5-point scale to measure the subjective responses of the visitors from 1 (strongly disagree/very poor) to 5

(strongly agree/very good). The questionnaire items of each variable are partly cited by some scholars according to the purpose of this study. After collecting questionnaire, we use SPSS 20.0 and AMOS 18.0 to analyze data.

As to the demographic information, the number of visitors who chose DIY tour and Package tour is 92 and 126 respectively, accounting for 42.2% and 57.8%. The number of male is 127, accounting for 58.3%, the number of female is 91, accounting for 41.7%. The age of most visitors ranges from 20-29, the number is 126, accounting for 57.8%. The following are 30-39 (82 respondents) and above 40 (10 respondents), accounting for 37.6% and 4.6%. In the aspect of education, most of the respondents are graduate from 3-year college or 4-year university, the number is 169, accounting for 77.5%. Number of respondents whose education level is high



school or below is 21, accounting for 9.6%. Rest of the respondents have master degree or above, the number is 28, accounting for 12.8%. In the aspect of monthly income, income of most respondents ranges from 3001-5000, the number is 105, accounting for 48.2%. Number of respondents whose monthly income below 3000 is 13, accounting for 6.0%.

Exploratory factor analysis and reliability analysis were first performed to determine the factor structure and dimensionality of self-congruity, functional congruity, independent self-construal, interdependent self-construal and e-WOM measures. Discriminant validity analysis and fitness of structured model were

then conducted. At last, regression analysis was utilized to test the moderating role of self-construal.

Results of the exploratory “Principal Factor Analysis” suggest that the explanation power of the five constructs is 74.799% which is more than 70%, so the validity of our survey is acceptable. The factor loadings found in the rotated component matrix were ranged from 0.720 to 0.881 which were larger than the lowest acceptance level of 0.50. Meanwhile, all the values of Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  for each construct ranged from 0.908 to 0.995 which were larger than 0.70.

<Table 2> Demographic Statistics

	Item	Number	Percentage %
Method	DIY Tour	92	42.2
	Package Tour	126	57.8
Gender	Male	127	58.3
	Female	91	41.7
Age	20-29	126	57.8
	30-39	82	37.6
	Above 40	10	4.6
Education	High school or below	21	9.6
	3-year college or 4-year university	169	77.5
	Graduate school	28	12.8
Income	3000CNY or below	13	6.0
	3001-5000CNY	105	48.2
	50001-7000CNY	74	33.9
	Above 7000CNY	26	11.9

<Table 3> Validity and Reliability Analysis

Construct	Item	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha
Self-congruity	SCON1	0.731	0.908
	SCON2	0.790	
	SCON3	0.847	
	SCON4	0.801	
	SCON5	0.797	
	SCON6	0.768	
Functional-congruity	FCON1	0.790	0.941
	FCON2	0.785	
	FCON3	0.796	
	FCON4	0.786	
	FCON5	0.819	
	FCON6	0.849	
	FCON7	0.815	
	FCON8	0.793	
Independent Self-construal	IDSC1	0.825	0.932
	IDSC2	0.846	
	IDSC3	0.834	
	IDSC4	0.839	
	IDSC5	0.824	
	IDSC6	0.849	
	IDSC7	0.809	
Interdependent Self-construal	ITSC1	0.843	0.937
	ITSC2	0.806	
	ITSC3	0.842	
	ITSC4	0.821	
	ITSC5	0.865	
	ITSC6	0.881	
	ITSC7	0.859	
eWOM	eWOM1	0.739	0.995
	eWOM2	0.720	
	eWOM3	0.729	
	eWOM4	0.737	

Next we use common method bias test since if measures are affected by common-method bias, the intercorrelations among them can be inflated or deflated depending upon several factors. In the common method bias test result (table 4), there is only one factor going to

emerge. If the factor explains more than 50% of the variance, there will be problems. In our case, it only explains 31.949% of the variance. Although that there are a lot of variance to be explained by a single factor, it's not majority.

<Table 4> Common Method Bias Test

Component	Initial Eigen values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	10.224	31.949	31.949	10.224	31.949	31.949

<Table 5> Discriminant Validity Test

	SCON	FCON	IDSC	ITSC	eWOM
SCON	0.790				
FCON	0.452	0.804			
IDSC	-0.010	0.213	0.832		
ITSC	0.080	-0.152	0.107	0.846	
eWOM	0.608	0.598	0.386	0.210	0.731

In addition, table 5 below shows the discriminant validity. It has been proved that constructs are different if the square root of the AVE of a certain construct is larger than the absolute value of the standardized correlation of that construct with any other construct in the analysis. According to the table, the correlation indicators of all variables are less than the square root of AVE which assured the discriminant validity.

Table 6 shows the results of Goodness Fit Index of this study. Most of them meet the standard of the recommended values,

indicating a good fitness of the research model. Although GFI value does not meet the recommended level, it is acceptable. The fit indices of the initial path analysis indicated that the path model is consistent with the data.

Furthermore, the path model indicated that self-congruity positively affected functional congruity ( $\beta=0.485$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), self-congruity positively affected e-WOM ( $\beta=0.447$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and functional congruity positively affected e-WOM ( $\beta=0.403$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). As a results, the findings of the path analysis support H1, H2 and H3.

<Table 6> Measurement Model Fit Analysis

Fit Indices	$\chi^2/df$	GFI	AGFI	NFI	CFI	PGFI	RMR	RMSEA
Recommended Value	$\leq 3.0$	$\geq 0.90$	$\geq 0.80$	$\geq 0.90$	$\geq 0.90$	$\geq 0.60$	$\leq 0.08$	$\leq 0.08$
Model Indices	1.401	0.846	0.821	0.915	0.974	0.727	0.074	0.043

<Table 7> Model Path Analysis

Path	Coefficient	SE	t	p
SCON→FCON	0.485	0.067	6.532	<0.001
SCON→e-WOM	0.447	0.070	7.105	<0.001
FCON→e-WOM	0.403	0.076	6.581	<0.001

In the analysis above we have test the structural model of our study. We use regression analysis to measure moderating effect of self-construal since each dimension of self-construal, independent and interdependent self-construal, contains 7 items in our study and we use 5-point Likert-type scale to measure the items such as “I enjoy being unique and different from others in many respects” and so on. For this reason statistical functions of regression analysis can help us understand well how the typical value of e-WOM changes when self-construal (independent or interdependent) is varied, while self-congruity and functional congruity are held fixed. The results of regression test indicated e-WOM is estimated from self-congruity, functional-congruity and self-construal. Their relationship is exhibited in table 8 and table 9.

First, we use e-WOM as dependent variable, self-congruity as independent variable and

self-construal (total) as moderate variable to do regression analysis. It indicated that self-congruity has a positive effect on e-WOM ( $\beta=0.329$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). At the same time, self-congruity\*self-construal also has a positive effect on e-WOM ( $\beta=0.160$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), which indicates that the effect of self-congruity on e-WOM depends on self-construal, supporting the moderating role of self-construal. These results support H4.

Furthermore, we use e-WOM as dependent variable, functional congruity as independent variable and self-construal (total) as moderate variable to do regression analysis. It indicated that functional congruity has a positive effect on e-WOM ( $\beta=0.451$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). At the same time, functional-congruity\*self-construal also has a positive effect on e-WOM ( $\beta=0.136$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), which indicates that effect of functional congruity on e-WOM depends on self-construal, supporting the moderating role of self-construal. These results support H5.

<Table 8> Results of Regression Model Coefficients  
IV: Self-congruity, DV: e-WOM, Moderator: Self-construal (total)

	Coefficient	SE	t	P
Constant	0.654	0.600	1.090	0.277
Self-congruity (SCON)	0.329	0.160	2.056	0.042
Self-construal (SC)	0.104	0.193	0.539	0.590
SCON*SC	0.160	0.060	2.657	0.008

R<sup>2</sup>=0.524  
F(3, 214)=78.447, P<0.001

<Table 9> Results of Regression Model Coefficients  
IV: Functional-congruity, DV: e-WOM, Moderator: Self-construal (total)

	Coefficient	SE	t	P
Constant	0.493	0.620	0.795	0.428
Functional-congruity (FCON)	0.451	0.182	2.478	0.015
Self-construal (SC)	0.176	0.200	0.881	0.379
FCON*SC	0.136	0.062	2.198	0.029

R<sup>2</sup>=0.510  
F(3, 214)=74.260, P<0.001

In addition, the moderating role of independent and interdependent self-construal on the relationship between self-congruity (functional-congruity) and e-WOM has been tested through regression analysis. Specifically, from table 10 it indicates that the impact of self-congruity on e-WOM appears to be larger for tourists with an independent self-construal

( $\beta=0.115$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) than for those with an interdependent self-construal ( $\beta=0.092$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). On the other hand, the impact of functional-congruity on e-WOM appears to be larger for tourists with an interdependent self-construal ( $\beta=0.108$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) than for those with an independent self-construal ( $\beta=0.087$ ,  $p<0.05$ ).

<Table 10> Results of Moderation Effects Model

Hypothesis	Dependent variable	Moderator	Independent variable	Coefficient	SE	t	p
H4	e-WOM	Independent Self-construal	Self-congruity	0.115	0.048	2.397	0.017
		Interdependent Self-construal		0.092	0.043	2.140	0.035
H5	e-WOM	Independent Self-construal	Functional-congruity	0.087	0.042	2.071	0.041
		Interdependent Self-construal		0.108	0.050	2.157	0.032

\*Bold coefficients indicate moderating effects of self-construal (independent self-construal and interdependent self-construal)

<Table 11> Results of Main Effects

Hypothesis	$\beta$	P	Result
H1 Self-congruity → Functional congruity	0.485	<0.001	Accept
H2 Self-congruity → e-WOM	0.447	<0.001	Accept
H3 Functional congruity → e-WOM	0.403	<0.001	Accept

\*Details of moderating effects of self-construal H4 and H5 (independent self-construal and interdependent self-construal) can be referred from Table 10.

## IV. Conclusion

### 4.1 Academic Implications

Many previous studies indicate that self-congruity, functional-congruity and consumer loyalty reflects a strong relationship that is rooted in consumers' emotional bounding. In this paper, we examined the link between self-congruity, functional congruity and positive e-WOM among tourists who have visited Korea. Thus our study contributes to

the literature on e-WOM, especially in tourism area. Due to fast development of tourism industry it is necessary to conduct researches to offer references to existent literature. The findings of our study indicate that tourists' self-congruity and functional congruity positively affect their e-WOM, and the degree of effects depend on moderating role of self-construal, which is consistent with some previous studies and also add references to existing literature. The results indicate that, first, the image and value of a destination, in

this paper Korea has been chosen, positively affect tourists' perception of functional attribute of a destination, the higher the self-congruity, the higher the matching degree of ideal function and perceived function that tourists have. Second, through functional congruity, self-congruity can positively affect e-WOM. If the characteristics, value and service quality of a destination are consistent or similar with tourists' expectation, they will recommend the destination to their friends or relatives in the future. Furthermore, the consistence of self concept and destination image will improve tourists' positive attitude toward the destination, this will in turn positively affect tourists' comments about this destination. Third, although in tourism area few studies have proved the relationship between self-congruity and consumer loyalty, some previous marketing studies have shown the essential link between self concept and consumer loyalty. The introduction of self-congruity and functional congruity contribute to existing studies in tourism area.

As to the moderating role of self-construal, the main contribution of this paper, we found that self-congruity has a greater effect on e-WOM when tourists are with an independent self-construal than those with an interdependent self-construal. On the other hand, it indicates that functional-congruity has a greater effect on e-WOM when tourists are with an interdependent self-construal than

those with an independent self-construal. Previous studies have identified some antecedents to e-WOM such as trust, entertainment, service quality etc. Although tourists' experience and involvement also have been introduced as moderators to measure tourists' loyalty, our study contributes to e-WOM research body by investing the joint effect of self-congruity and self-construal as well as self-congruity and self-construal on tourists' e-WOM. The effect of self-congruity on e-WOM differs depending on individual's self notion. In current study, tourists with an independent self-construal show a greater effect of self-congruity on their willingness to spread e-WOM after consumption than respondents with an interdependent self-construal. On the contrary, tourists with an interdependent self-construal demonstrate a greater effect of functional-congruity on their willingness to spread e-WOM after consumption than tourists who with an independent self-construal. We demonstrate self-construal is an underlying psychological mechanism explaining tourists' positive e-WOM, which is a nascent research variable in marketing research that can be used in future studies. The reason for this may be functional-congruity deals with "utilitarian destination positioning", tourists with interdependent self-construal have the tendency to help others for travel decision making. Because self-congruity deals with

“non-utilitarian destination positioning”, tourists with independent self-construal are will to communicate with others to express self-value only.

## 4.2 Managerial Implication

This study offers some important managerial implications for destination management. Destination managers should improve image (or emotional image/ brand characteristics) to build positive connection with consumers' self concept. By developing theme tourism products and efficient advertising, they can foster stable tourists group. In addition, managers can develop online community or Apps for tourists, which will not only offer convenience for tourists but also foster their loyalty. Moreover, utilitarian function of a destination is an essential premise for improving consumer loyalty. Destination managers should try to improve infrastructure such as hotel, restaurant, leisure place etc. and service quality to meet tourists' expectation, which will absolutely foster positive word of mouth among tourists. Because self-construal plays a moderating role between relationship self-congruity, functional-congruity and e-WOM, independent self-construal will enhance tourists' self-congruity and then lead stronger willingness to spread positive e-WOM, marketers should find way to evoking and emphasizing individuality to increase

self-congruity among tourists. On the other hand, interdependent self-construal will enhance tourists' functional-congruity and then lead stronger willingness to spread positive e-WOM, for marketers, they can create various channels such as online communities to encourage feedback and comments from tourists and then improve construction of the destination.

## 4.3 Limitations

The present study has several limitations. First of all, the sample size is relatively small and most of the respondents are young people accounting for 57.8%. This may because of the popularity of “Korea wave”. Most fans of Korean stars are aged from 20-29. In the future, studies should expand survey to more people who have experiences of visiting Korea. Second, as we chose Korea as the destination, due to special culture of Korea, the results may be biased. Thus, future studies need to take consideration into other destinations, especially, comparative studies can be conducted. Third, since this study chose self-construal as a moderator, future studies should identify other potential moderating variables such as time, experience, knowledge, culture difference or demographic characteristics etc.



## References

- 김종기, 김진성, “SNS에서의 그룹 형성이 정보 공유 활동에 미치는 향에 한 연구,” 정보시스템연구, 제22권, 제2호, 2013, pp. 25-49.
- 김진화, 변현수, 이승훈, “온라인 리뷰를 활용한 사용자 이해 및 서비스 가치 증대,” 정보시스템연구, 제20권, 제2호, 2011, pp. 21-36.
- 정남호, 구철모, “소셜 미디어를 이용한 국내 관광산업의 경쟁력 강화전략. 사회적 실재감 유형별 차이분석,” 정보시스템연구, 제22권, 제1호, 2013, pp. 115-141.
- Agrawal, N., and Maheswaran, D., “The Effects of Self Construal and Commitment on Persuasion,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 31, No. 4, 2005, pp. 841-849.
- Ahn, T., Ekinci, Y., and Li, G., “Self-congruence, functional congruence, and destination choice,” *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 66, No. 6, 2013, pp. 719-723.
- Beerli, A., Meneses, G.D., and Gil, S.M., “Self-congruity and destination choice,” *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 34, No. 3, 2007, pp. 571-587.
- Escalas, J.E., and Bettman, J.R., “Self-construal, reference groups, and brand meaning,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 32, No. 3, 2005, pp. 378-389.
- Gardner, W.L., Gabriel, S., and Lee, A.Y., “I Value Freedom, but “We” Value Relationships: Self-Construal Priming Mirrors Cultural Differences in Judgment,” *Psychological Science*, Vol. 10, No. 4, 1999, pp. 321-326.
- He, H., and Mukherjee, A., “I am, ergo I shop: does store image congruity explain shopping behavior of Chinese consumers?” *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 23, No. 5, 2007, pp. 443-460.
- Hung, K., and Petrick, J. F., “Why do you cruise? Exploring the motivations for taking cruise holidays, and the construction of a cruising motivation scale,” *Tourism Management*, Vol. 32, No. 2, 2011, pp. 386-393.
- Hackman, M.Z., Ellis, K., Johnson, C.E., and Staley, C., “Self-construal orientation: Validation of an instrument and a study of the relationship to leadership communication style,” *Communication Quarterly*, Vol. 47, No. 2, 1999, pp. 183-195.
- Jain, S.P., Desai, K.K., and Mao, H., “The influence of chronic and situational self-construal on categorization,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 2007, pp. 66-76.
- Jalilvand, M. R., and Samiei, N., “The Effect of Word of Mouth on Inbound Tourists Decision for Travelling to Isfahan as a Tourism Destination in an Islamic Republic,” *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2012, pp. 12-26.
- Kumar, V., and Nayak, J.K., “The role of self congruity and functional congruity in

- influencing tourists' post visit behavior," *Advances in Hospitality and Tourism Research*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2014, pp. 24-44.
- Kang, J., Tang, L., and Lee, J.Y., "Self congruity and functional congruity in brand loyalty," *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, Vol. 39, No. 1, 2015, pp. 105-131.
- Kang, J., Tang, L., Lee, J.Y., and Bosselman, R.H., "Understanding customer behavior in name-brand Korean coffee shops: The role of self-congruity and functional congruity," *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, Vol. 31, No.3, 2012, pp. 809 - 818.
- Komissarouk, S., and Nadler, A., "I" Seek Autonomy, "We" Rely on Each Other: Self-Construal and Regulatory Focus as Determinants of Autonomy and Dependency Oriented Help-Seeking Behavior," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Vol. 40, No. 6, 2014, pp. 726-738.
- Kwon, E., and Mattila, A.S., "The Effect of Self - Brand Connection and Self-Construal on Brand Lovers' Word of Mouth (WOM)," *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 6, 2015, pp. 1-9.
- Litvin, S.W., Goldsmith, R.E., and Pan, B., "Electronic word-of-mouth in hospitality and tourism management," *Tourism Management*, Vol. 29, No. 3, 2008, pp. 458-468.
- Lee, D., Kim, H.S., and Kim, J.K., "The role of self-construal in consumers' electronic word of mouth (eWOM) in social networking sites: A social cognitive approach," *Computers in Human Behavior*, Vol. 28, No. 3, 2012, pp. 1054 - 1062.
- Sirgy, M.J., Johar, J.S., Samli, A.C., and Claiborne., "Self-Congruity Versus Functional Congruity: Predictors of Consumer Behavior," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 19, No. 4, 1991, pp. 363-375.
- Sirgy, M.J., and Su, C., "Destination Image, Self-Congruity, and Travel Behavior: Toward an Integrative Model," *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 38, No. 4, 2000, pp. 340-352.
- Sirgy, M.J., Grzeskowiak, S., and Su, C., "Explaining housing preference and choice: The role of self-congruity and functional congruity," *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, Vol. 20, No. 4, 2005, pp. 329-347.
- Sung, Y., and Choi, S.M., "The influence of self-construal on self-brand congruity in the United States and Korea," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, Vol. 43, No. 1, 2010, pp. 151-166.
- Swaminathan, V, Page, K.L., and Gürhan-Canli, Z., "My" brand or "our" brand: The effects of brand relationship dimensions and self-construal on brand evaluation," *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 34, No. 2, 2007, pp. 248-259.
- Usakli, A., and Baloglu, S., "Brand personality

of tourist destinations: An application of self-congruity theory,” *Tourism Management*, Vol. 32, No. 1, 2011, pp. 114-127.

Wang, Y., Mab, S.S., and Li, D., “Customer participation in virtual brand communities: The self-construal perspective,” *Information & Management*, Vol. 52, No. 5, 2015, pp. 577-587.

Wang, H.W., Zhao, Y., Jiang, W.Y., and Guo, K.Q., “The Impact of Electronic Word of Mouth: The Adoption of Online Reviews in Online Communities,” *International Journal of Advancements in Computing Technology*, Vol. 4, No. 21, 2012, pp. 175-186.

White, K., Argo, J.J., and Sengupta, J., “Dissociative versus associative responses to social identity threat: The role of consumer self-construal,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 39, No.4, 2012, pp. 704-719.

**양금 (Qin Yang)**



동국대학교 일반대학원 경영학 석사학위를 취득하고 현재 동 대학원 국제비즈니스협동과정 박사과정에 재학 중이다. 주요 관심분야는 소셜미디어 마케팅, 전자상거래, 핀테크 등이다.

**이영찬 (Young-Chan Lee)**



서강대학교 경영학사, 동 대학원에서 경영학 석사 및 박사학위를 취득하였다. 현재 동국대학교 경주캠퍼스 경영학부 교수로 재직하고 있으며, *Annals of Management Science*, *The Open Operational Research Journal*의 Editorial Board, 한국경영학회 MIS 분야 대표 편집위원으로 활동 중이다. 주요 관심 분야는 기업성과측정, 데이터마이닝, 복잡계 이론, 다기준의사결정 등이다.

<Abstract>

## **The Effects of Self-Congruity and Functional Congruity on e-WOM: The Moderating Role of Self-Construal in Tourism**

Qin Yang · Young-Chan Lee

### **Purpose**

Self-congruity deals with the effect of symbolic value-expressive attributes on consumer decision and behavior, which is the theoretical foundation of the “non-utilitarian destination positioning”. Functional congruity refers to utilitarian evaluation of a product or service by consumers. In addition, recent years, social network services, especially mobile social network services have created many opportunities for e-WOM communication that enables consumers to share personal consumption related information anywhere at any time. Moreover, self-construal is a hot and popular topic that has been discussed in the field of modern psychology as well as in marketing area. This study aims to examine the moderating effect of self-construal on the relationship between self-congruity, functional congruity and tourists’ positive electronic word of mouth (e-WOM).

### **Design/methodology/approach**

In order to verify the hypotheses, we developed a questionnaire with 32 survey items. We measured all the items on a five-point Likert-type scale. We used Sojump.com to collect questionnaire and gathered 218 responses from whom have visited Korea before. After a pilot test, we analyzed the main survey data by using SPSS 20.0 and AMOS 18.0, and employed structural equation modeling to test the hypotheses. We first estimated the measurement model for its overall fit, reliability and validity through a confirmatory factor analysis and used common method bias test to make sure that whether measures are affected by common-method variance. Then we tested the hypotheses through the structural model and used regression analysis to measure moderating effect of self-construal.

### **Findings**

The results reveal that the effect of self-congruity on tourists’ positive e-WOM is stronger for

tourists with an independent self-construal compared with those with interdependent self-construal. Moreover, it shows that the effect of functional congruity on tourists' positive e-WOM becomes salient when tourists' self-construal is primed to be interdependent rather than independent. We expect that the results of this study can provide important implications for academic and practical perspective.

**Keywords:** Self-Congruity, Functional-Congruity, e-WOM, Self-Construal

<국문초록>

## 중국 관광객의 온라인 구전에 대한 자아일치성과 기능일치성의 효과: 자기해석의 조절효과를 중심으로

양 금·이 영 찬

### 목적

자아일치성(self-congruity)은 “비실용 대상 포지셔닝(Non-utilitarian destination positioning)” 이론에 근거한 것으로, 소비자들이 의사결정을 하거나 행동을 할 때 대상(제품, 서비스 등)과 자신의 가치를 일치시키려는 성향을 의미한다. 반면, 기능일치성(functional congruity)은 대상(장소, 제품, 서비스)의 실용적 가치에 자신의 의사결정이나 행동을 일치시키려는 성향을 의미한다. 최근 모바일 기반의 소셜네트워크서비스를 통해 소비자들이 제품이나 서비스에 대한 개인적 경험을 언제 어디서나 공유하게 되면서 온라인 구전을 통한 커뮤니케이션 기회가 많아지고 활발해지고 있다. 한편, 자기해석(self-construal)은 마케팅 및 현대 심리학에서 그동안 많이 다루어져 온 주제이다. 본 연구는 자아일치성 및 기능일치성과 중국 관광객의 긍정적인 온라인 구전 간의 관계와 자기해석의 조절효과를 검증하는 것을 연구 목적으로 한다.

### 설계/방법론/접근

연구가설을 검증하기 위해 본 연구에서는 32개 문항으로 구성된 설문지를 개발하였고, 모든 항목은 리커트 5점 척도를 사용하였다. 중국 설문조사 전문 웹사이트인 sojump.com에서 한국을 방문한 적이 있는 사용자들을 대상으로 설문조사를 실시하였고, 자료분석을 위해 SPSS 20.0과 AMOS 18.0을 사용하였고, 구조방정식과 회귀분석을 이용하여 연구가설을 검증하였다. 전반적인 모형의 적합도, 신뢰도, 타당성 등을 검증하기 위해 확인요인분석을 실시하였고, 동일방법편의(common method bias) 여부도 함께 진단하였다.

### 결과

연구결과 자아일치성과 기능일치성은 온라인 구전에 긍정적인 효과를 미치는 것으로 나타났다. 그리고 자아일치성이 온라인 구전에 미치는 효과는 독립적인 자기해석 성향이 있는 중국 관광객이 의존적인 자기해석 성향이 있는 중국 관광객보다 더 강하다는 것을 알 수 있었다. 반면, 기능일치성이 온라인 구전에 미치는 효과는 의존적인 자기해석 성향이 있는 중국 관광객이 독립적인 자기해석

성향이 있는 중국 관광객보다 더 강하다는 것을 알 수 있었다.

**키워드:** 자아일치성, 기능일치성, 온라인 구전, 자기해석

\* 이 논문은 2015년 12월 2일 접수, 2015년 12월 22일 1차 심사, 2016년 1월 8일 게재 확정되었습니다.