When AI Takes the Wheel: The Effectiveness of AI vs. Human-generated Content in Tourism Marketing

Abstract

This paper explores the differential impacts of AI versus human-generated content on potential tourists' behaviors. Compared to human-generated content (HGC), AI-generated content (AIGC) weakens the travel intentions of potential tourists. Grounded in the theoretical framework of human uniqueness and aesthetic value, the underlying mechanism for this effect is that the AIGC label leads to less perceived originality and then causes less savoring tendency about the content of travel destinations. Moreover, when tourists perceive AI as an intelligent (vs. repetitive) entity and when the content is novel can mitigate the adverse effects of AIGC.

We employ a multi-method approach that includes secondary data analysis and three lab experiments. In study 1, we use text-mining techniques to explore the attitude of potential tourists to AIGC and provide some empirical evidence of the AIGC impacts. Study 2 tests the main effect by manipulating the labels of content creators (AI vs. humans) in the context of tourism marketing. Study 3 examines the sequential mediators of perceived originality and savoring. Study 4 assesses the moderating effects of high-adaptivity (vs. low-adaptivity) AI algorithm.

The research has some theoretical contributions and practical implications. First, it examines the effectiveness of AIGC (vs. HGC) in tourism marketing. Perceived originality and savoring are introduced as sequential mediators, providing a novel theoretical framework that explains how the identities of content creators (AI vs. human) affect potential tourists. Second, this paper explores the boundary conditions from the AI algorithm, highlighting the importance of recognizing AI as a high-adaptivity intelligent entity to foster the acceptance of AIGC. Third, the findings also provide some insights for policymakers to help establish guidelines regarding copyright and intellectual property rights for AIGC.