The concepts of task and sources of information in leisure activities: a case study of backpackers

Shan-Ju Chang, Su, Hui-Je

Summary

Tourism is a global business. Among many forms of traveling, backpacking is increasingly popular among tourists. Backpackers as a special group of tourists are characterized by their willingness to plan and search information by themselves, the need to continue to search information during the traveling process, and are motivated to look for information by new situations and cultures they experience in places, new or acquainted, of ever changing landscape with time.

Research on travelers is abundant. However, more were from psychological or sociological perspectives, and relative few from the tourist information search perspective. Consider backpacking as way of life or in the context of everyday life information seeking. Tourist information search by backpackers is of special interest. They need to search information before, during and even after traveling, in order to make their trip worthy in terms of their money and time and for future travel plan. For backpackers, traveling plan involves many tasks such as deciding where to go, how to get there, what are interesting to sightsee, what should not miss, what are the social landscape and safety conditions etc. They have to make decisions based on information they collected and yet they are also flexible and may change the courses along the way.

Our research on backpackers shows that their information search can be conceptualized as a three-stage information search process. In each stage, depending on the type of task, backpackers use various information resources for different purposes. Depending on the characteristics of the source of information, one is relied on more than the other in different stage of traveling and for different task and purpose. Among others, the research results deepen our understanding about backpackers' information tasks in traveling, information sources needed and used, with practical implications for design of information services.