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### **Information Sources Survey Assignment**

**Introduction:** I am delving into the information community of travelers. The traveler community encompasses individuals new and experienced with traveling and vacationing as a hobby, or interest. I use both travelers and tourists as terms to describe this information community. This is to clarify that this community does in fact include experienced travelers of the world and members completely new to travel that commonly receive the label of “tourist” (Walsh, K. n. d.). Examples of the continuous debate of travelers versus tourists can be found in numerous articles and blogs relating to travel. My definition and current research both look at the information community as a whole, for the newest information seekers are just as significant to the community as experienced travelers. In fact, research has shown that many new community members highly valued content created by long-time travelers such as blogs and reviews (Chang, 2009). Chang’s research also noted that the community’s information seeking needs exist throughout the travel process from preliminary planning to create content post travel. Many traveler needs resolved by information seeking are: destination selection, budgeting, transportation, what to see and do, currencies accepted, potential travel risks and knowledge of another country’s laws. In this review, I survey two popular resources for the travel information community to understand how they effectively resolve the community’s information needs.

#### **Research-based source:**

**APA Style Citation:** *Fodor’s Travel Guides*. New York, NY: Random House.

Retrieved from: <http://www.fodors.com/>

**Position within the information cycle:** This source is late in the information cycle.

*Fodor's Travel Guidebooks* are annualized guidebooks published as hardcopies and e-books. Due to the process used by *Fodor's* to hire travel writers all over the world to explore and review destinations, there is a timely process involved with researching, editing, and publishing the information before it can be accessed by the information community (Our editorial policy, 2017). New editions are printed for travel destinations as updated information is compiled and edited.

**Scope and content:** *Fodor's* currently covers over 7500 travel destinations worldwide and utilizes on-the-ground research of 700 travel writers, local to or experts on the location, to compile detailed travel information (About us, 2017). As their website states: "For 80 years, *Fodor's Travel* has been a trusted resource offering expert travel advice for every stage of a traveler's trip" (About us, 2017). *Fodor's* provides researched information covered in extreme detail that a traveler could find useful in information seeking such as local popular spots, how to tip in another country, budgeting, time-management planning, and more (Fodors.com).

**Credentials and authority of the author, editor, and/or publisher:** *Fodor's Travel* has 80 years of experience in the publication of annualized travel guides. The first annual guidebook available to the travel and tourism information community was published by founder Eugene Fodor in 1936 titled *On the Continent: An Entertaining Travel Annual* (About us, 2017). *Fodor's Travel* employs numerous writers, editors, and photographers to compile destination research for the large number travel guides published. This makes detailing each contributor's credentials difficult. But as a whole publication, *Fodor's Travel* is consistently recognized for its integrity in publishing well researched travel

guides for its users. The Society of American Travel Writers Foundation has consistently awarded *Fodor's*. Most recently, the publication received the Lowell Thomas Award for works published in 2016 for its *Brooklyn Travel Guide* (SATW Foundation, n. d.).

**Purposes and uses:**

The purpose of *Fodor's Travel* is to provide thorough and accurate travel information for their users. The goal is to provide a compilation of crucial information in one place for the information-seeking traveler. For the information seeker, the publications cover destination knowledge that can be useful before, during, and after the travel experience (About us, 2017). As Chang (2009) pointed out in her research on this information community, travelers are constantly utilizing information through every part of their travel experience.

**Intended audience:** The intended audience is any member of the travel and tourism information community. *Fodor's Travel* compiles researched travel information that advanced and inexperienced travelers will find useful on their journeys.

**Design:** The information in these travel guides is available electronically and in hardcopy. By publishing content electronically and in hardcopy, the publication works to be extremely accessible for its audience as they travel. It also keeps its audience up-to-date with around 130 annual editions produced and a website and apps that receive over 2 million users monthly (Adriani, 2011).

**Currency and frequency of update:** This resource produces annual editions of its guidebooks. This allows for updated information to be researched and edited before being added into the newest edition of that destination's travel guide (Our editorial process, 2017).

**Biases and gaps:** Their editorial policy covers the rigorous operational rules they have established for their travel writers. For example, primary source research is required from the travel writer and secondary sources for information are unacceptable. But with this, *Fodor's Travel* does acknowledge that occasional cases of plagiarized content by writers can and has occurred affecting the integrity of that edition (Our editorial policy, 2017).

**Value for your information community:** With its 80 years of experience and annual production of thorough and detailed travel guides, *Fodor's Travel* has made a name for itself as a reliable source of well-researched travel information. Its ability to be accessible in multiple formats and its ability to effectively research traveling in thousands of worldwide locations, make it a consistently used resource by the travel and tourism information community.

#### **Community-based source:**

**APA Style Citation:** TripAdvisor. Retrieved from: <https://www.tripadvisor.com/>

**Position within the information cycle:** TripAdvisor is early in the information cycle.

The user created posts can be added at any time within that traveler's journey from the day of the experience to a week later when creating content for other community members. Research from multiple sources, such as Bjork and Kauppinen-Raisanen (2015) confirms that the travel and tourism information community wants to create content during and after their travels alongside seeking information. TripAdvisor allows for this instant creation of new community content.

**Scope and content:** TripAdvisor's user created content enables this information community to have reviews from like-minded community members on accommodations,

attractions, airlines and restaurants. TripAdvisor “provides travelers with the wisdom of the crowds” to help them make numerous travel decisions (About TripAdvisor, 2017).

Currently TripAdvisor claims to have over 535 million user created reviews.

**Credentials and authority of the author, editor, and/or publisher:**

Reviews on TripAdvisor are all user created. In terms of credentials, accuracy of some statements can be questionable. But research indicates that this information community values information created by fellow members, such as personal reviews. Chang’s (2009) study of backpackers showed that one of the earliest areas of information seeking completed by this subset of travelers was discovering community-based sources.

**Purposes and uses:** The purpose of TripAdvisor is to provide user created reviews for fellow travelers and tourists. By sourcing the opinions of like-minded vacationers, a travel community member might feel more satisfied by the information they receive as they make their own travel decisions. Being able to access useful knowledge, such as user reviews on hotels, removes a barrier for the information seeker. By knowing what fellow community members thought, the traveler feels more satisfied with their decision-making (Kourouthanassis et al., 2017).

**Intended audience:** The audience and the creators of this information are one in the same for this community-based source. All members of this information community can find this user-created content useful and can also participate in the creation of future reviews.

**Design:** TripAdvisor is a website that can be easily accessible by the information community. TripAdvisor also has an App that can be downloaded by users. The brand,

TripAdvisor, is its own company that has other functions like price comparison, but its main component is its community created content (About TripAdvisor, 2017).

**Currency and frequency of update:** TripAdvisor's hundreds of millions of travel related reviews can be added to at any time by the community. Some reviews are more current than others depending on a variety of factors, such as businesses closing and popularity of the accommodation, restaurant, or attraction.

**Biases and gaps:** Since the content of the reviews is entirely created by the individual, biases definitely arise on TripAdvisor. Filtering through unnecessarily scathing reviews and possible inaccurate information can be a consistent issue for the information community's use of this source. TripAdvisor explains that they do not fact-check every review due to the large quantity of reviews, but will screen reported reviews to ensure content is family friendly, posted in correct location, and follows guidelines (Help Center, 2017).

**Value for your information community:** TripAdvisor states that they "believe the sheer volume of content enables travelers to spot trends" that will aid in making the travel decisions that will aid in answering the information needs of the community. Though these numbers could lead to issues of "travel information overload," as Kourouthanassis et al. (2017) discussed in their article, the sheer number of users posting reviews and continuously creating information show that TripAdvisor is a significant community-based source to aid the information needs of the travel and tourism information.

**Compare and Contrast:** These two sources achieve a similar goal of providing travel information but from very different approaches. *Fodor's* uses travel writers to complete in-field

research going directly to worldwide locations to provide the most up-to-date and thorough information. While the information from *Fodor's Travel* is in depth, its late position in the information cycle does create concerns of information not being current. Information compiled into an annualized publication does not satisfy the need of knowing the most current thoughts on travel locations like an instantaneous user post on TripAdvisor. Both sources supply the travel community very useful information, but have very different approaches to how the information is presented. When seeking thoroughness and well-researched content, *Fodor's Travel* is a great resource to access. When seeking the opinions of fellow community members creating information, community-based TripAdvisor is an easily accessible option. Both sources address the travel and tourism information community's needs.

**Reflection:** As a personal fan of flipping through hardcopy travel guides, I have always enjoyed resources like *Fodor's*. They always feel so meticulously detailed and it seems that the travel writers put a lot of effort into providing accurate information. My personal anecdote, research-based sources like *Fodor's* are my go to for preliminary information seeking when planning a vacation and a community-based source like TripAdvisor is my quickly accessible go to for knowing other travelers positives and negative reviews to aid me with decision making. Both sources affectively serve the information community by operating affectively in their respective realms of travel information.

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