

Research note

A new nature-based tourism motivation model: Testing the moderating effects of the push motivation



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ABSTRACT

This research note focused on Hong Kong's nature-based tourism and disentangled the tourists' motivation factor structure. A new tourism motivation model was developed by particularly incorporating the moderator of push motivation. The push motivation was found to contribute to the tourists' future behavior as a moderator. Managerial implications were provided to Hong Kong Tourism Board and industry practitioners to design nature-based tourism promotion campaigns more strategically.

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1. Introduction and literature background

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, nature-based tourism has become and will continue to be a significant part of the tourism industry (UNWTO, 2010). Nature-based tourism, a form of tourism, accrues to foster learning experiences in appreciation of natural environments (Weaver, 2008). In Hong Kong, the urbanized areas account for only 17% of the total territory, and over 40% are protected areas including country parks, special areas, and wetlands (ETWB, 2002). And Hong Kong has many islands managed by Hong Kong Global Geopark of China (e.g. Ninepin Island, Tung Ping Chau). The Hong Kong Government started to highly promote the nature-based tourism and ecotourism concept since the opening of the Hong Kong Wetland Park and Hong Kong Geopark. The Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTb) launched the "Great Outdoors Hong Kong" marketing platform since 2009 to promote the Hong Kong Global Geopark, consisting of natural scenery of various outlying islands, hiking trails and green attractions (HKTb, 2014). Over the past years at the academic platforms, the nature-based tourism and eco-tourism have been studied with different aspects, including market segmentation (Ballantine & Eagles, 1994), travel behavior patterns (Hvenegaard, 2002), tourism benefit (Palacio, 1997), travel motivations (Merit & Hunt, 1998), tourism activities (Butler, 1990), and tourist's travel experiences (Chan &

Baum, 2007). None-the-less, there appears theoretical deficit in understanding Hong Kong's nature-based tourism and underlying travel motives.

Motivation refers to the driving forces for individual actions (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2009). Tourism motivation can be divided into push and pull factors (Yuan & McDonald, 1990). The push and pull motivation model posits that people make travel decision and select destinations due to both internal forces (push factors) and external forces of destination attributes (pull factors). This model provides a useful approach for examining visitor behavior and decision making process (Dann, 1977; Klenosky, 2002). In terms of the relationship between push and pull motivations, Dann (1981) argued that push factors precede and influence pull factors. Other schools of thought believed that push and pull factors are rather correlated simply (Klenosky, 2002). In particular, it has been noted that push factors drive people to travel while pull factors facilitate destination choices (Uysal & Jurowski, 1994). Nonetheless, the intricate relationship between push and pull motivations needs to be investigated further. Whether push motivation can act as a moderator to influence how pull motivation affects future behavior is yet to be fully researched.

The current study was developed to apply the push–pull motivation model to explore the travel behaviors and driving forces of Hong Kong's nature-based tourists. In literature, the relationship between the tourist motivation and future behavior has proved to be well-established (Lee, 2009; Lee & Hsu, 2013). More specifically, Yoon and Uysal (2005) evidenced that pull motivation affects tourist loyalty and satisfaction. Thus, it was hypothesized that pull motivation influences tourists'

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recommendation (of Hong Kong's nature-based tourism) to others (H1). In the meantime, the moderating effect of tourist motivation has become to be researched in empirical studies in the past decade. For example, the motivation proved to be a moderator for the relationship between tourist expectation and attitude (Hsu, Cai, & Li, 2010), between experiences and brand image formation (Jin, Lee, & Huffman, 2012), and between price and distance, and destination choice (Nicolau & Mas, 2006). In the current study, another hypothesis was therefore developed: push motivation moderates relationship between pull motivation and recommendation (of Hong Kong's nature-based tourism) to others (H2). To conclude, the purposes of this study were to answer three research questions with the proposed conceptual model (Fig. 1): 1) what are the push and pull motivation of nature-based tourism in Hong Kong? 2) whether pull motivation predicts tourists' recommendation of Hong Kong nature-based tourism to others; 3) whether push motivation has moderating effect on the relationship between pull motivation and tourist recommendation.

2. Methodology

In this study, the nature-based tourism motivation construct were developed to include 15 push items (Kim, Lee, & Klenosky, 2003; Luo & Deng, 2008) and 15 pull items based on a comprehensive literature review (Mody, Day, Sydnor, Jaffe, & Lehto, 2014; Zhang & Peng, 2014) in nature-based tourism and ecotourism. The push and pull motivation items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale: 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree. The 5-point likert scale also applied to the tourist recommendation construct ("recommend Hong Kong's nature-based tourism to others"). Composite items with arithmetic means of corresponding factors were then developed to represent push motivation and pull motivation.

The questionnaires were distributed through two approaches. One approach revolved around collecting data at the main entrances of two places: Sai Kung Bus Terminus and Central Pier. They are considered as the main transport interchange ports to Hong Kong's nature-based tourism attractions. The face-to-face interviews were made through random sampling method. The other approach referred to the online method. One researcher posted the questionnaire onto a local nature-based tourism discussion forum "www.hkoutdoors.com" and through social networks.

3. Findings

From 335 valid sample, most of the respondents were female (71.3%), followed by male (28.7%). It was found that despite the use of random sampling, more than half of the respondents were younger generations. They are important for the nature-based tourism market, because they are more energetic and more willing to interact with the environment. Over 80% of the respondents were local and the others, non-local. A majority of respondents traveled for leisure purpose (71%), followed by that for education (21.2%), and for adventure (7.8%). More than half traveled with friends (56.7%) and more than 20% traveled with couple/partner (21.2%).

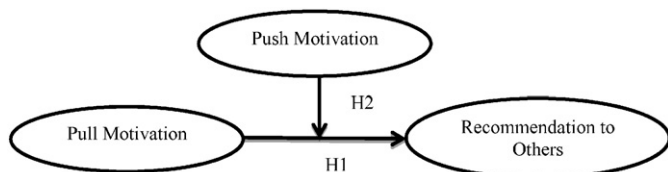


Fig. 1. Proposed conceptual framework.

Table 1 shows that the factor analysis categorized push and pull motivational items into three factors, respectively, with eigenvalues greater than 1.0. Push motivation items explained 59% of the variance and were labeled into "Self-enhancement", "Relaxation and knowledge", and "Escapism from routine life". Pull motivation items explained 59% of the variance and were labeled into "Scenery of Hong Kong", "Information and convenience", and "Various activities for fun". All factor loadings greater than 0.5 proved a high correlation between the underlying factors and individual items under each factor. The Cronbach's alphas were considered marginally acceptable, respectively (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006). The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure verified the sampling adequacy.

Table 2 shows the hierarchical multiple regression results. In Step 1, the dependent variable of "recommendation to others" was regressed to

Table 1
Exploratory factor analysis of push motivations and pull motivations.

	Push motivations		
	Self-enhancement	Relaxation and knowledge	Escapism from routine life
Prestige and status	.838		
Gaining a sense of accomplishment	.813		
Developing skills and abilities	.781		
Meeting new and varied people	.738		
Keeping physical fit	.595		
Experiencing something different		.807	
Visiting a new place		.768	
Increasing my knowledge and experience		.729	
Resting and relaxing		.625	
Gaining a new perspective on life		.584	
Viewing the scenery			.776
To enhance health			.701
Doing something with my family/friend(s)			.593
Avoiding interpersonal stress and pressure			.545
Experience rural Hong Kong			.456
Eigen values	5.506	2.113	1.239
% of variance explained	36.704	14.089	8.263
Cronbach's alpha	.627	.582	.794
KMO	.862		
	Pull motivations		
	Scenery of Hong Kong	Information and convenience	Various activities for fun
Visit the Geopark	.766		
Visit the wetlands	.708		
See H K wildlife e.g. Chinese white dolphin	.651		
Appropriate area for children's study on natural resources	.627		
Experience the natural environment	.624		
Visit the islands	.570		
Cultural and historic resources	.561		
Advertising/promotions for Hong Kong Eco tourism		.802	
Closer than other attractions		.780	
Convenient transport		.704	
Well-organized tourist information system e.g. maps, signs		.674	
Outdoor activities			.819
Suitable to travel with family and friends			.713
Tranquil rest areas			.581
Ideal climate and clean environment			.574
Eigen values	5.804	1.832	1.179
% of variance explained	38.692	12.215	7.859
Cronbach's alpha	.636	0.829	0.583
KMO	.887		

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