



Destination loyalty modeling of the global tourism[☆]



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ABSTRACT

This study examines the antecedents of destination loyalty and its relation to destination image, consumer travel experience, and destination satisfaction in the tourism context. This study raises important questions concerning how destination image, consumer travel experience, and destination satisfaction affect destination loyalty. This research attempts to identify three key antecedents of loyalty in the tourism context. The study empirically tests predicted relationships by using personal interview data from 475 foreign tourists. The conceptual model investigates the relevant relationships among the research constructs by using fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) and structural equation modeling (SEM) approach. Findings from the research sample support the argument that destination image, consumer travel experience, destination satisfaction are the key determinants of destination loyalty. Furthermore, destination image and consumer travel experience influence destination satisfaction. The study also discusses theoretical and managerial implications of research findings for marketing the tourism products globally.

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the antecedents of foreign travelers' behavioral intentions. Understanding travelers' loyalty is an important goal for destination marketing managers. In the context of tourist destinations, foreign visitor loyalty remains an important indicator of successful destination management. Previous studies exist on the antecedents of tourists' loyalty, including motivation, destination image, trip quality, perceived value, and satisfaction in different destination settings (Bigne, Sanchez, & Sanchez, 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Ekinci, Sirakaya-Turk, & Preciado, 2013; Huang & Hsu, 2009). However, little research contributes to the theoretical development in country branding. Although earlier research focuses on city brand images (Merrilees, Miller, & Herington, 2009), country branding is a relatively new area of academic research in marketing.

The literature on destination loyalty is incomplete in several important respects. This study attempts to explain foreign travelers' destination loyalty by developing a model following the existing theory of planned behavior. This research advances country branding research in several ways. First, the article articulates a model of the

determination of country brand loyalty, enabling the identification of the important country brand attitudes. Next, in the context of tourism, the review of literature reveals a number of studies on destination loyalty that need thorough investigation. Therefore, practitioners and academics find that conducting more studies of destination loyalty to have a greater knowledge of this concept is important. The relationship among some of these constructs remains unclear and inconclusive in the tourism fields. Although recent advances in the general marketing field indicate the importance of destination image, previous travel experience, and satisfaction in explaining aspects of consumer behavior, research is scarce on the role of these elements in tourism. To address this shortcoming, the current study develops and tests a model linking destination personality and tourist–destination identification with tourist satisfaction, positive word-of-mouth, and revisiting intentions. To bridge the gap in the destination loyalty literature, the study proposes an integrated approach to examine the theoretical and empirical evidence on the relationships among destination image, consumer travel experience, destination satisfaction, and destination loyalty in the tourism context. Also, identifying the relative importance of these factors in determining loyalty may enable destination marketing managers to allocate scarce resources efficiently and consolidate visitor loyalty.

2. Literature review and research hypotheses

2.1. Destination loyalty

Newman and Werbel (1973) define loyal customers as those who re-buy a brand. Tellis (1988) defines loyalty in behavioral terms as a repeating purchasing frequency. Although previous studies explore the

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issue of repeated visitation (Bowen & Shoemaker, 1998; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Gyte & Phelps, 1989) and identify preliminary tourist loyalty (Backman & Crompton, 1991; Oppermann, 2000; Pritchard & Howard, 1997; Sirakaya-Turk, Ekinci, & Martine, 2015), the study of the concept of loyalty and its applications to destination in the country brand has limitations.

Loyalty for a tourist destination has been the subject of intense academic debate with respect to its measurement (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Ekinci et al., 2013; Oppermann, 2000; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Another issue for the behavioral loyalty measures in tourism contexts is the determination of an appropriate time frame during which customers may or may not return to a destination (Ekinci et al., 2013; Sirakaya-Turk et al., 2015). However, the loyalty behavior approach may not be an adequate assessment of repeated visitation for tourism destinations because many consumers undertake their holiday only on an annual basis. These approaches remain unclear with respect to their conceptual framework and inability to explain the factors that influence customer loyalty (Bastida & Huan, 2014; Yoon & Uysal, 2005).

2.2. Destination image

Image constitutes as an overall impression with some emotional condition (Oxenfeldt, 1974). Dobni and Zinkhan (1990) conclude that image is a perceptual phenomenon that takes shape through consumers' emotional interpretation with cognitive and affective components. The definitions of the destination image relate to individual or group perceptions of a place (Crompton, 1979; Jenkins, 1999; Min, Martin, & Jung, 2013; Zeugner-Roth & Žabkar, 2015). Destination image is an interactive system of thoughts, opinions, feelings, visualizations, and intentions toward a destination (Költringer & Dickinger, 2015; Tasci & Gartner, 2007). An overall or composite results from interactions between these consumer choice attitudes (Gartner, 1989; Lin, Morais, Kerstetter, & Hou, 2007; Pike & Ryan, 2004). The characteristics of tourism products or services, such as multidimensionality (Gartner, 1989; Zeugner-Roth & Žabkar, 2015) and intangibility (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991), complicate the measurement of the destination image construct.

However, the relationship between destination image and behavior intentions remains a debatable matter. A good image can influence repeat patronage (Dick & Basu, 1985). Kandampully and Suhartanto (2000) further identify that hotel image with the performance of house-keeping, reception, food and beverage has a positive effect on customer loyalty. Hotel image acknowledges that destination image affects tourists' behavior and destination choice (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Költringer & Dickinger, 2015; Milman & Pizam, 1995; Woodside & Lysonski, 1989). Destination image influences tourists in the process of choosing a destination and revisiting the destination in the future (Hosany & Prayag, 2013; Zeugner-Roth & Žabkar, 2015). Following the earlier discussion:

H1. Destination image has a positive effect on destination loyalty.

2.3. Destination satisfaction

Oliver (1997) defines satisfaction as a judgment that a product or service feature provides a pleasurable level of consumption. Many tourism researchers deal with different aspects of consumer satisfaction in the hospitality and tourism industry, such as satisfaction with specific destinations (Danaher & Arweiler, 1996; Kozak & Rimmington, 2000; Hultman et al., 2015; Pizam & Milman, 1993; Qu & Li, 1997), time share (Lawton, Weaver, & Faulkner, 1998), group tours (Whipple & Thach, 1988) and restaurants (Dube, Renaghan, & Miller, 1994; Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung, 2007). In the tourism and leisure literatures, previous studies investigate visitors' satisfaction in a diverse range of contexts, including wildlife refuges (Tian-Cole, Crompton, & Willson, 2002), travel agency services (Millan & Esteban, 2004), shopping experiences

(Yuksel & Yuksel, 2007), holiday destinations (Tribe & Snaith, 1998), and tourists' overall satisfaction (Kozak, 2001; Severt, Wang, Chen, & Breiter, 2007; Yu & Goulden, 2006).

Research shows that satisfaction links closely to destination choice and decisions to return (Bigne, Andreu, & Gnoth, 2005; Hultman et al., 2015; Kozak & Rimmington, 2000). Satisfaction has a positive influence on loyalty through favorable revisiting intentions and recommendations to others (Bigne et al., 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Hosany & Prayag, 2013; Prayag, 2008). A number of studies examine the antecedents of customer loyalty (Backman & Crompton, 1991; Cronin, Brady, & Hult, 2000), the results of this body of research show that satisfaction is a good predictor of loyalty (Cronin et al., 2000; Petrick & Norman, 2001). A number of studies confirm a significant positive relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty (Anderson & Sullivan, 1993; Cronin et al., 2000; Hosany & Prayag, 2013). In tourism industry, some empirical evidences show that tourists' satisfaction is a strong indicator of revisiting and recommending the destination to other people (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000; Hultman et al., 2015). However, demonstrating that the effect of satisfaction on customer loyalty is not the same for all destinations worldwide is important (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000). Alternately, in the context of international tourism satisfaction may not have a direct effect on destination loyalty. Compared to the repurchase of consumer products, repeated visits to tourist destinations are relatively rare because of considerable travel time, cost constraints, and the variety of available alternative destinations (Michels & Bowen, 2005). Satisfaction leads to repeated purchase and positive word-of-mouth (WOM) recommendation.

H2. Destination satisfaction positively influences destination loyalty.

Destinations with a more positive image will be part of the decision making process (Gartner, 1989). Court and Lupton (1997) find that the image of the destination under study positively affects visitors' intention to revisit in the future. Image would affect how customers perceive quality; a positive image corresponds to a higher perceived quality, which will in turn determine the satisfaction of consumers (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000). Prior studies (Anderson & Sullivan, 1993; Bigne et al., 2001; Chi & Qu, 2008; Cronin, 2000; Prayag, 2009) establish the link between destination image and satisfaction. Further, destination image exercises a positive influence on perceived satisfaction.

H3. Destination image positively influence tourists' destination satisfaction.

2.4. Consumer experience

Tourism is a pioneering example of the experience economy (Dann, 1977). Experience originates from a set of complex interactions between the customer and a company's product offerings (Addis & Holbrook, 2001). In recent years, a consensus characterizes consumer experience as a multidimensional evaluation (Gentile, Spiller, & Noci, 2007; Hsu, Dehuang, & Woodside, 2009). The global tourism industry evolves into a fundamental challenge for marketers that need to comprehend the distinguishing characteristics of tourist experiences (Nikolova & Hassan, 2013; Perdue, 2002). The tourism experience is unique, emotionally charged, and with a high personal value (Ekinci et al., 2013; McIntosh & Siggs, 2005). Companies should provide unforgettable, satisfactory, and extraordinary experiences to their customers by adding value to their offerings (Berry et al., 2002; Nikolova & Hassan, 2013). The concept of the experience economy spawns some studies dedicated to the understanding of consumer experiences (Addis & Holbrook, 2001; Chang & Chieng, 2006; Gentile et al., 2007; Hsu et al., 2009; Nikolova & Hassan, 2013; Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung, 2007; Quan & Wang, 2004). However, research on the conceptualization and measurement of tourism experiences remains sparse.

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