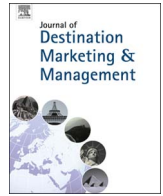




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Research Paper

Adventure tourism motivation and destination loyalty: A comparison of decision and non-decision makers

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ABSTRACT

Through a survey method, this study compares the process of how travel decision makers (DMs) and non-decision makers (Non-DMs) are motivated to travel and how they develop destination loyalty in an adventure tourism setting. The term 'DMs' refers to those individuals who make travel choices for a trip while 'Non-DMs' are those who take the trip but do not make the travel choices (e.g. family members). Data were collected from Japanese rafting tourists ($N = 597$) in Niseko, a famous adventure sport destination. The results demonstrate that the tourism motivations of DMs and Non-DMs differ, with DMs being more likely to pursue excitement compared to Non-DMs, who tend to be more motivated by family-related needs. The findings also show that DMs' destination loyalty is predicted by rafting services and cultural aspects of the destination. However, tourist satisfaction failed to mediate the relationship between pull motivations and destination loyalty for the DM group. Furthermore, these destination attributes also predicted Non-DMs' destination loyalty indirectly through tourist satisfaction. Destination marketers in adventure tourism settings should understand that the key to successful destination marketing is to develop destination loyalty among Non-DMs by satisfying their expected destination attributes while at the same time providing extraordinary experiences that exceed the expectations of the DM.

Adventure tourism is a growing distinct niche tourism market that provides exciting guided commercial tours through an outdoor activity centered on the natural terrain of the destination (World Tourism Organization, 2014). The adventure tourism market is estimated at approximately US\$263 billion and is expected to grow continuously worldwide (Adventure Travel Trade Association, 2013). Among a wide variety of adventure tourism activities, white-water rafting has been regarded as a distinctive activity that can satisfy tourists' needs by providing extraordinary and thrilling experiences (Arnould & Price, 1993; Fluker & Turner, 2000; Wu & Liang, 2011). Currently, white-water rafting is utilized globally to attract adventure tourists to a wide variety of destinations such as the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan (Japan Rafting Association, 2014). In Japan, tourism is considered a vital industry to the country's economy and due to the strategic efforts of the Japanese government, the popularity of tourism in Japan is at all-time high (Japan Association of Travel Agents, 2014). For example, the number of tourists who visit a popular

adventure tourism destination, Niseko, reached an record high of approximately 1.7 million visitors in 2015 (Niseko Town, 2015).

However, destination marketing has become increasingly competitive due to market saturation (Battour, Battor, & Ismail, 2012; Park & Jang, 2013). Tourists are now able to choose between numerous destinations for their vacation (Oppewal, Huybers, & Crouch, 2015). Thus, destination marketers must understand what motivates and attracts tourists to visit certain destinations and how to satisfy these needs to develop effective destination marketing strategies (Battour et al., 2012; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). In this respect, fostering destination loyalty is an essential element to survive in the saturated tourism market as tourists that are loyal to a destination are more likely to revisit and recommend the destination to others (Chen & Xiao, 2013; Meleddu, Paci, & Pulina, 2015). Although loyal tourists tend to spend less money than first-timers (Petrick, 2004a), their spending will at least provide positive economic impact to the destination, and their word-of-mouth will encourage other first-timers to visit the destination.

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Extensive research has been conducted to understand destination loyalty (e.g. Chi & Qu, 2008; Liu, Lin, & Wang, 2012). Specifically, research has focused on the interplay between push and pull motivations and satisfaction (Battour et al., 2012; Fluker & Turner, 2000). However, research into the differences between travel *decision makers* (DMs) and *non-decision makers* (Non-DMs) remains scarce. This issue is particularly important for adventure tourism destination managers as adventure tourists commonly travel with friends and family members (Adventure Travel Trade Association, 2013). 'DMs' refers to the individuals who make travel choices for a trip, while 'Non-DMs' are those who do not, such as family members on a parent-led trip (Gilbert & Wong, 2003). DMs and Non-DMs are essentially different in terms of their perceptions, expectations, and behavioral patterns (Kim, Choi, Agrusa, Wang, & Kim, 2010; Wang, Hsieh, Yeh, & Tsai, 2004). From the adventure tourism manager's point of view, understanding how these distinct tourist segments develop motivation, satisfaction, and destination loyalty can provide useful insights for developing effective destination marketing strategies. Therefore, the purposes of the current study were to: (1) test the relationship between tourism motivations, satisfaction, and destination loyalty for adventure tourists and (2) explore how these constructs differ between DMs and Non-DMs (see Fig. 1).

1. Literature review

1.1. Push/pull motivations

Motivation has played a central role in understanding travel behavior and decision making. While prominent sociological explanations have been suggested to explain travel behavior, such as the push away from the societal disintegration (Dann, 1977) or the search for existential meaning lost in modern life (Cohen, 1979), psychological needs have generally been recognized as motivational factors for travel (Baloglu & Uysal, 1996; Fluker & Turner, 2000; Moscardo, Dann, & McKercher, 2014; Walters, Mair, & Ritchie, 2015). A common conceptualization of tourist motivation is based on the internal and external motives of tourists, described as 'push' and 'pull' respectively (Crompton, 1979; Uysal, Li, & Sirakaya-Turk, 2008; Wu & Wall, 2016; Yousefi & Marzuki, 2015).

The push and pull framework is a frequently used method to explain tourist behavior (Chen & Chen, 2015) and tourism motivation (Fluker & Turner, 2000; Prayag & Hosany, 2014; Uysal & Jurovski, 1994). Accordingly, 'push motivation' refers to the inner force within the traveler that leads to the decision to undertake a journey (i.e. psychological needs to travel outside of everyday life). 'Pull motivation' refers to an external force, such as the attributes of a destination that lead the traveler to select one destination over another once the decision to travel is made. Tourist motivation is explained by the push and pull framework in that people travel because they are pushed by

internal forces and then pulled by the external forces of a tourist destination (Cha, McCleary, & Uysal, 1995; Uysal et al., 2008).

Push factors are derived from socio-psychological motives that drive individuals to travel (Baloglu & Uysal, 1996; Crompton, 1979; Prayag & Hosany, 2014; Uysal et al., 2008). For example, psychological factors such as escaping, relaxation, relation, knowledge, self-esteem, family togetherness, and entertainment are considered push factors (Buckley, McDonald, Duan, Sun, & Chen, 2014; Crompton, 1979; Fluker & Turner, 2000; Klenosky, 2002). On the other hand, pull factors are related to features and attributes of destinations such as weather, scenery, attractions, physical amenities, airfare, history and culture (Dann, 1997; Fluker & Turner, 2000; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Buckley et al. (2014) conducted a study in a Chinese white-water rafting context and found that Chinese white-water rafting travelers possessed common push and pull motivations such as relax, escape, nature, and culture. Regarding the relationship between push and pull motivations, push factors are considered to precede pull factors because pull factors only come into consideration once the decision to travel has been made as where to go, what to see and do in the chosen destination (Kim, Lee, & Klenosky, 2003; Zoltan & Masiero, 2012). Klenosky (2002) offers a similar explanation by summarizing the push factor with the question 'whether to go' and the pull factor as 'where to go.' Thus, the following hypothesis was posited:

H_1 : Push motivations will positively influence pull motivations.

1.2. Relationships among motivation, satisfaction, and destination loyalty

In addition to push/pull motivations, another factor critical to successful destination marketing is tourist satisfaction (Meng, Tepanon, & Uysal, 2008; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Tourist satisfaction has been examined as it relates to a variety of variables such as place attachment (Yuksel, Yuksel, & Bilim, 2010) and destination image (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007). As an important determinant of tourist behavior (e.g. repeat visitation, intention to recommend), satisfaction requires further scholarly attention to better understand its explanatory power and interrelationships with other significant factors for destination marketing.

The effect of motivation on satisfaction has been examined in the field of leisure and tourism extensively (Noe & Uysal, 1997; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Specifically, tourist satisfaction is described as how well a destination fulfilled a tourist's specific needs (Meng et al., 2008), and motivation has been acknowledged as one of the antecedents to satisfaction (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Yoon and Uysal (2005) revealed that pull motives are tourism attractions, and Noe and Uysal (1997) argue satisfaction is an outcome elicited from the consumer evaluation of destination performance. Previous literature is consistent in the idea that tourist attractions can produce tourist satisfaction (Jurovski, Cumbow, Uysal, & Noe, 1995). Therefore, it could be reasoned that satisfaction is associated with tourists' motivations related to the specific attributes of a destination. Therefore, we developed the following hypothesis:

H_2 : Pull motivations will positively influence satisfaction.

Motivation and satisfaction have been demonstrated to collectively influence destination loyalty (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Destination loyalty in general refers to the idea that tourists form positive attitudes towards a destination that leads to repeat visitation and positive word-of-mouth (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Considering the destination as a product to be branded and consumed (Hultman & Hall, 2012), destination loyalty in tourism studies is equivalent to customer loyalty from brand equity in marketing studies (Boo, Busser, & Baloglu, 2009; Pike, Bianchi, Kerr, & Patti, 2010). Customer loyalty toward a product or brand is generally conceptualized as behavioral (Ehrenberg, Goodhardt, & Barwise, 1990; Kahn, Kalwani, & Morrison, 1986) and attitudinal (Baldinger & Rubinson, 1996). Behavioral loyalty refers to repeat purchasing while attitudinal loyalty refers to the preference and

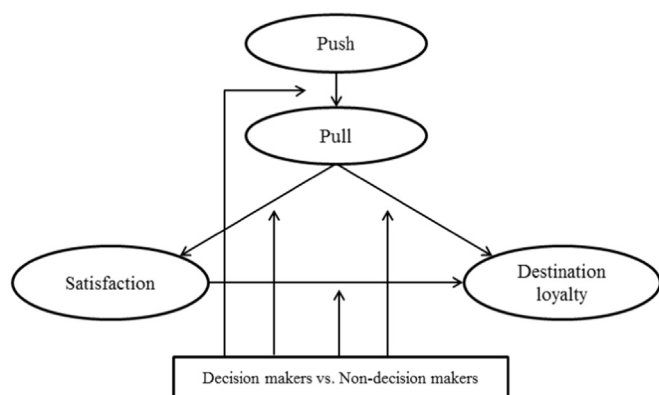


Fig. 1. Conceptual model.

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