



Behavioral intention of visitors to an Oriental medicine festival: An extended model of goal directed behavior



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HIGHLIGHTS

- EMGB is used to understand the behavioral intention of Oriental medicine festival visitors.
- Image of Oriental medicine festival site and perception of Oriental medicine affect attitude.
- Attitude, subjective norm, and positive anticipated emotion influence visitors' desire.
- Desire influences visitors' behavioral intention.
- Image and perception have significant relationships with attitude towards the medicine festival.

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ABSTRACT

Despite the importance of Oriental medicine festivals to Oriental medical tourism, little research has been conducted to understand the behavioral intention of visitors to these festivals. Therefore, this study examines the behavioral intention of visitors to a Korean Oriental medicine festival. This study employs the extended model of goal-directed behavior (EMGB) that incorporates two constructs related to Oriental medicine festivals: the Oriental medicine image of festival site (image) and the perception of Oriental medicine (perception). An on-site survey was conducted with 423 visitors attending the Sancheong Herbal Festival in South Korea. Results reveal that attitude, subjective norm, and positive anticipated emotion influenced visitors' desire to attend the festival, which, in turn, influenced their behavioral intentions. Two constructs of image and perception formed positive and significant relationships with attitude toward attending the festival. Practical implications of the study results are discussed.

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1. Introduction

The increased interest in quality of life and health have contributed to the development of medical tourism, a new type of alternative tourism, which incorporates medical (e.g., prevention of diseases, treatment) and tourism (e.g., visiting tourist attractions) activities. Combining medical and tourism activities allows

the tourism industry to be more profitable and to positively influence related industries that cater to tourists' medical needs. Therefore, many countries and regions around the world encourage the development of medical tourism that attracts tourists by fulfilling their needs for medical services (Lee, Han, & Lockyer, 2012).

In Asia, the rapid growth in medical tourism also increased an interest in Oriental medicine, which is the world's oldest codified system of medicine practiced for more than 2,500 years. Oriental medicine is gaining popularity among health conscious individuals because it helps to control and improve the internal conditions of the body and enhance quality of life (Wikipedia, 2013). In particular, there is a growing interest in Oriental medicine festivals that are believed to be an important means of developing the Oriental medicine industry and Oriental medical tourism. A variety of Oriental medicine festivals

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has been recently organized for tourists in South Korea (hereafter Korea) (e.g., Ginseng festival, herbal medicine festival).

One of the most popular Oriental medicine festivals in Korea is the Sancheong Herbal Festival. The festival is held annually in the Gyeongnam Sancheong County known for its unique herbal plantation. The Sancheong County is regarded as a Mecca of Korean Oriental medicine and represents a perfect place for developing medical tourism. Hosting the Sancheong Herbal Festival can exert a positive impact on the development of the Oriental medicine industry in the region. Despite the importance of Oriental medicine festivals to the Oriental medicine industry and medical tourism, little research has been conducted to understand the behavioral intention of visitors to these festivals. Therefore, this study examines the decision-making process of the visitors to Oriental medicine festivals by utilizing a theoretical framework that not only helps to understand and predict Oriental medicine festival visitors' behavior but also can help government agencies, tourism marketers, and festival practitioners to develop effective marketing strategies targeting these visitors.

The frequently used theories that explain individuals' behavioral intentions are the theory of planned behavior (TPB) and the model of goal-directed behavior (MGB). These theories can be further developed by considering other important variables that may directly or indirectly affect behavioral intentions (Leone, Perugini, & Ercolani, 2004). Therefore, this study expands the MGB and develops an extended model of goal-directed behavior (EMGB) incorporating two constructs related to Oriental medicine festivals: the Oriental medicine image of festival site and the perception of Oriental medicine. Specifically, the study tries to identify the effects of the Oriental medicine image of festival site and the perception of Oriental medicine on the behavioral intention of visitors to the Sancheong Herbal Festival in Korea. From the theoretical perspective, the findings of this study enhance the understanding of visitor intention to revisit an Oriental medicine festival by extending the MGB. From the practical perspective, the results of the study provide festival managers with effective marketing strategies to attract and better satisfy Oriental medicine festival visitors.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Oriental medicine and Oriental medical tourism

Oriental medicine relies on a diagnosis of a patient's Qi (or chi) energy and claims that the imbalance of Qi is the underlying cause of diseases. It categorizes body patterns and offers individual treatment plans to restore health and balance a patient's Qi through acupuncture, herbal medicine, oriental nutrition and massages, tuina or oriental bodywork, as well as tai chi and qi-gong (mind, breath, and physiological exercises) and other therapies that include electro-acupuncture, cupping, and lifestyle and nutritional counseling. Oriental medicine is practiced in China, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Vietnam, Thailand, Tibet, and India. These countries promote their traditional medicine and therapies to attract international tourists; some countries have even developed Oriental medical tourism strategies, specifically to increase the incidence of tourist visitation.

Since Oriental medicine relies on natural drugs that have fewer side effects than chemical drugs, it is accepted as an important means of providing quality healthcare services around the world. The Oriental medical canon has gained worldwide recognition for effective medical treatments. Currently, Oriental medicine is considered in Western countries as an alternative medicine that helps to improve the immune system and treats and prevents the diseases and illnesses for which Western medicine does not presently have a cure.

Committee on the Use of Complementary and Alternative Medicine by the American Public (2005) defines alternative

medicine, including Oriental medicine, as medical practices that include diet and nutrition, traditional and folk remedies, mind-body techniques, pharmacologic and biologic treatments, manual healing methods, and herbal medicine. It was found that approximately 38% of adults and 12% of children used some form of complementary and alternative medicine in 2007 (National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, 2013).

The growth of interest in Oriental medicine is followed by the increased interest in Oriental medical tourism, which is defined as travel for the purpose of receiving Oriental medical treatment and improving health. Oriental medical tourism combines Oriental medicine resources (e.g., acupuncture, herbal treatment, diet) with tourism resources (e.g., regional culture, heritage, food, wine). Thus, while Oriental medical tourists travel to obtain Oriental healthcare they also enjoy experiencing tourism attractions and services. Many Asian countries and regions promote Oriental medical tourism as a new wave of alternative tourism and a strategically important growth industry.

2.2. Korean medical tourism and Oriental medicine festival

Korea is a new destination for medical tourism and one of the fastest rising stars in Oriental medical tourism (Lee, Han, et al., 2012; Lee, Song, Bendle, Kim, & Han, 2012). Yu and Ko (2012) state that the Jeju government, one of the local governments in Korea, has enhanced the Island's stagnant tourism industry by expanding medical and well-being services, including Oriental medicine services. The development of medical tourism in Korea is primarily due to the high medical standards of Korean medical doctors, state-of-the-art medical infrastructure, leading modern medical technology, advanced knowledge of Oriental medicine, and excellent quality healthcare services – a cooperative system that combines both Occidental and Oriental treatments and leads the field globally. Korea is particularly known for being effective in the treatment of cancerous tumors, and thyroid and cosmetic surgeries.

It is predicted that Korea will become one of the biggest medical tourism destinations in Asia (Korea Tourism Organization, 2009). In 2012 medical tourism in Korea has more than doubled the number of foreign tourists-patients from 60,201 in 2009 to 155,672 in 2012 (Korea Tourism Organization, 2013). In 2012 over 33% of tourists who visited Korea for medical purposes were from the United States, 20% from China, and 17% from Japan. By 2015, the Korean government aims at welcoming 400,000 medical tourists and by 2020 more than 1 million (Korea Tourism Organization, 2013). In terms of Oriental medical tourism Korea owes its popularity to excellent skin care, plastic surgery, and diet programs. Frequently sought treatments include wrapping bodies in herbal ingredients, acupuncture, and wine fire treatments. All ingredients used during the treatment are medical herbs that help to eliminate toxins, brighten the skin, and help with anti-aging, wrinkles, and skin restoration. The increasing rate of satisfaction from these Oriental medical treatments has triggered a steady rise in the Oriental medical tourism industry. The Korean government fully supports the development of medical and Oriental medical tourism. Significant funds are devoted to promoting Korean Oriental medical tourism as a part of the national green growth strategy that encourages the use of natural resources. Several local governments in Korea (e.g., Jecheon, Sanchung, Daegu, etc.) have recently hosted Oriental medicine festivals to promote the importance of traditional healing and treatment and to encourage the development of the Oriental medical tourism industry. Oriental medicine festivals are recognized as unique festivals that contribute to the development of medical tourism and satisfy visitors' needs for both health and tourism experiences (Song, Moon, Choi, & Lee, 2013).

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