



Yesterday once more? Autobiographical memory evocation effects on tourists' post-travel purchase intentions toward destination products



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HIGHLIGHTS

- Investigate tourists' purchase behaviors toward destination products after the travel.
- Autobiographical memory evocation facilitates tourists' purchase intentions toward destination products after the travel.
- The role of product-destination congruity, travel satisfaction, evoked pleasure and destination attachment.
- A conceptual model was developed and empirical tested.

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ABSTRACT

When tourists return home from a remote tourism destination, it is not uncommon for them to encounter the destination's products being sold in their hometown. Autobiographical memory evocation is likely to affect their purchase intentions. This study aims to examine the effects of autobiographical memory evocation on behavioral responses. A conceptual model was developed to examine the causal relationships of product-destination congruity, travel satisfaction, autobiographical memory, evoked pleasure, destination attachment and purchase intention. Data were obtained from 342 tourists who had visited the heritage city of Lijiang, China. Autobiographical memory is found to lead to pleasure and a positive mood, higher levels of destination attachment, and greater purchase intentions for the product available in the tourist's hometown. Managerial implications are discussed.

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1. Introduction

For both outbound and domestic tourism, shopping is one of the major components of travelling. A tour without shopping opportunities is incomplete for many tourists (LeHew & Wesley, 2007). As indicated by Sirakaya-Turk, Ekinici, and Martin (2015), "Tourists purchase variety of goods when they travel. They shop for local crafts, goods, arts as souvenirs, and essential utilitarian items such as toothpaste and batteries for personal use". Such shopping constitutes a significant proportion of expenditures in both international and domestic tourism, second only to accommodation. According to Hong Kong Tourism Board (2014), tourists who visited Hong Kong in 2013 did spend more money on shopping than on accommodation. The expenditure on shopping by overnight

visitors accounted for 61.2% (US\$16.46 billion) of the total travel expenditure, whilst same-day visitors spent 90.8% (USD 61.76 billion) of their travel expenditure on shopping. More importantly, a good shopping experience positively influences tourists' moods and encourages cultural interaction between tourists and hosts (Sirakaya-Turk et al., 2015), resulting in re-patronage desires toward the tourist destination (Huang & Hsu, 2009). Tourists' satisfaction and travel experience are generally affected by shopping activities and the associated experiences (Croes, Shani, & Walls, 2010; Fallon & Schofield, 2006; Huang & Sarigöllü, 2008).

Because of the significant influence shopping has on tourist behaviors, tourist shopping behaviors have become the subject of considerable research in tourism studies (Wu & Pearce, 2014). Scholars have conducted this research from multiple perspectives. For example, they have studied tourist motivations to patronize a shopping village (Murphy, Benckendorff, Moscardo, & Pearce, 2011), motivations to purchase local food (Kim, Eves, & Scarles, 2013), tourist shopping behaviors in local markets (Wu & Pearce,

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2014), tourist shopping style preferences (Lehto, Chen, & Silkes, 2014), cross-border shopping behaviors (Bojanic, 2011), souvenir meanings and sustainability levels (Swanson & Timothy, 2012), shopping satisfaction differences among tourists from different countries (Lloyd, Yip, & Luk, 2011), and strategies for improving tourist shopping experiences (Yeung, Wong, & Ko, 2004). However, to our knowledge, no studies have focused on tourist purchasing behavior after the tourists return to their hometowns. Tourists' satisfaction level of travel experience apparently influences their consumption behaviors after an excursion ends, especially when tourists re-encounter a product from a tourism destination in their residence locale after a trip. The Mexican company Corona in the 1980s and Thai food companies in the 1990s capitalized on pleasant consumption experiences at tourism sites to successfully sell products in tourist residence locales, a phenomenon referred to as the reverse diaspora effect (Kumar & Steenkamp, 2013). Thus, the major objective of this study is to develop a conceptual model that captures the decision mechanism governing tourist post-trip consumption behaviors. Specifically, we examine the effect of autobiographical memory evocation on tourist purchase intention when tourists re-encounter the destination's local product in their hometowns. We expect that when tourists re-encounter a product from a tourism destination in their hometowns, their autobiographical memories are easily evoked, particularly if the product is highly congruent with the image of the tourism destination. Moreover, tourists' travel satisfaction will also influence autobiographical memory evocation. This autobiographical memory evocation will facilitate tourists' positive moods, higher levels of destination attachment, and greater purchase intentions toward the product. Our research findings are expected to contribute to the tourist purchasing behavior literature and provide managerial implications for international and tourism managers.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Tourist purchasing behavior

Shopping has long been regarded as a vital component of tourism (Wu, Wall, & Pearce, 2014). As the top leisure activity of travelers (Yu & Littrell, 2003), shopping is an activity that is pursued for entertainment as well as to make purchases (Sirakaya-Turk et al., 2015). Through gazing, searching for products and interacting with sellers, tourists' emotional state is influenced, which eventually affects their shopping and travel satisfaction levels (Gallarza & Saura, 2006; Yüksel & Yüksel, 2007). In addition, shopping satisfaction is another major topic of tourist behavior research. Such studies generally focus on tourists' shopping or purchasing preferences (Heung & Cheng, 2000; Reisinger & Turner, 2002), shopping satisfaction among domestic tourists (Turner & Reisinger, 2001) and among tourists from different nationalities (Lloyd et al., 2011; Wong & Law, 2003), the dimensions of tourist satisfaction with a tourism destination and tourists' shopping satisfaction level (Pizam, Neumann, & Reichel, 1978; Wong & Law, 2003; Wong & Wan, 2013; Yüksel, 2004). Yu and Littrell (2003) developed a model to describe tourist shopping behaviors for craft souvenirs, while Yüksel and Yüksel's (2007) model focuses on the effect of consumer perceived risk on satisfaction and loyalty intentions.

Most of the previous studies have focused on pre-trip and during-trip tourist shopping or purchasing behaviors. However, in addition to these two stages, the tourism process also includes a post-trip stage (Wang, Xiang, & Fesenmaier, 2014), which is the focus of this study. As indicated by Sujan, Bettman, and Baumgartner (1993), autobiographical memory evocation would play an important role in consumer purchase decision process. In

this study, we adopt autobiographical memory as our theoretical starting point to propose a model of tourists' purchasing behavior with respect to destination products during the post-trip stage.

2.2. Autobiographical memory

Explicit memory can be divided into semantic and episodic memory (Tulving, 1979). In general, autobiographical memory is a specialized subset of episodic memory and primarily concerns knowledge of the self in the past (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). It also involves the recollection of a previously experienced episode (Baumgartner, Sujan, & Bettman, 1992). Autobiographical memory originates from individual life experiences (Neisser, 1988) and is often referred to as personal memory (Brewer & Pani, 1983). This form of memory is experienced as the presentation of an event in a defined time and space (Brewer & Pani, 1983). Tourist memories of intellectual knowledge about a tourism destination are considered a form of semantic memory, whereas tourist memories of personal experiences are considered a form of autobiographical memory (Kim, 2014).

On the other hand, autobiographical memories consist of voluntary and involuntary memories. The main difference between these two types is the form of memory retrieval, i.e., voluntary autobiographical memories need a controlled and strategic retrieval process, while involuntary autobiographical memories usually just come to mind without any preceding attempt at retrieval (Watson, Berntsen, Kuyken, & Watkins, 2012). When tourists re-encounter a destination's local product in their hometowns, their autobiographical memories about the specific tourism experience may be easily triggered by the product and are intuitively voluntary in nature.

Autobiographical memory has three general functions: directive, self and social functions (Bluck, Alea, Habermas, & Rubin, 2005; Pillemer, 2003). The directive function mainly involves solving problems and planning for the future. In fact, autobiographical memory can provide information about activities while serving as a source of inspiration and motivation (Pillemer, 2003). The self function of autobiographical memory mainly refers to its role in the spontaneous imagination of future events, which allows individuals to automatically establish a continuous and unified sense of subjective time while evaluating their current life circumstances (Berntsen & Jacobsen, 2008). The social function of autobiographical memory mainly involves maintaining intimacy with others by directing or informing others and producing emotional resonance (Alea & Bluck, 2003). Therefore, it helps individuals successfully engage in interpersonal communication in their social lives. In this study, tourists' autobiographical memory is examined primarily in relation to its directive function, i.e., directing an upcoming action by recalling previous actions.

Previous studies have identified various factors that affect individuals' autobiographical memory formation and retention, such as surprising, emotional and consequential events (Rubin & Kozin, 1984) and extraordinary, surprising, unexpected and emotional experiences (Talarico & Rubin, 2003). Interestingly, people are more likely to retain highly positive events in memory than negative events (Rubin & Berntsen, 2003). Memory is considered the most important information source when a tourist is making a revisit decision (Braun-LaTour, Grinley, & Loftus, 2006; Kozak, 2001; Lehto, O'Leary, & Morrison, 2004). In fact, tourists' involvement with travel experiences, hedonic activities and local culture are likely to positively influence their autobiographical memory formation and evocation (Kim, 2010).

The evocation of autobiographical memory can be regarded as a special form of self-referencing, i.e., accessing self-related knowledge structures (Sujan et al., 1993). Cue-priming theory suggests

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