



Self-determined travel facilitation with mental construal priming



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HIGHLIGHTS

- The first attempt to utilize mindset manipulation to cultivate travel motivations.
- The extended applications of CLT and SDT in “risk-taking” goal pursuits.
- Concrete construal is dominant in facilitating challenging travel pursuits.
- The construal facilitation is by moderating the need-motivation relationships.
- Context-based construal priming can optimally facilitate self-determined travel.

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ABSTRACT

In order to encourage people with mobility impairments (PwMI) to become active tourists, it is crucial to enhance their self-determination for overcoming travel constraints. This study proposes mental construal priming as a relatively efficient approach to facilitating self-determined travel pursuits among PwMI. Two pretest-posttest web-based experiments within the context of accessible and inaccessible service support the construal-facilitating effect on self-determined travel motivations, particularly through moderating the relationships between autonomy/competence satisfaction and self-determined motivations. This study offers theoretical implications by bridging construal level theory and self-determination theory, and introduces a new perspective of utilizing mindset intervention to cultivate travel motivations. The context-based adoption of different construal priming programs is recommended to maximize facilitation effectiveness.

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1. Introduction

Leisure travel has been empirically verified as a promising tool for improving the wellbeing of people with mobility impairments (PwMI), through extended support networks and personal development (Lee, Agarwal, & Kim, 2012). Yet it is understandable that many PwMI forego leisure travel opportunities due to objective travel constraints such as facility/service inaccessibility (McKercher & Chen, 2015). Although a good deal of industrial progress has been made to remove or draw attention to these constraints (Buhalis, Darcy, & Ambrose, 2012), there is less growth of travel by PwMI than expected (Anand & Ben-Shalom, 2014). An explanation

provided by tourism scholars for this phenomenon is that, travel constraints on many occasions may serve as “acceptable” excuses to conceal a lack of interest or confidence in traveling (McKercher, 2009). Constraint theory further suggests that people do not experience objective environmental inhibitors (i.e., a lack of time/budget/service accessibility) unless their psychological inhibitors (i.e., hesitation or fear of failures) are resolved (Crawford & Godbey, 1987). Lee et al. (2012) further added that PwMI may perceive travel failures as inevitable, which leads to the absence of motivation to engage in future tourism activities. In such cases, even improving the objective travel settings may fail to recover their travel interests. Therefore, resolving the lack of travel motivation for PwMI is an essential prerequisite to the effective elimination of objective travel constraints (Eichhorn, Miller, & Tribe, 2013; Moghimehfar & Halpenny, 2016).

Self-determination facilitation is thereby proposed to motivate

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PwMI's travel pursuits and persistence despite objective constraints. As premised on the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985), self-determined motivations refer to engaging in activities freely out of individual interests and values, as opposed to expecting external contingent outcomes such as recognition/approval from others, forms of controlled motivation. Fostering self-determined motivations has been well-recognized as facilitating goal pursuit intention (Cerasoli, Nicklin, & Ford, 2014; Lindwall, Weman-Josefsson, Sebire, & Standage, 2016) and persistence despite difficulties (Hardre & Reeve, 2003; Koestner, Powers, Milyavskaya, Carbonneau, & Hope, 2015). In contrast, poorer pursuit intention and effort dedication are exhibited among people who are primarily driven by controlled motivations (Steidle, Werth, & Gockel, 2013). Therefore, leisure travel pursuit among PwMI, which is indeed a *goal pursuit behavior* with difficulties attached that also provides self-development benefits, should be effectively facilitated by fostering self-determined motivations. To encourage travel pursuit among PwMI despite challenges it poses, it is necessary to explore how to facilitate self-determined motivations.

Most of the existing self-determination facilitation practices adopt individualized face-to-face training programs that last for more than a week (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Silva et al., 2010). The programs were designed primarily for motivating an individual to develop positive habits (i.e., regular exercises) or overcome negative ones (i.e., alcohol addiction or procrastination) that are essential to wellbeing or self-development (Chirkov, Ryan, & Sheldon, 2011; Friederichs, Oenema, Bolman, & Lechner, 2016). While these programs are undeniably effective, their application among a wide population and particularly in the facilitation of less-essential leisure travel pursuits may not be feasible considering the required investment of time, labor, and funds. The current study therefore examines the facilitation of self-determined travel motivations by *Construal Level Priming*, a feasible intervention approach that is easily implementable on a regular basis in large groups.

Construal level theory (CLT), the theoretical ground for *Construal Level Priming*, depicts how an event that people mentally represent in the abstract could result in their asymmetric attention to core rather than peripheral features of the event, and vice versa (Trope & Liberman, 2003). For instance, when an abstract construal is adopted, people highlight the primary reason of “why” they would engage in an activity instead of focusing on the secondary or concrete specifics of “how” they would get involved. *Construal Level Priming* (Trope, Liberman, & Wakslak, 2007) is a corresponding intervention approach that employs *simple* mental set query practices to temporarily induce an individual's abstract vs. concrete construal of an event. Particularly, the primed abstract construal instead of concrete construal is proposed in this study as potentially facilitating self-determined travel motivations. The possible facilitation mechanisms are thereby examined as the primary research questions of this study: *does primed abstract construal (PAC) as opposed to primed concrete construal (PCC) lead to enhanced self-determined motivations (SDM) through a) the mediation of autonomy/competence satisfaction (AUT/COM) and b) moderating the effect of autonomy/competence satisfaction (AUT/COM) on self-determined motivations (SDM)?*

A randomized pretest–posttest experimental design (Dimitrov & Rumrill, 2003) is thereby adopted to examine the primed construal effect on self-determined travel motivations. Considering the possible variation of hypothesized relationships across travel difficulty levels (i.e. possibly stronger abstract construal effects under challenging scenarios) (Marguc, Förster, & Van Kleef, 2011), two experiments that primarily adopt the same design are conducted under two different conditions: (1) properly accessible service settings (Experiment 1) and (2) poorly accessible service settings (Experiment 2).

2. Literature review

2.1. SDT and self-determination facilitation

SDT explains how a spectrum of motivations (ranging from intrinsic to extrinsic) have varied influences on human decision making, performance, and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Sheldon, Ryan, Deci, & Kasser, 2004). In the case of intrinsic motivation, people generally behave for internally rewarding reasons such as acting out of personal interests or aspirations derived from individual important values/goals. Behaving with extrinsic motivation means acting in response to a sense of pressure or demand for certain outcomes coming from external forces, such as pursuing behaviors to impress others or to avoid criticism. It should be noted, however, that these “external” incentives can be accepted by individuals as their own values, resulting in the “internalization” of extrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Differing by the degrees of internalization, two types of motivation are located on the spectrum between the pure extrinsic and intrinsic motivations, that of *introjected motivation* and *identified motivation* (Deci & Ryan, 2000). As the least-internalized external incentive, introjected motivation reflects how people perceive certain activities not as part of their self-identity, but as what they should do to avoid contingent consequences such as guilt or shame, or to gain contingent self-esteem. People experience identified motivation when they start to accept certain external values as a part of their self-identity even though the fundamental reasons driving them are instrumental to a certain outcome, such as when people exercise regularly because they recognize that it would benefit their health. As intrinsic and identified motivations are rooted in inner interest and self-identity, they are classified as *self-determined motivations*. Behaviors driven by extrinsic and introjected motivations, however, primarily the consequences of social-environment control, are defined as *controlled motivations*.

Regarding the self-determination facilitation, Deci and Ryan (2000) proposed that the level of self-determination in individual motivation can be fostered by the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs, that of *autonomy, competence, and relatedness*. Autonomy can be defined as the degree to which people perceive their activities as being freely engaged and in accordance with their central values and intrinsic interests, such as responsibility and sense of humor (Weinstein, Przybylski, & Ryan, 2013). Competence reflects the desire to be in control of the environment of an activity, while relatedness refers to the desire for being connected with others and experiencing their social support (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Importantly, autonomy and competence are central to fostering self-determined motivations, as compared to the relatively distal influence from relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Van den Broeck, Ferris, Chang, & Rosen, 2016). Relatedness is nevertheless more relevant to the internalization of extrinsic motivations, particularly the introjected motivation.

As stated by Ryan and Deci (2000), the lack of individual self-determined motivations is often due to social environmental factors that interfere with the satisfaction of autonomy and competence. The popular self-determination facilitation approach, Motivational Interviewing (MI), thereby motivates individual autonomous pursuit of an activity by changing the objective environment to satisfy individual autonomy and competence needs (Friederichs et al., 2016; Hardcastle, Taylor, Bailey, Harley, & Hagger, 2013). Taking its application in tobacco abstinence as an example, a counselor would design diverse quitting plans to allow individual participant's free choices (autonomy satisfaction), or provide optimal levels of challenges when helping individuals design action plans (competence satisfaction) (Kusurkar, Croiset, & Ten Cate, 2011; Silva et al., 2010).

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