



Research Paper

Effects of pro-environmental destination image and leisure sports mania on motivation and pro-environmental behavior of visitors to Korea's national parks

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ABSTRACT

The purposes of this research were: (1) to examine the effects of pro-environmental destination image on motivation and pro-environmental behaviors; (2) to examine the key underlying factors of leisure sports mania; and (3) to understand fully how different factors of leisure sports mania influence motivation and pro-environmental behaviors. Based on previous studies, six main hypotheses were derived as constructs and a theoretical research model was proposed. The model was tested using the data collected from 222 people who have visited national parks in Korea. The data analysis revealed that environmental image affects both intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation, but does not affect any of the pro-environmental behaviors. In contrast, ecological image positively affects intrinsic and preservative behavior. For leisure sports mania, the result of EFA indicated that there are only three categories (i.e. conative, cognitive, and affective), contrasting the original research suggested four factors. It was also found that each factor of leisure sports mania influences motivation and pro-environmental behavior separately, and the conative and cognitive factors positively moderate the relationship between intrinsic motivation and preservative behavior. Lastly, there was no effect of extrinsic motivation on pro-environmental behavior, whereas intrinsic behavior significantly affected pro-environmental behaviors. The key implications of these findings are discussed in the latter part of this paper.

1. Introduction

Because South Korea is 70% mountains, Koreans' leisure activities comprise mostly visiting the mountains. According to Gallup Korea (2015), hiking has become the most popular leisure activity for recent 10 years since the introduction of the systematic five-day working week policy in 2004. It also stated that a third of Koreans would go to the mountains at least once a month. In mountainous destinations, managing and preserving the natural environment and ecosystem are the most important issues. Therefore, the government must administer these areas at the national level to protect the natural environment.

Since 1967, the Korean government has designated certain natural areas as national parks. The Korea National Park Service (KNPS) defines a national park as "the area that represents the natural ecosystem and cultural scene of the Republic of Korea". Aside from preserving the natural resources, other purposes of designating these areas as national parks are to contribute to people's leisure activities and increase the quality of their lives. By interacting with and experiencing nature, people's humanity enables them to feel, be creative, and discover the

meaning and purpose of life (Kellert & Wilson, 1995; Kellert, 2012). It can also impact on people's physical and psychological wellbeing by alleviating stress and anxiety from everyday life (Yi, 2015; Ulrich, 1983).

Since 2007 when the Ministry of Environment (ME) of Korea decided to abolish the entrance fee policy of national parks, which had been maintained for 37 years in the past, the number of visitors has increased gradually. Consequently, national parks are an important part of Korea's tourism industry: more than 40 million people are currently visiting these areas every year (KNPS, 2017). Alongside the growth in the number of park visitors, the hiking culture and industry in Korea has intensified dramatically. Many people join hiking communities and participate in group hiking trips, thereby boosting the hiking clothing industry to grow five times more in the past 10 years.

As more people visit nature destinations, such as national parks, it becomes more imperative to encourage them to have *pro-environmental behavior* referring to a "behavior that harms the environment as little as possible, or even benefits the environment" (Steg & Vlek, 2009). Moreover, reports on serious environmental damage, including soil erosion, exposure of plants' roots, littering, and animal extinction

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stemming from the careless hiking behaviors of visitors to Korea's national parks have consistently been published. This study is developed based on these issues and aims to find ways to engage visitors to Korea's national parks to practice pro-environmental behaviors.

Among the factors affecting pro-environmental behavior in national parks is *leisure sports mania*, which refers to a mental state in which a person puts plenty of time and effort, either individually or through a community group, into hiking; it is also considered as “positive addiction” (Glasser, 1976; Kim, 1997). Previous studies have showed that people who are considered as leisure sports maniacs (e.g. those who have specialization in a leisure activity) tend to be more responsible toward natural environment and behave in an environmentally friendly way (Kim & Won, 2014, 2016; Kim, 2010). However, other studies have reported that the increasing number of hiking groups and their undiscerning hiking behaviors cause much damage in national parks. For example, the number of cases of hiking maniacs illegally trying to explore restricted areas, which are preserved, has been increasing annually (KNPS, 2014). As a first step to address this issue, the factors that affect leisure sports mania in Korea's national parks must be determined, and how these factors influence pro-environmental behaviors must be investigated.

Given the facts presented above (i.e. an increasing number of tourists after the entrance fee was abolished and escalating levels of environmental damage caused by hiking maniacs), many studies have investigated the variables affecting pro-environmental behaviors (Karp, 1996; Ryu, Park, Kim, & Ju, 2016; Ryu, 2014; Yang, Kim, Ham & Lee, 2013; You, 2013; Yoo, Kim & Kim, 2015). However, the antecedents of pro-environmental behaviors based on literature are mostly related to internal attributes of individuals (e.g. beliefs, values, norms, sense of responsibility, and self-esteem); that is, the acquisition of practical implications is limited because changing people's personality is difficult. Therefore, examining the external factors, which can be controlled practically to encourage a pro-environmental behavior, is imperative.

Pro-environmental destination image, which can be defined as total environmental positive impressions that an individual has of a specific destination when referring to the contexts presenting destination image (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Lawson & Baud-Bovy, 1977; Stringer, 1984), is among the potential options. Previous studies of business and tourism fields have indicated that destination image has a causal relationship with attitude, motivation, and behavior (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Bigne, Sanchez & Sanchez, 2001; Castro, Armario & Ruiz, 2007; Chen & Gursoy, 2001; Cho, 2012; Chon, 2013; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Cai, Lehto & Huang, 2010; Sellgren, 2011; Son, 1982). Although many studies have concentrated on the visiting or purchasing behavior of customers or tourists, no one has examined the role of (pro-environmental) destination image affecting people's pro-environmental behaviors.

In summary, the purposes of this research are: (1) to examine the effects of pro-environmental destination image on pro-environmental behavior and its motivation; (2) to identify key factors that determine leisure sports mania; and (3) to understand fully how different factors of leisure sports mania influence pro-environmental behavior and its motivation.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Destination image and pro-environmental destination image

Recent psychology and other social science studies have emphasized the significance of image, which is the representative response that is explained as the result of perception (Ko, 2013). Image has been defined as a total impression that an individual holds of a specific object (Barich & Kotler, 1991; Dichter, 1985). The object can be a company, product, brand, person, or place (destination) (Barich & Kotler, 1991). Through different perspectives, image has been the focus of research in various academic and practical areas, such as marketing, experimental

psychology, communication theories, semantics, socio-psychology, and tourism.

Destination image in tourism research has been defined as the total impression that an individual or a group might have of a particular place (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Lawson & Baud-Bovy, 1977; Stringer, 1984; Kim & Lee, 2000). Given the perspective of formation process, destination image has been explained in three different categories, that is, organic, induced, and complex image (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Gartner, 1994; Gunn, 1972). Organic image is an impression of a destination that potential tourists form unconsciously without visiting the destination or putting effort to achieve an information. Induced image is derived from a conscious effort to develop, promote, and advertise (Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2006), and thus it is mostly based on a commercial information that marketers expose intentionally. Complex image can be formed directly through the experience of visiting a tourist destination and is associated with an organic image and a decision-making process (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991).

Destination image in tourism studies is also frequently explained by dividing it into cognitive and affective image (Baloglu & Mangalolu, 2001; Chon, 1991; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007). According to Gartner's (1994) model of destination image, conative image is suggested as the other component implying the potential future behavior based on an interaction between cognitive and affective image. Consequently, these two different perspectives of destination image components (i.e. organic/induced image and cognitive/affective image) could be similar to each other but differ in ways of expression. That is, the meanings of organic and affective image and that of induced and cognitive image are similar (Lee, 2014).

Many studies have widely examined destination image to prove its close association with tourism behavior (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Bigne et al., 2001; Castro et al., 2007; Chen & Gursoy, 2001; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Kim & Kang, 2007; Mansfeld, 1992). People tend to choose a destination when they have positive impression toward the place (Alhemoud & Armstrong, 1996; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Lee & Kim, 2012; Yoo, 2011). Furthermore, destination image also affects tourists' experiences, satisfaction, revisit intention, and place attachment (Assaker & Hallak, 2013; Bigne et al., 2001; Chi & Qu, 2008; Kim, Jeong & Shin, 2010; Li et al., 2010; Prayag & Ryan, 2012).

Pro-environmental destination image is originated from the concept of destination image and can be defined as total environmental positive impressions that an individual has of a specific destination. However, few studies have tried to clarify pro-environmental destination image or its related definitions. Rodrigues (2016) discussed “green destination image” as a new construct, which considers destination image as a paradigm of sustainable tourism, and suggested an exploratory research that would develop components and their measurement of green destination image. Park (2010) presented “environment-friendly image” that is generated by a firm's environmental marketing to examine its positive impact on consumers' behaviors. Park and Park (2011) investigated the relationship between “eco-image” and tourist satisfaction for urban tourism. Other studies have proven that in eco-nature destination, environmental and ecological image are two different components of pro-environmental destination image (Lee, 2010).

2.2. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

In asking why people behave in a certain way, one also poses the question what is motivation. Fundamentally, all human behaviors have psychological reasons; that is, motivation becomes a trigger for nearly every behavior. Thus, motivation can be defined as “one's direction to behavior, or what causes a person to want to repeat a behavior and vice versa” (Elliot & Covington, 2001).

Previous studies have classified motivation into two types, namely, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Choi & Lee, 2007; Kim & Park, 2015; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Intrinsic motivation is the self-desire for a certain behavior, or “to seek out new things and new challenges, to analyze

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