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Journal of Destination Marketing & Management

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jdmm

Research Paper

Working-holiday tourism attributes and satisfaction in forming word-of-mouth and revisit intentions: Impact of quantity and quality of intergroup contact

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Working-holiday (WH)
Tourism attributes
Satisfaction
Intergroup contact
Destination

ABSTRACT

Little is known about working-holiday (WH) traveler behaviors. This research was designed to explore the role of working-holiday tourism (WHT) attributes and satisfaction in generating WH travelers' behavioral intentions for WHT destinations by considering the moderating impact of intergroup contact. A field survey methodology was employed. A structural equation modeling and metric invariance test were utilized. The results indicated that the associations among research variables were significant and that the proposed model included a sufficient level of prediction power for intentions. In addition, WHT satisfaction had a significant mediating impact and had a prominent role in determining intentions. Self-fulfillment was the most influential factor among WHT attributes. Moreover, the results of the invariance test revealed that quantity and quality of the intergroup contact significantly moderated the impact of satisfaction on revisit intention and on word-of-mouth intention, respectively.

1. Introduction

Working-holiday tourism (WHT) has emerged as a new tourism trend, gradually gaining popularity worldwide (Jarvis & Peel, 2013; Wilson, Fisher, & Moore, 2010). In Taiwan, WH visas are offered to 28 countries, including Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Germany, South Korea, and Canada (Ho, Lin, & Huang, 2014). In Korea, the total annual number of outbound WH travelers was 48,000 in 2012. Moreover, in 2014, there were 16 countries in the visa agreement with Korea (Yoon, 2015). The number of participating countries with working holiday schemes significantly increased during the last decade. Overall, there are about 35 countries and regions that provide working-holiday visas for young people (Yang & Wen, 2016).

The term working-holiday tourism overlaps with other forms of tourism, including backpacking, volunteer tourism, budget tourism, and gap-year tourism (Cohen, 1973; Ho et al., 2014; Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995; Tsauro & Huang, 2016; Wilson et al., 2010). In these tourism programs with WHT characteristics, travelers are provided with accommodation, free food, and cultural activities. As a result, WHT tourism usually brings positive changes in individuals' ability, personality, and vision (Yang & Wen, 2016). WH travelers usually have a greater ability to tolerate differences and to cope with change and stress

when they return from WHT (Clarke, 2004). Despite the excellent benefits provided by WHT, little research has been carried out to explore the role of WHT attributes and their influences on travelers' behavioral intention. In fact, clarifying the mechanism behind a tourist's behavioral intention formation with tourism attributes would help boost loyalty, reduce marketing expenditures, and spread positive word-of-mouth recommendations by controlling different dimensions of attributes (Han, 2013).

Tourism research has already acknowledged that attributes of a product/service play a critical role in explaining complicated individuals' purchasing behaviors (i.e. revisit intention, word of mouth) (Han, 2013; Han, Meng, & Kim, 2017; Hwang & Lee, 2017; Hwang & Hyun, 2017; Lyu & Hwang, 2017). In the WHT context, people choose WHT due to its attributes, which are perceived through tourists' unique experiences (Ho et al., 2014; Jarvis & Peel, 2013; Wilson et al., 2010). Previous research indicated the distinctive attributes, such as a higher degree of involvement, travelling as a budget traveler, accumulation of working experience, and self-fulfillment (Ho et al., 2014; Rice, 2010; Urieli, 2001; Wilson et al., 2010; Yang & Wen, 2016). These benefits function together in forming WHT satisfaction, which could further induce revisit intention and word-of-mouth behavior. In addition, the literature revealed that intergroup contact (both quality and quantity

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dimensions) could strengthen tourism experiences, which would further moderate the formation of travelers' behavioral intention (Luo, Brown, & Huang, 2015; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). For the quantity dimension, WH travelers with a higher degree of quantity of intergroup contact are the tourists with more experiences and activities. For the quality dimension, WH travelers with a higher degree of quality of intergroup contact have a deeper contact with local people and culture. Therefore, the WH tourists who have a higher degree of both quantity and quality of experiences are more likely to revisit WH destinations and to spread word-of-mouth recommendations.

Nevertheless, such a decision-making process and other underlying factors that influence this process still remain unknown in the context of WHT. Exploring this emerging type of tourism would contribute to a better understanding of this new tourism phenomenon, stimulate further studies on such topics, and help in developing related theories. Specifically, identifying the attributes of WHT would deepen the understanding of WHT characteristics. The identified attributes as an assessment tool can be applied to WHT in future studies. Additionally, although the relationships between each dimension of WHT attributes and satisfaction, and its influences on revisit intention, and word of mouth behavior have been examined in some tourism contexts, such relationships were seldom empirically examined in the context of WHT. Clarifying the roles of these specific attributes in tourists' behavioral intentions could help comprehension of the functions of these attributes. Moreover, little is known about the relative importance of attributes dimensions in the formation of WH travelers' behavioral intention. The comparison of these attributes could provide the implications of strategy development on different attributes. Further, the moderating role of both quantity of group contact and quality of group contact has not been examined in WH travelers' decision-making process. Such an examination could deepen the understanding of unique characteristics of WHT.

Filling these research gaps, this study was designed to (1) identify the distinctive attributes of WHT by using both qualitative and quantitative approaches, (2) examine the causal relationships among four dimensions of WHT attributes, WHT satisfaction, and behavioral intentions, (3) explore the moderating impact of the quantity and quality of intergroup contact, and (4) examine the mediating role of WHT satisfaction within the proposed model. The details regarding the conceptual background are provided in the next section. The research methodology, data analysis, and results are then presented. Next, discussions including theoretical and practical implications and research limitations are provided. Lastly, the conclusion that stresses the overall value of this research is offered.

2. Literature review

2.1. Emerging WHT and its attributes

The history of the working-holiday phenomenon can be dated back in 1962 when the British Universities North America Club (BUNAC) offered work and volunteer exchange programs in the summer camps and ski resorts of North America (Wilson et al., 2010). In the literature, the term working holiday may have been first coined by Pape (1965) as 'touristry'. It is a form of tourism that depends upon occupation: however, the main purpose is the travel itself (Pape, 1965; Uriely, 2001). Thus, WHT usually enables resourceful, self-reliant, and adaptable young people engaging in employment for the purpose of supplementing their travel funds (Clarke, 2004). Extensive research has frequently mentioned working as a component of the tourist experience, and much work has been carried out to examine this new emerging form of tourism (e.g. Jarvis & Peel, 2013; Pizam, Uriely, & Reichel, 2000).

WH travelers are generally distinguished into different categories in previous literature, namely (1) professionals as working tourists, e.g. business travelers, official sightseers, (2) migration sightseeing, e.g.

working in different places with specialized skills, (3) non-institutionalized tourists, e.g. work as means to travel; also known as drifters, nomads, wanderers, and long-term budget travelers, and (4) working holiday tourists (Cohen, 1972; Riley, 1988; Uriely, 2001; Vogt, 1976). As such, WH travelers can gain benefits from the attributes from working-holiday tourism, including (1) immersion of a specific tourism destination, (2) economy of the trip, (3) experience of working, and (4) self-fulfillment (Ho et al., 2014; Wilson et al., 2010). Specifically, WHT enables participants to be immersed in a destination at a deeper level. While staying in a WH destination (generally longer than conventional mass tourism), there are more cultural exchanges between travelers and local residents (Cohen, 2003; Uriely & Reichel, 2000). Unlike a traditional master-servant relationship between tourists and locals, the relationship between participants and locals is an equal one (they are both being employed). The identity of WH travelers changes a local's attitude to them from a guest/master to a local, and thus the WH travelers are engaged in the society. This provides them more realistic and high-quality interactions (Yang & Wen, 2016). As such, WM tourism provided WH travelers pre-conditions of more time and more equal chances to contact local culture. WHT also enables a form of budget travelling. As the nature of WHT lies in a working aspect, WHT enables WH travelers, especially young travelers who are eager to solve their economic predicament, to get financial support for their travels (Adler, 1985). In such a way, WHT helps them achieve a long-term trip within a limited budget (Uriely, 2001). Additionally, WHT also provides the WH travelers a unique experience of work (Rice, 2010). In particular, this experience is not purely a working experience: it brings a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to explore new places and cultures (Ho et al., 2014; Jaakson, 1986; Uriely, 2001). This positive and new experience can even redefine the foundation of selfhood and reform self-identity, which leads WH travelers into maturity and self-growth when they finish their journey (Ooi & Laing, 2010). Moreover, through the activities in a WHT destination, WHT benefits WH travelers with a higher level of self-fulfillment. WHT operates in an unfamiliar environment during a longer stay time, and therefore, WHT activities are self-challenge activities in which WH travelers perceive themselves as risk-takers who have embarked upon an adventurous lifestyle. Through these activities, they develop a range of skills and acquire some competence (Elsrud, 2001; Ho et al., 2014). Through these achievements, therefore, WH travelers can gain a sense of accomplishment/self-fulfillment when they successfully complete their trip.

2.2. WHT satisfaction

Satisfaction has been defined in various ways during the past few decades (Oliver, 1980). Anderson, Fornell, and Lehmann (1994) defined satisfaction as an overall evaluation based on the total purchase and consumption experience with a good or service over time. In the tourism context, satisfaction is a function of prior expectation and perceived performance after tourism experience (Cong, 2016). Tourists are satisfied if tourism experiences provide pleasure exceeding their expectations, whereas they are dissatisfied if tourism experiences provide less pleasure than they anticipated (Oliver, 1997; Yi, 1990). Stedman (2002) defined tourism satisfaction as a multi-dimensional summary judgment of the perceived quality of a setting, meeting people's desire for the physical characteristics of a place, its services, and social dimension.

In a tourism destination, studies revealed that satisfaction could be formed by tourists' destination experiences (Huang, Weiler, & Assaker, 2015; Kim, 2017; Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung, 2007). For instance, Mehmetoglu and Engen (2011) empirically tested Pine and Gilmore's four dimensions of experiences model and found a significant relationship between tourist experience and satisfaction. Recently, Kim (2017) strengthened the role of memorable experience and destination image in forming satisfaction. In this sense, in a tourism destination, excellent experience could be formed by the evaluation of destination

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