



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Destination Marketing & Management

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

Research paper

Explicit and implicit image cognitions toward destination: Application of the Single-Target Implicit Association Test (ST-IAT)

Kwang-Ho Lee^a, Dae-Young Kim^{b,*}^a Hospitality and Food Management, Department of Family and Consumer Sciences, Ball State University, 2000 W. University Avenue, Muncie IN 47306, USA^b Department of Hospitality Management, University of Missouri, 115 Eckles Hall, Columbia MO, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 1 April 2015

Received in revised form

16 June 2016

Accepted 17 June 2016

Keywords:

Destination image

Implicit cognition

Explicit cognition

The single-target implicit association test (ST-IAT)

Cognitive measures

ABSTRACT

Understanding the nature of destination images has considerable importance in the tourism industry, which is highly image-driven. This study aims to measure the image attributes of destinations using data for both explicit cognitions (based on self-report surveys) and implicit cognitions (based on reaction times) based on theory drawn from tourism psychology. A series of experimental studies was carried out using the Single-Target Implicit Association Test (ST-IAT) to measure individuals' explicit and implicit cognitions of image attributes in the context of three destination countries: China, England and France. The findings imply that knowing the weight values between explicit image measures and the ST-IAT is imperative in predicting behavioral intentions in tourism.

© 2016 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

The tourism industry is highly image-driven. Destination management organizations (DMOs) have a mission to create image-based positioning strategies at each level for a destination (Kim & Richardson, 2003). Many tourism studies have thus attempted to build conceptual models using image-based attributes pertaining to affective and cognitive components, which in turn affect tourist behaviors at the local, regional and national levels (Chi & Qu, 2008; Jalilvand, Samiei, Dini, & Manzari, 2012; Prayag & Ryan, 2012; Prayag, 2012). Inconsistent findings on tourists' attitudinal perceptions toward a destination can arise from destination-image measures derived from the self-report surveys traditionally used in related studies (i.e. explicit measures) (Tasci, Gartner, & Cavusgil, 2007). These discrepancies may result from the restrictions inherent in explicit measures, such as respondents' limited introspective ability (Kihlstrom, 2004) and self-presentation bias (Friese, Hofmann, & Wänke, 2008; Maison, Greenwald, & Bruin, 2001). This problematic issue has led psychology researchers to identify two types of cognition toward objects of interest: conscious (explicit) and unconscious (implicit) (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). A number of researchers have gone beyond merely noting the limitations of self-report measures to propose implicit measures. This has led to a school of social psychology that

measures both explicit and implicit cognitions (or attitudes) toward objects of interest (Dempsey & Mitchell, 2010).

Research on measures of explicit and implicit attitudes has led to recognition of their importance in tourism. Self-reported questionnaires for measuring destination-image effects are currently recognized as not necessarily reflecting people's genuine thoughts (Yang, He, & Gu, 2012). This appears to show a weakness of using explicit measures as a research platform for building image-based marketing strategies for a destination. Many researchers now use more robust tools for implicit measures such as the Implicit Association Test (IAT), from social psychology, in tourism-destination research (Kim & Chen, 2010; Kim, Chen, & Hwang, 2011). The Single-Target IAT (ST-IAT) is a refined version that is conceptually identical to the Single-Category IAT (SC-IAT) and is applicable to tourism research (Karpinski & Steinman, 2006). This test allows for holistic measurement of individuals' implicit cognitions (or ST-IAT effects) toward destination-country image attributes. Deeper understanding of this cognition could offer insights to DMOs when creating image-based marketing strategies (Yang et al., 2012). Another advantage of the ST-IAT is that it influences behavioral outcomes and contributes to extending tourist-behavior models (Bluemke & Friese, 2008; Richetin, Perugini, Prestwich, & O'Gorman, 2007; Zinkernagel, Hofmann, Dislich, Gschwendner, & Schmitt, 2011).

Few studies have used implicit measures to focus solely on people's attitudinal cognitions toward destination countries without predicting tourist behavior (Kim & Chen, 2010; Kim et al., 2011; Yang et al., 2012). Hence, the application of the ST-IAT may help facilitate exploration of individuals' explicit and implicit

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: klee2@bsu.edu (K.-H. Lee), kimdae@missouri.edu (D.-Y. Kim).

cognitive perceptions toward a destination country and to predict tourists' behavioral intentions. The main aim of this study is to test whether there is consistency between explicit image evaluations obtained by a self-reported questionnaire and the ST-IAT effects. The study also examines if the weight values between explicit-image scores and the ST-IAT effects influence behavioral intentions to visit a country. Theoretical and practical implications for DMOs based on these findings are then offered.

2. Literature review

2.1. Destination image vs. country image

Despite the recognized importance of destination image, there is a lack of consensus on a clear definition in comparison with the concept of country image (e.g. Mossberg & Kleppe, 2005). From a marketing perspective, one study defined country image as 'the total of all descriptive, inferential, and informational beliefs one has about a particular country' (Martin & Eroglu, 1993, p. 193), which was distinguished from an individuals' cognitive and affective perceptions of a country. On the other hand, destination-country image can refer to the cognitive and affective feelings toward a destination country (Nadeau, Heslop, O'Reilly, & Luk, 2008). It is necessary to understand the concept of destination image using the criteria of cognitive-affective evaluations (Chen, 2001; Fustodio & Gouvêa, 2007; Huang & Gross, 2010; Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008). In this context, destination image can be conceptualized as tourists' image cognitions toward a destination country.

2.2. Destination images from a marketing point of view

A positive destination image provides an advantage in the strongly competitive tourism industry (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). The importance of tourism-destination images has encouraged tourism scholars to examine the concept of destination image as a likely influence on individuals' consequent behavior, destination choice, and destination-visit intention in a variety of local and national contexts (e.g. Choi, Tkachenko, & Sil, 2011; Pike, 2002). This has led to the development of a concrete tourism-destination image doctrine (Gallarza, Saura, & Garcia, 2002). Destination-image research provides significant theoretical and practical implications from a marketing perspective (e.g. Prayag & Ryan, 2012). The image-driven tourism industry has drawn attention to the importance of image across different marketing perspectives (e.g. positioning, market segmentation.) (Liu, 2010; O'Leary & Deegan, 2005). Creating a strong image through cognitive and affective image-building helps differentiate a destination and to develop a unique market identity (Hosany, Ekinici, & Uysal, 2007; Park & Petric, 2006; Prebensen, 2007).

2.3. Holistic destination image measurement

Two key components of a destination-image construct can be divided into cognitive and affective components. First introduced by Crompton (1979), the cognitive dimension refers to beliefs and knowledge about a destination. The affective dimension is based on the work of numerous researchers (e.g. Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Walmsley & Jenkins, 1993) and is defined as individuals' perceptual and experienced feelings about a destination (Frias, Rodriguez, & Castaneda, 2007; Kim & Richardson, 2003). These components include both positive and negative attributes.

Most relevant studies have focused on cognitive and affective images as determinants of the consequential variables of attitude and/or behavioral intention (e.g. Kim & Perdue, 2011; Kneesel, Baloglu, & Millar, 2010; Phillips & Jang, 2008; Qu, Kim, & Im, 2011; Wang & Hsu,

2010). Hosany et al. (2007) proposed three dimensions that include 12 destination-image attributes using a seven-point semantic-differential scale. The components of the affective feelings dimension are 'unpleasant-pleasant', 'distressing-relaxing' and 'pretty-ugly'. The components of the physical atmosphere dimension are 'quiet-noisy', 'innocent-sinful', 'sleepy-arousing' and 'overcrowded-sparse'. The components of the accessibility dimension are 'lively-stagnant', 'friendly-cold', 'easily accessible-isolated' and 'interesting-boring'.

Li, Pan, Zhang, and Smith (2009) examined the cognitive and affective image attributes that affect online information-search behavior to visit China, including 'exciting-gloomy', 'pleasant-unpleasant', 'sleepy-arousing', 'relaxing-distressing', 'friendly-unfriendly', 'accessible-isolated', 'lively-stagnant', 'interesting-boring', 'quiet-noisy' and 'overcrowded-sparse'. Stepchenkova and Li (2012) highlighted the destination image of the United States by comparing four groups of Chinese tourists with different options. They categorized destination image into 11 components such as 'happiness/delight', 'excitement/excited' and 'relaxation'. Many other studies have also delineated resort attractiveness using both cognitive image factors (such as 'quality of skiing' and 'quality of community') and affective image factors (such as 'fun/comfortable', 'crowded' and 'upscale atmosphere'), as well as affective destination image attributes of 'pleasant', 'relaxing' and 'exciting' (Kim & Perdue, 2011; Qu et al., 2011).

Most studies have been limited to assessing the cognitive and affective dimensions of destination image (e.g. Alvarez & Campo, 2011; Fustodio & Gouvêa, 2007; Li et al., 2009; Lin, Morais, Kerstetter, & Hou, 2007). However, several notable studies have attempted these attributes in unidimensional destination images (e.g. Alvarez & Campo, 2011; Hosany et al., 2007; Li et al., 2009). The most common the measurement scales are five-to-seven-point, Likert-type scales and semantic-differential scales (e.g. Phillips & Jang, 2008; Qu et al., 2011). The present study used 12 affective and cognitive image attributes on a seven-point semantic-differential scale for the measurement of destination-country images.

2.4. Explicit and implicit measures

Explicit measures can represent consciously accessible responses in a propositional format, and they are used to tap into individuals' feelings and predict consumer behavior in fields such as of psychology, marketing and tourism. Explicit measures such as those employed in self-reported surveys are used in a great deal of research on behavior prediction. Friese et al. (2008) proposed that such measures be devoted to assessing more deliberate evaluations and personal standards toward an evaluative concept, arguing that explicit self-report measures are consistent with the outcome of other salient measures (i.e. implicit measures) as predictors of consumers' consumption behavior. However, some studies argue that there are drawbacks regarding the utility of explicit measures. Fazio (1986) contended that people cannot explicitly express their feelings toward an object of interest without exposure to it and some confusion about the evaluative object might therefore occur. Other studies also suggest limitations arising from respondents' limited introspective ability and ample self-presentation bias (Friese et al., 2008; Kihlstrom, 2004; Payne, Burkley, & Stokes, 2008). Much attention has therefore been paid to the question of whether there is a relationship between explicit and implicit measures (e.g. Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998).

Implicit measures are an indirect way to uncover intrinsic feelings (Fazio & Olson, 2003). Various researchers have defined implicit measures from diverse angles (De Houwer, Teige-Mocigemba, Spruyt, & Moors, 2009; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). According to Greenwald and Banaji (1995, p.17), implicit measures can refer either to implicit cognitions or implicit attitudes that pertain to 'introspectively unidentified (or inaccurately identified) traces of past

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7419815>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7419815>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)