



Attachment to the home country or hometown? Examining diaspora tourism across migrant generations



Wei-Jue Huang^{a,*}, Kam Hung^a, Chun-Chu Chen^b

^a School of Hotel and Tourism Management, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, 17 Science Museum Road, TST East, Kowloon, Hong Kong

^b School of Hospitality Business Management, Washington State University, 14204 NE Salmon Creek Ave, Vancouver, WA, USA

HIGHLIGHTS

- Compared the ancestral home country vs. hometown attachment and diaspora tourism motivation of different migrant generations.
- Second-generation migrants had the lowest level of homeland attachment.
- 1 and 1.5-gen were equally attached to hometown and country, while 2, 3, and 4-gen were more attached to the home country.
- “Social bonding” received the highest mean scores and contributed the most to travel intention.
- “Place identity” did not emerge as a significant predictor of travel intention in both the home country and hometown models.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 26 August 2017

Received in revised form

23 February 2018

Accepted 27 February 2018

1. Introduction

Many people remember and feel nostalgic towards places from their past, be it their hometown, alma mater, or childhood home (Oxford & Long, 2004). This desire to return to and reconnect with the past often inspires people to travel (Pearce, 2012). One such case is people of migrant ancestry traveling back to their homeland, which is known as “diaspora tourism” (Coles & Timothy, 2004). While it’s difficult to estimate the size of the diaspora tourism market, within the past decade, more than four million people migrated permanently to foreign countries every year, and the number of international migrants worldwide reached 244 million in 2015 (OECD., 2017; United Nations, 2016). As traveling becomes more convenient and affordable, transnational migration and diaspora tourism will continue to grow. Compared to other international tourists, diaspora tourists tend to have a stronger attachment to the destination, as their “home” or

ancestral homeland. This personal connection allows them to experience the destination differently from other tourists, and they are generally more supportive of local development and heritage conservation (Huang, Ramshaw, & Norman, 2016; Iorio & Corsale, 2013). Traveling back to the homeland also helps migrants maintain physical and emotional ties to their country of origin (Tie, Holden, & Park, 2015).

It is not surprising that migrants feel a certain connection to their country of origin. Previous studies have examined the impact of diaspora tourism on migrant identity and sense of belonging towards the homeland (e.g., Iorio & Corsale, 2013; Li & McKercher, 2016; Maruyama & Stronza, 2010; Tie et al., 2015). On the other hand, the nature of such attachment and its impact on travel motivation and intention has been less explored. While place attachment has been used to explain the relationship between migrants and their former home (Li & McKercher, 2016), one question that remains unanswered is: how big is this “home”? Is it the actual house, neighborhood, hometown, or home country? Research has shown that attachment to a place may occur at different geographic levels, such as site-specific and area-specific (Hidalgo & Hernández, 2001; Williams, Patterson, Roggenbuck, & Watson, 1992). According to Hammond (2004), the definitions of “home” include “locations of various levels of scale, including an individual dwelling, a village, a territory, region, or nation-state” (p. 37). For diaspora tourists, can they feel at “home” the moment they set foot in their country of origin? Or must they return to their family’s former residence in order to really connect with their roots? And how do different levels of place attachment influence their intention to visit the homeland?

Moreover, like other segments of the tourism market, diaspora

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: sabrina.huang@polyu.edu.hk (W.-J. Huang), kam.hung@polyu.edu.hk (K. Hung), pikabamboo@hotmail.com (C.-C. Chen).

tourists are not a homogeneous group. Weaver, Kwek, and Wang (2017) segmented diaspora tourists based on their connectedness and experience with the culture of their homeland. Li and McKercher (2016) identified five types of diaspora tourist, with different travel motives and migration history. Previous studies have found that migrants visit their homeland for a variety of reasons, including leisure, business, VFR, genealogy, family reunion, religion, pilgrimage, roots seeking, language learning, sharing family traditions with their children, and more (e.g., Huang, King, & Suntuikul, 2017; Hung, Xiao, & Yang, 2013; Meethan, 2004; Santos & Yan, 2010; Schramm, 2004; Uriely, 2010). However, most of the literature on diaspora tourism utilized qualitative approaches. There is a lack of quantitative studies to examine the importance of different motivations and their impact on travel decision-making. Furthermore, migrants can be classified into different generations. In migration studies, the “first generation” refers to foreign-born individuals who relocated to a new country (Rumbaut, 2002). Second-generation migrants are native-born individuals with one or two foreign-born parents, and third-generation migrants are those with foreign-born grandparents. The first generation has personal ties to the homeland, as their place of birth and first home. For second and subsequent generations, their attachment to the homeland may not be as strong (Maruyama & Stronza, 2010; Tie et al., 2015). Oftentimes it is the migrant parents who bring their children back to the homeland to meet extended family and learn the language and culture of “home” (King & Christou, 2010). With increasing globalization and mobility of populations, more and more people can trace their family roots to another part of the world. The desire to connect with and visit the homeland should be quite different for recent migrants versus those whose ancestors migrated several generations ago. To gain a better understanding of diaspora tourism, it is necessary to explore how homeland attachment and travel intention get passed on from one migrant generation to another.

To address the aforementioned research gaps, this study aims to examine the homeland place attachment and diaspora tourism motivation of international migrants. Specifically, study objectives are:

- 1) To identify the dimensions of homeland place attachment and diaspora tourism motivation.
- 2) To compare international migrants' place attachment towards their ancestral home country vs. hometown.
- 3) To compare the attachment and travel motivation of different migrant generations (i.e., first-generation, 1.5-generation,¹ second-generation, third-generation, fourth-generation or more).
- 4) To explore the relationship between homeland attachment, motivation, and travel intention.

2. Literature review

2.1. Diaspora tourism

Diaspora, simply defined, is “the dispersal of a people from its original homeland” (Butler, 2001, p. 189). The term is originally associated with the forced exile of the Jewish people from the Land of Israel. Over time, other migrant populations who maintain

strong collective identities have also been labeled, or self-defined themselves, as “diaspora.” Cohen (1997) classified diasporas into five types, including: *Victim/refugee diaspora* (e.g., Jews, Africans, Armenians), *Imperial/colonial diaspora* (e.g., Ancient Greek, British, Spanish, Portuguese), *Labor/service diaspora* (e.g., Indentured Indians, Chinese, Japanese), *Trade/business/professional diaspora* (e.g., Lebanese, Chinese; Today's Indians, Japanese), and *Cultural/hybrid/postmodern diaspora* (e.g., Caribbean peoples; Today's Chinese, Indians). As “diaspora” constitutes many complex categories of dispersal, it is difficult to assess their numbers and boundaries (Sheffer, 2006). Multiple waves of migration took place within the same ethnonational group, and different migrant generations have varied experiences in their arrival and reception in the host society.

Numerous theories have attempted to explain the processes of migrant adaptation and integration, such as assimilation, acculturation, and transnationalism (DeWind & Kasinitz, 1997). In the traditional model of assimilation, the longer one lives in the host society, the more s/he becomes incorporated into the new country and disengaged from the old country (Alba & Nee, 2003). Ties to the homeland also tend to decrease from generation to generation, as each generation is more assimilated than their parents (Levitt & Glick-Schiller, 2004). However, not all migrants follow the same trajectory. Some groups cannot escape poverty and experience downward mobility, in which case they may assimilate into a minority “underclass” or remain close to their ethnic subcultures and networks (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Zhou & Xiong, 2005). Given the heterogeneous formations of diasporic communities, there is no standard in how identities and membership may change over time or last through the generations. Nevertheless, one shared characteristic of diasporas is a strong sense of community and desire to remain connected to the homeland (Shuval, 2000). Such identities can be passed down from generation to generation through “the transmission of knowledge, traditions, memory, and other cultural practices within families and by institutions” (Berg & Eckstein, 2009, p. 7).

For contemporary diasporas, the longing for “home” may not necessarily be a permanent return to the homeland, but as a form of tourism. According to Coles and Timothy (2004), diaspora tourism refers to “tourism primarily produced, consumed and experienced by diasporic communities” (p. 1). Given the wide range of migrant-sending and receiving nations, it is difficult to calculate the size of the diaspora tourism market (Iorio & Corsale, 2013). However, previous studies on the transnational activities of migrants provided some insights on their homeland trips. The 2002 Pew Hispanic Survey revealed that 30% of first-generation Hispanic immigrants in the US traveled to their homeland at least once a year (Waldinger, 2008). The Comparative Immigrant Enterprise Project also found that 19.1% of Colombian, Dominican, and Salvadoran immigrants traveled annually to their country of origin (Guarnizo, Portes, & Haller, 2003). Data from the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study and the Immigration and Intergenerational Mobility in Metropolitan Los Angeles study indicated that second-generation immigrants in the US traveled to their parents' home country approximately 2.6 times by the age of 39 (Portes & Rumbaut, 2008; Rumbaut et al., 2008). Another New York-based study showed that 67% of second-generation immigrants have visited their parents' country of origin (Kasinitz, Waters, Mollenkopf, & Anil, 2002). Among different nationality groups, it was worth noting that 62% of second-generation Chinese-Americans in the New York area had visited China, which was very high considering the geographical distance between New York and China (Kasinitz et al., 2002). These large-scale sociology projects provided compelling evidence that diaspora tourism was common among contemporary migrants.

¹ “1.5-generation” refers to foreign-born individuals who migrated to a new country, typically with their parents, before the age of 18 (Rumbaut, 2004). They are first-generation in being foreign-born yet tend to behave like the second generation in being “children of immigrants.”

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