



The role of authenticity in forming slow tourists' intentions: Developing an extended model of goal-directed behavior



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HIGHLIGHTS

- This study incorporates authenticity-related constructs into the model of goal-directed behavior.
- The results implied that the extended MGB is an improvement over the MGB.
- All antecedents of intention were found to be important constructs in our extended model.
- This study provides an insightful understanding of the slow tourist decision-making process.

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ABSTRACT

Despite the rapid growth in the slow tourism industry, research on slow tourists' behavior is rare. This study develops an extended model of goal-directed behavior to more comprehensively explain the formation of tourists' intentions to visit a slow tourism destination. Specifically, the extended model incorporates the critical constructs (i.e., perception of authenticity, knowledge, and information search behavior) into the original model of goal-directed behavior (MGB). The results of an on-site survey (N = 387) revealed that the model provides a satisfactory fit with the data and explains greater amounts of variance in behavioral intention. Three authenticity-related variables formed positive and significant causal relationships with the constructs in the extended model of goal-directed behavior. All the constructs in the original MGB were significant predictors of both desire and intention. The theoretical and practical implications of the findings are discussed.

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1. Introduction

The problems of global warming, environmental pollution and significant socio-economic inequalities are forcing tourism companies and tourists to evaluate the impact from the tourism industry (Frey & George, 2010). As responses to these threats, tourism researchers have made efforts to develop new alternative tourism paradigms to make the tourism industry sustainable (e.g., responsible tourism, justice tourism, ethical tourism, eco-tourism, pro-poor tourism, volunteer tourism, peace tourism) (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1991; Goodwin & Francis, 2003; Middleton, 1998; Weeden, 2001).

As such, one of the tourism industry's responses to the future

sustainability directions was the slow tourism, which applies the "slow philosophy" from the slow food and slow city movements (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010; Heitmann, Robinson, & Povey, 2011). Slow tourism refers to the form of tourism in which the tourists take their time on their journey and engage with people and places (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010; Gardner, 2009; Slow Travel.com, 2013). This tourism form shares common ideas with the sustainable tourism paradigms (e.g., alternative tourism, eco-tourism, and responsible tourism). For instance, alternative tourism is considered "developed from a reaction to the negative impacts of mass tourism" (Smith & Eadington, 1992, p.3). More specifically, responsible tourism is about "treating local people as people" "understanding the culture you are visiting" "respecting the people who are hosting your visit" and "treading softly on the environment of your hosts" (Lea, 1993, p.708). Consistent with these forms of tourism, the slow idea achieves sustainable development

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through authentic experiences (e.g., deep engagement with unspoiled nature and places; slow activities in the form of training/education and community participation). As such, slow tourism and its related slow destinations focus on authentic experiences as well as the benefits that accrue to the localities (Timms & Conway, 2012).

Despite of the importance of slow tourism, little is known about how slow tourists behave. From the practical perspective, comprehending and predicting slow tourists' behavior is important to developing proper marketing strategies and increasing tourism market shares. To reach this goal, the factors influencing tourists' decision-making processes can provide some clues. Among socio-psychological theories, the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) are considered as a representative theories used in previous studies. The TRA suggests that an individual can make a rational decision and reasoned choice depending upon the relationship between attitudes toward behavior, subjective norms, and actual behavior (Ajzen, 1985). This theory assumed that individuals' decisions are derived from the intensity of volitional efforts for the specific decisions (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Unlike TRA which are solely dependent on volitional aspects of one's decision/behaviors, the TPB provides a well-defined structure which explains human behaviors by adding the concept of perceived behavior control (PBC) to the original antecedents in the TRA (i.e., attitude and subjective norms) (Ajzen, 1991). Although these theories, the TRA and the TPB, are often used to understand tourists' intentions, the limitations of these theories have also been noted. That is, they do not consider the influence of past behavior, affective factors and motivational processes (Conner & Armitage, 1998; Leone, Perugini, & Ercolani, 1999). Thus, based on the conceptualization of the TRA and TPB, Perugini and Bagozzi (2001) proposed the Model of Goal-directed Behavior (MGB) to enhance the capacity and address the limitations of the TPB. They claimed that motivational, affective, and habitual processes should be considered during the decision-making process. In terms of the motivational process, desire was suggested as an important variable in forming behavioral intention. In terms of the affective factors, anticipated affective reaction to a specific behavior is a significant determination that can reflect individuals' emotions. Since anticipated emotion constructs represent the motive of promoting a positive situation and avoiding a negative situation of affairs, two types of emotions, positive and negative anticipated emotion, are believed to be the predictors of desire. In terms of the habitual process, past behavior or behavior is considered as a critical variable influencing the decision-making process (Perugini & Bagozzi, 2001). Therefore, the MGB incorporates desire, positive and negative anticipated emotions, and past behaviors along with the original factors in the TPB. Moreover, researchers have emphasized the necessity for a revision of existing socio-psychological theories to include new constructs that are considered critical in a certain context or that alter existing paths among latent variables (Ajzen, 1991; Conner & Abraham, 2001; Oh & Hsu, 2001).

Slow tourism activities provide more detailed and authentic experiences (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010). Hence, slow tourists are in essence those who have a strong orientation towards a sense of authenticity and an intention to participate in authentic activities (e.g., Ramkissoon & Uysal, 2011; Shen, Guo, & Wu, 2012). In other words, individuals whose perceptions of authentic activities are especially sensitive are potential customers of slow tourism. Thus, tourists who seek out authentic touristic experiences provide important clues for understanding slow tourist decision-making processes. Furthermore, the formation of perceptions mainly

depends on an individual's knowledge of certain fields and information about specific products/services (Baloglu, 2001). Thus, both knowledge of authentic activities and behavior associated with searching for authenticity-related information are believed to be effective variables in the formation of authenticity perception. Thus, this study extended the MGB by incorporating three constructs (i.e., perception of authenticity, knowledge and information search behavior), which are expected to improve understanding of tourists' intentions.

The specific purposes of this study are the following: 1) to develop a model by inserting perceptions of authenticity, knowledge and information search behavior into the original MGB (attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavior control, positive anticipated emotion, negative anticipated emotion, frequency of past behavior, desire and behavioral intention) in the context of slow tourism and 2) to provide practical suggestions and strategies for tourism marketers and government agencies. This study helps verify the context of slow tourism and provides an insightful understanding of the slow tourist decision-making process.

2. Literature review

2.1. Slow tourism and its authentic characteristics

Although there is no clear definition of slow tourism, slow tourism is believed by researchers as a new form of tourism (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010; Oh, Assaf, & Baloglu, 2016). Generally, slow tourism is defined as traveling more slowly, taking in the sights, and immersing oneself in the local landscape. Further, "slowing" the pace of a holiday provides more opportunities to interact and connect with local people and places on a deeper level (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010; Dickinson, Lumsdon, & Robbins, 2011). Actually, slow tourism is a concept modeled after the slow food and slow city movements (Heitmann et al., 2011). Thus, slow tourism shares the "slow" concept with these movements: addressing the issue of time poverty by encouraging more thorough connections to local people, places and life (Gardner, 2009; Heitmann et al., 2011; Slow Travel, 2013). The idea of "slow" derives from slow food in Italy in the 1970s. Local organizations taught visitors how to best enjoy their products and, having created a market for their products, set up a worldwide mail-order business (Perini & Watson, 2001). From then on, this new business has begun to establish itself in the food industry, as mass-produced food gives way to a growing preference for seasonal, local and traditional products (Nosi & Zanni, 2004). By extending the slow food movement's philosophy to all aspects of urban living, the slow city appeared and differentiated itself from other cities by broadcasting an anti-globalization message, promoting local food and cultural differences, and fostering networks and transnational cooperation (Heitmann et al., 2011). Slow City Movement, a non-governmental organization established in 1999 in Italy, has spread across 25 countries and has certified more than 100 cities worldwide (Cittaslow, 2013). These slow ideas reflected a social phenomenon caused by a modern society characterized by fast living and people who are often over-scheduled, task-orientated, and stressed (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010). By traveling slow, authentic experiences usually result in the sustainable development. For instance, slow food requires the standards of eco-friendly products/services and slow modes of transportations are often low-carbon means of travel (Cohen, 2002; Dickinson et al., 2011). However, as Scott (2011) and Weaver (2011) have criticized the validity of sustainable tourism, slow tourism's contributions to the environment remain in doubt by scholars. For instance, in a slow

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