



Testing the role of tourists' emotional experiences in predicting destination image, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions: A case of wellness tourism



Pramod Sharma*, Jogendra Kumar Nayak

Department of Management Studies, Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee, Roorkee, Uttarakhand 247667, India

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Tourists' emotions
Destination image
Satisfaction
Behavioral intentions
Yoga tourism
Rishikesh

ABSTRACT

A coherent body of research recognizes the significance of emotions in tourism. However, while a number of studies of emotions exist in mass tourism, empirical investigations of emotions in wellness (yoga) tourism have received less attention. Accordingly, this study investigates the interplay of tourists' emotional responses, overall destination image, satisfaction and behavioral intentions in wellness (yoga) tourism. The research was operationalized using empirical data collected from 345 domestic tourists visiting Rishikesh in India. The analysis was conducted using confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling which showed that tourists' emotions positively influenced overall image and satisfaction; overall image positively affects satisfaction; and both overall image and satisfaction positively influenced intention to revisit and recommend. This paper contributes by examining an emotion-behavior model of tourists in wellness (yoga) tourism. The academic and managerial implications of these findings are useful in designing strategies to better serve this emerging niche market.

1. Introduction

Yoga is “a set of activities which focuses on the union of body, mind and spirit” (Smith, 2007, p. 40). Around 300 million individuals practice yoga accounting for 4% of the global population (Shift, 2016). Yoga is not only practiced on a daily basis but it has become the central theme of many vacations (Lehto, Brown, Chen, & Morrison, 2006). This transformation of yoga into tourism is called yoga tourism (Cheer, Belhassen, & Kujawa, 2017). Yoga tourism accounts for approximately 439 billion (US dollar) market worldwide (Kumar, 2015). Yoga tourists have a unique kind of emotional experiences towards the destination they visit (Lehto et al., 2006). This is because, yoga tourism demands an intensive involvement of tourists in the destination (Ali-Knight & Ensor, 2017). Understanding the emotions of yoga tourist is important because of the uniqueness of emotions elicited by yoga tourist in the destination (Aggarwal, Guglani, & Goel, 2008). Despite of the importance of emotions in yoga tourism, the studies investigating the emotional responses of yoga tourists are difficult to find. Investigating the significance of emotions in yoga tourism would be an interesting study. This would augment the literature on tourism studies and also help destination marketers in better understanding of yoga tourism.

The conceptualization of tourist emotion and its applications in tourism literature are increasingly capturing the attention of tourism researchers (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2015; Lee & Kyle, 2013). Gradually,

tourist destinations are focusing more and more on tourism campaign that elicits emotions (Prayag, Hosany, & Odeh, 2013) such as “Incredible India!” and “Amazing Thailand!”. Studies in tourism literature empirically confirmed the significance of tourists' emotions in determining their behavioral intentions (Bigné, Mattila, & Andreu, 2008; Lee, Lee, & Lee, 2014). Although, the importance of studying tourist emotions, destination image, satisfaction and behavioral intentions is acknowledged in tourism literature. The studies investigating their interrelationships are scarce. Till now, the complex interrelationships among the conceptualized constructs are not clearly established in yoga tourism.

Prior studies made an attempt to summarize the relationships among the conceptualized constructs in a fragmented manner (e.g. Assaker & Hallak, 2013; Hallmann, Zehrer, & Müller, 2015; Lee, 2014; Prayag & Ryan, 2012). These studies can be summarized into three sets. First set of studies conceptualized the relationships among tourists' emotions, satisfaction, intention to revisit and recommend but omitted destination image in their hypothesized model (e.g. Lee, 2014; Prayag et al., 2013). Second set of studies conceptualized the interrelationships among destination image, satisfaction, intention to revisit and recommend, but fail to include tourists' emotions (e.g. Assaker & Hallak, 2013; Hallmann et al., 2015; Prayag, 2009). Finally, third set of studies hypothesized the interrelationships among tourists' emotions, destination image, satisfaction and intention to recommend but omitted

* Corresponding author at: CF-109, Ganga Bhawan, IIT Roorkee, Roorkee, Uttarakhand, India.
E-mail address: pramodsharmaias1990@gmail.com (P. Sharma).

intention to revisit (e.g. Prayag, Hosany, Muskat, & Del Chiappa, 2017). In all pertinent research examining tourists' emotions, the outcome variable is intention to recommend as an indicator of behavioral intentions (e.g. Lee, 2014). However, it is intended in this paper that both intention to revisit and intention to recommend will be simultaneously incorporated as an essential measure of behavioral intentions in wellness (yoga) tourism. In tourism literature, no research so far has concurrently investigated the inter-relationships among all these above constructs in a single model in wellness tourism. This substantial gap and paucity in the literature of tourism marketing is addressed in this paper.

The purposes of this paper are, i) to examine a theoretical model investigating the influence of specific tourists' emotions ("joy, love and positive surprise") in predicting tourists' behavioral intentions via overall image and satisfaction in wellness (yoga) tourism; and ii) to identify whether intention to revisit along with intention to recommend is an essential measure of behavioral intentions in an emotions-behavior model of wellness (yoga) tourism. This is significant because if specific emotions are more influential than others in the development of tourists overall image, satisfaction and consequently intention to revisit and recommend, then appropriate importance can be given to its effective management to attain a relatively positive emotional response. This would favorably influence the tourists' intention to revisit and recommend a wellness tourism destination.

The contributions of this paper are many-fold. First, this study contributes by investigating the integrated model of specific tourists' emotions in predicting behavioral intention through destination image and satisfaction in wellness (yoga) tourism. Scholars, observed that research in wellness (yoga) tourism are difficult to find which pose challenges to better understand this niche market (Ali-Knight & Ensor, 2017). Studying the conceptualized model in wellness tourism may provide a new insight into tourism research. Second, this paper examines the integrated emotion-behavior model in distinct geographical location and culture of the South Asian nation i.e. India. Previous studies revealed the necessity of testing the integrated model in distinct geographical locations especially in an Asian setting (Wang & Hsu, 2010). Finally, understanding the linkage between specific emotions and their consequent influence on behavioral intentions via, overall image and satisfaction have significant theoretical and managerial implications in designing and improving tourists' emotional experiences in wellness (yoga) tourism.

2. Theoretical background and hypotheses development

2.1. Yoga tourism - a subset of wellness tourism

Wellness tourism is marked by its antiquity (Bushell & Sheldon, 2009; Lehto et al., 2006). Wellness tourism involves "travelling to a different place to proactively pursue activities that maintain or enhance their personal health and wellbeing, and who are seeking unique, authentic or location-based experiences/therapies not available at home" (Global Spa Summit, 2011, p. 20). Wellness tourism along with yoga tourism is considered as a special interest tourism (Smith & Puczkó, 2008). Yoga tourism is one of the emerging sub-areas of wellness tourism (Smith & Kelly, 2006). Yoga signifies a union of mind, body and spirit (Aggarwal et al., 2008). Yoga is practiced not only as a phenomenon of developing good health and well-being but also as a channel for the pursuit of mindfulness, meditation and spirituality (Laing & Weiler, 2008).

Yoga has the conviction of providing relief for persons suffering from the obsessive compulsive disorder, chronic back pain, arthritis, asthma, breathing problems, and stress (Parker-Pope, 2002). Yoga is not only practiced on a regular basis but has grown as a central theme of many travel and tourism vacations designating it as a 'Yoga tourism' (Maddox, 2015). It has emerged as a "travel to feel well" philosophy (Lehto et al., 2006, p. 25). Yoga tourists travel with the main aim of

transformation (Aggarwal et al., 2008; Ponder & Holladay, 2013). Such tourists travel to escape from the demands and anxieties of the real world (Cheer et al., 2017; Smith, 2003). Yoga tourism can be viewed as a potential and emerging niche market (Ali-Knight & Ensor, 2017; Maddox, 2015). Emotional experiences elicited by tourists visiting yoga tourism is not similar to the emotional experiences of tourists visiting other destinations (such as visiting national park, islands or festivals) because of the kind and extent of involvement demanded by yoga tourism (Bowers & Cheer, 2017; Sharpley & Sundaram, 2005). Thus, studying the emotional experiences of such tourists and their resultant influence on behavioral intentions via destination image and satisfaction is of the outmost significance of this research.

2.2. The construct of tourists' emotional responses

A logical and consistent body of research confirms the pertinence of emotions in comprehending consumer behavior (Nyer, 1997). Cohen and Areni (1991) defined emotion as "an affective state characterized by episodes of intense feelings associated with a specific referent and instigate specific response behaviors" (p.188). Existing studies on tourism point out that research on tourists' emotion is attached specifically to island tourism, heritage sites, holidays, theme park and festivals (e.g. Lee, 2014). The common inference of these prior studies revealed that (a) emotions are significant precursor of overall destination image, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions; (b) magnitude and type of emotions differs across travel stages, products, and sites; and (c) prevalence of both positive and negative emotions in tourism (Yüksel & Yüksel, 2007).

The study of emotions has its root in psychology (Arnold, 1960). The literature on psychology put forward two considerable conceptual approaches to studying emotions. One such approach is categorical i.e. emotion specificity and another is dimensional i.e. valence based (Bagozzi, Gopinath, & Nyer, 1999). The first approach conceptualizes emotions as a distinctive affective state such as sadness, anger and joy (Izard, 1977). The second approach theorizes emotions by using dimensions like pleasure or arousal (Russell, 1980); positive or negative (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). Under the categorical approach, the distinction between discrete positive emotions and negative emotions are clearly indicated but the dimensional approach does not make such a distinction (Zins, 2002). In tourism studies, the dimension-based approach is more preferred in investigating emotions (Lin, Kerstetter, Nawijn, & Mitas, 2014).

Emotion is a psychological concept, so its measurement is done using well established scales such as "Positive Affect and Negative Affect Scales of Watson et al. (1988); Pleasure, Arousal, and Dominance Scale of Mehrabian and Russell (1974); Differential Emotion Scale of Izard (1977); and Eight Primary Emotions of Plutchik (1980)". Studies in tourism, adopt psychology based scale for measuring emotions (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2015). In spite of their extensive application, recently scholars have challenged the reliability, applicability, and validity of such psychology based scale (e.g. Schoefer & Diamantopoulos, 2008). Scholars argued that scales for measuring emotions borrowed from psychology are specific to its context only (Hosany, 2012). They are incapable of capturing the richness of destination attributes and tourist characteristics (Lee & Kyle, 2013). Existing psychology based scales fail to attain its content validity when borrowed to measure emotions in tourism, leading to delusive conclusions (Haynes, Richard, & Kubany, 1995).

Understanding the requirement to validly compute the complexity, intensity and diversity of tourists' emotional experiences, contemporary tourism and marketing scholars such as Hosany and Gilbert (2010) conceptualized and developed a scale called Destination Emotion Scale (DES). Destination Emotion Scale is empirically and theoretically at par with the operationalization of emotions in tourism (Lee & Kyle, 2013) and marketing studies (Batra, Ahuvia, & Bagozzi, 2012). For example, Lee and Kyle (2013) confirmed "joy, love, and positive surprise" as

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7422390>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7422390>

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