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Tourists' novelty and familiarity: Their effects on satisfaction and destination loyalty

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ABSTRACT

Novelty and familiarity play a important role in tourists' perception, and these have been treated as opposite concepts for a long period. However, in recent cognitive neuroscience literature, it is suggested that novelty and familiarity are distinct concepts, which independently influence consumer behavior (Shimojo, 2008). On this basis, this study aimed to examine the difference between the effects of novelty and familiarity on satisfaction and destination loyalty. The results reflected their different roles. Both novelty and familiarity contribute to destination loyalty. Meanwhile, only novelty has an effect on the formation of satisfaction. It can be inferred that tourists want to experience new things in familiar destinations. Managerial implications are also discussed briefly.

Keywords: *novelty, familiarity, satisfaction, destination loyalty.*

INTRODUCTION&LITERATURE

As the tourism market becomes more competitive, the importance of customer retention has increased. Loyalty is one of the major indicators used to measure customer retention and can be classified into behavioral loyalty and attitudinal loyalty (Jacoby & Chestnut, 1978). For destination marketing, tourists' loyalty toward a destination (hereinafter referred to as "destination loyalty") can be defined as their intention to revisit and recommend the destination to others (Yoon & Uysal, 2005).

Several studies have attempted to identify factors affecting destination loyalty. For example, past studies revealed the effects of satisfaction, destination image, motivation, etc. However, few studies have investigated the effect of destination familiarity, which plays an important role in tourists' perception (e.g., Milman & Pizam, 1995). Although Mechinda, Serirat, and Guild (2009) showed that familiarity influences destination loyalty, they did not examine the relationships among familiarity, satisfaction, and destination loyalty. If tourists feel a sense of familiarity, it can provide a feeling of security and comfort, which may lead to satisfaction and loyalty.

On the one hand, novelty seeking is known to be a key component of travel motivation (Crompton, 1979). It is also an antecedent of satisfaction and destination loyalty (Assaker, Vinzi, & O'Connor, 2011; Feng & Jang, 2007). Novelty is defined as the degree of contrast between present perception and past experience (Pearson, 1970).

According to these propositions, even though tourists seek for novelty, they prefer to visit familiar destinations. This appears to be inconsistent on the surface. However, in recent cognitive neuroscience literature, Park, Shimojo, and Shimojo (2010) showed a segregation of novelty and familiarity in preference judgments. Furthermore, Shimojo (2008) suggested that novelty and familiarity are distinct concepts, which independently influence consumer behavior.

Given the above considerations, this study aimed to examine the difference between the effects of novelty and familiarity on satisfaction and destination loyalty. Thus, the following null hypotheses were tested.

- H01a: There is no relationship between tourists' novelty and satisfaction.
- H01b: There is no relationship between tourists' novelty and destination loyalty.
- H02a: There is no relationship between tourists' familiarity and satisfaction.
- H02b: There is no relationship between tourists' familiarity and destination loyalty.
- H03: There is no relationship between satisfaction and destination loyalty.

METHODOLOGY

The data for this study was collected by a self-administered questionnaire method in Takayama city, Japan. Data collection was conducted from July to September, 2011. Out of the 1500 questionnaires that were distributed in major tourist attractions of the destination, a total of 542 usable responses were obtained and the response rate was 36.1%.

The questionnaire consisted of five sections: novelty, familiarity, satisfaction, destination loyalty, and socio-demographic information. Novelty was measured using four items on a 7-point scale (strongly disagree = 1; strongly agree = 7), on the basis of measures of novelty seeking (Lee & Crompton, 1992; Feng & Jang, 2007). Familiarity was measured using four items on a 7-point scale (strongly disagree = 1; strongly agree = 7) adapted from Mechinda et al. (2009). Based on Chi and Qu (2008), a single-item measure for overall satisfaction was used in this study, using a 7-point scale (very dissatisfied = 1; very satisfied = 7). Destination loyalty was measured using two items—intention to revisit and intention to recommend—on a 7-point scale (strongly disagree = 1; strongly agree = 7). Socio-demographic information included questions about gender, age, frequency of visit, etc.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test the hypotheses in this study. All analyses were conducted using R version 2.13.1 and the packages “psych” and “sem”. Prior to SEM analyses, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to establish the scale of novelty and familiarity (see Table 1). Because very few studies have done this. As a result, the scree plot indicated a two-factor solution. The two factors were labeled novelty and familiarity, and varimax rotation revealed that all items had factor loadings of 0.40 or greater. However, one item was excluded from subsequent analyses, because it had high loadings on two factors.

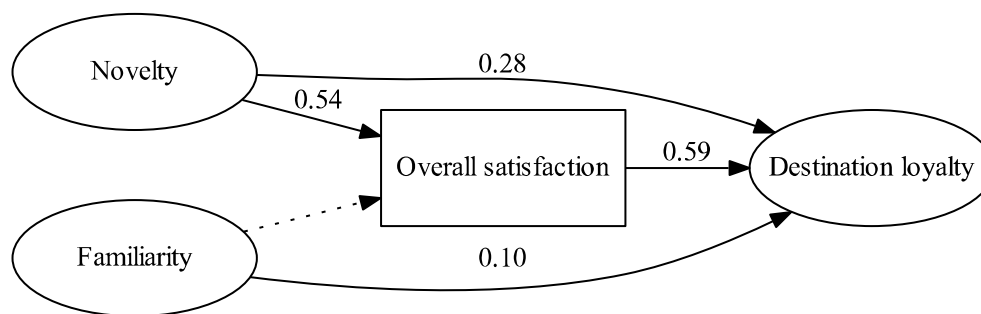
Next, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to examine the reliability and validity of the measurement model. It would seem inappropriate to conduct a CFA after an EFA on the same data. However, it is acknowledged that when there is not sufficient theoretical basis, EFA and CFA could be used to test the same data for cross-validation purposes (Fabrigar et al., 1999; Van Prooijen & Van der Kloot 2001; Worthington & Whittaker 2006). Additionally, satisfaction was not included in the analysis, because it was composed of a single item.

The goodness-of-fit indices indicated that the model adequately fit the data (GFI = 0.91, CFI = 0.94, NFI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.12; $p < 0.01$). The chi-square statistic was significant ($\chi^2 = 207.17$, $df = 24$, $p < 0.01$) owing to large sample sizes. All factor loadings were statistically significant ($p < 0.01$), and the composite reliabilities of each construct exceeded the recommendation level of 0.6 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). The average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct exceeded the recommendation level of 0.5, except for destination loyalty, which was 0.47. However, all factor loadings were larger than 0.5, and AVE for all constructs was higher than the square of the correlation between two constructs. Given these results, both convergent and discriminant validity were confirmed.

Table 1
The results of EFA (principal factor method)

	Factor1: Novelty	Factor2: Familiarity	Communality
This destination offers an unusual experience	0.86	0.09	0.75
This destination offers new discoveries	0.86	0.13	0.75
This destination offers new experiences	0.85	0.14	0.75
This destination is new for me	0.83	0.06	0.70
I know a lot about this destination	0.02	0.94	0.88
I know more than others about this destination	0.01	0.86	0.74
This destination feels familiar to me	0.18	0.79	0.66
I feel close to this destination	0.45	0.53	0.49
Variance explained (%)	39.2	32.2	

Figure 1
The structural model



Finally, the structural model was estimated using the maximum-likelihood method (see Figure 1). Although the chi-square statistic was significant ($\chi^2 = 231.7$, $df = 31$, $p < 0.01$), the goodness-of-fit indices indicated that the model adequately fit the data (GFI = 0.92, CFI = 0.94, NFI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.11; $p < 0.01$). Novelty had a direct effect on overall satisfaction ($\beta = 0.54$, $p < 0.01$) and destination loyalty ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.01$). Thus, H01a and H01b were rejected. Familiarity had a direct effect on destination loyalty ($\beta = 0.10$, $p < 0.05$). Consistent with previous research, overall satisfaction had a direct influence on destination loyalty ($\beta = 0.59$, $p < 0.01$). As a result, H02b and H03 were rejected. However, the path between familiarity and overall satisfaction was not significant ($\beta = -0.07$, n.s), and for that reason, H02a was not rejected.

These findings suggested that novelty is more influential in forming destination loyalty than familiarity. In addition, novelty was likely to influence overall satisfaction. Consequently, tourists may want to experience new things in familiar destinations. It can be inferred that the effect of familiarity on destination loyalty was mediated by the desire to reduce the risk of unsatisfactory experience (Gitelson & Crompton, 1984).

CONCLUSION

Novelty and familiarity were treated as distinct concepts in this study. The results reflected their different roles. Both novelty and familiarity contribute to destination loyalty.

Meanwhile, only novelty has an effect on the formation of satisfaction. In order to create a competitive advantage, destination marketers should emphasize that their destination offers something new to target markets. At the same time, they also should enhance tourists' familiarity with their destination by providing sufficient information (through advertising, public relations, tourist information centers, etc).

However, there are some limitations to the present study. First, this study did not examine the effects of socio-demographic characteristics. Second, this study was conducted at a specific destination. Third, this study did not take into account factors such as novelty seeking and other motivational variables. Future research should investigate these issues.

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