A Study on the Motivation-based Tourist Destination Image

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ABSTRACT

This paper raised a comprehensive theoretical model of motivation-based tourism destination image studies to explore the relationships among motivation, destination image, self-congruity and visit intentions. By collecting data from tourists visiting Beijing in 2008 and by using SEM, the empirical results indicate that the hypothesis for the theoretical model about the relationships among tourist motivations, tourist perceived destination images, self-congruity and visiting intention to the specific tourist destination are supported.

Keywords: motivation, tourist destination, image, self-congruity, travel intention, SEM.

INTRODUCTION

On the background of global economic integration in the 21st century, with the wide spread of modern transportation vehicle and under the stimulation of internet and various information media technologies, the movements of tourists within home country and abroad since 1950s becomes an obvious social economic phenomenon, and thus attract the attentions from governments at different levels. Tourism, as a window of local public image, attracts the attention from cities, regions and countries all over the world. The macro views that "Tourism forms a platform, economics and trades play their role on the stage" has been recognized widely at home and abroad. The flows of tourists among different regions and accompany the flows with information, goods and cash in the field of economy, trade, culture, science, technology and politics exert far-reaching and long term influence and penetration, therefore, destination promotion institutions at city, region and country levels all over the world work hard to attract high level visitors and expecting vigor input from developing tourism for local development. The local war in the world becomes fiercely and many local tourism images become homogeneous, how to build a unique tourist destination image in the minds of target tourists becomes an important task.

RESEARCH IMPORTANCE

This study begin its study from tourist motivation since motivation is the critical points behind tourist behavior, it is the driving force for all actions. Because motivations are connected with activities, and then connected with destination choice, therefore, motivation becomes an interesting focus in tourism marketing practice and research circle.

With the theories of motivation, attitude, and self-congruity as main framework, this study raises a theoretical model, the theme is tourist motivation-based tourist destination image study

in tourism push-pull theory, pull factors represent the personal internal motivations for travelling, and pull factors represent the specific tourist destination attractive factors. Thus the push-pull theory actually mainly discusses the relationship between tourist motivations and tourist destination perceived images.

Tourist destination image and its positioning study attract widespread interests from practical and research fields due to its theoretical and practical importance. In the world, many tourist destination organizations seldom conducting systematic tourists' motivation tracking survey and one reason is because they do not know from where and how to conduct it, this explains the importance of tourist motivation-based destination image studies. The lack of consensus of motivation construct makes the difficulty of discussion of personal travel reasons, and the empirical study on reasons of travelling are still very limited. If a breakthrough in the study of relationships between tourist motivations and tourist destination images, it will make contribution for the deeper understanding of influencing factors for tourists' destination choice. Therefore, the perspective of motivation-based tourism destination image study is the future international academic breakthrough direction.

The contributions of the research are as the followings: 1. This research tries to explore the internal connections between the components of motivations and destination images. 2. The paper discusses the relationships between tourism destination images and self-images. As some researcher mentioned, research in this research area is very limited and may indicate the future direction in tourism marketing research field. 3. This research sets up a comprehensive theoretical model of motivation-based tourism destination image studies to explore the relationships among motivation, destination image, self-congruity and visit intentions. This research is the first one to establish this theoretical model in the related research field. 5. The study uses SEM to discuss the relationships between motivation and destination images, from the literature review, this study is the first one in the research topic.

METHODOLOGY
Descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analysis, independent t test and correlation analysis have been used for the exploration of the relationships between tourist motivations and destination images. A Structure Equation Model is further used for empirical testing of raised theoretical model. The data are collected from tourists visiting Beijing between February and March 2009, among those respondents, the majorities are domestic tourists.

RESULTS
The empirical results indicate that there are correlations among tourist motivations, tourist perceived destination images, self-congruity and visiting intention to specific tourist destinations. The main conclusions from this study are as follows:

First, tourist motivation has direct positive influence on tourist perceived destination images; the escape motivation towards destination image has direct positive influence.

Second, the cognitive image had direct influence on affective images here in China according to the result of this study.

Third, results from both the first sample and the second sample proof the existence of relationship between cognitive image and self-congruity.

Four, there is a positive relationship between affective image and visit intention.

Five, the core hypothesis that tourist motivation influence perceived destination image and then connected with self-congruity is overall supported by this empirical research.

Six, differences exist between different tourists in terms of perceived destination images.

CONCLUSION

The result of this research provides some insights in further study in this filed, it provides a foundation for further study of formulating destination marketing strategy, destination image building, and destination positioning; it is also useful for cultural comparative studies in the field of tourist consumer behavior.

The selection of measurement indicators could be further improved and it is better to select different cities to discuss the differences from the results, these are the limitations for the present research.

Travel inhibitor such as time and money could be included in the model in future study and country image elements could be incorporated into tourist destination image studies.

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