



Testing the effects of congruity, travel constraints, and self-efficacy on travel intentions: An alternative decision-making model

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ABSTRACT

Travel decision making has been extensively studied. Various models and theories have been proposed to explain tourist behavior. Taking a new approach, this study applied the Motivation–Opportunity–Ability (MOA) model to explain travel intentions. The MOA model suggests that motivation, opportunity, and ability are major factors influencing travel intentions. This study explored the role of self congruity, functional congruity, perceived travel constraints, constraint negotiation, and self efficacy on travel intentions.

The proposed model and hypotheses were tested in the context of cruise tourism. An online panel survey was conducted with cruisers. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to test both the proposed model and hypothesized relationships among the constructs. All hypotheses except one were supported by the data. The proposed model also had an acceptable fit to the data.

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1. Introduction

Decision making studies are multi disciplinary in nature and have evolved from a wide range of fields including psychology (e.g., Harmon Jones, 2000; Oyserman, Fryberg, & Yoder, 2007; Pablo, Petty, & Barden, 2007), sociology (e.g., Howard, 2000; Lawler, Thye, & Yoon, 2000; Pierce, Cameron, Bando, & So, 2003), marketing (e.g., Cotte & Wood, 2004; Mandel, 2003; Simonson, Carmon, Dhar, Drolet, & Nowlis, 2001), and communication (e.g., Homer, 2006; Katz, 1973; Till & Baack, 2005). Although different theories or conceptual models (e.g., Theory of Planned Behavior by Ajzen, 1991; Goal Hierarchy of Motivation by Bettman, 1979; Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion by Petty & Cacioppo, 1980; Brand Personality by Aaker, 1997) have been proposed for explaining consumers' decisions, no one unifying theory has been agreed upon by scholars to fully explain decision making (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). Simonson et al. (2001, p. 251) suggested that this might be because “consumer behavior is too complex to be meaningfully captured in a single model.” Alternative approaches may enhance our understanding of decision making from different ways. The current study proposes an

alternative model, situated in the Motivation–Opportunity–Ability (MOA) framework, for explaining travel intentions.

An observation derived from past decision making studies is that scholars usually consider decision making as a rational process which involves multiple stages (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005) in which consumers logically derive their final decision. For instance, Crompton (1992) and Botha, Crompton, and Kim (1999) proposed a destination choice model in which people narrowed their choices from an awareness set, initial consideration set, and late consideration set to derive their final destination choice. Based on Assael's (1984) work, Vogt and Fesenmaier (1998) introduced an information search model in which the information search process is comprised of five stages: input variables, information acquisition, information process, brand evaluation, and purchase. Sirakaya and Woodside (2005) summarized previous decision making studies and suggested that people usually go through the following steps when making a travel decision: 1) recognizing the need for making a decision; 2) identifying goals; 3) formulating choice sets; 4) collecting information on each choice; 5) making a choice among the alternatives; 6) purchasing and/or consuming products/services; and 7) post purchase evaluation.

Although these models present a logical hierarchical process of decision making, some scholars (e.g., Crompton & Ankomah, 1993; Oppermann, 1998; Petrick, Li, & Park, 2007) have suggested that not everyone follows all the steps scripted above. People are more likely to skip some stages of decision making when they are brand loyal

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(Petrick et al., 2007), have previous experience (Oppermann, 1998), are familiar with the products/services (Prentice & Andersen, 2000), have social influences (Petrick et al., 2007), are more involved in their decision making process (Crompton & Ankomah, 1993), and/or if their decisions are routinized (Crompton & Ankomah, 1993). Petrick et al. (2007) studied decision making of cruisers and found that Crompton's (1992) destination choice set model, which is a multi stage decision making model, did not explain the phenomenon. This implies that the traditional multi stage approach may not be applicable to explain tourists' decision makings due to its sensitivity to the factors mentioned above.

Using the Motivation–Opportunity–Ability (MOA) model (MacInnis & Jaworski, 1989) as a guiding framework, the current study will evaluate travel motivation, opportunity, and ability as well as their influences on travel intentions. This model differs from previous decision making models in two ways. First, the model does not follow the traditional multi stage approach of other decision making models. Rather, the focus is more on identifying the key factors affecting behavioral intentions and examining the interactions among these factors. Second, the model incorporates both rational and hedonic components of decision making, to hopefully present a more holistic picture of decision making. It is hoped that the proposed model will offer an alternative understanding of travel intentions and the decisions that affect them.

2. Literature review

The MOA model was first proposed by MacInnis and Jaworski (1989) within the context of information processing. The model suggests that motivation, opportunity, and ability (MOA), are antecedents of consumer behavior(s). Based on MacInnis and Jaworski's (1989) work, MacInnis, Moorman, and Jaworski (1991) further explored the role of MOA in brand information processing for advertising and found it plays a mediating role in the relationship between executional cues and communication outcomes. They suggested that the executional cues of an advertisement affect the communication effectiveness of an ad through their influences on consumers' motivation, opportunity, and ability to process the information.

The MOA approach has been adopted by several scholars on a wide range of topics including community participation in tourism development (Hung, Turk & Ingram, 2011), brand purchase (Batra & Ray, 1986), art participation (Wiggins, 2004), and crime (Davidson & Gentry, 2001; Kenry, 2003; McGrew, 2005). A commonality found among these applications of the MOA model is that all participants in these studies were engaged in information processing or a decision making process and their decisions are mainly influenced by three factors: their motivation, opportunity and ability.

Similarly, travel propensity can be considered as the outcomes of information processing and to be subject to the influence of these three factors. A large body of research has been conducted in tourism contexts to investigate how people process information and how they make decisions (e.g., Crompton, 1992; Fodness & Murray, 1997; Gursoy & McCleary, 2004; Vogt & Fesenmaier, 1998). This research has focused on identifying factors influencing travelers' decision making processes and the outlying mechanisms leading to a travel decision. Applying the MOA model in a context of tourism, this study is expected to structure a theoretical framework with inclusion of both rational and hedonic components of decision making. The following paragraphs investigate motivation, ability, and opportunity in more detail.

2.1. Motivation

Motivation is an important factor in a decision making process as it affects both the direction and intensity of behavior (Bettman,

1979). There is substantial interest in investigating motives underlying human behavior in various fields of study. Motivation scholars have used different approaches to explain human motivations such as drive reduction theory (Hull, 1943, 1952), hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943, 1954), expectancy value theories (Lewin, 1938), and goal directed behavior (Bettman, 1979). These approaches have provided differing insights related to the understanding of human behaviors.

Since satisfying tourists is important to sustaining travel businesses, tourism scholars have actively engaged in travel motivation studies to understand tourists better. In his early work, Dann (1977) suggested that people travel for two basic reasons: 1) to escape from boredom of usual residence, and 2) to gain status recognition from others. These two basic travel motivations coincide with Iso-Ahola's (1982) notions of escaping usual environments and seeking intrinsic rewards, which act as two fundamental forces leading to a travel decision. Crompton (1979) identified nine socio-psychological motivations leading to a travel decision. These motivations are also referred to as "push" travel factors that have been argued to be necessary in order to result in a decision to travel (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1981).

While "push" factors refers to the inner needs that induce people to travel, "pull" factors have to do with the attractiveness of a destination that entices people to choose where to go for a vacation (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1981). Destination image represents the "pull" aspect of motivation. It is the image formulated based on tourists' personal interpretations of a destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; LaPage & Cormier, 1977; MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997). Although different classifications of destination image have emerged from past studies (e.g., Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Gartner, 1993; Gunn, 1972), cognitive and affective image are probably the most commonly recognized dimensions of image in the tourism literature (e.g., Baloglu & Love, 2005; Kerstetter, Yen, & Yarnal, 2005; Park, 2006). Cognitive image is formed based on beliefs or knowledge of a destination and affective image refers to subjective feelings or emotional responses of individuals toward a destination (Gartner, 1993).

Past research (e.g., Kim & Chalip, 2004; Kim, Lee, & Klenosky, 2003; Zhang & Lam, 1999) has often separated the discussions of "push" and "pull" motivations, even though they have been studied simultaneously. This practice has led to an unclear understanding of the interaction between "push" and "pull" motivations as well as how the interaction can influence travel intentions. The integration of these two approaches is likely to enhance the understanding of the role of destinations in fulfilling visitors' fundamental needs. The current study applies self congruity theory (Sirgy, 1986) to interpret the relationship between "push" and "pull" factors and to bridge the gap between these two approaches.

2.1.1. Self congruity theory

Self congruity is defined in marketing research as "the match between consumers' self concept and the user's image of a given product, brand, store, etc" (Kressmann et al., 2006, p. 955). The congruence between the perceived image of a product and self image can lead to preference of the product and thus, result in purchasing behavior. In other words, people tend to behave congruent to their self images (Mannetti, Pierro, & Livi, 2004). In tourism contexts, self congruity refers to the match between tourists' self image and perceived destination image.

Self congruity research encompasses different disciplines. For instance, Sirgy (1986) situated self congruity as an integrated theory of human behavior which contributes to research in different fields including personality, cognition, self concept, and cybernetics. Rosenberg (1989) also indicated that there was a long tradition of studying self concept in psychology, sociology, and

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