



## Nostalgia as travel motivation and its impact on tourists' loyalty



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### ABSTRACT

This study examines associations among push and pull motives for travel in the context of Macau. As a cultural tourism destination, Macau possesses attributes that can meet tourists' need for nostalgia. Individuals high in nostalgia are attracted to Macau's historical and heritage pull attributes. However, in order to create loyalty, these pull attributes must also provide opportunities for family members or friends to bond. The study examines pull motives holistically and individually. The results indicate that while holistic examination of motives better predicts future intentions to visit, individual examination provides details that can help in understanding the interaction among different push and pull motives to visit a destination.

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### 1. Introduction

Successful marketing of a tourism destination depends on a thorough understanding of tourists' motivations and their impact on subsequent behavioral intentions. The multifaceted nature of tourists (Dellaert, Ettema, & Lindh, 1998) makes the task of understanding the relationship between motivations and behavioral intentions difficult and complex. Because destinations often possess multiple attributes, tourists' motivations cannot be inferred simply based on the destination or activity chosen (McKercher & Chan, 2005). For example, a religious site with beautiful scenery may attract both religious and secular tourists (Shuo, Ryan, & Liu, 2009). To understand tourists' motivations, therefore, the researcher must examine both individuals' intrinsic desires and destinations' unique attributes (Ryan, Shuo, & Huan, 2010), also known as push and pull motivations, respectively (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). This study seeks to understand tourists' motivations in a specific market segment, namely culture and heritage tourism. Furthermore, this study focuses on tourists with nostalgically-triggered motivation to travel to the destination.

Nostalgia can be a powerful stimulus that can influence people's behavioral intention (Chen, Yeh, & Huan, 2014). Nostalgia is known to be an intrinsic motivation (Hsu, Cai, & Wong, 2007) that drives the individual to seek some form of remedy for the need to re-live past experiences, the memories of which trigger thoughts and feelings of pleasure and sadness. Understanding the need for nostalgia helps explain tourists' destination choices and how individuals respond to various destination attributes based on this need. This study seeks to understand how nostalgia (a destination choice push motive) affects tourists' responses to destination specific attributes (pull motives) and eventually influence tourists' loyalty. The level of tourists' loyalty is often measured by their willingness or intention to revisit the destination and their supportive behavior for the destination (Opfermann, 2000). Achieving high customer loyalty is a primary goal of almost all businesses, including tourism destinations.

Most research uses an integrated technique (e.g., Yoon & Uysal, 2005) to measure motivations and to examine their effects. This study offers a comparison of both integrated and segregated approaches to examine the causal relationship among nostalgia (a push motive), destination attributes (pull motives), and loyalty. Two research models are proposed and compared in this research using structural equation modeling. The objective of this research is to help destination marketers understand how to effectively use nostalgia in their marketing efforts. By comparing results of two different models, this study facilitates the understanding of the impact of nostalgia on behavioral intentions.

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The geographical subject of this study is Macau which was designated as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) in 2005. Up until late 1999, Macau was the last remaining Portuguese colony in Asia. Four centuries of colonization created a unique local culture from the blending of Macau's indigenous culture with European colonists' cultures. A rich and diverse cultural background is one of the essential components of a destination that can evoke a sense of nostalgia (Yeh, Chen, & Liu, 2012), hence Macau is an ideal subject for this study.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Motivation

Among the many theoretical constructs that measure motivation are Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Alderfer's ERG theory, Herzberg's motivator-hygiene theory (Ghazi, Ali, Shahzad, Khan, & Hukamdad, 2010), Pearce's leisure ladder (Chuo & Heywood, 2006), Iso-Ahola's escape-seeking dichotomy (Matheson, Rimmer, & Tinsley, 2014), and push and pull factors (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Despite differences in these theories, all agree that the study of motivation is based on human psychological and biological needs. Understanding motivation can therefore help to advance the understanding of why tourists travel and what they want to enjoy.

From an escape-seeking dichotomy perspective (Yoon & Uysal, 2005), a tourist tries to escape mundane life by seeking satisfactory experiences. In the context of this study, nostalgia triggers an individual's desire for authentic cultural experiences to escape their everyday existence (Osbaldiston, 2012). This concept of nostalgia-driven travel allows the study here to adopt a widely accepted model in tourism motivation as its theoretical basis, namely push and pull factor typology. This theory suggests that the individual is pushed by his or her innate motive to travel and pulled by destination-specific attributes in choosing a travel destination (Ryan et al., 2010; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). The focus of this study is on examining the role of nostalgia as a push motive. Among the many travel destinations that can satisfy the need for nostalgic experiences Macau was chosen for this study. The study examines how Macau's destination attributes interact with individuals' nostalgia motive.

Motivational research focuses on a wide range of both push and pull motives, and findings from these studies provide an important basis for understanding tourists' needs and wants. The main aim of the study here is to focus on a single type of push motive. Instead of broadening the understanding of tourists' motivations in general, this study seeks to deepen the understanding of one particular type of push motivation (i.e., nostalgia). The findings provide insights into a specific market segment, namely the need for nostalgia segment of tourists, and provide the basis for marketing strategy for enterprises supplying nostalgic products.

### 2.2. Nostalgia as push motive

Nostalgia was originally a medical term used to describe the homesickness of soldiers fighting in a distant foreign land (Chen et al., 2014). The term's usage was later broadened to describe a sentimental longing for something far away, where the distance referred to here is both spatial and temporal (Stephan, Sedikides, & Wildschut, 2012). The temporal distance is not limited to one's own past experiences, but also includes a collective past such as history. This vicarious nostalgia (Merchant & Rose, 2013) is a romanticized way to view a past without personally experiencing it. Individuals with nostalgia tend to seek out objects associated with a longed-for past in order to soothe their feelings associated with thinking about these places and times. These objects take many forms including historical ruins, ancient text, or even old buildings, and represent pull motives associated with destination attributes. Although some pull motives are specifically associated

with nostalgia, this study also includes other generic pull motives. The idea is to see how nostalgia interacts with pull motivations that are not specifically associated with it.

### 2.3. Destination attributes as pull motive

Some research that does not adopt the push and pull typology to study tourists' motivations (e.g., Kim, Borges, & Chon, 2006; Rid, Ezeuduji, & Pröbstl-Haider, 2014) is, nevertheless, valuable to the research here, especially studies that examine situation-specific motives by focusing on one destination or one event. For example, Kim et al. (2006) classify festival participants' motives in Brazil as family togetherness, socialization, site attraction, festival attraction, and escape from routine. Kim and Prideaux (2005) classify motives for inbound tourists in Korea as enjoying various tourist resources, culture and history, escaping from everyday routine, socialization, and social status. Rid et al. (2014) classify motives for travelers to rural Gambia as heritage & nature, authentic rural experience, learning, and sun & beach.

Researchers that adopt the push and pull factor typology (e.g., Hanqin & Lam, 1999; Yoon & Uysal, 2005) tend to be quite meticulous in generating lists of pull motives since many attributes often comprise a single destination and researchers are attempting to develop a general theoretical construct. Although this study includes some generic pull motives, the authors do not include an extensive list of pull motives to avoid blurring the focus of this study. This study adopts the light version of the pull motive construct. The list of pull motives for this study appears in Table 1.

The pull motives are categorized into four types: historical and heritage attractions (H&H), cultural and cuisine experiences (C&C), rest and relaxation facilities (R&R), and family and friend bonding opportunities (F&F). The first two types of pull motive are specifically related to fulfilling the nostalgic push motive. The other two types are generic pull motives involving attractions or experiences that satisfy relaxation and social needs. Meeting relaxation and social needs are two types of destination attributes most commonly recognized in the literature cited above.

### 2.4. Loyalty

Customer loyalty is often measured by an individual's willingness to repurchase a product, willingness to recommend the product to others (Han, Hsu, & Sheu, 2010), willingness to pay more for the product, actual purchase of a higher quantity of the product, and making the product the first choice among alternatives (Chen et al., 2014). Loyalty is often treated as a one-dimensional construct. For some products, such as restaurants, opportunities for repurchase happen quite frequently. However, the likelihood that an individual will return to the same

**Table 1**  
Pull motives.

Factor	Reference	Measure
H&H	Prayag and Hosany (2014)	Rich heritage and history
	Prayag and Hosany (2014)	Interesting architecture
	Kastenholz and Lima (2011)	Famous historic monuments
C&C	Prayag and Hosany (2014)	Cuisine conform to culture of Macau
	Yang, Ryan, and Zhang (2013)	Experience exotic cultural atmosphere
	Prayag and Hosany (2014)	Learn about Macau's culture
R&R	Mehmetoglu (2011)	Beautiful resort
	Rid et al. (2014)	Sandy beach
	Kim and Ritchie (2012)	Entertainment facility such as golf club
F&F	Hyde and Harman (2011)	I can have a good time with my friends/family in Macau
	Chand (2010)	It is safe for my friends/family to vacation in Macau
	Tung and Brent Ritchie (2011)	I can create good memory with friends/family in Macau

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