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Why do you cruise? Exploring the motivations for taking cruise holidays, and the construction of a cruising motivation scale

Kam Hung^{a,*}, James F. Petrick^b^a School of Hotel and Tourism Management, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hung Hom, Kowloon, Hong Kong^b Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences, Texas A&M University, USA

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ABSTRACT

The purposes of this study were to develop a measurement scale for motivation to cruising and to examine the role of cruising motivation on intention to cruise. The motivation measurement scale was developed by following the procedures recommended by Churchill (1979). The scale was tested and found to be both reliable and valid. The role of cruising motivation on intention to cruise was tested with an online panel survey and it was found that cruising motivation has a positive influence on cruising intention. Based on the study results, some marketing implications were provided to the cruise industry.

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1. Introduction

Motivation is a fundamental force behind all human behavior (Berkman & Gilson, 1978). It refers to the “internal psychological factors (needs and wants) that generate a state of tension or disequilibrium within individuals” (Crompton & McKay, 1997, p. 427). Although travel motivation has been extensively studied in tourism literature, the discussion of motivation has not been expanded to cruise tourism except for Qu and Ping’s (1999) study on the motivations associated with cruising in Hong Kong. However, this study adopted a motivation scale from elsewhere without examining the reliability and validity of the scale. Since understanding the underlying motives to cruising is likely to enhance our understanding of why people cruise and what they are looking for from their trips, the first purpose of the current study was to understand people’s motivation to cruising by developing a cruising motivation measurement scale.

Although travel motivation has been identified as a critical factor in explaining tourist behavior (Crompton, 1979), few studies tested the relationship between travel motivation and travel intention. Intention is defined as the direction of mind or “intended mode of behavior” (Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 1405). Most motivation studies have been characterized by identifying travel motivations in different tourism contexts such as garden (Connell, 2004), rural tourism (Frochot, 2005), and national parks (Kim, Lee, & Klenosky, 2003) without examining its influence on travel

intentions. Although Kim and Chalip (2004) investigated the role of travel motives on visiting intentions and found both direct and indirect effects of travel motivations on desire to attend the World Cup in Korea, their motivation measurement was adopted from a leisure motivation scale and only three dimensions of the scale were included in their study: escape, learning, and social motives. Therefore, this study was conducted to first develop a measurement scale for cruising motivation and then to investigate the influence of motivation to cruising on people’s intention to take a cruise vacation.

2. Literature review

Motivation has been one of the most researched topics in a variety of fields (i.e., psychology, sociology, consumer behavior, and tourism). Various motivation theories have been developed 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). While some theories such as drive reduction theory have suggested that people behave in certain ways due to their innate biological tendencies such as eating for hunger; others such as hierarchy of needs theory suggest that people do something because they want to achieve certain goals such as working hard to get a raise. The former is termed as a regulatory approach and refers to responses to physiological needs while the latter is termed a purposive approach and focuses on goal-directed behaviors (Beck, 2000). In a tourism context, the latter approach has been used more frequently.

Various motivation theories or concepts have been proposed to explain tourist behavior. For instance, MacCannell (1973, 1999)

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +852 2766 4334; fax: +852 2362 9362.

E-mail addresses: hmkam@polyu.edu.hk (K. Hung), jpetrick@tamu.edu (J.F. Petrick).

suggested that tourists travel to other destinations to seek authentic opportunities when their usual environments lack such an experience. Plog (1974, 2001) allocated tourists into an allocentric–psychocentric continuum in which tourists were categorized according to their personalities toward novelty-seeking and implied that personality was one of the basic sources of travel motivation. Pearce and Caltabiano (1983) applied Maslow's hierarchy of needs to the study of tourist travel motivations, and suggested that experienced travelers are more likely to go on trips to fulfill higher level of needs (i.e., self actualization) than novice travelers. These theories imply that people travel for fulfilling certain needs and wants and that these needs and wants are the basic motivations for initiating a travel experience. Although many motivation theories have been proposed in past research, scholars have not perceived these approaches as competitive entities; rather, they all contribute to the understanding of tourist behaviors in different ways. Thus, it is unlikely that scholars will ever agree on one unifying motivational theory in explaining tourist behavior.

Despite the vast amount of attention that tourism scholars have paid to studying travel motivation (e.g., Dann, 1977; Iso-Ahola, 1982; Crompton, 1979; Kim & Chalip, 2004), little effort has been paid to studying travel motivation in the context of cruise tourism. While prior cruising research had focused more on economic aspects of cruise tourism (e.g., Henthorne, 2000; Dwyer & Forsyth, 1998; Vina & Ford, 1998), more recent research has paid more attention to identifying different factors influencing cruise decision-making (Duman & Mattila, 2005; Petrick, 2004b; Li & Petrick, 2008). Other topics which have been discussed in the past cruising literature include safety assessment of cruise ships (Lois, Wang, Wall, & Ruxton, 2004) and different social aspects of cruise tourism such as social space, interaction and liminality (Yarnal & Kerstetter, 2005), tourist bubble (Jaakson, 2004), and McDonaldization of cruise tourism (Weaver, 2005).

Different factors have been found in past studies to influence people's cruising intentions. For instance, in their study of cruise passengers' decision-making process, Petrick, Li, and Park (2007) found that loyalty, familiarity, and social influences were the major factors affecting one's decision to go on a cruise vacation. Consistent with previous findings (Crompton & Ankomah, 1993), the authors suggested that the choice set model (Crompton, 1992), which is a sequential travel decision-making process in which people narrow down their destination choices to reach a final decision, does not apply to those who make habitual/routinized cruising decisions.

A few studies have also explored the role of loyalty in cruising intentions. For instance, Li and Petrick (2008) applied the investment model (Rusbult, 1980) in their study and found that loyalty is a function of cruise passengers' satisfaction with their relationship with cruises, quality of other alternatives, as well as their investment size on the relationship. Taking another perspective, Petrick (2004a) compared first-timers and repeaters and found that while first-timers and less loyal visitors tend to be less price sensitive and to spend more, loyal cruisers have higher revisit intentions and are more likely to spread positive word of mouth. These results were further supported by Petrick and Sirakaya's (2004) study in which they segmented cruisers by loyalty and found that loyal repeaters and satisfied first-timers tend to have higher perceptions of value and are more likely to have positive word of mouth and revisit intentions in the future.

Petrick (2004b) further investigated the roles of quality, value, and satisfaction in predicting cruise passengers' behavioral intentions. He tested three competing models for predicting behavioral intentions and found that while all three factors (i.e., quality, value, and satisfaction) influence repurchase intention directly, quality also has an indirect effect on repurchase intention via the mediators

of satisfaction and value. In addition, value was found to have a positive effect on satisfaction.

The roles of satisfaction and perceived value on travel intentions were further validated in Duman and Mattila's (2005) work. However, different from previous studies, affective factors (i.e., control, novelty, and hedonics) were included in the study to predict their direct effects on satisfaction and perceived value as well as their indirect influences on behavioral intentions. Results of their study found a predicting role of the variables on behavioral intentions.

Other influential factors of behavioral intentions identified in past cruising studies include price sensitivity (Petrick, 2005), critical incidents (Petrick, Tonner, & Quinn, 2006), and perceived image of cruise travel (Park, 2006). These studies generally conclude that cruising intentions are influenced by these factors. Although Vina and Ford (2001) also studied factors influencing people's propensity to cruise, the variables of prediction were limited to demographic and trip characteristics, and the studied sample was limited to those who previously requested travel information for tourist destinations in South Texas from regional convention and visitor bureaus.

The review of past cruising literature suggests that intention to cruise is influenced by many different factors. However, the research on cruising motivation and its relationship with cruising intention is still lacking. It is thus still unknown why people choose to take cruises and how motivation influences their intentions to cruise. Although different benefits of cruising were included in the CLIA's cruise market profile study (CLIA, 2008), the cruising benefit items were pre-determined in the questionnaire and their association with intentions to cruise was not explored. The sole use of structured questionnaires with Likert-type scales in most tourism studies has been criticized as confining subjects' responses to pre-determined items and forcing subjects to respond to items which may not apply to them (Samdahl, 2005; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000). Therefore, the use of multi-methods which contain both qualitative and quantitative methods is more likely to yield deeper understanding of a given topic. This study utilized both in-depth interviews and a survey to understand people's motivation to cruising by developing a cruising motivation measurement scale and to explore its influence on travel intentions.

3. Research methods

Adopting Churchill's (1979) recommended measurement scale development procedures, this study was conducted in four stages to address the objectives of the study. Stage one included in-depth interviews. Semi-structured interviews with a small sample were conducted to derive motivation measurement items. Convenience sampling was used to select subjects for the study. Participants included cruise passengers embarking and debarking at Port Everglades in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Different cruise lines were contacted during the period of December 2007 to February 2008 and two cruise lines (i.e., Holland America Line and Princess Cruises) granted the authors permissions to interview their passengers at Port Everglades.

The sample size was not determined *a priori*. Rather the strategy was to continue to interview people until the increment of new information forthcoming was minimal. All the interviews were semi-structured. In total, 32 interviews were conducted at the port with 19 interviews conducted with passengers who had just debarked from cruises and 13 interviews conducted with passengers who were waiting for embarkation. A total of 17 interviews were conducted with Holland America Cruise Lines' passengers and 15 interviews were conducted with Princess Cruises' passengers.

Stage two utilized a panel of experts. The motivation items generated from both interviews and past literature ($n = 63$) were next submitted for review by a panel of experts consisting of seven

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