



Case study

The destructive power of money and vanity in deviant tourist behavior

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HIGHLIGHTS

- A psychological model of deviant tourist behavior is given and testified.
- Tourists' perception of money as power will lead to deviant tourist behavior.
- Tourists' vanity is positively correlated to deviant tourist behavior.
- Vanity moderates the destructive effect of tourists' perception of money as power.

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ABSTRACT

Deviant tourist behavior is an important issue in tourism management. However, the academic understanding of this phenomenon remains limited. Based on the approach/inhibition theory of power, this study explored the effects of tourists' perception of money as power, their vanity and the interaction of these two factors on deviant tourist behavior. A survey and a quasi-experiment were performed to test the hypotheses; the results revealed that tourists' perception of money as power and their vanity were positively correlated to their agreement with deviant tourist behavior and their self-reported deviant tourist activity. Vanity had a moderate effect on the relationship between the perception of money as power and deviant tourist behavior. The research contributes to a better theoretical and practical understanding of this phenomenon.

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1. Introduction

Deviant tourist behavior (DTB) is a deliberate practice undertaken by tourists in a tourism-related context that results in damage or loss of property. Deviant tourist behaviors are quite common in worldwide tourism, e.g., violence (Hughes et al., 2008; Kerr & de Kock, 2002), removal of native objects (e.g., rocks, plants, coral) as souvenirs (Weaver, 2006), disrespect for cultural traditions (Bhati & Pearce, 2016) or graffiti (Thirumaran, 2013). These behaviors are not only destructive to tourism resources but could also hamper other tourists' tourism experience and cause losses to tourism enterprises and other organizations. Nevertheless, few scholars have paid enough attention to this phenomenon (Bhati & Pearce, 2016; Thirumaran, 2013).

Limited research has been performed on this topic. In qualitative

research, Uriely, Ram, and Malach-Pines (2011) introduced psychodynamic sociology to explain deviant tourist behavior and argued that such behavior reveals tourists' unconscious needs. However, the mechanism of how these needs lead to deviant tourist behavior remains unknown. Bhati and Pearce (2016) reviewed literature on vandalism and its motivation, and they discussed manifestations of vandalism in tourism and strategies to prevent it. Thirumaran (2013) provided suggestions to manage graffiti through fieldwork observations. In quantitative research, studies on this topic are generally descriptive in exploring the reasons for deviant tourist behavior. For example, Aslan and Kozak (2012) summarized customers' deviance behaviors toward resort hotel employees through interviews. Through a cross-sectional comparative survey, Hughes et al. (2008) found that tourists who are young male, engaging in frequent drunkenness and drug use are more likely to engage in violence. Uriely et al. (2011) provided a theoretical understanding of deviant tourist behavior. The existing literature mainly concerns the negative impacts of deviant tourist behavior, the identification of possible reasons for it and prevention strategies. However, few studies have built or tested a theoretical

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framework to explain the internal mechanism of what drives deviant tourist behavior. The existing literature is mainly introductory, and an academic understanding of deviant tourist behavior remains limited.

Tourism has been viewed as a permissive domain that provides tourists with a new environment in which they can ignore daily norms and regulations to some extent (Turner & Ash, 1975). It has been argued that deviant behavior in tourism could be a way of expressing individuals' unconscious needs (Uriely et al., 2011). However, few studies have looked into the antecedences of deviant tourist behavior. For some tourists, tourism might be not only a leisure activity but also an unconscious need to satisfy their vanity because the travel experience allows them to show off in front of others (e.g., climbing sculptures or trees to take a photo from a better angle). Scholars have found that vanity could lead to unfavorable behaviors (e.g., Belk, 1983; Chang, Lu, Su, Lin, & Chang, 2011). Thus, tourists' need to satisfy their vanity could be one factor that leads to deviant tourist behavior.

However, vanity is just one personal psychological factor that underlies tourists' behavior. Vanity may just answer the question of what tourists want to do. The question of why tourists can do remains unclear. Tourists still need approaches to fulfill their needs for vanity and the prerequisite trigger of deviant tourist behavior remains unknown.

The approach/inhibition theory of power explains how power influences individuals' behavior (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003). According to this theory, people with elevated or high power will have more freedom to do what they want to do. On the contrary, people with little or no power will face more behavior restrictions. This theory has been widely used to explain undesirable behaviors. For example, elevated power could lead to more immoral behavior (Lammers, Stapel, & Galinsky, 2010). Thus, elevated power is needed for tourists to engage in deviant behavior. This is because when tourists have low power, their behavior is more restricted, and they are less likely to engage in deviant behavior. Thus, tourists' perception of elevated power provides an approach for them to satisfy their vanity.

Generally, tourists need to pay for a tour. Money is viewed as one type of power that could bring more freedom (Alford, 2003). It could generate a feeling of omnipotence (Goldberg & Lewis, 1978), which might bring about negative consequences (Lease, Kennedy, & Axelrod, 2002; Zhou, 2015). Moreover, scholars have testified that vanity is influential in consumers' behaviors (e.g., Huang, Lin, & Phau, 2015; Workman & Lee, 2013). Thus, tourists' sense of power that stems from spending money for a trip and tourists' vanity are two psychological incentives for deviant tourist behavior. The study will test the influence of tourists' perceptions of money as power and tourists' vanity on deviant tourist behavior. The research findings will contribute to the understanding of this phenomenon for both scholars and practitioners.

2. Theory and hypotheses

Scholars have argued that tourism is fertile ground for irrational and deviant behaviors because tourists are able to ignore customary rules (Turner & Ash, 1975; Wang, 2000). Uriely et al. (2011) introduced the perspective of psychodynamic sociology in explaining the phenomenon of deviant tourism behavior. They argued that individuals' unconscious drives could be explanations for sexuality and aggression in tourism. Existing theories about deviant tourist behavior contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon. However, it remains unclear what motivates a tourist to engage in deviant behaviors.

According to the approach/inhibition theory of power (Keltner et al., 2003), elevated power or high power will increase

individuals' freedom, which will lead to higher approach-related tendencies (e.g., disinhibited, trait-driven behavior). In contrast, reduced power or low power will increase individuals' social constraint and lead to inhibition-related tendencies (e.g., attention to threats, inhibited). DeCelles, DeRue, Margolis, and Ceranic (2012, p. 682) define power as 'a psychological state associated with perceiving control'. Power plays a vital role in social interactions and even the psychological experience of power can generate the feeling of freedom of to act (DeCelles et al., 2012; Galinsky, Magee, Inesi, & Gruenfeld, 2006). Thus, according to the approach/inhibition theory of power, there are some factors that imbue tourists with an elevated power to act more freely. Consequently, tourists with elevated power will be more likely to engage in deviant tourist behavior.

Tourists generally pay to enjoy a tour. Money has been found to be a valid factor in generating a feeling of power (e.g., Lea & Webley, 2006; Zaleskiewicz, Gasiorowska, Kesebir, Luszczynska, & Pyszczynski, 2013). Generally, it leads to negative behaviors (Lease et al., 2002; Zhou, 2015). Having spent money on a trip could generate a feeling of power to act freely during it. However, not all tourists indulge in acts of deviance even though they have paid, which indicates that together with power, there are other factors that motivate tourists' deviant behaviors.

Substantial research has shown that instead of shaping who you are, power reveals an individual's traits (Keltner et al., 2003; Overbeck & Park, 2001). This is supported by recent research. Through an interview of hotel employees, Aslan and Kozak (2012) found that customers' dissolute character and the idea that everything should be managed for them on vacation was an important reason for their deviance. For many tourists, taking a trip allows them not just to relax but also to express themselves. For example, some tourists create graffiti to express their thoughts, and some climb on sculptures or trees to take distinctive photos. Deviant behaviors such as these are ways to show off.

Belk (1983) found that vanity is associated with showing off, boasting and other vices. Vanity is an important personality trait that influences individuals' behaviors (e.g., Wang & Waller, 2006; Watchravesringkan, 2008). In the case of tourists, many types of deviant tourist behaviors show the influence of vanity. For example, some tourists will break regulations to take a photo or take away or damage something to keep as a souvenir. In that sense, tourism provides an environment for tourists to express their vanity. When tourists view money as power, a paid trip could provide them with a feeling of elevated power to act to fulfill their vanity, even through deviant behaviors. Consequently, this study argues that tourists' feeling of power that stems from their attitude toward money in addition to their vanity will lead to more deviant tourist behavior. In the following sections, the relationship between them will be further discussed.

2.1. Money and deviant tourist behavior

In society, money is not just a tool to facilitate exchange and commerce; it also possesses a type of power that could fulfill an individual's psychosocial needs (Lea & Webley, 2006; Zaleskiewicz et al., 2013). Money is a type of social resource (Zhou, Vohs, & Baumeister, 2009). It has power that could bring people access to specific opportunities or resources (Chaux & Castellanos, 2015; Zhou, 2015). It is also viewed as symbol of status and success (Ng, Tam, & Shu, 2011).

Money can strongly 'affect people's reactions toward matters related to money' (Lau, 1998, p. 298). Alford (2003) stated that money is essential to freedom. Money activates people's self-sufficient feelings (Vohs, Mead, & Goode, 2006), and such feelings could give people the confidence that their needs can be met and

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