Toward A Better Understanding Of Motivations For A Geotourism Experience: A Self-Determination Theory Perspective

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Abstract

This study provides an in depth investigation in to tourist's motivations and the relationship between these motivations and the behavioural intention of the tourists to revisit the geosite. A pilot test was conducted at Crystal Cave in Australia. It used a convenience sample of 100 tourists. The main findings of this pilot study were that relaxation, escape from the daily routine, sense of wonder were the major intrinsic motivations. Amotivation had a very weak mean. There was a positive correlation between intrinsic motivation and behavioural intention to revisit Crystal Cave. The outcome of this study will contribute in developing a survey which will distribute at pinnacles in Australia and Wadi Rum in Jordan.

Key words: Geotourism, Geosite, Self-determination theory (SDT)

Introduction

Geotourism is a new concept and most dictionaries do not offer the meaning of this term (Joyce, 2006). The geotourism literature is still scant. Recent developments in geotourism have heightened the need for such studies. The purpose of this study is to understand the different motivations behind the tourists undertaking the geotourism experience and to investigate the behavioural intention of the tourist revisit the geosite. Towards this task, one main research question has been raised: what are different types of motivation (intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation and amotivation) behind the tourists undertaking the geotourism experience and how do these motivation correlate with the desire to repeat visitation to the same geosite?

Literature review

The existing literature that relates to geotourism (Hose, 1995, 1998; Larood &Prosser, 1998; Buckley, 2003; Macadam, 2003; Xunand &Ting, 2004; Dowling and Newsome, 2006, 2009; Joyce, 2006; Reynard, 2007; Borozinski, 2009, Komoo et al, 2009) has only been carried out in a small number of areas. Notwithstanding the significance of these studies, they pay scant attention to the issue of why people travel to geosite. Despite the breadth of application of motivation theories in tourism literature, studies about motivations of tourists undertaking geotourism experience are uncommon. This study reflected an urgent need to bridge the lacuna in geotourism literature.

Therefore, the main objective of this paper is to report on the pilot study, which was conducted to test the survey tool, before distribution to tourists in the pinnacles, Crystal Caves and Wadi Rum.

Method

Sample size

The pilot study used a convenience sample of 100 domestic and international tourists. The pre-tested questionnaire was distributed to 100 tourists at Crystal Cave. The participants were aged 18 years old and above. The pre-tested questionnaire was carried out at the weekends in April and May in 2010.

Pre-tested questionnaire design

The design of the questionnaires was based on the main constructs of the self-determination theory. The intrinsic motivation (IM), the extrinsic motivation (EM), and the amotivation (AM). The total items included tourist motivations were adapted from the literature and were modified to be appropriate for the nature of geotourism. The researcher applied the behavioural intention battery (Zeithaml et al, 1996) to measure the behavioural intention of the tourists to revisit Crystal Cave.

Results

Tourist motivation

The mean of the intrinsic motivation has ranged from the lowest mean score (3.11) to the highest mean score (3.88) (Table 1). The main factors of the intrinsic motivation behind visiting Crystal Cave is relaxation (To relax and reset), sense of wonder (To explore new places). Cronbach's Alpha for the items of intrinsic motivation is (.831).

Table 1. The results of intrinsic motivation measurement

Measures	Mean	Standard deviation
Factor 1: Knowledge		
To learn new things	3.65	1.10
To increase my knowledge	3.63	1.13
Factor2:Relaxation		
To relax and rest	3.88	.988
To refresh my mental and physical state	3.11	1.19
Factor3: Escape		
To escape from the daily life routine	3.81	1.04
Factor4:Enjoyment		
It is exciting	3.75	1.08
To have fun	3.62	1.04
Factor 5: Friendship		
To meet people with similar interests and hobbies	2.48	1.04
To travel with friends and my family	3.52	1.12
Factor6:Sense of Wonder		
Because it is an exotic place	3.21	1.29
To explore new places	3.87	1.11

The mean score of the extrinsic motivation ranged from (2.15) to (3.16). The major factors of extrinsic motivation are the identified motivation (Because it has many social, cultural and recreational advantages for me (Because I believe it is personally important to me to travel to the site), and the interjected motivation (In my life I need this type of tourism activity to be happy). While the external regulation has the lowest mean score (Table 1). The Cronbach's Alpha for of the extrinsic motivation items is (.687).

Table 2. Results of the extrinsic motivation measurement

Measures	Mean	Standard deviation
Identified		
Because it has many social, cultural and recreational advantages for me	3.16	1.05
Because I believe it is personally important to me to travel to the site	2.73	1.17
Intorjected		
In my life I need this type of tourism activity to be happy	2.59	1.21
I must be occupied with activities	2.47	1.25
External regulation		
To show others that I am a distinct person	2.15	1.18
Because my family and friends tell me to do this activity	2.22	1.31

The three amotivation items show low means score which is ranged from (1.79) to (2.11). The Cronbach's Alpha for the three items of the amotivation is (.687).

Table 3. The results of amotivation measurement

Measures	Mean	Standard deviation
Not by choice; I don't care about this type of tourism activity	1.88	1.15
I don't really know; I don't think that this type of tourism suits me	2.11	1.28
Honestly, I don't know; I think that I wasted my time in this type of tourism activity	1.79	1.19

- The correlation between tourist motivation and behavioural intention to repeat visitation to crystal cave

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine whether there is a relationship between the tourists motivation and the behavioural intention to revisit Crystal Cave. The results showed a statistically significant positive relationship between the factors of intrinsic motivation (knowledge, relaxations, enjoyment, and sense of wonder) with the items of the loyalty and a statistically significant positive relationship between one of the factors of extrinsic motivation (identified). Whereas, the results revealed a weak correlation between the amotivation and loyalty. The correlation between switch items and factors of motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) are weak and negative and there is a weak correlation between motivations and pay more. External and internal responses are correlated positively with enjoyment factor and identified as an extrinsic factor.

Discussion

The results of this study showed that the major intrinsic motivation behind tourists undertaking a geotourism experience in Crystal Cave were the relaxation, escape from the bustle and hustle of the daily life, sense of wonder and gaining knowledge. This pilot study produced results which corroborate the findings of a great deal of the previous works in this field which have suggested that geotourism is a

combination of learning, education, appreciation and sense of wonder. For example Dowling and Newsome (2006) stressed that geotourism is “sense of wonder, appreciation and learning”. Hose (2008) argued that there are two major types of geotourists: recreational group and educational group. Joyce (2006) considered the geotourist as a normal visitor who is interested in one or more parts of geology.

Furthermore, the results of this pilot study indicated that there were no significant effects for the external regulations on the tourist motivation. Most of the tourists was expressed high intrinsic for of motivation with low amotivation. One source of weakness in this study which could have affected the measurements of amotivation was that tourists do not like to express their negative feelings toward their tourism experience because it is a sensitive issue. Additionally, the intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation correlated positively with the likelihood of revisiting the geosite. Therefore, the status quo of geotourism as a new form of tourism requires more focus on the repeat visitation. Whereas geotourism has existed for less than ten years, retaining the first time tourists or geotourists is more effective than spending huge cost for promoting geosites for new tourists,

Conclusion and recommendation

The outcomes of this pilot study provide a better understanding the tourist motivation and the correlation of the motivation with the behavioural intention to revisit the geosite. Several limitations to this study need to be acknowledged. Many tourists at Yanchep National Park visited the Park for recreation purposes without visiting the Crystal Cave. The entry for the Park is free and the tourist only needs to pay the parking fees, while the entry for Crystal Cave is $10 per Adults and $5 per children. The visit must be pre-booked and the tickets are available at the visitor centre. The Cave tour starts every an hour as following: 10.30am, 11.30am, 1pm, 2pm, and 3pm (DEC, 2010). Therefore, most of the tourists (particularly domestic) prefer to stay at the barbecue area and enjoy with the lakeside view without visiting Crystal Cave. Nevertheless, there are no serious missing values in this pilot study and they were managed by a listwise procedure.

Based on the results of the pre-tested questionnaire, a number of slightly changes need to be considered. Firstly, editorial changes must be made to the questionnaire. Secondly, modifying the fourth question in the first section (General information):

(My Nationality (ies) is (are)) to (My nationality is .....)

Because most of the respondents answered this question with only one nationality. Finally, the revised questionnaire will conduct at Wadi Rum in Jordan in July 2010 and Crystal Cave and Pinnacles in Australia in January 2011.

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