Understanding international tourists: A cultural intelligence perspective

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Abstract:
Using Chinese tourists as research objects this paper investigates how the ability of an individual to adapt to a certain culture might has influence on his or her revisit intention and willingness to introduce the destination to others. This paper introduces cultural intelligence to the tourism research and proposes a strong positive relationship between cultural intelligence, tourists’ revisit intention and electronic word-of-mouth, and regards tourists’ enjoyment and satisfaction as intermediates of such relationship. Moreover, this paper also proposes that tourists’ perceived peer influence has a moderating effect on tourists’ positive emotion and post consumption evaluation. To understand such relationships precisely this paper employs online survey for data collection and structural equation modelling for data analysis technique. The research outcome would make contribution on both the application of cultural intelligence theory and destination marketing and management.

Keywords: Cultural intelligence, Revisit intention, Electronic word-of-mouth

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Introduction and Research Aim

Tourists’ revisit intention and E-WOM are two important dimensions of destination loyalty and therefore essence for the long-term and sustainable tourism industry growth (Kastenholz, 2004). As a result, plenty of researches studied this field from analysing effect of different destination attributes on tourists’ revisit intention and E-WOM through satisfaction, image and experiences etc. (e.g., Li, Cai, Lehto & Huang, 2010; Liang, Ekinci, Occhiocupo & Whyatt, 2013). As illustrated, most of previous studies put emphasis on different destination attributes, but the effect of travellers’ capacity to adjust to different cultures on their intention to revisit and recommend was merely investigated. Furthermore, most previous studies paid much attention on tourists themselves, while potential influences from fellow travellers, also known as “perceived peer influence” which being proved has significant moderating effect on objects’ behaviours (Childers & Rao, 1992), are still required to be uncovered. To fill such research gaps, therefore, this paper will introduce the concept “cultural intelligence”, which refers to the competencies of an individual to effectively adapt to different cultures (Earley, 2002), and detect its effect on Chinese visitors’ revisit intention and electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM), and the moderating effect of perceived peer influence as well.

How cultural intelligence has impacts on tourists’ revisit intention and their E-WOM? This paper explores it from several perspectives: (1) The influence of cultural intelligence on tourists’ enjoyment, (2) The influence of cultural intelligence on tourists’ satisfaction, and (3) The moderating effect of tourists’ perceived peer influence. Specifically, this paper regards tourists’ enjoyment as positive emotions in line with Mitas and Bastiaansen’s work in 2018 and proposes tourists who adapt to the destination’s culture better might enjoy the trip more. Moreover, despite tourist satisfaction was proved influenced by many destination attributes (e.g., Eusébio & Vieira, 2011), this paper follows the research consensus on measuring tourist satisfaction at an aggregated level (Prayag, Hosany, Muskat & Del Chiappa, 2016) and proposes tourists who are more familiar with the local culture obtain a higher overall satisfaction. In addition, such two relationships discussed above are assumed being moderated by tourists’ perceived level of cultural intelligence of their travel partners. Finally, this paper proposes tourists’ revisit intention and E-WOM are therefore being positively influenced. In sum, this paper also has potential to extend the application of cultural intelligence to tourism research and provide with destination marketing and management suggestions.

The aim of this study is:
To reveal the effect of tourists’ culture intelligence on their revisit intention and E-WOM.

Three research questions in line with this aim are shown below:
RQ1: How tourists’ cultural intelligence influences their revisit intention and E-WOM?
RQ2: Are tourists’ enjoyment and satisfaction directly subjected to their cultural intelligence?
RQ3: Will tourists’ perceived peer influence moderate their enjoyment and satisfaction?

The conceptual model is subsequently built and shown below.

![Conceptual model](image-url)
Methodology
This research will employ the quantitative methods due to the nature of the research realm. The data collection is still ongoing and expected to be finished by October 2019. Data will be collected via the online survey methodology and analyzed via the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) on the purpose of uncovering the relationship between dependent and independent variables in the conceptual framework (Hair, Sarstedt, Ringle & Mena, 2012). In this research, the non-probability convenience sampling is found suitable due to which is cost and time effectiveness and could make easier to reach the respondents. The target sample involves adult Chinese tourists who has been travelled abroad in last 5 years. The online questionnaire will be distributed through some Chinese mainstream social media applications including WeChat and Weibo due to both have a lot of users. In order to ensure the effectiveness of and rigor in this research, the sample size should go beyond 400, and the exploratory factor analysis will be applied to test the relationship between different variables. In addition, a pre-test will be conducted before the formal data collection and the questionnaire might also be revised based on the pre-test outcome. Finally, the Amos software will be employed to analyze the collected data and research outcome will then be discussed.

Implications for Theory and Practice
Although this study is not completed yet, it is expected to make contributions to theory and practice from several perspectives. In terms of theory implication, one of the major potential contributions of this research is introducing cultural intelligence to tourism research, especially to understand tourists’ intention to revisit and recommend. The application scope of most previous cultural intelligence studies (e.g., Holtbrügge & Engelhard, 2016; Presbitero & Quita, 2017) was generally confined to international expatriation and education success, and the number of related researches on tourism is very limited. In addition, this research is expected to support the existed well-established relationship between tourists’ positive emotion and their revisit intention and E-WOM. Furthermore, this research also has potential to prove the moderating effect of perceived peer influence on not only objects’ behaviours, as many previous studies indicated (e.g., Hoffman, Monge, Chou & Valente, 2007; Trucco, Colder & Wieczorek, 2011), but also on their emotions and appraisal of experiences.

In terms of managerial implication, this research is expected to define the importance of cultural intelligence on tourists’ outcome behaviours, which means marketers and managers of destinations could strengthen visitors’ attachment and attract more travellers by improving travellers’ cultural intelligence via marketing techniques. For example, tour guides can introduce tourists more about local culture, customs and social conditions, and teach visitors some simple daily languages and encourage them to communicate with the locals as well. In addition, most destinations or tourism countries tried to advertise themselves by introducing their natural sceneries and environmental resources, and this paper is expected to uncover the importance of cultural intelligence and suggests marketers to put more emphasis on local culture advertising. Moreover, this research will also suggest marketers to improve visitors’ experiences with their cultural experiences by providing more cultural tourism products which includes attracting travellers to visit local shops, restaurants and museums to increase tourists’ cross-cultural involvement. Furthermore, this paper also suggests that for better and more comprehensive visitors’ cultural experiences, marketers could launch more countryside travel programs for travellers’ cultural intelligence improvement.
References


