



Feature Article

Tourism meets psychology

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Psychological frameworks and tourism

“Why do people travel?” The reasons for travel vary widely. Imagine a family that plans to travel during a summer vacation. The father, who is addicted to samurai dramas, might want to visit the Edo wonderland of Nikko Edomura or Toei Kyoto Studio Park (Toei Uzumasa Eigamura). The mother is busy with housework, parenting, and work, and she might prefer to relax in hot spring resorts. The sister might want to visit Tokyo Disney Resort, and the brother might want to enjoy a barbecue on a camping trip.

What determines tourists’ decision-making behavior varies significantly. Demographic factors, such as tourists’ age, sex, occupation, or income, are traditionally used to investigate tourists’ decisions on where they prefer to go or what they will do there. Additionally, psychological factors have been recently recognized as determinants of tourists’ decision-making behavior. This article incorporates psychological theories and frameworks to investigate tourists’ decision-making behavior, and recent studies and cases are introduced.

Why people travel: Behaviors and motivation

It has been suggested that investigating the desire to travel is important in understanding and developing the tourism market [Maeda, 1995; Oguchi, 2006, Sasaki, 2000]. Tourism research and people who work in the tourism industry have raised concerns about the framework for investigating the desire to travel.

Motivation is required to act, and this theory applies not just to tourist behavior. Motivation is defined as psychological energy that generates an action toward a certain goal and maintains it until the goal is achieved. Imagine someone who must study to pass important job promotion examinations. If he/she is energized and has sufficient motivation, he/she will study intensely and might pass the exam. If his/her motivation is impaired for some reason, for example, if the examination is too difficult or if his/her favorite musician’s concert is scheduled just before the examination, although the person initially had sufficient motivation, he/she will not study and might fail the exam. A similar concept is involved in understanding travel; if

individuals have sufficient motivation to travel, then they will travel. However, if their motivation is impaired by obstructive factors such as lack of money, time, traveling companions, or attractive destinations, people will abandon travel.

Two types of factors generate motivation: pull and push factors. The pull factor, or incentive, is an exogenous force that satisfies internal desire. The push factor, or an intrinsic factor, is an intrinsic desire. For example, pull factors such as aromas and push factors such as hunger trigger a motivation to eat something.

What makes people travel: Pull factors

The pull factors for travel are described as the factors that motivate people to decide where they would like to go, for example, “I want to go to Guam to play marine sports,” “I want to watch premier league games in England,” or “I want to go to Peru to see the historic sanctuary of Machu Picchu.” Marine sport resorts, premier league games, and Machu Picchu are the strong pull factors in these instances.

Hudman and Hawkins [1989] mention twelve components of travel destinations’ attractiveness, as noted in Table 1:

Desire to travel: Push factors

The push factors for travel are described as the psychological factors that shape someone’s notion of living activities and induce the desire to travel.

Basho Matsuo, a famous haiku poet who lived in the Edo period, mentioned “I seemed to be possessed by the spirits of wanderlust, and they all but deprived me of my senses. The guardian spirits of the road beckoned, and I could not settle down to work” in his work, “*Oku no Hosomichi*”, which was translated into English as “*The narrow road to Oku*” by Donald Keene [2007]. “*The spirits of wanderlust*” is described as “*Sozrogami*” in Japanese and it is a god that possesses people and lures them in some vague way. “The guardian spirits of the road” is described as “*Dosojin*” in Japanese and it is a god that exists by the roadside, such as on mountain paths and crossroads, and prevents evil spirits and disease; people at the time professed *Dosojin* as a god of safe travels. It is easy to imagine

Table 1: Components of travel destinations' attractiveness

Components	Items
Buildings and their Surroundings	Buildings and craftwork, ranging from ancient civilization to modern society Example: Historical architecture, monuments of historical events or famous persons
Cultural Activities	Example: Artistic events, music, performing arts
Religion	Example: Temples, shrines, churches
Politics	Process of political matters
Science	Scientific technology Example: Linear motor cars, space centers
Nature	Example: Natural parks, mountains, rivers
Climate	Example: Summer retreats, winter resorts
Landscapes	Geological formations and plant life Example: Autumnal leaf coloration, deserts
Outdoor Life	Example: Animal watching, hunting, fishing
Outdoor Recreation	Example: Watching sports, outdoor events
Entertainment	Example: Theme parks, theaters, gambling, food
Health	Example: Hot springs

that travel at that time might carry too much risk and difficulty because there was no convenient transportation or sufficient lodging. Nevertheless, Basho Matsuo embarked on his trip, driven by a strong desire. It is natural for people to have instinctual desires to travel.

Two main push factors exist: novelty seeking and escaping/relaxing (Figure 1). Novelty seeking is a desire to seek novel and uncommon experiences during travel. Escaping/relaxing refers to the desire to relax and rest. Though this classification is simple and somewhat unrefined, it gets straight to the point of the desire to travel. Gray [1970] classified tourists into two categories: Those who seek “wanderlust,” that is, those who want to soak in the culture and explore the different environments of the destination, to seek novel, uncommon experiences, and gain new knowledge. The other is those who seek “sunlust,” that is, those who want to relax physically and psychologically and escape from their stressful daily lives. “Wanderlust” might involve a strong desire to seek novelty, and “sunlust” might involve a strong desire to escape/relax.

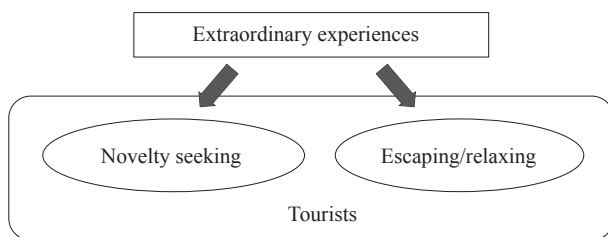


Figure 1: Two push factor categories

How to assess tourists' motivation

It is essential for both tourism research and those who work in

the tourism industry to systematically understand tourists' motivation and desires. However, methodological intractability is needed to assess tourists' motivation and desires. People's reasons for traveling, as mentioned earlier, vary widely. It is also difficult to assume that people travel for only one purpose. Tourists have multiple motives to travel and behave to satisfy these motives.

Pearce [2005] developed a scale to assess tourists' motivation and desires. He gathered 143 items from literature related to tourists' motivation and desires and extracted 74 motivational items. To verify the scale, he conducted a survey on tourists in northern Australia and extracted 14 travel factors, as shown in Table 2. Based on his research, “novelty,” “escape/relax,” and “relationship strengthening” are common and basic tourist motives.

Sasaki [2000] also summarized five factors for tourists' motives: (1) to relieve many daily tensions and frustrations, (2) to do something fun, (3) to enhance a personal relationship, (4) to build a wealth of knowledge, and (5) to become more than one was before.

Several studies point out the push factors in each approach: (1) to relieve frustrations that are experienced every day, (2) to have novel experiences, (3) to enhance personal relationships, and (4) to grow mentally and intellectually. Tourists are driven to travel by one or multiple push factors.

Table 2: Tourist motivations extracted by Pearce [2005]

Factors	Motive items
Novelty	Having fun. Experiencing something different.
Escape/Relax	Resting and relaxing. Getting away from everyday psychological stress/pressure.
Relationship Strengthening	Doing things with my companions. Doing something with my family/friend(s).
Autonomy	Being independent. Being obligated to no one.
Nature	Viewing the scenery. Being close to nature.
Self-Development	Learning new things. Experiencing different cultures.
Stimulation	Exploring the unknown. Feeling excitement.
Personal Development	Develop my personal interests. Knowing what I am capable of.
Relationship Security	Feeling personally safe and secure. Being with respectful people.
Self-Actualization	Gaining a new perspective on life. Feeling inner harmony/peace.
Isolation	Experiencing peace and calm. Avoiding interpersonal stress and pressure.
Nostalgia	Thinking about good times I've had in the past. Reflecting on past memories.
Romance	Having romantic relationships. Being with people of the opposite sex.
Recognition	Sharing skill and knowledge with others. Showing others I can do it.

Tourism and mental health

Mental health tourism is a current trend and challenge that tourism and psychology collaborate towards. Travel’s most common purpose, as mentioned above, involves relieving frustrations that are experienced every day. Furthermore, those who proactively engage in tourism tend to be physically and mentally healthy. “Mental health tourism” focuses on mental wellness and aims to reduce participants’ negative mood and increase their positive mood. When people experience a positive mood during travel, they sometimes encounter flow experiences. It is suggested that those in flow experiences improve their attention and concentration and become more creative and productive [Oguchi, 2015].

People are increasingly attentive to mental health tourism because of a variety of modern social factors: repentance for mass tourism problems, mass tourism dissatisfaction, a greater diversity of values, changes in the concept of health, and the impact of social issues.

Unfortunately, a number of people have emotional and mental problems. Figure 2 illustrates the number of patients who suffer from mental illness, based on a patient survey conducted by the Japan Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. The number of patients is expected to increase by 50 % of the number in 1996. The number of patients with depression is especially remarkable and is twice the number from 1996. Thus, people are increasingly attentive to mental health and mental health tourism.

Case study on mental health tourism

Mental health tourism is closely associated with nature. Forest therapy [Ohe, 2015] and thalassotherapy [Arakawa, 2015] are well-known forms of mental health tourism.

This section discusses forest therapy in the Okutama area. The idea that forests and greenery have a positive effect on mental wellness is well known and is called “forest bathing.” Researchers are trying to scientifically explain why and how forests and greenery have a positive effect on mental wellness, and to apply the findings to programs and activities that improve tourists’ mental health.

The NPO Forest Therapy Society designates forests as “forest therapy bases” and “forest therapy roads” after verifying its healing effects by physiological, psychological, and physical experiments. The forest therapy society requires applicants to complete a documentary examination and both physiological and psychological experiments. The documentary examination assesses the natural condition, the environmental condition, and the establishment. The physiological experiment assesses such psychological indicators as heart rate, blood pressure, and heartbeat, both in the forest and in the city over multiple days. The psychological indicators include subjective well-being, and stress and relaxation levels.

The psychological relaxation effect is detected in forests in Japan. Forest therapy reduces cortisol, blood pressure levels, and heart rate; promotes parasympathetic nerve activity; decreases sympathetic nerve activity; and calms prefrontal cortex activity [Park et al., 2011]. Forest therapy for three days and two nights has been proven to improve immune function [Park et al., 2007]. Also, the subjective symptoms, which were measured using a shortened version of the profile of mood states (POMS), improved and continued for 5 days [Ikei et al., 2015].

Figures 3-6 illustrate the forest therapy program and activities in the Okutama area. Okutama is in Tokyo, approximately two hours from the city’s center. All areas in Okutama are part of the Chichibu-Tama-Kai National Park. Approximately 94 % of its administrative area is forest, and it is known as the city with the highest number of large trees in Japan. The Okutama area is a precious resource for Tokyo, with many remaining natural areas.

Measures to eliminate the stagnation in Okutama’s tourism industry and the attrition of young people were examined in the area’s 2004 long-term comprehensive development plan. As a result of this plan, Okutama decided to utilize its resources, nature, and forests for regional development and began to promote forest therapy there.

Five therapy roads exist as of June 2016: the Okutama Ikoji roads; the Kaori roads; the Okutama Mukashi roads; the Kawanoriyama-Hyakuhirotaki nature trip; and the Hatonosukei-

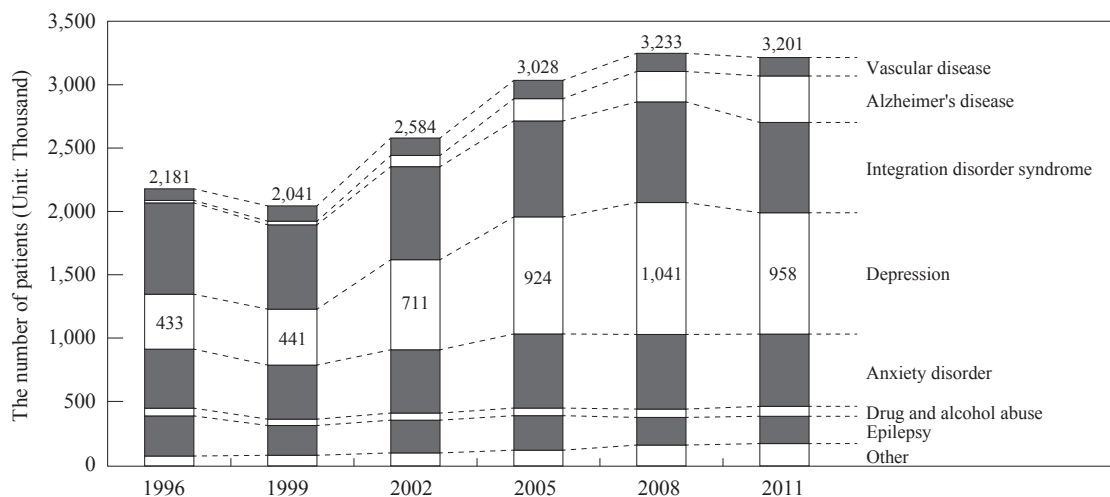


Figure 2 The number of patients with mental illness.



Figure 3: Walking on the therapy road



Figure 4: Woodchips on the therapy road



Figure 5 Bathing in the sun



Figure 6: Rest spot on the therapy road

roku nature trail. Okutama forest therapy assistants attend to the tourists during the guide walk. The tourists walk slowly, and immerse themselves in their senses.

Conclusion

It is difficult to answer the initial question “Why do people travel?” As mentioned above, the reasons for travel vary among people. Psychology offers research that shows and investigates some determinants of tourists’ decision-making behavior. Several studies highlight the push factors: 1) to relieve everyday frustrations, 2) to have novel experiences, 3) to enhance personal relationships, and 4) to grow mentally and intellectually. Tourists are driven to travel by one or multiple push factors.

Furthermore, one of the latest trends and challenges that tourism and psychology collaborate for is mental health tourism. Those who proactively engage in tourism tend to be physically and mentally healthy. “Mental health tourism” focuses on mental wellness, and aims to reduce participants’ negative mood and increase their positive mood. The author believes that tourism’s psychological aspects should receive more attention in the future.

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