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Lan-Lan Chang

*Department of Park, Recreation and Tourism Management Clemson University*

Kenneth F. Backman

*Department of Park, Recreation and Tourism Management Clemson University*

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Chang, Lan-Lan and Backman, Kenneth F., "An Investigation of Creative Tourists' Experience and Revisit Intention" (2016). *Tourism Travel and Research Association: Advancing Tourism Research Globally*. 23.

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## **An Investigation of Creative Tourists' Experience and Revisit Intention**

Lan-Lan Chang  
Department of Park, Recreation and Tourism Management  
Clemson University

and

Kenneth F. Backman  
Department of Park, Recreation and Tourism Management  
Clemson University

### **ABSTRACT**

*As Richards (2008) asserted, creative tourism is a new form of tourism that has the potential to change tourism development and make a significant contribution in differentiating and changing the tourism experience. Reviewing current literature, despite increased attention being given to the conception of creative tourism, there has been little empirical work focused on the tourists' consumption psychology of creative tourism. Thus, this study attempts to reveal tourists' intention to revisit creative tourism destinations by applying the theory of planned behavior, to explore tourists' experience on visiting creative tourism destinations and to explain the relationship between tourists' experience and intention to revisit creative tourism destinations. The findings of this study will benefit tourism business managers the in ensuing thematic characteristics planning and designing of their product to fit the preferences of target markets, and they will benefit marketing strategy planning and targeted consumer recognition as well.*

**Keywords:** *tourists' experience, revisit intention, theory of planned behavior, creative tourism*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Cultural tourism is one of the main trends in the global tourism market and is viewed as a thriving industry. As the World Tourism Organization reported in 2004, cultural tourism has become one of the largest and fastest growing parts of global tourism and is still seen as one of the major growth areas for the future. However, growing competition is making it more difficult to succeed by developing undifferentiated cultural products (Richard, 2002). Furthermore, contemporary tourists are becoming more active and looking to involve new experiences and want to have holiday experiences that will change them rather than simply filling them with loose experiences (Richards, 2001). As Poussin (2008) pointed out, tourists look for authenticity and unique experiences and hope to have a better understanding of the place or country visited. In addition, Godbey (2008) observed that "the act of tourism for such travelers is always moving toward something, rather than away from something. They seek the beautiful, the unique, and the authentic" (Cited from Wurzburger, 2009: 19).

From the descriptions in the literature, it is clear that cultural tourism needs to have more interactivity and creativity to ensure an authentic experience which will satisfy the needs and wants of contemporary consumers. As Smith (1998) mentioned, “the idea of culture as the main attraction for visitors is rapidly giving way to the idea that creativity is what counts” (Cited from Richards 2001: 64). Early connections between tourism and creativity were made through evaluations of creative activities, such as consuming creative performances or craft products while visiting destinations (Zeppel & Hall, 1992). Until now, creativity has been relocated in tourism studies “from a narrow market niche related mainly to the arts and craft products into a much broader phenomenon which touches a wide range of tourism activities” (Richards, 2011: 1236). In 2000, Richards and Raymond coined the term, creative tourism and defined it as “tourism, which offers visitors the opportunity to develop their creative potential through active participation in learning experiences which are characteristic of the holiday destination where they are undertaken” (Richard, 2003: 65). As Richards (2008) contended, creative tourism is a new form of tourism that has the potential to change tourism development and make a significant contribution in differentiating and changing the tourism experience. Compared to other traditional forms of cultural tourism; creative tourism appears to meet the needs of tourists wishing to develop a more active and longer lasting form of experience (Richards, 2006).

The concept of combining culture and creativity to develop tourism has become a popular trend throughout the world. Currently, because creative tourism is viewed as a new direction, a strategy to be followed by cities and areas in search for growth, and a potentially helpful way to promote the local economy through cultural development, many countries and places in the world are developing different forms of creative tourism as part of their broader development strategies (Richards, 2009). For example, tourists can experience traditional craft-making or take language classes in New Zealand, take part in perfume-making in France, experience painting, drawing, sculpture, and carving in Canada, participate in the folk music of Mexico, etc.

Since the creative tourism market has shown an increasing trend, it is crucial for researchers and managers to understand the consumption psychology of tourists when they engage in creative tourism. Reviewing current literature, and despite increased attention being given to the conception of creative tourism, there has been little empirical work focused on the tourists’ consumption psychology of creative tourism. In other words, in order to develop products and provide services which actually meet their needs and wants, there is still a need to explore and examine tourists’ consumption psychology when they visit creative tourism destinations.

### **Revisit intention**

Explaining and predicting human behavior is the main purpose of consumer behavior studies. However, it is a complex and difficult task. The desires and needs of consumers vary and change constantly with different outlooks. For tourism proprietors, how to fully understand the purchasing behaviors of tourists and predict their future purchasing intentions is one of the main crucial tasks. As Ajzen & Driver (1992) pointed out, having a better predictive technique and explanation of tourists’ intention may be helpful in understanding their behavior. According to a study by Wang (2004), the cost in attracting repeat visitors is less than new customers. In addition, compared with first-time visitors, repeat visitors tend to spend more (Lehto,

O'Leary, & Morrison, 2004) and stay longer (Wang, 2004). Thus, in order to sustain competitiveness, designing a memorable experience to attract tourists to revisit their destination year after year should be a key mission and significant measure for managers. Over the past few decades, a number of studies had applied or extended the theory of planned behavior to predict and explain tourists' intentions to engage in diverse types of tourism or visit different destinations. Most of studies found supported that the theory of planned behavior can advance our understanding of tourists' intention and travel behavior. However, there is still lacking a body of research to reveal tourists' intention to revisit creative tourism destination which applies the theory of planned behavior.

### **Theory of planned behavior**

Over the past few decades, a number of theories have been developed and tested in different contexts for understanding human behavior. Ajzen (2002) claimed that the theory of planned behavior is one of most influential and popular conceptual frameworks to study human behavior. The theory of planned behavior was initially proposed by Ajzen in 1999, and it has received great attention in the literature. For example, the literature reveals that the theory of planned behavior has been cited in 18,475 studies as of Jan. 6, 2012 by searching in Google Scholar. In the same way, the theory of planned behavior has been listed as a key phrase by 1,099 dissertations or theses and 353 articles. The theory of planned behavior has been applied into different topics and supported by most studies which applied the theory such as leisure (Ajzen & Driver, 1992; Hrubes & Ajzen, 2001; Pierro, Mannetti, & Livi, 2003; Latimer, et al., 2005; Chatzisarantis & Biddle, 1998), tourism (Han, et al., 2011; Greenslade & White, 2005; Lam & Hus, 2006), therapeutic recreation (Galea & Bray, 2006), health behavior (Conner, et al., 2002), consumer behavior (Pavlou & Fygenson, 2006; Kassem, et al., 2003), etc.

The theory of planned behavior is an extension of the theory of reasoned action introduced by Fishbein & Ajzen in 1975. Both theories were rooted in the social psychology field and used to explain informational and motivational influences on behavior (Conner & Armitage, 1998). Like the theory of reasoned action, the concept of intention to perform a given behavior is central to the theory of planned behavior. In the theory of planned behavior, people's intentions can predict his/ her behavioral performance. Intentions are "assumed to capture the motivational factors that influence a behavior; they are indications of how hard people are willing to try, or how much of an effort they are planning to exert, in order to perform the behavior" (Ajzen, 1991: 181). A behavioral intention can best be elucidated as an intention for planning to perform a certain behavior (Ajzen, 2002). Generally speaking, when people have a stronger intention to engage in a behavior, they are more likely to perform the behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The link between intention and behavior is the reflection that people tend to engage in behaviors they intend to perform. As Doll and Ajzen (1992) indicated, when people have complete control over behavioral performance, intention should be sufficient to predict behavior.

According to the theory of planned behavior, an individual's intention is determined by three conceptually independent predictors: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control toward a specific behavior (see Figure 2.1). In combination, attitude, subjective norms, and perception of behavioral control toward a

specific behavior lead to the establishment of a behavioral intention (Ajzen, 2006). The first predictor, attitude, is a person's behavioral beliefs and positive or negative evaluation of the behavior in question (Latimer & Martin Ginis, 2005). Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) defined attitude as "a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object" (p. 6). As Rhodes, et al. (2006) mentioned, attitude has a main effect on the predictability of exercise intentions and behavior. However, Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) claimed that attitude alone is hard to predict a behavior; it should aggregate with other variables. The second predictor, subjective norms, is function of normative beliefs, which means the perceived social pressure to perform the behavior or not (Ajzen, 1991). As Ajzen (2002) pointed out, a person's perceptions toward a specific behavior is influenced by pressure groups. Thus, there should be a need to understand how subjective norms play an important role in a person's behavioral decision.

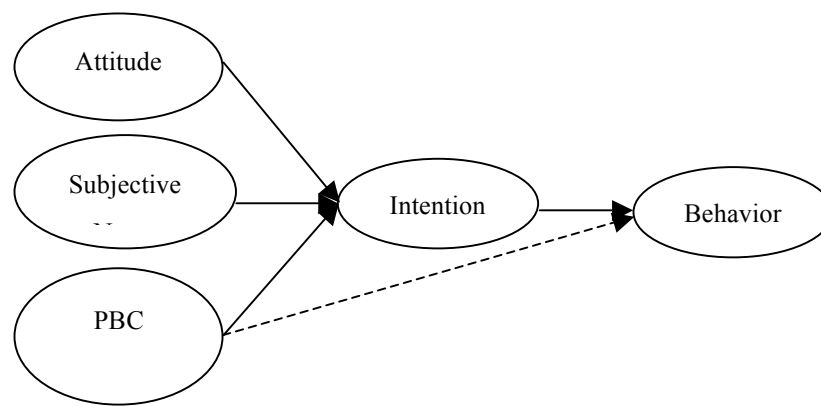


Figure 2.1 The theory of planned behavior

The last predictor influencing an individual's intention is perceived behavioral control (PBC), which is the difference between the theory of reasoned action and the theory of planned behavior. Perceived behavioral control means the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior is assumed to reflect past experience as well as anticipated impediments and obstacles (Ajzen, 1991). The theory of planned behavior is expanded from the theory of reasoned action by adding this concept. Hausenblas et al. (1997) applied the theory of reasoned action and the theory of planned behavior to exercise behavior and concluded that the theory of planned behavior is more useful than the other one. Thus, we can say that perceived behavioral control really plays an important part in the theory of planned behavior. According to the theory of planned behavior, perceived behavioral control and behavioral intention can be used directly to predict behavioral achievement; however, the relative importance of intention and perceived behavioral control in the prediction of behavior is expected to differ in various situations and behaviors (Ajzen & Driver, 1992). As a general rule according to the theory of planned behavior, the more favorable the attitude and subjective norm with respect to a behavior, and the greater the perceived behavioral control, the stronger should be an individual's intention to perform the behavior under consideration (Ajzen, 1991).

## **Tourist experience**

Research into tourists' experiences during a trip has mainly been concerned with visiting, seeing, learning, enjoying and living in different lifestyles (Stamboulis & Skayannis, 2003) and has been deemed a crucial construct in travel and tourism research (Oh et al., 2007). Since Pine & Gilmore coined the term "experience economy" in 1998, there have been an increasing number of studies looking into experiences (Quan & Wang, 2004; Anderson, 2010) which are dedicated to the understanding of the diversity of consumer experiences in tourism research domains, such as food experience in tourism (Quan & Wang, 2004), wildlife viewing experience (Anderson, 2010), tourist experience within cruise vacations (Hosany & Witham 2010), festival visitor experience (Cole and Chancellor, 2009), and tourist experience of sporting events (Chen & Funk, 2010), etc.

In addition, tourist experience is also one of influencing factors for tourists' revisit intentions. As Petrick, Morais, & Norman (2001) pointed out, if people are satisfied and have a positive experience during an activity, then they are more likely to repeat it. In the same way, Gnoth (1997) mentioned that emotional reactions to the tourism experience are essential determinants of post-consumption behaviors such as intention to recommend. Reviewing current literature in tourism, the relationship between tourists' experience and revisit intention has been explored by many studies (Cole & Chancellor, 2009; Hosany & Witham, 2010; Hsu & Crotts, 2006; Chen & Funk, 2010; Oh et al., 2007). Most of the studies found that tourists' experience and their revisit intentions are positively related. For example, Hosany and Witham (2010) explored cruisers' experiences by applying the four realms of consumer experiences identified by Pine and Gilmore (1998) and investigated the relationships among cruisers' experiences, satisfaction, and intention to recommend. In their results, they found that all the four dimensions of cruisers' experiences are significant and positively related to their intention to recommend, and they suggested that cruise management professionals created pleasant and memorable experiences that can motivate stronger behavioral intentions among passengers. Also, Lee et al. (2005) reported that people with a positive destination image would perceive their on-site experiences positively, which may lead to greater behavioral intentions. In the same way, Weed (2005) pointed out that sporting event participants who enjoy their sport tourism experience would likely repeat the experience in the future. Thus, as reflected in the literature described above, tourist experience is expected in the present study to be positively related with revisit intention.

Reviewing the current literature, there appears a lacking of research which explores tourists' experiences when they visit creative tourism destinations and exploring the relationship between tourists' experience during the visit to creative tourism destinations as well as their revisit intention. Thus, in order to explain and predict tourists' future behavior with regard to visiting creative tourism destinations, this study attempts to reveal tourists' intention to revisit creative tourism destinations. This is accomplished by applying the theory of planned behavior, to explore tourists' experience visiting creative tourism attractions and to explain the relationship between tourists' experience and intention to revisit creative tourism attractions. The findings of this study will benefit tourism business managers in ensuing thematic characteristics for planning and designing of their product to fit the preferences of

target markets, and the results will also, benefit development of marketing strategy, planning and targeting of consumers.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Data collection procedure**

Since accurate data about the population in these creative tourism destinations is not available, the sample in this study will be collected via an on-site survey. In order to survey a maximum number of visitors over a relatively small period of time, a self-administrated questionnaire will be distributed to participants who are selected at the exit of the main gate of the study areas. A limitation of this type of survey may involve self-selection biases because it involves a non-probability sampling method. However, it is at the researchers' discretion to determine who will be the most useful and representative, so it is deemed a useful method for researchers to do the sampling (Babbie, 2010). In addition, with the intention of collecting a representative sample of creative tourism tourists, the on-site survey will be conducted on both weekdays and weekends. Before doing the questionnaire, the researchers explained and outlined the purpose of the study to the participants. After getting approval, the self-administrated questionnaire was given to each participant. To minimize sample homogeneity, this study only chooses one member from every family group to be interviewed. All subjects were selected based on their willingness to volunteer their personal information on site and who were 18 years and older.

### **Variable measurement**

Variables in this study are measured using multiple items which were adapted from prior studies. In 1999, Pine and Gilmore offered the concept of experience economy as a framework to understand and evaluate experiential consumption. Drawing from that, Oh, Fiore, and Jeoung (2007) developed the 4E tourist experience measurement scales and tested the validity and reliability of the four scales in their study. In the results, they provided empirical evidence for both face and nomological validities of these four scales and pointed out that each scale had Cronbach's alpha coefficients above 0.77. Their conclusion was that their measurement scales can provide a platform for future research applications in various tourism settings, and accordingly there are several studies which have used these four scales to explore tourist experience and have demonstrated their usefulness in a diverse arena ranging from cruiser tourism (Hosany & Witham, 2010) to eagle watching (Anderson, 2010). Thus, this study used Oh, Fiore, and Jeoung's (2007) 4E tourist experience measurement scales to measure creative tourists' experiences. Twenty four experience economy items are included in these four tourist experience scales, 6 items for each dimension. Respondents were asked to indicate their opinions by checking the appropriate response to the questionnaire items using a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. The details of the question items are as follows.

Based on a review of the literature, there is no standard questionnaire for the theory of planned behavior. The questionnaire in this study was adopted from existing literature (Ajzen & Driver, 1992; Lam & Hsu, 2006; Lai et al., 2010; Petrick &

Backman, 2002). The description of the question items was slightly modified to be appropriate for this study. The tourists' attitudes associated with the creative tourism destination is measured by four items ranging from strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 7 based on previous studies (Ajzen & Driver, 1992; Lam & Hsu, 2006; Lai et al., 2010). The tourists' subjective norms and perceived behavioral control associated with the creative tourism destination are operationalized by five and three items ranging from strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 7, based on previous studies (Ajzen & Driver, 1992; Lam & Hsu, 2006; Lai et al., 2010). In addition, the tourists' revisit intentions associated with the creative tourism destination also is operationalized by two items ranging from strongly low = 1 to strongly high = 7, based on previous studies (Ajzen & Driver, 1992; Petrick & Backman, 2002).

## ANTICIPATED RESULTS

Success requires a better understanding of the likes and wants of customers. This study attempts to reveal tourists' intention to revisit creative tourism destinations by applying the theory of planned behavior, and to explore tourists' experience on visiting creative tourism destinations as well to explain the relationship between tourists' experience and intention to revisit creative tourism destinations. The primary expected results of this study are likely to be: (1) there is a positive relationship between tourists' experience and intention to revisit creative tourism destinations which means tourists' experience is an influencing factor on their intention to revisit creative tourism destinations; (2) the theory of planned behavior can be used to advance our understanding of tourists' intention to revisit creative tourism destination. The findings of this study will benefit tourism business managers in ensuing thematic characteristics planning and designing their products to fit the preferences of target markets, and will benefit marketing strategy planning and targeting consumers.

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