

IMPACT OF EXTRAVERSION AND SENSATION SEEKING ON INTERNATIONAL TOURISM CHOICES

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Tourism is a leisure-related social activity. People always choose their desired tourism destinations and types according to their interests, intentions, and preferences. This means that personality influences tourism consumers' behavior. We examined the impact of extraversion and sensation seeking on international tourism choices, based on data obtained from a large-scale survey of Taiwanese nationals aged 20 years and older. The results of our analysis confirmed the research hypotheses, that when compared to people with no international tourism experience, those with international tourism experience tend to have higher levels of extraversion and sensation seeking.

Keywords: extraversion, international tourism, personality traits, sensation seeking, Taiwan.

Personality can be defined as *an individual's enduring pattern of thoughts, emotions, and behavior occurring in different environments* (Hogan, 1987). This definition shows that personality is structuralized and organized, is able to express the differences between people, and, furthermore, is able to influence behavior. Of the various perspectives from diverse discourses on personality, trait theory is more frequently used in leisure studies (Mannell & Kleiber, 1997). It has been confirmed in numerous studies that, based on personality trait theory, people's leisure preferences and activities choices are influenced by their unique personality traits (Barnett & Klitzing, 2006; Hills & Argyle, 1998; Lawton, 1994; Lu & Argyle, 1993).

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and preferences. This means that personality influences tourism consumers' behavior. Although studies on the relationship between personality traits and tourism consumers' behavior are still being actively developed, tourism behavior characteristics for different personality traits have been compared (Cohen, 1972; Plog, 1974). Also, Nickerson and Ellis (1991) compared the prediction effects of extraversion and introversion for tourism types. Other researchers have analyzed the relationship between the concepts of sensation seeking, leisure activity types, and tourism (Galloway & Lopez, 1999; Lepp & Gibson, 2008; Zuckerman, 1979, 1994). In this study, we extended previous research, using large-scale survey data for Taiwan to analyze the impact of extraversion and sensation seeking on international tourism choices.

Literature Review and Hypotheses

According to the five-factor model, personality traits can be categorized into five basic dimensions, that is, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience (Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003; McCrae & John, 1992). Extraversion is most often used in studies on leisure activities and tourism consumption. Plog (1974) indicated that allocentrics prefer unstructured vacations and exotic travel, whereas psychocentrics prefer traveling in familiar environments. A positive correlation between extraversion and participating in outdoor leisure activities has also been shown in previous studies (Lu & Kao, 2009), as has the fact that extraverted individuals prefer risk-taking and adventurous activities when traveling (Mannell & Kleiber, 1997). Sensation seeking can be regarded as being related to extraversion traits because individuals with sensation-seeking traits also tend to favor exciting, novel, and risk-taking activities to achieve optimal experience when traveling (Zuckerman, 1994). Sensation seeking is also predictive of participation in leisure activities that are more adventurous (Furnham, 2004). In addition, previous researchers have indicated that individuals who have higher levels of sensation seeking tend to choose riskier tourism destinations, as well as holiday adventures that are bolder and more daring (Eachus, 2004; Gilchrist, Povey, Dickinson, & Povey, 1995).

International tourism is exotic, offering exposure to foreign cultures, and, in comparison to domestic tourism, is much higher in novelty and risk. In this study, our intention was to show, based on the literature review, that individuals who demonstrate higher levels of extraversion and sensation seeking are more likely to engage in international tourism.

Therefore, the following hypotheses were proposed:

Hypothesis 1: When compared to people with no international tourism experience, those with international tourism experience will tend to have higher levels of extraversion.

Hypothesis 2: When compared to people with no international tourism experience, those with international tourism experience will tend to have higher levels of sensation seeking.

Method

Participants and Procedure

We used the data from the Taiwan Social Change Survey 2007, Phase 5, Wave 3, Questionnaire 2: *Leisure Lifestyle*. The sections in this questionnaire were based on those from the 2007 survey of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), which was entitled *Leisure Time and Sports*. The data samples were collected from Taiwanese nationals residing in Taiwan, aged 20 years and older. Taiwanese census data were used as the sampling frame, and a three-stage sampling procedure was used with a probability-proportional-to-size method to select the interview candidates. The sampling procedure was as follows: We employed population density, educational level, population ratio over the age of 65 years, population ratio between the ages of 15 and 64 years, population ratio employed by industrial businesses, and population ratio employed by commercial businesses as indicators, and we divided Taiwanese townships into seven strata.

Table 1. *Gender, Age, Overseas Travel Experience, and Frequency Distribution*

	With overseas travel experience	Without overseas travel experience	Total
Gender			
Male	598	406	1004
Female	651	356	1007
Age			
Under 30	107	131	238
Between 31 and 40	283	130	413
Between 41 and 50	233	127	360
Over 51	626	374	1000
Total	1249	762	2011

During sampling, we calculated the population figures for all the townships in each stratum, used the population ratio to allocate the number of people to be sampled from each stratum, and extracted townships of a certain number from each stratum based on the population. We used the population numbers and systematic sampling method in each township to extract villages of a certain number. Finally, we used the same systematic sampling method to extract a certain number of individuals for interviewing within the selected villages. The

total effective sample was 2,011, with 762 participants having no overseas travel experience. Of the 1,249 participants having overseas travel experience, 598 were men and 651 were women. The mean age of the total participants, those without travel experience, and those with travel experience, was 46.06, 45.62, and 46.33 years, respectively.

Measurement

The variables were selected from Questionnaire 2: *Leisure Lifestyle*. The variable “with or without international tourism experience” was selected from *Planning International Tourism* in the second part of the questionnaire. *The main types of leisure activities* “extraversion” and “sensation seeking” variables were selected from the sections on the five main personality traits and sensation seeking, in part one of the questionnaire, *The Meaning of Modern Leisure Studies*. Items of extraversion were obtained from subscales of the Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI), which is a brief measure of the Big Five personality dimensions (Gosling et al., 2003). Although it is not as effective as standard multi-item instruments, the 10-item measure of the TIPI is reliable and valuable for situations in which brief measures are required (Gosling et al., 2003). Extraversion was thus measured positively and negatively, by using the positive statement “extraverted, likes to socialize” and the negative statement “does not like to talk.” The responses to the positive statement were measured on a 4-point scale ranging from (1 = *very much like me* to 4 = *not at all like me*), whereas the negative statement was measured inversely. A higher score for the respondent indicated a greater degree of extraversion. The internal consistency for the two questions examining extraversion was established (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .80$, and $.73$, respectively).

Four items from the Sensation-Seeking Scale (SSS; Zuckerman, 1994) were used to measure sensation seeking. The statements regarding sensation seeking were: “I get bored if I see the same familiar faces all the time”, “Sometimes I like to be more adventurous”, “I would like to go by myself to explore foreign places”, and “I want to go with others to a foreign place”. The 5-point scale used to measure the statement ranged from 1 = *very much like me* to 5 = *not at all like me*. A higher score for the respondents indicated a higher sensation-seeking trait. We combined the four statements and, during data analysis, considered them as a variable with a single score representative of the sensation-seeking trait level. The extraversion variable and the sensation-seeking variable had a Cronbach’s α of 0.73 and 0.82, respectively, indicating high internal consistency.

Data Analysis

We used PASW Statistics 18 and logistic regression analysis to analyze the data.

Results

As illustrated in Table 2, results show that extraversion was a clear predictor of whether or not a person had international tourism experience ($\beta = 0.26$, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 18.00$, $p < .001$). The odds ratio indicates that when extraversion increases by one unit, the chance of having international tourism experience is 1.30 times greater ($e^{0.26} = 1.30$). In other words, the higher the level of extraversion, the greater the chance is of having international tourism experience.

In addition, an analysis of sensation seeking and international tourism experience shows that sensation seeking was a clear predictor of whether a person had international tourism experience ($\beta = 0.20$, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 19.04$, $p < .001$). The odds ratio indicates that when sensation seeking increases by one unit, the chance of having international tourism experience is 1.22 times greater ($e^{0.20} = 1.22$). In other words, the higher the level of sensation seeking, the greater the chance is of having international tourism experience. The two research hypotheses are supported. Extraversion and sensation seeking were significant factors predicting whether or not a person had international tourism experience. Extraversion had a higher impact than sensation seeking, based on the odds ratio.

Table 2. *Logistic Regression Analysis of Extraversion and Sensation Seeking for Participation in International Travel*

Dependent variable: Participation in international travel (no international tourism experience is set as a reference group)

	Regression coefficient	SE	e^β
Intercept	-.70	.20	
Independent variable			
Extraversion	.26***	.06	1.30
Sensation seeking	.20***	.05	1.22
Likelihood ratio	43.82***		
Hosmer-Lemeshow goodness of fit	.20		
Cox and Snell R^2	.02		
Nagelkerke R^2	.03		
Correctness ratio	62.4%		

Note. *** $p < .001$

Discussion

In recent years the Big Five personality dimensions, especially extraversion, have been used frequently as variables to assess their impact on tourist-related variables. Sensation seeking is another crucial variable used in recent years in tourist behavior research. Because extraverted people have higher levels of personality traits such as assertiveness, gregariousness, excitement seeking,

and positive emotionality, they seek novelty and are more willing to undertake international travel. Similarly, as sensation seekers enjoy seeking excitement, novelty, and adventure, they are more willing to travel to exotic international destinations and experience foreign cultures. Our results correlate with those of previous researchers (Galloway & Lopez, 1999; Lepp & Gibson, 2008; Nickerson & Ellis, 1991). In this study, we consolidated and expanded previous studies on how personality traits affect leisure preferences and behavior. The results confirmed that extraversion and sensation-seeking personality traits significantly influence the choice of international travel, thus contributing to the classic discussion about “why people go on vacations.” Unlike extraverted people and sensation seekers, people with low levels of sensation seeking prefer to be in familiar and comfortable surroundings, and, therefore, they seldom travel internationally. The results can be applied practically in the tourism field. Tourism providers or managers can use personality traits, such as extraversion and sensation seeking, as market segmentation variables for international travel to develop relevant novel, exciting, and adventurous tourist packages or products.

Because the data used for analysis were derived from an already completed collection of secondary data, all the measurements for extraversion and sensation seeking involved using brief items, thereby imposing critical restrictions. Although demonstrating high internal consistency and reliability, these measures are inferior to standard multi-item instruments. More items could be used in follow-up studies to measure these two constructs, thereby enhancing their validity and reliability. Extraversion and sensation seeking are crucial variables for tourist behavior. Future researchers could examine their impact on tourist variables, such as different types of tourist roles, and the implications for market segmentation. Furthermore, we have suggested in this study that variables such as demographics and tourist roles could be included. The relationship between demographic variables of extraversion, sensation seeking, and tourist roles could be further explored.

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