

Little Children with Giant Power: The Influence of Product Knowledge on Family Holiday Decision Impact in Perspective of Tourism Attachment at Heritage Destination

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Abstract

With modern family structure shrinking, children are playing an increasingly important role in family purchasing decisions. Based on the research framework of consumer attachment, the paper explores the relationship between children tourism product knowledge and family holiday decision impact, mediated by tourism attachment. In the view of children, focus group discussion is used and 166 questionnaires are collected with an adjusted measurement scale. Children visitor data analyzed with SEM revealed product knowledge is a significant predictor of family holiday decision in initiation stage and search/decision stage and the mediate effect of tourism attachment is tested. In the context of tourism, children is regarded as the one of the dominant role. The more confident performance from product knowledge encourages children to have a more positive attitude of attachment towards tourism, resulting in strong influence on family holiday decision. This study offers empirical evidence for developing a theoretical framework of children tourism consumption and offer insights into modern children's' tourism product design and marketing in context of heritage tourism.

Keywords: Children tourism, product knowledge, tourism attachment, family holiday decision

1. Introduction

The global population of children has reached nearly 2 billion (World Bank, 2019). Although they are young and have no financial means, children have their own opinions as a very important and special consumption group, which is called "little giants of consumption". It is estimated that children between the ages of 4 and 12 spend approximately US\$188 billion in household purchases each year (McNeal, 1998). Parents need to listen to children's input opinion in 43% of purchases (Cooper, 1999). Chinese families are also very willing to spend money for their children. Chinese children (7-11 years old) affect 68.7% of their parents' routine purchases and 23.3% of household durable goods purchases (Chan, McNeal, 2003). Children tourism plays an important role in children's education and family emotional maintenance (Feng Xiaohong, Li Mimi, 2016), which is different from general consumption. It is a catalyst for

family holiday, directly increasing numbers of tourists, extending their stay of time, encouraging parents to participate promotions, and enriched experience with education (Ryan, 1992).

Tourism research mostly regard children as weak member within the family with the study perspective of adults. Many family purchasing studies focus on the roles of husband and wife, ignoring the important impact from children (Lackman and Lanasa, 1993). Past research of children's consumption mostly concentrated on tangible products (Marshall, 2010) and individual-related products (Beatty and Hill, 2007) such as toys and clothes. However, family holiday products are full of intangible experience as a group consumption. In tourism context, there is little research on the impact of children's product knowledge on family holiday as a group decision (Therkelsen, 2010). In limited studies, some argues children tourism product knowledge has little effect on family holiday decision impact (Foxman et al., 1989) or lacks empirical support (Beatty and Talpade, 1994), some argues self-perceived product knowledge of children is positively related with the impact of family

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holiday decisions (Tinson and Nancarrow, 2005; Thomson, Laing, and Mckee, 2007). One of the possible explanation for the inconsistency is that these studies ignoring mediator between the relationships. According to the "cognition-attitude-intention" framework of planned behavior theory, it is necessary to find a mediator variable of attitude dimension.

Consumer attachment is an attitude construct focuses on emotional connection between consumers and products, services or brands. It is better than attitude in predicting the outcome of higher-level exchange relationships (Thomson et al., 2005). In the past, consumer attachment in the tourism study only focused on adults and ignored "children version". Therefore, in the process of children tourism consumption, this paper intends to explore the mediate effect between children tourism product knowledge and family holiday decision impact. Empirical evidence is expected to develop a theoretical framework of children tourism consumption and offer insights into modern children's tourism product design and marketing.

2. Theory and hypotheses

2.1 Relationship between children's tourism product knowledge and family holiday decision impact

Product knowledge refers to the specific knowledge directly related to the product and the indirect knowledge related to personal experience and others experience (Dacin, Mitchell, 1986). Objective product knowledge concerns that consumers actually possess, while subjective product knowledge concerns degree of self-confidence and self-perception of consumers in their own product-related knowledge. Children's knowledge, especially subjective knowledge of products, can make children more confident about products with more self-identification, resulting to more positive behavioral intention. Effect of children's product knowledge on family purchasing decisions shows a changing trend. Foxman (1989) finds little effect while Beatty and Talpade (1994) finds effect lack of empirical support. The studies after year 2000 (Tinson and Nancarrow, 2005; Thomson, Laing, and Mckee, 2007) find a greater impact as children obtaining more and more knowledge and information from varied channels. In the family holiday decision, it is argued there are two stages referring initiation stage and search/decision stage (Beatty, Talpade, 1994; Guo Xiaochai, 2010). Based on this, it makes sense to propose in heritage tourism context:

H1: in scenario of heritage destination, children's tourism product knowledge has a positive effect on family holiday decision impact.

H1-1: children's tourism product knowledge has a positive effect on family holiday decision impact in initiation stage.

H1-2: children's tourism product knowledge has a positive effect on family holiday decision impact in search/decision stage.

2.2 Relationship between children's tourism product knowledge and tourism attachment

Children's subjective product knowledge is a self-perception of product knowledge level and a self-confidence performance. It is often used to predict children's attitudes and affect the strength of attitudes positively (Pieniak, Verbeke, 2007). According to the internal formation pattern of attachment, the more and richer children know about the product, the stronger their thoughts and emotions will be spontaneously aroused. With more product knowledge, children are more interested in products, and more likely to establish emotional connections and psychological bonds with products. Based on this, it proposes:

H2: children's tourism product knowledge has a positive effect on tourism attachment.

2.3 Relationship between tourism attachment and family holiday decision impact

It is believed emotions can directly affect attitudes (Brown and Stayman, 1992). Improvement of tourism functions can increase the emotional attachment of tourists, which affects tourists' shopping satisfaction next (Qian Shuwei, Su Qin, and Zheng Huanyou, 2010). Tourists' attachment will influence their intention to revisit in the future (George, 2004). Studies on attachment have confirmed that consumers' emotional attachment makes effect on their consumer choices, such as attitudes, decision-making, satisfaction, and loyalty. With a strong motivation, attachment makes consumers willing to devote personal resources to maintain relationships. The higher the attachment of children consumers on tourism, the more likely they make efforts to influence parents' tourism purchase decisions with a result of rich self-worth and emotional benefits. Based on this, it proposes:

H3: tourism attachment has a positive effect on family holiday decision impact.

H3-1: tourism attachment has a positive effect on family holiday decision impact in initiation stage.

H3-2: tourism attachment has a positive effect on family holiday decision impact in search/decision stage.

2.4 Relationship between children's' product knowledge, tourism attachment and family holiday decision impact

Children will more actively participate in and exert more impact on the product purchase decision, when they realize the role of main participant and users of the product which is closely related to them (Beatty and Talpade, 1994; Chankon Kim & Hanjoon Lee, 1997; Lee and Beatty, 2002; Shoham and Dalakas, 2003). It is tested that children have an important impact on leisure activities related to themselves and travel places where they decide to go (Filiatrault and

Ritchie, 1980). In tourism activities, attachment is an emotional result induced by connection between individual attitudes and self-cognition. With stronger correlation between themselves and specific item, children will establish deeper individual's emotional connection and make more positive intention. Base on this in tourism context, it proposes:

H4: tourism attachment plays a mediating role between children's product knowledge and family holiday decision impact.

Based on the framework of "cognition-attitude-behavior intention" and the mechanism of attachment, a research model is established (See Figure 1).

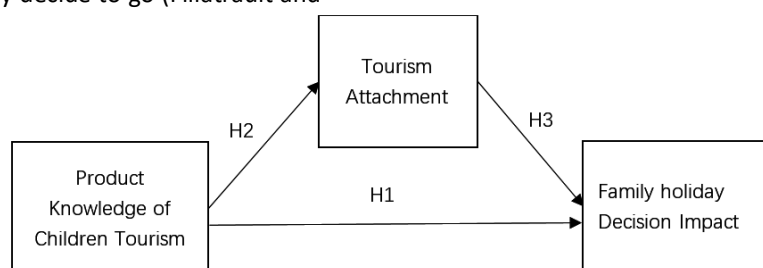


Figure. 1 Research Model

3. Method

3.1 Data collection and sample

The study takes the scenario of heritage destination of Great Cannel in Hangzhou, which is a legend canal connected south to north China with the longest construction duration and service life. Hangzhou is the endpoint city of Great Cannel full of historical and culture resources, such as museums, ancient dwellings and bridges, shipping landscape, catering and accommodation. The questionnaires are distributed to the pupil children visitors accompanied by parents or grandparents in the weekends during summer vacation at the entrance and exit of scenic area of World Cultural Heritage Grand Canal. In the survey, children have the right to know and withdraw voluntarily. With the permission of children and their parents or grandparents, the investigators tell children the objective of survey in simple and clean

language. The young children with reading difficulties are helped with explanations, eliminating worries when they participating the survey.

A total of 220 questionnaires were distributed and 198 were returned with the rate of 90%. Excluding 32 invalid questionnaires such as incomplete information, identical answers or greatly regular responses, 166 valid questionnaires were finally collected with an effective rate of 83.8%.

The demographic characteristics of the children tourist samples of heritage destination of Great Cannel in Hangzhou are as follows (see Table 1). In terms of gender, 44% are boys and 56% of the samples are girls, basically maintaining a balance. In terms of age, most children are varied from 8 to 11, accounting for 86.7%. In terms of grades, the majority of children are from grade 1 to grade 4, accounting for 89.2%.

Table 1. Descriptive statistical analysis of the samples

	Specific Project	Count	Proportion(%)
gender	male	73	44.0%
	female	93	56.0%
age	7	16	9.6%
	8	31	18.7%
	9	47	28.3%

	10	39	23.5%
	11	27	16.3%
	12	5	3.0%
	13	1	0.6%
grade	first grade	31	18.7%
	second grade	36	21.7%
	third grade	52	31.3%
	fourth grade	29	17.5%
	fifth grade	15	9.0%
	sixth grade	3	1.8%

3.2 Variable measures

To address each purpose of the study, concept of product knowledge (Wang et al., 2007; Therkelsen, 2010), tourism attachment (Williams and Vaske, 2003; Wen Fei, 2011) and family holiday decision impact (Foxman et al., 1989; Beatty and Talpade, 1994; Tinson and Nancarrow, 2005; Thomson, Laing, and Mckee, 2007) were adopted to examine children visitor in the scenario of heritage destination of Great Cannel in Hangzhou. Children's tourism product knowledge was measured by Wang et al. (2007) scale with 3 items. Tourism attachment was measured with 8 items using combination of place attachment scale of Williams and Vaske (2003) and consumer attachment scale of Wen Fei (2011). Family holiday decision impact was measured in two stages scale of Beatty and Talpade (1994) with 3 items in initiation stage and 3 items in search/decision stage. Since the research studies 8-12 years old pupils, it adjusted and optimized some items at questionnaire with 6 children focus group discussion. For the sake of children's reading comprehension and concentration, both product knowledge and tourism attachment have only one dimension, while family holiday decision impact is just divided into two stages of initiation and search/decision. The questionnaire is friendly to children and measured with a 5-point Likert scale.

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test the proposed direct effects in the model. However, to test the mediation effects, bootstrap 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals (CIs) were used. The output of SPSS results showed that no item presented a skewness or kurtosis level higher than these thresholds, sustaining the normality condition that is fundamental for the use of maximum likelihood estimation in SEM.

4. Results

4.1 Reliability and validity tests of the scale

It shows that the Cronbach's α value of each variable is greater than 0.7, indicating that the variables in the questionnaire of product knowledge, tourism attachment and family holiday decision impact have good reliability. After each evaluation factor is deleted, the value of the reliability coefficient is not significantly improved, indicating that the research data is highly reliable. From the results of Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), it shows all variable scales pass KMO test and the Bartlett's test. The KMO values of each variable were greater than 0.7 and all Bartlett values had passed the significance test. With principal component analysis, each factor can be explained over 50% of total variation.

Therefore, it indicates that the variables in the questionnaire have good structural reliability (see Table 2).

Table 2 Reliability and validity analysis

Variable	Factor loading	Cronbach's α	sig.
Product knowledge (variance interpretation=68.334%, KMO=0.777)			
<i>I am experienced with the heritage of Great Cannel</i>	0.858		
<i>I know more about the heritage of Great Cannel than my parents</i>	0.817	0.866	0.000
<i>I am familiar with the heritage of Great Cannel</i>	0.806		
Tourism attachment (variance interpretation=82.334%, KMO=0.892)			
<i>Travelling is very special to me</i>	0.659	0.870	0.000

<i>Travelling means a lot to me</i>	0.755		
<i>I learned a lot about myself when spending time</i>	0.634		
<i>I am very attached to the tourism activities</i>	0.645		
<i>I feel tourism is a part of me</i>	0.655		
<i>Tourism is the activity I like most</i>	0.638		
<i>I feel most satisfied with tourism than any other activities</i>	0.614		
<i>I feel most important with tourism than any other activities</i>	0.610		
Family holiday decision impact			
in initiation stage (variance interpretation=51.413%, KMO=0.846)			
<i>I made my parents realize that it is necessary to take me out on a trip here</i>	0.789		
<i>I made my parents realize that it is useful to take me on a trip here</i>	0.826	0.815	0.000
<i>I made my parents think about taking me out on a trip here</i>	0.734		
in search/decision stage (variance interpretation=77.954%, KMO=0.763)			
<i>I made my parents to know where I like to travel most</i>	0.766		
<i>I influenced my parents take me to travel</i>	0.830	0.821	0.000
<i>I influenced the specific content of the travel arrangements made by my parents</i>	0.824		

After assessing the performance of the measurement model with data sample by MPLUS, it fits the data well, resulting in a significant Chi-square of 473.509 ($p < 0.01$). The ratio of Chi-square to degrees of freedom ($\chi^2/df = 1.065$) was less than the recommend threshold of 3.0 (Bagozzi and Yi 1988).

Generally, the other measurement model indices showed good fit to the data (Tucker–Lewis index = 0.914, comparative fit index = 0.921, and standardized root mean square residual = 0.041). Thus, both reliability and validity of the model were further assessed (see Table 3).

Table 3 Fit Index

Index	Chi-square	Chi-square/df	GFI	AGFI	NFI	CFI	RMSEA
Value	473.509	1.605	0.912	0.902	0.914	0.921	0.041

4.2 Hypothesis test and result discussion

According to the result (see Table 4), the study analyzes in detail the logic relationship between children's tourism product knowledge (PK), tourism attachment (TA), and family holiday decision impact in initiation stage (FTDI1) and search/decision stage (FTDI2). With evidence for hypothesis 1 between children's tourism product knowledge (PK) and family

holiday decision impact, standard coefficient is 0.159 in initiation stage (FTDI1) with p value less than 0.001; standard coefficient is 0.113 in search/decision stage (FTDI2) with p value less than 0.05. It is believed children's tourism product knowledge is positively related to family holiday decision impact significantly. Therefore H1-1 and H1-2 is valid.

Table 4 Empirical results of hypothesis

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Unstandardized regression coefficient	Standard error	p	Standard coefficient	R ²
FTDI1	PK	0.153	0.040	0.000	0.159	0.323
	TA	0.457	0.055	0.000	0.409	
FTDI2	PK	0.115	0.045	0.011	0.113	0.061
	TA	0.112	0.056	0.045	0.095	
TA	PK	0.197	0.037	0.000	0.230	0.110

As expected, we also find significant relationship between tourism product knowledge (PK) and tourism attachment (TA), with standard coefficient 0.230 and p value less than 0.001. Therefore, H2 is valid.

For hypothesis 3 between relationship between tourism attachment (TA) and family holiday decision impact, standard coefficient is 0.409 in initiation stage (FTDI1) and 0.095 in search/decision stage (FTDI2) with p value less than 0.001. Therefore, H3 is valid.

Mediation analysis was then carried out, inferring of product knowledge on family holiday decision impact would be mediated by tourism

attachment of children. To do this, a bootstrap method was employed to test where the indirect effect was significantly different from zero. As per Preacher and Hayes (2008), a bootstrap analysis with 95% bias-corrected CIs and 10,000 resamples was used to test whether tourism attachment was driving the results.

As expected, the results summarized in Table 5 showed that tourism attachment has a mediating effect significantly of children's tourism product knowledge on family holiday decision impact in both initiation stage and search/decision stage with giving supported to H4.

Table 5 Effect analysis of mediation model

Effect	Estimate	S.E.	z-value	p-value	Lower bound	Upper bound
Total						
PK→FTDI1	0.267	0.042	6.357	0.001	0.187	0.355
Indirect						
PK→TA→FTDI1	0.070	0.020	3.500	0.001	0.037	0.116
Direct						
PK→FTDI1	0.197	0.04	4.925	0.002	0.119	0.275
Total						
PK→FTDI2	0.137	0.049	2.796	0.001	0.048	0.242
Indirect						
PK→TA→FTDI2	0.022	0.013	1.692	0.031	0.002	0.055
Direct						
PK→FTDI2	0.115	0.050	2.300	0.015	0.024	0.224

5. Discussion and implications

This study, grounded in the important research on product knowledge (Wang et al., 2007), tourism attachment (Williams and Vaske, 2003; Wen Fei, 2011) and family purchase decision impact (Beatty and Talpade, 1994), offers a deeper insight into children visitors' consumption process. The study was inspired by the notion that family holiday decision impact is influenced by product knowledge developed by tourism attachment of children visitors –an aspect that has been widely ignored in past studies. The data is collected from children visitors in the scenic area of Great Canal selected in UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2014. It is famous to all Chinese children with precious historical image and cultural association, especially as it is written into Chinese textbook of primary school. In children's consuming memory, product knowledge is stored as content, structure and evaluation. With evidence above, it was found

that product knowledge has a direct influence on family holiday decision impact in two stages and mediated by tourism attachment. Together, the results offer numerous theoretical and managerial implications.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

On the theoretical front, this study makes several contributions to the children tourism literature. It is the first attempt to measure mechanism between product knowledge and family holiday decision impact in perspective of tourism attachment of children. Findings showed that children tourism product knowledge is a strong predictor in explaining how children impact family holiday decision. Another implication is that tourism attachment was found to have a significant impact on family holiday decision impact of children. As expected, the findings revealed tourism attachment mediates the relationship between children tourism product knowledge and family holiday decision impact.

The inconsistent relationship is clarified (Foxman et al., 1989; Beatty and Talpade, 1994; Tinson and Nancarrow, 2005; Thomson, Laing, and McKee, 2007).

5.2 Practical Implications

From a practical perspective, this study makes several contributions and offers an understanding of children tourism consumption. First, findings suggest that children's tourism knowledge, children's tourism attachment are some of the critical factors that can affect family holiday decision impact in the context of heritage destination. The marketers should thoroughly comprehend the significant roles of factors above. Second, findings clearly show tourism attachment mediating the relationship between children's tourism knowledge and family holiday decision impact. The marketers should also recognize the value of tourism product knowledge in children's perception and self-identification. Economic benefits on culture and heritage are closely associated with tourism attachment, making children confident to impact family holiday decision when initiating and searching on tourism destination and activities.

5.3 Limitations

This study highlights the dominant position of children, regarding children as partners who participate in the research together rather than as passive investigators. The survey before questionnaire interviews makes focus group reducing dissonance between adult researchers and child respondents. However, it shows children's views are possibly influenced with potential dominance, prejudice and threats, especially when they participate in surveys with their parents. Their behavior and expression in front of parents may be different from what in the absence of parents (Therkelsen, 2010). With survey supervised by parents, there may be gaps between data and real as it is difficult to make an environment free from parental interference.

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