

Influence of Tourism Safety Perception on Destination Image

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Contributor: Guijin Ding

Tourism safety perception affect multiple dimensions of destination image to varying degrees. Tourists with a high safety perception evaluate and affectively experience destination attributes more positively with higher satisfaction and stronger willingness to revisit and recommend. Tourism safety perception affects the stereotype image of the destination to a certain extent. Tourists in general produce a broadly homogeneous stereotype image, but there are differences in diversity and emotions. Tourists with a high safety perception have a richer and more positive stereotype image.

Keywords: tourism safety perception ; destination image ; image dimension

1. Tourism Safety Perception

Tourism safety perception refers to the subjective feelings and perceptions of tourists about the safety of a destination under the influence of external information involvement and their own factors ^[1]. Tourists' perception of destination safety may be both positive and negative ^[2]. Scholars generally measure tourism safety perception of destinations based on the natural and social environment of destinations and tourism elements and types of tourism safety issues. There are currently two major measurement methods: one is to measure the overall tourism safety perception, for example by asking visitors to respond to statements such as, "xxx is a safe/unsafe place, xxx is as safe/unsafe as other tourist destinations, I am told that xxx is a safe/unsafe tourist destination" ^{[3][4][5]}; the second is to measure the safety perception of tourists by asking about topics such as terrorism, natural disasters, public health, social security, cultural conflicts, tourism services, and tourism activity elements ^{[6][7][8][9][10]}. The overall security perception measurement is generally based on structural equation modeling for an impact path study, and the measurement of safety perception elements is generally based on factor analysis for dimension extraction.

Empirical studies have shown that tourism safety perception has a certain influence on tourism decision-making ^{[11][12]}, tourism preference ^[6], tourism behavioral intention ^{[7][13][14]}, satisfaction ^[5], and loyalty ^[7]. Barker et al. argued that tourist concerns about safety and fear of crime are as important as whether they experience crime victimization for their influence on tourism decisions and travel behavior ^[15]. Sönmez and Graefe found in their study that the level of risk perception directly affects tourists' choice of holiday destinations across the world ^[12]. Chen et al. found that terrorist events and war risk factors have an impact on travel preferences ^[6]. Li et al. found that both tourist safety perception and tourism image perception have a significant positive effect on loyalty, and tourist safety perception and tourism image perception have a full mediating effect between negative public opinion and tourist loyalty ^[3]. Yang and Xie found that tourists' safety perception affects willingness to travel; specifically, micro safety perception positively affects tourists' micro travel intention and macro safety perception positively affects macro travel intention ^[13].

2. Destination Image

Destination image is the sum of individuals' beliefs, ideas, and impressions about a destination ^[16]. In the conceptual dimension of destination image, most scholars believe that destination image is a multidimensional structure including cognitive components and affective components. The cognitive dimension refers to knowledge and beliefs about a destination with a focus on the evaluation of destination attributes; the affective dimension refers to the feelings or affection for the destination with focus on the subjective feeling of the destination ^{[17][18]}. On this basis, Gartner believes that destination image is developed from three components that are interrelated and interact with each other: cognition, emotion, and conation. The component of conation includes the behavior or intention of an individual to revisit and recommend the destination ^{[19][20][21]}, and also includes spreading positive reputation ^[22]. Cognitive image, affective image, and conative image are generally measured in a structured way and studied quantitatively. Scholars have done extensive research on these three image dimensions.

Echtner and Ritchie developed a conceptual framework for destination image, which is a three-dimensional continuum composed of attribute–holistic, functional–psychological, and common–unique ^[23]. Echtner and Ritchie, based on the conceptual framework of the three-dimensional continuum, developed a structured scale of cognitive image and unstructured measurement questions regarding stereotype image, affective image, and unique image ^[24]. The concept of stereotype image has its origin in social psychology and refers to people's beliefs in characteristics, attributes, and behaviors of a specific group ^{[25][26]}. In the field of tourism, scholars have extended the study of stereotype image from “groups” to “destinations” to investigate people's beliefs in characteristics or attributes of a particular destination. Stereotype image is generally measured in an unstructured way and studied both quantitatively and qualitatively. There are few research results in this area.

Destination image is a very complex concept, and its formation is influenced by a combination of factors. Many scholars believe that destination image is mainly influenced by personal and stimulus factors. Personal factors are internal determinants, i.e., demographic characteristics (gender, age, schooling, family life cycle, social class, and place of residence), and psychological characteristics (motivation, values, personality, and lifestyle); stimulus factors include primary sources of information (information obtained by tourists from field visits to the destination) and secondary sources of information (tourism information and tourism advertisements provided by destination marketing organizations, destination-related news or TV programs presented by mass media, and introductions by friends and relatives) ^{[18][27][28][29]}. In addition, tourists' familiarity with the destination ^{[24][30][31]}, visit frequency ^[32], travel experience ^{[28][33]}, and geographical distance ^{[34][35][36]} also affect destination image to varying degrees.

3. Influence of Tourism Safety Perception on Destination Image

Existing viewpoints have shown that tourism safety perception has a significant impact on destination image. George argued that tourists would have a negative impression of the destination if they felt unsafe or threatened there ^[37]. Lepp et al. found that Uganda is perceived as a dangerous destination and that the perceived risks characterized by poverty, war, civil unrest, disease, and hunger severely affect its tourism image ^[38]. Scholars have further found in empirical studies that tourism safety perception has an impact on some dimensions of destination image. Lehto et al. explored the effect of tourists' natural disaster perception on affections and travel intentions based on the pleasure arousal dominance (PAD) affection model, and found that natural disasters significantly affect PAD affections and travel intentions ^[39]. Chew and Jahari verified through their study that tourism risk perception has a certain impact on cognitive image and affective image, and that cognitive image and affective image play an intermediary role in the relationship between perceived risk and revisit intention ^[40]. Yang and Xie found that tourism safety perception has a significant positive impact on affective image, and that tourism safety perception and affective image have multiple mediating effects between hospitality and satisfaction ^[5]. Li et al. found that safety perception and overall image perception of tourists have a full mediating effect between negative public opinion and tourist loyalty ^[3]. These studies indicate that tourism safety perception may have a direct or indirect influence on destination image in different dimensions.

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