

FACTORS AFFECTING TOURIST TRAVEL INTENTION TO NEPAL AFTER NATURAL DISASTER

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Abstract

The main objective of the study is to examine the four factors (motivation; attitude; subjective norm; perceived behavior controls) affecting tourist travel intention to Nepal after natural disaster. Based on Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) model, it consists of three factors: Attitude; Subjective Norm; and Perceived Behavior Control. In this study, researchers had extended the TPB with additional factor, Motivation. Clear understanding of motivation is the crucial to any effort to obtain the knowledge of tourists' travel behavior.

The quantitative questionnaires were approached to detect between four factors with travel intention by using linear regression analysis to confirm the results. Survey data were collected from 405 international tourists who visited Nepal. Results of the study demonstrated that motivation, subjective norm, and perceived behavior control factors are significant influences tourists' behavior intention in proposed extended model of TPB.

Keywords: Theory of Planned Behavior, Behavior Intention, Motivation, Nepal

บทคัดย่อ

วัตถุประสงค์ในการวิจัยครั้งนี้คือ การทดสอบปัจจัยที่มีผลต่อความตั้งใจในการมาท่องเที่ยวประเทศเนปาล หลังจากการเกิดภัยพิบัติทางธรรมชาติ โดยใช้แนวคิดทฤษฎีพฤติกรรมตามแผน (Theory of Planned Behavior) ซึ่งมี 3 ตัวแปรที่เกี่ยวข้อง คือ ทศนคติ การคล้อยตามกลุ่มอ้างอิง และความสามารถในการควบคุมพฤติกรรม โดยในงานวิจัยนี้ผู้วิจัยได้เพิ่มตัวแปรแรงจูงใจ เนื่องจากแรงจูงใจนั้นเป็นอีกหนึ่งปัจจัยที่มีผลต่อพฤติกรรมของนักท่องเที่ยว ดังนั้น กรอบงานวิจัยนี้ประกอบด้วยตัวแปร 4 ตัว ได้แก่ ทศนคติ การคล้อยตามกลุ่มอ้างอิง ความสามารถในการควบคุมพฤติกรรม และแรงจูงใจ

การวิจัยครั้งนี้ใช้แบบสอบถามเชิงปริมาณในการศึกษาปัจจัยทั้ง 4 ด้านที่มีผลต่อความตั้งใจในการมาท่องเที่ยว โดยใช้การวิเคราะห์การถดถอยเชิงเส้น กลุ่มตัวอย่างที่ใช้ในการสำรวจนักท่องเที่ยวต่างชาติที่เดินทางมาท่องเที่ยวในประเทศเนปาล มีจำนวนทั้งหมด 405 คน ผลการวิจัยพบว่า ตัวแปร การคล้อยตามกลุ่มอ้างอิง ความสามารถ

ในการควบคุมพฤติกรรม และแรงจูงใจ มีอิทธิพลอย่างมีนัยสำคัญต่อความตั้งใจในการมาท่องเที่ยว

คำสำคัญ: ทฤษฎีพฤติกรรมตามแผน เจตนาารมณ์ทางพฤติกรรม แรงจูงใจ ประเทศเนปาล

Introduction

Tourism industry has grown to establish itself as a major global industry in the world. The tourism industry has made substantial contribution for the robust growth in economy, formation of skilled jobs, foreign investment and earning of foreign currencies and overall economic and social well-being of the world. For the six year running, international tourism industry has outpaced world merchandise trade as the travel & tourism made direct contribution of US\$ 2.3 trillion to global economy creating 109 million jobs worldwide in 2016 (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2017). But as with all other industries, the tourism industry is also facing growing rates of major crises which have proven to create immense setback to the very industry and all the stakeholders. Tourism industry is vulnerable to various forms of natural and man-made disasters like earthquakes, tsunamis, avalanches, terrorism attacks, political unrest and so on. The impacts of such disasters usually cover a much larger area from the affected region and for longer period after the incident.

In 2015 Nepal was struck with two catastrophic earthquakes which were followed by hundreds of tremors. This caused outspread casualties and damages. Thousands lost their lives while many were left without food and shelters. Bordered by India and China,

Nepal is blessed with natural diversity; from steamy jungle in the plains of Terai in the south and the icy peaks of the world's highest mountain ranges in the north. About 86% of total area is covered by hills and mountains and the rest is plains of the Terai region. The age old civilization has helped produce many cultural, historical and architectural monuments scattered all around the country. Even with such natural resources and rich history, Nepal remains one of the poorest countries in the world. Tourism is one of the important industries for Nepal that makes major economic contribution and creates large number of employments. In the recent years, with the change in political scenario, there have been growths in foreign investment in this sector. Because of its landscape and climate, regular landslides, avalanches, earthquakes, floods occur regularly weakening ecosystem and causing major loss of lives and properties and lack of coordination and eagerness among government structures, public ignorance, poor infrastructure and absolute poverty makes disasters difficult to manage (Lal, 2015). Thus for the sustainable growth of tourism industry in Nepal, researches should be done to understand tourists behaviors and decision making process in the wake of disasters. This study aims to look at the detrimental factors in tourists' travel intention after a major disaster like 2015 Earthquake.

Literature Review

There have been many researches on the impact of crises and disasters on tourism. Tourists' motivation for travel and how their behavior is developed have been the most sought after research themes for tourism researches as these play crucial role in marketing and business planning in tourism industry. The Theory of planned behavior (TPB) has been broadly used to discuss external and internal motivational factors that drive ones behaviors (Ajzen, 1991).

Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The theory of reasoned action (TRA) was proposed by Fishbein and Ajzen. TRA postulates that behavior intention is driven by a personal and a social factor where personal factor is represented by attitude towards the behavior and the social factor by Subjective Norm (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). But TRA is limited to only volitional behaviors and cannot explain human behavior when other alternatives and options are present. Ajzen (1991) put forward the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), an extended model of the TRA by introducing a third predictor of behavior for situations where subjects cannot entirely control their intentions and behaviors, a Perceived Behavior Control. TPB proposes that three key precursors, attitudes towards the behavior, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control predict an individual's behavioral intentions (Ajzen, 1991). Attitude is the extent of how strongly the individual positively or negatively (favorably or unfavorably) values the performance of target

behavior or action. In case of tourism attitude is the feeling towards travel products. Subjective norm is perceptions of social pressure in engaging or not engaging a given behavior. Perceived behavior control means an extent to how one perceives his capability to carry out a given behavior. It is the perception of the ease or strain of carrying out a given intended act (Phetvaroon, 2006). Behavioral intention refers to the amount of effort a person makes to carry out a particular behavior. It is a cognitive representation of a person's readiness to perform a given action (Armitage & Conner, 2001). Ajzen (1991) assumed that an individual's intention with the combination of perceived behavioral control, would better predict behavior than the previous behavioral models including the TRA.

While postulating the theory of planned behavior, Ajzen suggested that the TPB might not be independent and adequate enough to explain human behaviors in diverse circumstances, and encouraged attempts to further enhance and introduce useful new variables (Ajzen, 1991). Ajzen suggested that the TPB model needs to be used in different phenomena and cases and this can extend and improve the model as it gets more and more applied in different research fields. In the past, researchers have conducted several studies by adding extra variables to the TPB to improve its predictive utility. Some notable such constructs are past behavior, expectation of tourist visa exemption visitors' satisfaction, motivation, as well as perceived risk (Chang, 2013).

Han, Lee & Lee (2011) applied the TPB with additional construct, the tourists' expectations, to examine mainland Chinese travelers' inten-

tion to visit Korea, and result found that the extended model of the TPB successfully explained the understanding of how Chinese tourists make decisions in selecting Korea as a travel destination (Han, Lee & Lee, 2011). Oh & Hsu (2001) applied the TPB to examine the volitional and non-volitional features of gambling behavior in casino. The study established that all the TPB factors; attitude, subjective norm and three factors of perceived behavioral control successfully predicted players' casino gambling intentions (Oh & Hsu, 2001).

While Hsu & Huang (2012) successfully applied motivation as an additional construct to the TPB in their study of Chinese tourists motivation to visit Hong Kong, this study looks at the tourists' intention of visiting a travel destination after a natural disaster.

Travel Motivation

Travel motivation can be considered as influencing factors that create a desire in an

individual to travel to a particular destination. Clear understanding of motivation is the crucial to any effort to obtain the knowledge of tourists' travel behavior (Hsu & Huang, 2010). Different push and pull factors come into play in travel motivations. The push factors are the individual characteristics and desires which push them to travel. These are socio-psychological reasons like the desire or need to escape from daily life routine, looking for adventure, leisure and relaxation etc. Pull factors comprise of the tangible and intangible attributes of the destination like the natural, historic and cultural attractions, people, food and the image promoted by the industry (Uysal & Hagan, 1993).

Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was derived from research by Hsu & Huang (2010) in which they studied Chinese mainland tourists' travel intention and actual behavior to visit Hong Kong.

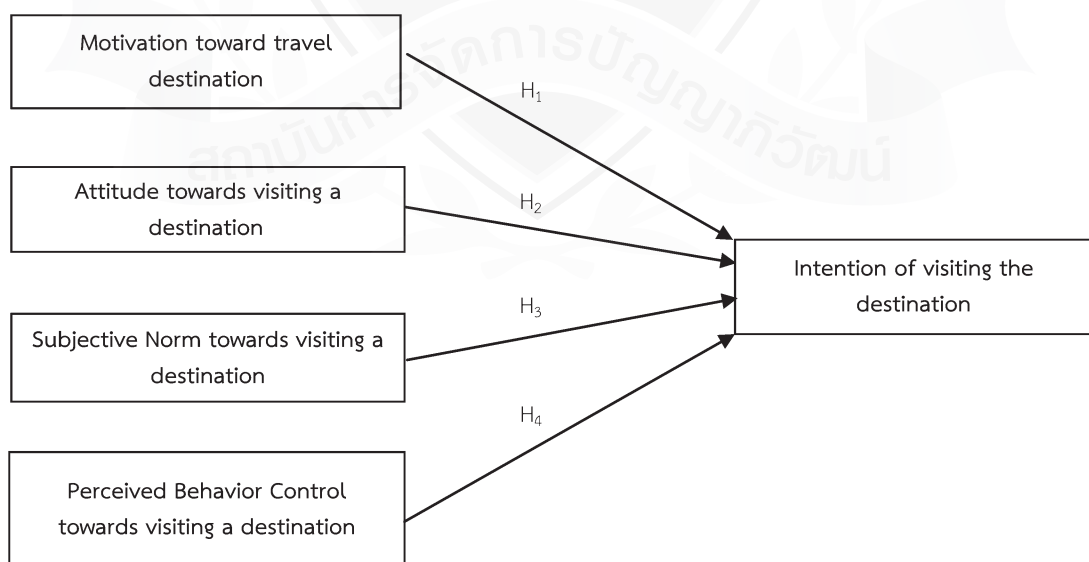


Figure 1 Proposed framework derived from Hsu & Huang, 2010

Objective

The objective of this study is to examine the factors affecting tourist travel intention to visit Nepal after natural disaster.

Hypotheses

Many researchers have studied relation between behavioral intention and motivation. Yoon & Uysal (2005) in their study of effect of tourist motivation to visit the destination of Northern Cyprus suggested that motivation variables have positive effect to destination satisfaction and destination loyalty of the visitors. Baloglu & Cleary (1999) in his study of the organization of informational, motivational, and mental variables on visitation intention, found positive relation between travel motivation and tourists' visit intention. Thus based on these results, following hypothesis was presented:

H₁: Tourists' motivation of visiting a destination has a direct effect on their travel intention.

In their research, Ajzen & Driver (1992) showed that attitudes towards behavior predicted leisure choice intentions with significant accuracy. Lam & Hsu (2004) in their study of Chinese tourists' and Taiwanese tourists' destination selection process found attitude and perceived behavioral control to be directly affecting Chinese tourists' behavioral intention and subjective norm and perceived behavioral control to be influential predictor for Taiwanese tourists. Researches on human behaviors based on the TPB have successfully shown that attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control are positively and directly related with behavioral intention (Phetvaroon, 2006); thus the following

three hypotheses were proposed:

H₂: Positive attitude toward destination positively influences tourists' behavior intention.

H₃: Positive subjective norm about a destination positively influences tourists' behavior intention.

H₄: Perceived behavior control positively affects tourist behavior intention.

Research Methodology

Questionnaire design

Elements in the questionnaire were derived from available literature review. Necessary modifications were made to make it suitable for Nepal Tourism Industry. 20 attributes from the previous tourism studies were selected to use as motivation factors for tourists to select Nepal. Five items each for Attitude, Subjective Norm, Perceived Behavior Control and Behavior Intention were adapted from available literature on TPB.

On the base of 5 point Likert scale Respondents were asked to indicate their perceptions of motivations in a range of 1 (very unimportant) to 5 (very important), attitude in a scale of 1 (very low) to 5 (very high) and 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) for subjective norm, perceived behavioral control and behavioral intention. Moreover, regression analysis was done to examine the impact of variable on the prediction of behavior intention.

Data Collection

The sample size was selected based on formula by Burns & Bush (1995) and a similar study by Chen & Hsu (2000) and Heung & Cheng (2000) as 400.

The target population for the study is the international tourists who had visited or wished to visit Nepal after 2015 earthquake. More than 70% of tourists' arrival to the country is by air, so only international airport in the capital was selected as survey area. According to Nepal Tourism Statistics 2015, tourists' arrival by air was 203,439 all together for the months or February, March and April combined.

For pilot study, responses from 40 international tourists were collected for to assess reliability of measurement instruments and to improve quality and efficiency of the data collection process. Reliability is the assessment of the extent of internal consistency among the scales of the constructs in the study (Hair, Anderson & Black, 1998).

The internal consistency of data was measured by Cronbach's coefficient alpha. In general Cronbach's Alpha depends on number of items; fewer numbers of items tend to result in poor Alpha value. For items less than 10, if the coefficient of Cronbach's Alpha is over 0.8, the reliability is good, if in the range of 0.6-0.7, it is considered acceptable and reliability is considered poor if Alpha is less than 0.6 (Cavana, Delahaye & Sekaran, 2001). The Cronbach's alphas for the five constructs ranged from 0.698 to 0.739 indicating high internal consistency among the variables.

Results and Discussions

Respondents' Demographic Profile

The study sample was made of 405 tourists who visited Nepal during March 2017. Among 405 respondents, 222 respondents (54.81%) were male, 159 respondents (39.25%) were

female while 24 respondents (5.92%) introduced themselves as the third gender. The majority of the respondents were between 18 and 35 years old (59.41%) followed by 36-50 years old 41.97%. Most of respondents (49.63%) indicated their purpose for the visit to be holiday and pleasure. 11.36% were in the country for business purpose while 10.12% accounted for trekking. Almost 97% respondents had flown into the country.

Majority of respondents stayed for more than 10 days in Nepal (41.23%) while about 23% respondents each stayed for 6-8 days and 8-10 days. Among the respondents almost 73% stayed in some star hotels. Other forms of accommodation were guest house 16.54%, Hostel 5.92%.

The major source of information for the respondents while planning for trip to Nepal was internet (46.17%) while word of mouth accounted for 19.26%.

Predicting travel intention

A three-step regression analysis was done to examine the impact of variable on the prediction of behavior intention. On the first step, original TPB variables namely attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavior control only were used as an independent predictor to dependent travel intention. On the second step, motivation was entered as an independent predictor to the equation.

In order to test the original model of the TPB, regression analysis was conducted with Behavior intention as a dependent variable and Attitude, Subjective norm and Perceived behavior control as independent predictors.

Table 1 Coefficients of regression on attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavior control for original TPB model.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-.433	.144		-3.016	.003
AT	.240	.047	.215	5.117	.000
SN	.695	.048	.604	14.381	.000
PBC	.188	.039	.140	4.823	.000

*significant at 0.01; $R^2 = 0.746$

Table 1 shows the result of the first test. All TPB constructs explained 74.6% of the variance in the travel intention of the tourists. A significant positive relation was found between all TPB constructs: attitude towards destination, subjective norm and perceived behavior control and travel intention. The table indicates that Subjective norm (SN) (beta = 0.640) is more strong

in predicting travel intention than Attitude (AT) (beta = 0.215) and perceived behavior control (PBC) (beta = 0.140).

In the second step motivation was entered as an independent variable along with original TPB variables with behavior intention as dependent variable and regression analysis was run.

Table 2 Coefficients of regression on motivation, attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavior control for proposed TPB model.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-1.080	.179		-6.029	.000
MT	.422	.074	.238*	5.684	.000
SN	.704	.047	.612*	15.107	.000
PBC	.121	.039	.090**	3.082	.002
AT	.049	.056	.044	.870	.385

* significant at 0.01 ** significant at 0.05; $R^2 = 0.765$

Table 2 illustrates the result of regression analysis with motivation as an additional variable to the original TPB as an independent predictor. Introduction of motivation (MT), increased the TPB model's explanatory power to 76.5%. This implies that extending original model of the TPB is useful in different applied segments of behavioral sciences to improve its efficiency in explaining travel behavior intention. In the proposed model of the TPB, construct variables Motivation (MT beta = 0.238), Subjective norm (SN beta = 0.612) and Perceived behavior control (PBC beta = 0.09) were found to be significant while Attitude (AT beta = 0.04) was shown to be insignificant. This finding is in line with the result of study by Hsu and Huang (2012) on travel intention and motivation of Chinese tourists to visit Hong Kong. The result of the study found subjective norm (beta = 0.315) to have significant influence over travel intention followed by perceived behavior control (beta = 0.171) and attitude having only marginal effect. (Hsu & Huang, 2012).

Measurement of Motivation

The mean value of 20 items of motivation ranged from 3.2 to 4.17. Items with mean value 4 or greater were considered to be influential motivating factors for selecting Nepal as a travel destination. These features were: "Visit new and exciting place (mean = 4.17)", "Take a break from daily routine life (mean = 4.16)", "Experience different culture (mean = 4.16)", "Enjoy the natural and rural surroundings (mean = 4.15)", "Have privacy (mean = 4.13)",

"Go for trekking (mean = 4.04)", "Release work pressure (mean = 4)" and "Fulfill curiosity about Nepal (mean = 4)". The finding shows the importance of natural and cultural settings of Nepal. This means visitors travel to Nepal to explore its natural surroundings, cultural heritage and to get refreshed from their day to day life and work.

Based on the results, Hypotheses 1, 3, and 4 are supported while hypotheses 2 is rejected. The study focused on tourists' intention to visit Nepal after a disaster like an earthquake; the perceived constraints such as risk, accessibility, an importance of significant ones' approval as well as suggestion help to diminish the effect of attitude towards the destination.

Conclusion

In order to examine and predict tourists' future behavior intentions with regard to visiting tourism destinations after occurrence of major disaster, this study attempted to explore the underlying motivational factors that have strong impact on their visit intention and also attempted to apply an extended model of the TPB to analyze and predict tourists' behavior intentions to visit destinations after a disaster. The study also examined the demographic characteristics of the visitors and their travel characteristics.

The purpose of the study had three segments. First, the study tried to examine if the theory of planned behavior could be used to predict and explain international tourists' behavior intention in visiting travel destinations

suffered by a major natural disaster. Based on the discussed literature, most of the studies focusing on examining tourists' travel intentions or revisit intentions had applied the framework of the theory of planned behavior and its extension (Han, Lee & Lee, 2011). Number of studies successfully inferred and suggested that the theory of planned behavior could be used and improved the understanding of travelers' behavior intentions to take part in wide range of tourism activities or visit different types of tourist destinations (Chang, 2013). The result of the data also validated the efficacy of original TPB model to explain relation of tourists' visit intention with determinant factors attitude, perceived behavior control and subjective norm. Hence, this study examined the applicability of the TPB to examine and understand tourists' behavior intention to visit destinations in crisis. Secondly the study applied extended model of TPB with addition of motivation to visit as new antecedent to behavior intention as supported by discussed literature. In the findings, determinants like subjective norm, motivation and subjective behavior control were able to explain tourists travel intentions while attitude was seen to have marginal effect. From finding it can be suggested that natural and rural landscapes of Nepal like hills, mountains, jungles and its traditional and cultural settings act as a motivational factors for visitors to select Nepal as their travel destination. Nepal offers them a gateway from their daily routine life and an experience that can help them get refreshed and enjoy the peace that they seek.

Recommendation

This study has provided some crucial insights into travel behavior of international tourists to Nepal. It has been seen that even in the aftermath of devastating natural disaster like 2015 earthquake, tourists find Nepal's unique natural landscape, cultural settings including various cultural events and historical monuments, and an opportunity to experience relaxing and refreshing time from hectic daily work and life to be the most important factors for choosing to visit Nepal. So preservation and restoration of natural flora & fauna and cultural settings must be the primary objective for concerned tourism bodies. They should plan to create more positive image of these destination products while promoting Nepal.

The result of this study reflected the important role of subjective norm and perceived behavior control in tourists' decision process while attitude seemed to be ineffective on predicting tourists' behavior intention. This means in case of destinations after disasters, peer reviews, references and availability of constraints and opportunities dictates travelers travel intention. Major concerns for tourists to visit destination like Nepal after a disaster is the perception of safety and security. To address this issue, stakeholders must launch safety measures like of warning system, quick response team and should conduct regular press conferences in international markets so that the target tourist market get real information about the ongoing improvements.

The study showed internet to be a major

source of information about Nepal for the respondents. So Tourism authorities in Nepal should work with their best capacity to create and sustain a favorable image of Nepal in world media. Priority must be given on showcasing Nepal as a safe place with varieties of activities to present tourists. There are many social sites like Facebook, Instagram, TripAdvisor, Wikitravel and numerous travel blogs where tourists share their views about any travel destinations. It is important to address such social media along with mainstream media to create a favorable image of Nepal. Marketers can use travel motivations as a basis for market segmentation; such strategy may help to determine required new travel products and refine marketing plan as it brings about new and better understanding of visitors' intention and behavior (Phetvaroon, 2006). Tourism authorities in Nepal and private tour operators should work together to fulfill the needs of tourists' different motivations with available tourism products. For example for those whose main purpose to visit Nepal is pilgrimage, special programs must be made so that they can easily visit major religious destinations of Nepal. For nature lovers, eco-friendly programs like homestays, local life experience can be made. Based on motivational factors, tailor made products should be offered to specific market segments. Tourism stakeholders in Nepal must make its priority to reach out to the potential international visitors so that they can be well assured about their safety. For the creating of positive image of the country,

major tourist destinations must be made easily accessible with different options available, modern facilities for comfort of tourists should be built, better infrastructures needs to be developed who that tourists can have easier and faster access to historical and religious sites. Special eco-friendly programs must be put under practice to ensure the major trekking trails and mountaineering routes do not get destroyed. For the fate of tourism industry depends on service and product qualities and their speed of delivery; thus strategies must be made to address these issues.

Limitations and Future Research

- This study generalizes the study findings, which is its first limitation. This study included International Airport only as a survey site due to limited time and other resources. So a sample population cannot be generalized to target population of international tourists. As the tourists in airport tend to be from big tour group, the probability of respondents being from same category like country of origin or those visiting same tourist destinations is high. So the suggestions for future studies are to include other diverse survey sites including other major tourist attractions.
- This study is based on the attributes of destination products of Nepal only so the results may not be generalized for other destinations and regions.

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