

Implicit cognitions in the experience economy: Anticipation of desired travel experiences

Tercia, Christiana¹; Teichert, Thorsten²; and Sirad, Dini³

¹Dr. Christiana Tercia

Universitas Prasetiya Mulya, School of Business and Economic
Edutown, KavlingEdu 1 No. 1
BSD Raya Barat 1, BSD City – 15339
Tangerang – Indonesia
Tel: +62 (0)21 304 50 500
Fax: +62 (0)21 604 50 505
Email: sevi@pmbs.ac.id / sevip14@gmail.com

²Prof. Dr. Thorsten Teichert

Hamburg University, Chair of Marketing and Innovation
Von-Melle-Park 5 • D-20146 Hamburg
Tel: +49 (0)40 42838-4643
Fax: +49 (0)40 42838-5250
Email: thorsten.teichert@uni-hamburg.de

³Dini Sirad, MBA

Universitas Prasetiya Mulya, School of Business and Economic
Edutown, KavlingEdu 1 No. 1
BSD Raya Barat 1, BSD City – 15339
Tangerang – Indonesia
Tel: +62 (0)21 304 50 500
Fax: +62 (0)21 604 50 505
Email: dini.sirad@pmbs.ac.id

Abstract

Today, social travel products are at the forefront of the experience economy. Innovative service providers design travel products, which entice travelers to experience travel in novel ways and connect with new cultures. However, most travel products today still provide basic aesthetic experiences, such as e.g. beaches and club settings, along with traditional entertainment offers. A possible cause for this disparity between travelers' articulated needs for more life-changing travel experiences and underwhelming travel offerings may be attributed to the traditional survey-based methodology of capturing travelers' experiences. Unconscious desires, as well as social desirability biases might lead to an overestimation of the importance of higher-order, politically correct travel experiences. Given such psychological bias, this study uses a novel methodology of implicit attitude measurement to elicit consumers' true attitudes toward travel experiences. Findings show that potential travelers implicitly associate aesthetics more with positive impressions and education more with negative travel impressions. Comparing escapism and entertainment motives, respondents on average associate entertainment more with positive mood and escapism more with negative mood.

Keywords: *Implicit Association Test, experience economy, travel motives, experimental study*

1. Introduction

In the experience economy, consumers value more the associated experiences of the physical product offerings rather than its mere functional value. This poses a challenge for marketers as desired experiences have to be assessed during pre-purchase stage and product or service offerings must be customized to customers' subjective expectations.

Travel decision making has been one of the most investigated area in the study of tourism (Bieger & Laesser, 2004; Hyun Jun, Vogt & MacKay, 2007; Sirakaya & A. Woodside , 2005). Many of travel decision-making models present pre-visit stage (such as information search and expected experience from traveler) as an initial process (Um & Crompton, 1990). Initial process is critical for travelers in developing the destination image. Research had been shown that destination image plays a crucial role in developing travelers' attitude, hence their final decision to travel (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000 ;Yang, He and Gu, 2012).

Travel products are without any doubt at the forefront of the experience economy. As social travel is quickly becoming the norm for many travelers, innovative travel firms must strive to design travel offerings which allow group of travelers to socially engage with each other, discover new emerging destinations, and connect with new cultures. In spite of social travel's media acclaim, the majority of travel offers still focus on providing simple aesthetic experiences, as e.g. beautiful beach and club settings along with traditional entertainment offers. A possible explanation for this gap between articulated needs and realized offers might be that the experiences which travelers' truly search for are not well captured by traditional surveys. Unconscious desires as well as social desirability biases might lead to an overestimation of the importance of higher-order, politically correct travel experiences.

Many tourism studies have thus made an effort to reveal the tourists' attitudes towards destination that they wish to visit. The measurement of attitude traditionally relied on self-report rating such as survey, where people rate particular things such as tourism brochures, web based advertisings on bidimensional judgments such as 'favorable/unfavorable', 'good/bad', 'useful/useless' (Jang, 2016). The self-report measurement purely focuses in capturing respondents' explicit cognitive process (i.e. explicit consumer's attitude) (Yang, He, & Gu, 2012).

A major drawback from using self-report measurement is the inability of respondents to retrieve their personal memories automatically. Thus, it is more important to evaluate person's real attitude, as to avoid the drawback from using self-reported measurement. Traveler's real

attitude can be measured indirectly. This process is known as implicit attitude measurement. Implicit attitude is a persons' unconscious view toward an object, which can be triggered automatically by the mere presence of the objects outside its attentive oversight (Bohner & Dickel, 2011; Jang, 2016).

Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz (1998) introduced implicit association test (IAT). Nowadays IAT is one of the most widely used instruments in measuring individual's implicit cognition. However, there are lack of studies that had used this robust tool to measure attitude implicitly in the tourism – destination research (Lee & Kim, 2017; Kim, Chen, & Hwang, 2011; Kim & Chen, 2010). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to utilize Greenwald et al. (1998) Implicit Association Test to elicit travelers' true attitudes toward different types of travel experience by incorporating Pine & Gilmore's (1999) experience economy framework as its supporting framework.

2. Literature Review

Pine & Gilmore's (1999) experience economy framework is an important theoretical lens to understand consumption experience via its four realms: education, entertainment, escapism, and aesthetics (Figure 1). In the context of tourism destination, travelers are absorbed in the experience upon engaging in an entertainment or an educational activity, whereas those who participate in an aesthetics or escapist activity are likely to be *immersed* into the environment around them.

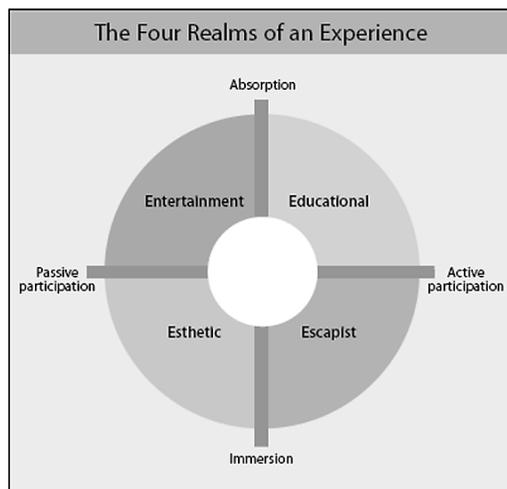


Figure 1: The four realms of economy experience (Pine & Gilmore, 1999)

Educational experience is about learning (e.g. visit museum, join up a local cuisine cooking course) and the entertainment experience is about sensing (e.g. watching circus, watching music concert). Furthermore, aesthetics experience is about being in the presence (e.g. lying on the beach) and escapist experience is about performing the activity at hand (e.g. trekking on rice field).

In the absorptive experience realm, tourist will decide whether to either actively (e.g. educational) engage with the experiential activities or passively (e.g. entertainment) with them. The decision to engage passively or aggressively will decide the type of experience activity. Similar to the absorptive experience real, tourists, who immerse themselves in the environment will decide whether to participate actively (e.g. escapist) or passively (e.g. aesthetic) in all activities during their vacation.

The IAT attempts to indirectly uncover intrinsic feelings (Fazio & Olson, 2003) as well as unconscious cognitive association (e.g. attitude, self-esteem, self-concept) by using reaction time-date (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998). In IAT procedures, participants are exposed with a series of stimuli which can be either pictures and/or words. Then, they are asked to assign each to a particular category. Participants' responses are measured according to their reaction time on how quickly they are able to assign the stimuli to a particular category correctly.

The IAT paradigm has gained increasing recognition among researchers attempting to measure consumers' implicit responses (Sookeun, Liu, & Dae-Young, 2015; Greenwald, & Banaji, 2000; Asendorpf, Banse, & Mücke, 2002; Maison et al., 2004). Greenwald et al. (1998) state that the IAT procedures seeks to measure implicit attitudes by measuring their underlying automatic evaluation, thus, it can reveal the strength of respondents' mental associations between a target concept and its evaluative attribute (Sookeun et al. , 2015). Researcher s have been widely used IAT in social psychology research such as self –esteem and self-concept (Greenwald, & Banaji, 2000), personality traits (Asendorpf et al., 2002).

In the context of marketing research, e.g. Maison et al. (2004) employed IAT to investigated implicit brand attitudes and their relation to explicit attitude, product usage and product differentiation.. Within the context of the tourism field, several studies had employed the IAT to measure tourists' sub-consciousness association about international destinations (Sookeun, Liu, & Dae-Young, 2015), and tourists' attitudes towards destinations (Kim, & Chen, 2010; Kim, Chen, & Hwang, 2011).

By incorporating Pine and Gilmore's four realms experience economy and implicit association test, the present study sought to further understand how travelers' perceived association on the experience with theme of education, entertainment, escapist and aesthetic (figure 1). Later, we divided the experiment into two experimental study based on connection that the tourists have during their last visit (absorptive vs. immersive experience). Thus, in one experimental design, we have educational experience versus aesthetic experience category. And the other one, we have entertainment experience versus escapist experience category. Each of the study was paired with the pleasant versus unpleasant words association. The goal, at the end, is to identify which of these experiences is perceived as pleasant and unpleasant experience to travelers.

3. Method

The IAT is composed of several blocks, and the average response time for each block is measured for comparison. Faster sorting in one block versus another indicates a particular pattern of association (Jang, 2016). For this experiment, we split the IAT into two experiment studies with the total of 411 participants from three different universities in Indonesia.

Experiment 1 used the IAT to assess implicit attitude towards a pair of target attitude, thus, 257 participants in this experiment 1 responded to target-concept discriminations in a form of pictures of destination which associated with the educational experience (e.g., painting, cooking, visiting museum, wine review) versus pictures of destination which associated with the aesthetic experience (e.g., garden, beach, mountain, village). The target concept discrimination was used in combination with discrimination of pleasant meaning words (e.g., awesome, fun, satisfying, comfortable) from unpleasant meaning words (e.g., bad, disgusting, pathetic, unfortunate).

In experiment 2, 154 participants responded to target-concept discrimination in a form of pictures of destination which associated with the entertainment experience (e.g., watching: music concert, dance performance, circus) versus pictures of destination which associated with the escapist experience (e.g., tracking, skiing, diving). The combination of discrimination words also used in this experiment with the pleasant meaning words (e.g., fresh, quiet, entertaining, excited) and unpleasant meaning words (e.g., noisy, annoying, boring, disturbing).

The experiment was conducted online, the survey link was sent via participants email and the information was given at the beginning before respondents started to participate in five steps

of experiment. Each of experiment (1 and 2) used 14 stimulus words and 14 stimulus pictures. The IAT consisted of five procedural steps: (a) categorize the initial target concepts (educational vs. aesthetic or entertainment vs. escapist) (b) evaluative attribute discrimination, (c) combined task, (d) reversed target-concept discrimination, and (e) reversed combined task. The second round of IAT included only four steps because participants did not need to repeat practice of the evaluative discrimination. Thus the steps were as follow: (f) initial target-concept discrimination, (g) first combined task, (h) reversed target-concept discrimination, and (i) reversed combined task. At the end of the experiment, respondents received feedback regarding their preference of destination choices based on their main response latency in millisecond and percentage correct task.

4. Results

We followed the revised IAT scoring algorithm (Greenwald, Nosek, and Banaji 2003) and treated the raw data according to following procedure: First, we eliminated trial response latencies greater than 10,000 milliseconds. Then, we included all response latencies, whereby we added a latency correction to false responses. Finally, we calculated the difference score between the congruent and incongruent trial block, divided by the pooled standard deviation of response latencies across both blocks). The resultant measure resembles the IAT D score (Greenwald, Nosek, and Banaji 2003).

The analysis of experiment 1 compares the relevance of aesthetic versus educational motives for travel. The analyses show that respondents associate aesthetics more with pleasant impressions and education more with unpleasant impressions, with a significant D-score of 0.195 (std error 0.050). This second key finding is particularly interesting given the sample population of students whereby a desire for learning could have been expected.

As a robustness check of findings, we finally checked for possible sequence effects of the IAT experiment. Hereto, we analyzed the differences in the estimated D-scores across the two settings of the IAT experiment, either starting with the compatible or incompatible task. The following table exhibits the calculated D-scores for the IAT experiment comparing educational with aesthetic motives. As can be seen, there were no sequence effects present in our study. Thus, findings are not influenced by between-block learning effects.

	Sequence of IAT Test		
	compatible first	incompatible first	Total
Mean D-Score	0.199	0.191	0.195
Standard Deviation	0.619	0.614	0.617
Number of observations	84	66	150

Table 1: Robustness Check of findings of the IAT tests

The analysis of experiment 2 allows us to gain insights about implicit emotional associations with escapism as compared to entertainment as travel motive. Comparing escapist and entertainment motives, respondents associated entertainment significantly more with positive mood than escapism, manifested by a D-score of 0.182 (std. error 0.034). This is noticeable given the sample population of young people who often explicitly state escape and adventure as a motive of self-fulfillment (Brown 2005).

5. Summary

Both experiments reveal implicit preferences towards travel motives different from those which might have been expected and which were reported from standard questionnaires. Thus it can be proposed that the implicit motives for travel deviate from explicitly stated motives.

Two experiments tested the travelers' associations toward destination offers that provide a particular experience to them. Result in experiment 1 reveal that implicitly respondents have stronger positive association toward aesthetic experiences as compared to educational experiences during their destination visit. This implies that Indonesian travelers' prefer to just passively enjoy the nature and immerse in the environment surrounding them. Therefore, compared to actively involving in local cuisine cooking class, consuming the beautiful scenery of the mountain or lying on the beach becomes more favorable activities for Indonesian travelers. In experiment 2, the results also reveal that Indonesian travelers prefer entertainment experiences more than escapist experience. Hence, marketer can offer activities which enable travelers to lay back, become passively involved in activities or just absorb the environment surrounding them

(e.g. watching traditional dance performance, watching performing arts) compared to active activities like hiking, trekking or scuba diving which requires travelers to immerse in the environment and to actively engage in activity.

6. References

- Asendorpf, J. B., Banse, R., & Mücke, D. (2002). Double dissociation between implicit and explicit personality self-concept: The case of shy behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 83 (2), pp. 380-393.
- Bieger T., & Laesser C., . (2004). Information Sources for Travel Decisions: Toward a Source Process Model. *Journal of Travel research* 42 (4), 357-371.
- Bohner, G. & Dickel, N. (2011). Attitudes and attitude change. *Annual Review of Psychology* (62), pp. 391 - 417.
- Brown, S. (2005). Travelling with a purpose: Understanding the motives and benefits of volunteer vacationers. *Current issues in tourism*, 8(6), 479-496.
- Chen, C. F., & Tsai, D. . (2007). How destination image and evaluative factors affect behavioral intentions? *Tourism Management*, 28(4), 1115-1122.
- Fazio, R. H., & Olson, M. A. (2003). Implicit measures in social cognition: Their meaning and use. *Annual Review of Psychology* 54, pp. 297 - 327.
- Greenwald, A. G., & Banaji, M. R. . (2000). Using the implicit association test to measure self-esteem and self-concept. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74 (6), pp. 1022-1038.
- Greenwald, A. G., McGhee, D. E., & Schwartz, J. L. K. (1998). Measuring individual differences in implicit cognition: The Implicit Association Test. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 76 (6), pp. 1464-1480.
- Greenwald, A. G., Nosek, B. A., & Banaji, M. R. (2003). Understanding and using the implicit association test: I. An improved scoring algorithm. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 85(2), 197.
- Hyun Jun, S., Vogt, C. A., & MacKay, K. M. (2007). Relationship between travel information search and travel product purchase in pretrip contexts. *Journal of Travel Research*, 45(3), 266 - 274.
- Jang, D. (2016). Explicit and implicit attitudes and attitude changes towards tourism destination: Las Vegas, USA, versus Jeongseon, South Korea. *International Journal of Tourism Research* (18), pp. 417-422.
- Kahneman, D., & Thaler, R. (1991). Economic analysis and the psychology of utility: Applications to compensation policy. *The American Economic Review* 81 (2), pp. 341-346.
- Kim, D.-Y., & Chen, Z. (2010). Are people aware of their attitudes towards destination? Understanding the Implicit Association Test in tourism research. *Tourism Analysis* 15(3), pp. 299-313.
- Kim, D.-Y., Chen, Z., & Hwang, Y.-H. (2011). Are we really measuring what we think we're measuring? Assessing attitude towards destinations with the Implicit Association Test. *International Journal of Tourism Research* 13 (5), pp. 468-481.

Implicit cognitions in the experience economy

- Lee, K.,H. & Kim, D., Y. (2017). Explicit and implicit image cognitions towards destination: Application of the single-target Implicit Association Test (ST-IAT). *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management* (6), pp. 396-406.
- Maison, D., Greenwald, A. G., & Bruin, R. H. (2004). Predictive validity of the implicit association test in studies of brands, consumer attitude and behavior. *Journal of Consumer Psychology* 14 (4), pp. 405 - 415.
- Pine, B. J., & Gilmore, J. H. (1999). The experience economy: work is theatre & every business a stage. *Harvard Business Press*.
- Sirakaya, E., & Woodside . (2005). Building and Testing Theories of Decision Making by Travelers. *Tourism Management*, 26, 815-32.
- Sookeun, C., Liu, L., & Dae-Young, K. (2015). Accessing tourists' unconscious associations about international destination: Data fuzzification of reaction times in the Implicit Association Test. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing* 32:5, pp. 578-594.
- Tapachai, N., & Waryszak, R. . (2000). An examination of the role of beneficial image in tourist destination selection. *Journal of Travel Research*, 39(1), 37- 44.
- Um, S., and J. Crompton. (1990). Attitude Determinants in Tourism Destination Choice. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 17 (3), 432-48.
- Yang, J., He, J., and Gu, G. (2012). The implicit measurement of destination image: The application of Implicit Association Tests. *Tourism Management* (33), 50-52.