HOW SHOPPING SATISFACTION CONTRIBUTES TO INTERNATIONAL TOURISM SATISFACTION AND TOURISM EXPENDITURES BY GENDER: ANALYSIS OF U.S. TOURISTS IN SOUTH KOREA

Joyce Middaugh, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, USA
Lynn Eunjung Kwak, Southern Connecticut State University, New Haven, Connecticut, USA
Fang Meng, University of South Carolina, Columbia, USA

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to examine how international tourists’ shopping satisfaction related to their overall satisfaction as tourists and the tourists’ expenditure differences by gender. A survey was conducted among U.S. citizens of who were traveling to South Korea (n = 422). The survey took place at transport hubs of the major international airports and seaports in South Korea prior to tourists’ departure. The findings of this research concluded that tourist shopping satisfaction was significantly correlated with overall tourist satisfaction. In addition, different shopping patterns were reported among men and women tourists. The results of this study confirm that a positive retail shopping experience is an important aspect of overall international tourism.

Keywords: United States tourists, shopping satisfaction, gender

1. INTRODUCTION

For many tourists, traveling is not about making it to a destination, but escaping reality and enjoying leisure time. International tourism includes accommodation, entertainment, sightseeing, and shopping (Belk and Costa, 1995) and brings a considerable amount of money into the destination country. International tourists reached 693 million in 2003 and are expected to be 1.56 billion by 2020 worldwide (Timothy, 2005). When hosting countries better understand what encourages tourists to shop, they can better serve tourists. By satisfying the visiting tourists, a travel destination remains successful.

Tourists, people who non-routinely travel away from home (Littrell et al., 1994), spend a considerable amount of money in shopping. Tourist spending has been found to be three to four times higher than ordinary shoppers (Littrell et al., 2004). Although previous research results found that shopping is a major expenditure when traveling (Oh et al., 2004; Yuksel, 2004), little research has been conducted on United States tourists’ shopping behavior abroad. In addition, previous studies did not identify relationships between tourists’ shopping satisfaction and overall tourist satisfaction.

This study aimed to contribute to the literature by examining the direct relationship between shopping satisfaction and overall tourist satisfaction. Further, this study investigated relationships between tourists’ gender and expenditure levels while they are shopping abroad.

The purpose of the study was to examine how international tourists’ shopping satisfaction related to their overall tourists’ satisfaction and the tourists’ expenditure differences by gender.

This study examined U.S. tourists’ shopping behaviors and satisfaction as they visited an international destination – South Korea. Western shoppers find Asian products to be unique, which appears to lead to higher satisfaction (Wong and Law, 2003).

In addition, when visiting Asian countries, Westerners tend to spend more money than tourists from other countries. In 2010, South Korea generated $71 billion in travel and tourism (WTTC, 2010). Since travel and tourism influence various sectors of the economy, this impact can be greater. In 2007, United States tourists comprised 7.8% of 6.4 million foreign visitors to South Korea, which is the third largest group after Japanese and Chinese tourists (WTTC, 2010).

Understanding U.S. tourists’ shopping behavior in South Korea can help both U.S. tourists have better experiences, enhance South Korea’s tourist industry, and serve as an example for other tourist
satisfaction and their shopping behavior studies. As an international destination, South Korea has a mix of souvenirs and products that should interest a wide range of consumers, such as luxury brands, authentic souvenirs, and trendy products.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

2.1. Tourist Overall Satisfaction
Consumer satisfaction is a positive and affective reaction, which is based on the overall post-purchase evaluation of a consumption experience (Babin and Griffin, 1998; Churchill and Surprenant, 1982; Oliver, 1980). High satisfaction is believed to result in a positive attitude and increased likelihood of the consumer recommending the product and service to others (Anderson et al., 1994).

Expectancy-disconfirmation theory explains that customer satisfaction is an evaluative response to the product purchase and consumption experience, resulting from a comparison of what was expected and what is received. Previous studies have explained that tourist satisfaction is based upon tourist expectations and judgments in regards to the attributes and function of the destination (Heung and Cheng, 2000; Meng et al., 2006).

Another proposed satisfaction theory, the Performance-only approach, indicates that perceived performance is a strong and direct determinant of customer satisfaction (Churchill and Surprenant, 1982; Crompton and Love, 1995; Li and Carr, 2004). According to the theory, when a product or service performs at a desired level, the customer will be satisfied regardless of any previous expectations.

This approach implies that a confirmation-disconfirmation calculation is unnecessary since consumers’ prior experience may bias perceptions of performance; expectations may be good for choice, but not for satisfaction measures (Woodruff et al., 1973). In a tourist context, Crompton and Love’s (1995) study concluded that the best satisfaction model was the Performance-only theory, which also best predicts tourist’s future behavior and overall satisfaction. Therefore, this particular study adopted the Performance-only approach.

2.2. Shopping Satisfaction
Shopping and tourism are increasingly associated with each other, although some tourists may shop more or less than others (Kim and Littrell, 1999). Overall tourist satisfaction is influenced by many factors. One of these factors can be shopping during travel (Oh et al., 2004).

Shopping provides an escape from routines, and a retail environment helps consumers relax and enjoy consumption experiences (Timothy, 2005). During their international travel, shopping is considered to be one of the important activities among U.S. tourists (Kim and Littrell, 1999; Kim and Littrell, 2001). Tourists are led to believe that buying souvenirs is an important part of traveling and information available for tourists usually includes a section on shopping (Belk and Costa, 1995).

Previous studies have suggested that shopping satisfaction is based upon service, quality, and value that customers receive (Frank and Enkawa, 2009; Gómez et al., 2004). Service provided by sales associates is an important indicator of the shoppers’ satisfaction (Heung and Cheng, 2000; Tosun et al., 2007). For example, many cultures negotiate when making a purchase, while others do not. The language barrier is another challenge between a salesperson and the customer (Yuksel, 2004). According to Joseph-Mathews et al. (2009), customers experienced pleasurable emotional responses and more satisfaction when signs were legible, visible, and adaptive to the market.

Therefore, international shopping areas could better accommodate tourists by improving their communication capabilities. Tourist destinations are distinguished by various retail locations and the high accessibility of souvenirs (Anderson and Littrell, 1995). International tourists commonly demand wide and distinctive assortments of souvenirs to remember their travel experience (Swanson, 2004). International tourists are a unique group of shoppers and they create challenges for travel destinations and retailers.
Retailers need to respond to the cultural differences in service expectations of customers from other countries (Wong and Law, 2003; Yuksel, 2004). Based on the above discussion, it is hypothesized that

\( H_1 \): Tourist shopping satisfaction is significantly related to overall tourist satisfaction.
\( H_2 \): Tourists who identify shopping barriers compared to those who do not identify shopping barriers have significantly lower levels of overall tourist satisfaction.

2.3. Shopping Expenditure and Gender Differences
Previous research (Littrell et al., 2004; Oh et al., 2004; Yuksel, 2004) indicated that shopping is tourists’ major expenditure and they spend more during their travel than they would at home.

However, limited research has been conducted regarding relationships between gender differences and tourist spending. Within the international tourism and shopping industry, understanding gender differences would assist retailers to cater to their target market more effectively.

In addition, there have been differing study results about gender and shopping. For example, there were no differences as to how males and females define authenticity, uniqueness of merchandise, and why they purchase souvenirs (Littrell et al., 1993). On the contrary, men and women made choices differently in such areas as recreational shopping, price/value consciousness, and bargain seeking (Bakwell and Mitchell, 2006; Oh et al., 2004). When traveling with their wives, husbands shopped more than at home (Anderson and Littrell, 1995). Women not only improved their knowledge of the visited location, but actively engaged in shopping while traveling, (Anderson and Littrell, 1995). Based on the previous research on gender and shopping, we propose that,

\( H_3 \): Gender is significantly related to expenditure levels among tourists.

3. METHODOLOGY

In this study, survey participants were U.S. citizens who were leaving South Korea after their stay. The survey took place at transport hubs of the three major international airports and two seaports in South Korea. Trained English-speaking researchers approached tourists who were waiting for their departures in the waiting rooms.

The survey was conducted in English and the total number of usable surveys was 422. The survey was conducted between January and March of 2007 (n = 221) and 2008 (n = 201).

The questionnaire took about ten minutes to complete. It asked respondents to rate the importance of a series of travel behavior variables.
TABLE 1: Demographic Characteristic of Participants.

\[(N = 422)\]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>(n)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>64.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-20</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>24.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 61 age</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below $60,000</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$60,001-100,000</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,001-200,000</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than $200,000</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>38.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>46.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>41.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The survey also included questions about the tourists’ activities, tourist destinations, shopping destinations, and shopping items purchased during their trip. The following responses are listed in order of frequency: The major activities were sightseeing and business, which were followed by shopping. The tourist destinations included large cities, shopping areas, museums, and traditional palaces and villages, respectively. In terms of frequent shopping destinations, they listed airport duty-free shops, small retail stores, and open markets as the most visited. The major items that they purchased during their travel were clothing, food, and traditional crafts, respectively. The questionnaires included questions on demographic information such as gender, age, and occupation. Demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1.

3.1. Measurements

Overall tourist satisfaction was measured by three statements: “Will you recommend Korea as a tourist destination to other people?”, “Has your impression of Korea changed positively after this visit?”, and “Rate your overall satisfaction of this trip to Korea.” Participants were asked to indicate their opinions for each statement. The statements were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = Very Unlikely; 5 = Absolutely for the first two statements and 1 = Very Unsatisfied; 5 = Very Satisfied for the last statement). Cronbach’s alpha was .65 for the overall tourist satisfaction measurement. Overall shopping satisfaction was rated with one statement (1 = Poor; 5 = Excellent).

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

To test Hypothesis 1 (tourist shopping satisfaction is significantly related to overall tourist satisfaction), correlation analysis was used. Based on the analysis, overall tourist satisfaction is significantly related to tourist shopping satisfaction \((r = 0.27, p < .05)\). Therefore, \(H_1\) was supported. To test Hypothesis 2 (tourists who identify shopping barriers compared to those who do not identify shopping barriers have significantly lower levels of overall tourist satisfaction), a t-test was used. In this study a list of common barriers to international shopping were presented to the survey participants (e.g., communication barriers, lack of directional signs, distinctively Korean products, and soliciting). They chose up to three items that they felt were inconvenient during their shopping. Based on their answers, two groups of tourists were
identified: tourists who identified their shopping barriers (n = 236) and tourists who did not identify their shopping barriers (n = 186). Then, shopping satisfaction differences between these two groups were examined via t-tests. Corresponding to each comparison made between these, Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations of the outcome variables, and the t-value from t-tests. The results of each Levene’s test were not significant for all outcome measurements, which indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was met for these analyses. Tourists who did not identify their shopping barriers had significantly higher overall satisfaction mean scores (M = 4.24) than their counterparts (M = 4.02) (t = 3.72, df = 420, p < .05). Therefore, H2 was supported.

**TABLE 2: Mean Scores and t-tests for level of overall tourist satisfaction for those who identified shopping dissatisfaction and those who did not identify shopping dissatisfaction.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic characteristics</th>
<th>Identified barriers (n = 236)</th>
<th>Did not identify barriers (n = 186)</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t (n = 422)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall tourist satisfaction</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: M = Means, SD = Standard Deviations (n = 422). p < .05.

**TABLE 3: Mean Scores and t-tests between male and female tourists in their shopping expenditure.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic characteristics</th>
<th>Male (n = 254)</th>
<th>Female (n = 146)</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t (n = 400)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total expenses</td>
<td>1,636</td>
<td>1,455</td>
<td>.328</td>
<td>.485</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping expenditure rate</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>-4.041</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: M = Means, SD = Standard Deviations (n = 422). p < .05.

To test Hypothesis 3 (gender is significantly related to expenditure levels among tourists), a t-test was used. For their expenditures, males had higher mean score (M = 1,636) than females (M = 1,328). In terms of percentage of shopping expenditure compared to their entire expenses, males had a significantly lower mean score (M = .23) than females (M = .35) (Table 3). Therefore, H3 was supported.

5. DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study was to examine how international tourists’ shopping satisfaction related to their overall tourists satisfaction and the tourists’ expenditure differences by gender. The results of this study show that tourist shopping satisfaction is strongly related to overall tourist satisfaction. In addition, overall tourist satisfaction was higher for tourists who did not identify barriers compared to tourists who experienced shopping barriers.

The results confirm that a positive shopping experience is an important aspect of international tourism. Among shopping barriers, communication between tourists and sales associates was acknowledged as the most critical obstacle. When tourists lack knowledge about potential merchandise choices, they need to rely more on a retailer who can provide them with information and services (Littrell et al., 1994). In this study, when tourists experienced difficulties in communicating in English with sales associates, their overall shopping satisfaction and tour satisfaction were relatively low.

The results of this study support previous research, which consequently suggests that international shopping areas could improve the tourist experience by encouraging their staff to improve their communication skills (Heung and Cheng, 2000; Tosun et al., 2007). Communication capabilities include not only interpersonal modes but also effective signage.
Clear signage is important for international tourists when they attend cultural events, use transportation, and visit retail stores. In addition, selling practices such as soliciting, personal space discrepancy and unclear body language can cause lowered satisfaction.

Regarding tourists' gender differences, men spent more money overall when shopping, but women spent a higher percentage of the travel budget on shopping. In order to understand the difference between males and females' spending behavior, it is important to understand each gender's shopping motives. In their study of local merchant loyalty, Noble et al. (2006) concluded that males had a stronger motive to seek product information and females had a stronger motive to seek merchandise uniqueness and assortment.

As the results of this study indicated, the gender of international tourists is an important factor in their shopping expenditure, and international destinations need to employ different retail strategies to attract customers based on gender. As most research conducted focuses on women tourists, more research is recommended to examine men's shopping behavior and the reason men are more inclined to shop in tourist places (Timothy, 2005).

It is important to note that tourism is a multi-disciplinary industry and includes various inter-dependent sectors. Therefore, overall tourist satisfaction is a multi-dimensional concept comprised of multiple sources of satisfaction (Chi and Qu, 2009). Tourist satisfaction is influenced by a variety of individual attributes of all the products and services that make up the entire experience (Pizam and Ellis, 1999). For example, tourists' evaluations may be based on specific judgments and feelings about activities such as sightseeing, shopping, and entertainment.

Therefore, identifying and measuring satisfaction with individual components at a destination is necessary to accurately assess tourists' overall satisfaction. In addition to the various destination attributes, a tourist's personal characteristics likely influence the individual's level of satisfaction, and further impact the tourist's intentions to revisit a destination and/or recommend it to other people.

This study had several limitations that need to be considered when interpreting its results. Due to the survey method, in-depth interviews or observations were not conducted to examine causal relationships among variables or unique individual tourist's concerns. The survey took place in two consecutive years using a random sampling of U.S. tourists in South Korea. Therefore, future studies may employ open-ended questions and observations of tourist buying behaviors.

Despite these limitations, this study uniquely investigated previously unexamined gender differences in the context of international tourists' retail shopping experiences. The results also confirm that a positive retail shopping experience is an important aspect of overall international tourism. A satisfactory shopping experience is related to tourists' overall satisfaction and enhances the image of tourist destinations. Travel destinations can remain successful by effectively satisfying international tourists' experiences.

REFERENCES:


**AUTHOR PROFILES:**

**Mrs. Joyce Middaugh** is an Honors Program student in the Department of Human and Consumer Sciences at Ohio University.

**Dr. Lynn Eunjung Kwak** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Marketing, the School of Business at Southern Connecticut State University.

**Dr. Fang Meng** is an Assistant Professor in the School of Hotel, Restaurant, and Tourism Management at University of South Carolina.