

# **Impacts of Time Perspectives on Tourists' Travel Intention: The Mediating Roles of Travel Motivation and Travel Attitude**

LAI Tin Hang

## **Abstract**

Travel and tourism has been regarded as an industry that entails movement of people between the place of abode and a destination(s) of interest. Tourism scholars have always been interested in studying how tourists make decisions to travel to a particular destination. Therefore, behavioural intention has been an important concept in tourism. Various factors play different roles in the decision-making process which makes it complicated and difficult to predict tourist behaviour. However, studies aimed at understanding the role played by past, present or future temporal considerations in formulation of behavioural intention have been scarce, as previous studies incorporating the time perceptiveness were mainly in fields other than tourism.

In psychology and leisure studies, an individual's thoughts toward the past, present, or future constitute a key theoretical concept and are thus recognized as one of the fundamental antecedents of future behaviour. The cognitive temporal model provides a useful account of how time perspective relates to travel consumption via enhanced motivation and attitude (Bergadaa, 1990). When one looks for direct evidence of the cognitive temporal model, there is little empirical evidence to support it. Likewise, existing tourists' psychology studies are inclined more toward a behavioural approach rather than cognitive approach (Scott, 2020). The behavioural approach concerns how the environment shapes tourist responses. Behaviour is simply a response to environmental stimuli. In other words, the behavioural approach does not take into

consideration the subjective psychological processes that mediate the relationship between antecedents of stimuli and the outcomes. This missing link leaves understanding of the psychological processes that underpin behaviour potentially incomplete. A cognitive approach aims to understand the psychological / mental processes that occur in the journey from stimulus to behaviour. It also acknowledges the mediating processes that go into shaping of tourist behaviour, and different psychological outcomes that impact the way they respond to different circumstances. While psychology literature has used the cognitive approach, it has been scarcely validated in the tourism context. Considering tourism as a complex discipline, cognitive approach is useful in solving basic conceptual difficulties. Drawing upon the cognitive temporal model, this study adapts the cognitive approach to examine the direct relationship between the time perspective and behaviour as well as the mediating relationship between these two constructs in the context of Hong Kong tourists travelling abroad.

This study has adapted a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. The qualitative study was conducted at the first stage, while the second stage involved a quantitative study that examines the relationships among all suggested constructs. In the first stage, a thorough review of the relevant literature was performed to specify the domain of each construct and the relationships among constructs. The results obtained from the literature review were evaluated and transformed into the proposed conceptual model. Focus group interviews and expert panel opinions were then invited to ensure the items derived from the literature are appropriate and relevant.

The second stage involved a pilot study to fine-tune the measurement instrument. Based on results of the pilot study, the instrument was refined for reliability and validity improvement. Owing to COVID-19, an online survey was posted on various online travel communities based in Hong Kong. The final questionnaire was administered to Hong Kong residents who plan to travel abroad for pleasure in the coming twelve months. A total of 519 questionnaires were collected. Exploratory factor analysis was used for item reduction and to identify the dimensionality of the important research concepts. Confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modelling were used to confirm and test causal relationships of the constructs.

Results of structural equation modelling show that push-based travel motivation and travel attitude are the antecedents of travel intention. Additionally, push-based travel motivation is significantly affected by three types of time perspectives. Present time perspective and future time perspective have significant impacts on travel attitude and travel intention, whereas past time perspective does not. Finally, mediating effects of push-based travel motivation and travel attitude on the correlations between three types of time perspectives and travel intention are identified by bootstrapping. The results indicate that the mediating roles of push-based travel motivation and travel attitude have significantly positive effects on the relationship between three types of time perspectives and travel intention. This suggests that temporal considerations in which individuals characteristically focus on the past, present, and/or future induce them to fulfil their internal needs of travel, influence the formation of a favourable attitude toward visiting a particular destination, and this favourable attitude in turn facilitates tourists' expectations of future travel to the said destination for vacation purpose.

From a broad theoretical perspective, this study demonstrates that travel intention can be directly and indirectly derived from time perspective, travel attitude and push-based travel motivation. A clear implication of this study is that the travel intention gets formed in a multi-faceted psychological process, and it is not only dependent on certain needs of the tourist but is also influenced by the tourist's emotional feelings towards travel as well as the temporal consideration focusing on the past, present, and/or future. Interestingly, little effort has been made to explore this arena. This study has made a pioneering effort to apply time perspective in the tourism domain and develops a framework to underscore the direct and mediating effects of time perspective on travel intention. This provides a novel approach to researchers who are interested in understanding travel intention and travel decision making process. The present study also empirically develops instruments for measuring Hong Kong tourists' push-based travel motivation and time perspectives. By examining the relationship between travel motivation and travel attitude, it provides empirical support to Gnoth's (1997) conceptual framework in which travel motivation precedes attitude. Moreover, this study has made an important contribution to the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) by addressing the lack of consistency regarding the role of attitude in determining behavioural intentions.

From a practical perspective, suggestions are provided to destination management organisations and tourism planners. Understanding the time perspective – travel intention mechanism helps tourism planners in contexts of destination promotion,

market segmentation and special interest tourism development. In addition, the scale for travel motivation developed through stringent procedures in this study can be employed by destination management organisations to measure the level of travel motivation from the perspectives of Hong Kong tourists. This measurement should help tourism planners to use that information to design their promotional plans.

Keywords: Time perspective, travel motivation, attitude, travel intention, decision making process