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CONSUMER DECISION MAKING IN TOURISM OF VIETNAMESE TOURISTS

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Abstract

This article reports on a study of consumer decision making in tourism. Authors surveyed approximately 550 tourists in the north of Vietnam to assess levels of consumer decision making including awareness, attitude and behavior. Independent variables included region and the gender of tourists. Although there are no region and gender differences in consumer decision making, correlations and mediating relationships are found.

Keywords: *Consumer decision making, tourism, awareness, attitude and behavior*

Introduction

In recent years in Vietnam, a considerable amount of effort has been devoted to understanding the processes by which consumers arrive at some type of decision (usually a choice to purchase). Despite the attention this topic has received, a large portion of the variance in consumer choice has yet to be explained. The present paper is an attempt to account for some of this unexplained variance. Some researchers have tended to apply decision models which have been borrowed from other areas of inquiry (e.g., social psychology, economics, and cognitive psychology). Other researchers have focused on cognitive processing that occurs immediately prior to the act of purchase (or selection). Yet many decisions are made repeatedly or frequently over time and thus involve continuous-as opposed to discrete-processing (Hogarth 1981). Deshpande et al. (1983) proposed a view which attempts to describe consumer decision making in situations that involve repeated purchases over time and that can be typically considered as low in importance or involvement. There are some tactics, these tactics could be related to price (e.g., "buy the cheapest brand" or "buy the brand on sale"), performance ("buy the brand which works the best"), affect ("buy the most pleasing brand"), or normative factors ("buy the same brand my mother buys;"



Deshpande et al. 1983). It is important to note that these tactics are even more simple and involve less effort than many of the heuristics already suggested in the consumer literature (Engel and Blackwell 1983). Ivan Wen et al. (2016) examined the relationship between the Internet and purchase decision making. The authors paid attention to issues such as causes and consequences of information overload and consumer confusion, and interacting effects associated with communication channels and consumer decision-making.

In this paper, we address the limitation in the literature, and examine the mediator role of Attitude on the relationship between Awareness and Behavior in consumer decision making of the Vietnamese tourists. The following hypotheses (Hs) are proposed in relation to the consequences of the main factors:

H1: The survey will show adequate factorial validity as a measure of consumer decision making in tourism

H2: The mean levels of awareness, attitude, and behavior are significantly different

H3: The latent factors of consumer decision making are correlated

H4: The effect of awareness on behavior is partially mediated by attitude.

Methods

The authors designed a questionnaire to be answered by tourists in the north of Vietnam. This questionnaire sought (a) demographic information about the respondent; (b) the tourists' consumer decision making in tourism including awareness, attitude and behavior. The questionnaire contained 17 Likert-type 3 points scale questions. The authors pretested the original version on 200 tourists and removed, relocated, or revised questions that were too easy or difficult. Most tourists completed the questionnaire in about 30 minutes.

To best understand and interpret the data, a series of indexes was developed. These indexes grouped questions by type of knowledge or information. The questions were derived from topics covered in textbooks and real life. The questionnaire was administered in both city and suburban areas; 550 tourists participated in the survey. The sample showed broad demographic variation. Among respondents, 46% were female and 54% were male. The data is analysed by using SPSS and AMOS version 23.

Results

Factor analysis

Assuming that identifying latent variables that account for the correlations among measured variables is the goal of the research. As researchers, authors decided to use the structural equation modelling analysis (Gefen, D. et al, 2000) in this research. Both



exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) are used. The model tested was a relatively simple model with 3 latent factors (Awareness, Attitude, Behavior) and 17 measured variables. The H1 was accepted.

Correlations and descriptive statistics for the factors are presented in the table below (see Table 1).

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and correlations

Factors	Mean	SD	1	2	3
1. Awareness	1.96	.46			
2. Attitude	1.45	.34	.16**		
3. Behavior	1.66	.41	.44**	.28**	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

N = 550

As indicated in the Table 1, Attitude score is lower in comparison to other factors: Awareness and Behavior. In other words, Awareness and Behavior levels were significantly higher than Attitude levels. The mean level of Awareness was 1.96; for Attitude, 1.45; and for Behavior, 1.66. There are no region and gender differences in consumer decision making of the Vietnamese tourists.

As the correlations in Table 1 show, Behavior was positively correlated with each of the other factors. The correlations ranged from a low of .16 to a high of .44. The correlation between Awareness and Behavior was .44. This indicates that when the Awareness quality was good, tourists tend to apply it to the reality, thus confirming H2 and H3.

Mediating relationships

The important point for mediating relationship is that a third variable plays an important role in governing the relationship between two other variables. Baron and Kenny (2009) argued that for us to claim a mediating relationship, we need to first show that there is a significant relationship in the direct pathway between the independent variable (Awareness) and the dependent variable (Behavior).

Direct pathway

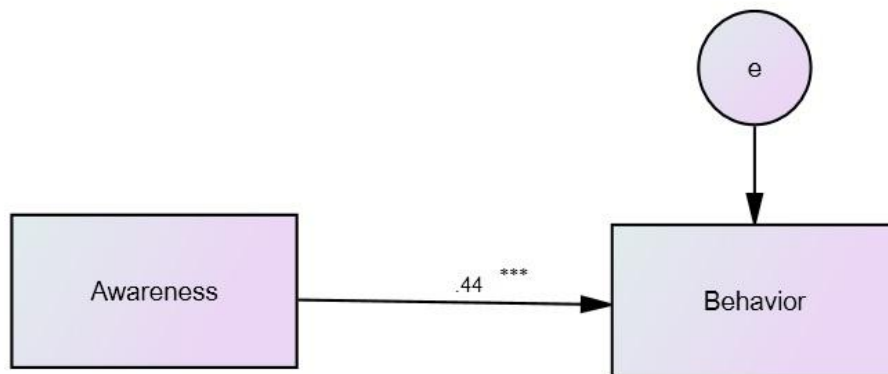


Figure 1. The relationship between Awareness and Behavior. *** $p < .001$

The regression coefficient for the direct pathway Awareness on Behavior is 0.44. In this case, it is also correlation between Awareness and Behavior.

Indirect pathway

The next step is to show that there is a significant relationship between the independent variable and the mediator (Attitude). Then we need to show that there is a significant relationship between the mediator and the dependent variable.

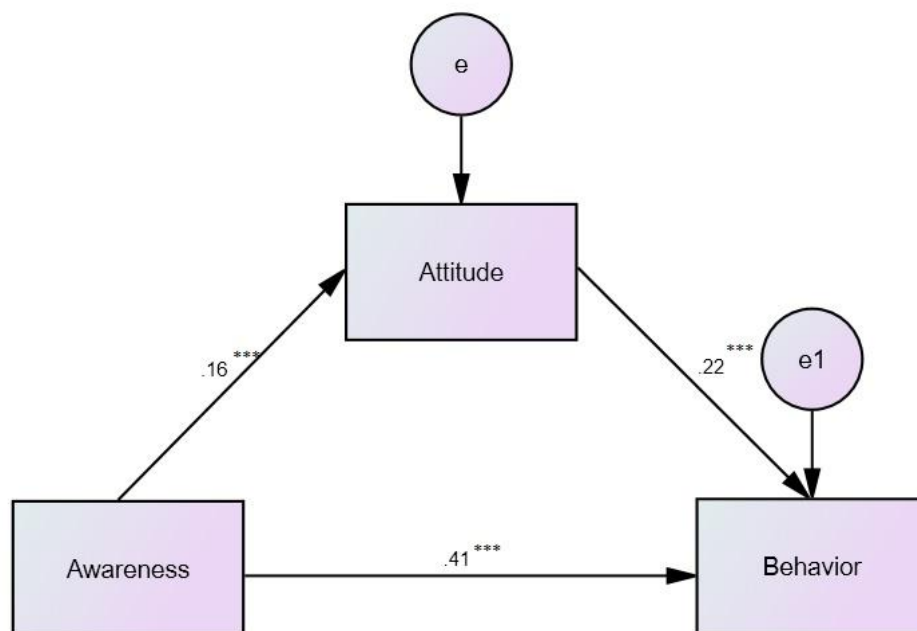


Figure 2. Mediating role of Attitude in explaining the relation between Awareness and Behavior. *** $p < .001$



The regression coefficient for the direct path Awareness on Attitude is 0.16, whereas the regression coefficient for the direct path Attitude on Behavior is 0.22. Then the regression coefficient for the indirect path Awareness on Behavior as product of single paths: $0.16 \times 0.22 = 0.03$. If Awareness changes by one standard deviation, then Behavior changes by 0.30 standard deviations via Attitude. The total path as product of sum up direct path and indirect path: $0.41 + 0.03 = 0.44$.

These three conditions require that the three paths (involving Awareness, Attitude, and Behavior) are all individually significant. The final step consists of demonstrating that when the mediator and the independent variable are used simultaneously to predict the dependent variable, the previously significant path between the independent and dependent variables is now reduced (partially mediating relationship), if not nonsignificant. The H4 was accepted.

This research indicates that levels of consumer decision making including awareness, attitude and behavior are quite high. The attitude is low among them, but their levels of awareness and behavior are higher. The latent factors are correlated. There are no region and gender differences in consumer decision making. The effect of awareness on behavior is partially mediated by attitude.

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