

Examining tourists' loyalty toward cultural quarters

CHEN, Annie <<http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3903-9212>>, PENG, Norman and HUNG, Kuang-peng

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this research note is to examine the factors that contribute to tourists' decision to visit Taiwan's cultural quarters. Wansborough and Mageean (2000) define a cultural quarter as a distinct and spatially limited area that contains a large number of cultural activities and facilities compared with other areas. Montgomery (2003) concurs, stating that most great cities have identifiable quarters that attract cultural entrepreneurs and artists, such as London's Soho, New York City's Lower East Side, and Paris's Left Bank. Cultural quarters are becoming increasingly important elements of modern society in terms of fostering cultural diversity and creativity.

Because of the importance of cultural quarters, city planners and cultural organizations have been attempting to promote the development of cultural quarters in appropriate locations (Moss, 2002; Porter & Barber, 2007). However, scholars have suggested that additional research on the appeal of cultural quarters can benefit the existing tourism literature (Montgomery, 1995; Pappalepore, Maitland, & Smith, 2014; Shorthose, 2004). Furthermore, many of the existing studies that are related to cultural quarters have focused on Western European cities. Research on non-Western cities' cultural quarters may add new insight to this body of literature. To augment the literature on the appeal of cultural quarters, the current study aims to investigate the loyalty of cultural quarter visitors using a model of the symbolic consumption of tourism destination brands (Ekinici, Sirkaya-Turk, & Preciado, 2013).

2. Literature Review

The symbolic consumption of tourism destination brands model is proposed by Ekinici et al. (2013). Figure 1 shows the proposed framework for the current research. The framework suggests that self-congruence, brand identification, and lifestyle-congruence have positive effects on tourists' destination brand loyalty. This

model is suitable for the current research because cultural quarters symbolize a certain lifestyle, personal image, and identification (Montgomery, 1995; Pappalepore et al., 2014).

*Figure 1 here

The first hypothesis that will be examined is the relationship between self-congruence and loyalty. In the context of this study, destination brand loyalty refers to tourists' intentions to revisit a cultural quarter in the future and to recommend the destination to others (Oliver, 1999). Nam, Ekinici, and Whyatt (2011) suggest that individuals attempt to align their actual self and ideal self through the products that they consume. This factor has positive effects on consumers and tourists' brand loyalty (Ekinici et al., 2013; Kressmann et al., 2006; Nam et al., 2011). Cultural quarters contain a large number of cultural activities (Wansborough & Mageean, 2000), such as performances and learning opportunities. Therefore, cultural quarter visitors can use these activities to sustain and enhance their self-image. Based on studies conducted by previous scholars, the following hypothesis will be examined:

H1: Self-congruence has a positive effect on tourists' destination brand loyalty.

Second, the consumer literature suggests that individuals identify with brands that help them to build a good reputation within their social groups or within the social groups to which they aspire (Chen & Peng, 2012). Cultural quarters often have distinctive images (McCarthy, 2006). For instance, Pappalepore et al. (2014, p.227) suggest that East London has a "cool image". Based on the abovementioned literature, tourists are likely to be loyal to destinations that help them to build their image within their social groups or groups with which they want to be associated (Ekinici et al., 2013). Stokburger-Sauer (2011) and Nam et al. (2011) have confirmed that tourists' brand identification positively affects their loyalty to a destination, such as visit and advocacy intentions. The second hypothesis that this study will examine is as follows:

H2: Brand identification has a positive effect on tourists' destination brand loyalty.

Third, scholars have argued that individuals' lifestyles affect their tourism participation behavior (Gross & Brown, 2006). "Lifestyle" can be defined as a person's unique living pattern as expressed by his or her interests, opinions, and activities (Gladwell, 1990). Ekinçi et al. (2013) observe that tourists are more likely to be loyal to activities that are aligned with their lifestyle. Cultural quarters reflect a certain lifestyle; for example, East London has a certain Bohemian lifestyle (Pappalepore et al., 2014). As Montgomery (1995) notes, it is important for cultural quarters to reflect a unique lifestyle. Based on the literature discussed above, the third hypothesis that this study will examine is as follows:

H3: Lifestyle-congruence has a positive effect on tourists' destination brand loyalty.

3. Method

Students were recruited to gather data from tourists who visit Taipei's cultural quarters, including Songshan Cultural and Creative Park, Huashan1914 Creative Park, Taipei Artist Village, Treasure Hill Artist Village, and Sugar Refinery Cultural Park. An on-site purposive sampling method was used to recruit participants. A total of 102 usable surveys were obtained after 30 days of data collection. To qualify for the interview, potential participants needed to 1) be over the age of 18, 2) have visited one of Taipei's cultural quarters, and 3) be a resident of Taiwan but live outside of Taipei City. Table 1 shows the participants' demographic information. Measurement scales were designed to examine the following target question: "What are the determinants of a tourist's loyalty to a cultural quarter?" The participants completed a survey that evaluated their self-congruence, brand identification, lifestyle-congruence, and destination brand loyalty (Ekinçi et al., 2013; Nam et al., 2011) on a Likert-type scale

(Table 2).

*Table 1 here

*Table 2 here

4. Data Analysis and Results

IBM SPSS AMOS 20 was used to analyze the data. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to specify the structure between the observed indicators and latent constructs and to test the validity of the measurement model. Following Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) two-step approach, this study examined the adequacy of the measurement model and the structural components of the model using CFA and structural equation modeling. Taken together, the high factor loadings, composite reliability, and average variances extracted (AVE) for each construct confirmed the reliability, convergence, and discriminant validity of the instrument. The structural equation modeling results showed a good fit between the data and the model ($\chi^2/df=1.449$, $p<0.001$, RMSEA=0.067, CFI=0.963, NFI=0.900). This study's results support the application of the symbolic consumption of tourism destination brands model in the context of cultural quarters.

Regarding the hypotheses, H1 was supported, with a structural estimate of 0.601 ($t=4.764$, $p<0.01$). Thus, self-congruence positively influences loyalty. H2 was not supported, with a structural estimate of 0.201 ($t=1.665$, $p>0.05$). This result indicates that tourists' brand identification with cultural quarters does not significantly affect their loyalty. H3 was supported, with a structural estimate of 0.156 ($t=1.858$, $p<0.05$). Lifestyle-congruence was found to positively affect tourists' loyalty to cultural quarters.

5. Discussion and Implications

Based on the findings of the current research, several topics are worthy of further discussion. First, as documented in the literature, a cultural quarter often embodies a

certain lifestyle and image. This study's results show that tourists are more likely to revisit and recommend a cultural quarter that enhances their self-image and supports their lifestyle. In other words, if a tourist wants to see himself or herself as an artist or wants to live an artistic lifestyle, then he or she is more likely to be loyal to cultural quarters that contain a large number of art-related events and products. These two results are aligned with the tourism and consumer behavior literature.

Second, the consumer literature suggests that individuals are loyal to brands that help them to build a good reputation within their social groups or within social groups to which they aspire. However, tourists' loyalty to cultural quarters is not affected by brand identification. In other words, when the media or other people criticize a cultural quarter, tourists' intentions to recommend and revisit that cultural quarter are not affected. One possible reason for this finding is that cultural quarters attract visitors who share similar interests and, therefore, outsiders such as the media and those who do not share similar interests do not largely affect tourists' loyalty to cultural quarters. However, this interpretation needs further examination.

Third, this study's findings may have implications for practitioners. Practitioners who want to promote cultural quarters must excel in their ability to identify and target tourists who share similar lifestyles and who seek to use these destinations to build their image. For instance, Taiwan's Sugar Refinery Cultural Park may need to identify and target tourists who are nostalgic because the park was transformed from an old sugar refinery. Additionally, the promotion of cultural quarters through other similar cultural activities should be an effective strategy. For example, Taipei Artist Village may want to promote their village during the Taipei Art Festival.

6. Limitations, Future Studies, and Conclusions

In conclusion, this study examines the factors that contribute to tourists' loyalty

to cultural quarters using a model of the symbolic consumption of tourism destination brands. Although this study contributes to the research on cultural quarters, it also has certain limitations. One limitation is that this study did not fully explore the finding that brand identification did not significantly affect tourists' loyalty. Future scholars may want to further investigate the possible reasons behind this result.

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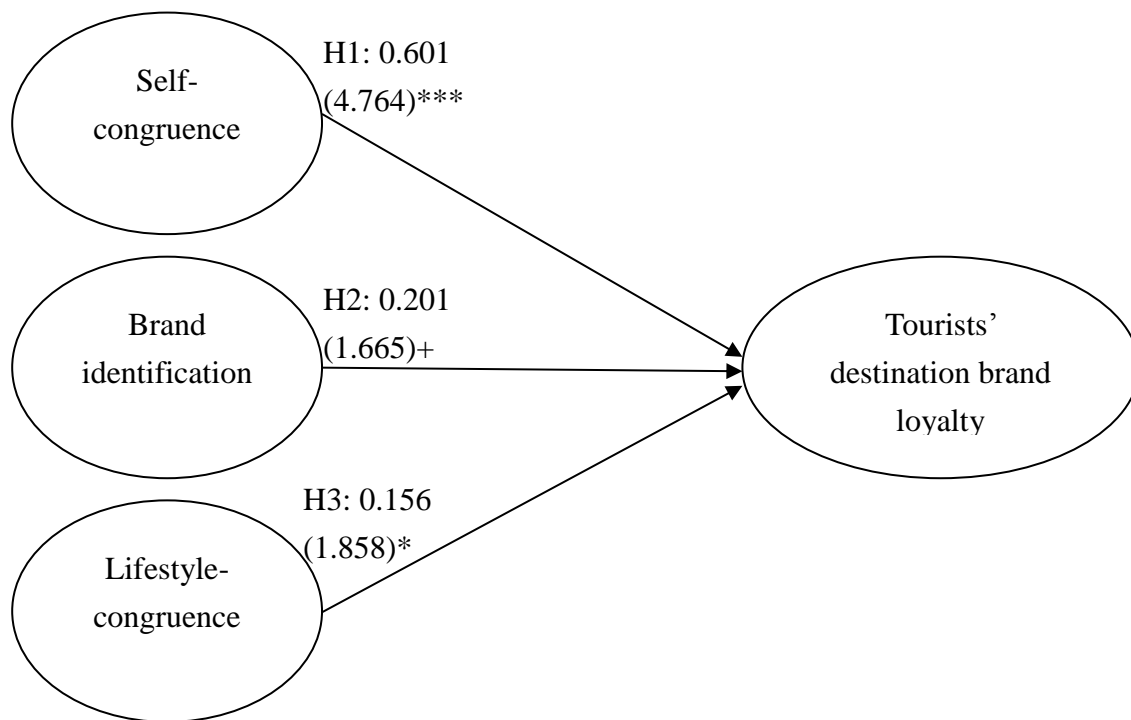
Table 1- Characteristics of the participants (N=102)

	Demographic traits	%
Gender	Male	45.0
	Female	55.0
Respondent's age	Between 18-30 years old	38.6
	Between 31-40 years old	39.8
	Between 41-50 years old	11.8
	Between 51-60 years old	6.9
	Above 61 years old	2.9
	High school degree	1
Education	University or college degree	76.5
	Postgraduate degree or above	22.5
Marital status	Married	58.8
	Unmarried	41.2

Table 2. Descriptive Analysis of the Measures (N=102)

Construct /	Items	Mean	SD	α	AVE	CR
Self-congruence (S)	S1: The typical visitor of this culture quarter has an image similar to how I like to see myself.	4.98	0.99	.79	.58	.80
	S2: The image of this culture quarters is consistent with how I like to see myself.	5.05	1.07			
	S3: The image of this brand is consistent with how I would like others to see me.	5.32	1.17			
Brand identification (BI)	BI1: If I talk about this culture quarter, I usually say “we” rather than “they”.	4.86	0.98	.82	.61	.83
	BI2: If a story in the media criticizes this culture quarter, I would feel embarrassed.	4.74	1.06			
	BI3: When someone criticizes this culture quarter, it feels like a personal insult.	4.78	1.03			
Lifestyle-congruence (L)	L1: This culture quarter reflects my personal lifestyle.	5.01	1.08	.89	.67	.89
	L2: This culture quarter is totally in line with my lifestyle.	5.03	1.18			
	L3: Visiting this culture quarter supports my lifestyle.	4.84	1.18			
	L4: Visiting this culture quarter is congruent with my lifestyle.	5.28	1.03			
Destination brand loyalty (DBL)	DBL1: I will recommend this culture quarter to someone seeks my advice.	5.93	0.91	.84	.65	.85
	DBL2: Next time I will visit this culture quarter.	4.86	1.21			
	DBL3: I plan to revisit this culture quarter in the future.	5.72	0.99			

Figure 1. Research Framework and Hypotheses



Number on path: standardized parameter estimation, Number in parentheses: T-Value.
Remark: *Significant at $p < 0.05$; **Significant at $p < 0.01$; ***Significant at $p < 0.001$.