

Association for Information Systems

AIS Electronic Library (AISeL)

WHICEB 2019 Proceedings

Wuhan International Conference on e-Business

Summer 6-26-2019

Mental Imagery of Travelling Destination: Pictures on the Website

Nan Bi

Business School, Northeast Normal University, Changchun?130000, China, bin100@nenu.edu.cn

Chengyue Yin

Business School, Northeast Normal University, Changchun?130000, China, yincy653@nenu.edu.cn

Follow this and additional works at: <https://aisel.aisnet.org/whiceb2019>

Recommended Citation

Bi, Nan and Yin, Chengyue, "Mental Imagery of Travelling Destination: Pictures on the Website" (2019).
WHICEB 2019 Proceedings. 5.

<https://aisel.aisnet.org/whiceb2019/5>

This material is brought to you by the Wuhan International Conference on e-Business at AIS Electronic Library (AISeL). It has been accepted for inclusion in WHICEB 2019 Proceedings by an authorized administrator of AIS Electronic Library (AISeL). For more information, please contact elibrary@aisnet.org.

Mental Imagery of Travelling Destination: Pictures on the Website

Nan Bi¹, Chengyue Yin²

Business School, Northeast Normal University, Changchun, 130000, China

Abstract: The objective of this work is to find what kind of pictures will evoke more mental imagery of the potential travelers and make them more likely to choose the destination for their next trip. The study use the psychological theory of mental imagery and the self-categorization theory to build 7 hypothesis. Two online experiments will be manipulated to test these hypothesis of the study. The findings could help the destination managers to design and show different kinds of pictures on their website to certain potential travelers.

Keywords: mental imagery, self-categorization, destination website

1. INTRODUCTION

Mental imagery is a familiar experience in our daily life. Many advertisements can evoke consumers' mental imagery, for example, a restaurant ad shows the delicious food and consumers will image themselves tasting it in their own mind. Mental imagery is a psychological concept like 'seeing with the mind's eye or hearing with the mind's ear' (Kosslyn, Ganis. & Thompson 2001 p635)^[1]. It reflects the sensory or perceptual experience process by representing in an individual's working memory in terms of ideas, feelings, and memories (MacInnis & Price 1987)^[2]. The auditory, visual, haptic and gustatory stimuli are all can evoke mental imagery, and visual imagery is the most dominant.

Mental imagery theory has been used to many subjects especially in consumer behavior. Researchers have stimulate pictures, text, sound and so forth to evoke consumers' mental imagery in print advertisement (Babin and Burns 1997; Burns et al. 1993)^{[3][4]}, radio advertisement (Bone and Allen, 1992)^[5] and even in online retailing (Yoo and Kim 2014)^[6]. The prior literature suggests mental imagery processing influences consumer decision making (Babin & Burns 1997; Bone & Ellen 1992)^{[3][5]} and it usually plays a significant role in mediating ad-evoked feelings and attitudes (Bone & Ellen 1992; Burns et al.,1993)^{[5][3]}. It could also form stronger attitude because of its high elaboration quality (Haugtvedt & Petty 1992)^[7].

There are also some researches focused on tourism advertisement. Miller and Marks (1997) examined the influence between photograph, electronically altered and water color rendition to mental imagery and attitude^[8]. Walters et al. (2007) tested the effects of picture and text as print ad stimuli to evoke participants consumption vision when they make a decision to take on a holiday^[9]. Travelers' emotional and experiential needs are relevant in pleasure-seeking and destination choice behavior (Goossens 2000)^[10]. So potential travelers will also experience the destination in their mind's eye when they are engaged in mental imagery processing as similar as the product purchase decision making. Mental imagery would influence traveler's destination choice (Oh, Fiore, and Jeoung 2007)^[11] and form a strong attitude even when the destination suffered a negative crisis(Lee & Gretzel 2012)^[12].

Many potential travelers search information about a destination through the internet which has fundamentally reshaped the way tourism related information is distributed and the way people plan for and

¹ Nan Bi : E-mail:bin100@nenu.edu.cn

² Chengyue Yin : E-mail: yincy653@nenu.edu.cn

consume travel (Buhalis & Law, 2008)^[13]. The destination Website would be the first step for potential travelers form a general image about the destination. So it is important for tourism marketers to understand what types of stimuli on a destination Web site would efficiently induce mental imagery. Recent study has examined imagery-eliciting Web site features including picture (picture vs. no-picture), text (narrative vs. expository) and sound (sound vs. no sound) which could influence mental imagery processing and persuasion effect (attitude strength, confidence and attitude resistance) on destination Websites (Lee and Gretzel, 2012)^[12]. The result shows that only picture has the significant influence to travelers mental imagery. But another study identified sensory descriptions (vs. function description) as textual elements could encourage mental imagery processing (Lee et al. 2010)^[14].

So the studies presented in this paper will reexamine the influence of pictorial and textual features on the Website. Prior researches usually test the picture influence using a destination scene picture on the Website compared with no picture group. But the destination Websites must have present pictures on their front page as we know now. So what kind of pictures will influence more to potential travelers is still an outstanding problem. Even more, accompany with the rapid growth of international tourism (outbound tourism reached 9.97 million passengers, an increase of 4.7% in 2014³), managers are eager to know what difference about travelers from different countries and how to persuade them from different cultural background.

This study focuses on the persuasion effect (consumer attitude) of travel destination Websites, because it is usually the most useful communication channel to foreign potential travelers to get general information about the destination first. Two experiments will be manipulated in this research to find the features which would foster strong attitude by eliciting mental imagery processing.

2. CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Mental imagery processing and consumption vision

Mental imagery processing refers to a psychological process engaged in the representation of nonverbal information in an individual's working memory in terms of ideas, feelings, and memories (MacInnis & Price 1987)^[2]. When individuals exposed in such a stimuli as auditory, visual, haptic, or gustatory, they will imagine a scene by descriptions contained in the stimuli. Especially when the visual stimuli contained a consumption vision, consumers may image self interacting with a product and experiencing the consequences of its use (Philips, Olson, & Baumgartner 1995)^[15]. Escalas (2004) refers to this process as mental simulation, which entails the cognitive construction of hypothetical scenarios, including rehearsals of likely or less likely future events, realistically reexperiencing or reconstructing past events mixing in hypothetical elements^[16]. It could form consumers' positive affection and further influence the success of an advertisement in persuading. Consumption vision is a special form of mental imagery that could entail conscious representations of the self experiencing future consumptive situations (Philips, Olson, & Baumgartner 1995; Walters et al. 2007)^{[15][9]}.

There is such a stimuli as pictures, words, sound effects, and, more literally, instructions of advertising messages can evoke mental imagery (Babin & Burns 1997; Bone & Allen 1992; Fennis, Das, & Franssen 2012)^{[3][5][17]}. Print advertisements and websites usually use pictures and text as basic forms of communication (Singh & Dalal 1999)^[18]. In tourism research, Lee et al. (2010) identified sensory descriptions (not sound) on destination Web sites as textual elements that encourage mental imagery processing^[14]. Furthermore, Walters et al. (2007) considered tourist consumption visions would influence information search stage of the decision process^[9].

According to these prior researches, we put forward the hypothesis as follows:

³ 2014 annual statistics published by Germany IPK international tourism consulting company.

H1: Consumers experience greater mental imagery when exposed to destination picture with persons enjoying the journey on the website, in comparison to destination scenery only.

H2: Consumers experience greater mental imagery when exposed to text with sensory descriptions on the website, in comparison to function descriptions.

H3: Consumers experience greater mental imagery when exposed to destination picture with people enjoying the journey and sensory descriptions on the website, in comparison to other groups.

2.2 Self-categorization theory

Self categorization is an important approach in social identity theory, which holds that self concept is a set of cognitive characterization about individual on their selves and existed in the form of self categorization. It is a cognitive group of the same stimulus category (consistent, similar, equivalent, and alternative) including oneself compared to the other stimulus categories (Turner 1987)^[19]. It is a social group theory which seeks to explain how individuals become unified into a group and capable of collective behavior. Any individual has multiple self concepts. For any given person, group categorization may occur on ethnicity, gender, age, occupation, economic status and so forth. Specific self-concept can be excited in a specific situation (Bruner 1957)^[20].

Self-categorization theory has been applied in a wide variety of domains such as group-based emotions, intergroup forgiveness, attitudes prediction and behaviors prediction (see Hornsey 2008)^[21]. Research has demonstrated that individuals are typically more persuaded by messages from their in-group than by messages from the out-group (Mackie et al. 1990)^[22]. Smith and Henry (1996) finds more evidence about it that they verified participants could make judgment faster when they are represented in-group and further concluded as information about our in-groups can become part of our self-concepts^[23]. People can assumption other members agree as their own in-group because they are similar in some kind (Allen & Wilder 1978)^[24]. In addition, messages coming from in-group sources may be seen as particularly credible or informative, leading people to systematically process such messages (Wyer 2010)^[25].

From this self-concept perspective, individuals feeling a greater degree of this social identity will be more willing to purchase locally manufactured goods(Lantz & Loeb 1998)^[26]. And when a person engages in a process of self-categorization and uses ethnic criteria as the basis for this categorization, ethnic self-awareness will occur. In Forehand and Deshpandé's experiments(2001), participants responded more favorably to same-ethnicity spokespeople and advertising that targeted their ethnicity^[27]. Appiah(2007) tested the effectiveness of testimonial advertisements on black and white browsers' evaluations of a high-end product on a commercial website and found that white browsers respond no differently to a commercial site with the black character, white character, or no testimonial advertisement; but black browsers do respond differently, that they are more believed the website is targeted them and responded more positive attitude on black character testimonials^[28].

So we put forward the hypothesis 4 5 and6:

H4: Consumers experience greater mental imagery when exposed to destination picture with persons in their group on the website, in comparison to out-group persons.

H5: Consumers experience greater mental imagery when exposed to text with their native language on the website, in comparison to Official (English) language.

H6: Consumers experience greater mental imagery when exposed to destination picture with persons in their group and native language descriptions on the website, in comparison to other groups.

2.3 Mental imagery and the persuasion effect

Mental imagery could influence consumers' decision-making. Researchers have found that mental imagery

has a positive influence on consumer attitudes and leads to greater confidence that events will unfold as expected (MacInnis & Price 1990)^[29]. It has been shown to affect the persuasion power of the advertisement's message and is often accompanied by strong affective responses (Green & Brock 2000)^[30].

With regard to the tourism purchase, Goossens (2000) provided visual and vivid information on pleasure destination attributes will increase both the consumers' involvement and their ability to perceive more differences in service supply^[10]. And mental imagery evoked by concrete pictures of destination in a travel advertisement could influence traveler's purchasing decisions (Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung 2007; Walters et al. 2007)^{[11][9]}, enhances behavioral intentions and communication effects (Lee & Gretzel 2012)^[12]. So we put forward the hypothesis 7:

H7: Consumers will enhance greater travel intention when they experience greater mental imagery.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Methodology

Two experiments will be manipulated to test the above hypothesis. The first experiment uses a 2 (picture: destination picture vs. destination picture with people) \times 2 (text: narrative text vs. expository text) between-subjects factorial design to test the hypothesis 1, 2, 3 and 7. The second experiment uses another 2 (destination picture with people: in-group vs. out-group) \times 2 (text language: native vs. official) between-subjects factorial design to test the hypothesis 4, 5, 6 and 7.

3.2 Scale

Mental imagery use the three dimensions (vividness, quantity, and elaboration) to measure the imagery processing, which was modified by Babin and Burns (1998)^[31]. Behavior intension will be measured by 3 questions: likelihood to visit a certain place in next 12 months, intend to visit the destination in next 12 months, want to visit the destination. All the items will use a 7-point Likert items (1=strongly disagree and 7=strongly agree) to measure.

3.3 General discussion and implications

The research is based on psychological theory of mental imagery and the self-categorization theory. Prior research of mental imagery paid more attention on the print ad and for the tangible product. We focus on the intangible products' (travelling destination) online showing, and want to find what kind of picture will evoke more mental imagery and consumer's travel intension. It could be used to make the travel destination Website more special for certain kinds of travelers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research was supported by the National Social Science Foundation of China 14CGL072.

REFERENCES

- [1] Kosslyn, S. M., Ganis, G., & Thompson, W. L. (2001). Neural foundations of imagery. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, 2(9), 635-642.
- [2] MacInnis, Deborah J., and Linda L. Price (1987). The role of imagery in information processing: Review and extensions. *Journal of consumer research*, 13.4: 473-491.
- [3] Babin, L. A., & Burns, A. C. (1997). Effects of print ad pictures and copy containing instructions to imagine on mental imagery that mediates attitudes. *Journal of advertising*, 26(3), 33-44.

- [4] Burns, A. C., Biswas, A., & Babin, L. A. (1993). The operation of visual imagery as a mediator of advertising effects. *Journal of Advertising*, 22(2), 71-85.
- [5] Bone, P. F., & Ellen, P. S. (1992). The generation and consequences of communication-evoked imagery. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 93-104.
- [6] Yoo, J., & Kim, M. (2014). The effects of online product presentation on consumer responses: A mental imagery perspective. *Journal of Business Research*, 67(11), 2464-2472.
- [7] Haugtvedt, C. P., & Petty, R. E. (1992). Personality and persuasion: Need for cognition moderates the persistence and resistance of attitude changes. *Journal of Personality and Social psychology*, 63(2), 308.
- [8] Miller, D. W., & Marks, L. J. (1997). The effects of imagery - evoking radio advertising strategies on affective responses. *Psychology & Marketing*, 14(4), 337-360.
- [9] Walters, G., Sparks, B., & Herington, C. (2007). The effectiveness of print advertising stimuli in evoking elaborate consumption visions for potential travelers. *Journal of Travel Research*, 46(1), 24-34.
- [10] Goossens, C. (2000). Tourism information and pleasure motivation. *Annals of tourism research*, 27(2), 301-321.
- [11] Oh, H., Fiore, A. M., & Jeoung, M. (2007). Measuring experience economy concepts: Tourism applications. *Journal of travel research*, 46(2), 119-132.
- [12] Lee, W., & Gretzel, U. (2012). Designing persuasive destination websites: A mental imagery processing perspective. *Tourism management*, 33(5), 1270-1280.
- [13] Buhalis, D., & Law, R. (2008). Progress in information technology and tourism management: 20 years on and 10 years after the Internet—The state of eTourism research. *Tourism management*, 29(4), 609-623.
- [14] Lee, W., Gretzel, U., & Law, R. (2010). Quasi-trial experiences through sensory information on destination web sites. *Journal of Travel Research*, 49(3), 310-322.
- [15] Phillips, D. M., Olson, J. C., & Baumgartner, H. (1995). Consumption visions in consumer decision making. *Advances in consumer research*, 22, 280-280.
- [16] Escalas, J. E. (2004). Imagine yourself in the product: Mental simulation, narrative transportation, and persuasion. *Journal of advertising*, 33(2), 37-48.
- [17] Fennis, B. M., Das, E., & Franssen, M. L. (2012). Print advertising: Vivid content. *Journal of Business Research*, 65(6), 861-864.
- [18] Singh, S. N., & Dalal, N. P. (1999). Web home pages as advertisements. *Communications of the ACM*, 42(8), 91-98.
- [19] Turner, J. C., Hogg, M. A., Oakes, P. J., Reicher, S. D., & Wetherell, M. S. (1987). *Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory*. Basil Blackwell.
- [20] Bruner, J. S. (1957). On perceptual readiness. *Psychological review*, 64(2), 123.
- [21] Hornsey, M. J. (2008). Social identity theory and self-categorization theory: A historical review. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 2, 204–222.
- [22] Mackie, D. M., Worth, L. T., & Asuncion, A. G. (1990). Processing of persuasive in-group messages. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 58(5), 812.
- [23] Smith, E. R., & Henry, S. (1996). An in-group becomes part of the self: Response time evidence. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 22, 635–642.
- [24] Allen, V., & Wilder, D. (1978). Perceived persuasiveness as a function of response style: Multi-issue consistency over time. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 8, 289–296.
- [25] Wyer, N. A. (2010). Selective self-categorization: Meaningful categorization and the in-group persuasion effect. *The Journal of social psychology*, 150(5), 452-470.
- [26] Lantz G, Loeb S. (1998). An examination of the community identity and purchase preferences using the social identity approach[J]. *ACR North American Advances*.

- [27] Forehand, M. R., & Deshpandé R. (2001). What we see makes us who we are: Priming ethnic self-awareness and advertising response. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 38(3), 336-348.
- [28] Appiah O. (2007). The Effectiveness of “Typical-User” Testimonial Advertisements on Black and White Browsers' Evaluations of Products on Commercial Websites: Do They Really Work?[J]. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 47(1): 14-27.
- [29] MacInnis, D. J., & Price, L. L. (1990). An exploratory study of the effects of imagery processing and consumer experience on expectations and satisfaction. *Advances in consumer research*, 17(1), 41-47.
- [30] Green, M. C., & Brock, T. C. (2000). The role of transportation in the persuasiveness of public narratives. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 79(5), 701.
- [31] Babin, Laurie A., and Alvin C. Burns. (1998). A modified scale for the measurement of communication - evoked mental imagery. *Psychology & Marketing* 15.3: 261-278.