Predicting International Air Travelers’ Intention to Engage in Airport Shopping Behavior: Extension of the Theory of Planned Behavior

Han, Hee-sup · Hyun, Sung-hyup · Hwang, Jin-soo

Abstract

Despite its importance, relatively little is known about international tourists’ decision-making process for their shopping at an airport abroad. Filling such research gap, the present study attempted to examine overseas tourists’ intention formation for airport shopping when traveling abroad by employing and expanding the theory of planned behavior. Particularly, we aimed 1) to assess the intricate associations among attitude toward the behavior, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, desire for airport shopping, and frequency of past behavior in generating intention for airport shopping by modifying the TPB model, 2) to test the relative importance among study constructs in determining airport-shopping intention, and 3) to identify the superiority of the proposed theoretical framework in predicting intention compared to the original TPB. Desire for airport shopping, image of it, and frequency of past behavior were newly incorporated into the original theory of planned behavior. Data collected from the international travelers using a particular airport in South Korea was utilized for analysis. Findings from the assessment of the measurement model verified the adequate level of composite reliability and construct validity. Results from the structural model revealed that the proposed extended theoretical framework was superior to the original socio-psychological theory in terms of prediction power; and integrated variables had a significant role in intention formation. In addition, the vital impact of desire (relative importance) as a direct driver of intention was found. Further, desire was identified to be a significant mediator in the relationship between attitude and intention for airport shopping. Findings of this study will help airport operators and marketers improve/invent tactics to increasing international tourists’ airport shopping behaviors and to spend more.

key words : shopping, airport, air travelers, theory of planned behavior, intention

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** Associate Professor, College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Sejong University, Korea. e-mail: heesup.han@gmail.com
*** (Corresponding Author) Assistant Professor, Department of Tourism and Convention, Pusan National University, Korea. e-mail: shyun@pusan.ac.kr
**** Assistant Professor, Division of Tourism, Dongseo University, Korea. e-mail: jinsoohwang@hanmail.net
I. Introduction

International tourists’ shopping and retailing are increasingly becoming an important route for revenue generation in the airport industry (Lin & Chen, 2013a). It is an undeniable fact that such non-aeronautical commercial businesses contribute to bringing more profits to an international airport than its aeronautical activities (Lin & Chen, 2013b). Common commercial outlets at international airports include duty-free shops, food and beverage services, convenience stores, or other various service/leisure facilities, but some airports also have unique facilities (e.g., casino facility, swimming pool, screen-golf facility, and song room) designed to deliver satisfactory/unique experiences to passengers as well as to maximize revenues (Geuens et al., 2004; Kim & Shin, 2001). The categories of airport commercial product normally are comprised of functional-utility, low-cost/tax-free, service, souvenir, café/F&B, entertaining, and brand-name/luxury products (Perng et al., 2010). In the highly competitive airport industry, recently international airport operators and marketers dynamically increase commercial offerings to air travelers through airport shopping/retailing in order to boost airport revenue. Because of its accurateness and capability in predicting human decision-making process, a conceptual framework adopted in this research was the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). While Ajzen’s (1985, 1991) TPB has been applied and employed in diverse settings, a limited number of studies have utilized this socio-psychological theory to explicate air travelers’ intention formation or behavior for airport shopping. Furthermore, numerous researchers have emphasized the criticality of such variables as image, desire, and past behavior/experience in explaining customers’ decision-making process in marketing, consumer behavior, and tourism (Lee & Back, 2007, 2009; Han & Kim, 2010; Oh & Hsu, 2001; Perugini & Bagozzi, 2001). However, relatively little effort has been made to integrate these important constructs into the existing socio-psychological theory (i.e., TPB). In addition, research that has employed a socio-psychological theory or decision-making theory into an airport-shopping context is almost rare. That is, the application of an existing socio-psychological theory (e.g., TPB) in an airport sector and the empirical assessment of its applicability has been hardly examined. To fill this research gap, the present study developed the following research objectives:

1) The first objective was to test the intricate associations among attitude toward the behavior, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, desire for airport shopping, and frequency of past behavior in generating intention for airport shopping by modifying the TPB model.

2) The second objective was to identify the relative important among attitude toward the behavior, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, desire for airport shopping, and frequency of past behavior in determining airport-shopping intention.

3) The third objective was to verify the proposed-theoretical framework's superiority in terms of prediction power compared to the original TPB.

In the following section, a theoretical background is discussed. Next, methods and results are presented. Lastly, discussion based on the results of this research and limitation that gives opportunities for future study is provided.