Image Transfer in Corporate Sponsored Museum: The Role of Smart Technology Mediated Experience

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Abstract

This study identifies company awareness, company image, and behavioural intention to buy a company's product as mediated by smart technology-mediated experiences in the company's museum from the perspective of smart technology-mediated experiences and image transfer. The findings indicate that *sense, act*, and *relation* experiences affected the company's museum image, which in turn affected purchase intention through the awareness and image of the company.

Keywords: smart technology-mediated experience; museum image; company image; company awareness; purchase intention

1 Introduction

Some companies operate museums to demonstrate corporate social responsibility. This corporate or company museum is "a corporate facility with tangible objects and/or exhibits, displayed in a museum-like setting, that communicates the history, operations, and/or interests of a company to employees, guest, customers, and/or the public" (Danilov, 1992, p. 4). Museums are places in which experience is dominant (Pallud & Straub, 2014) and use smart technologies, such as Near Field Communication (NFC) and Beacons, to enhance visitors' experiences. Visitors using smart technologies can have sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and social-identity experiences (Schmitt, 1999). In company museums, smart technology-mediated experiences may shape visitors' perceptions of the company through the company museum. However, prior research has focused on the functions, potential, or adoption of smart technologies in tourist attractions and destinations (e.g., Pesonen & Horster, 2012). This study conceptualizes smart technology-mediated experiences and image transfer. Hence, the objective of this study examines the impact of smart technology-mediated experiences in the company museum on the perception of the company that operates it.

2 Theoretical background

2.1 Smart Technology-mediated Experiences

Today's museums use NFC services for a museum guide (Di Rosa & Benente, 2013). Using Beacon, museum visitors receive information about collections instead of audio headsets (Mallik, 2015). In other words, museums with cutting-edge technologies enrich visitors' experiences. Such experiences include "sensory experiences (*sense*), affective experiences (*feel*), creative cognitive experiences (*think*), physical experiences, behaviours and lifestyles (*act*), and social-identity experiences that result

from relating to a reference group or culture (*relate*)" (Schmitt, 1999, p. 60). *Sense* is experienced by the five senses and *feel* is experienced by an appeal for people who are engaged and who participate in the museum through these smart technologies. *Think* is a cognitive experience that occurs while touring a museum and *act* is an experience that generates an effect on visitor behaviour patterns, which arise from the impressions taken from the museum, and *relate* means the experience connecting visitors and the museum. This smart technology-mediated experience influences human perceptions or behaviours by stimulating experience-related perceptions (Hsu & Tsou, 2011; Jin, Lee, & Lee, 2015).

2.2 Image Transfer

The image of a certain object may transfer to any other related object image (Gwinner & Eaton, 1999). This is because the perceptions of a certain objects are shaped by other well-known objects (Lee, Kim, Lee, & Kim, 2014). This process is the image transfer. In the literature of sport sponsorship, an event's image transferred to a sponsoring brand's image because people who have memories regarding a sporting event have a tendency to endorse the sponsoring brand (Gwinner & Eaton, 1999). Company museums hold exhibitions of company collections to demonstrate their corporate social responsibility and to publicize the history or a brand identification of the company (Nissley & Casey, 2002). Thus, the mission of company museums is to encourage visitors to form their own positive images of the company. The image established by smart technology-mediated experiences increases the visitor's awareness of the company running the collection and museum or stimulates the formation of a visitor's perception and purchase intention toward the company.

3 Research Model and Hypotheses

Based on theoretical background, this study suggests that smart technology-mediated experiences shape visitors' image formation about the company museum. From the view of image transfer, this museum image influences image or awareness about the company, which finally increase the likelihood of purchase the company's products. Thus, the research model is presented in Fig. 1.

Several prior studies have stated that experiences positively influence customers' perceptions (Jin et al., 2015). In a museum, smart technology-mediated experiences consist of sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and relational experiences (Hsu & Tsou, 2011; Schmitt, 1999). Those experiences finally influence visitors' beliefs, thoughts, and impressions of the museum (Jin et al., 2015). In other words, museum experiences that are built up by smart technologies will positively influence the formation of the museum's image in the visitor's mind.

H1: Sensory experiences (sense) positively influence the company museum image.

H2: Emotional experiences (feel) positively influence the company museum image.

H3: Cognitive experiences (think) positively influence the company museum image.

H4: Behavioural experiences (act) positively influence the company museum image.

H5: Relational experiences (relate) positively influence the company museum image.

A positive image about an object leads to positive perceptions of its associated objects (Jin et al., 2015). Image transfer theory indicates that the perceptions of an object are formed by the perceptions of its associated objects (Deng & Li, 2014; Lee et al., 2014). Visitors' favourable images of the company museum become a standard for their perception of the company. Thus, visitors who have a positive image of a company museum tend to be more aware and have a more positive image of the company.

H6: The company museum image positively influences the company awareness.

H7: The company museum image positively influences the company image.

The company awareness is defined as the degree of visitors' recognition of the company brand, and the image of the company is the visitors' impressions of the company, which is the operator of a company museum. Many studies of sport sponsorship have identified that awareness is a predictor of corporate image (Ko, Kim, Claussen, & Kim, 2008). Furthermore, basic knowledge and impressions about the company are determinants of behavioural intentions because people tend to buy products for which they have a higher level of recognition (Ko et al., 2008; Yuan & Jang, 2008). The museum visitors may get to know the company and are affected by the company's image. In other words, visitors who had higher levels of awareness and company image are more likely to purchase a company's products and services.

H8: The company awareness positively influences the company image.

H9: The company awareness positively influences the purchase intention.

H10: The company image positively influences the purchase intention.

4 Research Methodology

All items were composed using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). *Smart technology-mediated experiences* and *company museum image* were measured based on Hsu and Tsou (2011) and Huang et al. (2014). The representative items of *smart technology-mediated experiences* included "Using an exhibition guide service like NFC or Beacon tries to stimulate my sensory experiences" (*sense*), "… to put me in a certain mood" (*feel*) or "… to stimulate my curiosity" (*think*), "… reminds me of activities I can do in the museum" (*act*), and "By using the museum's exhibition guide service like NFC or Beacon, I feel that I am more connected to the museum" (*relate*). The representative item of *company museum image* was stated as "I have a better impression of the museum by using an exhibition guide service like NFC or Beacon technology". *Company awareness* items were derived from Yuan and Jang (2008) and Mason and Nassivera (2013). The representative item of *company awareness* included "Through visiting the museum, I increased awareness of company". *Company image* and *purchase intention* items were adapted from Kim and Hyun (2011) and Ko et al. (2008). The representative item of *company image* was stated as "After visiting the museum, I think that company is a leading pharmaceutical company" and items of *purchase intention*

included “Through visiting the museum, I intend to buy the company’s products”. This study composed a research scenario using the footage of NFC or Beacon service uses in the company museum. We made a video about the use of these services in the Handok Museum of Medicine and Pharmacy. The museum is run by Handok, a company which develops and produces medicines, and shows the history of medicine, company’s history or its product information. In the museum, NFC or Beacon service is available for visitors wanting information about all the exhibits. We showed the video to participants, among whom were students majoring in tourism and hospitality. While watching the video, they had second-hand experience using NFC or Beacon services in the museum. After watching the video, participants completed the questionnaire. The total number of participants is 154. 42.9% of whom were male. More than half of the respondents (52.6%) had used NFC and 16.2% had used Beacon.

5 Data Analysis and Results

This study applied the Partial Least Square analysis to test the research model using SmarPLS. Convergent and discriminant validity assessed the appropriacy of our measurement model and satisfied the criteria of Hair et al. (2010) and Fornell and Larcker (1981). The results of hypotheses are shown in Fig. 1 and all hypotheses except for *feel* and *think* are proved.

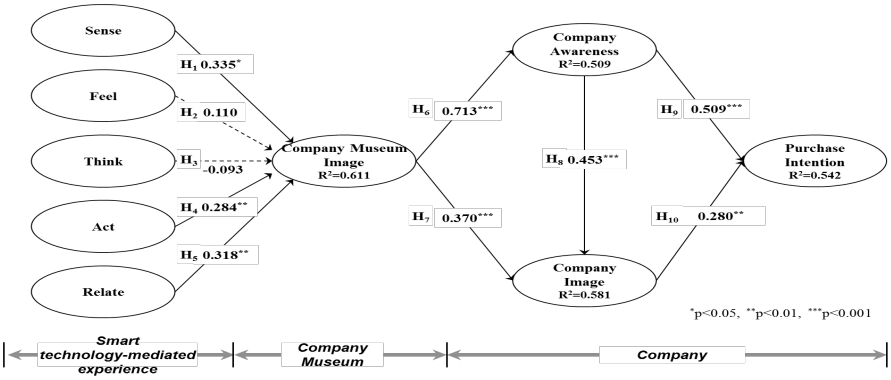

Fig. 1. Results of hypotheses

6 Conclusion

Based on smart technology-mediated experience and image transfer, the findings revealed that *sense, act*, and *relation* experience had a positive effect on the *museum’s image*, which form the *purchase intention* through the *awareness and image of the company*. In terms of theoretical implications, this study extends the scope of prior studies related to smart technology-mediated experiences and the company’s museum. In terms of practical implications, smart technologies enhance visitors’ sensory, behavioural, and relational experiences and form tourists’ perceptions of attractions or tourist companies. Thus, tourism marketers and the destination management organizations need to promote themselves using smart technologies.

Although our research was designed to show participants a video, participants must experience real situations and thus, caution is needed when interpreting our results.

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