

Household Support: An Ignorantly Key Factor for Tour Guide's Profession Loyalty. A Case Study in China

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Abstract. Tour guides play an essential role in tourism industry. However, in practice, a large majority of experienced tour guides commonly make attempts to switch to other sectors instead of other enterprises of tourism industry after they have three to five year of work experience. In order to disclose the reasons of the phenomenon data from 113 valid samples was obtained through paper-based questionnaires. Meanwhile, partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) is employed assessing the research model in which we hypothesize household support, economic rewards, social rewards and career prospects have positively influence profession loyalty. The results show effect of household support ($p < 0.01$) and economic rewards ($p < 0.1$) are statistically significant respectively. Household support is a very key factor on tour guide's profession loyalty contrasted with others. Finally, the limitations of the study are discussed.

1.Introduction

Employee loyalty is a very popular topic in human resource research. The higher level of employee loyalty can give enterprises many benefits, such as decreasing cost and increasing work efficiency. In contrast, profession loyalty means employees continue to work in a sector many years also have many advantages. It provides abundantly experienced workers and axes dozens of training costs for a sector. This further prompts the sector booming.

However, previous studies lay more stress on employee loyalty and less on profession loyalty. In terms of employee loyalty, Antecedents mainly focus on factors affecting profession loyalty. The main factors include employee satisfaction, work environment, work revenues, employee empowerment as well as employee personality [1-4]. On the contrary, the discussion on factors affecting profession loyalty remains in its infancy. In practice, profession loyalty is equally important with employee loyalty. Thus, we further develop it.

Tour guides play an interface role between the tourism destinations with its visitors through their knowledge and interpretation [5]. An abundance of veteran tour guides are essential elements in tourism development. However, in practice, we find the tour guide sector constantly has a dilemma. On the one hand it has a considerable labor demand along with booming tourism, on the other hand a ton of veteran tour guides often choose to switch sectors instead of enterprises when they have served for several years. Jiang & Tribe (2009)

also believe that tourism jobs are short lived professions [6]. Consequently, the tour guide sector is very suitable as a typical case for research of profession loyalty. Why do tour guides have a very low level of profession loyalty, and what is key factor? In this study through empirical investigation and in-depth interview we found there are several factors positively affecting profession loyalty. Particularly, household support is a very strong and efficient factor which however always be neglected. This is a main contribution in the studies.

2. Literature review and hypothesized relationships

2.1 Studies on Tour Guide Profession

At present, in terms of human resource of tourism it seems more studies focus on the hospitality sector instead of tour guide although both are important in tourism development. Ap & Wong (2001) point out that very few studies focus on the tour guide profession; especially in the English-based literature [5]. Nyahunzvi & Njerekai (2013) also suppose there is limited research around the key issues and challenges facing the tour guiding profession, globally [7]. Therefore, in our study the measurement scales of latent variables are limited. The measurement items derive from in-depth interview with veteran tour guides.

2.2 Employee Loyalty and Profession Loyalty

Employee loyalty refers to employees having strong feelings attached to their employing organization. So, they work hard and scarcely resign from their enterprise [8].

Profession loyalty means someone has a very strong passion and will continue to serve in their present sector for many years, not suddenly switching to another sector. It is different than employee loyalty which refers to employees continuing to serve in an enterprise instead of a sector. One person who frequently moves onto a different enterprise in the same sector can be recognized that he still has a profession loyalty instead of employee loyalty.

2.3 Household Support

Household support means that your parents and relatives are all very supportive of the career you have served, or your career intention. They often give you confidence and encourage you to continue to do your present work instead of dissuading. Prior studies have less focus on this. However, in the in-depth interview, a lot of respondents point out that what kind of job to look for is deeply influenced by their parents or relatives. In most cases they often are obedient to their parents. Therefore, we hypothesize:

H1. Household support has a positive influence on profession loyalty.

2.4 Economic Rewards and Social Rewards

The definition of Economic rewards is that the money and living goods received from work. Kalleberg (1977) named it as the extrinsic rewards which can include pay, or job security [9]. Social rewards refer to personal recognition, friendship, and rapport from their work [10]. It generally is associated with the task itself, such as a sense of achievement, interest, or accompaniment [9]. Jessen (2010) regard it as intrinsic rewards [2].

Previous studies also show economic rewards and social rewards have a positive influence on loyalty [11]. In order to examine whether those are suitable in tourism context or not, we hypothesize:

H2. Economic rewards have a positive influence on profession loyalty.

H3. Social rewards have a positive influence on profession loyalty.

2.5 Career Prospect

Career prospect is that you can get more monetary rewards and promotion in the future along with the booming industry. The career you served is tremendous and you are never afraid of livelihood. From the in-depth interview we found it plays a key role in choosing a career. Also, we have an attempt to contrast among household support, economic rewards, social rewards as well as career prospects. Thus, we hypothesize:

H4. Career prospect has a positive influence on profession loyalty.

3. Research methodology

3.1 Data Collection and Subjects

The research data was obtained through a survey from paper questionnaire. It was conducted in July 2018 in the WUDANG MOUNTAIN, a famous Taoism tourism scene in HUBEI province in middle China. The questionnaires were completed by the tour guides with a convenient sampling method. The dozens of tour guides cooperated with us on a face-to-face interview survey. In the end, a total of 113 valid responses were obtained.

3.2 Measurement Development

A survey questionnaire is employed in this study, which consisted of two sections. The first section is designed for get the demographic information of the respondents, which includes five questions relating to gender, age, education, career, and number of times serving as tour guide. The second section of the questionnaire consists of 11 questions related to household support, economic rewards, social rewards, career prospects, and profession loyalty. These items derive from previous related studies and in-depth interviewing to tour guides. The first version of the questionnaire was delivered to some experts for advice. At the same time, a pilot test was conducted with some tour guides who had extensive experience serving as guide. The questionnaire was revised according to their feedback. All items use a five-point Likert type Scale (strongly disagree=1 to strongly agree=5). Table1 shows the operational definitions and the scale items for these constructs.

Table1. Measurement items

Construct	Measurement items
Economics Reward (ER)	
ER1	As a tour guide, I can earn money rapidly.
ER2	As a tour guide, I can obtain more revenues.
Social Reward (SR)	
SR1	As a tour guide, I am very proud.
SR2	I can make friends with people worldwide.
SR3	I have learnt how to get along with others since I am a tour guide
Household Support (HS)	
HS1	My parents strongly support my job as a tour guide.
HS2	My girlfriend/boyfriend/husband/wife strongly support my job as a tour guide.
Career Prospect (CP)	
CP1	Tour guide has a very big development prospect.
CP2	If you persist in doing as a tour guide, you surely can secure more revenues.
Profession Loyalty (PL)	
PL1	I will continue to serve as a tour guide in that it has a speculative prospect.
PL2	I will recommend my relatives as a tour guide

3.3 Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)

At present, the Structural Equation Modeling technique is widely employed in human resource management research. There are two approaches to estimate the relationship in a structural equation model (SEM) [12, 13]. One is the more widely applied covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM) approach. The other is Partial least square structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). In contrast with CB-SEM, PLS-SEM has certain advantages. PLS-SEM generally makes no assumptions about the data distributions and achieved high levels of statistical power with small sample sizes [14, 15]. Therefore, it is very suitable in this case because the sample size of this study was smaller (N=113). In this research, we employed smartpls3.0 to run data.

4. Data analysis and results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

A total of 113 respondents were surveyed. Of these 113 participants, 20 were men (17.7%) and 93 were women (82.3%). It is generally known that female employees are the majority in the tourism industry. Most respondents were between the ages of 21 and 23 (73.5%). In terms of education, 23 (20.4%) had a high school

certificate, 49 (43.4%) had a college education, and 41 (36.3%) had an undergraduate degree. Nearly half of respondents served in travel operations (57.5%). Regarding work experience, 62 (54.9%) have served as a tour guide more than 40 times, 37 (32.7%) ranged between 1 and 10 times, 6 (5.3%) ranged between 11 and 20 times, 4 (3.5%) ranged between 21 and 30 times, 3 (2.7%) ranged between 31 and 40 times. Table2 shows respondent demographics.

Table 2. Demographic profile of the respondents (N=113)

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	20	17.7
Female	93	82.3
Age		
18-20	16	14.2
21-30	83	73.5
31-40	10	8.8
Above 40	4	3.5
Education		
High school	23	20.4
College	49	43.4
Undergraduate	41	36.3
occupation		
Travel operation	65	57.5
Hospitality	1	.9
Undergraduate	36	31.9
Others	11	9.7
number of times of serving as tour guide		
0	1	.9
1-10	37	32.7
11-20	6	5.3
21-30	4	3.5
31-40	3	2.7
Above 40 times	62	54.9

4.2 Common Method Bias Test

The data was collected from the questionnaire survey. In this case there is a possibility that common method bias exists. Thus, we used Harman's one-factor test to assess any potential common method bias. The threat of common method bias may be high if a single factor accounts for more than 50% of variance [16]. The results from the principle component factor analysis show that the first factor accounted for 36.629% (the variances explained ranged from 12.497% to 36.629%) and no general factor accounted for more than 50% of variance. This indicates that common method bias is not serious in our data.

4.3 Reflective Measurement Model

In this study the reflective measurement model was modelled using smartpls3.0. The evaluation of reflective measurement model should examine those aspects; including internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity [14].

The first criterion to be evaluated is typically internal consistency reliability. However, Cronbach's alpha is sensitive to the number of items in the scale. Thus, composite reliability (CR) is generally applied for internal consistency reliability. The CR varies between 0 and 1, with higher values indicating higher levels of reliability. In general, when the composite reliability of each construct exceeds the threshold value of 0.7, a measurement model has better internal consistency reliability [14]. Table 3 shows that the CR of each construct in the research ranged between 0.821 with 0.920. It is above the threshold Value of 0.7. Thus, the results indicate that the items have satisfactory internal consistency reliability. Table 3 show the loading and reliability.

Convergent validity is the extent to which a measurement correlates positively with alternative measurements of the same construct. To evaluate convergent validity, researchers consider the outer loadings of indicators and the average variance extracted (AVE). In general, the indicator's outer loadings should be higher than 0.7 and is significant at least at the level of 0.05. Meanwhile, AVE should be higher than the suggested threshold value 0.50 [14]. From the table, the loading of each item ranged from 0.762 to 0.963. It is above the threshold Value of 0.7 and all items are significant at the 0.05 level. Furthermore, each AVE value of construct is above 0.5. Thus, in this research all items have better indicator reliability.

Discriminant validity is the extent to which a construct is truly distinct from other constructs by empirical standards. The convergent and discriminant validity were assessed by checking whether the AVE (Average variance extracted) of each construct is larger than its correlation with any other construct [14]. The results in the table show that the discriminant validity was achieved. Table 3 shows the Loading and reliability. Table 4 shows the discriminant validity.

Table 3. Loading and reliability

	Loading	Ave	CR	Cronbach' s alpha	T value
ER		0.754	0.858	0.717	
ER1	0.963				13.897**
ER2	0.762				4.671**
SR		0.664	0.855	0.751	
SR1	0.825				15.248**
SR2	0.804				11.393**
SR3	0.814				12.579**
HS		0.851	0.920	0.825	
HS1	0.914				44.447**
HS2	0.931				68.124**
CP		0.696	0.821	0.564	
CP1	0.815				4.939**
CP2	0.853				5.679**
PL		0.749	0.856	0.664	
PL1	0.856				22.848**
PL2	0.875				31.272**

Note: **significant at $p < 0.01$

Ave=average variance extracted. CR=composite reliability

Table 4. Discriminant validity

	HS	CL	ER	SR	CP
HS	0.923				
CL	0.647	0.865			
ER	0.217	0.31	0.868		
SR	0.457	0.417	0.216	0.815	
CP	0.15	0.245	0.59	0.395	0.834

Note: the bold Numbers on the diagonal are the square of the AVEs. Off-diagonal elements are correlations among constructs.

4.4 Structural Model

PLS-SEM relies on a nonparametric bootstrap procedure to test coefficients for their significance [14, 17]. The number of bootstrap samples should be high, at least equal to the number of valid observations in the data set [17]. In the study, 5000 bootstrap samples are conducted.

The most commonly used measure to evaluate the structural model is the coefficient of determination (R square Value). The R square Value ranges from 0 to 1 with higher levels indicating higher levels of predictive accuracy. In previous studies on marketing issues, R square Value of 0.75, 0.50, or 0.25 for endogenous latent variables can be respectively described as substantial, moderate, or weak [12, 18]. In this study, R square Value is 0.462. The results are shown in Fig 1. It indicates that the model explains 46.2% of variance for profession loyalty. H1 examines the effects of household support on profession loyalty ($\beta=0.556$, $P<0.001$). H2 examine the effects of economic revenue on profession loyalty ($\beta=0.147$, $P<0.1$). H3 examine the effects of social revenue on profession loyalty ($\beta=0.121$, $P>0.1$). H4 examine the effects of career prospect on profession loyalty ($\beta=0.028$, $P>0.1$). H3 and H4 are not significant. Therefore, H1 and H2 are supported. Table5 and Fig1 show results for the structural model and hypotheses testing.

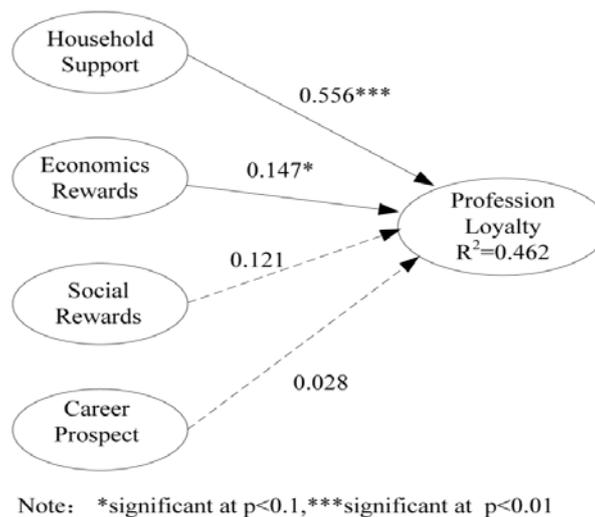


Fig. 1 the results of structural model

Table 5. Results for the structural model and hypotheses testing

Hypotheses	Original Sample	Standard Deviation	T value	Remarks
H1: HS -> PL	0.556	0.079	7.006	Supported***
H2: ER -> PL	0.147	0.085	1.725	Supported*
H3: SR -> PL	0.121	0.078	1.552	Not Supported
H4: CP -> PL	0.028	0.088	0.312	Not Supported

Note: *significant at $p < 0.1$ based on 5000 bootstraps; ***significant at $p < 0.01$ based on 5000 bootstraps. HS=Household support; ER=Economics reward; SR=Social reward; OP=Occupation prospect; PL=professional loyalty

5. Discussion

On the tour guide's profession loyalty there are two tendencies. In the first stage, when people initially serve as tour guides, they have more passion because the many tour guides have an opportunity to secure more money rapidly. Although working as a tour guide is very hard it remains an effective means of livelihood, and it is why the economic rewards have a positive effect on profession loyalty. The results also support it in this study. Conversely, social rewards are not key issues for livelihood after all. Lee (2015) also suggested that economic rewards drive program loyalty more strongly than social rewards [11]. Our results agree with this as H3 is not significant.

In the second stage, when tour guides have worked for 3 to 5 years, most experienced tour guides generally choose to switch to other sectors, resulting in a big loss to the increasing tourism industry. Why is this phenomenon more popular? From our results the effect of household support is the leading reason. It has a key impact on profession loyalty far more than other factors. However, previous studies scarcely discuss the relations between household support and profession loyalty. But this phenomenon is indeed existence in some developing countries, especially in China. Why it generally existed. We believe that the outlook of Chinese traditional Values plays a key role. In China, some jobs have had lower prestige in its long history. In the old days, housekeeper, doorman, chef, prostitute, as well as entertainer have been recognized as the top five disgraceful careers, commonly known as "five stigma profession" (五子行) Nowadays it remains a strongly influence in some deprived areas. Merritt (2000), Pizam, Pine, Mok, & Shin (1997) suggested Chinese cultural values have a dramatic effect on the behavior of employees [19, 20]. Tsang (2011) also thought Chinese commonly value face (protecting, giving, gaining, and losing) which is a very important element of Chinese cultural Values [21]. Those lead to some careers being regarded as prestigious, or not prestigious in older generations. More importantly, these older generations will often stereotype. They often persuade their children to choose a relatively high prestigious career. In China, most of juveniles are obedient to their parents in many aspects including their choice of a profession due to traditional cultural values. Berríos-Allison(2005) also suggested that families influence college students' occupational identity[22]. The tour guide profession possesses some attributes of a servant. Thus, it constantly has failed to gain the decent reputation, especially from older stereotype generations.

On the other hand, the older generation in China values the nature of enterprise when they instruct their children to choose a career. They always prefer institutions and the state-owned enterprises rather than private enterprise, even if they have the same level of salary. Nevertheless, a large of majority travel operations in China are commonly private enterprises, fueling this phenomenon. Those are the key reasons why parents generally dissuade their children from pursuing a career as a tour guide. Consequently, we can conclude that household support indeed exerts positive influence on profession loyalty. At present, lower level of household support lead to dozens of tour guide quitting after they serving as tour guide for 3 to 5 years.

In addition, from the results it shows career prospects fail to have a positive effect on profession loyalty. In ordinary people's outlook, the tourism industry is tremendous with increasing outbound and inbound tourists in recent years. Thus, tour guides should be loyal to their career. However, in practice most tour guides suppose that this job is not splendid because it generally prefers very young females and good-looking employees. Once you are married or you are over the age of 30 it is difficult for you to continue to perform because of lack of energy.

6. Conclusion

In this study, we examine four hypotheses. H1 and H2 are supported. Conversely, H3 and H4 are not supported. Of those, we found that the level of effect of household support on profession loyalty (H1) is far more than economic rewards. Meanwhile, the Value of R square is 0.462. This shows household support is a very important and effective factor on profession loyalty. This is the main contribution in this study.

7. Limitation

However, the study has three weaknesses. First, the size of samples is relatively small, just having 113 samples. Despite partial least structure equation model (PLS-SEM) method may accept a small sample compared with CB-SEM, but the larger samples can make results more satisfactory. The main reason is that the number of tour guides is fewer than the number of tourists. It is difficult to invite more tour guides to conduct a questionnaire face to face because of time and financial limitations. On the other hand, previous studies over this topic remain in its infancy. Thus, scales on latent variables for reference are still limited. Most measurement items derive from interviewing sophisticated tour guides. Finally, this study only relies on Chinese experience and we should learn more from those in other countries in the future.

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