Social return and intent to travel

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Scale developed to measure anticipated social return from social media posts.
- Social Return Scale (SRS) validated using Confirmatory Factor Analysis.
- Anticipated social return found to influence intent to visit Cuba.
- Social Return adds variance to the Theory of Planned Behavior.
- New tool for destination marketers to measure the symbolic value of the destination.

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

In recognition that not all travel experiences are evaluated equally, there is the opportunity for different travel experiences to generate varying levels of "Social Return." "Social Return" is the amount of positive social feedback that one's social media posts of travel generate. This paper develops the Social Return Scale (SRS) and uses the scale to predict 758 U.S. travelers' intentions to visit the country of Cuba. The CFA of the SRS revealed strong construct validity based upon factor loadings above 0.85, an average variance explained estimate of 86%, and a construct reliability coefficient of 0.91. The SRS also had a positive and significant relationship with intention to visit Cuba across six structural equation models that varied by time horizon (1 year, 5 year and 10 years) and the inclusion of Theory of Planned Behavior constructs. Results suggest that "Social Return" is a salient symbolic factor in the destination selection process.

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1. Introduction

Travel has long been a conspicuous form of consumption, where travelers use their experiences as leverage within social relationships (Correia, Kozak, & Reis, 2016; Dimanche & Samdahl, 1994; Sirgy & Su, 2000). This is evident from tourism's vibrant history of conspicuous experiences such as the Grand Tour of Europe, the Titanic's maiden voyage, and early rail trips to visit America's National Parks. More modern examples of tourism's conspicuous nature include the phenomenon of 'gap years,' destination weddings or extravagant honeymoons, and the cementing of travel experiences as core component of what is shared on social media (Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016; Lo, McKercher, Cheung, & Law, 2011; Lyu, 2016).

While travel and social standing have a long history of interconnectedness, social media has fundamentally changed the nature of this form of conspicuous consumption (Lo & McKercher, 2015). No longer do peers have to take each other's word on where they have traveled or wait for the slideshow upon returning from the trip; travelers are now able to receive instant gratification and recognition through posting pictures of their travels in situ. Travelers also now have the ability to broadcast their travel experiences to peer networks much larger than previously available (Munar &

Jacobsen, 2014). Social media's rise has essentially taken an already conspicuous activity and elevated it to one of the most conspicuous forms of consumption. While social media helps to make travel more conspicuous, there is an element of sophistication with online picture sharing where the pictures are carefully selected and manicured to portray a desired social image (Lo & McKercher, 2015). This type of symbolic consumption falls under the umbrella of what Eckhardt, Belk, and Wilson (2015) call "inconspicuous consumption." The motive to signal status to peer groups through consumption is the same as conspicuous consumption, but under inconspicuous consumption there is "increased desire for sophistication and subtlety … to further distinguish oneself for a narrow group of peers" (Eckhardt et al., 2015, p. 807).

In recognition that the traveler is keenly aware of the social value of their travel and that not all travel experiences are evaluated equally (Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016; Lo, McKercher, Lo, Cheung, & Law, 2011; Lyu, 2016), there is the opportunity for varying travel experiences to generate different levels of "Social Return." In the age of widespread social media use, particularly in the context of travel, "Social Return" can be conceptualized as the amount of positive social feedback that one's social media posts will generate (Deegan, 2015). The general idea is that the more well received the social media post, the more social media return the post will generate through increased 'likes,' 'comments,' and 'sharing.' This in turn leads to an enhanced social status of the poster among their social group. In essence, social media has provided a medium for peer groups to manicure their social images to demonstrate the "cultural capital" that Bourdieu (1984) states is needed to effectively climb the social ladder (Trigg, 2001).

While the conspicuous nature of tourism and the idea that travel destinations have different symbolic images is not new (Eckinci, Sirakaya-Turk, & Preciado, 2013), researchers within the tourism literature have yet to measure the anticipated 'Social Return' that sharing tourism experiences will provide social media users. This has important managerial and theoretical implications because the disparate levels of anticipated "Social Return" from different travel experiences could be a salient factor in the formation of tourists' destination selection set (Woodside & Lysonski, 1989) and ultimately their decision to travel or not travel to a destination. This is especially important as narcissism becomes more normalized and the posting of travel experiences on social media becomes a more prominent primary motivation for travel (Canavan, 2017; Munar & Jacobsen, 2014). Munar and Jacobsen (2014) describe these self-centered motivations being related to the current techno-meritocratic system that we have entered where one's value is partly derived from the image they procure through digital platforms. This focus on "Social Return" is similar to other measures of the symbolic value of travel consumption such as "Self Concept/Self-Congruity" (Chon, 1992; Litvin & Goh, 2002; Sirgy & Su, 2000) and destination personality (Matzler, Strobl, Stokburger-Sauer, Bobovnicky, & Bauer, 2016; Pan, Zhang, Gursoy, & Lu, 2017; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011). However, with "Social Return" the attention is on the anticipated image enhancement through posting about travel experiences on social media sites.

With this gap in mind, this paper has two goals. The first is to develop and test the "Social Return Scale" (SRS) using Churchill's (1979) criteria for scale development. The SRS is designed to capture the anticipated social return from traveling to a destination. Scale items ask potential tourists to consider a peer who has posted a travel experience on social media and to evaluate the social value that the post provides the poster. After testing the construct validity of the SRS, the second goal is to assess the SRS′ predictive validity. This test of predictive validity is important because if the scale is to be worthwhile, it needs to be able to explain a portion of variance in travelers' intent to visit a destination. Therefore, the SRS is administered to a sample of U.S. travelers to see if their perceptions of others' social media posts about travel to Cuba (i.e. Social Return) significantly explain their own intentions to visit Cuba.

Cuba is considered a novel tourism destination for U.S. travelers as visitation is still restricted for most U.S. citizens despite recently restored diplomatic relationships between the U.S. and Cuba. It was chosen as the destination of interest in this study as the (in)conspicuous consumption of novel tourism destinations is likely to elicit greater social return or 'status' than the consumption of a mainstream tourism destination (Lepp & Gibson, 2008). It is of interest to see how much variance the SRS explains in American tourists' intentions to travel to Cuba within the next year, 5 years, and 10 years. The SRS predictive validity is tested in conjunction with other constructs from the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (e.g. attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control) to see if the proposed SRS adds value to the previous research attempting to predict travelers' intention to visit a destination. Three time horizons are used to gauge tourists' intentions to travel to Cuba, because it is of interest to see how the SRS performs for those interested in traveling to Cuba sooner rather than later, as popular press articles speak of "seeing Cuba before it changes" (Fleischner 2015; Telegraph 2016). A literature review on conspicuous consumption and the emerging influence of social media over tourism follows before presenting how the scale was developed and tested within a TPB framework.

2. Literature review

Veblen's Theory of the Leisure Class describes conspicuous consumption as people's tendency to "spend money on artifacts of consumption in order to give an indication of their wealth to other members of society" (Trigg, 2001, p. 101). It is a powerful critique of the neoclassical understanding of consumer behavior where all consumer purchases were previously theorized to be independent of other consumers and conducted with the maximization of functional utility in mind (Leibenstein, 1950; Trigg, 2001). Under the idea of conspicuous consumption there is simultaneous evaluation of the product or service's functional and symbolic utility. This results in both a functional demand for a product where the inherent qualities that the product possess or provides is sought by the consumer, and a symbolic demand for the product which stems from all of the factors not associated with the inherent qualities of the product such as the status or image that consumption of the product provides (Leibenstein, 1950). Hamilton and Tilman (1983, p. 793) writes that "Veblen argues quite clearly that goods are used simultaneously as instruments to achieve some end-in-view as well as symbols of status" and that "both aspects of consumption are present and determinative at all times." It is the symbolic nature of consumption which provides consumers with leverage over their peers. Hamilton (1981, p. 792) attributes the need for this type of symbolic consumption as the need "to dispose of the mass production associated with affluent societies" and thus signify aesthetic tastes with the focus on impressing other elites (Eckhardt et al., 2015).

Despite the popularity of Veblen's original Theory of the Leisure Class and the idea of conspicuous consumption, the understanding of the symbolic nature of consumption patterns among consumers has evolved to include multiple facets beyond the pure purchase of luxury products to signal wealth. Leibenstein (1950) breaks away from this unidimensional view of conspicuous consumption by adding two different motivations for conspicuous consumption. The first is the 'Bandwagon Effect,' which Leibenstein (1950, p. 189) describes as

the extent to which the demand for a commodity is increased due to the fact that others are also consuming the same commodity. It represents the desire of people to purchase a commodity in order to get into 'the swim of things'; in order to conform with the people they wish to be associated with; in order to be fashionable or stylish; or, in order to appear to be 'one of the boys.'

Leibenstein's "Bandwagon Effect" diverges from Veblen's discussion on conspicuous consumption because the focus of the consumer's purchasing is not on signaling extravagant wealth, but to signal social inclusion and that they can "keep up with the Joneses" as the idiom goes.

In direct contrast to the Bandwagon Effect is a type of conspicuous consumption Leibenstein (1950) calls the "Snob Effect." Under the "Snob Effect" consumer purchases are motivated not by conformity, but by "the desire of people to be exclusive; to be different; to dissociate themselves from the 'common herd'" (Leibenstein, 1950, p. 189). It is "opposite but completely symmetrical" from the Bandwagon Effect (Leibenstein, 1950, p. 199). Using tourism as a frame of reference, Correia et al. (2016, p. 3) acknowledges that under the Snob Effect, "tourism experiences that are out of the ordinary (exclusivity) or unique travel experiences (uniqueness) give tourists a sense of prestige, conferring status through a perceived increase in their social standing and the sense that others will be impressed." Bourdieu (1984, p. 31) describes the Snob Effects' emphasis on distinction as much more powerful than pure conspicuous consumption because

The naïve exhibitionism of 'conspicuous consumption,' which seeks distinction in the crude display of ill-mastered luxury, is nothing compared to the unique capacity of the pure gaze, a quasi-creative power which sets the aesthete apart from the common herd by a radical difference which seems to be inscribed in "persons"

This "radical difference" described by Bourdieu is also referred to as 'cultural capital'. According to Bourdieu, cultural capital is required to navigate the many cues signaled through consumption. Only those with the 'requisite' cultural capital will be able to have the aesthetic tastes to secure the positions of status sought after within their various social groups (Trigg, 2001).

Aligned with the notion that conspicuous consumption is multidimensional and not always motivated by sheer extravagant displays of wealth is the work by Eckhardt et al. (2015) on inconspicuous consumption. Inconspicuous consumption is "the use of subtly marked products which are misrecognized by most observers, but facilitate interaction with those who have the requisite cultural capital to decode the subtle signals" (Eckhardt et al., p. 808). The loosening of a need to spend extravagantly to signify wealth is attributed by Daloz (2013) to the clearer distinctions between peer social groups. If there are clear distinctions, there is no longer a need to signal to the lower class that one has wealth and the emphasis on signaling switches inwardly to one's own peer group. Eckhardt et al. (2015, p. 808) describes this as an "inward hedonistic turn with the concern for impressing others narrowed to other elites. Like the gourmet food enthusiast, the coffee connoisseur, or the vinophile, the pleasure is not so much in flaunting wealth and taste as enjoying it in the company of other elite enthusiasts."

This 'inward hedonistic turn' has significant implications to the sharing of tourism experiences via social media (Canavan, 2017; Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016; Lo et al., 2011; Lyu, 2016; Munar & Jacobsen). Social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram

require members to be 'friends' in order to see each other's post. This makes the motivations for sharing more focused on signaling to peers that they have the "requisite cultural capital" to fit in rather than climbing the social ladder as previously associated with Veblen's pure understanding of conspicuous consumption. According to Sedera, Lokuge, Atapattu, and Gretzel (2017), the social return from social media "Likes" has grown to become a moderating factor in one's satisfaction with their travel experience. Dinhopl and Gretzel (2016) support these findings through their discussion of "Selfies" reorienting the tourist gaze from the extraordinary things within the destination to the extraordinariness of oneself for their social media audience to consume.

Social return is not the first construct designed to measure the symbolic value of travel experiences. Early recreation and tourism researchers were keenly aware of the symbolic utility of travel (Dann, 1977). Dimanche and Samdahl (1994, p. 121) write

It is apparent that both leisure and consumption have a symbolic nature that represents something much greater than either the activity or the purchase. By focusing on the commodification of leisure, we are forced to explore the manufacture and production of symbolic meaning and the ways by which culture creates opportunities for both leisure and consumption.

However, it appears that the symbolic nature of travel experiences has fundamentally changed with the invention of social media. Enhancing social status through conspicuous travel escapades is a historic part of travel, but the smart phone and social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter and Facebook have raised the symbolic nature of travel to a new level (Lyu, 2016). While there are other symbolic constructs within the literature such as self-concept (Chon, 1992; Litvin & Goh, 2002; Sirgy & Su, 2000) and destination personality (Matzler et al., 2016; Pan et al., 2017; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011) that have been found to have positive and significant relationships with tourists' intentions to visit a travel destination, a scale to measure the anticipated social return from travel and its relationship with ones intention to travel has yet to be developed. This is needed as the symbolic value of travel has evolved to focus heavily on the image one manicures through their social media posts of their travels (Williams, Stewart & Laresen, 2012).

With these past results and the theoretical support from the literature on conspicuous consumption, there is reason to believe that the anticipated social return from one's travel experience will have a positive and significant relationship with one's intention to visit the destination. A novel aspect of the Social Return Scale is that its wording is not limited to only luxurious travel experiences or certain social groups. The Social Return Scale (SRS) is flexible enough to capture all three of Leibenstein's (1950) Snob, Bandwagon, and Veblen's effects. The scale's wording allows the individual tourist to think of the congruence between his or her image of what is "trendy, popular, and cool" and decide if that social medial post of that travel destination meets that criteria. This provides for a range of responses as to what is social media worthy with the respondent being the judge rather than the academic. For example, one travel destination such as *Beach A* may be known as a place to avoid for one segment of the population while another finds it as an iconic spot. This would allow those who have an affinity for *Beach A* to rate the potential social return as high while those who favor *Beach B, C or D* to evaluate it as having low social return potential.

The application of the SRS is particularly valuable in the context of emerging and/or controversial destinations. This study focuses on the influence of social return on U.S. travelers' intention to visit Cuba, an emerging destination for U.S. travelers as recent changes

in policy have allowed more individuals to travel to the country. This is a change in the longstanding policy that U.S. citizens could only travel to Cuba under the Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control General License for sanctioned purposes (e.g. business travel, humanitarian projects, research and education, etc …) and whereby educational travel was only permissible with a structured group tour (U.S. Embassy, n.d.). These changes increase the number of allowable purposes for travel under the General License from seven to twelve.

Despite rapidly changing relationships, Cuba is a controversial destination as its political, cultural and economic landscape is quite divergent from that of the United States. In the past, researchers have found that travel between two such political adversaries to be greatly hindered until diplomatic relations were restored resulting in a flood of tourists pouring across the borders (Webster & Timothy, 2006). Furthermore, Cuba has received a great deal of attention in the popular media, and the narrative 'see Cuba before it becomes 'Mcdonaldized' has been internalized by masses of American tourists (Zegre, Needham, Kruger, & Rosenberger, 2012). Such attention in the media suggest that Cuba may currently be subject to the 'snob' effect, but once visitation increases in the future it may shift to the 'bandwagon' effect. For this reason, it is of interest to explore the relationship between social return and intent to visit Cuba across several travel time horizons. This study utilizes three time horizons to examine the influence of social return on intention to travel to Cuba within the next year, five years, and ten years.

Intention to travel is a concept that has been frequently examined in the tourism literature. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) has been used extensively and there is a great deal of support for its structure and ability to predict engagement in behaviors (Bianchi, Milberg, & Cúneo, 2017; Hsieh, Park, & McNally, 2016; Lam & Hsu, 2004, 2006). TPB is a framework for understanding why individuals engage in certain behaviors. Within the TPB, attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control are all predictors of behavioral intentions. We seek to test the predictive validity of the SRS by adding it as an additional predictor of behavioral intention within the TPB model.

3. Developing and testing the Social Return Scale (SRS)

Churchill's (1979) protocol for scale development was combined with Rossiter's (2002) emphasis on establishing content validity to develop the SRS as a reliable and valid scale. This combination provides for a more stringent development of the SRS because both psychometrics and content validity are emphasized. According to Rossiter, no other validity matters if the items do not appear to be grounded in rationalism. Churchill's (1979) recommendations for scale development have been widely used within the marketing and tourism literature (Boley & McGehee, 2014; Boley, Nickerson, & Bosak, 2011). Each of Churchill's (1979) recommended steps for scale development, as well as how each step was implemented for

this study, are included in Table 1.

3.1. Steps 1 & 2: specifying the domain and item generation

Churchill's (1979) first recommendation is to specify the domain of the construct. This step essentially calls researchers to perform an extensive review of the literature in order to delineate what is exactly to be measured. This type of rigorous review of the literature was performed within the introduction and literature review. For review, the SRS is designed to measure the anticipated social return that travel to a destination provides a potential traveler. It requires survey respondents to evaluate whether social media posts from that destination make the traveler look "cool, popular, unique, stand out, and savvy."

The second step in Churchill's recommendations is to generate a pool of items to measure the construct. This step was undertaken by a team of academics in the winter of 2016 after conducting a review of the pertinent literature on tourism related to conspicuous consumption and social media. The goal was to create items that embodied the enhanced social status sought by many travelers. Six items were initially created to measure the anticipated "Social Return" from traveling to Cuba.

3.2. Steps 3 & 4: pilot survey and purification of the EBTS

Before testing the scale's construct validity through confirmatory factory analysis, Churchill's (1979) third and fourth recommendations are to pilot test the generated items in order to purify them using exploratory factor analysis and reliability analysis. In accordance with Churchill's recommendations, a pilot test of the SRS was conducted in February and March of 2016 using 402 undergraduate students from four universities within the United States.

The 402 returned questionnaires were entered into SPSSv.24 for analysis. SRS items were analyzed using Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity to assess the level and significance of correlations between items. The Bartlett test was significant at the 0.001 level and the KMO coefficient was 0.85 which satisfied Tabachnick and Fidell's (2007) requirements for factor analysis. These two tests indicated adequate correlations among the items to be scaled and that it was appropriate to proceed with exploratory factor analysis.

Principal components exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using varimax rotation was then used to illuminate ways to purify the SRS. Special attention was given to items that adversely affected the reliability and validity of the scale. Specifically, items were considered for deletion based upon the 1) strength of their factor loading, 2) how the item affected dimensionality, 3) how the item's deletion affected Cronbach's Alpha, and 4) if the item seemed too redundant. The EFA of the six items indicated unidimensionality with only a single Eigenvalue over the 1.0 threshold and 67% of the variance explained by the one factor (Table 2). Factor loadings

Table 1
Scale development procedures modified from Churchill (1979).

Step	Recommended Procedure	Technique Implemented
1	Specify Domain of Construct	Introduction and literature review on conspicuous consumption and social media picture posting
2	Generate Pool of Items	Literature review; Face validity from research team
3	Collect Data	Pretest across four university campuses (n = 402)
4	Purify Measure	Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test using pretest data
5	Collect Data	Panel of American Travelers (n = 758)
6	Assess Reliability	Confirmatory Factor Analysis (Construct Reliability)
7	Assess Validity	Confirmatory Factor Analysis (Construct Validity)
8	Develop Norms	Future Research

Table 2
Exploratory factor analysis of social return scale.

	Mean	R	Eigen Value	Variance Explained	CR
	Pretest across four universities (n=402)[a]				
Social Return Scale (SRS)			4.0	67%	0.90
Social media posts of travel to Cuba make …					
… the traveler look cool.	5.27	0.82			
… the traveler more popular.	4.71	0.79			
… the poster stand out	5.19	0.88			
… the poster look unique	5.30	0.87			
… the poster look savvy	4.78	0.81			
… me envious of the traveler	4.93	0.75			

[a] KMO Statistic = 0.85; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity = 0.01.

ranged from 0.75 to 0.88 and the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient was 0.90. To maintain consistency, the wording of the prefix for all items was changed from being focused on both the poster and the traveler to "Social media post of travel to Cuba make the traveler …."

3.3. Step 5: primary data collection

After the scale's initial purification from the pilot test, Churchill (1979) recommends a larger data collection to further test the scale's reliability and validity through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). In accordance with this recommendation, an online survey containing the six items of the SRS was administered in April 2016 to a panel of U.S. travelers provided by Issues and Answers, a global market research firm. Online panel data has become commonplace in the tourism research realm, and many studies have found such data to be reliable and lacking in response bias that is common to other data collection methods (Boley, Magnini, & Tuten, 2013; Jordan, Boley, Knollenberg, Kline, In Press; Nunkoo & So, 2016). The panel was limited to residents of the U.S. 18 years of age and older, who had traveled at least 50 miles from home in the past year for business or pleasure, and who had a household income of $50,000 or more. These criteria were used to tailor the sample towards U.S. residents who are active travelers. In total, 1122 individuals started the online survey. Three hundred seventy respondents were removed either due to their income and travel characteristics not meeting the above criteria or large portions of missing data within their responses. The deletions resulted in a usable sample of 758 respondents. Based on the possibility that respondents viewed a dependency between the questions about intention to travel to Cuba across the three time horizons, those survey respondents who indicated that they planned to travel to Cuba within the next year (i.e., answered 5 or greater on the seven-point scale) were removed from five year and ten year models, and those who indicated that they planned to travel to Cuba within five years were removed from the ten year model. This result in 758 respondents for the year 1 models, 632 respondents for the five year models, and 502 respondents for the ten year models.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) using AMOS was conducted to assess the SRS' construct validity using the Year 1 data. Predictive validity was assessed through six path models that examined the relationship between social return and intent to visit Cuba. The first three models focus on the direct relationship between social return and intent to visit Cuba over three time horizons (1 year, 5 years, and 10 years). Models four through six include the Theory of Planned Behavior constructs of positive attitudes, negative attitudes, perceived behavioral control, and subjective norms to see how the SRS performed at predicting intention to visit Cuba across these time horizons.

3.4. Steps 6 & 7: assessing reliability and validity through confirmatory factor analysis

An integral part of scale development is demonstrating construct validity (Churchill, 1979). According to Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2010), construct validity is "the extent to which a set of measured items actually reflect the theoretical latent constructs those items are designed to measure" (p. 686). The construct validity of the SRS was assessed by examining convergent validity, discriminant and nomological validity. Convergent validity examines how much common variance is shared between the items and the latent construct. To establish convergent validity, Hair et al. recommends factor loadings being statistically significant and over 0.5, reliability coefficients above 0.7, and the average variance explained (AVE) to be more than 50%. The CFA of the SRS met these strict requirements with all factor loadings being significant and ranging from 0.87 to 0.96, the construct reliability coefficient being 0.91, and an AVE of 86% (Table 3). Discriminant validity is a test of the scale's uniqueness from other constructs included in the measurement model. Hair et al. (2010) recommend assessing discriminant validity by comparing the squared correlations between constructs with the AVE by each construct. To demonstrate discriminant validity, the AVE of each construct must be higher than the squared correlation between other constructs. As seen in Table 4, the SRS's AVE of 86% is higher than all squared correlations with other the TPB constructs included within the model. Nomological validity is a test of how well the developed scale predicts other variables that theory suggests it should (Hair et al., 2010). To test nomological validity, a series of six structural equation models were conducted to see if Social Return could predict intent to visit Cuba within the next year, five years and ten years.

3.5. Tests of predictive validity

Predictive validity was assessed by examining the relationship between social return and intent to visit Cuba over three time horizons (1 year, 5 years, and 10 years) and by examining the relationship between the SRS in conjunction with Theory of Planned Behavior constructs (e.g., attitudes, perceived behavioral control, and subjective norms). A total of six structural equation models were estimated to test these relationships.

The first three SEM models regress SRS on intent to visit Cuba within the next year, five years and ten years (Table 5). The SRS had a positive and significant regression coefficient with intent to visit within the next year ($\beta = 0.54$; *p=0.001*), five years ($\beta = 0.50$; *p=0.001*), and ten years ($\beta = 0.44$; *p=0.001*) when include as the sole antecedent. The second set of SEMs (4–6) examined the SRS in conjunction with the TPB constructs of positive and negative attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control. These

Table 3
Confirmatory factor analysis of SRS and TPB constructs.

Scale and item description	N	MEAN	R	ERROR	AVE	CR
Social Return from Tourism Scale (SRS)[a]					86%	0.91
Social media posts of travel to Cuba make …						
… the traveler look cool	751	4.01	0.95	0.30		
… the traveler more popular	751	3.88	0.93	0.41		
… the traveler stand out	750	4.22	0.91	0.54		
… the traveler look unique	751	4.22	0.93	0.48		
… the traveler look savvy	751	4.00	0.96	0.26		
… me envious of the traveler	751	3.79	0.87	0.95		
Positive Attitudes Towards Traveling to Cuba[a]					83%	0.91
Traveling to Cuba would be …						
… enjoyable	758	4.49	0.96	0.41		
… pleasant	758	4.49	0.93	0.34		
… worthwhile	758	4.60	0.96	0.27		
… satisfying	758	4.53	0.96	0.23		
… fascinating	758	4.87	0.89	0.63		
… authentic	758	4.97	0.77	1.07		
Negative Attitudes Towards Traveling to Cuba[a]					74%	0.74
Traveling to Cuba would be …						
… scary	758	4.34	0.89	0.65		
… uncomfortable	758	4.28	0.86	0.75		
… risky	758	4.43	0.83	0.94		
Perceived Behavioral Control[a]					77%	0.78
If I wanted to, I could visit Cuba in the near future	758	4.79	0.86	0.73		
If I wanted to travel to Cuba in the near future, I could	758	4.97	0.95	0.27		
It is mostly up to me whether or not I travel to Cuba in the near future	758	5.06	0.81	0.88		
Subjective Norms[a]					78%	0.76
Most people who are important to me would …						
… approve of me traveling to Cuba	758	4.27	0.85	0.91		
… expect me to travel to Cuba	758	3.60	0.91	0.66		
… visit Cuba themselves	758	3.66	0.90	0.66		
I plan to travel to Cuba within the next year[b]	758	2.62				
I plan to travel to Cuba within the next 5 years[b]	632	2.92				
I plan to travel to Cuba within the next 10 years[b]	502	2.53				

Model Four: $\chi 2(df) = 1028.4(195)$; CFI = 0.96; TLI = 0.95; RMSEA = 0.08.
[a] Scale: 1 = Strongly disagree - 7 = Strongly agree.
[b] Scale 1 = Not at all likely - 7 = Very likely.

Table 4
Correlations and squared correlations between model constructs.

	SRS	PA	NA	PCB	SN
Social Return (SRS)	**86%**	0.48	0.09	0.11	0.38
Positive Attitudes (PA)	0.69	**82%**	0.27	0.16	0.60
Negative Attitudes (NA)	−0.30	−0.52	**74%**	0.03	0.25
Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC)	0.34	0.41	−0.18	**77%**	0.18
Subjective Norms (SN)	0.62	0.78	−0.50	0.42	**78%**

Note: Based on Year 1 model; All correlations are significant at p < 0.05.
Diagonal line represents average variance explained (AVE) by each construct; Numbers below the diagonal line are correlations and numbers above the line are squared correlations.

were included to see how the SRS performed in conjunction with previously tested measures shown to influence intent to travel (Bianchi et al., 2017; Hsieh et al., 2016; Hsu & Huang, 2012). Within the year one model, three of the four antecedents were significant predictors of intent to visit Cuba and the model explained 56% of the variance in intent to visit within the next year. Subjective Norms were the best predictor of intention to travel to Cuba within the next year ($\beta = 0.69$; $p=0.001$) followed by the anticipated Social Return ($\beta = 0.13$; $p=0.001$, negative attitudes ($\beta = 0.12$; $p=0.001$) and perceived behavioral control ($\beta = 0.07$; $p=0.02$).

Within the year 5 model, three of the four antecedents were significant and 59% of the variance in intention to visit Cuba was explained. Subjective Norms ($\beta = 0.41$; $p=0.001$), Social Return ($\beta = 0.08$; $p=0.03$), and Perceived Behavioral Control ($\beta = 0.09$;

$p=0.003$) all remained significant and positive predictors, but a positive and significant relationship emerged between positive attitudes and intent to visit ($\beta = 0.27$; $p=0.001$) while no relationship was found between negative attitudes and intent to visit ($\beta = −0.07$; $p=0.07$).

The last model focused on intent to visit Cuba within the next 10 years. This model explained the least amount of variance (43%) among the three models to include the SRS and the TPB constructs. Within this model, subjective norms ($\beta = 0.31$; $p=0.001$) remained the best predictor of intention to visit Cuba followed by positive attitudes ($\beta = 0.25$; $p=0.001$), Social Return ($\beta = 0.10$; $p=0.001$), and negative attitudes ($\beta = −0.11$; $p=0.03$). Over this extended time frame, perceived behavioral control became insignificant ($\beta = 0.07$; $p=0.07$).

4. Discussion and conclusions

Tourism has long been a conspicuous form of consumption (Correia et al., 2016). However social media's increasing prominence as a medium for sharing travel experiences has changed the landscape and scope of this social activity. Scant research has examined how this manner of sharing tourism experiences influences the destination selection process. With this gap in mind, this study sought to develop a scale capable of measuring the anticipated social return from sharing tourism experiences on social media and examine its relationship with intent to travel to a destination. In regards to the SRS' development, the CFA of the SRS

Table 5
Structural equation models predicting intention to travel to Cuba within the next 5 years.

SEM Models	Hypothesized Relationship	R	p	Support for Relationship
Model 1: R² = 0.29	Social Return → Intention to travel to Cuba within the next year	0.54	0.001	Y
Model 2: R² = 0.25	Social Return → Intention to travel to Cuba within next 5 years	0.50	0.001	Y
Model 3: R² = 0.20	Social Return → Intention to travel to Cuba within next 10 years	0.44	0.001	Y
Model 4: R² = 0.56	Subjective Norms→ Intention to travel to Cuba within the next year	0.69	0.001	Y
	Social Return → Intention to travel to Cuba within the next year	0.13	0.001	Y
	Negative Attitudes → Intention to travel to Cuba within the next year	0.12	0.001	Y
	Perceived Behavioral Control → Intention to travel the next year	0.07	0.02	Y
	Positive Attitudes → Intention to travel to Cuba within the next year	−0.02	0.70	N
Model 5: R² = 0.59	Subjective Norms→ Intention to travel to Cuba within the next 5 years	0.41	0.001	Y
	Positive Attitudes → Intention to travel to Cuba within the next 5 years	0.27	0.001	Y
	Perceived Behavioral Control → Intention to travel the next 5 years	0.09	0.003	Y
	Social Return → Intention to travel to Cuba within the next 5 years	0.08	0.03	Y
	Negative Attitudes → Intention to travel to Cuba within the next 5 years	−0.07	0.07	N
Model 6: R² = 0.43	Subjective Norms→ Intention to travel to Cuba within the next 10 years	0.31	0.001	Y
	Positive Attitudes → Intention to travel to Cuba within the next 10 years	0.25	0.001	Y
	Social Return → Intention to travel to Cuba within the next 10 years	0.10	0.02	Y
	Negative Attitudes → Intention to travel to Cuba within the next 10 years	−0.11	0.03	Y
	Perceived Behavioral Control → Intention to travel the next 10 years	0.07	0.07	N

Model One: χ2(df) = 376.2(14); CFI = 0.95; RMSEA = 0.2.
Model Two: χ2(df) = 319.4(14); CFI = 0.94; RMSEA = 0.19.
Model Three: χ2(df) = 279.2(14); CFI = 0.93; RMSEA = 0.19.
Model Four: χ2(df) = 1028.5(195); CFI = 0.96; RMSEA = 0.08.
Model Five: χ2(df) = 974.3(195); CFI = 0.95; RMSEA = 0.08.
Model Six: χ2(df) = 903.5(195); CFI = 0.94; RMSEA = 0.09.

demonstrated strong construct validity. Its six items had strong convergent validity as assessed through factor loadings, AVE, and construct reliability. The test of discriminant validity also distinguished the SRS as unique from the similar subjective norms construct and other TPB constructs. These findings suggest that the SRS is a construct valid scale that other tourism researchers interested in social media such as Lyu (2016), Lo and McKercher (2015), and Munar and Jacobsen (2014) can use to assess the anticipated social return from various types of online tourist photography, like selfies and other posts on Instagram or Facebook.

When including the SRS in the structural equation models, the SRS was a positive and significant predictor of tourists' intentions to travel to Cuba across all six models. This supports the notion that the anticipated social return from traveling is a salient dimension of the destination selection process. When the SRS was included with the TPB constructs (models 4–6), it remained a unique and significant predictor of intent to travel to Cuba across all three time horizons, but less than the subjective norms associated with traveling to Cuba. Another interesting finding was that while a significant relationship remained between social return and intent to travel across all three time horizons, the relationship weakened as the time horizons grew in length (β = 0.54; p=0.001 in year one vs. β = 0.44; p=0.001 in ten years). These findings provide evidence that the SRS could be a beneficial addition to the TPB, and further testing of the SRS in the TPB is necessary.

Theoretically, this study expands the understanding of the symbolic value of travel to include social return provided by peer groups on social media platforms. Such an understanding is of great importance as technology continues to rapidly change the way individuals consume tourism products and services and express themselves to their peer groups. For researchers, these results provide credence to including a measure of the anticipated Social Return in structural models developed to measure a range of travel behaviours from the destination selection process (Lam & Hsu, 2006; Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005; Woodside & Lysonski, 1989), to hotels (Han, Hsu, & Sheu, 2010), and even wineries (Quintal, Thomas, & Phau, 2015). The tourism literature already has other measures of the symbolic value of travel (e.g. self-concept, subjective norms), however the SRS serves as a measurement tool to gauge the influence that anticipated social media feedback has on

the travel destination selection process. Researchers interested in the symbolic value of travel could include the SRS in the same model with the construct of subjective norms, destination personality, and self-concept to examine which symbolic variables are the best predictors of intent to travel.

For practitioners, model results suggest that the symbolic value of social media posts about travel experiences has a greater influence on intentions to travel in the short-term compared to the long-term. This implies that destinations with high social media potential could take advantage of the bandwagon effect and the snob effect as they wax and wane in popularity and, in turn, the resulting social value. This was particularly evident in model four that included social return with the other TPB constructs. Within this model, social return was a better predictor of traveling to Cuba than one's positive or negative attitudes towards Cuba or their perceived behavioral control over visiting Cuba. In subsequent models, social return's position as the second best predictor was replaced by one's positive attitudes towards traveling to Cuba.

On one hand, the scale provides a new tool for destination marketers to use to better understand the symbolic image of their destination and how it matches with potential travellers. On the other hand, the SEM results confirm what many destination marketers already know; social media is influencing the destination selection process. However, the SRS provides destination marketers with the ability to gauge the perceived social media return from their destination and the social return associated with their competitors. Through more targeted research on which destination characteristics are actually social media worthy, destination marketers can use this information to inform their promotional material and product development initiatives. By developing and promoting activities and experiences with a high level of social return, destination marketers will likely be able to entice more travellers to visit. As previous shown by Ekinci et al. (2013), the destination selection process includes more than the functional value that the destination provides.

The SRS is presented to destination marketers as a tool that moves beyond the previous symbolic measures of destination personality, subjective norms, and self-concept to focus specifically on the anticipated positive social media feedback that a destination offers. This is deemed important because the operationalization of

these previous symbolic measures into the marketing mix is not as clear as the results from including the anticipated social return. For example, how does a destination marketer use the finding that one's peer group approves of them visiting a destination influences their intentions to visit? Or, how do destination marketers translate the findings that the destination has a 'sincere' or 'convivial' personality? It is arguably easier for destination marketers to investigate perceptions of the prestige and status conveyed through social media posts of travel to the destination and, in turn, quickly tailor marketing messages and destination experiences towards these symbolic signs tourists are trying to signal to their peer group. Additionally, this research supports Ekinci et al.'s (2013) work on the importance of promoting the symbolic aspects of the destination rather than solely promoting the functional attributes such as price and weather; marketers need to consider the anticipated social media buzz travel will create and harness the force behind these symbolic images to influence visitation to the destination. A tourist's decision to visit a destination is likely a complicated mix of both these functional attributes and how these functional attributes can be commodified into experience worthy of sharing via social media.

4.1. Limitations and future research

Whereby this research is the first testing of the SRS, limitations exist. The first limitation is that the study tests the SRS within the context of one destination (Cuba). This is a limitation for two reasons. First, the scale's construct validity has only been confirmed in one destination and in order to develop norms, as suggested by Churchill's (1979) eighth scale development step, the scale needs to be tested across other destinations and cultures before it can claim cross-cultural validity. Second, future research would benefit from applying the SRS to a range of destinations at the same time. This would provide the ability to compare the anticipated social return of several destinations and its influence on intentions to visit across a variety of destinations. This would be interesting within crowded tourism markets such as the Caribbean where many of the destinations are providing similar experiences. If a destination can provide and promote experiences with a high level of social return, they could potentially earn a competitive advantage.

Additionally, the SRS does not identify which aspects of the destination have the potential for high social return. To remedy this limitation, it is suggested that qualitative research be paired with applications of the SRS to identify what exactly is driving the anticipated social return. For example, if a certain food, beach, or waterfall is found to be particularly pertinent, destination marketers can use this information to make sure that the asset is promoted and protected accordingly. Another option is to use the new suite of data analytic tools associated with the rise of "Big Data" to mine social media posts of Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram users who have recently visited the destination to see what they post and which types of posts received the most social return (Mariani, Di Felice, & Mura, 2016; Pantano, Priporas, & Stylos, 2017). This will provide destination marketers with a pulse of which types of experiences are in vogue and give them the ability to cater to those tourists motivated to post by what Leibenstein refers to as the "Bandwagon Effect." While beneficial, this type of research does not shed light on which travel experiences will provide the desired social return for those who are motivated by inconspicuous consumption and the "Snob Effect." Catering to the "Snob Effect" is much more difficult because the social return associated with these experiences is a moving target; once enough people post on the experience, the novelty and requisite cultural capital to find and capitalize on these experiences is lost and the travellers will have to look for new experiences that are even more 'extraordinary'. To

cater to these tourists, destination marketers should perhaps survey the destination for untapped, locally-based extraordinary experiences that will provide tourists with the novel experience they are looking to share.

Under both of these scenarios (i.e., Bandwagon and Snob Effects, there seems to be a never-ending push to consume backdoor travel experiences embedded in the natural and cultural resources of a destinations. Lo and McKercher (2015, p. 110) write that "Encountering the ordinary … rarely induce(s) the desire to take a picture, for it *is* seen as 'meaningless' or 'nothing special'." This desire to experience and broadcast the 'extraordinary' is going to push travellers further and further into backstage peripheral areas where these unique experiences exist. This is positive for the dispersal of the economic benefits of tourism from urban to rural areas, however caution must also be taken to ensure that the influx of visitors is not short-lived due to the degradation of these resources that serve as the foundation of the experience. Protection of the resource is also important because these natural and cultural resources sought by tourist are also the foundation to resident quality of life. A steady stream of 'camera happy' tourists could result in residents resenting tourism and potentially becoming antagonistic towards tourism despite its economic benefits (Doxey, 1975).

Lastly, the SRS in this example is only applied in the context of intent to visit the destination. While this is believed to be an important contribution to the literature, the items within the scale can be easily modified to gauge the social return of a range of tourism experiences. For example the SRS could be applied to the anticipated social return of festivals, restaurants, hotels, and excursions. The SRS is positioned as an important tool to help researchers and practitioners gauge the symbolic value of sharing a range of hospitality and tourism experiences and how this value influences consumer behavior.

Author contributions

Bynum Boley is the corresponding author for the study and his main contribution consisted of coming up with the idea to develop a scale to measure the anticipated social return from travel. He wrote parts of the introduction, literature review, results, and discussion section and conducted the analysis. He also oversaw the manuscript submission process.

Evan Jordan contributed to the paper in many ways. His main contribution was in the analysis portion of the paper where he helped with the structural equation model that applied the Social Return Scale to the three different travel time horizons. He wrote a portion of the methodology section and provided extensive edits of the manuscript prior to submission.

Carol Kline contributed to the paper in many ways. She was the manuscript's resident expert on Cuba and ensured that the paper was written in a way that acknowledged the current political climate between the USA and Cuba. It was also Dr. Kline's initial idea to conduct a survey of American travelers and their perceptions of traveling to Cuba. As with all of the authors, she helped create the items for the scale, pilot tested the survey in her undergraduate class and participated in the main data collection.

Whitney Knollenberg contributed to the paper in multiple ways. She helped create the items for the scale, pilot tested the scale in her undergraduate classroom and participated in the main data collection. Dr. Knollenberg also provided an extensive edit of the manuscript prior to submission.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data related to this article can be found at http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2017.08.008.

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