

Exploring the Travel Motivation of Macau Tourists towards Mainland China

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Abstract

This paper aims to investigate the travel motivations of Macau residents (18-years old or above) towards Mainland China. A quantitative approach was applied in this research. It identified four important motivations, including travel cost, travel for visiting friends and relatives, various of attractions and activities, and exchange rate. The result showed that the majority of Macau tourists surveyed visit the Mainland at least once a week. However, most of them were short trips. In addition, the differences between motivation factors and demographic factors were also compared.

Keywords

Travel, motivation; Macau residents; Mainland China.

1. Introduction

According to the data from UNWTO (2018), the number of global tourists will maintain an average annual growth rate of 3.8% until 2020, and the number of global inbound tourists will reach 1.8 billion by 2030. Tourism revenues will rise to \$16 trillion, equivalent to 10% of global GDP by 2020. It provides 300 million jobs, which account for 9.2% of the world's total employment, further establishing its important position in global economy. Tourism has gradually become one of the important industries in the world (Tsang, Lee & Liu, 2014). As a country with a profound historical background, China is the world's second largest inbound tourist destination and the world's largest tourist consumer, accounting for about 25% of the total number of inbound tourists in the world (UNWTO, 2018).

The Macao Special Administrative Region located on the west side of the Pearl River in southern China. Since Macau's return to China in 1999, Macau residents have been allowed to use the return permit to travel to the Mainland. In recent years, the rapid development of tourism in mainland China has attracted a large number of Macau residents to travel back to their hometowns. Based on the data from the National Bureau of Statistics (2019), the number of Macau tourists visiting to mainland reached 26.79 million, up 6.5 percent. In addition, due to the opening of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge and the proposal of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area strategic plan, the cooperation between Macau and mainland become increasingly close, and the number of inbound and outbound tourists also steadily increased. In the past, the only reason for Macau residents traveled to Mainland China was to visit family. However, in recent years, with the rapid development of China's tourism industry, a variety of tourism products and activities have attracted a large number of Macau tourists, especially young tourists.

The number of Macau residents visiting mainland China continues to increase for a number of reasons. However, few studies have explored the main factors that influence their motivation to travel. Understanding the motivation of Macau residents to visit mainland China can help the government and tourism practitioners to better plan and promote the further development of the tourism industry. The purpose of this study is to find out the main factors that influence the motivation of Macau residents to travel to Mainland. The objectives of this research are:

- (1) to understand the attitude of Macau residents towards travelling to Mainland.
- (2) to identify the motivation factors of Macau residents to towards Mainland.
- (3) to examine the relationship between motivation factors and demographic factors.
- (4) to analyze the findings and make recommendations for attracting more Macau tourists to Mainland.

2. Literature Review

Murray (1964) believed that travel motivation is an intrinsic state that guide and motivate human behavior. Travel motivation is also considered as a driving force to meet people's psychological and physiological needs (Gnoth, 1997). Tourists need this kind of motivation to stimulate them to travel and relax. Most of the previous study in this field were based on Maslow's hierarchy theory and considered from five levels. The theory holds that a person's behavior is decided by unconscious or conscious needs that generate behavioral motivation. However, Maslow's hierarchy need also has its potential weaknesses (Goebel & Brown, 1981). Based on these weaknesses, some scholars have redefined the motivation of tourism. For example, Fodness (1994) believed that the study of travel motivation is an indispensable basis for tourism research and development. In addition, Mill and Morrison also believe that travel motivation arises from the realization of individual awareness of demand. In order to explore motivation, it is necessary to describe "who", "when", "where" and "how" of the travel. Particularly, "why" is the key factor behind all tourist behavior. In previous studies, motivation was generally regarded as the driver behind all behaviours (Iso-Ahola, 1982; Crompton, 1979). In fact, previous studies have explored "push" and "pull" factors, but few studies have been able to clearly explain specific motivations. "Push" factors are referred to be the psychological and social needs that let a person inclined to travel, and "pull" factors are those attract a person to a particular destination when the motivation is aroused. Therefore, we present a factor that the income level can account for in the respondents' status. Since people with different regulations have different travel motivation, we establish independent variables based on scholars' theories. In addition, the push factor is the internal factor of the tourist, which establishes the need to travel, while the pull factor is the external factor of the tourist, which is due to the attraction of the destination. Therefore, we also set travel costs according to the income level. Tourism cost is a good pull factor that affects tourists' decision-making. According to the results of previous literature, we can find that the push factor and the pull factor are the two main factors that affect the travel motivation. Therefore, the variables of this topic are mainly based on push-pull factors.

Iso-Ahola (1980) put forward in the leisure research people's motivation to pursue leisure activities mainly consists of two aspects: seeking and escaping. As known to all, China has made great achievements in tourism development in recent years and is about to become the largest tourist country in the world (UNWTO, 2020). From the perspective of macro factors, it is easy to understand why Macau tourists choose mainland as their travel destination. In addition, previous literature has put forward functional theory to explain tourism motivation behavior. It can find that people have a variety of internal psychological needs in travel. The relationship among decision-making process, target selection and market segmentation are studied. There are few studies to explain the role of motivation in understanding tourist behavior, noting that once motivation is aroused, people gather information about their plans to travel. It is not only impossible to measure and study the statistical data quantitatively, but also impossible to find the specific variables affecting the tourism motivation. According to the actual situation, we introduced "visiting relatives and friends". Through the questionnaire survey, we can compare the changes in the statistical data to infer our results.

Travel motivation is expressed through the behavior of tourists. For example, if you do not travel to a place, you may never travel again. In this subject, we propose various scenic activities to attract tourists' consumption. Mansfeld (1992) pointed out that once people are motivated to travel, they gather information about the planned trip. Based on incentives and cost factors, we established a tourism motivation variable, namely "exchange rate", which is a common variable that makes many tourists reconsider their trip and control their costs. If the exchange rate of the travel destinations is low, tourists will be more willing to travel there and spend more money (Wilkins, 2001). Moreover, China is rich in tourism resources and attracts tourists from all over the world. According to UNESCO (2020), China now has 55 cultural and natural sites inscribed on the World Heritage List. Visiting cultural heritage and experiencing traditional culture are often the main reasons for visitors to travel in a country (McKercher & Cros, 2003; Ritchie & Zins, 1978). Through tourism, Macao visitors can have an in-depth understanding of Chinese culture, taste local food and participate in local events. Based on the previous analysis of travel motivation, this research established four measurement factors: travel cost, travel for visiting relatives and friends, various of attractions and activities and exchange rate.

3. Research Method

3.1. Research Design

A quantitative approach was used in this research to identify the travel motivation of Macau tourists towards Mainland China. Based on past literature, a survey questionnaire was developed with main measures related to travel motivation, as well as behaviours demographic and social factors that are more related to Mainland China (Swanson & Horridge, 2006; Moscardo et al., 2001; Woosman et al., 2009). 5-point Likert scales were used to measure the items. In summary, the main sections of the survey instrument include demographics (gender, age, marital status and employment status), descriptions of current vacation (travel experience of Mainland China and duration of the vacation), and factors that influence travel motivation.

3.2. Sampling

This study used non-probability sampling. The target population of this research were the Macau residents (18-years old or above), who willing to travel to Mainland China. All the data were collected online by e-questionnaires, from November 1 to November 30, 2020. A pilot test was undertaken with 20 Macau tourists, in order to test whether the participants can fully understand the questionnaire or not. Using snowball sampling, we sent the Google form to our friends who are Macau residents and asked them to recommend other candidates. Based on time and cost limit, 200 Macau residents who willing to visit mainland within 12 months were selected. Additionally, this research chose the respondents who had Mainland travel experience to avoid the uncertainty of motivation.

3.3. Data Analysis

For this research, data were analyzed using SPSS, drawing on the relevant statistical methods, including factor analysis, descriptive analysis, one-way ANOVA analysis, independent sample t-test, reliability and validity analysis.

4. Findings

Table 1 shows the description of survey respondents. Among the respondents, 80 (40%) are male and 120 (60%) are female. Young tourists comprise the majority, with the 18-25 years old group accounting for 25% and the 26-35 years old group accounting for 47.5%. Moreover, 75% of the respondents visited to Mainland at least once a week. As for travel period, most of the

respondents prefer short trips, with the one-day trip accounting for 40% and the 2-5 days trip accounting for 45%. As for the annual income level, most of the respondents' income level between 10000-39999 MOP, accounting for 86%.

Table 1. Description of survey respondents (N=200)

Demographic variable	Percent (%)	Demographic variable	Percent (%)
		Frequency of visit to Mainland	
Gender		At least once a week	75
Male	40	At least once a month	15
Female	60	At least once a year	7
		Less than once a year	3
		Travel period	
Age		One day trip	40
18-25	25	2-5 days	45
26-35	47.5	1 week	11
36-45	20	More than 1 week	4
46-55	7.5		
56 and above	0		
		Annual income level	
Employment status		Less than 10000 MOP	2
Student	23	10000-19999 MOP	35
Employment	64	20000-29999 MOP	31
Unemployment	8	30000-39999 MOP	20
Retired	5	40000-49999 MOP	5
		50000 MOP or above	7

Factor analysis reveals four potential common tourism motivations: travel cost and income level, travel for visiting friends and relatives, variety of attractions activities and exchange rate. According to Kaiser (1970), the KMO measure of sampling adequacy is 0.76, which is considered satisfactory. As Table 2 shows, Cronbach's alphas and factor loadings are also satisfactory with alphas from 0.67 to 0.79 and loadings ranging from 0.61 to 0.83. While the exception of "exchange rate", the Cronbach's alpha values are below the recommended coefficient of 0.7 (Nunnally, 1997), 0.67 is still considered acceptable. According to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), Cronbach alpha greater than 0.60 is moderately reliable. Besides, using thresholds such as 0.7 is "short-sighted" and assumes that there is no unacceptable or acceptable sacred level of alpha (Schmitt, 1996). In some cases, such as the current research, measurements as low as 0.67 are still be useful.

To find out the relationship between travel motivation and the 4 factors, we use correlation-analysis method (Table 3). Based on the correlation analysis, all "Travel cost", "Travel for visiting friends and relatives" and "Various of attractions and activities" indicated positive and significant relationships with travel motivation. However, we did not find any relationship between "Exchange rate" and travel motivation.

Table 2. Factor analysis of travel motivation

Factors	Factor loadings	Eigenvalue	Percentage of variance	Reliability coefficient
Factor 1: Travel cost	0.79			
Travel cost for visiting Mainland is valuable		4.36	32.15%	0.79
Travel cost for visiting Mainland is affordable	0.71			
I tend to spend less money travelling to Mainland compare with other places	0.66			
Factor 2: Travel for visiting friends and relatives				
I travel to Mainland to visit my relatives or friends	0.78	2.17	12.77%	0.78
I travel to Mainland because most of my friends or relatives are there	0.77			
I travel to Mainland to worship my ancestors	0.68			
Factor 3: Various of attractions and activities				
There are various of activities in Mainland	0.67	1.4	9.9%	0.73
There are various choices of food and beverage in Mainland	0.78			
There are various of attractions in Mainland	0.79			
Factor 4: Exchange rate				
I will travel to Mainland when the exchange rate is more benefit to Macau resident	0.61			
The change in exchange rate may affect my choice of destination	0.83	1.2	5.4%	0.67
I travel to Mainland because the exchange rate is good	0.62			
Total variance explained			60.22%	
Total scale reliability				0.82

Table 3. Travel motivation and the 4 factors

Correlation Coefficients	Travel cost	Travel for visiting friends and relatives	Various of attractions and activities	Exchange rate
Travel Motivation	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.08
p value	<0.05	<0.05	<0.05	n.s.

One of the objectives of the research is to explore whether there are any significant differences between motivation factors and demographic variable. According to the results of analysis of variance (ANOVA), there were significant differences between motivation factors and respondents' demographic characteristics. The research found that the respondents who prefer short trips, perceived importance on 'travel for visiting friends and relatives. There was statistically significant difference between the motivational factors and the gender of the respondents. Female respondents rated 'travel cost' more significant than male respondents did.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This research attempted to find out the factors which mainly affects the travel motivation of Macau residents towards Mainland China (travel cost, travel for visiting friends and relatives,

various of attractions and activities, exchange rate). In order to test the relationship between these variables, a theoretical model was tested and developed. Among the sample of 200 tourists, a positive effect was found between travel motivation and travel cost, travel for visiting friends and relatives, and various of attractions activities. However, we did not find the significant relationship between exchange rates and travel motivation. The research results have some reference value for tourism planners to make strategies to maintain and enhance the competitiveness of destinations. Tourism providers must incorporate attraction into the construction of a competitive tourism portfolio. Tourism manager can identify unique tourist groups according to tourism motivation and social and demographic factors, integrate the quality and significance of scenic spots activities, and promote more Macau tourists to visit Mainland. In addition, the result also showed that most of the respondents visit to Mainland at least once a week. However, most of them were short trips. Tourism practitioners need to have a more comprehensive understanding of the travel preferences of Macau tourists, hold more events to cater to their preferences, and strengthen advertising to attract more Macau tourists to visit mainland and encourage them to stay longer.

This study is contributed to understand the travel motivation for attracting Macau tourists towards mainland China. First of all, although the quantitative research method adopted has many advantages, the sample size is still insufficient. A larger sample size will undoubtedly improve the reliability and validity of the research results. In addition, stratified sampling can be considered to identify unique tourism subdivisions based on travel motivations and demographic factors. Further research can be carried out through qualitative approach. Moreover, research results may be limited to the selected research sample. Different samples may produce different results. Finally, this research mainly discusses the motivation of Macau residents to visit Mainland China. It is believed that assessing other factors, such as behavioral intention, is also necessary to provide an overall understanding of travel motivation.

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