

College students' preference of tourist attractions
and its interaction with motivation and information gathering behavior

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Introduction

Tourist's preference of tourist attractions refers to the fact that tourists usually have different preference of tourist attractions. Tourist attraction preference was found to be related to other characteristics of tourists. Madrigal and Kahle (1994) found vacation activity preferences related to personal value systems. Mcguiggan (2003) proposed that personality will influence vacation preference. This study aims at exploring tourist attraction preferences of college students and its relation with travel motivation and information gathering behavior.

The research questions are:

1. Do college students differ in their travel attraction preference, if yes, what are the patterns of their difference?
2. Do college students interested in different travel attractions also differ in their motivation and information gathering behavior? If yes, how does tourist attraction preference interact with motivation and information gathering behavior?

Data collection

The data is based on a survey of 2008 in a college in Nanjing, China. The survey was implemented in the form of self-administered questionnaire and the subjects are college students. 393 responses were received in total.

In terms of the questions, demographic information (gender, age, major, and grade), travel preference (interested in travel and travel frequency), 20 items of travel motivation (e. g.

learn history, learn culture, view heritage, cultivate sentiment, and etc.), 10 items of information gathering behavior (e. g. How often do you get tourism information from these resources?), and 8 items of tourist attraction preference (e. g. nature, heritage, folk custom, and etc.) have been asked. Except the demographic information, all of the questions are informed by Likert Scale with 1 representing “strongly agree” and 5 “strongly disagree”.

Data analysis

The data analysis process includes factor analysis, cluster analysis and T-test. Factor analysis is used to categorize 8 items of tourist attraction preference into several bigger packages, with each package share the similar level of preference. Based on the results of factor analysis, cluster analysis was used to classify college students into several groups that have different tourist attraction preference. T-test was followed to test whether college students interested in different travel attractions also differ in their motivation and information gathering behavior.

Results

Socio-demographics

Table 1 outlines the distribution of gender, grade, and major in the study sample. About three-fifth of the respondents (60.3%) are male. A majority of the respondents are freshman (32.3%) and sophomore (46.1%). Nearly two-thirds of the respondents reported a major in engineering (66.7%), and the others majored in Science (14.5%), Humanity (15.5%), and arts and sports (2.8%).

Table 1

Sociodemographic Profile of Respondents

Demographics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	237	60.3
Female	156	39.7
Grade		
Freshman	127	32.3
Sophomore	181	46.1
Junior	77	19.6
Senior	6	1.5
Major		
Engineering	262	66.7
Science	57	14.5
Humanity	61	15.5
Arts and sports	11	2.8

N= 393.

Clusters of college students with different tourist attraction preferences

Then factor analysis is conducted with Principal Component Analysis as the extraction method and Varimax with Kaiser Normalization as the rotation method. The results in table 2 show that KMO reaches 0.768 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is significant. The 8 items of tourist attraction preference can be represented by 2 factors, which could explain 60.876% of the total variance.

The first factor includes 5 items: study place, red tourism, therapy place, themed park, and city. The second factor includes 3 items: nature, heritage, and folk custom. Reliability analysis shows that the classification is reliable and the Cronbach Alpha of both clusters are higher than 0.700 and reach the highest when all the items are included. Based on the characteristics of the 8 items and the similarity of the items represented by the same factor, the first factor could be named artificial sites and the second authentic sites.

Table 2

Factor Analysis and Reliability Analysis of preferred destination types

	Factors		Alpha If Item Deleted	Cronbach Alpha
	1	2		
Artificial sites				.786
study place	.813		.750	
red tourism	.782		.734	
therapy place	.766		.705	
themed park	.626		.771	
city	.607		.764	
Authentic sites				.717
nature		.823	.669	
heritage		.820	.537	
folk custom		.698	.670	

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

Based on the results of factor analysis, cluster analysis is conducted to classify respondents into four groups. The first group shown in the figure 1 in blue color is neither interested artificial nor authentic attractions. The second group in green color is more interested in authentic sites than in artificial ones; the third group in grey color is more interested in artificial sites than authentic ones; and the purple one is kind of interested in both sites.

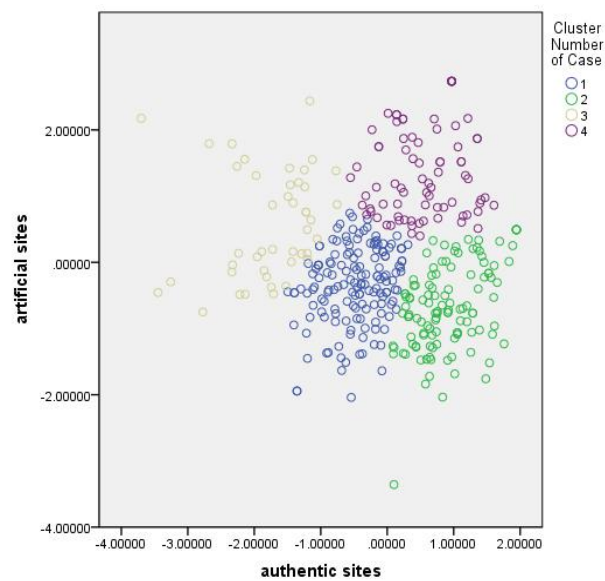


Figure 1 cluster analysis groups with different tourist attraction preferences

To compare the groups with different tourist attraction preferences, the second and third groups are selected instead of the comparison of four groups. The cluster analysis results shown in table 3 indicate that the second group with preference of authentic tourist attractions has 117 respondents and the third group with preference of artificial sites has 44 respondents.

Comparison will be conducted between the two groups.

Table 3

Cluster analysis of groups with different tourist attraction preferences

	Cluster			
	1	2	3	4
Authentic sites factor	-.47481	.91638	-1.76439	.54510
Artificial sites factor	-.34731	-.66932	.57443	1.34397
Observations	153	117	44	79

Travel motivation and information gathering behavior between groups with different tourist attraction preference

Table 4 shows the T-test results of demographic and travel preference by groups with different tourist attraction preferences. Among grade, gender, age and major, only grade is significantly different between the two groups with different attraction preferences. Students who preferred artificial sites to authentic sites are higher in grade. For the travel preference, students who preferred authentic sites are more interested in travel than those who preferred artificial sites.

Table 4

T-test of demographic and travel preference by groups with different tourist attraction preferences

Activities	Authentic sites preferred		Artificial sites preferred		T-value	P
	mean	Std. deviation	mean	Std. deviation		
Grade	1.718	.680	2.078	.7594	-2.819	.005
Interested in travel	4.000	.861	3.591	.8712	2.678	.008

Table 5 shows the T-test results of travel motivation by groups with different tourist attraction preferences. Among the 20 items of travel motivation that have been asked, 8 items are significantly different between the two groups. Motivations including show self, intern, study and train, rehabilitation, and business are shown higher for students that prefer artificial sites. Motivation including learn culture, relax, and cultivate sentiment are shown higher for students that prefer authentic sites. Further comparison of the motivations that higher for each group indicate the students who prefer travelling to authentic sites more concern with their travel experience and travel for its own sake; students who prefer travelling to artificial sites more incline to travel for work-related purpose like business and train.

Table 5

T-test of motivation by groups with different tourist attraction preferences

Motivation	Authentic sites preferred		Artificial sites preferred		T-value	P
	mean	Std. deviation	mean	Std. deviation		
	Show self	1.410	.744	2.159		
Intern	1.590	.948	2.568	1.283	-4.607	.000
Study and train	1.812	.982	2.546	1.210	-3.601	.001
Rehabilitation	1.444	.835	1.818	.922	-2.459	.015
Business	1.624	.838	2.273	.997	-4.151	.000
Learn culture	3.701	1.093	2.886	1.017	4.293	.000
Relax	4.342	.853	3.500	.853	5.495	.000
Cultivate sentiment	3.658	1.092	3.046	.834	3.800	.000

Table 6 shows the T-test results of information gathering behavior by groups with different tourist attraction preferences. It shows that, in general students who preferred authentic sites are more active in obtaining information than students' preferred artificial sites. Only when needing help for decision, students that preferred artificial sites are more active in obtaining help from professionals. The relation of tourist attraction preferences and their information gathering behavior indicates that students who preferred authentic sites are more independent and active in obtaining tourism-related information.

Table 6

T-test of information gathering behavior by groups with different tourist attraction preferences

information	Authentic sites preferred		Artificial sites preferred		T-value	P
	mean	Std. deviation	mean	Std. deviation		
Information sources						
Relative and friends	3.915	2.902	2.886	.9697	2.298	.023
Book and travel notes	3.453	1.185	2.841	.9870	3.312	.001
Self knowledge	3.487	1.039	3.068	.8183	2.680	.009
Decision help						
Friends	3.745	1.092	3.296	.9042	2.426	.016
Who have been there	4.017	1.106	3.591	.8441	2.313	.022
Professionals	2.333	1.420	2.818	1.0842	-2.313	.023

Conclusion

In conclusion, in terms of tourist attraction, college students differ in their preference of authentic and artificial sites. According to the results of factor analysis and cluster analysis, college students could be clustered into four groups: neither preferred, both preferred, authentic sites preferred, and artificial sites preferred.

The results above also show that students with different preferences of tourism attractions have different travel motivation and information gathering behavior. To be specific, students who prefer authentic sites are lower in grade on average, more interested in travel, more active in obtaining tourism related information on their own, and more inclined to travel for learning

culture, relaxing, and cultivating sentiment; students who prefer authentic sites are higher in grade on average, less interested in travel, tend to ask practitioners for information, and more incline to travel for intern, study and training, business and rehabilitation.

References

Madrigal, R., & Kahle, L. R. (1994). Predicting vacation activity preferences on the basis of value-system segmentation. *Journal of Travel Research*, 32(3), 22-28.

Mcguigan, R. L. (2003). A vacation choice model incorporating personality and leisure constraints theory. *Tourism Analysis*, 8(2), 183-186.