

A Study on College Students' Motivation for Leisure Travel in Macau

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Abstract The youth tourist market in Macau is currently promising, as the number of college students is increasing every year, and these college students are potential customers in this market. The General Secretary of the Federation of International Youth Travel, Peter DeJong, pointed out that the actual consumption of young tourists has reached a high-end standard because of their long travel cycle, their high degree of environmental awareness and their courageousness to explore new environments. In particular, the per capita consumption is much greater than the economic benefits created by those who stay in five-star hotels “high-end tourists.” By promoting and developing this market, the related tourism enterprises could be structured to enhance a comprehensive and sustainable development in Macau’s tourism industry. The main focus of this research is to study college students’ motivation for leisure travel in Macau. The model of pull and push suggested by Dann (1977) was employed in this study to investigate college students’ motivation for leisure travel. The findings showed three categories in the push factors; a esthetics, learning, and self-actualization. Pull factors included the ability to find hygienic and comfortable accommodation and delicious food as two priority concerns while choosing a tourist destination. Finally, it is hoped that these findings can provide some possible recommendations to the tourism industry in Macau.

Keywords Leisure tourism · Travel motivation · Youth market · High-end tourists · Sustainable development

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1 Introduction

Since the establishment of the Macau Special Administrative Region, the Macau economic situation is growing increasingly. Due to gambling rights changes, tourism and related industries have benefited. Macau, the so-called “Monte Carlo of the Orient,” has an economy that relies heavily on gambling. However, the gambling industry is also a source of instability in the Macau economy, as the nature of gambling businesses is not susceptible to technological advancement or productivity growth. It’s reliance on single economic development, could cause a crisis in Macanese economy. In recent years Macau has attempted to divert itself from developing single economies through gambling to focus more on culture and humanity since its heritage was recognized in world heritage in 2005. Since 2008, the Chinese government has decided to develop Macau as the tourism and leisure center of the world. Essentially, Macau is attempting to develop itself to be one of the best tourist destinations to increasingly attract national and international tourists.

According to the statistics of the Macau educational department, there were 32,543 college students in 2011 in comparison with 32,312 in 2010 and 31,249 in 2009. It is evident that increasing number of students has been studying in Macau in recent years based on the successful promotion of the higher educational policy. Employing professionals from worldwide acclaim and developing its international image, Macanese education wins its own reputation and attracts more Chinese students to choose Macau to pursue their higher education. As a result, the youth travel market consists of not only Macanese college students but also the mainland Chinese students. For example, there were 17,296 Macanese students and 15,248 mainland students in 2011.

Most research focuses on the issues of tourism development and management in Macau; however, little has been done to consider the tourism market for young adults. In developing a serial plan on the promotion of the tourism industry in Macau, the youth market should not be neglected. Currently, increasing numbers of college students are studying in Macau every year. In the near future, those Macanese college students will become the main trend of society. In other words, these college students are about to formally enter into society and become the new social strength. Leisure travel helps enhance students’ social and rational cognition, personality, enhance the international vision, cultivate esthetic ability, and improve their comprehensive quality. Exploring college students’ motivation for leisure travel in Macau allows the tourism enterprises and related departments to promote a comprehensive and sustainable development of leisure tourism. Therefore, it is important to explore what the motivations of college students are and to facilitate the government in improving its policy on the youth market.

The purpose of this research focuses on college students’ motivation for leisure travel in Macau. The aim of this research is to employ the motivation factors to explore college students’ motivation for leisure travel. In order to achieve the goals of this research, the research questions were designed as follows:

What are the leisure travel features of college students in Macau?
What factors motivate college students to travel?
Which features of a destination encourage students to visit it?

2 Literature Review

Motivation has been defined as biological and psychological needs and wants. (Dann 1981; Pearce 1982; Uysal and Hagan 1993). Travel motivation refers to a set of needs that motivate a person to take part in a tourism activity (Pizam et al. 1979). Kozak (2001) suggests that an empirical examination of tourist motivations is essential because it helps to identify the attributes of tourist destinations to match tourist motivations. This helps to identify markets which encompass such destination features.

Most human behaviors can be predicted by inner motives as “internal stimuli,” for example, personal needs or desires, which guide people to reach their goals, and external motives such as environmental and social factors, which draw people’s interest (Gleitman 1986; Iso-Ahola 1989) to fulfill their intentions. Similarly Dann (1977) indicated while a specific resort may contain a number of attractions for a number of potential tourists, their actual decision to visit such a destination is resultant from his earlier need for travel. According to Crompton (1979), most tourist motivation is related to travelers’ decisions on choosing destinations which involve the concept of push and pull factors. These factors explain how individuals are pushed by internal variables, and how they are pulled by a travel destination (Uysal and Hagan 1993). As a result, an examination of “push” factors is thus logically, and often temporally antecedent to that of “pull” factors (Dann 1977). In short, tourists are pushed and pulled by some sources of inherent forces. Individuals are pushed by motivation variables into making travel decisions and are pulled by destination attributes (Uysal and Hagan 1993).

The push factors are socio-psychological motives and include tourist’s desires such as the desire for escape, novelty seeking, adventure seeking, dream fulfillment, rest and relaxation, health and fitness, prestige, and social interaction, family togetherness, and excitement. Most push factors originate from intangible or intrinsic desires of human beings (Uysal and Jurowski 1994; Chon 1990; Crompton 1979). Several studies have been conducted from such perspectives (Crompton 1979; Dann 1977, 1981; Iso-Ahola 1982, 1989; Pearce and Caltabiano 1983; Pyo et al. 1989; Uysal and Hagan 1993; Yuan and McDonald 1990). The push motivations have deemed useful in explaining the desire to go on a vacation, while pull motivations have deemed useful in explaining the choice of destination.

Pull factors can be the features, attractions, or attributes of the destination (Crompton 1979). The pull factors are motives aroused by the destination rather than emerging exclusively from within the travelers themselves. Pull factors are inspired by a destination’s attractiveness (Yoon and Uysal 2005) and a specific destination pulls people to realize their needs of particular travel experiences,

such as natural and historic attractions, food, people, recreation facilities, and the marketed image of the destination (Uysal and Hagan 1993). Therefore, the attractive characteristics of a destination may encourage and inspire intrinsic push motivations (McGehee et al. 1996). Such perspectives have been employed in several studies such as Iso-Ahola (1982); Pyo et al. (1989); Yoon and Uysal (2005); Yuan and McDonald (1990).

In tourism research, the push and pull concepts have been used to represent the internal and external stimuli respectively. Studies show that one of the best ways to understand tourist motivation is to examine and conceptualize tourists' behavior using push and pull factors (Kim and Lee 2002; Kim et al. 2003; Klenosky 2002). Many previous studies have researched the different types of tourists travel motivation in China. These studies mainly investigated the types of travel motivations and their preferences, tourist consumption behavior, and so on. However, few related studies of travel motivation have been carried out in Macau. Therefore, it is the intention of this researcher to apply this theory to explore the travel motivation of college students in Macau.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Instrument

This study is based on Dann's (1977) model; that is, the push and pull factors of motivation. Several previous studies were reviewed to help construct and finalize the first draft of the instrument. The questionnaire was divided into three parts. The first part was designed to obtain personal information, the second part to understand the leisure travel features of college students, and the last part examined the students' motivation for leisure travel. 12 items were gathered. Each push dimension contained 12 items, with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "not at all important (1)" to "extremely important (5)." As for the investigation of push factors, the questionnaire was designed to rank the features of tourist destinations from "priority" (1) to "less concern" (5).

3.2 Sampling

According to Morrison (1993) and Cohen et al. (2000), the quantitative research not only depends on the appropriateness of the research methodology and instrumentation, but it also needs to adopt a correctly selected sampling strategy. Purposive sampling was chosen as the method for this research because its advantages allowed the researcher to build up a sample on the grounds of satisfying the needs of this research. In order to reduce the bias, this researcher was careful in categorizing the subjects, from the grade and the major of the participants and also from the participants' original place of birth. Consequently, the samples involved

in this study included participants who were studying and living in Macau and from different faculties and grades.

3.3 Pilot Study

The purpose of the pilot study was to investigate the possible problems and risks that could be potentially present during the formal study (Cohen et al. 2000). It is also important to carry out a pilot study to verify that the research context and design methods are appropriate for an acceptable outcome of the study. The pilot study was conducted on the 5th of May 2011. Fifty students from different grades and faculties volunteered to take part in this study. After which, some modification of questions was carried out in order to clarify some vague meaning in the statements.

3.4 Data Collection

The main study was carried out at the Macau University of Science and Technology from the 10th to 20th of May 2011. The researcher and her graduate students divided into two groups to distribute the questionnaires. One group only distributed the questionnaires to local students and the other group focused on distributing the questionnaires to non-local students. The two groups distributed questionnaires to different faculties after the students finished their sessions. The purpose of the study was firstly introduced by the research group and then the subjects were asked if they were willing to participate. Later, the research group identified their hometown before requesting participants' willingness to respond to the questionnaires. The gender issue was also controlled by the research group when they distributed the questionnaires. Finally, the questionnaires were administrated to 450 university students, and 415 valid copies were returned.

3.5 Assessing Validity and Reliability

The overall sample size was found adequate to conduct a principal component analysis on the 9 travel motives using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measurement. The KMO was meritorious (.763) as it was greater than the suggested 0.70 baseline (Ryan and Glewndon 1998). In order to examine the underlying dimensions of college students' motivations for travel, principal component analysis with a varimax rotation was applied to the 9 motivational variables used in the questionnaire. Nine items for each factor were examined for this study, and the factor loading scores of the rotated solution were more than 0.57 for all push factors.

Reliability of each of the resulting factors was determined using Cronbach's alpha with acceptable reliability estimate set at 0.7 (Nunnally 1978). In this study, the results showed that alpha coefficients ranged from 0.75 to 0.73.

4 Research Results

A total of 450 questionnaires were distributed and 415 valid questionnaires were finally obtained. Demographic profile of sample showed in Table 1. The raw quantitative data obtain from the valid questionnaires ($N = 415$) was coded and then entered into statistical package SPSS 17.0 for analysis. Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the sample. The gender of the respondents did not show great differences between the male students (53.98 %) and female students (46.02 %). As the last year students had left school for internship while conducting this research, the last year students only occupied 6.3 %. The first, second, and third year students were evenly distributed. The local students comprised 54.77 % and the non-local students 47.23 %.

4.1 The Analysis of Leisure Travel Features

Table 2 displays the results of leisure travel features. 69.6 % of college students traveled 1–2 times per year. One quarter of students traveled 3–5 times per year. More than half of the students (54.6 %) intended to travel for 4–6 days and around one third of students for 1–3 days. Only one tenth of students traveled over a week. The sources of travel information were from friends (42.9 %), internet (31.1 %), and media (13 %). Students mostly traveling with friends comprised 54.5 % and those traveling with family, 38.1 %. Only 2.4 % of students traveled with tour groups and 5.1 % preferred traveling alone. The most preferable tourist destinations were mainly located in Mainland China (82.2 %). Those choosing to travel in a foreign country made up only 11.8 %.

Table 1 Demographic profile of sample

| Variable | Frequent | (%) |
|-------------------------|----------|-------|
| Gender ($n = 415$) | | |
| Male | 224 | 53.98 |
| Female | 191 | 46.02 |
| Grade ($n = 415$) | | |
| First year | 131 | 31.60 |
| Second year | 124 | 30.10 |
| Third year | 133 | 32 |
| Four year | 27 | 6.30 |
| Residence ($n = 415$) | | |
| Local | 227 | 54.77 |
| Non-local | 188 | 47.23 |

Table 2 College students' leisure travel features

| Variable | Category | Number | (%) |
|-------------------|--------------|--------|-------|
| Number of travels | 1–2 times | 289 | 69.60 |
| | 3–5 times | 108 | 26 |
| | over 5 times | 18 | 4.40 |
| Length of stay | 1–3 days | 144 | 34.70 |
| | 4–6 days | 225 | 54.20 |
| | over 7 days | 46 | 11.10 |
| Information | Friends | 178 | 42.90 |
| | Internet | 129 | 31.10 |
| | Media | 54 | 13.00 |
| | Travel agent | 43 | 10.40 |
| | Others | 11 | 2.70 |
| Companionships | With friends | 226 | 54.50 |
| | With family | 158 | 38.10 |
| | With group | 10 | 2.40 |
| | Alone | 21 | 5.10 |
| Preferable places | China | 341 | 82.2 |
| | Abroad | 49 | 11.8 |
| | Macau | 25 | 60 |

4.2 Factor Analysis of Pull Factors

The results of the pull factor analysis are presented are presented in Table 3. Factor 1 was labeled as “a esthetics,” and included three attributes and had a reliability level of 0.75. The three attributes accounted for 33.61 % of the total variance. They were: enjoy humanity, enjoy natural environment, and enjoy ethnical culture. Factor 2 named “Learning,” included three attributes and had a reliability level of 0.75. The three attributes accounted for 19.02 % of the total variance. They were: participate competition; learn new things broaden one’s horizon. Factor 3 was labeled “Self-actualization” and included three attributes; self-development, experience new life style, and enjoy freedom. The three attributes explained the 13.74 % of the total variance and had a reliability level of 0.73.

4.3 Ranking for Pull Factors

The results of the pull factors are presented in Table 4. There were five categories of main pull factors being ranked. The top three factors were hygienic and comfortable accommodation, delicious food and diversity entertainments and shopping. The factors of convenient transportation and tourism-related service were less of a concern to college students when choosing a tourist destination.

Table 3 Factor loading and communality for push factors

| Push factors | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 | Communality |
|------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|-------------|
| Factor 1: aesthetics | | | | |
| Enjoy humanity | 0.880 | | | 0.791 |
| Enjoy natural environment | 0.846 | | | 0.742 |
| Enjoy ethnical culture | 0.694 | | | 0.570 |
| Factor 2: learning | | | | |
| Participate competition | | 0.833 | | 0.712 |
| Learn new things | | 0.794 | | 0.644 |
| Broaden one's horizon | | 0.732 | | 0.599 |
| Factor 3: self-actualization | | | | |
| Self-development | | | 0.840 | 0.729 |
| Experience new life style | | | 0.780 | 0.648 |
| Enjoy freedom | 33.61 | 19.02 | 0.706 | |
| Variances | | | 13.74 | 0.537 |
| Cumulative variance (%) | 33.61 | 52.63 | 66.37 | |
| Cronbach's alpha | 0.75 | 0.75 | 0.73 | |
| Number of items | 3 | 3 | 3 | |

Table 4 Ranking for pull factors

| Category | Means | Rank |
|--|-------|------|
| Diversity of entertainments and shopping | 3.49 | 3 |
| Delicious food | 2.82 | 2 |
| Convenient transportation | 3.53 | 4 |
| Hygienic and comfortable accommodation | 2.34 | 1 |
| Tourism-related service | 3.97 | 5 |

5 Discussion and Recommendations

5.1 Discussion

The empirical data collected from the survey and descriptive analysis of the results has portrayed the college students' characteristics. According to the research findings, this study has gained insight into the college students' motivation for leisure travel in Macau. The importance of this research is twofold. Firstly, this study explored the different leisure travel features of college students in terms of the travel frequency, length of stay, companionships, source of travel information and preferable tourist destinations. Based on the results, the travel motivational factors can be portrayed; the college students in Macau would travel 1–2 times every year and they would intend to travel for 4–6 days every time. Surprisingly, they chose to travel in mainland China rather than going abroad. Furthermore, the travel information they obtained was mainly from friends or the Internet, and they prefer to travel with friends.

Secondly, the instrument in this research was developed using push and pull factors. The results illustrated that the college students' motivation for leisure travel was mainly presented within three categories; a esthetics, learning, and self-actualization. The results tended to suggest that college students in Macau were not motivated to pursue any adventure activities or socializing with people. In comparison with the study carried out by Zheng and Lai (2008) where their results showed only two factors. Socializing and adventure were not included in this current study. It could be suggested that because the students in Macau live in a tensional city life, they tend to be more willing to enjoy natural and cultural landscapes to relax in instead of pursuing certain adventure activities or socializing with others during their leisure time.

Regarding the pull factors, this researcher intended to classify the features of a tourist destination into five categories; diversity of entertainments and shopping, delicious food, hygienic and comfortable accommodation, convenient transportation, and tourism-related service. The results showed that the college students favored mostly the standard of hygienic and comfortable accommodation when choosing a tourist destination. The delicious food was their second concern, followed by diversity of entertainments and shopping. Surprisingly, the tourism-related service such as banking or posting mail only drew a small amount of attention by students within the five categories. It could be assumed that the college students in Macau searched for health and safety as their priority during their leisure time. This is probably because many international hotels have expanded their branches in Macau recent years, providing luxury hotels with higher quality food and accommodation. As a result, it could be that the students are easily influenced by their living environment to consider the better tourist destination as the one with higher quality food and accommodation.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is suggested that not only the tourist industry but also the government should pay more attention to the youth travel market. Whilst the Macau government and travel industry welcome more and more tourists coming from all over the world, it is urgent to consider the promotion of the youth market in Macau. It is essential to promote this market, as the college student population will expand every year. The government should not only consider their school education, but also encourage them to associate with the outside world by traveling to broaden their minds. To culture college students to have global vision from leisure travel should be essential for the Macanese government to consider as part of educational development. It can be concluded as the Chinese saying goes, "we gain more from traveling ten thousand miles than studying ten thousand books."

In order to strengthen the youth market in Macau, there are several suggestions to make. First is to improve the Macau tourism policy. Not only the government

but also school authorities should support the youth travel market. For example, the government departments need to well establish tourism law to protect youth safety while traveling. Besides study tours, school authorities may negotiate with the tourism industry to organize special tours based on the interest of the students. Improving the promotion information system in the campus would strengthen the communication between students in order to share their travel experience and information. In doing so, the youth market could be promoted much more easily among students. The creation of a youth market for college students according to their special interest would also establish a distinctive tourism brand in Macau. Close cooperation with the mainland tourism industry would promote the youth market by means of providing discount flight tickets or accommodation, and arranging various tours for college students to participate in. Finally, it is essential to monitor the youth market by researching and exploring the students' travel motivations across time to modify and provide a better service for this market.

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