

Factors Impacting Travelers' Sightseeing Intentions

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Abstract. In general, those who plan to travel need to take several steps before they embark on their journeys. For example, they become familiar with the existing tourist destinations. They also need an intent to visit selected sites. Furthermore, planning a trip is also necessary. In this study, I attempted to demonstrate the factors that affect travelers' intentions to visit tourist destinations. Based on the results of a questionnaire administered to university students, I examined the factors through a correlation analysis. As a result, it was determined that being familiar with the tourist destination and its tourism resources does not necessarily affect the visit intention. In this survey, the highest correlation to visit intention was to the average value of the degree of interest in nature, tourism, history, local food, and hot springs.

Keywords: Travelers' behavior, Sightseeing, Noto region

1. INTRODUCTION

In general, those who plan to travel need to take several steps before they embark on their journeys. For example, they become familiar with the existing tourist destinations. They also need an intent to visit selected sites. Furthermore, planning a trip is also necessary.

Recently, regional tourism has received tremendous attention. However, the methodology for effectively attracting visitors is still developing. In order to attempt to efficiently attract more visitors, it is necessary to identify what these visitors would be interested in, what prompts them to visit destinations, and what affects their destination choices.

In this study, I examined several factors that influence potential travelers' decision making processes with regard to sightseeing destinations, as based on a questionnaire survey. I also aimed to obtain clues regarding the conditions that must be met in order for people to visit particular tourist destinations.

2. METHOD

In order to achieve the goals described above, I administered a questionnaire survey to university students. Based on the aggregate results of the questionnaire and subsequent correlation analysis, I extracted the factors that might affect the visit intentions of those who were planning to travel. I selected the Noto region as a specific destination about which I asked the respondents whether or not they would like to visit. I asked about their degree of their

interest and knowledge about the region and compared the relevance to the visit intention. In general, the farther away the travel destination is, the more likely the tourist behavior known as "racket type" or a multiple sites type be observed. I also considered tourist activities in neighboring destinations that I assumed to be relatively simple.

3. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

There was a previous study on the factors that affect peoples' choices with regard to the travel destinations. Yashiro and Oguchi (2003) conducted a questionnaire survey on the tourist destination preferences. They surveyed 98 female college students in Tokyo, who ranged in age from 18 to 23. The question was "what kind of tourist destination would you prefer?" This was followed by a listing of options." Yashiro and Oguchi tabulated the number of respondents who answered "affirmative" or "very affirmative" for each choice. Consequently, the percentage of affirmatives was particularly high for places with natural resources such as "where there are hot springs (86.7%)," "warm places (83.7%)," and "where there is a sea (77.3%)." Non-natural sites, "where there are ruins (68.4%)," "where there are theme parks (62.2%)," and "where there are historic sites (57.1%)" also received relatively high affirmation rates.

Although the subject was limited to female university students, these survey results suggested that the accumulation of tourism resources may be advantageous in order to attract tourists.

Similarly, according to a 2003 poll by the Cabinet

Office, the main reasons for domestic travel were as follows (multiple answers, the top four items):

- Beautiful nature and scenery (mountains, rivers, waterfalls, sea, natural parks, etc.) 65.0%
- Relaxing in the hot springs 60.1%
- Local foods at the travel destination 42.5%
- Historic sites, cultural heritage, and museums 34.8%

In the same survey, respondents were also asked about the primary activities at the domestic travel destination (multiple answers, the top four items):

- Beautiful nature and scenery (mountains, rivers, waterfalls, sea, natural parks, etc.) 61.1%
- Relaxing in the hot springs 54.5%
- Local foods at the travel destination 36.0%
- Historic sites, cultural heritage, and museums 31.9%

Based on these results, it appears as though when the travelers visit tourist sites, their travel is usually based on plural purposes and the actual activities are generally in line with them. I recognized the significance of this research in that it uncovered what kind of elements travelers consider with respect their chosen destinations. However, it was still unclear the level to which those elements affected travelers' visit intentions.

4. RESULTS

I conducted a questionnaire survey from July 22-24, 2014. This survey was intended for university students in Kanazawa city who attended tourism classes.

There were 272 attendees in those classes on the survey administration date; the number of respondents was 202 (70 male students, 131 female students, and 1 unknown). The questionnaire consisted of six items and didn't require the respondents' identity.

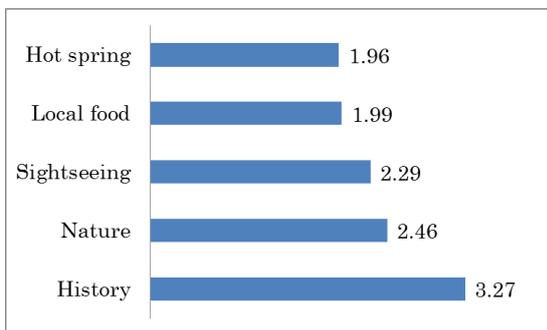


Figure 1: The Average of the Interest Level

The first question asked about their interest in tourism resources and local food in the Noto area. There were five degrees of interests with 1 equaling "very interested" to 5 equaling "not interested." Figure 1 shows the average for

all answers to the question. Of the five items, it can be observed that interests in local food and hot springs were relatively high.

In the second question, I asked whether or not the respondents had been to (lived there or still living there) the Noto area. Approximately 67% (135 respondents) answered that they had visited the Noto area (28% of respondents said "no").

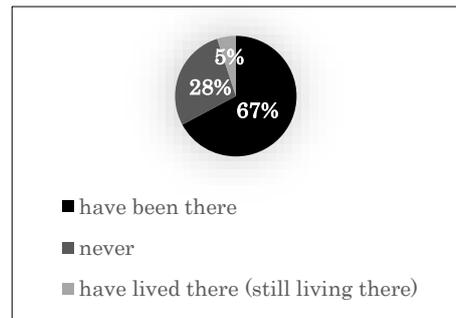


Figure 2: Visit or Residence in Noto Area

It should be noted that what I refer to as "the Noto area" in this essay is the northern region from Hodatsushimizu town in Ishikawa prefecture. This area does not include Kahoku, Uchinada, Tsubata, and Himi.

The next question centered on whether the respondents wanted to visit the Noto area. A rating of "1" equaled "want to visit," while "5" equaled "do not want to visit." Respondents who lived in the area were asked to answer as if they lived outside the area. The mean was 2.27; this suggested that they were familiar with the Noto area, hence why only a few indicated that they intended to visit the region.

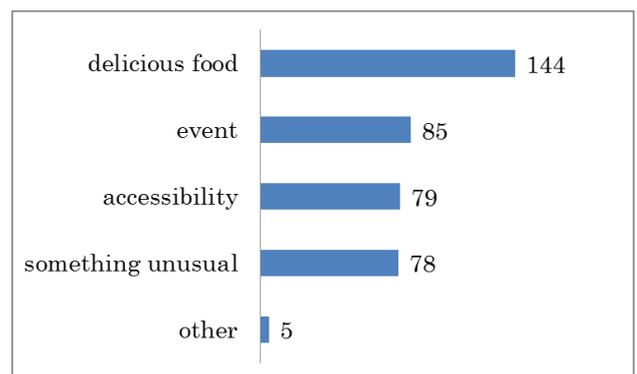


Figure 3: The Prerequisite to Visit the Noto Area

The fourth question inquired about their prerequisites to visit the Noto area. I provided the following multiple answers (Figure 3). Many respondents chose ②, with ①

as the second most popular choice.

- ①there is an event
- ②can eat delicious food
- ③possible to see something unusual
- ④easy to access
- ⑤other

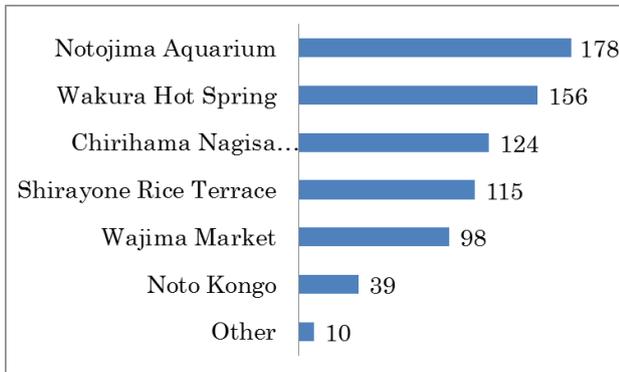


Figure 4: Familiar Tourist Sites in the Noto Area

In the fifth question, respondents were requested to list tourist sites with which they were familiar in the Noto area. The most frequently mentioned among them was Notojima Aquarium. The second was Wakura-onsen, followed by Chirihama Nagisa Driveway, and Shiroyone Rice Terrace (Figure 4).

The last question was regarding Komaruyama Castle Park which Toshiie Maeda built in the current Nanao city. The park's former name (Komaruyama Park) was changed in April 2014. Currently, Nanao city is undertaking the redevelopment plan for the park. Visits to the park have declined since 2009. There were 7,588 visitors in 2013, whereas in 2009, there were 11,270 visitors. The majority of visitors come to view cherry blossoms (e.g., visits in April accounted for 46.8% of 2013 attendance). As for the recognition of the park, 1 signified that the respondent is very familiar and 5 equaled "do not know." Concerning the degree of interest, 1 equaled "very interested," and 5 suggested "not interested." For intention to visit, 1 indicated "want to visit," while 5 would indicate no intention.

Table 1 illustrates the correlation coefficient between the degree of the respondents' visit intention and their interest level indicated in the first question. The highest among these is "nature" (0.479), followed by "sightseeing" (0.433), "history" (0.342), "local food" (0.329), and "hot springs" (0.312), in the order of the size of the correlation coefficient.

Table 2 indicates the correlation coefficient between the degree of the respondents' visit intentions and their mean of the degree of interests among the five keywords.

This table also illustrates the correlation coefficient between the visit intention and the number of tourist sites with which the respondent is familiar in the Noto area. The former was 0.528, which exceeded those of the five keywords. Conversely, the latter was 0.154 suggesting that the correlation was difficult to find(2). Originally, the stronger the visit intention was, the more familiar the individual would be about the destination. However, traveler's curiosities might have been diluted if the individuals were familiar with the sites. In addition, some people may have lost their interests after several visits. In some cases, the visit might have led to a revisit. However, some people never revisited sites. Therefore, it could be said that familiarity and recognition do not necessarily help tourist sites.

Finally, I examined the relevance between the degree of the intention to visit the Komaruyama Castle Park and the respondents' interest levels. The correlation coefficient between the interest in history and that in Komaruyama Castle Park(3) was 0.427, while the correlation between the intention to visit Komaruyama Castle Park and the interest in history(4) was 0.430. Although I cannot determine these values are high, there was some correlation between them (Table 3).

5. CONCLUSION

In this study, I examined several factors that could affect travelers' intentions to visit tourist places based on the results of the questionnaire survey administered to students. Through a correlation analysis, I have determined that being familiar with tourism resources in specific places does not necessarily influence an individual's intention to visit.

As a result, the average value of the level of interest in the five keywords, such as "nature," "sightseeing," "history," "local food," and "hot springs," correlated highest with respondents' intentions to visit the Noto area. The intent to visit Komaruyama Castle Park correlated relatively high with an interest in history.

However, it is undeniable that there are several limitations to this study. I designated Noto area as an instance of specific tourist destination in a questionnaire survey to university students. If I designated other places, the results may have been different. In addition, this study doesn't distinguish round-trip oriented tourists and extended stay oriented tourists. Generally speaking, the former would prefer destinations with abundant tourist resources. In the future, I would like to discuss the differences in their behaviors.

Table 1: The Correlation Coefficient between the Degree of the Respondents' Visit Intentions and Their Interest Levels

		intention to visit	local food	hot springs	sight seeing	nature	history
intention to visit	correlation coefficient	1	.329**	.312**	.433**	.479**	.342**
	significance probability		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	201	201	201	201	201	201
local food	correlation coefficient	.329**	1	.535**	.467**	.367**	.159*
	significance probability	.000		.000	.000	.000	.025
	N	201	201	201	201	201	201
hot springs	correlation coefficient	.312**	.535**	1	.517**	.421**	.177*
	significance probability	.000	.000		.000	.000	.012
	N	201	201	201	201	201	201
sightseeing	correlation coefficient	.433**	.467**	.517**	1	.589**	.347**
	significance probability	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	201	201	201	201	201	201
nature	correlation coefficient	.479**	.367**	.421**	.589**	1	.393**
	significance probability	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	201	201	201	201	201	201
history	correlation coefficient	.342**	.159*	.177*	.347**	.393**	1
	significance probability	.000	.025	.012	.000	.000	
	N	201	201	201	201	201	201

*. Correlation coefficient is significant at the 5% level. **. Correlation coefficient is significant at the 1% level.

Table 2: The Correlation Coefficient between the Degree of the Respondents' Visit Intentions and Their Average Interest Levels or Knowledge

		intention to visit	interest level (mean)	number of tourist sites
intention to visit	correlation coefficient	1	.528**	.154*
	significance probability		.000	.029
	N	201	201	201
interest level (mean)	correlation coefficient	.528**	1	.258**
	significance probability	.000		.000
	N	201	202	202
number of tourist sites	correlation coefficient	.154*	.258**	1
	significance probability	.029	.000	
	N	201	202	202

*.Correlation coefficient is significant at the 5% level. **. Correlation coefficient is significant at the 1% level.

Table 3: The Correlation Coefficient between the Degree of the Intention to Visit Komaruyama Castle Park and Respondents' Interest Levels

		history	interest level	intention to visit
history	correlation coefficient	1	.427**	.430**
	significance probability		.000	.000
	N	201	194	194
interest level	correlation coefficient	.427**	1	.777**
	significance probability	.000		.000
	N	194	194	194
intention to visit	correlation coefficient	.430**	.777**	1
	significance probability	.000	.000	
	N	194	194	194

** . Correlation coefficient is significant at the 1% level.

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