

A comparative study on travelers' sightseeing intentions

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Abstract

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, intention to visit, interest

1. Introduction

Recently, regional tourism has received tremendous attention since tourism has a potential to revitalize regional economies. Although it would be quite difficult to choose the best methodology for effectively attracting visitors, stakeholders who engage in tourism have been attempting to do that.

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 order to attract more visitors, it is essential to make potential visitors take action such as by making a reservation to go on a trip. And it is also necessary to identify what they would be interested in, what prompts them to visit destinations, and what affects their destination choices as well. If we are successful in doing that, we will be able to disseminate information regarding regional tourism more effectively and also can expect more visitors in the region.

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. In addition, I aimed to examine the conditions that must be met 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 studies

There was a previous study on the factors that affect people's 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 three questionnaire surveys. The first spanned July 22-24, 2014; second was during July 15-17, 2015; and third was conducted on December 22, 2015. These surveys targeted university students in Nagoya and Kanazawa cities who attended tourism classes.

In these classes, there were 459 (187 in Nagoya and 272 in Kanazawa) attendees on the date of survey administration; the total number of respondents was 337 (135 in Nagoya and 202 in Kanazawa). In terms of gender, there were 115 (45 in Nagoya and 70 in Kanazawa) male students, 220 (89 in Nagoya and 131 in Kanazawa) female students, and 2 (1 each in the two cities) unknowns. The questionnaire consisted of six items and did not require the respondents to disclose their identity.

In order to obtain more data and perform a comparison, the survey was conducted in two universities. Nagoya city is more urbanized and at a greater distance from the Noto peninsula than Kanazawa city. Thus, I expected several differences in the results.

The first question asked about their interest in tourism resources and local food in the Noto area. There were five degrees of interests with 5 equaling "very interested" to 1 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.

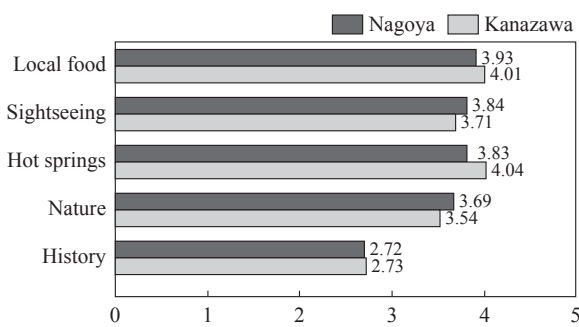


Figure 1: The average of the interest level

In the second question, I asked whether or not the respondents had been to (lived there or still living there) the Noto area. Approximately 67.2 % (135) of the respondents in Kanazawa answered that they had visited the Noto area (27.9 % said "no"), whereas 12.6 % (17) in Nagoya answered that they had been there (85.9 % said "no").

It should be noted that what I refer to as "the Noto area" in this essay is the northern region from Hodatsushimizu town in

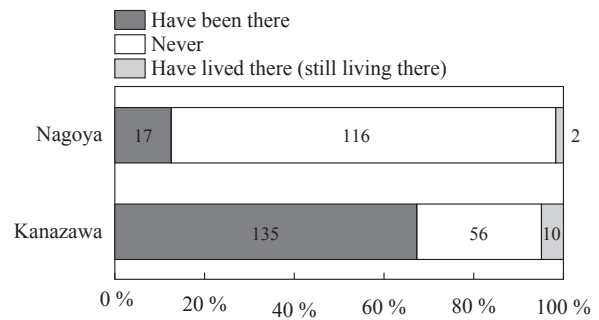


Figure 2: Visit or residence in Noto area

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 "5" equaled "want to visit," while "1" equaled "do not want to visit." Respondents who lived in the area were asked to answer as if they lived outside the area. The means of Nagoya and Kanazawa were 3.50 and 3.73, respectively, suggesting that the students in Kanazawa were more familiar with the Noto area. Hence, I suppose slightly more students in Kanazawa compared to Nagoya indicated that they intended to visit the region.

The fourth question inquired about their prerequisites to visit the Noto area. I provided the following multiple answers (Figure 3).

- (1) There is an event
- (2) Can eat delicious food
- (3) Possible to see something unusual
- (4) Easy to access
- (5) Other

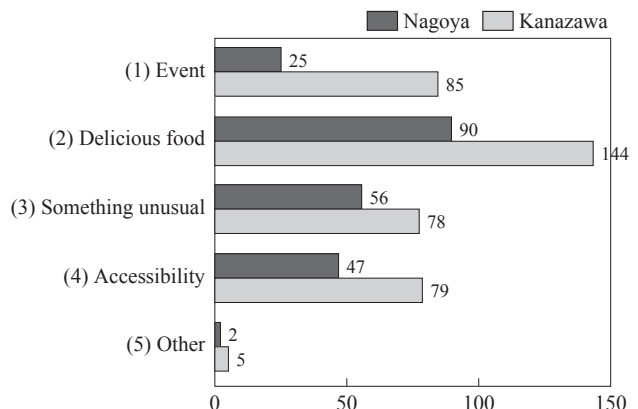


Figure 3: The prerequisite to visit the Noto area

While many respondents chose answer (1), the second most popular choice could not be determined correctly; students in Nagoya chose (3), while those in Kanazawa preferred (1). This difference could be explained easily; numerous events are held in Nagoya city that the students can enjoy without going outside the city.

In the fifth question, respondents were requested to list tourist sites with which they were familiar in the Noto area. As expected, students in Kanazawa knew the tourist sites in Noto well, while those in Nagoya were not very familiar with the sites. Any difference in terms of cities regarding the students' tendencies to visit familiar sightseeing spots could not be observed. 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, 5 signified that the respondent is very familiar and 1 equaled "do not know." Concerning the degree of interest, 5 equaled "very interested," and 1 suggested "not interested." For intention to visit, 5 indicated "want to visit," while 1 would indicate no intention. As I expected the students' recognition of the park to be extremely low, I briefly explained about the park on the survey form when asking about visitor intention and interest.

The average values of responses of students in Nagoya were 1.26 (1.75 in Kanazawa) for "know", 2.40 (2.29 in Kanazawa) for "interested," and 2.64 (2.51 in Kanazawa) for wanting to visit. Students from both Nagoya and Kanazawa showed lower values of awareness, interest, and visit intentions.

Table 1 and 2 illustrates the correlation coefficient between the degree of the respondents' visit intention and their interest level indicated in the first question. The values of students in Nagoya can be presented as follows: "tourism" (0.429), "hot springs" (0.365), "local food" (0.338), "nature" (0.310), and "history" (0.263), in the decreasing order of the sizes of the correlation coefficient (see Table 1)⁽¹⁾.

On the other hand, the highest among these in Kanazawa is "nature" (0.479), which is followed by "sightseeing" (0.433), "history" (0.342), "local food" (0.329), and "hot springs" (0.312).

Table 3 and 4 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

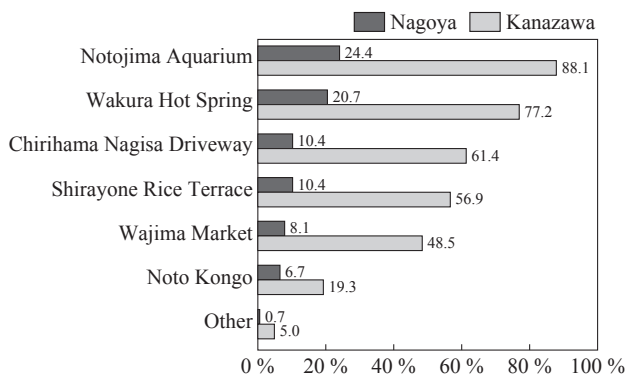


Figure 4: Familiar tourist sites in the Noto area

Table 1: The correlation coefficient between the degree of the respondents' visit intentions and their interest levels (Nagoya)

	Intention to visit	Local food	Hot springs	Sight seeing	Nature	History
Intention to visit	Correlation coefficient	1	.338**	.365**	.429**	.263**
	Significance probability		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	133	133	133	133	133
Local food	Correlation coefficient	.338**	1	.507**	.466**	.378**
	Significance probability	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	133	135	135	135	135
Hot springs	Correlation coefficient	.365**	.507**	1	.583**	.268**
	Significance probability	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	133	135	135	135	135
Sightseeing	Correlation coefficient	.429**	.466**	.583**	1	.452**
	Significance probability	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	133	135	135	135	135
Nature	Correlation coefficient	.310**	.378**	.583**	.721**	1
	Significance probability	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	133	135	135	135	135
History	Correlation coefficient	.263**	.289**	.268**	.452**	.469**
	Significance probability	.002	.001	.002	.000	.000
	N	133	135	135	135	135

Notes: * 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 interest levels (Kanazawa)

		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
Nnature	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

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

illustrates the correlation coefficient between the visit intention and number of tourist sites with which the respondent is familiar in the Noto area. The values for the former were 0.447 (Nagoya) and 0.528 (Kanazawa), which exceeded those of the five keywords. Conversely, those for the latter were 0.238 (Nagoya) and 0.154 (Kanazawa), 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 was 0.420, while that between the intention to visit the Park and interest in history was 0.365 (see Table 5). Both of them with "sightseeing" (for which interest level was 0.441, and intention to visit was 0.427) were higher than "history."

Let us look at the results of students in Kanazawa. The correlation coefficient between the interest in history and that in Komaruyama Castle Park ⁽³⁾ was 0.427, while the correlation

Table 3: The correlation coefficient between the degree of the respondents' visit intentions and their average interest levels or knowledge (Nagoya)

		Intention to visit	Interest level (mean)	Nnumber of tourist sites
Intention to visit	Correlation coefficient	1	.447**	.238**
	Significance probability		.000	.006
	N	133	133	133
Interest level (mean)	Correlation coefficient	.447**	1	.321**
	Significance probability	.000		.000
	N	133	135	135
Number of tourist sites	Correlation coefficient	.238**	.321**	1
	Significance probability	.006	.000	
	N	133	135	135

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

Table 4: The correlation coefficient between the degree of the respondents' visit intentions and their average interest levels or knowledge (Kanazawa)

		Intention to visit	Interest level (mean)	Nnumber 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

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

Table 5: The correlation coefficient between the degree of the intention to visit Komaruyama Castle Park and respondents' interest levels (Nagoya)

		Local food	Hot springs	Sight seeing	Nature	History	Interest level	Intention to visit
Local food	Correlation coefficient	1	.507**	.466**	.378**	.289**	.182*	.197*
	Significance probability		.000	.000	.000	.001	.037	.024
	N	135	135	135	135	135	131	131
Hot springs	Correlation coefficient	.507**	1	.583**	.583**	.268**	.320**	.288**
	Significance probability	.000		.000	.000	.002	.000	.001
	N	135	135	135	135	135	131	131
Sightseeing	Correlation coefficient	.466**	.583**	1	.721**	.452**	.441**	.427**
	Significance probability	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	135	135	135	135	135	131	131
Nature	Correlation coefficient	.378**	.583**	.721**	1	.469**	.364**	.338**
	Significance probability	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	135	135	135	135	135	131	131
History	Correlation coefficient	.289**	.268**	.452**	.469**	1	.420**	.365**
	Significance probability	.001	.002	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	135	135	135	135	135	131	131
Interest level	Correlation coefficient	.182*	.320**	.441**	.364**	.420**	1	.813**
	Significance probability	.037	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	131	131	131	131	131	131	131
Intention to visit	Correlation coefficient	.197*	.288**	.427**	.338**	.365**	.813**	1
	Significance probability	.024	.001	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	131	131	131	131	131	131	131

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

between the intention to visit the Park and interest in history⁽⁴⁾ was 0.430 (Table 6). Although these values do not indicate a strong correlation, there was a moderate correlation among them.

5. Conclusion and future challenges

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 Komaruy-

Table 6: The correlation coefficient between the degree of the intention to visit Komaruyama Castle Park and respondents' interest levels (Kanazawa)

		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

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

ama Castle Park correlated relatively high with an interest in history.

Overall, on comparing the results of Nagoya and Kanazawa, no major difference could be observed. In Nagoya, there were fewer students who had ever been to Noto and, hence, their recognition of tourist destinations in Noto was relatively low. In addition, they also showed less interest in the “event.”

This survey suggested that the higher the average interest level, the higher the intention to visit. In other words, it is important to present to potential tourists an accumulation of diverse tourism resources, and by doing this we can expect them to become interested and visit the areas.

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.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

- ⁽¹⁾ I attempted to examine the correlation coefficient between the school year and the respondents' visit intentions. The result of -0.062 was hardly relevant.
- ⁽²⁾ With regard to this issue, I accidentally input a larger value to lower level of intention to visit at first. For instance, “1” means “want to visit,” while “5” is “do not want to visit.” Thus I corrected them when I was examining the data.
- ⁽³⁾ The correlation coefficient with other keywords included, “local food” (0.137), “hot springs” (0.183), “sightseeing” (0.213), and “nature” (0.358), respectively.
- ⁽⁴⁾ Similarly, the correlation coefficient with other keywords

included, “local food” (0.216), “hot springs” (0.253), “sightseeing” (0.251), and “nature” (0.390).

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