

Cultural differences of self-presentation motivation on photogenic tourism between Hong Kong and Japan

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Abstract

"Photogenic travelers" actively take "photogenic" photographs that get "Like" on Social Networking Services (SNS) like Instagram and post their favourite ones to SNS. Such "photogenic travelers" are on the rise in Japan. Hanai et al. [2019] pointed that the psychological background of their behaviors may include "self-expression" and "conformity" factor. Moreover, the "conformity" factor may have active conformity arising from the desire to seek praise and passive conformity as well as avoid rejection. The purpose of this study is twofold. First, this study examines whether the psychological background of "photogenic travelers" who post travel photographs on SNS, as observed in the Japanese study, is also observable in Hong Kong. The other is to explain the two routes to "conformity" in terms of the different self-presentation strategy, "ingratiation" and "self-promotion," which is the three-factor structure. An internet survey was conducted with 200 participants living in Hong Kong in September 2021. Confirmatory factor analysis showed the model with a three-factor structure had sufficient validity and the three-factor structure model had a slightly better fit than the two-factor model. The two side in "conformity" that is "self-promotion" and "ingratiation" was shown.

Keywords

photogenic tourism, self-expression, ingratiation, self-promotion, Hong Kong

1. Introduction

In recent years, people have become interested in unknown travel destinations after seeing photographs on the Internet, travelled to such destinations, taken pictures of their destinations, and posted them on social networking services (SNS) such as Instagram (picture and movie based SNS) and Facebook (picture and text based SNS). Such behaviors have become popular, especially among young people. This phenomenon is known as "photogenic tourism" in Japan. The word "photogenic" means "person who is appealing when photographed," but in Japan, the word "photogenic" is often used to describe landscapes, food, and drinks that attract a lot of attention when posted on SNS. "Photogenic travelers" actively take "photogenic" photographs that get "Like" on SNS and post their favourite ones to SNS.

Hanai et al. [2019] examined the psychological background

of "photogenic travelers" posting travel photos on SNS from the perspective of self-processing, referring to Shibata's [2003] self-presentation typology through brands. As a result, the following two types of self-presentation styles were extracted: a self-oriented self-presentation style that wants to express one's own particularity and personality (i.e., "self-expression" factor), and another oriented self-presentation style that seeks to express one's on-trend self (i.e., "conformity" factor). In addition, public self-consciousness, the desire to seek praise, and the desire to avoid rejection had a positive influence on "conformity". There are two processes in the "conformity" factor: active conformity due to the desire to seek praise from the awareness of "the way others see me," and passive conformity due to the desire to avoid rejection. In addition, private self-consciousness and the desire to seek praise had a positive influence on the "self-presentation" factor. The desire to express oneself on SNS and to be recognized by others, based on the awareness of "the way I see myself" [Yashiro et al., 2019] and social recognition was also clarified. Self-presentation to avoid criticism and rejection was observed (Figure 1).

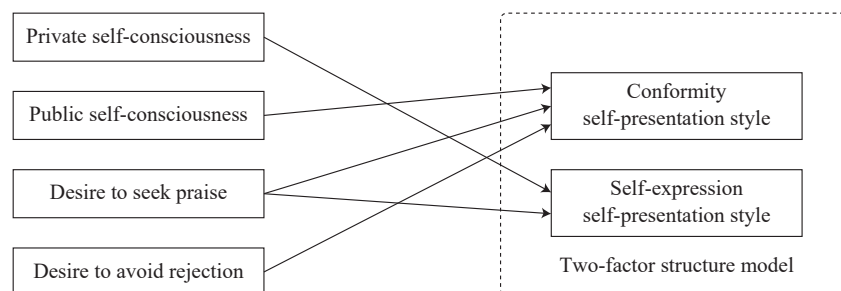


Figure 1: Relationships between the self-consciousness, the desire to seek praise and avoid rejection, and the two types of self-presentation style

The purpose of this study is twofold. First, this study examines whether the psychological background of “photogenic travelers” who post travel photographs on SNS, as observed in the Japanese study, is also observable in Hong Kong. The other is to explain the two routes to “conformity” pointed out in Yashiro *et al.* [2019] in terms of the different self-presentation strategy, “ingratiation” and “self-promotion”.

2. Literature review

2.1 SNS usage and travel photographs in Hong Kong

First, we would like to explain why Hong Kong was the target of this study. First, Hong Kong has an extremely high rate of SNS usage in the world. According to DataReportal [2021], the active social media users as a percentage of the total population was 88.1 %, ranking 9th globally. This is much higher than the global average of 58.4 %. For people in Hong Kong, SNS is a very familiar information communication tool. Second, people in Hong Kong often take photos of memorable events and share them with others or post them on SNSs. For example, location photo weddings, which are photo shoots in wedding costumes in tourist or scenic spots, are widely held [Konno *et al.*, 2019]. The photos taken in location photo weddings are not only displayed at the wedding venue on the wedding day, but also posted on SNS. Thus, the behavior of taking photos of memorable experiences for oneself and posting them on social networking sites is common in Hong Kong. This study examines whether the psychological background of “photogenic travelers” who post travel photographs on SNS, as observed in the Japanese study, is also observable in Hong Kong.

2.2 Effects of travel photographs on travelers’ consciousness and behaviors

Several researchers have studied the effects of photography on people’s consciousness and behavior. Takeda and Ishida [2016] focused on the self-expression and self-discovery that occurs when college students take and review photos and demonstrated that reviewing photos gives them a sense of satisfaction about being able to express their feelings and thoughts. In addition, they sometimes confirmed their own hobbies and preferences while noticing new things about themselves. Based on their research, Hanai *et al.* [2018] examined the role of travel photography as encompassing travelers’ self-discovery and self-expression. According to the results, about half of the surveyed university students found that interesting travel photos on SNS influenced their decision to travel. The results also showed that they “discovered a new aspect by looking back at the travel photos.” The act of taking a photograph, as in the case of the “I”, is a psychological process of trying to understand one’s inner self and to show one’s individuality.

On the other hand, the self-image expressed through photography is not the image of oneself that one sincerely thinks of oneself, but rather an aspect of being conscious of the eyes of others and appealing to a self-image that is viewed favorably by

others. Goffman [1959] pointed that people behave according to the people they face to, friends, family, bosses, coworkers, and lovers, in a variety of settings, such as at home, in school classrooms, and at work. In other words, people are both performers who perform according to their “roles” and audiences who watch them perform. People are expected to play various “roles” in their lives, and Goffman [1959] called it “impression manipulation” when people control their words and actions in order to respond to these expectations.

What is expressed through photography is not the experience itself, but the experience that has been cut out and processed for others to see. This trend has become more pronounced with the advent of SNSs: since its launch in 2010s, Instagram, a social media platform for posting photos, has quickly become a household name among millennials and one of the most popular social media platforms in the world. Instagram users are capturing their various daily scenes of fashion, food, scenery, and holidays in photographs and posting them on Instagram. Cohen *et al.* [2022] analyzed how luxury travel is depicted and interrelated in Rich Kids of Instagram (RKOI) posts depicting luxury lifestyles on Instagram. They then presented a conceptual model of how RKOI uses transportation and luxury travel to construct their image. In summary, the background of posting travel photos has a significant self-presentational aspect, in that it expresses an image of oneself that one would like to be seen by others.

2.3 Self-presentation

Self-presentation is one way in which people intentionally communicate their identities. Self-presentation is how people try to present themselves to control or shape how others see them [Ando, 1994]. Every person desires to be seen as a good person [Jones, 1973]. Making a socially desirable impression increases the likelihood of receiving rewards and positive responses from others. Therefore, when SNS users express their identities, they may not be revealing their true selves, but rather control the expression of parts of themselves that they believe are more likely to receive positive responses from others. Arkin [1981] classified self-presentation patterns into two categories: acquisitive self-presentation and protective self-presentation. The former is self-presentation to gain praise and social recognition, while the latter is self-presentation to avoid criticism and rejection.

Jones and Pittman [1982] also categorized five types of strategic self-presentation that actively manipulate impressions on others: (1) “ingratiation” (appealing to one’s preferred characteristics to gain favor of others), (2) “self-promotion” (demonstrating one’s ability to gain respect from others), (3) “exemplification” (showing that one is a virtuous person), (4) “intimidation” (showing that one is a person with strong influence over others to make them do one’s bidding), and (5) “supplication” (emphasizing negative aspects of oneself to gain assistance). Kobayashi [2006] pointed out that strategies of “self-promotion” are used to exalt the self, while strategies of

“ingratiation” are used to achieve cooperation and acceptance with others.

2.4 Photogenic tourism as self-presentation

As above mentioned, Hanai et al. [2019] examined the psychological background of “photogenic travelers” posting travel photos on SNS from the perspective of self-processing. As a result, the two types of self-presentation styles were extracted: a self-oriented self-presentation style that wants to express one’s own particularity and personality (i.e., “self-expression” factor), and another oriented self-presentation style that seeks to express one’s on-trend self (i.e., “conformity” factor).

Kim and Tussyadiah [2013] investigated the impact of SNS use on social support and tourism experiences and the moderating role of different tourist self-presentation strategies. They argued that the more a traveler participates in social activities through SNS during his/her trip, the more social support he/she receives, and that this relationship is moderated by the tourist’s self-presentation strategy. Kim and Tussyadiah [2013] categorized tourist self-presentation strategies into “positive” self-presentation and “honest” self-presentation. The “positive” self-presentation corresponds to the “conformity” factor, while the “honest” self-presentation corresponds to the “self-expression” factor of Hanai et al. [2019].

In addition, Yashiro et al. [2019] further studied the findings of Hanai et al. [2019] and came to the following findings. Public self-consciousness, the desire to seek praise, and the desire to avoid rejection had a positive influence on “conformity”. There are two processes in the “conformity” factor: active conformity due to the desire to seek praise from the awareness of “the way others see me,” and passive conformity due to the desire to avoid rejection. In addition, private self-consciousness and the desire to seek praise had a positive influence on the “self-presentation” factor. The desire to express oneself on SNS and to be recognized by others, based on the awareness of “the way I see myself” and social recognition was also clarified. Self-presentation to avoid criticism and rejection was observed.

Hanai et al. [2019] and Yashiro et al. [2019] summarize self-presentation strategies that are conscious of others’ eyes as “conformity,” but a close examination of their contents reveals

that they do not identify “ingratiation,” which is the pursuit of acceptance by others, and “self-promotion,” which aims to be envied by others. In this study, we categorize “conformity” into “ingratiation” and “self-promotion,” and examine how self-consciousness and the desire to win praise or avoid rejection affect self-presentation strategies in posting travel photos (Figure 2).

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

An Internet survey was conducted. Data collection was delegated to Cross Marketing, Inc., from September 7 to 14, 2021. A total of 200 persons living in Hong Kong, 91 men and 109 women aged 18 years and above, were included.

3.2 Items

Participants responded to items about the following aspects:

- SNS usage: Participants were asked about what kind of SNS they used for reading and used for posting. The options were “LINE,” “WhatsApp,” “WeChat,” “Facebook,” “Instagram,” “Red,” “Twitter,” “Weibo,” “SNS other than above,” “Blog,” and “Neither.”
- Experience of traveling influenced by SNS: Participants who used SNS were asked if they had traveled.
- Experience of posting travel photographs: Participants who used SNS for posting were asked if they had posted travel photographs.
- Self-presentation style on SNS posting behavior of travel photographs: Participants who had posted travel photographs on SNS were asked to respond on a scale for self-presentation style on SNS posting behavior of travel photographs. This scale was developed and validated by Hanai et al. [2019]. It consisted of 21 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale.
- Self-consciousness: Five items of the public self-consciousness and five items of the private self-consciousness were adopted from Sugawara’s [1984] scale. It was a 7-point Likert scale.
- Desire to seek praise and to avoid rejection: Five items of the desire to seek praise and five items of the desire to avoid re-

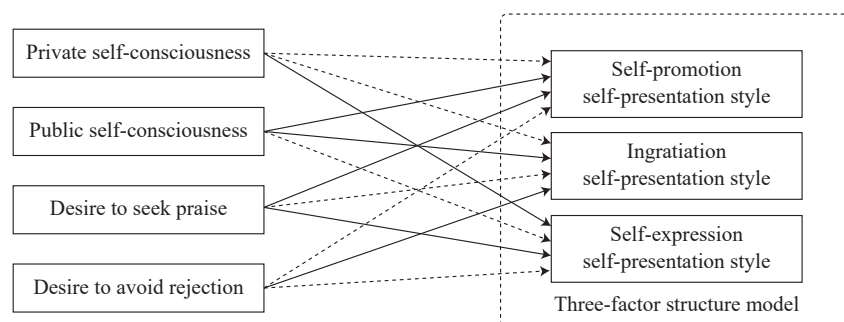


Figure 2: The three factor model of relationships between the self-consciousness, the desire to seek praise and avoid rejection, and the self-presentation style

Note: Solid lines are paths estimated from Yashiro et al. [2019].

jection were adopted from Kojima *et al.*'s [2003] scale. It was rated on a 5-point Likert scale.

4. Results

4.1 SNS usage and experience of posting travel photographs

92 % of the participants used SNSs. In a study conducted in Japan in 2019, the SNS usage rate was 67.6 %, so people in Hong Kong use SNS more than people in Japan. The most popular SNS in Hong Kong was Facebook, and 75.5 % of the participants used Facebook and 56.0 % posted on Facebook. In addition, 81.5 % of the participants posted to SNS in Hong Kong compared to 28.6 % in Japan (Table 1).

One hundred and ninety-four participants used SNS, and 122 users (62.9 %) traveled influenced by SNS. In addition, 163 participants posted on SNS, and 148 users (90.0 %) posted travel photographs on SNS. In a study in Japan in 2019 [Hanai *et al.*, 2019], 77.3 % of users had posted travel photographs on SNS. In the following analysis, 148 respondents who had posted travel photographs on SNS were included in the analysis.

4.2 Differences of SNS posting rate of travel photographs by gender

Table 2 shows a cross-tabulation of the SNS posting rate of travel photographs by gender. Chi-square analysis was con-

Table 2: Cross-tabulation of the SNS posting rate of travel photographs by gender

		SNS posting of travel photographs		
		Have posted	Never have posted	Total
Male	<i>N</i>	70	6	76
	%	92.1 %	7.9 %	100.0 %
Female	<i>N</i>	78	9	87
	%	89.7 %	10.3 %	100.0 %
Total	<i>N</i>	148	15	163
	%	90.8 %	9.2 %	100.0 %

ducted, and there were no significant differences in the SNS posting rate of travel photographs by gender ($\chi^2(1) = 0.291, p = .589$).

4.3 Confirmatory factor analysis of the scale for measuring self-presentation style on SNS posting behavior of travel photographs

Table 3 shows the factor structure of items regarding the scale for measuring self-presentation style on SNS posting behavior of travel photographs. All analyses were performed with Stata. Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted on the 21 items of the self-presentation stay on SNS posting behavior of travel photographs scale, assuming three factors, "self-expression," "ingratiation" and "self-promotion." The "self-expression" consists with the "self-expression" factor in the previous study. The "ingratiation" and "self-promotion" correspond to the subfactors of the "conformity" factor in the previous study. After removing items with Standardized coefficient value less than 0.50, 13 items remained. The results showed an adequate level of fit ($\chi^2(62) = 85.040, p < .05, RMSEA = .050, CFI = .970$; Table 3). The AVEs for each factor were all greater than .40, and the CRs were all greater than .75, indicating convergent validity and reliability.

A confirmatory factor analysis assuming a two-factor structure was also conducted to examine whether the model fits better with the two-factor structure assumed in Hanai *et al.* [2019] or the current three-factor structure. The two-factor model also provided a good fit, but the three-factor model was a better fit (Table 4).

4.4 The effects of self-consciousness and desire on seek praise and avoid rejection on self-presentation style on SNS posting behavior of travel photographs

Principal component analysis was conducted for each of the five items for public self-consciousness and five items for private self-consciousness. The loadings for the first principal

Table 1: SNS usage rate (Reading/writing)

	Hong Kong in 2021		Cf. Japan in 2019	
	Reading (%)	Writing (%)	Reading (%)	Writing (%)
LINE	24.5 %	–	56.3 %	–
WhatsApp	72.0 %	–	–	–
WeChat	42.0 %	–	–	–
Facebook	75.5 %	56.0 %	26.1 %	11.7 %
Instagram	57.0 %	42.0 %	19.6 %	10.7 %
Red	7.0 %	4.0 %	–	–
Twitter	37.0 %	15.5 %	30.4 %	16.8 %
Weibo	17.5 %	7.5 %	–	–
SNS other than above	8.0 %	3.5 %	3.5 %	1.7 %
Blog	5.5 %	3.0 %	5.3 %	3.9 %
Did not use/post on SNS and Blog	3.0 %	18.5 %	32.4 %	71.4 %

Note: The values in Japan were obtained from Hanai *et al.* [2019].

Table 3: Factor structure of items on the scale measuring self-presentation style on SNS posting behavior of travel photographs

		Standardized coefficient	Mean	Standard deviation	AVE	CR	α
Self-expression	I want to show my individuality by posting on SNS.	.667	3.89	1.00	.431	.819	.818
	I want to express a sense of myself in my posts.	.674	3.80	1.01			
	I want to reflect my personality in my posts.	.634	3.96	1.00			
	I want to post to suggest my strong preferences.	.638	3.53	1.07			
	I want to differentiate myself by posting something different from others around me.	.610	3.59	1.10			
	I feel satisfied by posting something that is different from others.	.710	3.68	1.09			
Ingratiation	I want to have a peace of mind through my posting behavior of photogenic photographs.	.773	3.45	1.19	.550	.785	.785
	I want to feel recognized through fashionable posts.	.787	3.51	1.10			
	I want to post the same posts as others because I am afraid not to catch up with trends.	.659	3.21	1.24			
Self-promotion	I was others to feel envious about my posts.	.780	3.70	1.09	.528	.816	.814
	I feel superiority when I can post something that becomes the beginning of a conversation.	.766	3.55	1.17			
	I want to post photographs that might get a lot of "line (likes)."	.659	3.73	1.07			
	The more money I spent, the higher is my motivation to post.	.694	3.38	1.20			

Table 4: Goodness-of-fit index for each model

	χ^2		RMSEA	CFI
Three-factor model	85.040	$p < .05$.050	.970
Two-factor model	97.769	$p < .01$.060	.956

component were above .70 for all items. The explanatory rate was 66.6 % for public self-consciousness and 65.8 % for private self-consciousness. The average of the items for each component was calculated. Similarly, principal component analysis was conducted for each of the five items for the desire to seek praise and avoid rejection. The loading for the first principal component was above .65 for all the items. The explanatory rate was 63.5 % for the desire to seek praise and 50.5 % for the desire to avoid rejection. The average of the items for each component was calculated.

First, correlation coefficients were calculated between self-consciousness, desire to seek praise and to avoid rejection, and self-presentation style on SNS posting behavior of travel photographs (Table 5). The results showed that both the "self-

presentation," "ingratiation" and "self-promotion" score were significantly and positively correlated with public self-consciousness, private self-consciousness, and the desire to seek praise and avoid rejection.

Next, multiple regression analysis (stepwise method) was conducted with the three factors of self-presentation style on SNS posting behavior of travel photographs as dependent variables and self-consciousness, desire to seek praise, and avoid rejection as explanatory variables (Table 6). As to the "self-promotion" score, public self-consciousness and desire to seek praise affected positively, as was the case in Japan. The desire to avoid rejection did not affect the "ingratiation" score in Hong Kong, as opposed to the case in Japan. As to the "self-expression" score, private self-consciousness and desire to seek praise affected positively, similar to the case in Japan.

Note that sample size and power were calculated after-the-fact using G*Power, α error prob. = .05 and Power ($1 - \beta$ error prob.) = .95. The required sample size was 36-40. Therefore, the sample size in this study ($n = 148$) was determined to be acceptable.

Table 5: Correlation coefficients between self-consciousness, desire to seek praise and to avoid rejection, and self-presentation style on SNS posting behavior of travel photographs

	Public self-consciousness	Private self-consciousness	Desire to seek praise	Desire to avoid rejection
Self-expression	.472***	.553***	.441***	.321***
Ingratiation	.454***	.402***	.602***	.490***
Self-promotion	.426***	.435***	.552***	.443***

Note: *** $p < .001$.

Table 6: Standardized partial regression coefficients on self-presentation style on SNS posting behavior of travel photographs

	Self-expression	Ingratiation	Self-promotion
Public self-consciousness		.233**	.213**
Private self-consciousness	.443***		
Desire to seek praise	.219**	.498***	.413***
Desire to avoid rejection			
R^2	.342***	.405***	.294***
Adj R^2	.333***	.397***	.284***

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$.

5. Discussion

Compared to Japan, participants in Hong Kong were generally more active on SNS. This was especially true for posting behavior (81.5 % in Hong Kong vs. 28.6 % in Japan). The percentage of people who posted travel photographs was 90.8 % in Hong Kong, compared to 77.3 % in Japan. It was confirmed that posting travel photographs on SNSs is a common behavior in Hong Kong. Looking at the relationship between travel photograph posting behavior and gender, no gender difference was found in Hong Kong, but gender difference was observed in the Japanese study, with females posting travel photographs more frequently [Hanai *et al.*, 2019].

Confirmatory factor analysis of a scale to measure self-presentation style in SNS posting behavior of travel photographs showed the model with a three-factor structure had sufficient validity and the three-factor model had a slightly better fit than the two-factor model. This study shows the two side exists in “conformity,” that is “self-promotion” and “ingratiation.”

The results of multiple regression analysis showed that private self-consciousness and the desire to seek praise of SNS posters promoted the “self-expression” factor. This result is similar to that of a Japanese study. Self-expressive self-presentation suggests that there is a desire to express oneself on SNS and to be recognized by others, based on the awareness of “the way I see myself” that asserts the value of one’s own way of thinking and values.

The “self-promotion” factor was promoted by the public self-consciousness and the desire to seek praise. This result is similar to that of Japanese study, which showed that was active conformity based on the desire to seek praise from the awareness of “the way others see me.” On the other hand, the “ingratiation” factor was related to the public self-consciousness and the desire to seek praise too. There was no passive conformity due to the desire to avoid rejection which was observed in a Japanese study. The psychological process of worrying about people’s reactions to one’s posts and the content of people’s posts in order not to be negatively evaluated or disliked by the people around was not observed in Hong Kong.

These differences between Japan and Hong Kong in the “ingratiation” self-presentation require careful discussion. Although SNS are used in many countries around the world, it

has been noted that there are cultural differences in behavioral strategies on SNS. For example, it has been pointed out that, there are cultural differences of behavioral strategies when people feel envy because seeing others’ desirable posts on SNS [Wenninger *et al.*, 2019]. In the individual sphere, the coping behavior of self-enhancement is taken, whereas in the collective sphere, this tendency is not seen. On the other hand, no influence of cultural differences was found with regard to gossiping or discontinuous intentions.

Although both Japan and Hong Kong are in the same Asian region, Hofstede’s six-dimensions of national culture points out that national cultures differ even within the Asian region. Kojima [2016] suggested the characteristics of SNS use in Japan. It has been pointed out that the use of LINE and the desire to avoid rejection are related to the formation of relationships among adolescents, and that the relationships on LINE among those with a high desire to avoid rejection tend to be superficial. For example, they tended to start relationships after exchanging LINE accounts, and they tended to respond to comments from others whom they did not wish to continue the relationship with. In other words, the followers of people with high rejection-avoidance desires would include people whom they have superficial relationships with, which may lead to the protective self-presentation in Japan.

Finally, this study thus found slight differences in the model between Hong Kong and Japan. As mentioned above, it is assumed that this is due to cultural differences in SNS use and travel behavior. Also, this study focused on the psychology of travelers posting travel photographs on SNS, but further study is needed to investigate the effects of photographs posted on SNS on travel motivations and travel behavior of those who see them.

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