The perceived role of social interaction in the co-creation of tourism experiences:
A study of Chinese visitors to Japan
(Abstract)

201781　韓　星

指導教員名: プラート カロラス

2019 年度提出

Abstract

Tourism scholars and practitioners have increasingly started acknowledging the tourist's role as a co-creator of tourism experiences. Based on the service-dominant logic and customer-dominant logic, a growing body of literature on tourist experiences has addressed the importance of tourists' social interactions with various types of social actors in shaping the co-creation of tourism experiences. However, previous studies have largely focused on the service organizations and service personnel as the counterparts of tourists in interactions that co-create the tourist experiences, leaving tourists' social interactions with residents and other tourists largely unexplored. In addition, there is a relative lack of research on East-Asian tourists' experiences in East-Asian contexts. Addressing these plural research gaps, this study investigates Chinese tourists' social interactions with various types of social actors, including service providers, residents, and other tourists, during their visit to Japan. In the current study, special attention was paid to the tourist-tourist interaction, as Chinese outbound tourists show more diversified perceptions towards social interactions with other tourists.

This study applied a two-stage research approach. The first phase consisted of 29 semi-structured in-depth exploratory interviews with 42 Chinese outbound tourists in Japan to gain an initial insight into the social aspects of Chinese tourists' experiences. The investigation covered both direct and indirect (or 'inward') social interactions between Chinese tourists and three types of social actors: service providers, residents, and other tourists. The findings revealed three types of tourists' direct social interactions with other social actors based on the factors influencing the occurrence of the interactions. The three types of interactions are labeled protocol-oriented interaction, help-related interaction and sociable interaction. Protocol-oriented interaction is the most frequently reported type of interaction in this study; it is mechanical in nature and occurs when a tourist feels obliged to be polite by initiating or responding to the other individual's courtesy because they must share time or space with one

another. Tourist encounters with service providers when purchasing or receiving a product or service also fall into this category. The second most frequently reported type of interaction is related to the tourists' need to get help from other people (including other tourists, residents, and service providers), or the tourists' response to help requests from other people (mainly other tourists). Sociable interaction occurs out of the interactants' intrinsic motivation to socialize. Besides the direct interactions, interviewees also reported a substantial number of indirect or inward interactions with other people, especially with other tourists. It suggests that other people may influence the tourist experience without direct interaction taking place, which further confirms the important impact of the social aspect of the tourist experience.

By covering tourists' perceptions of social interactions with all three types of social actors, the first stage of qualitative study was able to compare Chinese tourists' social interactions with different types of social actors and the relative impacts of each of these types of interaction on their travel experiences. The result indicates that compared with service providers and residents, Chinese outbound tourists held a wider range of views towards other tourists and these in turn reflect various attitudes towards the co-creation of the tourism experience with other tourists.

The second stage of quantitative study investigated the factors influencing tourist participation in tourist-tourist (T2T) interaction, as well as the impact of the interactions on tourist satisfaction. Specifically, the study differentiates tourists' interactions with other Chinese tourists and with non-Chinese tourists. Tourist motivation, tourist possession of physical operant resources and cultural operant resources were proposed as the antecedents of T2T Interaction. Tourist extraversion was proposed as the overarching factor influencing the three antecedents. Furthermore, a positive relationship between tourist-tourist interaction and tourist satisfaction was proposed. Data were collected among 300 Chinese outbound tourists and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling as well as other techniques. The results support all the hypotheses except for the relationship between tourist extraversion and possession of

2

cultural operant resources, and the relationship between tourist possession of cultural operant resources and T2T Interaction. The unique role of cultural operant resources in Chinese tourists' interactions with other tourists is thus emphasized in this study. Data analysis also uncovered that Chinese tourists distinguish in T2T Interaction between whether the counterparts are other Chinese tourists or non-Chinese tourists. In addition, this study demonstrated that tourists with different demographic characteristics and travel styles exhibit different patterns regarding the social aspects of their tourism experiences.

This research provides a theoretical foundation to understand Chinese outbound tourists' perceptions of social interactions, directly or indirectly, with not only the host people (including service providers and residents), but also other tourists (including in-group and out-group tourists). The quantitative study on tourist-tourist interactions addresses the emerging role of other tourists as important participants in co-creating tourist experiences and presents the first endeavor to develop a model to investigate this phenomenon. On a practical level, the study offers tourism practitioners a better understanding of Chinese outbound tourists' complicated perceptions and expectations towards the role of different types of social actors in their tourism experiences. It is proposed that these insights may assist tourism practitioners and destinations to better develop strategies to facilitate positive social interactions and at the same time avoid or alleviate negative interactions, so they can better co-create valuable experiences with tourists.