

## A STUDY ON THE CULTURAL TOURISM OF THE CHINESE TOURISTS IN JAPAN

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### ABSTRACT

The Japanese tourism industry is becoming an important pillar of the Japanese economy. To increase the number of Chinese visitors to Japan, emphasizing the charm of the Japanese culture will be key. Promoting “cultural tourism” as the main reason for Chinese tourists to take vacation trips to Japan will be a major factor in helping Japan reach its international tourism goals by 2020 and beyond.

Earlier studies on cultural tourism have offered several conclusions, but few have addressed the subject of cultural tourism as it relates to Chinese visitors to Japan. There appears to be little existing research on Japanese tourism from the perspective of cultural exploration. In most studies on Chinese visitors to Japan, the focus is primarily on economics and policies; very few studies address “cultural tourism.”

So in this study, we attempt to expand our understanding of “cultural tourism” among Chinese tourists coming to Japan by identifying factors influencing tourism from a cultural point of view. We conducted a questionnaire survey of Chinese tourists who visited Japan. Before analyzing using multiple regression analysis, we analyzed In order to grasp the visiting factors of Chinese tourists.

Based on the results of the survey described here. It was established that increasing numbers of Chinese tourists now visit Japan to pursue “cultural tourism.” The specific elements of this cultural tourism were identified.

**Keywords:** Chinese tourists; Japanese culture; cultural tourism; Japanese economy

### INTRODUCTION

Throughout much of the world, tourism is regarded as a highly important industry affecting employment creation and economic promotion and occupying a prominent position in the policies of national and regional governments. In recent years, the Japanese tourism industry has become a key pillar of the Japanese economy.

In 2013, the number of foreign tourists visiting Japan reached the government's target of 10 million visitors per year for the first time in history. This had been a target number set in the “Visit Japan Campaign” led by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism since 2003. To achieve its aim of creating a “tourism nation,” the government continues to work with the private sector to reach a target of 40 million foreign visitors by the time the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games are held in Tokyo (Wang, 2015).

According to estimates by the Japan Tourism Agency, 24,039,000 foreign visitors visited Japan in 2016, representing an increase of 21.8% over the previous year. This marked the second straight year for Japan to register a record high. The largest number of tourists came from China (5.373 million). Expenditures among foreign visitors to Japan averaged ¥150,000 per person. Chinese visitors have led the way in spending, with a total of ¥558.3 billion spent, or 27.5% of overall tourist spending in 2014. In 2016, 126 million Chinese traveled abroad, equivalent to the total population of Japan. Given China's population of 1.4 billion people, pioneering the Chinese tourism market would seem to be a crucial element in Japan's drive to expand its tourism industry (JNTO, 2016).

### Purpose

Due to the economic development of China and the consequent increase in the number of prosperous Chinese citizens, many Chinese now travel overseas. Japan's proximity to China, along with its image as a clean and safe destination, has made it an inviting place to visit for Chinese tourists. Furthermore, the Japanese government's “tourism nation” strategy has resulted in relaxed entry conditions, making it easier for Chinese visitors to obtain visas (Dai, 2012).

In addition, the tourism environment, including such things as the provision of free Wi-Fi and preferential tickets for transportation, has been improved. The Chinese perception of Japan as a place offering good service and reliable, high-quality products has also played a significant role in attracting Chinese tourists (Ro & Yamaguchi, 2011).

Importantly, the nature of Chinese tourism in Japan has begun to undergo a noticeable change. Since 2016, the “shopping spree” trend of Chinese tourists has declined significantly, along with China's economic slowdown and changes in the

currency exchange rate. As a consequence, the orientation of Chinese tourists in Japan has begun to shift to cultural sightseeing. For Chinese tourists, “cultural tourism,” including experiencing Japanese daily life, making contact with the Japanese people, and experiencing Japanese culture are becoming an important part of their motivation to visit Japan (Tang, 2016).

There appears to be little existing research on Japanese tourism from the perspective of cultural exploration. In most studies on Chinese visitors to Japan, the focus is primarily on economics and policies; very few studies address “cultural tourism.”

In this research, we attempt to expand our understanding of “cultural tourism” among Chinese tourists coming to Japan by identifying factors influencing Chinese tourism from a cultural point of view. The overall aim is to assess and guide the future of Japanese cultural tourism. It can be said that Japanese traditional culture has become an important factor in the rise of Chinese tourism in Japan.

## SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Culture is generally associated with the unique characteristics of an ethnic groups, community, or society. It is composed of such elements as academics, art, religion, and moral norms. Broadly speaking, it is the way of living shared by a group of individuals.

Tourism means not only viewing nature and visiting historic buildings; it also includes satisfying the basic needs of humans seeking change in their lives by developing new appreciations, acquiring knowledge, gaining experiences, participating in new endeavors, and receiving spiritual encouragement in their leisure time activities.

It is useful to differentiate “tourism culture” from “cultural tourism.” “Tourism culture” is a culture created through sightseeing. It is a newly formed “culture,” built through exchanges between tourists and the communities and inhabitants they visit. On the other hand, cultural tourism is tourism activity that targets certain cultural elements and cultural resources. This might include, for example, art tourism, festival tourism, or cultural events tourism.

As observed in *Introduction to Tourism*, a book written by Nobuyuki Okamoto and edited by Yuhikaku (Okamoto, 2001), “Culture-driven tourism activities are collectively referred to as ‘cultural tourism,’ but there are also theories that it is within the scope of learning, art appreciation, festival/cultural events, ruins visits, etc.” According to the “Sightseeing and Traveling Dictionary” written by Munetada Kitagawa and edited by Minerva Shobo (Kitagawa, 2008), cultural tourism is “a type of tourism developed based on the cultural motivation of travelers.” (Hirai, 2012).

Earlier studies on cultural tourism have offered several conclusions, but few have addressed the subject of cultural tourism as it relates to Chinese visitors to Japan.

Previous studies on Chinese tourists visiting Japan have focused on the behavior of the tourists (Jin, 2009), their selection of a travel destination (Dai, 2012), and the form and changes in Chinese travel to Japan (Shimizu, 2007). There have also been studies on the trends of Chinese tourists visiting Japan (Yu & Shimoyama, 2010), reasons behind the increase in Chinese tourism in Japan (Tsuchiya, 2014), and Chinese tourist satisfaction with shopping and tourism resources in Japan (Ro & Yamaguchi, 2011).

However, while there has been relatively extensive research on the visits of Chinese visitors to Japan focused on economic factors and policies, few have examined the “cultural tourism” aspects of these visits.

Because of the long history of exchange between Japan and China, many of the cultural elements of the two countries, such as customs, language, kanji, food and daily life, are closely connected. The Japanese culture is much more familiar than the cultures of the West, where customs, language, food, and daily living are relatively foreign. Thus, for many Chinese tourists, a Japanese culture that is familiar and attractive to them is thought to be a significant factor favoring their choice of Japan as a touring destination.

## METHODOLOGY

In this study, in order to investigate the various factors influencing Chinese tourist visits to Japan from a cultural point of view, we conducted a questionnaire survey of Chinese tourists who visited Japan. Based on survey results, we sought to understand the behavior and motivations of these Chinese visitors and attempted to analyze those factors which most influenced their visit.

**Method of investigation:** As indicated, the subjects of this survey were Chinese tourists in Japan. The data were collected between June 1 and June 20, 2016. Questionnaires were distributed via China’s largest Web-based SNS and WeChat. Those responsible for the primary data collection bear no responsibility for the analysis and interpretations presented herein.

**Contents of the questionnaire:** The questionnaire was composed of 18 items, covering income, educational background, appreciation of cartoons, understanding of Japanese culture, etc.

**Method of analysis:** The contents of the specific questions consisted of 9 questions: “Do you like Japanese cartoons, comics, movies?”; “The Japanese anime, cartoons, do you understand the words and the contents of the film?”; “Do you like Japanese culture?”; “Do you think that Japanese society has been influenced by Chinese culture? (Confucius’ philosophy such as trust and courtesy, loyalty)”; “When you travel in Japan, are the Chinese characters helpful to you?”; “Will you discuss Japanese culture, society, and life with friends and relatives in China?”; “Do you think the Japanese culture has an impact on your life?”; “Does the evaluation of friends and relatives relative to Japan affect the traveling to Japan?”; “Do you use Japanese products? (Cosmetics, electric products, etc.)?”. The questions were given on a 5-point scale.

During this analysis, all of the independent variables were analyzed using the forced-entry method to explain the factors impacting the dependent variables. The analysis was conducted using SPSS 19.0 for Windows (Hirai, 2007).

## RESULTS

### Basic attributes

The basic attributes of survey respondents are shown in Table 1. The sample was composed of 38 males (38%) and 61 females (62%). Twenty-five respondents (25%) were younger than 25; 25-35-year-olds made up 63% of the sample. This suggests that young tourists between the ages of 25 and 35 comprise approximately 60% of the Chinese tourists visiting Japan. As for annual income, these results suggest that the annual income for roughly 85% of Chinese tourists visiting Japan is less than 150,000 RMB. With respect to education level, about 75% of the Chinese tourists in the survey were university graduates or above. In summary, Chinese visitors to Japan tend to be young and highly educated. They are overwhelmingly middle-class, belonging to the rather stable, and upper-middle-income group.

### Multiple Regression Results

In order to assess the Japan factor for Chinese tourists, response to the question “Would you like to visit Japan again?” was set as the dependent variable in our primary regression analysis. The other 10 items served as independent variables. The nine items were included in the multiple regression models. Ten questions were used to check for multicollinearity between the items. Using the Pearson correlation coefficient to measure correlation, we found no values of 0.8 or more, which led us to conclude that multicollinearity was not a problem (Murasei, 2007).

**Table 1: Description of sample**

Item	Contents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	38	38
	Female	61	62
	total	99	100
Age (Years)	25	25	25
	25-35	62	63
	36-45	8	8
	46-55	4	4
	56	0	0
	total	99	100
Annual income (RMB)	Less than 10000	22	22
	10,000 to 50,000	24	24
	50,000 to 100,000	25	26
	100,000 to 150,000	14	14
	Over 150,000	14	14
	total	99	100
Educational qualification	Junior high or less	5	5
	High school	4	4
	Vocational school	16	16
	University	46	47
	Masters	28	28
	total	99	100
District (region)	North China	21	21
	East China	12	12
	South China	24	25
	Central China	8	8
	Southwest	14	14
	Northwest	4	4
	Northeast	16	16
	total	99	100

**Table2: Model Summary**

R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
.760 <sup>a</sup>	.578	.535	.840	1.898

Forced-choice survey responses to the question “Would you like to visit Japan again?” served as the dependent variable in our multiple regression analysis of survey results. Overall results of the analysis are shown in Table 2. As indicated, the coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) is 0.578. The adjusted coefficient of determination (Adjusted R<sup>2</sup>) is 0.535, indicating that 53.5 percent of “Would you like to visit Japan again?” This measure is commonly used as an indicator of the meaningfulness of the regression equation (Hirai 2012). The value of the Durbin-Watson statistic is close to 2 (1.898), indicating that there is no problem with assuming the independence of residuals for each explanatory variable (Hirai, 2012).

**Table 3: Results of multiple variable regression analysis**

Model item	Beta	T	Sig
Do you like Japanese cartoons, comics, movies?	.094	.988	.326
The Japanese anime, cartoons, do you understand the words and the contents of the film?	.046	.515	.607
Do you like Japanese culture?	.285	2.589	.011
Do you think that Japanese society has been influenced by Chinese culture? (Confucius' philosophy such as trust and courtesy, loyalty)	-.196	-2.119	.037
When you travel in Japan, are the Chinese characters helpful to you?	.238	2.724	.008
Will you discuss Japanese culture, society, and life with friends and relatives in China?	-.259	-2.901	.005
Do you think the Japanese culture has an impact on your life?	-.044	-.464	.644
Does the evaluation of friends and relatives relative to Japan affect the traveling to Japan?	-.012	-.158	.875
Do you use Japanese products? (Cosmetics, electric products, etc.)?	-.215	-2.330	.022

The standardized coefficients (beta values) and significance probabilities for the explanatory variables are as follows in

- 0.285 (p<0.05) for “Do you like Japanese culture?”
- -0.196 (p<0.05) for “Do you think that Japanese society has been influenced by Chinese culture? (Confucius' philosophy such as trust and courtesy, loyalty)”;
- 0.238 (p<0.01) for “When you travel in Japan, are the Chinese characters helpful to you?”
- -0.259 (p<0.01) for “Will you discuss Japanese culture, society, and life with friends and relatives in China?”
- -0.215 (p<0.05) for “Do you use Japanese products? (Cosmetics, electric products, etc.)?”

## DISCUSSION

### *Basic attributes*

According to survey results, one of the basic attributes of visiting Chinese tourists is that the majority are women. One of the reasons for this is that many women often want release from work and family pressures. In addition, many Chinese women are eager to try women-only travel.

Another important characteristic is that many Chinese visitors to Japan are in their 20s to 30s. One reason why the age of Chinese visitors to Japan has trended younger is that Japan is close to China and one can schedule trips lasting only two or three days. This makes it possible for young visitors, who tend to have limited income, to enjoy a satisfactory and satisfying travel for less than RMB 10,000.

According to one travel agency in China, Chinese who go to Europe are mostly wealthy, middle-aged or elderly people who can afford the time and have the money. In contrast, those who choose to travel to Japan are typically individuals who seek and enjoy a compact trip, a common tendency among young people.

In recent years, the number of Internet sites and blogs introducing Japan to China and the world has increased. Accordingly, the number of Chinese who want to access newly-familiar Japanese subcultures such as Japanese cartoons and animation has increased as well. Interest in traditional Japanese culture has also grown. All of this increased interest has resulted in an increase in Chinese tourist visits to Japan.

Representing another important factor, well-educated tourists have high general intellectual and cultural levels, can often speak international standard languages (primarily English) and have strong communication skills. Many large cities in

China enable convenient international transportation, with modern airports and multiple flights directly from China to Japan (Dentsu, 2016).

As mentioned above, we examined the tourism-related behavior of Chinese tourists visiting Japan, identifying some of its basic characteristics and clarifying important factors influencing their decision to visit Japan.

### **Multiple Regression Analysis**

The study's multiple regression analysis revealed that responses to questions that focused on culture correlated significantly to a desire to come to Japan. These questions included "Do you like Japanese culture?"; "Do you think that Japanese society has been influenced by Chinese culture? (Confucius' philosophy such as trust and courtesy, loyalty) "; and "When you travel in Japan, are the Chinese characters helpful to you?"

The beta value of 0.285 ( $p < 0.05$ ) for the question "Do you like Japanese culture?" suggests that Chinese tourists who like Japanese culture are inclined to travel to Japan. Many young Chinese people have grown up with Japanese cartoons and anime, which today are prevalent in China. Moreover, since movies based on Japanese society and nature have also become popular in China, it is increasingly common for Chinese travelers to wish to experience Japanese culture firsthand rather than merely observing it through movies, books, and television. It is apparent that Chinese tourists wanting to experience the traditions of Japanese culture, or who enjoy the Japanese food culture, or who wish to be part of the routine of everyday Japanese life are finding their way to Japan. This explains why meditating at a Zen temple in Kyoto or participating in cultural experiences such as wearing a kimono, partaking in the traditional Japanese tea ceremony, learning flower arranging with maiko, walking in a pilgrimage in Shikoku, or seeking heal are such popular activities for Chinese visitors who come to Japan (Moriya, 2016).

The beta value for the question, "Do you think that Japanese society has been influenced by Chinese culture? (Confucius' philosophy such as trust and courtesy, loyalty)," is -0.196 ( $p < 0.05$ ). This negative (and significant) value indicates that Chinese tourists typically believe that the culture of Japanese society is not influenced by Chinese culture and suggests that the Chinese perception of the uniqueness of the Japanese culture may be a factor influencing the decision of Chinese tourists to visit Japan.

In point of fact, Japan imported much of the Chinese culture before the Meiji Restoration. In addition to this extensive Chinese influence, modern-day Japan has also been greatly influenced by Western culture. By its successful integration of these two cultures into its own traditional culture, Japan offers a unique cultural experience for Chinese tourists. Meanwhile, in China, where Confucian thought has been criticized since the 54th movement, young people know little about Confucian thought or the fact that Confucianism is at the root of Japanese culture. Nevertheless, they are interested in Japan's unique culture and are coming to Japan to witness and participate in it.

For the question "Is Kanji useful when traveling in Japan?" the beta value is 0.238 ( $p < 0.01$ ). Although there are some differences in the way kanji characters are written and interpreted in the two countries, there are many similarities, which creates a sense of closeness when Chinese travel in Japan. Signs in shops, stations, and restaurants can generally be understood, conveying a feeling of convenience and comfort that comes with knowing that written communication can be relatively easy. Thus, in Japan (as opposed to countries that use the Western Roman alphabet), Chinese visitors find the freedom of shopping and entertainment to be high.

In summary, Chinese tourists who are interested in visiting or re-visiting Japan love the Japanese culture and are motivated by the opportunity to come to Japan to experience it.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

As described, the behavior of Chinese tourists visiting Japan to share in the Japanese culture has been examined. Tourist characteristics and factors influencing their decision to visit Japan have been identified.

From the analysis of results, the three questions, "Do you like Japanese culture?"; "Do you think that Japanese society has been influenced by Chinese culture? (Confucius' philosophy such as trust and courtesy, loyalty)"; "When you travel in Japan, are the Chinese characters helpful to you?", are key to understanding why more Chinese tourists are visiting Japan. It was also found that Chinese tourists who visit Japan tend to be highly educated and are often members of the younger generation.

In order to continue to increase the number of Chinese visitors to Japan, it will be important to emphasize in travel promotions the ability to experience elements of the Japanese culture that Chinese people find attractive. In the future, by drawing an increasing number of Chinese tourists to Japan, the Chinese people will become increasingly aware of Japanese customs, culture, and hospitality, which, in turn, will motivate them to learn more and promote mutual understanding between the two countries.

Finally, cultural tourism has the potential to boost the economy of not only the major cities of Japan but also the more rural areas, an important feature as Japan continues on the path of becoming a "tourism nation."



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Sample questionnaire is available at <https://www.wjx.cn/jq/18763522.aspx>