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The Motivations of Non-Buddhists Visiting a Buddhist Temple

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Appropriate Session Topic: Effective Targeting, segmentation, or Customer Relationship Management approaches

Please Review: First for an oral presentation and second for display as an illustrated paper presentation (option b).

Introduction

The Korea National Tourism Organization (KNTTO, 2005) reported that the tourism industry is one of the most important sources of revenue in Korea and in the wake of regional competition from neighboring tourism destinations, KNTTO has taken measures to reinvent Korea's destination image in hopes of clear differentiation. One of the ways by which this has been accomplished is by highlighting the nation's Buddhist culture. A recent survey undertaken by KNTTO indicated that visitors were willing to experience Buddhist temples in Korea. Although informative, the survey neglected to determine tourists' motivations to visit Korean temples. Thus, building on this extant work, the current study seeks to identify potential tourists' motives for visiting a Buddhist temple in Korea. Specifically, this study adopts the Leisure Motivation Scale developed by Beard and Ragheb's (1983) to examine the motives of potential tourists as well as the relationship between their demographic characteristics and their motives. Four dimensions comprise the Leisure Motivation Scale, namely, intellectual, social, competence-mastery and stimulus-avoidance. In terms of the travel experience, the intellectual dimension addresses the extent to which one is motivated to travel in order to discover novel things and learn about different cultures. The social dimension examines the extent to which one travels in search of friendships and the desire to build inter-personal relationships. The Competence-Mastery dimension considers the extent to which one partakes in tourism activities that are competitive, achievement oriented and challenging, by design. And lastly, the stimulus avoidance dimension focuses on the extent to which one needs to escape or remove oneself from over stimulating day to day situations (Beard and Ragheb, 1983). Notably, numerous tourism scholars have adopted the scale in their examinations (see Ryan and Glendon, 1998, Uzzell, 1984) thus; incorporating the scale within the current study given its record of providing insightful information on tourist motivations. The scale possesses a proven measure of reliability and in fact it has been replicated in many studies (Mohsin & Ryan, 2007; Lin, Chen, Wang, & Cheng, 2007; Murray & Nakajima, 1999; Blakely and Dattilo, 1993; Lounsbury and Polik, 1992).

Methods

This study examines tourists' motives through a self-administered survey instrument. Data were collected on-site from non-Buddhist participants visiting a Buddhist temple in Chinatown, Los Angeles between April 24 and July 4, 2007. The chosen location and participant pool were selected based on the assumption that visitors to a temple likely were willing to visit Buddhist temples elsewhere in the world. Participants were all 18 years of age or older and self-identified as non Buddhist temple members. The survey instrument was administered to a sample population of 240 participants; however, 61 incomplete surveys were discarded. Thus, the current study is based on 74% of the originally administered surveys. The sample population encompassed 84 male and 86 female participants. The majority of respondents were between 21-30 years old (35.8%), had a four-year college degree (37.3%), and an annual income of \$105,000 or above (18.7%). The data were analyzed using SPSS. An Independent-Sample *t*-test was conducted to evaluate relationships between tourists' scores on the Leisure Motivation Scale and demographic characteristics. Additionally, determination of the existence of significant differences resulted from one-way ANOVA with a chosen level of significance at .05. A post hoc analysis using the Bonferroni test was utilized to clarify the nature of any significant differences.

Findings

A significant relationship between visitors' likelihood of visiting temples and scores on the Intellectual and Stimulus-Avoidance Component of the Leisure Motivation Scale was identified. For this sample of Non-Buddhists in Los Angeles, California, intellectual and stimulus avoidance motivations for visiting a Buddhist temple were important. In regards to the intellectual component, significance was found in the relationship between this subscale and the likelihood of tourists to visit Buddhist temples in Korea. Participants were highly motivated by the prospects of discovering and learning about new things, as well as expanding interests and knowledge. In relation to the Stimulus Avoidance component, significance was found in the relationship between this subscale and the likelihood of tourists to visit Buddhist temples in Korea. Participants were highly motivated by the prospects of being within a calm atmosphere, mentally relaxing, as well as, relieving stress and tension. With respect to the Stimulus-Avoidance Component of the LMS, visitors may have a desire to avoid stimulus or relax while participating in a temple stay program. In order to provide satisfying experiences for people who seek to relax during their leisure time, temples could provide relaxation based activities such as yoga, tea ceremonies, and meditation lessons.

The results of this study did not reveal a significant difference on the total LMS by gender, however there was a significant difference between males and females with respect to the Stimulus Avoidance Component, with females recording a significantly higher score on this component than males. These findings were different from other studies. For example, Blakely and Dattilo (1993) reported that women scored lower on Intellectual, Social, and Competence-Mastery subscales in their research sample. Lounsbury and Polik (1992) also found that men scored higher than women on the Competence Mastery scale. In spite of the different study results, it is possible to assume that men and women are motivated by different reasons in their leisure activities. Gender differences in leisure activity participation should be a consideration in coordinating temple visits in Korea.

Accordingly, the visitors to a Buddhist temple as a non-Buddhist may wish to visit a temple to learn of new cultures or religions and because of a desire to seek relief from the stress of a busy life. In a nutshell, the findings demonstrate that non-Buddhist visitors' intellectual motivations would influence their participating in a temple stay program in the future. Also, non-Buddhist visitors' stimulus avoidance motivations would influence their participation. The visitors to a Buddhist temple as a non-Buddhist may wish to participate in a temple stay to learn of new cultures or religions and or because of a desire to seek relief from the stress of a busy life.

Application of Results & Conclusion

The results of the present investigation shed light on reasons why tourists would be motivated to visit Buddhist temples in Korea. These reasons entail travel motivated by the need to seek tranquil and serene environments that induce relaxation as well as cerebrally enriching purposes. Similarly, Steiner and Reisinger (2006) point out that, "... resoluteness would manifest as a desire to get off the beaten track, away from crowds, away from the popular tourism spots" (p. 307). Silver (1993) suggests that tourists searching for different cultural experiences are "sophisticated and usually highly-educated people" (1993: 316). Tourists in this group want to experience different cultures, but they want to do so in a way that is mentally comfortable and easy for them. Moreover, the visitors at the temple could be tourists who seek deeper cultural experiences. Weiler and Hall (1992) proposed that cultural tourists were

relatively young, the majority of which were tertiary-educated and a third of their sample in professional occupations. This seemed to be confirmed by the findings.

These findings may be useful to Korean tourism officials as they highlight the psychological needs of potential travelers, providing key attributes that effective advertising can employ to successfully lure tourists to a destination. Crompton (2007) pointed out that tourists are not motivated by the specific qualities of the destination, but rather tourists are motivated by the match of a destination's major attributes to the travelers' psychological needs. He argued that attention should focus on locations which promote self-actualization, and excitement. Therefore, for the best marketing strategy for these individuals, efforts are required to arouse people's awareness of their own real motives such as an exercise in self-discovery (Lee, Petrick, & Crompton, 2007). Possamai (2000) pointed out that because of individualism and mobility, people constantly seek to explore new ideas and their spiritual growth. Buddhist temples develop promotional strategies designed to increase in-bound tourism by featuring Buddhist temples as desirable attractions.

Goeldner and Ritchie (2003) emphasized the importance of cultural attractions in adding a particular national flavor in keeping with traditional ways of life and projecting a favorable image of the destination. Buddhist temples can satisfy tourists' motivations for stimulus avoidance and as destinations representing diverse culture. Westerners who have never experienced Korean traditional culture or religion may enjoy an exotic environment when visiting Buddhist temples. Since most visitors agreed that they would visit a Buddhist temple if they visited Korea, KNTTO should realize that Buddhist temples play an important role as a tourism attraction among foreigners. In order to attract more foreign visitors, KNTTO should research how the tourism strategies of other Asian countries such as Burma emphasize Buddhist temples. Tourism marketing strategies in Korea should focus on their unique and exotic culture and history that can attract foreign visitors.

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