

AN ANALYSIS ON THE DEMAND FOR HOMELAND VISIT: THE CASE OF THE CHINESE IMMIGRANTS IN MACAO

by

Man-U Io

Tourism College, Institute for Tourism Studies, Macao
Colina de Mong Ha, Macao
E-mail: yan@ift.edu.mo

ABSTRACT

The statistics show that near half of the Macao residents are immigrants from Mainland China and Hong Kong where are also the most popular tourist destinations for Macao residents. It is believed that these immigrants' homeland visit is an important factor for provoking the Macao tourism flow to Mainland China and Hong Kong. To examine this proposition, a quantitative survey of 500 Chinese immigrants has been conducted. The statistical results show that a large number of respondents visited their home town in Mainland China and Hong Kong last year, and their major motives of visiting "home" included visiting friends and relatives, spending free time with family members, having a vacation in a familiar place, and enjoying the local cuisine. The relationship between immigrants' length of living in Macao/homeland and their homeland visit behavior is examined, aiming to get an insightful understanding of their demand for visiting "home". Along with the increase of immigrants from Mainland China to Macao and overseas countries, the demand for visiting Mainland China will remain high. To better capture and serve this market segment, the tourism industry should pay more attention to their tourism needs. It is also worthwhile to further explore homeland tourists' behavior and the nature of homeland tourism in future studies.

KEYWORDS

Tourist, Immigrants, Homeland

INTRODUCTION

Economic globalization encourages many forms of migration which generate a significant tourism flow around the world and create migratory networks and transnational communities (Feng & Page, 2000; Williams, 2006). For immigrants, their homeland can be a popular destination for vacation, especially under the purpose of visiting friends and relatives (Feng & Page, 2000; Kluin & Lehto, 2012). However, visiting friends and relatives is not the only motive of visiting one's homeland. Some immigrants tried to establish a connection to their homeland and ethnic communities by visiting "home" (Garrido, 2011), or to seek their ethnic and cultural identity by visiting their ancestral homeland (Maruyama & Stronza, 2010). It is also possible that immigrants just behave like some tourists who enjoy visiting a familiar place for vacation, where they can have a more focused activity set and tourism convenience (Lehto, O'Leary, & Morrison, 2004).

This study is conducted in Macao for the Chinese immigrants. Although the major population in Macao is Chinese, the cultural difference between Macao and Mainland China is significant. After four hundred years' occupation by the Portuguese, Macao today is still keeping the unique mixed culture of the Portuguese and the Chinese. Cantonese as the major local language in Macao and the use of traditional Chinese characters also make the Chinese culture in Macao different from that in Mainland China. However, the Chinese immigrants from Mainland China and Hong Kong have already carried 44.5 percent of the total population (Statistics and Census Bureau, 2011a). With the increasing influence of the immigrants from Mainland China, the local Chinese in Macao are sharing more generic characteristics with them in terms of culture, languages, and social values. These cultural similarities are expected to speed up the Chinese immigrants' acculturation and help them quickly adapt to the new living environment in Macao. Moreover, some demographic variables and the length of living in Macao are also expected to influence Chinese immigrants' acculturation, as it was found in previous studies that socio-demographic factors and the length of living in a country of exile had a significant impact on immigrants' acculturation level and psychological well-being (Lee, Moon, & Knight, 2004; Wu, Chib, Plassmanc, & Guob, 2010). In despite of the easy adaptation to the new life in Macao, many Chinese immigrants seem to enjoy visiting their homeland very much.

In the light of the statistics which show that many Macao residents travel independently to Mainland China (47%) and Hong Kong (20%) in 2011 for vacation (Statistics and Census Bureau, 2011b), it is believed that the Chinese immigrants' homeland visit to Mainland China and Hong Kong is a key reason for such a significant tourism flow to Mainland China and Hong Kong in addition to geographical convenience. To examine whether the Chinese immigrants from Mainland China and Hong Kong enjoy visiting their homeland, this study is conducted to explore the demand of Chinese immigrants for homeland visit.

METHODOLOGY

A quantitative survey method was applied to this study with a sample of total 500 valid respondents. The survey was conducted with a face-to-face person-administered method. The target population was the Chinese immigrants from Mainland China and other Asian countries, who are currently living in Macao. Qualified respondents were recruited from eight local institutes in Macao which mainly serve immigrants. In each institute, all qualified target respondents were invited to participate in the survey interview through the contact person of the institute. Only the volunteers of the target population were recruited and interviewed. The questionnaire was designed in Chinese and covering questions of demographic information, travel motivation, and travel patterns. A 5-point Likert scale was used to measure travel motivation (1 = disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The items of travel motives measured in the survey questionnaire were developed from the focus group interview with ten Chinese immigrants in Macao and literature review. Three survey interviewers were recruited and trained before they conducted the survey.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The sample is made up of 2.4 percent respondents emigrated from Hong Kong, 8.4 percent respondents from other Asian countries, and 89.2 percent respondents from Mainland China. The biggest group of the sample accounts for 61.6 percent emigrated from the Canton province of Mainland China where is very near Macao.

As shown in Table 1, respondents who had lived longer time in their homeland tended to visit their homeland last year more often than those who had lived shorter time in their homeland. The results suggest that immigrants who have a stronger root in their homeland before migration tend to have a closer tie with their homeland after migration. Besides, of the sample of 500 respondents, only 22.8 percent respondents did not visit their homeland last year, and these 22.8 percent respondents have been living in Macao for 310 months on average. Comparatively, other respondents who had visited their homeland last year had a shorter length of living in Macao. Since the minimal average length of living in Macao for respondents is 231 months, the figure suggests that the Chinese immigrants tend to visit their homeland regularly or occasionally even after a long time living in Macao.

TABLE 1
MEAN ANALYSIS BY ANOVA AND T TEST OVER THE LENGTH OF
LIVING HOMELAND/MACAO AND THE FREQUENCY OF HOMELAND VISIT

		N	Mean (in month)	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
Length of living in homeland	Frequency of homeland visit				3.258	.039
	>5 times	150	275.09	154.753		
	2-4 times	146	268.24	162.751		
	0-1 time	204	235.01	161.019		
	Total	500	256.74	160.400		
Length of living in Macao	Did you visit your homeland last year?				-4.398 (t value)	0.00 (2-tailed)
	yes	386	230.75	163.108		
	no	114	310.18	189.306		

As shown in Table 2, respondents who visited their homeland more than 5 times last year, had spent the shortest length of stay among three groups. Respondents who visited their homeland 2 to 4 times last year had spent the longest stay among three groups. The results suggest that most respondents tend to spend about a week on their homeland visit. In addition, 73.2 percent respondents indicated that they planned to visit their homeland this year. Given all these statistical results, most Chinese immigrants in Macao have a high demand for visiting their homeland even they have well settled and been living in Macao for long time.

TABLE 2
ANOVA ANALYSIS FOR THE LENGTH OF STAY DURING THE VISIT TO
HOMELAND AND THE FREQUENCY OF HOMELAND VISIT LAST YEAR

		N	Mean (in day)	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
length of stay during visit	Frequency of homeland visit				5.918	.003
	>5 times	150	4.73	10.432		
	2-4 times	146	8.63	11.100		
	0-1 time	204	6.86	8.150		
	Total	500	6.74	9.878		

Regarding the motivation of visiting homeland, respondents indicated five major motives: visiting friends and relatives (4.3/5), enjoy the local cuisine (3.69/5), enjoy spending a vacation with family members (3.68/5), have a vacation in a familiar place (3.44/5), and tour around the landscapes there (3.42/5). The results suggest that visiting friends and relative is not the only major reason for homeland visit though it carries the biggest mean value in this study, other major motives show that respondents shared some similar travel motives with many pleasure tourists who enjoy trying the local cuisine and touring around the natural tourist attractions (Hsieh, O'Leary, & Morrison, 1992). Spending time with family members through a vacation is a common way for many pleasure tourists to increase the family tie with their family members (Kim & Prideaux, 2003). A familiar place for vacation provides tourists with a higher degree of convenience for touring around the destination due to their previous knowledge of the place setting, thus it is a common motive shared with some pleasure tourists (Pearce, 2012). Given all these results, homeland visitors are likely to behave like ordinary pleasure tourists who enjoy various tourist activities rather than only focus on the activity of visiting friends and relatives.

CONCLUSION

The statistical results reveal that most respondents in Macao had a stable connection with their homeland through regular homeland visits. The ANOVA analysis suggests that respondents who had a longer time of living in their homeland tended to visit their homeland more often. The respondents who visited homeland more than 5 times last year had a shorter length of stay during homeland visit than other respondents who visited their homeland less than 5 times last year. Moreover, 73.2 percent respondents indicated that they would visit their homeland this year. These statistical results suggest that the Chinese immigrants from Mainland China and Hong Kong have a high demand for visiting their homeland.

However, their motives of homeland visit not only include visiting friends and relatives, but also include some common travel motives of pleasure tourists, such as, enjoying the local cuisine, spending time with family members, spending a vacation at a familiar place, and touring around the natural tourist attractions. These results suggest that homeland visitors should not be simply classified as "visiting friends and relatives" tourists, or the potential profit of his market segment cannot be maximized or captured. Instead, homeland visitors should be further studied in terms of their travel behavior and tourism needs in order to better serve them and better capture this market segment. Given the steady increase of Chinese immigrants from Mainland China to Macao and overseas countries, the tourism flow of these immigrants to Mainland China will continue and benefit many tourism service sectors. Therefore, it is worthwhile to further explore homeland tourism and tourist behavior in future studies.

REFERENCES

- Feng, K., & Page, S. J. (2000). An Exploratory Study of the Tourism, Migration–Immigration Nexus: Travel Experiences of Chinese Residents in New Zealand. *Current Issues In Tourism*, 3(2), 246-281.
- Garrido, M. (2011). Home is Another Country: Ethnic Identification in Philippine Homeland Tours. *Qual Sociol*, 34, 177-199.
- Hsieh, S., O'Leary, J. T., & Morrison, A. (1992). Segmenting the international travel market by activity *Tourism Management*, 209 - 223.
- Kim, S. s., & Prideaux, B. (2003). Marketing implications arising from a comparative study of international pleasure tourist motivation and other travel-related characteristics of visitors to Korea *Tourism Management*, 26, 347 - 357.
- Kluin, J. Y., & Lehto, X. Y. (2012). Measuring Family Reunion Travel Motivations. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 39(2), 820-841.
- Lee, H. Y., Moon, A., & Knight, B. G. (2004). Depression Among Elderly Korean Immigrants: Exploring Socio-Cultural Factors. *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work*, 13(4), 1-26.
- Lehto, X., O'Leary, J., & Morrison, A. (2004). The Effect of Piror Experience on Vacation Behavior. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 31(4), 801-818.
- Maruyama, N., & Stronza, A. (2010). Roots Tourism of Chinese Americans. *Ethnology*, 49(1), 23-44.
- Pearce, P. L. (2012). The Experience of Visiting Home and Familiar Places. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 39(2), 1024-1047.
- Statistics and Census Bureau. (2011a). Population Census. Retrieved July 24, 2012, from http://www.dsec.gov.mo/getAttachment/564633df-27ea-4680-826c-37d1ef120017/C_CEN_PUB_2011_Y.aspx
- Statistics and Census Bureau. (2011b). Tourism Statistics. Retrieved July 24, 2012, from http://www.dsec.gov.mo/getAttachment/36d0a054-52d1-469e-9fc0-894a6f2d4d1e/C_TUR_PUB_2011_Y.aspx
- Williams, L. (2006). Social Networks of Refugees in the United Kingdom: Tradition, Tactics and New Community Spaces. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 32(5), 865-879.
- Wu, B., Chib, I., Plassmanc, B. L., & Guob, M. (2010). Depressive symptoms and health problems among Chinese immigrant elders in the US and Chinese elders in China. *Aging & Mental Health*, 14(6), 695-704.