

Application of theory of planned behavior to develop sustainable tourism:  
A case of Chinese tourists to Norway

(持続可能な観光業に向けた計画行動理論の適用：中国人観光客によるノルウェー旅行の事例)

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1. Introduction

With the rapid economic development, Chinese people's willingness to travel and willingness to consume in their trips have increased greatly. In 2015, China already became the biggest outbound tourism market in the world. The mainstream travel style among Chinese tourists is still mass tourism, which is often unsustainable and has negative impacts on local societies, environments and natural resources. However, new characteristics and trends in travel styles have gradually emerged, especially youth tourists who are highly educated and relatively have basic eco-awareness started to show a new trend of demands and tendency of outbound choices. Considering the current situation, this study aims to explore the possibility of fostering sustainable Chinese tourism markets lead by youth tourists.

2. Method

Norway was chosen as a target destination for Chinese outbound tourists. This is because the country is a newly-emerged nature-based destination for them. To analyze Chinese tourists' behavioral intention and related factors in traveling, the theory of planned behavior was applied and extended to a new structural equation model. Data necessary for the analysis were obtained by questionnaire survey using social network platforms (Weibo and Wechat in China). Then the model's performance along with all the hypotheses embedded in the model was examined quantitatively using Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) 22.0 and Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) 21.0.

3. Results and Discussion

The structural equation model successfully accounted for Chinese tourists' traveling behavioral intentions to Norway. The tourists' attitudes towards behavior, subjective norm and destination image were proved to have positive and direct impacts on their traveling behavioral intentions, while perceived behavioral control and external environmental change showed no significant relations with final behavioral intention. Furthermore, the respondents to the questionnaires, most of who are young (in their 20's through 40's) and highly educated (have bachelor or higher degrees), are considered to have basic eco-awareness, desire to escape from daily work and study, and pursue more relaxing, experiencing and valuable trips, and to be easily influenced by surround people and form markets.

4. Conclusion

The results suggest that it is highly possible to foster sustainable Chinese tourism markets to Norway lead by youth Chinese tourists. Besides, more focused promotions and further education and propaganda on low-carbon tourism and clean products would help to foster such sustainable markets. Further studies are considered necessary to conduct some in-depth investigation to explore applicable market-fostering methods and add new factors to improve the explanatory ability of structural equation model.