Post-Disaster Tourist Behavior: Motivation and Intention

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Abstract—**Focusing on the popular Chinese tourist destination of Sichuan in the aftermath of the Wenchuan earthquake in 2008, this study attempts to explore domestic tourists' motivations and intentions to visit a post-disaster destination. Based on a questionnaire survey, this study identifies six push factors and four pull factors of travel motivation. The results of linear regression analysis reveal that different push and pull factors drive people to visit Sichuan for leisure and dark tourism purposes. In the meanwhile, this study reveals the potential of joint consumption of both leisure and dark tourism. In terms of managerial implications, the findings suggest that dark tourism can be used as another vehicle to restore tourism to Sichuan, and post-disaster sites in general.**

Keywords-disaster; motivation; visit intention; dark tourism; Sichuan

I.   INTRODUCTION

As the level of competition in the global tourism market rises, understanding tourist behavior has become more complex given the development of niche markets and the growing diversity of experiences sought by tourists, such as heritage tourism, ecotourism and dark tourism. Studies of tourist behavior commonly focus on the consumption of "pleasant diversions in pleasant places" (Strage & Kempa, 2003, p. 387), whereas little is known of tourist behavior in the context of sad or distressing sites (Stone & Sharpley, 2008), and particularly destinations recovering from natural disasters. In addition, previous post-disaster tourism studies predominately focus on the supply perspective, with an attempt to provide guidelines for tourism management and recovery (e.g., Faulkner, 2001; Ritchie, 2008;). This study aims to address the aforementioned research gaps in the literature and enhance current understanding of post-disaster tourist behavior. Inspired by recent "dark tourism" literature (e.g., Sharpley & Stone, 2009), this study aims to shed further lights on tourists' consumption of disaster sites.

Sichuan is a popular tourist destination situated in southwestern China. Tourism plays a crucial role in the province's economic development and attracts millions of domestic and international tourists. On May 12, 2008, Sichuan was struck by an intensive earthquake (i.e., the Wenchuan earthquake) that flattened many areas and killed thousands of people. Nevertheless, tourism recovered more quickly than previously anticipated. To attract tourists back, swift countermeasures (e.g., infrastructure reconstruction and comprehensive promotion) have been adopted. Moreover, a detailed perspective plan was unveiled taking the new tourism resources or products derived from the earthquake (e.g., appearance of landform and geology, earthquake ruins and commemorative museum) into consideration in seeking a new driving force.

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

A.   Tourist Behavior: Motivation and Travel Intention

Motivation is of key importance for tourist behavior as it is the trigger for any action of an individual (Fodness, 1994; Holden, 2006). Several researchers have approached tourist motivation from a sociological perspective (e.g., Cohen, 1974; Dann, 1977, 1981; MacCannell, 1989; Rcjek, 1993; Wang, 2000). While the abundance of different perspectives highlights the lack of a universal agreement upon the conceptualization of tourist motivation (Filep & Greenacre, 2007; Fodness, 1994; Pearce, 1993), there is a common agreement on the importance of push and pull factors to the understanding of travel decisions (e.g.,, Kim, *et al*., 2003; Sangpikul, 2008; Zhang & Lam, 1999;). The push factors are internal drives that create the initial desire to travel and are socio-psychological in nature, such as the desire for escape, rest and relaxation, excitement, novelty seeking, prestige, dream fulfillment and social interaction (Klenosky, 2002). Pull factors are external factors and arise from the attractiveness and specific attributes of a destination as perceived by potential tourists.

B.   Post-Disaster Tourist Behavior

With disasters becoming more frequent and geographically diverse and media informing potential tourists of the most recent and distance disasters, academics have paid increasing attention to the relations between disaster and tourism (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. (2006) International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. (2006). Worlddisaster report 2005. IFRC, Geneva.Hystad & Keller, 2008). Studies have mostly adopted a supply perspective (Lehto, Douglas, & Park, 2008), exploring the response of particular tourism organizations (e.g., Israeli & Reichel, 2003; Yeoman, Lennon, & Black, 2005) or developing tourism disaster management and recovery frameworks (e.g., Faulkner, 2001; Ritchie, 2008). However, most of these studies have focused on the traditional leisure tourism market, ignoring other segments which might not be

motivated by leisure pursuit or which may develop due to the perceived changes in the product.

Dark tourism is defined as visitation to sites associated with death, disaster, and depravity (Lennon & Foley, 2000) or the "the act of travel to sites associated with death, suffering and the seemingly macabre" (Stone, 2006, p.146). Studies on dark tourism have explored the diversity of death-related sites, such as Holocaust sites (Lennon & Foley, 2000), sites of slavery and Apartheid (Ashworth, 2004; Austin, 2002), Graceland (Rojek, 1993) and prisons (Wilson, 2008). Several studies have also highlighted the relevancy of dark tourism to the exploration of tourism to post-disaster destinations.

III.   METHODS

This study uses a mixed-method design of qualitative and quantitative approaches with a triangulation of data collection (interviews, content analysis and survey). In the first stage of the research a qualitative approach was adopted and semi-structured interviews were held in order to develop the questionnaire to be used at the second stage, the main study. The items in the questionnaire resulted from the content analysis of the semi-structured interviews conducted with a purposive sample of 10 tourists who had been to Sichuan after the earthquake. Interviewees were simply asked by an open-ended question, what they believed motivated them to visit Sichuan, the quake-hit tourist destination after the disaster. The most frequent motivation answers and keywords were selected and used as the questionnaire items. Additional items in the questionnaire were drawn from interviews with experts (i.e., senior officials of the Chinese National Tourism Administration) as well as literature dealing with leisure and post-disaster travelling motivation and behavior (e.g., Kim *et al.*, 2003; Rittichainuwat, 2007; Sangpikul, 2008; Uysal & Jurowski, 1994; Zhang & Lam, 1999).

At the second stage of the study, a quantitative approach was adopted using a self-administered survey. The first section explores push and pull motivations to visit Sichuan. Respondents were asked to indicate the importance they assign to 1) different reasons in their decisions to travel to Sichuan (i.e., push factors) and 2) the destination attributes that may influence their decision to visit Sichuan (i.e., pull factors). To measure the importance of the different motivational items a Likert scale, ranging from 'extremely unimportant' (1) to 'extremely important' (7), was used. The second section assessed travel intention. In this context, respondents were asked to rate the likelihood that they will travel to Sichuan in the following 12 months to engage with five different tourism experiences, such as different tourism products (e.g., for leisure or dark tourism) and travel modes (e.g., participation in a package tour, independent travel or backpacking). Travel intention was measured by a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from very unlikely (1) to very likely (7). The third part sought socio-demographic profiles of respondents. Since data were collected in China, to maintain content validity, the questionnaire was translated into Chinese under the principles of a blind translation-back-translation method (i.e., from English to Chinese and then from Chinese to English) as suggested by Brislin (1976).

A pilot test was conducted with 20 respondents to obtain feedback on the clarity and appropriateness of the questionnaire. It was also undertaken to determine whether the planned questions were meaningful to respondents and internally consistent. Finally, pre-testing was also used to minimize the number of items in each subscale in order to bring the survey to a length that would not be daunting for respondents. Based on the pilot test, the final version of the questionnaire was developed. The data collection for the main study was conducted over one week during April 2008 in the form of a self-administered questionnaire, on major pedestrian streets in Beijing, one of the major source markets for domestic tourism in China.

IV.   RESULTS

The final sample used for the data analysis is composed of 284 participants. The sample is rather evenly distributed between males (52.1%) and females (47.9%). Consistent with the characteristics of visitors to Sichuan, young and middle aged tourists were the dominant groups among the survey participants, whereas most participants stated themselves to be in the age of 26-35 (51.1%), followed by the age groups of 16-25 (28.9%) and 36-45 (13.0%). Most respondents were educated at the college or university level (66.2%). More than two-thirds (70.1%) of the respondents had never been to Sichuan, implying a potential travel market waiting to be explored. Despite geographic remoteness, 26.8% of respondents declared to be personally affected or connected to someone affected by the Wenchuan earthquake. However, the majority of respondents (73.2%) declared they were neither descents of Sichuan nor affected by the earthquake.

A.   Motivation for Post-Disaster Visitation

Participants were first asked to indicate the importance of different push and pull motives in their decision to visit Sichuan after the earthquake. The results indicate that the 26 items describing push motives to visit Sichuan after the earthquake can be grouped into six distinct factors, explaining over 60% of the total variance (see Table I). These were labeled as: 1) 'special interesting in earthquake', 2) 'novelty seeking', 3) 'prestige', 4) 'escape and relaxation', 5) 'socialization' and 6) 'fun and recreation'. While 'fun and recreation', 'prestige' and 'escape and relaxation' emerged as the three most important push factors motivating the respondents to travel to Sichuan, all other three motives were also ranked relatively high with a mean score above four. With regard to pull motives, from the original 16 pull motivational items, four dimensions were retained for the final structure explaining 63.20% of the total variance (see Table II). These were termed as: 1) 'personal safety, cleanliness and accessibility', 2) 'infrastructure', 3) 'value for money' and 4) 'the publicity of earthquake'. It can be seen that participants place relatively high importance to all these push motive in their decision to visit, particularly 'personal safety, cleanliness and accessibility' and 'key tourist attractions and facilities'. Although overall the

publicity of the disaster is the least important motive for visiting Sichuan, it is still ranked relatively high, with a mean score above four.

TABLE I. EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS FOR PUSH MOTIVES

Push factor dimensions	Factor Loading	Eigen Value	Variance explained	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean
Factor 1 Special interest in earthquake		3.492	13.431	0.829	4.44
To see the wreckage/debris of the disaster	.780				
To see the improvements/changes of the disaster	.796				
To visit earthquake relics and give a remembrance	.745				
To take contemplation of fate when being present at dark sites	.692				
To help local people recover from disaster	.619				
To seek out the black spot referring to earthquake reported without the encouragement of mainstream media	.596				
Factor 2 Novelty seeking		2.821	10.850	0.810	4.59
To experience new and different lifestyle	.755				
To find thrills and excitement	.740				
To do outdoor sports/explore	.724				
To go to places many people have not been/wish to visit	.517				
Factor 3 Prestige		2.760	10.615	0.746	5.10
To go to well-recognized places that receive complimentary reviews	.782				
To go to places that can give friends/relatives a profound impression	.718				
To gain a opportunity to broaden horizon and enrich knowledge	.477				
Factor 4 Escape and relaxation		2.645	10.175	0.785	5.05
To be emotionally and physically refreshed	.733				
To do exercise	.608				
To relieve stress	.648				
To change pace and get away from routine	.621				
To do nothing at all but relax	.519				
Factor 5 Socialization		2.353	9.049	0.760	4.38
To make friends and develop relationship	.836				
To meet new people with similar interest	.814				
To visit friends/relatives	.498				
To have enjoyable time with family/friends	.415				
Factor 6 Fun and Recreation		2.260	8.693	0.702	5.50
To have a hobby to travel	.667				
To taste Sichuan cuisine	.638				
To see the ethnic groups' performances	.639				
To get close to nature and see remarkable scenery	.574				
Total Variance Explained			62.813		
KMO = 0.855, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity= 3445.078, df= 325, Sig.= 0.000					

TABLE II. EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS FOR PULL MOTIVES

Pull factor dimensions	Factor loading	Eigen Value	Variance explained	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean
Factor 1 Personal safety, cleanliness and accessibility		3.681	23.006	0.856	5.75
Personal safety	.811				
Service quality	.725				
Public transportation	.724				
Hygiene and cleanliness	.646				
Reliable travel arrangement	.634				
Environment quality, water, air, and soil	.607				
Factor 2 Infrastructure		2.366	14.789	0.759	5.41
Various ethnic and folk customs and activities	.731				
Well-known historical heritage	.727				
Beautiful natural scenery	.549				
Gastronomy	.604				

Pull factor dimensions	Factor loading	Eigen Value	Variance explained	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean
Hospitality, recreation, accommodation and shopping facilities	.561				
Factor 3 Value for money		2.284	14.278	0.726	5.12
The best deal	.773				
A big value for money	.734				
Special tour promotion	.699				
Factor 4 The publicity of earthquake		1.780	11.127	0.720	4.80
Wenchuan earthquake	.844				
Marketed image during/after earthquake	.774				
Total Variance Explained			63.200		
KMO = 0.868, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity= 1862.464, df= 120, Sig.= 0.000					

TABLE III.   REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF BEHAVIORAL MOTIVATIONS

	β	*t*-value	Sig.
A. Intention to visit Sichuan for leisure only			
Push 1 Special interests in earthquake	-.147	-2.691	.008
Push 6 Fun and Recreation	.312	5.554	.000
Pull 1 Personal safety, cleanliness and accessibility	.177	2.758	.006
Pull 3 Value for money	.208	3.309	.001
R²= 0.265, Adjusted R²= 0.254, F= 25.122, Sig.= 0.000			
B. Intention to visit Sichuan for dark tourism only			
Push 1 Special interests in earthquake	.475	7.842	.000
Push 3 Prestige	-.152	-2.983	.003
Push 4 Escape and Relaxation	.108	2.182	.030
Pull 4 The publicity of earthquake	.300	5.151	.000
R²= 0.494, Adjusted R²= 0.487, F= 68.085, Sig.= 0.000			
C. Intention to visit dark sites during a package tour			
Push 1 Special interests in earthquake	.356	5.559	.000
Pull 3 Value for money	.153	3.062	.002
Pull 4 The publicity of earthquake	.250	3.859	.000
R²= 0.396, Adjusted R²= 0.389, F= 61.069, Sig.= 0.000			
D. Intention to visit dark sites during an independent travel			
Push 1 Special interests in earthquake	.395	6.409	.000
Pull 4 The publicity of earthquake	.319	5.181	.000
R²= 0.430, Adjusted R²= 0.426, F= 105.861, Sig.= 0.000			
E. Intention to visit dark sites as a backpacker			
Push 1 Special interests in earthquake	.309	4.678	.000
Pull 4 The publicity of earthquake	.331	5.005	.000
R²= 0.344, Adjusted R²= 0.340, F= 73.735, Sig.=0.000			

B.   The Impact of Motivation on Travel Intention

Participants were asked of their intention to travel to Sichuan to engage in different leisure and dark tourism experiences: 1) for leisure purpose only (mean= 5.25), 2) for the only purpose of visiting dark sites associated with the earthquake (mean= 4.36), 3) to visit dark sites associated with the earthquake as part of a package tour (mean= 4.39), 4) to visit dark sites as part of an independent travel plan (mean= 4.51), 5) to visit dark sites associated with the earthquake as part of a backpacking trip (mean= 4.52). As can be seen from the means scores, overall participants indicate the strongest intention to travel to Sichuan for leisure purpose only. While participants display the lowest interest in visiting for the sole purpose of engaging in a dark tourism experience, this option is still ranked relatively high. Furthermore, participants also showed relatively high interest in visiting dark site as part of a wider leisure travel (such as backpacking, or a package tour).

To identify the relationships between push and pull motives (independent variables) and travel intentions (dependent variables), linear regression analysis was used. Using the backward variable selection method, the final regression models filter out statistically insignificant independent variables and only contain those variables significant at the 5% significance level. The results reveal that different push and pull factors motivated people to visit Sichuan for leisure and dark tourism purposes, respectively (see Tables 3, cases A- E). Desire for fun and recreation and push motives as personal safety, cleanliness and accessibility and good value for money positively influence people's intension to visit Sichuan for leisure purposes (see Table 3, case A). Not surprisingly, fun and recreation motives have the strongest effect on a purely a leisure travel intention. Yet,

as seen form the negative β value, participants motivated by special interest in the earthquake are less likely to engage in a leisure only experience ($\beta = -.147$, $p < .01$).

On the other hand, participants interested in a dark tourism experience are mainly pushed by the special interest in disaster and are pulled by the publicity of the earthquake (see Table III, case B). Interestingly, the intention to engage in a dark tourism excursion is also pushed by escape and relaxation motives. This may suggest that some dark sites, and particularly those of natural disasters, are peaceful spaces that provide an opportunity for profound reflection. In addition, participants attempting to accumulate prestige through travelling have no interest in a dark tourism product ($\beta = -.152$, $p < .01$). With regard to those intending to visit dark sites as part of a package tour (Table III, case C), while they too are motivated by the interest in the disaster and its publicity worldwide, they are also more sensitive to the travel expense and are attracted by the external force of 'value for money'.

Referring to participant's intention to visit dark sites during an independent travel (Table III, case D), the motives of special interest in the earthquake and its publicity are of significant contribution in this context. Finally, the results of presented in Table 3 case E highlight the importance of the special interest in the disaster and its worldwide coverage to participants' intention to take a dark tour as backpackers. As the regression analysis identified these two motives as the only ones affecting the intention to visit the sites associated with the disaster as part of a backpacking trip.

V. Discussion and Implications

'Fun and recreation' and 'personal safety, cleanliness and accessibility' are the principal internal initiative and external force, respectively, driving people to visit Sichuan in the aftermath of the earthquake. The findings suggest that the earthquake has aroused the general public's attention to the matter of safety and security issues, possibly due to prevailing uncertainties caused by the devastating destructions to mountainous geography and large-scale death in some areas. Also，the findings of this study also highlight the relevancy of this framework to clarifying travel motivations regarding a post-disaster destination. Moreover, in addition to leisure travel motives, this study highlights the importance of dark tourism motives as far as a post-disaster leisure destination is concerned. Thus it supports the argument put forward in the previous literature that given the changes in the destination's attributes after a disaster, people may visit such a destination for other reasons than mere leisure (Huan *et al.* 2004). Although the participants are mainly interested in a leisure experience in post-disaster Sichuan, they display high interest in visiting its dark sites (e.g., the relics parks and public cemeteries) during their trip. This finding also further discloses the potential of tourists' joint consumption of different types of tourism (i.e., both leisure and dark tourism) during the same visit. In the tourism context, tourists seek to enrich their experience in a destination as much as possible given financial and time constraints. A post-disaster destination may exploit the new tourism resources developed from a disaster to meet tourists' joint consumption desires. The implication for post-disaster destination development is that, in addition to recovering the well-developed leisure tourism resources, attention should be paid to exploiting new resources and developing new type of tourism (e.g., dark tourism).

This study contributes to the literature on dark tourism by providing empirical evidence with regard to the relationships between motivation and intention, and specifically in the context of a post-disaster destination. Additionally, the findings suggest that all the types of travel intentions which involve dark tourism (either solely or in combination with leisure) are associated with curiosity or special interest in the disaster (a push factor) or the pulling appeal of the disaster. This highlights the need to understand the change in the destination attributes and image following a disaster, and the subsequent new markets. Furthermore, this study suggests that dark tourism to the well-developed tourist destination of Sichuan is motivated by different travel motivations. Unlike the common view on the binding relationship between interest in death and visiting dark sites (Slade, 2003; Stone & Sharpley, 2008), those who intend to visit Sichuan for seeking a dark tourism experience only are also motivated by a desire of escape and relaxation in addition to other than a touristic motives. This study thus provides empirical evidence to support previous research findings that tourists are very likely to be motivated by diverse purposes, such as a sense of patriotism (Slade, 2003), curiosity (Rittchaninuwat, 2008). This suggests that such sites of death and disaster, commemoration and contemplation provide an alternative means to satisfy tourists' certain desires such as escape and relaxation.

Since the desire to experience dark tourism (e.g., to tour earthquake sites) is likely to be facilitated by the media report and publicity of this catastrophe (Lennon & Foley, 2000; Sharpley & Stone, 2009). Therefore, active publicity of the quake-affected areas may contribute to boosting Sichuan's tourism industry. In addition, more efforts should be put to fully exploit various tourism resources available in Sichuan, and manage the product development and marketing of post-disaster Sichuan more effectively. For example, a larger itinerary combining the major quake-hit sites with other leisure tourism attractions may attract people who prefer to visit the dark sites in a package tour. Arousing tourists' consciousness, that 'to help the locals recover from the disaster' indicates a glorious achievement, and promoting quake tours as a unique experience, may be helpful to reverse the attitude of many prestige-seekers, who, according to this study, are unlikely to participate in dark tourism. Finally, dark tourism, as an extremely novel tourism product in China, deserves closer attention in its later developing direction. Promotion of dark tourism to popularize this special type of tourism may concern many ethical and political issues. The devastating effects of the earthquake may be felt much longer than simply a year or two. For example, it is questioned whether or not the relatives of the victims are sensitive to the commercialization of some dark sites (e.g., a cemetery) into a tourist destination. Hence, a cautious optimism should be held in taking action.

VI. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The survey of this study was conducted in the capital city only. Thus the sample may not be representative of the whole non-affected population, given that China is such a geographically and culturally vast country and has diverse subcultures due to regional differences. Future studies on domestic Chinese tourists' post-disaster travel behavior should cover other regions in the sample in order to provide a broader perspective of the understanding, particularly of the diversity of dark tourism motivations. Finally, the success of marketing destinations has addressed some concerns about tourist motivation and its interplay with satisfaction and loyalty with a destination (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Post-disaster destinations should be of no exception. Future research should take an integrated approach to understanding post-disaster tourist behavior and extend the theoretical and empirical discussions on the relationships among constructs of the push and pull motivations, satisfaction and destination loyalty. In particular, it would be interesting to investigate whether there is a causal linkage between tourist experience on dark sites and the overall satisfaction towards the destination.

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