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A Comparison of Short- and Long-Haul Vacation Tourists on Evaluation of Attractiveness: The Case of Hong Kong

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***Abstract*—**In this study, an attempt was made to find reasons why tourists go to particular attractions. Tourists may be either motivated by the attractions or simply make the choice to satisfy their needs and desires. Based on the attractions in Hong Kong, this research was conducted to explore the attraction-related concepts to discuss how the attraction system works. Due to the limited studies on exploring the attractiveness of attractions through tourist movement patterns, the study aims to evaluate such indicators to determine whether tourists are motivated by attractiveness or their own needs. The investigation is conducted through the comparison of different source markets - Mainland China, short haul markets (excluding Mainland China) and long haul markets. The latest finding of Departing Visitor Survey (DVS) implemented by the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) is employed for the analysis. Various tourist movement patterns are drawn from the practical data. The managerial implication to destination management organizations (DMOs) is suggested to better allocate attractions according to the needs of tourists.

***Keywords*—**Attractions, attraction system, Hong Kong, tourist movement patterns

I. Introduction

GEOGRAPHICALLY, the destination, as a larger area, is comprised of many attractions as single units, as well as the support services needed by tourists [1]. A visit to a destination arises out of a motivation. Motivation is explicit when the individual has wants or needs to be met or satisfied [2]. The motivation process [2] reflects a motivation to visit the destination and is derived from two directions: one is to satisfy tourist needs and the other is driven by the actual attractions. If the attractions match or satisfy tourist needs, it will be translated into the motivation to visit a specific destination [3] (Fig. 1). This decision making process of visiting a destination to some extent explains the reasons why tourists travel. However, every tourist's need to travel has different levels, ranging from a fundamental level as innate as biological, instinctive or physiological needs, to higher levels such as psychological needs (which are learned or socially engineered arising out of the environment), as adopted from Maslow's need-based motivation in tourism concepts. Maslow pointed out that human needs motivate human behavior based on a very generic hierarchy of human needs [2], [4]. Although investigation can be conducted to label into categories the reasons why tourists travel, those reasons are generalized motivations for travel with particular groups but their specific motivations are hardly expressed to help identify their needs. On one hand, it is because the tourists themselves are unaware of their needs; on the other hand, they hold back the real reasons for travel to a particular destination, for instance the desire for status within their relationships [2], [5]. Because it is hard to explicitly express such needs, identification of them is a challenge. It is believed, though, that the expression of the reasons to travel to a destination is better illustrated by repeat visitors who confirm the desire to return to the same destination year after year, as they continue to try and see if their needs will be met [2].

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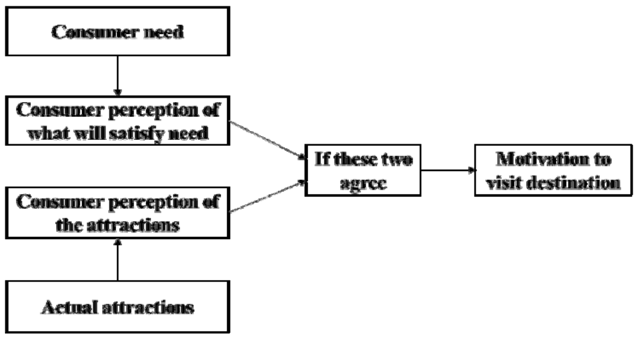


Fig. 1 The motivation process [2, p. 67]

A. Motivation

Tourist motivation is regarded as a multidimensional concept that explains tourist decision making [6]. Reference [7] defined motivation as a "state of need, a condition that exerts a push on the individual towards certain types of action that are seen as likely to bring satisfaction (p. 16)." When it comes to the application on tourism motivation, as [8] defined, "tourism motivation is a complex area dominated by the social psychologist with their concern for the behavior, attitudes and thoughts of people as consumers of tourism (p. 80)." There is a range of motivating factors that have an important influence on travel decisions; for example, socio-psychological motives dominate the decision that contains personal and individualized elements (i.e. escape, socializing, relaxation, and self-development) when inner urges act as travel motivators [8]–[10]. These socio-psychological motives are identified as push factors in Dann's pull-push theory [11]; therefore, motives may be used as a basis for market segmentation and research can focus on making the end result satisfying by using socio-psychological motives to develop attractions, taking it into consideration with marketing decisions [10]. While the challenge is that motives are multidimensional, it is hard to judge which motive effectively influences behavior. Only dominant motive(s) can be attempted to explain the phenomenon, but one cannot deny that there may be the existence of multi-motivational situations that affect the final decision on travelling [12]. Furthermore, it is complicated to discuss a wide range of motivation on a psychological level, as the psychological aspects on push factors arouse a variety of preference behaviors. Tourist instinct needs present a bit of a challenge as they cannot be easily generalized into a universally acceptable theory [8]. A needs-based approach is one of the main theoretical approaches in studying tourist motivation that assumes that tourists select destinations to satisfy their needs and thus it sees attractions as being designed to meet tourist needs [8].

B. Purpose of Attractions

Are attractions designed only to meet tourist needs or more? First, the nature of attractions needs to be identified. Reference [13] said a tourist attraction is “a named site with a specific human or natural feature which is the focus of visitor and management attention (p. 46).” This commonly referenced definition is also shared by [14], [15], who emphasize that the primary purpose of attractions is attracting visitors. Reference [8] extended the scope of attraction into natural or man-made attractions: nodal as icon images in a city, linear to group the attractions in similarity, and sites which include both permanent attractions and temporary attractions like special events.

Controversially, a broader definition, which is more inclusive, has been developed. As [2] stated “an attraction has benefits inherent in the destination, rather than any purpose-built facility specially designed to appeal to the tourist (p. 214).” The classification of attraction defined by both the English Tourism Council and the National Tourism Organization in the UK also agreed to have this inclusive approach, trying to cover all attractions through distinguishing their principle features, like resource type, visitor markets, objectives involved and human management aspects. They emphasized that attractions are primarily intended for tourists but also meet the needs of *local, day, domestic and international visitors* [16]–[19]. In other words, attractions are not only made for tourists, but also for other groups of people, like local residents [1], [17], [20], [21]. It is acknowledged that the boundaries of the definitions remain blurred. While it is a challenge to have a universally accepted definition for tourist attractions, this paper focuses on the attractions taking into consideration the various aspects of tourism.

Taking a managerial perspective of the definition, [22] proposed a classification of tourist attractions into ‘points, lines and areas’, encouraging considerations of the specific attributes of the resource, tourist behavior and spatial distributions, the potential for commercial exploitation, and associated planning and management strategies as a whole. Dating back to 1970s, more research attention has been on pull factors, rather than push factors, and, for tourism marketers and planners, the pull factors give them a clearer direction to input planning and marketing efforts [11].

Despite the debate among scholars on the classification of different categories of attractions by either key features or purposes, they all reach a common ground that attractions aim to fulfill the needs of tourists by providing a pleasure and satisfaction experience and an appropriate level of services [8]. Tourist attractions as central elements are primary motivators for travel [1], [8]. Reference [8] added that attractions are also something tourists may visit “en route to a destination,” as an extra reward to one’s travel, and is regarded as a secondary attraction in a destination [23]. If tourists just pass a place and visit a site, when it is not the terminal destination, the attraction en route can be regarded as simply one to satisfy tourist needs. Those attractions may not be inviting enough compared with the ones tourists determine to visit prior to departure. Reference [24] has identified that there are transit markers en route that lead tourists from one attraction to another. It is valuable to discuss the attractiveness of both the simple attraction and multi-attractions by location.

C. Attraction System

Researchers have developed and put into practice lists of factors and typologies of tourists to try to identify the elements in attraction systems [25]. Reference [24] further stated that “a tourist attraction is a system comprising three elements: a tourist, a sight and a marker.” The marker is the information that links the tourist to a destination or an attraction and stimulates a tourist’s motivation to visit. In further analysis, [24] reformulated the system in a precise way: “a tourist attraction system is defined as an empirical connection of tourist, nucleus and marker.” Instead of using *sight*, he adopted [26] concept of *a nucleus* as the central element in the system. If the nucleus does not exist, there is less value in considering a place as a tourist attraction [5], [24]. It seems that Leiper simply replaced the term “sight” or “attraction” by “nucleus”; however, in Gunn’s model of a tourist attraction, he clarifies that nucleus is the central component of the attraction. Making it complete, there is also *a zone of closure* (i.e. ancillary services) associated with the attraction and to prevent the attraction from being commercialized, there is an *inviolate belt* in between the zone of closure and the nucleus. These three components are the layers of a tourist attraction [8], [26]. Although both Gunn and Leiper used the same term, “nucleus” or “nuclei” in their frameworks, the meanings are in two different dimensions with one considering the tourist attraction as self-contained and the other emphasizing the link between the tourist and the attraction.

Similarly, [2] identified that facilitators are essential in the system as the factors that motivate tourists to travel. No matter how the researchers present the ideas, it affirmed that attractions are part of a wider system of meanings and cannot be studied in isolation [3], [5], [24]. And, it is emphasized that the elements in an attraction system are necessarily connected to form a complete attraction.

Reference [27] did a comparative evaluation on tourism attraction typologies from ideographic, organizational, and cognitive perspectives and highlighted the value of the attraction framework in organizing research on tourist attractions by using real practices and examples. He also proposed that cross-perspective measures be employed for further attraction research.

D. Hierarchy of Attractions

As a result of the differences of real performance among attractions, they are assessed in a hierarchy with primary attractions considered to be the core motivator of a visit, and lower order attractions as secondary and tertiary attractions which are typified by low tourist participation, due to constraints on time, money, distance, etc. A trade-off decision is made in a tourist's mind about whether the attractions are worthwhile or not. If not, tourists will find other supplementary attractions as a relief [5]; therefore, the more powerful the attractiveness, the more probability for a tourist to visit the place.

With the guidance of the research objective, the data analysis is conducted to determine if there are any differences in choosing attractions, or if there is a certain pattern of preferences by a particular market through comparing different segment markets on visitations to various attractions. To explore this delicate relationship, this study will focus on the context of Hong Kong in particular and investigate the following questions:

1) What are the patterns of tourist movement to the visitation of particular attractions in Hong Kong?
2) Do tourists come to Hong Kong for a single attraction or multi-attractions?

II. Method

Data are retrieved from the latest released *2016 Visitor Profile Report* by HKTB which is based on the findings of DVS implemented by HKTB. The annual survey is conducted in eight main departure points in Hong Kong targeting visitors from various source countries since 1973. It includes totally 140 different items to respectively measure tourist profile on attractions visited, activities participated in, expenditure, and satisfaction index and so on. There are five major sections presented in the Visitor Profile Report including All Overnight Visitors, Vacation Overnight Visitors, Business Overnight Visitors, All Same-Day In-Town Visitors and Sub-Market Analysis [28], [29]. This study particularly used data of top attractions that visited by Mainland China, short haul markets (excluding Mainland China) and long haul markets in 2016. Therefore, relevant data from a section of Vacation Overnight Visitors is chosen as this section reflects the segment of pleasure tourists and largely avoids the one-day mainland Chinese, who are statistically tourists, but indeed the daily commuters between Hong Kong and South China with non-travel purposes.

The movement patterns are then delineated for all these three markets. Though many studies have used these data to examine topics of market access and cultural distance on tourism [29], [30], few studies have ever been done on exploring the tourist movement patterns retrieved from such practical information.

Fig. 2 Tourist movement toward attractions by Mainland China (edited by the author)

III. Findings and Discussions

By consolidating the data on all vacation overnight visitors and comparing three different markets, the analysis as discussed below describes a tourist movement pattern to attractions which correspond to their own identity and needs. A change in the focus of attractions by different markets is then discovered.

A. Comparison of Mainland China Market, Short- and Long-Haul Markets on Tourist Movement toward Attractions

The data on Places Visited by Major Market Areas (%) released in the 2016 Visitor Profile Report by HKTB was interpreted into the following figures (Fig. 2 –Fig. 4), which clearly described the distribution of tourists who visit attractions in different locations in Hong Kong. The spot size, as shown in the figure, reflects the percentage of major market areas visiting a particular attraction in its location; the bigger the size, the greater the proportion of the same market group going to an attraction. The distribution of visitation to attractions by Mainland China is dispersed in locations with the main attractions visited being isolated in Kowloon, Hong Kong Island and Lantau Island (Fig. 2). Compared with the short haul markets (excluding Mainland China), the tourist movement toward attractions is centralized in Kowloon and around The Peak in Central-Western District on Hong Kong Island (Fig. 3). Similarly with the long haul markets, the pattern is more centralized in Kowloon, although it seems that the attractions on Hong Kong Island and Lantau Island are a little bit isolated from the ones in Kowloon. As a whole, though, the distribution of visitation is close to the pattern of short haul markets. What is distinguished is that The Peak has an obvious variation in that it attracts the largest market group (41% of long haul markets) (Fig. 4). Whereas almost all the other visitations to attractions by short haul markets are slightly bigger than long haul markets, the differentiation is relatively small (from 37% to 12%) (Fig. 6).

Fig. 3 Tourist movement toward attractions by Short Haul Markets (excluding Mainland China) (edited by the author)

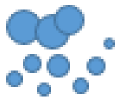
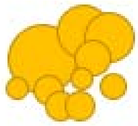
To take it one step further by also considering visitor characteristics on these three segment markets, the following table provides a comparable summary of the interaction between attractions and tourists and how the choices by tourists reflect the attractiveness of attractions (see Table I).

Fig. 4 Tourist movement toward attractions by Long Haul Markets (edited by the author)

B. Single Attraction VS. Multi-Attractions

To further analyze the findings, with special emphasis on tourist participation at attractions, in general, the higher the percentage of visitation to each attraction, the accumulation (overlap coverage) shows that there is increased opportunity for a tourist to visit more than one attraction. If such an assumption is reasonable, by comparing all 10 attractions' visitation percentage, it is the long haul markets that have the highest chance for the individual tourist to visit multi-attractions than short haul markets. If this is reflected in the figures as shown in Table I, the overlap coverage should be the largest. Comparatively speaking, Mainland China tourists are relatively focused on their choices of attractions and they prefer to go to a single attraction instead. For instance, the range for Mainland China from the tourists who visit The Peak (15%) to those who visit Lan Kwai Fong/Soho (4%) (10^{th} attraction by Mainland China's visitation) is large, and the latter one is quite small. However, for long haul markets, the percentage of tourists who visit The Peak is 41%, but for the same attraction – Lan Kwai Fong/Soho - by long haul markets, the percentage of visitation is 15%, much more than the Chinese visit numbers. Although both ranges are large, the percentages of the long haul markets are all larger than the Chinese market. That means, long haul markets have a relatively centralized distribution to the market visiting multi-attractions, whereas, the Chinese market has a dispersed distribution of the visitation to the attractions, and are much more likely to choose a single attraction. In discussing tourist needs, long haul markets prefer to have multi-attractions to visit within a limited time, which makes it worth visiting from far-off original markets. Most of Mainland China tourists are repeat visitors, who are more focused and have a better understanding of their needs, and so go to the particular attraction they want. The target is clearer.

TABLE I
DISTRIBUTION ON ATTRACTIONS BY MAJOR MARKET AREAS

	Mainland China	**Short Haul Markets (excluding Mainland China)**	**Long Haul Markets**
Location of Attractions	Dispersion  (Fig. 2)	Relative Concentration  (Fig. 3)	Relative Concentration  (Fig. 4)
Crowd concentration on attractions	Dispersion	Concentration	Relative Dispersion
Length of Stay	Short (3.2 nights)	Medium (2.9 nights)	Long (4.0 nights)
Activities (number of attractions)	Sightseeing (5) Culture exploration (2) Entertainment (2) Dining (1)	Sightseeing (4) Culture exploration (2) Entertainment (3) Dining (1)	Sightseeing (4) Culture exploration (3) Nature-based relaxation (2) Dining (1)
Participation in attractions	Go to Single Attraction  Overlap percentage up to 87%	Go to Multi-attractions  Overlap percentage up to 196%	Go to Multi-attractions  Overlap percentage up to 198%

The following discussion will further focus on how each market responds to the attractions and its pattern of visitation of particular attractions.

C. Mainland China Market

As indicated by the latest visitor profile from HKTB on the percentage of the major market who visited places, there is a large gap among sightseeing attractions visited by Mainland China tourists (i.e. The Peak (15%) – Garden of Stars/Starry Gallery (7%) –Tsim Sha Tsui Waterfront Promenade (5%)). In contrast, there is little difference (2%) between theme parks - Hong Kong Disneyland (15%) and Ocean Park (13%) - with entertainment as the main purpose. In other words, among similar attractions, Mainland China tourists choose either Hong Kong Disneyland or Ocean Park for entertainment, with there being no difference in visitation. For Hong Kong Disneyland, Ocean Park is supplementary to entertainment needs; or the reverse, for Ocean Park, Hong Kong Disneyland is supplementary. They both supplement each other. However, for sightseeing attractions, tourists who choose The Peak (15%), compared with those who choose to visit Tsim Sha Tsui Waterfront Promenade (5%), represent a huge contrast in attraction options. It may indicate that, to this target market, sightseeing attractions may reflect an interest in certain needs, for example night view or nature-based relaxation.

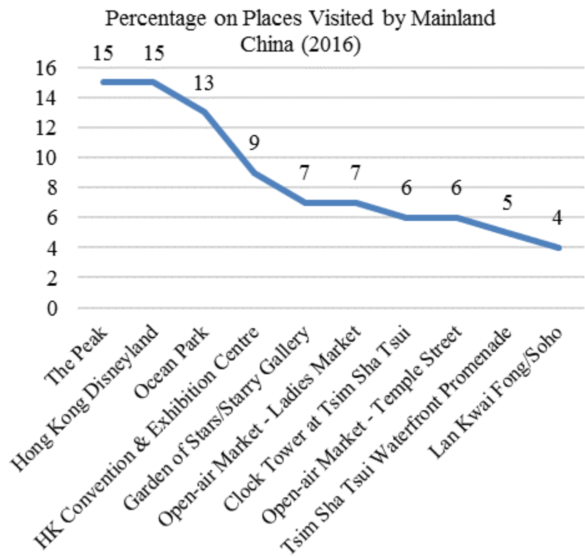


Fig. 5 Percentage on Places Visited by Mainland China (2016)

D. Short Haul Markets (Exclude Mainland China)

Applying the same approach with the comparison among attractions visited by short haul markets (excluding Mainland China), the differences between the sightseeing attractions are relatively less than with Mainland China tourists (i.e. Clock Tower at Tsim Sha Tsui (19%), Tsim Sha Tsui Waterfront Promenade (16%), A Symphony of Lights (14%)) (Fig. 6). As the Clock Tower at Tsim Sha Tsui, A Symphony of Lights and Tsim Sha Tsui Waterfront Promenade are located nearby one another, and there is no large difference in visitation. Probably, tourists choose to go to these three attractions because of the convenience and short distance of travel. It is difficult to draw a conclusion regarding whether short haul tourists come to Tsim Sha Tsui only because of the attractiveness of the Clock Tower or of A Symphony of Lights or Waterfront Promenade, or simply because of the bundling of attractions.

Conversely, for open-air markets including Ladies Market (28%) and Temple Market (16%), both with the same function with local culture attractiveness, there is a large difference between the visitation to these two attractions by short haul markets. In other words, the Ladies Market's attractiveness is more than the Temple Market's to this group. Likewise, there is large difference with visiting Hong Kong Disneyland (26%) and Ocean Park (12%) (more than two times). Hong Kong Disneyland acts as a magnet attraction to those short haul tourists who are interested in entertainment and Ladies Market is an iconic cultural attraction for those who are interested in experiencing local culture. It may be concluded that in terms of choice with similar attractions of either entertainment or culture, short haul markets have a distinctive preference, based on their own specific needs. Whereas, with sightseeing attractions, short haul markets have no strong preference amongst those attractions. They act as supplements to each other for this particular this market.

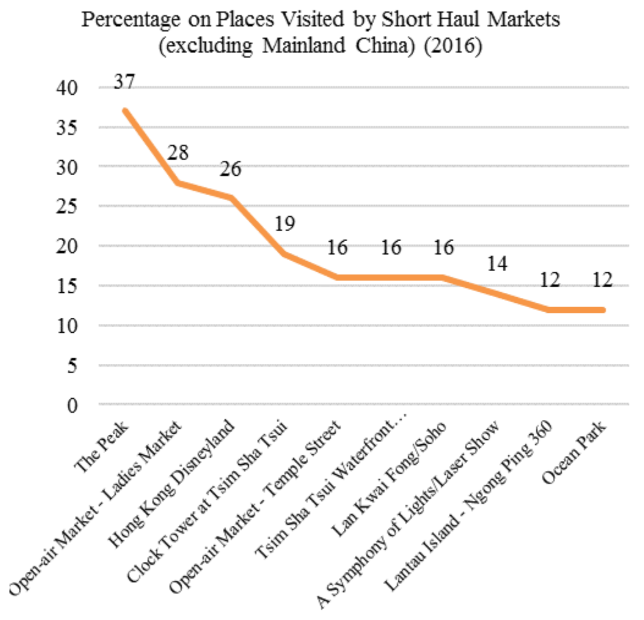


Fig. 6 Percentage on Places Visited by Short Haul Markets (excluding Mainland China) (2016)

E. Long Haul Markets

In long haul markets, 41% of the tourists visit The Peak, the highest in proportion compared with other sightseeing attractions. The other sightseeing attractions are all around 12% - 23% visitation. It could be seen that The Peak is an iconic attraction for tourists who travel from a long way to Hong Kong (Fig. 7). Apart from The Peak, there is a dispersed distribution of types of attractions, either culture-oriented, like Temple Street and Ladies Market, or nature-oriented like Lantau Island. Even with other sightseeing attractions, there is only a slight difference between similar attractions. Long haul tourists try to explore as much as possible to justify their investment in cost and time travelling from far away [31]. One risk factor that can act as a deterrent to long haul tourists from destinations that are far from their origin markets is that these tourists have reduced knowledge of their destination [32], [33]. What is more, [34] identified a geographical aspect, and that is that the more distant the destination, the more increase in attractiveness of that destination than a closer one.

TABLE II
COMPARISON ON SEGMENT MARKET OF THE REASONS FOR VISITATION

Segment Market	Attraction attracts tourists	Attraction simply satisfies needs
Mainland China	No outstanding attraction with distinguished visitation	There is no obvious tourist movement pattern with attractions of similar type
Short Haul Markets (excluding Mainland China)	Ladies Market as culture attraction with pulling power Hong Kong Disneyland attractiveness is more than Ocean Park	There is no obvious tourist movement pattern with sightseeing attractions
Long Haul Markets	Victoria Peak is an iconic attraction with a 3/4 proportion of the market	All other types of attractions are distributed in similar visitation pattern

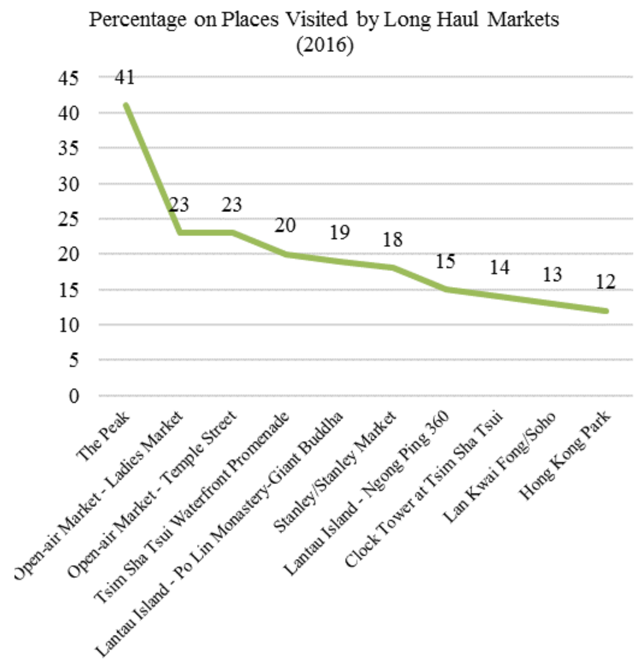


Fig. 7 Percentage on Places Visited by Long Haul Markets (2016)

To combine the findings, the following table provides a clear contrast of how different markets respond to the attraction, being motivated either by the attractiveness of attractions or by their own needs on visitation.

IV. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Attractions promote their characteristics to attract a specific market segment, while at the same time, to satisfy various tourist needs by either iconic attraction(s) or even bundles of attractions with similar attributes, like location or function. A destination like Hong Kong has multi-function attractions which include art, skyline, entertainment, local culture, business, religion and sightseeing. It is hard to say if tourists come because and only because of one attraction, because for different markets the meaning of attractions varies from each other. An attraction may not be the primary focus of one group but may be the reason for travel for another group. In other words, the hierarchy of attractions - primary attractions, secondary attraction and tertiary attractions – is a relative concept; a primary attraction may be a secondary to another. As such, each attraction may play a supplementary role to simply satisfy tourist needs as an extra reward to the trip. The successful attractions are the ones which respond best to the tourists' various needs [35]. The reasons for choosing particular attractions depend upon different needs and the level of importance to each person.

DMOs are suggested to allocate attractions or resources in a way that correspond to a certain market of its needs, such as form a strategic alliance to manage attractions which are close each other for the aim of maximizing demand [36], [37]. The strategic challenge in practice is to not get limited by seeing the market distribution, but to dig into both the physical and psychological needs of tourists so that attractions can match those needs, maximizing the use of the resource and fully realizing its values. For example, a tourist visit to Hong Kong Park may be due to the proximity to the Peak tram. It is The Peak that raises the demand for the attraction of Hong Kong Park. However, for some mixed need tourists, they may visit Hong Kong Park specifically for bird watching, and then the proximity may also drive them to The Peak. In that sense, it is Hong Kong Park that raises the visitation for The Peak. The shared benefits within one attraction set or area can be leveraged. In this case, it is timely to allocate the same type of attractions or resources close each other for the aim of maximizing demand,; to increase accessibility for each single attraction within the same area, and to facilitate tourists' commute among each attraction in attraction set.

V. Limitation

The study, however, has its own limitation as it does not examine the instinct facts that may affect tourist motivation. Moreover, motivation is only one of many variables that explain tourists' preference behavior in choosing the attributes of a destination attraction.

HKTB provides a comprehensive dataset on the visitor profile; however, by conducting this research, a few weaknesses in the categories of attractions become apparent. In terms of inclusiveness, the current attraction list is not complete enough. Historical buildings/structures are excluded in sightseeing attractions and there is only "temple" listed as a separate category, the only representative of a cultural attraction. An attraction may have multi-functions, such as the Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre, which is regarded as a sightseeing attraction in the list, but which may also be used as a special function for meetings, exhibitions, fairs; however, it is not manifested in the data. Even in sightseeing categories, dining places like the Floating Restaurant are included, which makes the categorization even more complicated and blurred. Since the data analysis is mainly based on the current categorization, the final result may be generalized and with less focus, allowing certain scenarios to be ignored.

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