

Exploring Influencing Factors of Travel Decision-making for Buddhist Temple Stay Programs

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Abstract. In order to explore the influencing factors of travel decision-making for Buddhist temple stay programs, this study adopted the framework of the two-factor theory and the method of semi-structured interviews, and finally six motivating factors and two hygiene factors were figured out. Motivating factors consist of contents and regulations, temple environment, popularity and public praise, collective meditation, voluntary contribution, and catering and accommodation, while hygiene factors include accessibility and safety. Through the analysis of motivating and hygiene factors, on the one hand, it deepens the understanding of travel decision-making for Buddhist temple stay programs, on the other hand, it also provides some practical implications for the management of those programs.

Introduction

Within China, the Buddhist temple stay program, which is open to the public regardless of religious belief, has increasingly become a popular experiential religious tourism product. In the social environment full of stress, tourists participate in Buddhist temple stay programs wishing to escape from the daily life, figure out approaches to solve personal problems, or just gain a unique experience[1]. Different from the mainstream religious tourism for sightseeing and worshipping, tourists who participate in Buddhist temple stay programs have to stay in the temples for several days, follow the schedule of monks, have vegetarian food, attend fixed courses on meditation and comply with strict rules [1]. During the programs, in order to be focused, speaking is forbidden in the most time and no cellphones are allowed.

As an emerging experiential religious tourism product, the Buddhist temple stay program is growing fast and become more and more popular, but little has been known about what influence tourists' decision to attend those programs, which may have important implications for managers to better understand the tourists and manage the programs. In order to explore the factors influencing tourists' decision to attend Buddhist temple stay programs, this study adopted the two-factor theory trying to figure out the factors which can motivate and hinder tourists' participation.

Two-Factor Theory

Two-factor theory was developed by psychologist Frederick Herzberg in 1959 to analyze the factors in the workplace that affect the job satisfaction and work motivation[2]. This theory proposes that there are two kinds of job characteristics which have different impacts on worker satisfaction at work, including motivating factors and hygiene factors[3]. Motivating factors are incentives that can lead to satisfaction and motivate individuals when present, but will not generate dissatisfaction if they are absent [4]. As for hygiene factors, although they do not actually motivate individuals, they will result in dissatisfaction when absent or inadequate[4]. In other words, satisfying motivating factors can increase satisfaction and enhance work motivation, whilst meeting hygiene factors can prevent dissatisfaction. According to the research of Herzberg, motivating factors like sense of achievement

and recognition are intrinsic characteristics of job itself, while hygiene factors are extrinsic to the job, concerning the conditions surround performing the work, like salary and interpersonal relations [5].

The two-factor theory is mainly applied in the management of human resource with relatively few applications in the field of tourism. In the tourism-related studies, the two-factor theory has been mainly adopted to the research of tourist satisfaction and human resource management in the hospitality industry and tourism planning[5, 6]. Few studies have employed the two-factor theory to better understand the travel decision-making except the study of Blackwell[4], which proposed that the two-factor theory can be applied to understand the motivation for pilgrimage and religious tourism. In the context of pilgrimage and religious tourism, motivating factors refer to the incentives that encourage them to go on the religious trip, while hygiene factors are ones that may cause demotivation and dissatisfaction, both of which can influence the final travel decision-making [4]. Based on the above researches, this study tries to better understand the travel decision-making for Buddhist temple stay programs from the perspective of the two-factor theory, by identifying the motivating and hygiene factors that influence tourists' participation.

Method

In order to explore the motivating and hygiene factors that influence travel decision-making for Buddhist temple stay programs, semi-structured interview was adopted in this study. Firstly, with the aim of extracting the factors that influence the motivation of tourists to attend Buddhist temple stay programs, the interviewees were asked, "when you consider attending a Buddhist temple stay program, what factors particularly attract or hinder your participation?". Secondly, based on last answer, respondents were asked for each mentioned factor, "if this factor is well satisfied, would you prefer to attend the Buddhist temple stay program?" and "if this factor can not be well met, will it reduce your motivation to attend the Buddhist temple stay program?". Motivating factors and hygiene factors were identified according to the responses.

Because the tourists who have attended Buddhist temple stay programs are relatively rare and uneasy to contact with, the interviewees of this study were mainly selected by snowball sampling[7]. Firstly, a tourist who used to attend Buddhist temple stay programs was selected for interview, and was asked to recommend the next or several qualified interviewees. Then these recommended respondents would be interviewed and asked to recommend the following qualified interviewees. The process would be continued until the content of interview was basically saturated. Ultimately, 14 interviewees were selected.

The first step of analysis was to classify all the mentioned factors into motivating factors and hygiene factors. If satisfaction of these factors could enhance respondents' motivation of participation, the factors were categorized as motivating factors; if respondents considered the lack of these factors would reduce their motivation of participation, the factors were identified as hygiene factors. Secondly, all these original motivating factors and hygiene factors would be coded into different content categories which are the final motivating and hygiene factors. The content of interviews was coded by two analysts and 90% of the coding results of them were consistent. All the disagreement has been solved after discussion and adjustment.

Motivating Factors

Contents and Regulations

Contents of Buddhist temple stay programs refer to the arrangement of all the activities during the programs, involving methods of meditation, instructions provided by tutors, time arrangement, enrichment of courses and other activities, and so on. If the methods of meditation are suitable for tourists, rich experience can be obtained from courses and activities, and the instruction of tutors can help learn Buddhist knowledge, solve inner doubts, or acquire transformation, motivation of tourists to attend Buddhist temple stay programs can be greatly enhanced. But for tourists of different beliefs

or levels of beliefs, the emphasis they pay attention to is different. Tourists who believe in Buddhism usually focus on the practice of meditation, while general tourists pay more attention to the enrichment of courses and activities which enables them to get unique experiences different from the past. As for the instruction of tutors, it motivates both Buddhist and non-Buddhist tourists. Non-Buddhist tourists hope to gain wisdom and transformation with the enlightenment of tutors, so that they can better cope with the troubles in life. In addition to this, Buddhist tourists also hope they can make progress in Buddhism with the guidance of tutors.

The regulations of programs mainly include no mobile phones, no speaking, keeping early hours, and so on. Many respondents mentioned that handing in cellphones made them feel satisfied. On the one hand, they can escape from the daily life and countless information without mobile phones, on the other hand, it also helps maintain inner peace and provide a better environment for meditation. No speaking also has a similar effect. As for the regulation of keeping early hours, it is a significant motivating factor for tourists who wish to adjust the daily routine and keep a regular life.

Temple Environment

Temple environment refers to all the people, objects and activities in the temple, including not only the natural environment, architecture, Buddha statues etc., but also the activities of monks, volunteers and believers, as well as the overall atmosphere of the temple. According to the interviews, most respondents, especially those who wanted to escape from secular affairs, release from pressure and relax mind and body, would be satisfied with the peaceful environment of temples. As the quiet environment of temples enables tourists to experience inner peace and provides a good atmosphere for meditation, it is an important factor that motivates them to attend the Buddhist temple stay programs. In addition, living in temples, along with all the Buddhist objects and activities of monks, volunteers and other followers, enables tourists to experience another aspect of temples which cannot be seen by the tourists for sightseeing, which is of great attraction for tourists who want to explore and experience the real life in temples.

Popularity and Public Praise

Popularity and public praise mainly consist of three parts, including the popularity and reputation of the Buddhist temple stay programs, the Buddhist temples that hold them and the master monks who tutor them. Famous Buddhist temples are more likely to attract tourists who want to find out the true aspect of those temples and experience the impregnation of Buddhism in them. At the same time, good word-of-mouth of the Buddhist temples can also endorse the quality of the temple stay programs. The popularity and good reputation of tutors represent more possibilities to end inner worries and doubts, gain spiritual progress and transform the mind. Generally, Buddhists or tourists who have attended several Buddhist temple stay programs pay more attention to the reputation of temples and tutors on meditation, while general tourists may pay more attention to the popularity of temples and tutors among the public. Furthermore, as the reputation of Buddhist temple stay programs is mainly disseminated through word of mouth and news, the programs with news reports and word of mouth from past participants tend to attract more tourists.

Collective Meditation

Collective meditation refers to that all the participants of a Buddhist temple stay program practice meditation together. It is found that collective meditation has a great stimulating effect on tourists who believe in Buddhism or like meditation. These tourists pointed out that it could be easily disturbed when practicing meditation at home and could not persist for a long time, which resulted in relatively poor effect of meditation. While all the participants of a program practiced meditation together in the same place, it would be easier for them to keep in meditation more consciously and persistently with the impact of the atmosphere. Therefore, some respondents suggested that if someone wanted to make faster progress on meditation, he or she should better participate in collective meditation.

Voluntary Contribution

Voluntary contribution refers to the way in which some Buddhist temple stay programs do not charge fees, and tourists make donations according to their willingness and financial status. On the one hand, voluntary contribution can reduce the overall cost, and thus encourage some tourists with poor economic conditions to participate in temple stay programs. On the other hand, this approach can also satisfy some tourists who want to pay the fee according to the effect of the program, as the donation is always at the end of a program. Furthermore, voluntary contribution is also in line with the public image of Buddhism that is charitable, which can make tourists form a better impression of Buddhist temple stay programs and promote them to attend the programs. In addition, many respondents pointed out that if the programs charged a reasonable fee according to the cost of materials, manpower, etc., they would not produce any dissatisfaction.

Catering and Accommodation

Participants of Buddhist temple stay programs have a light vegetarian diet just like the monks, while they usually sleep in the guest rooms of temples with bunk beds. In general, tourists have relatively low expectations for food and accommodation in temples. Once the taste of food and quality of accommodation exceed their expectations, tourists will be satisfied, which contributes to their motivation to attend Buddhist temple stay programs. At the same time, tourists attending Buddhist temple stay programs are not driven by hedonic motives, but often come with the purpose to exercise and improve themselves. Therefore, even if the food and accommodation are not good enough, tourists generally will not be dissatisfied.

Hygiene Factors

Accessibility

Accessibility refers to the degree of convenience for tourists to head for the destinations where temple stay programs are held. It mainly involves the distance between the destination and the tourist generating region, the time and expense of transportation and the degree of transportation convenience. It is found that the accessibility of a temple stay program is the fundamental hygiene factor influencing the motivation of tourists to attend temple stay programs. If the journey from the origin to the destination is too far, takes too long, cost too much or cannot be completed smoothly and conveniently, tourists will be greatly hindered to participate in the Buddhist temple stay program.

At the same time, different aspects of accessibility are interrelated and act together on the motivation of tourists to attend temple stay programs. For example, a long distance often leads to the long time and high cost of transportation, while the inconvenience of transportation may lead to more time and energy spent on transportation. All these interrelated elements may contribute to the decline of motivation together. As long as one or several of these elements are unacceptable to tourists, it will seriously influence the motivation of tourists to attend the Buddhist temple stay program.

Safety

Safety is the other important hygiene factor some tourists pay attention to. Safety is mainly divided into two parts which are personal safety and ideological safety. During the program, all the participants are not allowed to leave the temple and contact with the outside world, so it is easy to arouse participants' concerns about their personal safety. For the ideological safety, since people sometimes associate Buddhism or other religious beliefs with feudalistic superstition, some tourists, especially those who participate in the Buddhist temple stay program for the first time or attend a new program in a new temple, will worry about whether they will be brainwashed. In addition to the tourists, some of their families may be worried about whether they want to be a monk or a nun after attending Buddhist temple stay programs. In result, their families would only allow them to attend

those programs if they confirmed they would not do that. In summary, if the personal and ideological safety cannot be guaranteed, tourists are not likely to attend Buddhist temple stay programs.

Conclusions and Discussions

In order to explore the influencing factors of travel decision-making for Buddhist temple stay programs, this study adopted the two-factor theory and ultimately got six motivating factors and two hygiene factors. Motivating factors include contents and regulations, temple environment, popularity and public praise, collective meditation, voluntary contribution, catering and accommodation, while hygiene factors include accessibility and safety.

From the above findings, it can be found that motivating factors are mostly associated with content of the Buddhist temple stay program itself, and have positive impacts on the tourist experience during the temple stay program. For example, enriched contents and regulations of Buddhist temple stay programs can provide abundant and distinct learning and practice experiences for tourists, while just a slightly better catering and accommodation can provide a satisfactory living experience during the programs. Referring to the hygiene factors, accessibility as the most important one is unrelated with the Buddhist temple stay program itself, but concerning with the tourist travel conditions. If these conditions are not satisfied, it will hinder tourists to attend Buddhist temple stay programs, but it will not have a direct impact on tourists' experience and satisfaction of the programs.

Although motivating factors can motivate tourists' participation in Buddhist temple stay programs while hygiene factors hinder it, the effects of different motivating and hygiene factors are different. For example, as the core elements of temple stay programs, contents and regulations seem to be the most important motivating factor, while catering and accommodation seem to have relatively less contribution to the motivation. Furthermore, according to the results, the importance of motivating and hygiene factors are different according to the types of tourists. For instance, contents and regulations are always an important motivating factor for tourists who believe in Buddhism, while for general tourists, especially who attend the program for the first time, popularity and public praise are also significant important in motivating them to attend the temple stay programs.

The research findings also provide some implications for the operation and management of Buddhist temple stay programs. If managers want to attract more tourists, they should focus on satisfying or promoting the motivating factors as well as the realization of hygiene factors. For motivating factors, the contents should be enriched, regulations should be clearly specified and enforced, quiet Buddhist atmosphere should be promoted, and so on. Referring to hygiene factors, although accessibility almost has no relation to the program itself, managers can improve it by providing transportation schemes, shuttle buses, and so on. The sense of security can also be enhanced through detailed introduction of Buddhist temple stay programs and word of mouth. In addition, as different types of tourists focus on different motivating and hygiene factors, managers should pay more attention to the corresponding factors if they want to attract certain types of tourists.

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