

Adaptation and Validation of Tourist Destination Perception Scale in China

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Abstract

Gaining a comprehensive understanding of tourists' perceptions is imperative for the improved management of cities as tourist destinations. This study aims to assess the validity and reliability of tourist destination perception scale developed by Reitsamer & Brunner-Sperdin (2017) for the adaption of the Chinese version. For this purpose, this study was conducted using a total sample 116 tourists including 62 females and 54 males. The collected data were analyzed with descriptive analysis. For the reasons of testing the validity and reliability of the scale, content validity, construct validity as well as Cronbach 's Alpha value were used. According to the result, it was found that the Chinese adaption of tourist destination perception scale is quite valid and reliable.

Keywords: Tourist Destination Perception, Tourist , China, Validity, Reliability

Introduction

Tourism is widely recognized as one of the largest economic sectors on a global scale (Mai et al., 2020). It is an expansive and rapidly growing industry that makes a significant contribution to both local and global economies (Zhong & Chen, 2019). According to the 2019 report by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), the tourism industry made a substantial contribution of 10.4% to the global GDP and played a significant role in providing employment opportunities for approximately 319 million individuals. The tourist destination is the most important carrier of tourism activities, the fundamental unit of analysis in the tourism industry, and the crucial element that distinguishes tourism research from other fields (Pike & Page, 2014).

In the dynamic tourism industry of today, competition among businesses is ever intensifying, extending beyond national borders to encompass even smaller destinations vying for attention on the global stage (Reitsamer & Brunner-Sperdin, 2017). China is a major tourist destination. According to data from the National Bureau of Statistics of China, the domestic tourism volume in China reached as high as 4.891 billion person-times in 2023. For tourist destinations in China, it is crucial to comprehend the methods of attracting tourists and maintaining a consistent demand for tourism to secure sustainable revenue. A comprehensive perception of the products and services of a place is a necessary prerequisite

for consumers' emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses (Reitsamer & Brunner-Sperdin, 2017). For instance, recently renowned tourist destination cities in China such as Harbin, Zibo, Tianshui, etc., which previously had relatively low visibility, have gained popularity among tourists due to providing excellent experiences. In other words, it's about having a strong perception as a tourist destination and leveraging the power of media to spread the word, attracting more tourists to visit. Therefore, a key aspect of enhancing the competitiveness of tourist destinations lies in understanding the perceptions and experiences of tourists (Kim et al., 2019). Measuring the perception of tourist destinations is an important issue, especially in China.

Tourist destination perception refers to the psychological process through which tourists perceive the tourism process of a destination under the influence of external stimuli. It involves the sensory acquisition of information about the tourist attractions, environmental conditions, service quality, and other aspects of the destination. It represents a comprehensive reflection of the level of cognitive understanding of the tourism products and services at the destination (gen & Yingying, 2011). Gaining a comprehensive understanding of travelers' perceptions is imperative for the improved management of cities as tourist destinations (Cambra-Fierro et al., 2022).

However, research findings indicate that studies on tourist destination perception mostly focus on the perception of specific aspects of tourist destinations, such as service quality perception, image perception, safety & risk perception, brand perception, experiential perception. There is relatively less research that comprehensively considers tourist destination perception. However, when it comes to destinations, tourists are typically seen as perceiving them as a complete package (Cracolici & Nijkamp, 2009). Therefore, this study learn from the scales of tourist destination perception which contains Access, Amenities, Attractions and activities, Entertainment, and Local community (Reitsamer & Brunner-Sperdin, 2017).

The research on tourist destination perception by Reitsamer et al. is very detailed. But considering that its research area is Austrian tourism destinations, there are many differences from China in the field of cultural backgrounds, individual behaviors, thought processes, and values exhibit. In the context of China's national conditions, it is essential to study the concept of tourist destination perception and the applicability of its content structure to Chinese tourist destinations.

Literature Review

Tourist Destination Perception

The British Tourism Society officially introduced the concept of a "tourist destination" in 1979, marking a significant milestone in the recognition and definition of tourism as a phenomenon (Vanhove, 2022). Tourist destination is defined as a distinct geographical area that visitors perceive as a distinctive entity, supported by a set of political and legislative measures for the management of tourism (García-Almeida, 2019). Tourist destination perception is a psychological process in which tourists form an understanding of the destination under the joint action of the destination object factor and the tourist subject factor (Zhong, 2015). As a multi-attribute tourism product, the tourists are assumed to perceive the destination as a whole (Reitsamer & Brunner-Sperdin, 2017). Tourist destination perception represents a comprehensive reflection of the level of cognitive understanding of the tourism products and services at the destination (gen & Yingying, 2011). Gaining a comprehensive understanding of travelers' perceptions is imperative for the improved management of cities as tourist

destinations (Cambra-Fierro et al., 2022). Currently, the majority of ongoing research has focused on investigating tourists' perceptions and opinions regarding tourist destinations and how these views impact tourists' intentions and behaviors (Cronjé & du Plessis, 2020).

Measurement for Tourist Destination Perception

Due to its comprehensive nature, the structural dimensions of tourist destination perception include the following aspects: perceived service quality, image perception, safety & risk perception, brand perception, experiential perception. Among them, image perception and safety perception have received more attention. In localized research, there are certain limitations to studying of tourist destinations perception: First, past studies have focused on individual aspects of tourist destinations perception rather than considering a comprehensive perception of the destination. This lack of a standardized scale for measuring tourist destinations perception has been a drawback. Second, previous research has overlooked the importance of considering comprehensive tourist destinations perception as a significant variable in analyzing its relationship with other variables. Therefore, this study aims to address these limitations by developing a scale that views tourist destinations as holistic entities, emphasizing the comprehensive perception of tourists towards these destinations. Meanwhile, it is important to note that when studying tourist destination perception as a variable in conjunction with other variables, the extensive structural complexity makes the research exceptionally intricate.

Therefore, we need to draw inspiration from a refined structure of tourist destination perception after condensation. Fan believes that tourist destination perception includes four aspects: landscape, facilities, service and safety (Jun Fan et al., 2014). Zhong integrates the perception elements into three parts: attraction, tourism supporting facilities, public environment and service (Zhong, 2015). The research on tourist destination perception by Reitsamer et al. supply Access, Amenities, Attractions and activities, Entertainment, and Local community.

In this study, by developing a multidimensional assessment scale for tourist destination perception, future researchers can empirically examine the conditions of different dimensions of tourist destination perception and their impact on tourist intentions, behaviors, and so forth. This can effectively assist tourist destinations in implementing improvement measures, thereby enhancing tourist willingness to travel and inspiring positive tourism behaviors. This holds particular significance for Chinese tourist destinations.

Methods

Population and Sampling

In research, the population refers to the entire group of individuals, events, or objects that demonstrate the behaviors and/or possess the characteristics that are of interest to the researcher (Elfil & Negida, 2017; Omair, 2014).

This study specifically focuses on tourists visiting Chinese tourist destinations. Xi'an is one of the biggest cities around the world and the representation of the flourishing classical Chinese culture (Yin et al., 2019). The tourism industry of Xi'an has developed well and had become the top ten popular tourist destination cities in China in 2018 (Government, 2019). Therefore, Xi'an is representative among tourist destinations in China. A common guideline suggests that the sample size should be at least 10 times the maximum number of links for any latent variable in either the internal or external model (Goodhue et al., 2012). According to this guideline, the sample size of 60-100 in this study meets the requirements.

Using a convenient sampling method, the survey questionnaire was created and edited using the Wenjuanxing platform. The researchers distributed the survey questionnaire through WeChat groups, explaining the research plan and assuring participants of the confidentiality of their information. This approach aimed to select tourists who had visited Xi'an within the past six months, as their memories of this experience were likely to be more vivid. To ensure accuracy, a screening question was included at the beginning of the questionnaire, asking participants if they had visited Xi'an in the past six months. Only those who answered "yes" were allowed to proceed with the survey. To evoke memories of their trip to Xi'an, the questionnaire also included questions about the specific attractions visited in Xi'an and whether participants had tried any local cuisine. Based on these criteria, a planned distribution of 60 questionnaires resulted in a total of 121 completed questionnaires received through Wenjuanxing. After excluding invalid questionnaires, a total of 116 questionnaires were analyzed.

Scale Construction

This study adopted the scales of tourist destination perception which contains Access, Amenities, Attractions and activities, Entertainment, and Local community (Reitsamer & Brunner-Sperdin, 2017). Table 1 shows all the measurement items of tourist destination perception. 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree".

Table 1

Items and measurement of Tourist Destination Perception(TDP)

Dimensions and Items	Adapted/Adopted	Authors
Access		
Aa1. There are many alternative ways to get to this destination	Adopted	Reitsamer & Brunner-Sperdin.(2017)
Aa2. There are many convenient ways to get to this destination		
Aa3. There are many convenient transportation possibilities for getting around		
Amenities		
Ab1. There are interesting places to visit within this destination	Adopted	Reitsamer & Brunner-Sperdin.(2017)
Ab2. The destination offers excellent local cuisine		
Ab3. There are high-quality restaurants in this destination		
Attractions and activities		
AA1. The destination offers man-made attractions originally built for other purpose		Reitsamer & Brunner-

AA2.The destination offers man-made, purpose-built attractions such as theme parks	Adopted	Sperdin.(2017)
AA3.The destination offers temporary, nonphysi-cal attractions such as events or festivals		
Entertainment		
E1.The destination offers plenty of fun and entertainment		Reitsamer & Brunner-
E2.The destination offers sports and recreational opportunities	Adopted	Sperdin.(2017)
E3.The destination has places with excellent nightlife and evening entertainment		
Local community		
LC1.Local people made a good impression on me	Adopted	Reitsamer & Brunner-
LC2.Local people were friendly		Sperdin.(2017)

Methods for Validity and Reliability Analysis

Content validity refers to the extent to which the components of an assessment tool are pertinent and representative of the intended construct for a specific assessment objective (Cook & Beckman, 2006; Haynes et al., 1995). It is employed to ascertain the suitability of the questionnaire's content in alignment with the study's objectives (Parsian & Dunning, 2009). This is because content validity relies on the researcher's expertise in selecting and measuring items to accurately determine which variables are being assessed. Additionally, content validity is established by involving experts and seeking their opinions and expertise in the assessment process (Delgado-Rico et al., 2012). Therefore, in terms of practical implementation, content validity was conducted to assess the validity of the content by requesting experts' feedback consisting of comments, clarity, and quality of each item (Tapanes, 2011). The suggestions and feedback provided by experts are used to make adjustments and improvements to the instrument.

Construct validity pertains to the degree of relationship between the items of an instrument and the underlying construct being measured (Delgado-Rico et al., 2012). It is a quantitative measure that encompasses multiple items, and factor analysis is employed to assess the validity of the construct. Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt emphasized that construct validity is evaluated through factor analysis, which involves analyzing convergent validity and discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). Measurement forms the cornerstone of the research process, as the choices made in measurement directly impact the quality of the gathered data, which in turn are utilized to draw conclusions. If a researcher employs a scale without construct validity, the obtained results would hold little significance (Flake et al., 2022). When evaluating the measurement model of this pilot study, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) is utilized to determine construct validity. In the pilot study, the 116 questionnaires were coded and analyzed using the SPSS statistics software.

Results

Participant Demographics

According to the data presented in Table 2, this study collected a total of 116 valid responses. The gender distribution of participants shows that 53.4% are female, and 46.6% are male. Additionally, the age distribution of participants indicates that the majority fall within the 18-50 age range. Concerning the duration of tourism stay in Xi'an, most participants stayed for 2-3 days. In terms of educational background, a significant number of participants hold a bachelor's degree.

Table 2

Demographic characteristics of tourists (n = 116)

	Details N (%)
Gender	Male 54 (46.6) Female 62(53.4)
Age	<18 years 0 (0)
	18–29 years 35 (30.2)
	30–39 years 47(40.5)
	40–49 years 28(24.1)
	≥50 years 6(5.2)
Education	PhD 3 (2.6)
	Master 8 (6.9)
	Bachelor 68(58.6)
	Diploma 20(17.2)
	High school 11(9.5)
	Less than high school 6(5.2)
The number of days spent on travelling in Xi'an	1 day 15(12.9)
	2-3 days 76(65.5)
	≥ 4 days 25 (21.6)

Content Validity

In this study, the experts (tourist management experts and consumer behavior experts from China's higher education institutions or universities) have been sent the final version of the questionnaire. Panel of experts of this study contains 3 lecturer and 4 professors (Table 3).

Table 3

Panel of Experts

NO	Code	Position of experts
1	E1	Professors(Tourism Management), Pingdingshan University,China
2	E2	Professors(Tourism Management), Zhengzhou University of Aeronautics,China
3	E3	Professors(Tourism Management), Pingdingshan University,China
4	E4	Professors(Consumer Behavior), Pingdingshan University,China
5	E5	Lecturer(Tourism Management), Pingdingshan University,China
6	E6	Lecturer(Consumer Behavior), Henan University of Urban Construction,China
7	E7	Lecturer(Consumer Behavior), Pingdingshan University,China

According to some scholars' recommendations, a scale can be considered excellent if it achieves an Item-Content Validity Index (I-CVI) of 0.78 or above (Polit et al., 2007). Through the evaluation of experts, the I-CVI of the scales were calculated. As shown in Table 4, it can be observed that the I-CVI fall within an acceptable range. Both of them indicate that the scale possesses good content validity.

Table 4

The CVI of Items

Items	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	Content Validity Index (CVI)
Aa1	4	4	3	4	2	3	4	0.86
Aa2	3	4	4	4	3	4	3	1
Aa3	3	4	4	4	4	4	3	1
Ab1	3	4	4	4	3	3	3	1
Ab2	3	4	3	3	4	3	4	1
Ab3	4	4	3	4	3	4	3	1
AA1	3	4	4	3	3	3	4	1
AA2	3	4	3	3	4	4	3	1
AA3	3	2	4	4	4	3	4	1
E1	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	1
E2	4	3	3	3	3	4	3	1
E3	4	4	3	4	3	3	4	1
LC1	4	2	3	4	4	3	3	0.86
LC2	3	4	4	3	4	3	4	1

Construct Validity

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy for the TDP construct was found to be 0.850, indicating that the TDP items were suitable for factor analysis in the next stage. The Bartlett's Test for the TDP construct yielded a significant result ($p < 0.05$), suggesting that the correlation between the items was sufficient for the subsequent factor analysis. The KMO and Bartlett's Test for TDP is shown in Table 5.

Table 5

KMO and Bartlett's Test for TDP

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.850
Bartlett's Test of Approx. Chi-Square	1153.757
Sphericity Df	91
Sig	.000

Researchers conducted principal component analysis with varimax rotation to investigate the factors in TDP. The Eigenvalues showed the four factors explained a total variance of 75.284%. As shown in Table 6, the four factors in sequential order individually accounts for 21.752 percent, 21.251 percent, 17.639 percent, 14.642 percent.

Table 6

Results of Total Variance Explained for TDP

COM	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Var	Cum%	Total	% of Var	Cum%	Total	% of Var	Cum%
1	6.966	49.756	49.756	6.966	49.756	49.756	3.045	21.752	21.752
2	1.316	9.402	59.158	1.316	9.402	59.158	2.975	21.251	43.003
3	1.162	8.303	67.461	1.162	8.303	67.461	2.469	17.639	60.642
4	1.095	7.822	75.284	1.095	7.822	75.284	2.050	14.642	75.284

Note: Com=Component, Var=Variance, Cum=Cumulative

According to the exploratory factor analysis, four factors were identified. They were named Factor 1, Factor 2, Factor 3, and Factor 4 respectively, as shown in Table 7. These items which include AA3, E1, E2, and E3, demonstrated loading of 0.664, 0.874, 0.819, and 0.738 on Factor 1. These items which include Ab1, Ab2, Ab3, AA1, and AA2, demonstrated loading of 0.581, 0.802, 0.791, 0.597, and 0.686 on Factor 2. These items which include Aa1, Aa2, and Aa3, demonstrated loading of 0.700, 0.889, and 0.733 on Factor 3. These items which include LC1, and LC2, demonstrated loading of 0.887 and 0.898 on Factor 4.

Table 7
Results of Rotated Component Matrix (TDP)

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Aa1			.700	
Aa2			.889	
Aa3			.733	
Ab1		.581		
Ab2		.802		
Ab3		.791		
AA1		.597		
AA2		.686		
AA3	.664			
E1	.874			
E2	.819			
E3	.738			
LC1				.887
LC2				.898

Extraction method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalization.

a. The rotation has converged after 6 iterations.

Compared to the original scale, the number of factors is one less. More specifically, Factor 1 includes four items: AA3, E1, E2, and E3. Factor 2 includes five items: Ab1, Ab2, Ab3, AA1, and AA2. Both Factor 1 and Factor 2 are different with the original scale while the Factor 3 and Factor 4 are same with the original ones.

The original scale was adopted from the research of Austrian scholars and was applied in studies related to the perception of Austrian tourism destinations. Considering the differences in geographical context between Chinese tourist destinations and the perceptions of domestic Chinese tourists, it is necessary to rename these two factors. Based on the items, Factor 1 primarily encompasses facilities and tourist attractions. Therefore, it can be renamed as "Amenities and Attractions". Similarly, Factor 2 primarily encompasses activities and entertainment, and it can be renamed as "Activities and Entertainment". Factor 3 includes three items Aa1, Aa2, and Aa3. It is the same with the dimension of "Access" in original scale. Factor 4 contains two items LC1, and LC2. It is the same with the dimension of "Local community" in original scale. In conclusion, the instrument of tourist destination perception have the same fourteen items, just be adapted as four dimensions, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8

Instrument for Tourist Destination Perception(TDP) (dimension adaption)

Measures and Items	Adapted/ Adopted	Authors
Access		
AS1. There are many alternative ways to get to this destination	Adopted	Reitsamer & Brunner-Sperdin.(2017)
AS2. There are many convenient ways to get to this destination		
AS3. There are many convenient transportation possibilities for getting around		
Amenities and Attractions		
AA1. There are interesting places to visit within this destination	Adapted	Reitsamer & Brunner-Sperdin.(2017)
AA2. The destination offers excellent local cuisine		
AA3. There are high-quality restaurants in this destination		
AA4. The destination offers man-made attractions originally built for other purpose		
AA5. The destination offers man-made, purpose-built attractions such as theme parks		
Activities and Entertainment		
AE1. The destination offers temporary, nonphysical attractions such as events or festivals	Adapted	Reitsamer & Brunner-Sperdin.(2017)
AE2. The destination offers plenty of fun and entertainment		
AE3. The destination offers sports and recreational opportunities		
AE4. The destination has places with excellent nightlife and evening entertainment		
Local community		
LC1. Local people made a good impression on me	Adopted	Reitsamer & Brunner-Sperdin.(2017)
LC2. Local people were friendly		

In conclusion, according to the exploratory factor analysis (EFA), the four factors - Access, Amenities and Attractions, Activities and Entertainment, and Local community, and all the 14 items were found to be acceptable totally. All of these indicated that the TDP scale after adaption in this study possesses good construct validity.

Reliability Analysis

Reliability is defined as an evaluation of the extent of consistency among multiple measurements of a variable (Hair, 2009). Three types of reliability that can be employed include test-retest reliability, split-half method, and Cronbach's alpha. In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha method was utilized. According to the results of reliability analysis in this study (Table 9), all the Cronbach' alpha value exceeded 0.8. Therefore, based on the high level of internal consistency observed in the data, it can be concluded that the survey instrument as a whole is reliable and satisfactory.

Table 9

Cronbach 's Alpha of each construct

Construct	Number of items	Cronbach' alpha
Tourist Destination Perception (TDP)	14	0.919
Access	3	0.842
Amenities and Attractions	5	0.849
Activities and Entertainment	4	0.880
Local community	2	0.932

Discussion

The present addressed an important aim to analyse the applicability of Tourist Destination Perception measuring instrument in China. This study employed various analytical methods, including content validity, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and reliability analysis. Content validity assessment involved expert validation, confirming the accuracy and relevance of questionnaire items, ensuring that the questionnaire content met the requirements of the research objectives. When assessing structural validity using the EFA method, the original 5 dimensions were reduced to 4 dimensions. While individual items remained unchanged, they were now classified under different dimensions, highlighting differences in the structure of tourist destination perception between China and Austria. The adaptability and validation of this measurement framework provide a meaningful foundation for research on the perception of Chinese tourism destinations.

Conclusion

This study rigorously examined the validity and reliability of tourist destination perception scale in China. The theoretical significance of the research lies in its contribution to enriching the understanding of tourist destination perception and related studies. Specifically, this study contributes to existing literature in two ways. First, this study confirms that tourists' perception of the environment is holistic, consistent with Kaplan and Kaplan's viewpoint (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989). Second, building upon a review of existing literature on the tourist destination perception, the study identified key factors deemed important by Chinese tourists in evaluating destinations and established an effective evaluation scale. From a practical perspective, tourist destinations can enhance the perception of tourists by improving factors related to the four major dimensions. This, in turn, can lead to greater tourist recognition of the destination, which is crucial in a competitive tourism market. However, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of this study. The research sample consisted of tourists visiting Xi'an, China, which, while representative for historical tourist destinations, might not cover

tourists visiting other types of destinations. Future studies should consider expanding the scope of tourists studied. Additionally, it is worth noting that further research is needed to explore the predictive validity of the perception scale for Chinese tourist destinations in relation to relevant variables in the tourism industry.

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