



A STUDY ON CHINESE MIDDLE-CLASS TOURISTS' PERCEPTION OF JAPAN: AN ANALYSIS BASED ON TRAVEL NOTES FROM THE INTERNET

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Abstract

China and Japan are neighbors separated only by a narrow strip of water. Due to historical and political factors, the Chinese have always held conflicted and reserved emotions regarding Japan. However, since 2010, there has been a sharp increase in the number of Chinese tourists visiting Japan. Since 2015, China has been the largest source of tourists to Japan. A pattern is observed when data regarding the geographic origins of tourists are examined: the tourists include mainly young middle-income groups aged 20–40 years.

An increasing number of Chinese tourists publish notes about their travel experiences on Internet platforms. In this study, content analysis is used to examine the tourism perception of Chinese middle-class tourists to Japan. Travel notes from www.ctrip.com and www.mafengwo.com were collected from January 2018 to February 2019. High-frequency words and statistical frequency were extracted from 794 samples using the RostCM6.0 software. Liszt scale analysis is used to evaluate the level of satisfaction of tourists for the following four aspects: natural landscape, humanistic characteristics, tourism service, and social environment.

Our findings are as follows: (1) Chinese middle-class tourists hold an overall positive impression of their travels in Japan. (2) They expressed high satisfaction with the tourist attractions and accommodations. (3) They were pleased with daily transportation, shopping, and other facilities. (4) They felt safe while traveling in Japan. Based on these results, this paper proposes some viable methods for the sustainable development of tourism and non-governmental exchanges between China and Japan.

Keywords: Chinese Middle-Class, Tourists, Perception, Japan, Internet, Travel Notes.

1. Introduction

In recent years, China's outbound travel market has intensified. Due to the influence of some historical and political factors, the Chinese people have always had complex feelings towards Japan. However, with the devaluation of the Japanese Yen, relaxation of the Japanese government's visa policy, expansion of the tax-free system, and other factors has caused the number of Chinese tourists visiting Japan to increase sharply since 2010. This trend has been observed in both countries and has become a popular subject of discussion. Since 2015, China has been the largest source of tourists to Japan. According to recent data from the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO), the number of Chinese tourists to Japan has reached 8.38 million, demonstrating an increase of 13.9 percent from 2017, which is the highest record yet. Meanwhile, Chinese tourists' tendency for extensive shopping in Japan resulted in the creation of a new Japanese word in 2015, "Bakugai (explosive buying)." Therefore, the significance of studying Chinese tourists to Japan cannot be ignored.

Chinese tourists to Japan primarily originate from Beijing, Shanghai, Guangdong, Jiangsu, and other affluent southeast coastal areas. In addition, Chinese tourists to Japan mainly comprise middle-income groups between the ages of 20 and 40 years. Therefore, most Chinese tourists to Japan can also be referred to as middle-class Chinese tourists. The Chinese middle class is not only a major user of free independent travel to Japan, but also of smartphones and the Internet. They like to record and share their travel experiences and express their perception of Japan through online travel notes.

On September 21, 2015, the China National Tourism Administration released the “Tourism + Internet Plan.” This plan aims to promote and guarantee a deep integration of Internet in tourism. Due to the influence of this plan, obtaining tourism information from the Internet has become a common habit of Chinese tourists, middle-class or not. Therefore, the online travel notes by Chinese tourists to Japan do not only record the travel activities and experiences of middle-class tourists, but also serves as a platform for other Chinese people to obtain information regarding Japanese tourism and the Japanese image. Therefore, it is of great significance to investigate Chinese middle-class tourists' perception of Japan by analyzing their online travel records.

2. Literature Review on Tourism Destination Image

Although research on the construction of image for tourism destinations began in the 1970s, there certainly has not been a uniform concept attached to such studies. This type of study can be divided into two groups: one based on tourists' perception, and the other on the destination.

From the perspective of tourists, Hunt (1971) proposed the concept of tourism destination image. He suggested that tourism destination image refers to the collective impression of the place from those who do not reside locally. According to Crompton (1979), the image of a tourism destination is a summary of its tourists' feelings, impressions, ideas, and beliefs regarding specific things and events related to the destination. Fakeye and Crompton (1991) considered that the image of a tourism destination is a deposited impression selected by the tourist after his travel based upon his prior general knowledge of the destination. According to Middleton (1994), the image of a tourism destination is based on the psychological feelings of tourists, and is an expression of the comprehensive view of a tourism destination formed in the hearts of tourists. Baloglu and McCleary (1999) believe that tourism destination image is related to the tourists' cognitive and emotional images of the tourism destination. On the other hand, from the destination angle, Walmely and Young (1998) believe that the image of the tourism destination is formed after deciding on the scenic elements to visit at the destination, such as the roads, areas, and more.

This study suggests that tourism destination image should be a summary of the image perceived by tourists and the image of the destination created through marketing aimed at potential tourists. However, this study only selected the perspectives of tourists and examined Chinese middle-class tourists' perception of Japan. The findings of this study will be helpful for guiding tourism development and planning, effectively designing tourism products, and opening up the tourist market.

3. Research Method

With the growth of the Internet, the vast amount of information available on the Internet has increasingly gained the attention of scholars. An increasing number of researchers use network information resources to study tourism image, among which, content analysis is an important method. For example, Chon (1991) examined frequently cited travel websites and found that the most popular theme was the impact of the destination images on tourism shopping behavior and satisfaction. Stepchenkova and Morrison (2006) studied the perceptions of Russian tourist

destinations obtained from the Internet by analyzing the content of travel agency websites in the United States and Russia.

After becoming familiar with how to use content analysis for tourism destination image, this study tries to ensure the validity of the research and avoid the one-sidedness of the sample extraction. The present study first used the python language to write the web crawler program for big data mining. Thereafter, the study involved collecting 5,486 travel notes related to free independent travel to Japan from Ctrip.com and mafengwo.com, which are the most representative travel website in China. A total of 794 travel notes from January 2018 to March 2019 were selected for the sample. Next, this study utilized the RostCM6.0 content mining software and Wordart high frequency word analysis software to perform the content analysis. Through the objective, systematic, and quantitative analyses of the travel notes, this study describes the basic characteristics of Chinese middle-class tourists to Japan in terms of their age, sex, city, travel time, travel duration, and consumption per capita. Meanwhile, this study also investigates the perceptions of Chinese middle-class tourists to Japan based on the following 6 aspects: cities, scenic spots, hotels, transportation, shopping, and food.

4. The Basic Characteristics of Chinese Middle-Class Tourists to Japan

Through analysis of the 794 travel notes, the present study found that women account for 77%, while men account for 23% of the number of tourists. Their ages are primarily within the range of 20 to 45 years. In terms of regional structure, these tourists mainly come from first-tier cities with better economic living conditions and convenient transportation; among these, the largest proportion of tourists are from Shanghai (32.8 %), followed by Beijing (22.7 %), Shenzhen (20.6 %), and Guangzhou (19.2 %). Their travel time is usually after the Chinese Spring Festival, summer vacation, and NewYear holiday. Their travel duration is generally more than seven days, and the average cost of their trip to Japan is RMB 9,599.627 (about USD 1,427.37).

4.1. The Age Distribution

Although there is not much mention of age in the travel notes, the age of middle-class tourists to Japan was approximately deduced for this study by checking the tag “the relationship of tourists” in their travel notes. We found that about 90% of those who used the tag “travelling with friends” were young people aged between 20 and 30 years. The travel notes with the tag “parent-child” were written by tourists between the ages of 30 and 45 years. In addition, the travel notes with the tag “couple-related” were written by 25- to 35-year-old tourists, and the travel notes with the tag “one person” were written by 20- to 30-year-old tourists. Finally, the travel notes with the tag “family” were written by tourists within the age range of 30 to 45 years. Therefore, the age distribution of Chinese middle-class tourists to Japan can be roughly inferred (Figure 1).

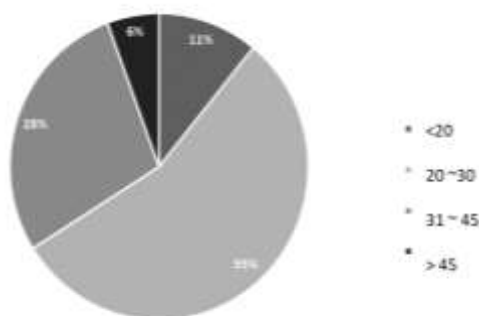


Figure 1: Age distribution of Chinese middle-class tourists to Japan

4.2. Tourist Source Structure

According to the analysis in this study, the main sources of tourists to Japan include first-tier cities with better economic and living conditions, and convenient transportation. Among these cities, Shanghai accounted for 32.5% of the tourists to Japan, followed by Beijing (22.7%), Shenzhen (20.6%), and Guangzhou (19.2%).

4.3. Travel Time

According to official data from the JNTO, Japan has higher concentrations of Chinese tourists during the New Year holiday, Chinese Spring Festival, summer and winter vacations, and China's National Day. Among these, the summer and winter vacations are the annual peak times for Chinese tourists to Japan.

However, by filtering the number of free independent travelers to Japan on Ctrip.com and mafengwo.com, this study found that the travel times of Chinese middle-class freestyle tourists and the JNTO demonstrated some differences (Figure 2).

For example, in 2018, the number of Chinese middle-class tourists to Japan peaked in March and July, whereas the Chinese Spring Festival in 2018 was held from February 15 to 21. Similarly, the number of Chinese middle-class tourists to Japan peaked in January and fell by the Spring Festival (February 4–10) in 2019. This study argues that this is because the middle class is free to choose their vacation times, and thus, can stagger the tourism peak times.

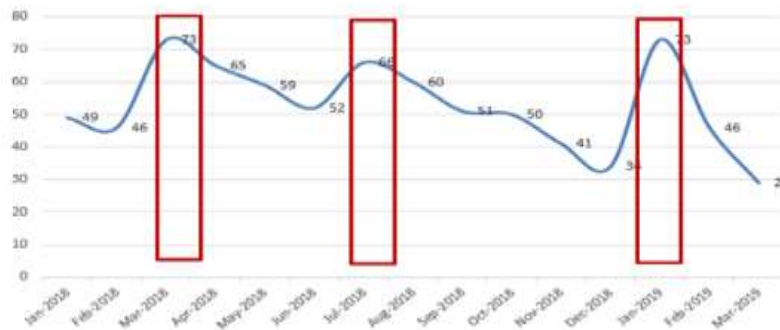


Figure 2: Travel time

4.4. Travel Duration

Chinese tourists are more willing to stay in Japan for a longer period than tourists from other countries. A total of 53% of Chinese tourists tend to stay in Japan for 4 to 6 days, while 46% stay for over 7 days.

However, the results of this study revealed that the travel duration for Chinese middle-class tourists to Japan varies, with 53%, 11.6%, and 35% tourists staying for 3, 4, and 6 days, respectively (Figure 3).

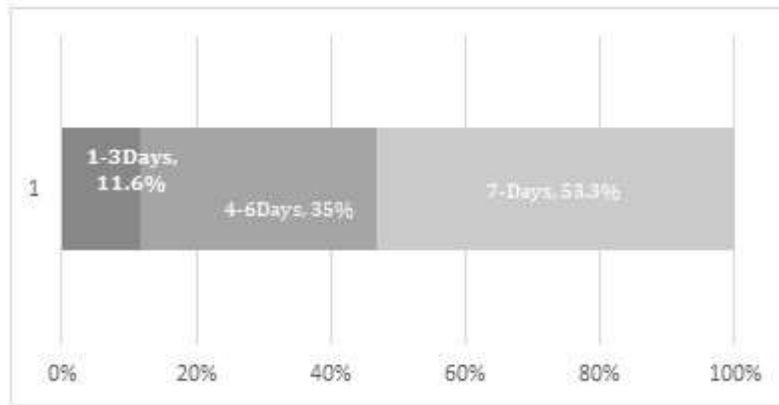


Figure 3: Travel duration

4.5. Per Capita Consumption

According to official data from the JNTO, of all countries' tourists to Japan, Chinese tourists have the highest spending power, with a per capita consumption of more than JPY 110,000 (about USD 983.73) in 2018. However, this analysis demonstrates that the average spending by middle-class tourists to Japan is RMB 9,599.627 (about USD 1,428.86), which is a higher value than that which was given by the JNTO.

5. The Perceived Types of Chinese Middle-Class Tourists to Japan

The results of this study show that Chinese middle-class tourists have a good impression of the tourist environment of Japan, as well as a high evaluation of tourism perception.

5.1. Perception of Japanese Cities

The top destinations for middle-class Chinese tourists who opted for free independent travel in Japan are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Hot area 1

No.	Religion	Frequency	No.	Religion	Frequency
1	Tokyo	30312	6	Mt. Fuji	5296
2	Osaka	26729	7	Nagoya	4800
3	Kyoto	26007	8	Naha	3208
4	Hokkaido	17382	9	Kobe	2705
5	Oginawa	9769	10	Fukuoka	2656

Based on the word frequency statistics, this study also found that Chinese middle-class tourists have tended to visit local cities in recent years, besides the famous Japanese cities listed in Table 2.

Table 2:Hot area 2

No.	Religion	Frequency	No.	Religion	Frequency
1	Kamakura	1388	8	Sendai	749
2	Nagasaki	1259	9	Yokohama	695
3	Nikko	1146	10	Tomiyama	573
4	Ryukyu	1121	11	Aomori	323
5	Takayama	1039	12	Ishikakishima	190
6	Kagoshima	1049	13	Niseko	6
7	Kanazawa	1010			

5.2. Perception of Popular Scenic Spots

The top destinations for middle-class Chinese tourists who opted for free independent travel in Japan are shown in Table 3.

Table 3:Popular scenic spots

Tokyo			Osaka		
No.	Spot	Frequency	No.	Spot	Frequency
1	Sensoji	10047	1	USJ	6414
2	Shinjuku	8663	2	Shinsaibashi	2609
3	Hakone	5168	3	Osaka	1407
4	Ginza	4137	4	Dotonbori	575
5	Disneyland	3456			
Kyoto Area			Hokkaido Area		
No.	Spott	Frequency	No.	Spot	Frequency
1	Kiyomizu	10943	1	Sapporo	8682
2	Fushimi	5732	2	Otaru	5198
3	Arashiyama	3926	3	Hakodate	4101
4	Kinkakuji	2890	4	Furano	1715
5	Toudaiji	709	5	Noboribetsu	1449

In addition, this study divided the scenic spots in Japan into natural, historical, and artificial social resources. The result indicated that the scenic spots in Tokyo, Osaka, and the Kyoto area mostly fall within the categories of historical and artificial social resources (Figure 4).

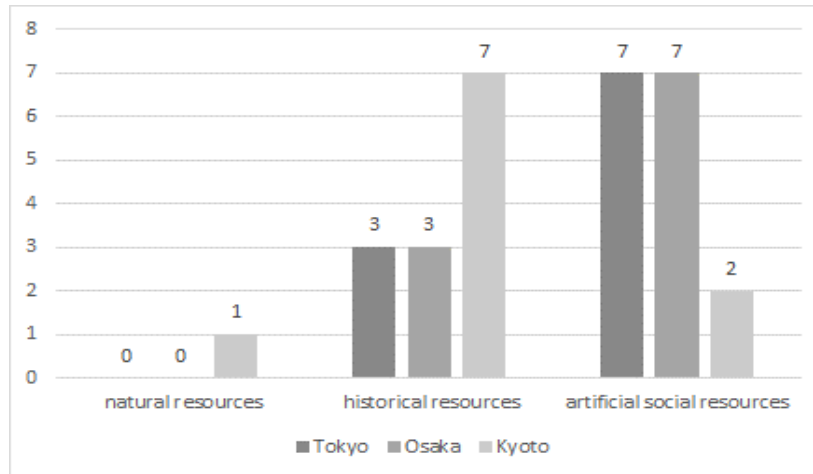


Figure 4: The types of scenic spots

5.3. Perception of Play Items

By analyzing the word frequency statistics, this study found that in addition to visiting scenic spots, middle-class Chinese tourists to Japan are more eager to experience the local culture (Table 4).

Table 4: Tourism activities other than visiting scenic spots

No.	Word	Frequency	No.	Word	Frequency
1	Hot springs	14815	6	Seeing traditional sacrificial	3159
2	Shopping	14389	7	Night scene	2527
3	Cherry-blossom	7369	8	Visiting Japanese gardens	1578
4	Appreciating	6821	9	Viewing autumnal leaf-fall	1695
5	Trying on kimono	3741	10	Ski	258

Hot springs, kimono wearing experience, sumo competitions, tatami experiences, visiting Japanese gardens, viewing cherry blossoms, and experiencing traditional ceremonies are popular activities among Chinese middle-class tourists. Shopping, of course, is also one of the top consumer activities. However, in addition to shopping, physical and mental relaxation, experiencing the local culture, and exploration of food and beauty have gradually become popular consumer activities. It appears that a higher number of Chinese middle-class freestyle tourists seek exposure to authentic Japanese cultural activities than group tourists.

6. The Perception and Evaluation of Chinese Middle-Class Tourists to Japan

Overall, Chinese middle-class tourists mostly have a positive perception of Japanese tourism. Based on the statistical analysis of the affective vocabulary, this study found that the top 15 adjectives that involved emotions were all positive words (Table 5).

Table 5: Emotional Words

No.	Words	Frequency	No.	Words	Frequency
1	clean	2303	9	exquisite	487
2	lovely	2231	10	petty	350
3	tasty	2070	11	fresh	328
4	beautiful	1782	12	happy	218
5	enjoyable	912	13	romantic	170
6	delicious	701	14	glorious	154
7	good-looking	596	15	bustling	149
8	quiet	566	16	comfortable	115

6.1. Cities and Attractions

Chinese middle-class tourists have a high evaluation of popular attractions in Japan. Three popular Japanese cities (Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto) were scored by free independent tourists on Ctrip, and this study analyzed these scores and determined the top 10 tourist attractions in each city. On the premise of a full score of 5, the average score was 4.5 for Tokyo, 4.59 for Osaka, and 4.54 for Kyoto. The overall average was 4.54. At the same time, 94% of Chinese middle-class tourists evaluated Japanese cities as either “good” or “very good” (Table 6).

Table 6: Cities and Attractions

Tokyo	Score	Number of comment	Travel method				Attractions evaluation					
			Couples travelin	Family travelin	Travelin g with	Busines s travel	Trave l	Very Goo l	Norma l	Averg e	Ba d	Ver y
Sensoji	4.5	3858	85	142	169	30	34	2234	1272	325	13	14
Tokyo	4.7	1324	21	25	55	6	8	1055	195	44	11	19
Ginza	4.6	3115	62	72	120	26	13	2015	880	199	13	8
Tokyo	4.6	2474	54	69	131	17	24	1646	660	143	12	13
Shinjuku	4.6	1734	44	30	76	16	10	1101	497	134	1	1
Akihabara	4.5	1113	35	15	66	12	17	632	390	88	1	2
One Piece	4.6	402	13	2	24	2	4	300	76	17	5	4
Odaiba	4.5	766	26	24	79	7	8	460	245	60	1	0
Sanrio	4.6	434	14	2	28	1	2	299	93	29	9	4
Imperial	4.3	851	29	27	80	12	9	425	309	111	5	1
General	4.55	16071	383	408	828	129	129	10167	4617	1150	71	66

Osaka	Score	Number of comment	Travel method				Attractions evaluation					
			Couples travelin	Family travelin	Travelin g with	Busines s travel	Trave l	Very Goo l	Norma l	Averg e	Ba d	Ver y
Universal	4.8	9054	49	94	100	5	14	7774	976	179	35	90
Shinsabash	4.6	3060	42	71	101	19	16	1939	898	210	5	8
Dotonbori	4.6	1446	34	35	57	10	9	911	438	86	5	6
Osaka	4.5	1733	35	54	73	15	15	1069	577	102	2	3
Osaka	4.6	1141	20	27	50	2	7	820	249	46	4	22
Osaka	4.5	1450	35	47	69	10	14	869	491	80	3	7
Umeda Sky	4.5	507	12	14	46	2	4	313	156	30	3	5
Harry	4.8	364	6	11	33	1	2	283	76	4	1	0
Tower	4.4	496	11	19	45	3	5	250	200	40	3	3
Tempozan	4.6	436	15	15	43	2	3	289	132	15	0	0
General	4.59	19707	259	387	617	69	89	14517	4193	792	61	144

Kyoto	Score	Number of comment	Travel method				Attractions evaluation					
			Couples travelin	Family travelin	Travelin g with	Busines s travel	Trave l	Very Goo l	Norma l	Averg e	Ba d	Ver y
Kiyomizu	4.6	2497	55	73	116	16	16	1602	735	156	3	1
Arashiyama	4.6	1064	25	23	52	7	7	686	313	63	0	2
Kyoto	4.5	357	7	6	39	3	5	207	123	27	0	0
Fushimi	4.6	1542	34	42	80	7	9	1014	433	92	3	0
Toei Kyoto	4.5	53						31	19	3	0	0
Kinkaku-ji	4.6	2043	43	79	120	11	20	1303	606	126	7	1
Gion	4.6	399	14	11	36	3	4	252	124	21	2	0
Nijo-jo	4.5	978	23	42	59	6	9	569	330	79	0	0
Yasaka	4.4	634	14	12	48	4	6	348	221	65	0	0
General	4.5	9567	215	288	550	57	76	6012	2904	632	15	4

Among the 45,345 evaluations by Chinese middle-class tourists of attractions in three cities (Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto), the number of “very good” evaluations was 30,696 and of “good” evaluations was 11,714, whereas the number for “normal” evaluations was only 2,574. Moreover, the number of “bad” evaluations was 147, and that of “very bad” was 214 (Figure 5).

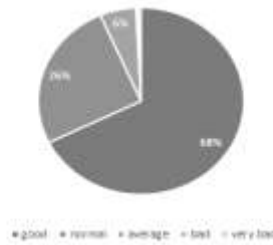


Figure 5: Tourists’ overall evaluation of the three attractions

6.2. Scenic Spot Facilities

The evaluations by Chinese middle-class tourists of the facilities at Japanese scenic spots are depicted in a word cloud map (Figure 6).



Figure 6: The evaluation of scenic spot facilities

It can be seen that the assessment of middle-class tourists is generally positive. Tourists are generally satisfied with the sanitary conditions at Japanese scenic spots. The tourists positively evaluated the management, guidance, and tour routes of the scenic spots, along with Japan’s efforts toward protection of the scenic spots. However, they were dissatisfied by the queues at attractions, considering they are always too long and there are too many Chinese tourists in the queues.

6.3. Hotel Facilities

According to the 2018 big data report on freestyle outbound tourism by Mafengwo.com, in the evaluation of the satisfaction of Chinese free independent tourists with destination accommodation (Figure 7), Morocco was ranked at the top, while Japan was ranked tenth.

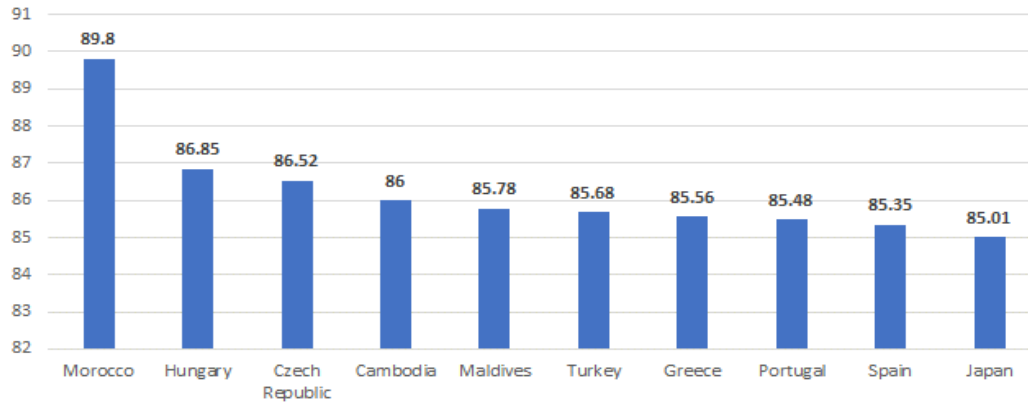


Figure 7: Freestyle travelers' satisfaction with destination accommodation

This study compared Morocco with Japan on the basis of a big data survey by Mafengwo.com. The top 10 popular attractions in these two countries were selected, and the hotels nearby, the number of hotels in that area, and the scores (given by tourists) to these hotels were compared and analyzed. The study found that Marrakech accounted for a score of more than 4.5 points. This study further collected all 147 comments on the hotels for analysis, among them being the hotels that more than scored 4.0 in Marrakech area, reviewed by 20 people or more. As a result, this study found that the high-frequency words are “characteristics,” “beautiful,” and so on. (Table 7).

Table 7: The evaluation of hotel facilities in Marrakech

Hotel	Score	Number of Comments	Word	Frequency
Four Seasons Resort	4.8	25	very unique	53
Es Saadi Marrakech Resort	4.6	24	beautiful	32
Riad Palais Sebban	4.5	26	Grandeur	26
Hotel & Ryad Art Place	4.6	28	Atmosphere	25
Royal Mirage Deluxe	4.1	20	good location	16
Red Hotel Marrakech	4.1	24	good breakfast	16
			Resort	11
			lobby garden	8
			Enthusiasm	7
			bad service	6
			Cactus	4
			like a palace	3

The results indicated that tourists who visited Morocco agreed that the unique designs and decorations of the hotel had local characteristics.

On the other hand, this study also selected Sapporo for analysis, which is the Japanese city with the highest rating of 4.5. There are 91 hotels in Sapporo listed on Ctrip.com that scored more than 4.5 points and had more than 20 comments. According to the ranking for popularity, this study selected 11,077 comments from the reviews of the top 10 popular hotels and conducted word frequency analysis (Table 8).

Table 8: The evaluation of hotel facilities in Sapporo

Hotel	Score	Number of	Word	Frequency
Sapporo Grand Hotel	4.6	1557	good location	2264
Sapporo Park Hotel	4.7	1084	good breakfast	1249
Nest Hotel Sapporo Ekimae	4.6	1116	good service	1117
Premier Hotel Nakajima Park	4.7	515	convenient transportation	789
Nest Hotel Sapporo Odori	4.7	588	convenient shopping	257
Tmark City Hotel Sapporo	4.6	100	good scenery	240
Keio Plaza Hotel Sapporo	4.7	1988	cost-effective	210
Hotel Monterey Sapporo	4.7	1131	General	111
Hotel Gracery Sapporo	4.7	2021	good environment	94
Century Royal Hotel Sapporo	4.7	977	park scenery	46
			fully equipped	33
			general room facilities	31
			just a few minutes to	29

Further, this study compared 233 hotels in Kyoto that had been scored 4.5 or higher and received more than 20 comments. On the basis of popularity and reviews, the top 10 hotels were selected, and 13,437 comments were used for word frequency analysis (Table 9).

Table 9: The evaluation of hotel facilities in Kyoto

Hotel	Score	Number of Comments	Word	Frequency
Hotel the Celestine Kyoto Gion	4.9	1044	good location	2402
Hotel New Hankyu Kyoto	4.7	3095	convenient transportation	1170
Miyako Hotel Kyoto Hachijo	4.7	2757	good service	1054
Hotel Keihan Kyoto Grande	4.7	2385	good breakfast	640
Mitsui Garden Hotel Kyoto Shinmachi Bettei	4.8	1036	fully equipped	340
Mitsui Garden Hotel Kyoto Shijo	4.7	1484	convenient shopping	310
Kyoto Arashiyama Onsen Kadensho	4.7	410	cost-effective	207
Hotel Keihan Kyoto	4.6	63	good environment	184
Hotel Monterey Kyoto	4.7	557	nice room	87
Green Rich Hotel Kyoto Station South	4.7	606	very close to the attraction	86
			comfortable spa	64
			near the market	62

It was found that words such as “characteristic” did not feature in the evaluation of Japanese hotels in Kyoto. It seems that the Chinese middle-class tourists expect the hotel to be more cultural and unique. In other words, on the basis of comfort, Chinese middle-class tourists have a high demand for culture, exploration, and individuation. Moroccan hotels have distinctive geographical and cultural characteristics, which are far beyond the expectations of middle-class tourists; thus, tourists are deeply impressed by Moroccan hotels that meet their cultural and exploration needs. Therefore, even if Japanese hotels are in a good position to serve tourists well, middle-class tourists prefer Moroccan hotels with cultural characteristics.

6.4. Transport Facilities

According to the word frequency statistics of traffic facilities determined for this study, the most common means of transportation for Chinese middle-class tourists to Japan are the subway, tram, and Shinkansen/bullet train (Table 10). Japan Rail Pass is most commonly mentioned, and tourists learn how to use it through word of mouth. This is also in line with the characteristics of free independent tourists.

Table 10: Transport Facilities

Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency
airport	20013	Transportation ticket	1586
bus	12455	Transfer	2311
aircraft	5376	Cruise	1791
traffic	8909	subway station	1549
subway	8762	line	647
walk	6042	General ticket	634
rail	3887	taxi	253
train	3882	JR station	188
Shinkansen	2848		

After investigating the perceptions of Chinese middle-class tourists to Japan regarding the transport facilities, this study found that they considered Japan's traffic to be convenient, safe, and well-connected; on the other hand, they felt that the routes were complicated, confusing, and easy to get lost in (Table 11).

Table 11: Emotional Vocabulary

Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency
safety	2309	confusing	1089
extend in all directions	1834	get lost	654
complicated	1775		

6.5. Shopping

According to official data from the JNTO, in 2018, the consumption of Chinese tourists to Japan accounted for 34.1% of the total consumption of tourists to Japan. This study determined the word frequency statistics of shopping venues, the evaluation of words related to consumption, and consumer content, from the online travel notes. The results are shown in Table 12.

Table 12: Consumption analysis

Consumption words		shopping location		Consumer content	
Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency
cheap	5753	shopping mall	5682	Cosmeceutical	519
buy	652	outlet shop	1229	Chocolate	398
shopping	455	Akihabara	848	Snack	346
tax refund	411	convenience store	736	Cosmetic	204
duty free	129	duty free shop	695	MUJI products	56
easy to use	105	pharmacy	554	electric equipment	33
				music box	36
				Kobayashi Pharmaceutical	32
				essential oil	24

The results of this study found that Chinese middle-class tourists prefer to purchase daily necessities. However, products such as rice cookers and thermos, which have been reported about by the Japanese media, are not listed in these word frequency statistics.

6.6. Food

According to data released by JNTO, food is the third largest form of consumption for Chinese tourists, next to shopping and accommodation. Additionally, according to the statistics of travel notes, this study shows that Japanese food is favored by Chinese middle-class tourists to Japan. Japanese food items popular among Chinese middle-class tourists to Japan are shown in Table 13.

Table 13: Food

No.	Word	Frequency	No.	Word	Frequency
1	Hand-Pulled Noodle	7227	6	Maccha	1347
2	Sushi	3471	7	beef	1222
3	Japanese cuisine	3238	8	eel	1121
4	Food package	2117	9	Uji	686
5	seafood	2101	10	Sashimi	576

Conclusion

As the number of Chinese tourists who visit Japan continues to rise, Chinese tourists will continue to deepen their understanding of Japan, and increasingly publish travel notes about Japan on the Internet. These travel notes do not only represent the tourism-related perceptions of Chinese tourists who have traveled to Japan, but also play an important role in the construction of Japan's image in China.

From the previous analysis, the overall evaluation of the Japanese tourism experience by Chinese middle-class tourists is positive, and their satisfaction levels are considerably high. Furthermore, Chinese tourists' enthusiasm and participation are high as well. In addition to visiting traditional attractions, Chinese middle-class tourists also indulge in experiencing local Japanese traditional activities and eating representative cuisine, among other activities. These tourists are not sensitive to price factors and are more willing to pay for special foods and activities. Unlike the tourist-style trips of group tourists, Chinese middle-class tourists tend to be more relaxed in their itineraries. They have a higher number of expectations from attractions, hotels, and transportation facilities. In addition to the requirements for hardware facilities and service quality, Chinese tourists also value facilities with rich local character. In terms of shopping, Chinese tourists tend to spend more on daily necessities, which reflects their pursuit of quality in the smaller aspects of their travels.

The perception of Chinese middle-class tourists to Japan indicate that there are several aspects of Japanese tourism that need improvement. To meet the requirements of Chinese middle-class tourists, this study believes that the tourism industry, including Japanese tourism, need to adopt the following three strategies: First, it should rationally explore and effectively allocate tourism resources, while fully considering their development. Despite the fact that there are established tourist routes, such routes have become unable to meet the demands of Chinese middle-class tourists. Suppliers for the tourism industry should develop innovative products to vitalize Japanese resources. Second, the Japanese tourism industry must further improve the relevant facilities and equipment at tourist attractions and accommodations, especially by having more hotels with local characteristics. Third, with the increase in the number of Chinese tourists to Japan, it is recommended that the relevant tourism departments develop the capacity to anticipate the number of tourists during peak months and manage the scenario with awareness and sensitivity of their service capacity to avoid potential conflicts and dissatisfaction.

Finally, with the rapid growth in the number of Chinese middle-class tourists, the Chinese middle class is also constantly undergoing change. This calls for tourism companies to continuously optimize their products and improve the image of tourist attractions based on understanding of the users' needs. With this study, we hope to further the focus on Chinese middle-class tourists in future studies, while providing the relevant departments with understanding of the needs of these tourists and optimizing tourism products.

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