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**“If You Build It, They Will Come”:  
Relationship between Attraction Features and Intention to Visit**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The purpose of this study is to find out what themes and features of a tourist attraction are considered important by tourists, and whether or not these features influence their likelihood of visiting different types of attractions. First, for potential travelers to a rural destination, their likelihood of visiting different types of built tourist attractions was measured. Second, five attraction features (i.e., Experience, Cultural Value, Site Accessibility, Marketing, Leadership) were used to identify potential travelers' preference. Finally, this study explored whether*

*attraction features influenced potential travelers' likelihood to visit different types of built attractions. The findings of this study can provide direction for the planning of cultural and heritage tourism.*

**Keywords:** *cultural and heritage tourism, visiting attraction, attraction features, travelers' preference*

## INTRODUCTION

Not all places are blessed with the natural scenery and resources to become successful tourist destinations. As more and more nations, cities, and small communities recognize the economic potential of tourism, some places find it necessary to design and build their own tourist attractions. However, due to globalization and the homogenization of destinations, the phrase "if you build it, they will come" no longer stands true for all tourism superstructure. For places trying to develop tourism, one key question is: what attracts tourists and what doesn't? The purpose of this study is to find out what themes and features of a tourist attraction are considered important by tourists, and whether or not these features influence their likelihood of visiting different types of attractions. Specifically, research questions are:

1. For potential travelers to a rural destination, what is their likelihood of visiting different types of built tourist attractions?
2. What are the underlying dimensions of attraction features preferred by potential travelers?
3. Can these dimensions be used to predict what type of built attraction people are likely to visit?
4. Does the influence of these dimensions differ according to the type of attraction?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Developing attractions and preserving unique cultural and natural assets have been an issue (du Cros, 2001; McKercher, Ho, & de Cros, 2004). Ideally, travel destination should attract tourists and generate revenue for ongoing maintenance of cultural and heritage resources of community. The popularity of travel destination also reflects the value of culture and tradition. On the other hand, poor management planning and low number of visitors may affect to discontinue the community's subsidies from organization or government and make local residents less confident for their traditional and cultural value (McKercher et al., 2004). McKercher and Ho (2006) pointed out the large purposive cultural theme parks which have high accessibility and provide a variety of other experiences such as recreational activities are successful to accommodate a large number of tourists. However, high valued cultural heritage destinations which are isolated and do not provide other entertaining activities are less likely to be selected by tourists. Therefore, effective management of cultural heritage tourism planning requires both conservation and commodification.

McKercher et al. (2004) examined the attributes of popular cultural attractions in Hong Kong, such as museums, monuments, and temples. They discovered that large, purposely-built

attractions and facilities within tourist zones were more likely to be popular with tourists. In addition, they identified five attribute categories of popular attractions: Product, Experiential, Marketing, Cultural, and Leadership. Understanding of what visitors needs and what they expect to do in cultural attractions for valuable tourism experience helps to provide direction for better management planning of cultural and heritage tourism.

## METHODOLOGY

A total of 36 items ranging from 1) not at all important to 4) very important were generated from McKercher et al.'s (2004, 2006) qualitative findings. The scale was included in a survey as part of a study on potential visitors to the Rocky Knob area of southwest Virginia, USA. The study participants (N=812) were individuals who had requested tourism information for the Blue Ridge region from the Virginia Tourism Corporation in 2008.

Visitors' intention of visiting seven types of built tourist attractions were measured using a four-point Likert Scale, 1) definitely would not visit to 4) definitely would visit. The seven types of built tourist attractions were an environmentally sustainable visitor center, a regional touring center, an agritourism heritage center, a regional artist's collaborative center, a center for recreation and conservation programs, a center for the region's animal and plant biodiversity, and a center for reintroduced Woodland Bison. Tourist attraction features were measured using a four-point Likert Scale, 1) not at all important to 4) very important which asked how important each of 36 items would be when visiting a tourist attraction (McKercher et al., 2004).

The data was analyzed using SPSS 19.0 and EQS 6.1. First, descriptive analysis was conducted to explore the level of travelers' intention to visit different types of built tourist attractions. Second, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was computed with tourist attraction features to identify dimensions of the tourist attraction features. Finally, Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression analysis was conducted to explore the relationship between tourist attraction features and preferred scenarios of built attractions by visitors.

## RESULTS

The 812 participants had a mean age of 60 ranging from 18 to 94 years old. Over half of them were female (52%), and most had college level of education (71%). The level of income among them varied from less than \$24,999 to \$99,000.

The respondents showed the highest intention to visit **(1)** an agritourism heritage center (M=3.23), followed by **(2)** a regional touring center (M=3.19), **(3)** a center for reintroduced Woodland Bison (M=3.11), **(4)** a regional artist's collaborative center (M=2.92), **(5)** a center for recreation and conservation programs (M=2.86), **(6)** a center for the region's animal and plant

biodiversity (M= 2.85), and (7) an environmentally sustainable visitor center (M=2.66) (See Table 1).

**Table 1.**  
**Likelihood of Visiting This Type of Tourist Attraction**

<b>Different Scenarios for Built Attractions</b>	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Mean	SD
	Definitely would not visit	Probably would not visit	Probably would visit	Definitely would visit		
1) Agritourism Heritage Center	4.4	10.7	42.9	42.1	3.23	0.81
2) Regional Touring Center	3.1	12.7	46	38.2	3.19	0.77
3) Center for Reintroduced Woodland Bison	6.8	14.6	39.3	39.3	3.11	0.89
4) Regional Artist's Collaborative Center	7.9	22.2	39.7	30.1	2.92	0.91
5) Center for Recreation and Conservation Programs	8.2	22.9	43.4	25.5	2.86	0.89
6) Center for the Region's Animal & Plant Biodiversity	8.4	24.8	40.3	26.4	2.85	0.91
7) Environmentally Sustainable Visitor Center	11.5	29.6	40.1	18.9	2.66	0.91

The findings of CFA revealed that a final five-factor model emerged with the remaining 20 items of attraction features out of 36 items developed based on McKercher et al.'s (2004, 2006) qualitative findings . The first dimension was labeled Experience (e.g., the attraction provides a unique experience), the second dimension, Cultural Value (e.g., the attraction fits in with the local culture), the third dimension, Site Accessibility (e.g., the facility has a good traffic flow and parking), the fourth dimension, Marketing (e.g., the attraction provides something new for repeat visitors) and finally, the fifth dimension, Leadership (e.g., the facility staff offer good service). Chi-square was 611.63 with 160 degrees of freedom. The probability value for the chi-square was significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). However, other model fit summary suggested good model fit (CFI = 0.93, NNFI = 0.91, NFI = 0.90, RMSEA = 0.06, SRMR = 0.049). All items have 0.668

and above of factor loading. R-square ranged from 0.446 to 0.717. Cronbach alpha and composite reliability ranged from 0.73 to 0.88 which exceed recommended standards (See Table 2).

**Table 2.**  
**Five Tourist Attraction Feature Dimensions**

Five attraction feature Dimensions	M (SD)	Factor loading	Cronbach $\alpha$	Composite Reliability
<b>Site Accessibility</b>			0.77	0.78
The facility has a sufficient parking	3.43 (0.70)	0.78		
It is easy to find my way around the location	3.35 (0.71)	0.8		
The facility has a good traffic flow and parking	3.18 (0.81)	0.86		
<b>Leadership</b>			0.85	0.86
The facility staff are courteous	3.63 (0.62)	0.79		
The facility staff offer good service	3.47 (0.69)	0.9		
The facility staff are very knowledgeable	3.47 (0.67)	0.88		
The facility staff can answer my travel questions	3.33 (0.77)	0.8		
<b>Cultural Value</b>			0.87	0.88
The attraction does not detract from the natural scenery	3.40 (0.77)	0.79		
The attraction is authentic to the region	3.26 (0.81)	0.84		
The attraction fits in with the local culture	3.11 (0.85)	0.86		
The attraction does not alter the cultural values of the community	3.11 (0.91)	0.81		
The facility has architectural features that match with local traditional building	2.77 (0.96)	0.78		
The facility has a color scheme that fits the surrounding structures/area	2.61 (0.99)	0.79		
<b>Experience</b>			0.8	0.82
The attraction provides a unique experience	3.23 (0.77)	0.9		
The experience is pleasantly surprising	3.22 (0.75)	0.85		
The experience is educational	2.94 (0.87)	0.81		
The experience is participatory	2.60 (0.94)	0.78		
<b>Marketing</b>			0.73	0.74
The attraction provides something new for repeat visitors	2.96 (0.87)	0.86		

The attraction provides different experience for different members of my travel party	2.78 (0.93)	0.81
The attraction is designed for visitors	3.20 (0.79)	0.79

**Table 3.**

**OLS Regression Results of Different Scenarios for Intentions to Visit Built Attractions**

*Seven types of built tourist attractions	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	Standardized coefficients (betas)						
F-value	21.49***	30.55***	30.55***	30.55***	25.52***	23.80***	31.45***
R <sup>2</sup>	0.139	0.187	0.187	0.187	0.162	0.152	0.192
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.133	0.181	0.181	0.181	0.186	0.146	0.186
Constant	1.612	1.745	1.947	1.278	1.211	1.588	0.908
(SE)	(0.183)	(0.207)	(0.211)	(0.207)	(0.207)	(0.211)	(0.207)
Experience	0.145*	0.181***	0.235**	0.321***	0.388***	0.418***	0.295***
Cultural Value	0.231***	0.300***	0.060	0.319***	0.240***	0.170*	0.225***
Site Accessibility	-0.072	-0.172***	-0.055	-0.284***	-0.111	-0.220**	-0.210**
Marketing	-0.023	-0.023	0.213**	0.063	0.041	0.111	0.241***
Leadership	0.235**	0.235**	-0.045	0.136	0.051	-0.029	0.029

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

**\*Seven Types of Built Tourist Attractions**

(1) Agritourism Heritage Center, (2) Regional Touring Center, (3) Center for Reintroduced Woodland Bison, (4) Regional Artist’s Collaborative Center, (5) Center for Recreation and Conservation Programs, (6) Center for the Region’s Animal & Plant Biodiversity, (7) Environmentally Sustainable Visitor Center

**DISCUSSION**

Four out of five dimensions matched the study on attributes of popular cultural and heritage destinations in Hong Kong by McKercher et al. (2004). However, ‘Product’ was changed to ‘Site Accessibility’ because unlike ‘Product’ which included six components such as site close to urban areas, access, scale, iconic architectural buildings, or purpose-built attractions, ‘Site Accessibility’ in this study only reflected the easy access to attractions and a sufficient parking space at the rural nature of the destination. The findings of this study also demonstrated that the small local tourism can benefit by focusing on developing identified dimensions such as cultural values and a unique and educational experience rather than constructing over-sized parking lots or purposive building which alters the cultural values of the region.

The five dimensions of attraction features appeared to be a useful tool to predict what type of built attractions travelers would visit. The influence of the factors differed according to travelers' preference for types of built attractions. For example, respondents who showed intention to visit to a regional touring center put importance to learn natural and cultural resources and seek unique and interesting experiences, but they appeared not to care about sufficient parking lot or the easiness of accessibility. Unlike these respondents, respondents who preferred to visit a center for reintroduced Woodland Bison into their ancestral homeland were not interested in cultural value, but in a unique and various experience for repeated visitors and different travel parties.

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