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## The difference of Japanese Spa Tourists Motivation in Weekends and Weekdays

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to reveal the differences in the motivations of Japanese spa tourists on weekends as opposed to weekdays using a factor-cluster market segmentation approach. “Spas (ONSEN)” are some of the most popular tourist destinations in Japan, and tourists visit specific spa destinations to enjoy their unique qualities. In this study, we collected push motivation data from a questionnaire and separated respondents into weekend and weekday samples. The weekend and weekday motivation factors were derived from 54 motivation items through factor analysis. As a result of cluster analysis, weekend tourists were divided into three clusters and weekday tourists were segmented into four clusters. Through a comparison of the results for weekends and weekdays, we find the following. First, weekday tourists have clearer motivations than do weekend tourists. Second, both weekend and weekday tourists seek “soothing” when they travel to spas. Our results have marketing implications for spa operators: they will likely benefit from targeting their promotional strategies to the specific weekend and weekday tourist markets.

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**Keywords:** Tourist motivation; Segmentation; Spa destination in Japan; Weekends and weekdays

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### 1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to reveal the differences in the motivations of Japanese spa tourists on weekends as opposed to weekdays using a factor-cluster market segmentation approach. “Spas (ONSEN)” are some of the most

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popular tourist destinations in Japan. There are approximately 3,000 Japanese spa destinations that offer various benefits, such as effective health and beauty remedies, relaxation, and a serene atmosphere. Tourists visit specific spa destinations to enjoy their unique attributes. However, many spa operators do not have a full understanding of where spa tourists come from, who these tourists are,” “why they choose spa destinations from among the numerous tourist destinations,” and “what specific qualities they seek in spas.” Misui & Kamata, 2013 attempted to investigate where spa tourists come from using the Huff model. Their study provided some useful information on the origin of tourists and the market size of spa destinations.

In this study, we seek to understand why tourists choose spa destinations from among numerous tourism destinations and what particular attributes and benefits they seek in spas. These results signify the spa tourists’ motivations. We attempt to differentiate these spa tourists’ motivations on weekends versus weekdays. For this purpose, market segmentation using a tourist motivation approach appears to be the most useful method. When the most common characteristics of the segment are revealed, spa destination brands and related companies can fine-tune their marketing strategies to cater more comprehensively to tourist requirements. Several small-scale studies have segmented Japanese tourists by motivation. Segmenting spa tourists by their motivations can improve practical business strategies in spa tourism.

## 2. Literature review

Many studies have focused on the segmentation of tourists. A review of these studies reveals that they generally take similar perspectives. First, they regard the market as either a priori or a posteriori. As Dolnicar, 2004 mentions, almost all such studies targeting a particular market are a priori studies. The representative study of a posteriori segmentation is Bieger and Laesser, 2002. They segmented tourists in Switzerland according to their motivations. The target of their research was the entire population of Switzerland, thus requiring a posteriori segmentation. Second, these studies characterize motivational factors as either “push” or “pull.” Push factors are the tourists’ own internal forces and pull factors are the external forces exerted by destination attributes. Pull factors are generally tied in with the attractiveness of tourism destinations. In market segmentation by motivation, it is more suitable to use the push motivation factor as a variable. One of the most popular methods of identifying segments is cluster analysis (Shoemaker, 1994, Dolnicar, 2004, Bieger & Laesser, 2002, Jang et. al, 2002, Calantone & Johar, 1984, etc.). Cluster analysis enables the formation of some homogeneous groups (segments) using data that describes pull or push motivation.

Calantone & Johar, 1984 pointed out the importance of “situational benefit segmentation” for the travel market. Through a segmentation analysis of the motivation of tourists who visited Massachusetts, they showed that different factors influenced choice in different seasons. They also implied that travel companies’ marketing programs must recognize the influence of seasonal variations in market needs and incorporate this into their annual plans.

Kamata & Misui, 2013 analyzed the differences in Japanese tourists’ motivations for vacationing in the peak tourist season as well as around the peak. The results showed that a specific segment emerged as the favorite in the peak season. Building on that previous work, we attempt in this study to reveal the characteristics of spa tourists as laid out in Table 1. Our study seeks to explore and further clarify these findings.

Table 1. Future assignments of former study and revise in this study.

	Kamata & Misui, 2013	This study
Tourist motivation	7 push motivation (Bieger & Laesser, 2002)	54 motivations for spa tourists
Travel type	All tourists during April and May in 2012	spa tourists
The purpose of study	The differences in Japanese tourist motivation for vacationing at the ‘peak’ and ‘around the peak.’	To derive segments by spa tourists motivations on weekends and weekdays

## 3. Analysis

### 3.1. Hypothesis

Our hypotheses are based on the following assumptions. First, tourists’ motivations will vary on weekends as opposed to weekdays, and the markets must be differentiated accordingly. Furthermore, prices (transportation,

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