

# Hiking in China: A fuzzy model of satisfaction

Ping Li <sup>a,\*</sup>, Zhou Bin <sup>b</sup>, Chris Ryan <sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Yuexiu School of Hospitality Management, Zhejiang Yuexiu University of Foreign Languages, Zhejiang, China

<sup>b</sup> School of Tourism, Ningbo University, Zhejiang, China

<sup>c</sup> China-New Zealand Tourism Research Unit, The University of Waikato Management School, Waikato, New Zealand

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 14 January 2017

Received in revised form 7 March 2017

Accepted 9 March 2017

Available online xxxx

### Keywords:

Hiking

China

Tourism

Recreation

Fuzzy modeling

## ABSTRACT

As China's domestic tourism develops, so too many recreational activities are emerging as tourism products. One of these is hiking and a substantial investment in trail development by the Chinese State commenced in 2014. Based on the Beard and Ragheb Leisure Satisfaction Scale and combined with measures of the characteristics of hiking, this paper constructs an evaluation index of hiking leisure satisfaction with data derived from 579 respondents undertaking hiking on trails developed in Ningbo, China. The study also uses fuzzy modeling to identify the importance of attributes of hiking that may determine satisfaction to better assess ways by which the hiker experience could be enhanced. The results show that: (1) the provision of hiking opportunities is much appreciated by respondents; and (2) it is suggested that a programme of hiking and leisure education, skill enhancement and improving the planning and design of walking trails would further increase hiker satisfaction.

© 2017 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

Research into leisure explores the meaning and value of leisure for human life, its relevance to social progress, and seeks to identify the general rules of leisure behavior to improve opportunities for even yet more beneficial leisure experiences that can positively enhance people's quality of life (Ma & Liu, 2001; Li & Lu, 2004). In the West, the history of leisure research can be traced back to the ancient Greek period of Aristotle. Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, published in 1899, is generally held to mark the birth of modern leisure science (Li & Lu, 2004), and since then leisure studies have drawn on philosophy, cultural studies, economics, sociology and the behavioral sciences to better understand the role of leisure in society. In doing so it has also borrowed significantly from statistical and other modes of analysis that characterize analytical thinking in the western social sciences, and adopted concepts from adjacent disciplines including gender studies (Song, 2014). Satisfaction studies have also contributed analytical techniques and it can be said that leisure satisfaction is the positive perception formed by individuals engaged in recreational activities designed to meet needs of relaxation, competition or wellness. Indices of satisfaction are used to measure the quality of leisure activities and their ability to meet needs. As a result leisure satisfaction research emerged in the 1980s to become a significant concern of western social scientists, and subsequently has attracted much attention from scholars of other cultures (Beard & Ragheb, 1980; Riddick, 1986; Raj, Manigandan, & Jacob,

2006; Huang & Carleton, 2003; Shin & You, 2013; Fenech, 2012, and Evren, 2014).

With the steady development of China's social economy, leisure has become a key part of people's daily activities, and leisure-related supply, consumption, and demand has become an increasingly important topic in Chinese social and economic policies. In February 2013, the State Council issued the "National Tourism and Leisure Program (2013–2020)", thereby formally recognizing leisure as a key activity for the first time since the Communist take-over in 1949. This initiative has meant that leisure studies is a relatively new field of study for Chinese scholars, and the Chinese Academy initially drew on western work as evidenced by the publication of the "Western Leisure Studies Translation Series" by the Yunnan People's Publishing House, a series that commenced in 2000 (Yu & Ma, 2008). As in wider tourism studies however, a challenge for Chinese scholars has been the need to adopt the western leisure theories, research methods and research results to specific recreational activities within a very different and quickly evolving Chinese context, and to further apply these understandings to the adaptation of recreational activities within Chinese tourism that, for much of the last thirty years, has been primarily premised on sightseeing rather than other activities.

This paper reports results derived from data collected from 579 respondents surveyed in Ningbo City in Zhejiang Province with a questionnaire incorporating the Leisure Satisfaction Scale devised by Beard and Ragheb (1980, 1983) in combination with fuzzy modeling and an importance and performance analysis (IPA). This was to provide empirical support for the proposed theoretical framework of leisure. The paper seeks to contribute to leisure research in China and make recommendations that may improve national leisure policy making. The paper

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [115503897@qq.com](mailto:115503897@qq.com) (P. Li), [njuzhoubin@163.com](mailto:njuzhoubin@163.com) (Z. Bin), [caryan@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:caryan@waikato.ac.nz), [chris.ryan@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:chris.ryan@waikato.ac.nz) (C. Ryan).

is structured by first providing a review of the literature prior to describing the development of a fuzzy model. Details are then provided as to the data collection, and then as to the data analysis. Finally a conclusion follows with recommendations for managerial practice.

## 2. Literature review

Walking as an organized outdoor leisure activity commenced with the Industrial Revolution in Europe and was closely associated with mountaineering in Switzerland and the Himalayas in the 1860s, but was then adopted by the newly mobile working classes seeking a low cost holiday activity as paid holidays became available to them through legislative reforms aimed at improving the well-being of people (Frison-Roche, 1996, Adler, 1985). Today rambling or hiking holidays have become a recognized tourist activity valued for its relaxation and exercise, while also generally considered as being ecologically friendly (Huang, 2005). As such it has attracted significant attention from researchers who have studied developments in the market place, motives for hiking, social cognition, and the social and economic impacts of walking holidays and recreation (Gao & Li, 2012).

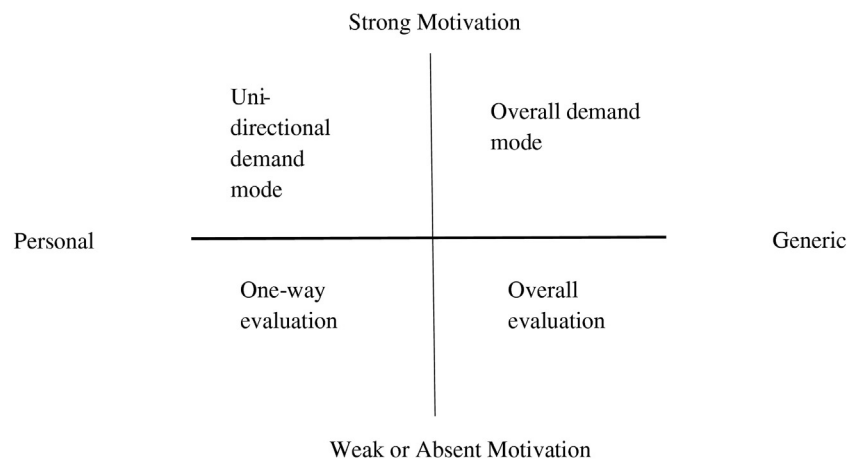
Shaffer (2004) explored the “social and natural authenticity” experienced by hiking leisure participants and suggested that hiking and backpacking was a compulsory ritual for American young adults and a way of self-education and a broadening of their horizons. Similarly Breejen (2007) explored the hiking and recreational experiences through a survey of walkers following well-known long-distance trails in the Western Highlands of Scotland. In China scholars have researched hiking activity from the perspective of it being a means of traveling from which cultural experiences are obtained in eco-friendly ways (e.g. Liu & Song, 2012). Earlier Rao (2010) had analyzed hiking tourism in Australia and suggested lessons for the development of Chinese hiking tourism. In one of the earlier studies undertaken in China, Hu, Guo, and He (2008) had looked at a proposed Anhui Trail to identify the development of hiking tourism, its problems and difficulties, and the need to develop trails congruent with the terrain and ecological resources.

As noted previously, western leisure satisfaction research began in the eighties of last century. The pioneering research is that of Beard and Ragheb (1980, 1983), who argued that leisure satisfaction is the result of individuals' leisure activities and recreational choices that predispose participants to positive perceptions and evaluations of their leisure activities and time. In addition they developed a “Leisure Satisfaction

Scale” premised on psychological, educational, social, relaxation, physiological and aesthetic dimensions, and which is still widely used by leisure researchers (Song & Jiang, 2014). Mannell, Jackson, and Burton (1989) integrated past leisure satisfaction research to divide leisure satisfaction into four quadrants based on motivations and a personal-generic dimension; these being: the unidirectional demand mode, overall demand mode, one-way evaluation mode, and overall evaluation mode (Fig. 1). He described the various behaviors and needs related to leisure activities through various criteria, first by reference to specific leisure activities to measure the satisfaction derived from leisure activities, and finally premised on the strength of motivations based on motivation theory. The study of individual leisure activities satisfaction is thus based on intrinsic motivation, that is, whether people's needs are met (Mannell et al., 1989). For their part Chinese scholars have tended to concept development rather than seeking empirical data, partly reflecting the current stage of leisure research in China. Song and Jiang (2014) defined leisure satisfaction as a measure of the subjective and affective experience as evaluated by individuals in leisure activities. On the other hand Jin (2006) conceived of leisure satisfaction as a subjective evaluation of the *quality* of leisure activities, including the level of participation, subjective satisfaction and the nature of the leisure environment while also considering the cost of leisure activities, its actual and expected benefits, and the inter-relationships between these variables.

In addition to differences in conceptual reasoning, the study of leisure satisfaction within and outside of China can also be classified along two other dimensions, namely an emphasis on degrees of leisure satisfaction and its impacts on participants' lives, and second on the determinants of participation rates. As early as 1980, Ragheb (1980) and Guinn (1980) respectively conceived of leisure satisfaction in terms of impacts on attitudes to leisure and life satisfaction and as reiterative processes. At much the same time, Ragheb and Griffith (1982) demonstrated that leisure satisfaction has a significant impact on levels of life satisfaction through a regression analysis of leisure participation, satisfaction derived from recreational activity and life satisfaction with a sample of 55-year-olds. In an Australian study that used the Leisure Satisfaction Scale and Life Skills Profile, Lloyd, King, Lampe, and McDougall (2001) studied 100 patients undergoing a rehabilitation programme. They found that these patients with mental illness scored much the same on life satisfaction as the general population, but also found that those with lower disabilities and more social contact enjoyed their

### The Four Quadrants of Leisure Satisfaction



Derived and amended from Mannell (1989)

Fig. 1. The four quadrants of leisure satisfaction.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5108789>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5108789>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)