

Survey of the Behaviors and Willingness of Chinese Travelers in a Coastal Area to Visit Japan under the Zero Covid-19 Policy

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Abstract: - This research aimed to evaluate the current attitudes of Chinese travelers. We conducted a survey of Chinese tourists traveling in China's coastal area under the national Zero Covid-19 Policy. The surveys were conducted during two periods: the first was from September 28-October 7, 2022; the second from October 29-November 16, 2022. Both took place before China announced national Covid-19 tolerance in December 2022. All participants were interviewed face-to-face using a questionnaire created by our research team. The results of correspondence analyses revealed the following. Chinese travelers were somewhat indifferent about traveling during the Covid-19 restrictions, especially groups 20–29 and 30–39 years old. On the other hand, the Covid-19 restrictions appeared to have less effect on those under 20 years old. In imagining the after-Covid-19 era, although those 30–39 were willing to travel to Japan, those 20–29 were neutral about the idea. Although familiarity with the Tohoku area, especially Iwate Prefecture, was very low among Chinese travelers according to the results, we assume their willingness to visit Miyako City in Iwate Prefecture is rather high. To promote Chinese interest in the tourist resources of Miyako City, we assume that it would be better to use popular Chinese SNS systems such as Weibo, WeChat, and TikTok, rather than popular Japanese SNS systems.

Key-Words: China's coastal area; correspondence analysis; Covid-19; face-to-face survey; travel to Japan; travel behavior.

Received: September 16, 2022. Revised: January 19, 2023. Accepted: February 21, 2023. Published: March 10, 2023.

1 Introduction

The number of Chinese tourists coming to Japan was increasing before the Covid-19 global pandemic [Table 1]. Although the pandemic is not completely over, we think it is time to prepare for inbound visitors in the near future.

Therefore, the first aim of this research was to survey the behaviors and willingness of Chinese tourists in China's coastal areas to travel to Japan under the Zero Covid-19 Policy.

In addition, we were interested in why only a comparatively small number of Chinese tourists visited Japan's northeast Tohoku area even before Covid-19 compared to other areas, such as Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto [1].

The Tohoku area is located to the north of Tokyo, and people can get there directly from Tokyo by bullet train. Few Chinese tourists seem familiar with the area, however. Therefore, the second aim of this research was to quantitatively evaluate the current interest of Chinese tourists in the Tohoku area, and to consider how to increase the number of visitors there, especially to the Miyako area located on the Pacific coast of Iwate

Prefecture.

2 Methodology

2.1 Research Areas and Periods

The surveys for this research were conducted over two periods: from September 28-October 7th, 2022; and from October 29-November 16, 2022. Both were before China announced national Covid-19 tolerance in December 2022.

The survey samples consisted of Chinese tourists who were currently visiting the coast of China from Shanghai (37 persons, 10.5%), Jiangsu Province (159, 45.0%), Zhejiang Province (82, 23.2%), Fujian Province (23, 6.5%), Guangdong Province (13, 3.7%), and Other (39, 11.0%).

They all were interviewed face-to-face using a questionnaire developed by our research team. The participants' characteristics are listed in Figure 1.

Characteristic	Valid n	Percentage	Characteristic	Valid n	Percentage
Gender (valid n = 353)			Occupation (valid n = 353)		
Male	19	5.4	Student	160	45.3
Female	334	94.6	Business person	123	34.8
	353	100	Business owner	17	4.8
			Civil servant/Teacher	23	6.5
			Contract / Temporary employee	0	0.0
			Self-employed	7	2.0
			Part-time	3	0.8
			Housewife	5	1.4
			Unemployed	9	2.5
			Others	6	1.7
				353	100
Age (valid n = 353)			Personal monthly free fund (valid n = 353)		
≤ 19	63	17.8	≤ 1000	63	17.8
20-29	233	66.0	1000-1999	78	22.1
30-39	50	14.2	2000-2999	55	15.6
≥ 40	7	2.0	3000-3999	39	11.0
	353	100	4000-4999	18	5.1
			5000-5999	28	7.9
			6000-6999	11	3.1
			7000-7999	12	3.4
			8000-9999	11	3.1
			10000-19999	27	7.6
			≥ 20000	11	3.1
				353	100
Marital status (valid n = 353)					
Not married	60	17.0			
Married	218	61.8			
Other	3	0.8			
N.A.	72	20.4			
	353	100			
Place of living (valid n = 353)					
Shanghai 上海	37	10.5			
Jiangsu Province 江苏省	159	45.0			
Zhejiang Province 浙江省	82	23.2			
Fujian Province 福建省	23	6.5			
Guangdong Province 广东省	13	3.7			
Others	39	11.0			
	353	100			

Fig. 1: Respondent characteristics

2.2 Surveys

We conducted questionnaire surveys, which included the following items.

(1) age; (2) gender; (3) place of residence; (4) number of visits to Japan; (5) number of visits to Tohoku Area; (6) how they accessed information about Japan; and (7) reasons for visiting Japan.

2.3 Analysis

Based on the survey responses, we conducted a correspondence analysis [2], [3], [4], using the R statistical system [5] with the CA package. A correspondence analysis can evaluate the relationship between two variables [2], [3], [4].

3 Results Part 1: Chinese travel Behavior

Tables 2–8 present the results of the correspondence analyses [Figs. 2–8].

3.1 Frequency of Trips

Table 2 shows the number of trips each tourist had taken after the beginning of Covid-19.

Figure 2 presents the result of the correspondence analysis, indicating the relationship between frequency of travel after Covid-19 and the respondents' age groups.

As may be seen in the figure:

1) Trip frequency decreased more for those 20–29 and 30–39 years old than for other age groups.

2) On the other hand, the trip frequency for the under-20 group did not change much compared to the other age groups.

3.2 Number of Places Visited

Table 3 lists the number of places visited after the beginning of Covid-19 for each age group.

Figure 3 contains the results of the correspondence analysis, showing the relationship between the number of places visited and the respondents' age groups.

As may be seen in the figure:

1) The number of places visited after Covid-19 declined for those 20–29 and 30–39 years old compared to other age groups.

Table 1. Number of Chinese tourists to Japan between 2017–2021 (created by authors, data cited from JNTO [1])

	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
2017	630570	509090	508979	528781	517038	587193	780771	819855	678313	663815	567149	564264
2018	632304	716333	594920	683377	668600	760949	879097	860121	652740	715255	617252	599086
2019	754421	723617	691279	726132	756365	880651	1050420	1000639	819054	730631	750951	710234
2020	924790	87220	10365	163	25	334	785	1606	2954	4502	18147	18365
2021	10225	1747	3951	3271	1823	1973	3931	2396	3960	4009	3189	1764

2) On the other hand, the number of places visited by the under-20 group did not change much compared to the other age groups.

3.3 Use of Public Transportation

Table 4 shows the use of public transportation after Covid-19 for each Chinese tourist age group.

Figure 4 presents the results of the correspondence analysis, indicating the relationship between the use of public transportation after Covid-19 and the respondents' age groups.

As may be seen in the figure:

1) Use of public transportation after Covid-19 declined among those 30–39 years old more than in other age groups.

2) The decline for those 20–29 years old was less than that of those 30–39 years old.

3) The use of public transportation for the under-20 group did not change much compared to other groups.

3.4 Use of Own Car

Table 5 presents the number of Chinese tourists who used their own car for travel after Covid-19 by age group.

Figure 5 shows the results of the correspondence analysis, indicating the relationship between tourists' use of their own car after Covid-19 and the respondents' age groups.

As may be seen in the figure:

1) The use of their own car after Covid-19 increased for those 30–39 years old, compared to other age groups.

2) Meanwhile, the use of their own car decreased in the under-20 group compared to the other groups.

3) Finally, the use of their own car did not change much for those 20–29 years old compared to the other groups.

4 Results Part 2: Chinese Tourists' Willingness to Travel to Japan

4.1 Willingness to Travel to Japan after Covid-19

Table 6 lists the willingness of Chinese tourists to take trips to Japan after Covid-19 for each age group.

Figure 6 presents the results of the correspondence analysis, revealing the relationship between willingness to travel to Japan after Covid-19 and the respondents' age groups.

As may be seen in the figure:

1) Willingness to travel to Japan after Covid-19 was higher for those 30–39 compared to other age groups.

2) On the other hand, willingness to travel to Japan after Covid-19 was lower for those 20–29 compared to other groups.

3) Meanwhile, willingness to travel to Japan after Covid-19 for those under 20 was higher than for those 20–29 years old.

4.2 Chinese Tourists' Familiarity with the Tohoku Area

Table 7 presents the Chinese tourists' familiarity with the sightseeing resources of the Tohoku area.

Figure 7 shows the results of the correspondence analysis, indicating the relationship between Chinese tourists' recognition of these resources and the respondents' age groups.

As may be seen in the figure:

1) Familiarity with the Tohoku area was somewhat lower for those under 20 than for other age groups.

2) The recognition rates for Akita and Fukushima were quite high for those 20–29 compared to other age groups.

3) As to familiarity with the Tohoku area, the recognition rates for Sendai, Miyagi, and Yamagata in those 20–29 were rather higher than that of other groups.

4) Meanwhile, the recognition rates for Aomori and Iwate were higher for those 30–39 than for other age groups.

4.3 Chinese Tourists' Preference for Tohoku area's Miyako City

Table 8 shows the Chinese tourists' preference for the sightseeing resources of the Tohoku area's Miyako City.

Figure 8 presents the results of the correspondence analysis, indicating the relationship between preference for the sightseeing resources of Miyako City [Fig. 9] and the respondents' age groups.

As may be seen in the figure:

1) In terms of Chinese tourists' preference for the Tohoku area's Miyako City, preference for Bindon was higher in those in the under-19 group than in other groups.

2) Meanwhile, Chinese tourists' preference for Tohoku's Jodogahama and Uminekamaru near Miyako City was higher among those 20–29 than for other groups.

2) Finally, preference for the Tohoku area's Aonodokutsu near Miyako City was higher among those 30–39 years old than for other groups.

5 Discussion

Chinese travelers were somewhat indifferent toward travel during the Covid-19 restrictions, especially those 20–29 and 30–39 years old. On the other hand, the behavior of those under 20 did not change much during the Covid-19 restrictions.

In imagining the post-Covid-19 era, although those 30–39 years old were willing to travel to Japan, those 20–29 were neutral about the idea.

According to our results, although familiarity with Tohoku, a northeastern area of Japan, and particularly Iwate Prefecture, is very low for Chinese travelers, their willingness to visit Miyako City in Iwate Prefecture is rather high. Therefore, we assume that the number of Chinese travelers who will visit Miyako depends on trip promotions.

Luo [8] pointed out that the SNS systems popular in China are quite different from those of Japan. There is no compatibility between them. He suggested that those looking to promote Japanese travel resources to Chinese people should use Chinese SNS systems.

We definitely agree. To promote the travel resources of Iwate Prefecture's Miyako City to Chinese people, popular Chinese SNS systems such as Weibo, WeChat, and TikTok should be used.

Table 2. Frequency of trips

	decreased	unchanged	
	increased	Under 20Y	
	28	3	31
20–29Y	149	57	22
30–39Y	36	8	5
Over-39Y	7	0	0

Table 3. Number of visited places

	decreased	unchanged	
	increased	Under 20Y	
	19	5	38
20–29Y	155	45	29
30–39Y	36	7	6
Over 39Y	7	0	0

Table 4. Use of public transportation

	decreased	unchanged	increased
Under 20Y	28	20	14
20–29Y	104	92	32
30–39Y	30	14	5
Over 39Y	5	2	0

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Contribution of Individual Authors to the Creation of a Scientific Article (Ghostwriting Policy)

The authors equally contributed in the present research, at all stages from the formulation of the problem to the final findings and solution.

Sources of Funding for Research Presented in a Scientific Article or Scientific Article Itself

No funding was received for conducting this study.

Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

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Fig. 2: Sightseeing resources of Iwate Prefecture's Miyako City in Tohoku. From top to bottom: Jodogahama [6], Aonodokutsu [6], Bindon [7], and Uminekomaru [6], respectively.

Table 5. Use of own car

	decreased	unchanged	increased
Under 20Y	20	22	20
20–29Y	42	114	73
30–39Y	10	21	18
Over 39Y	3	1	3

Table 6. Travel to Japan after Covid-19

	negative	rather negative	neutral	rather positive	positive
Under 20Y	4	19	7	22	10
20–29Y	15	76	30	63	46
30–39Y	5	11	6	11	16
Over 39Y	0	2	0	2	3

Table 7. Familiarity with the Tohoku area in northeastern Japan

	Sendai	Aomori	Iwate	Miyagi	Fukushima	Akita	Yamagata	N.A.
Under 20Y	26	3	2	6	21	31	4	16
20–29Y	84	22	13	32	114	140	17	40
30–39Y	20	9	8	7	29	29	4	11
Over 39Y	5	1	0	0	4	3	1	0
Total	135 (38.2%)	35 (9.9%)	23 (6.5%)	45 (12.7%)	168 (47.6%)	203 (57.5%)	26 (7.4%)	67 (19.0%)

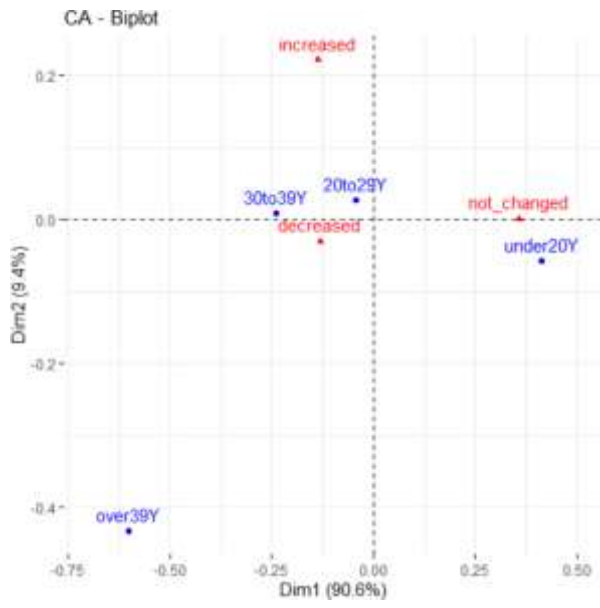


Fig. 2: Frequency of trips

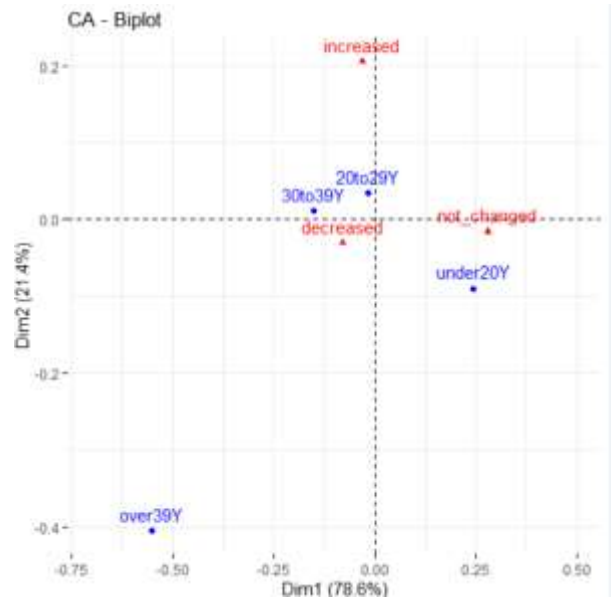


Fig. 3: Number of places visited

Table 8. Preferences for resources of Iwate Prefecture's Miyako City in Tohoku

	Jodogahama	Aonodokutsu	Bindon	Uminekomaru
Under 20Y	14	11	29	23
20-29Y	90	67	60	98
30-39Y	17	21	10	18
Over 39Y	2	3	3	2

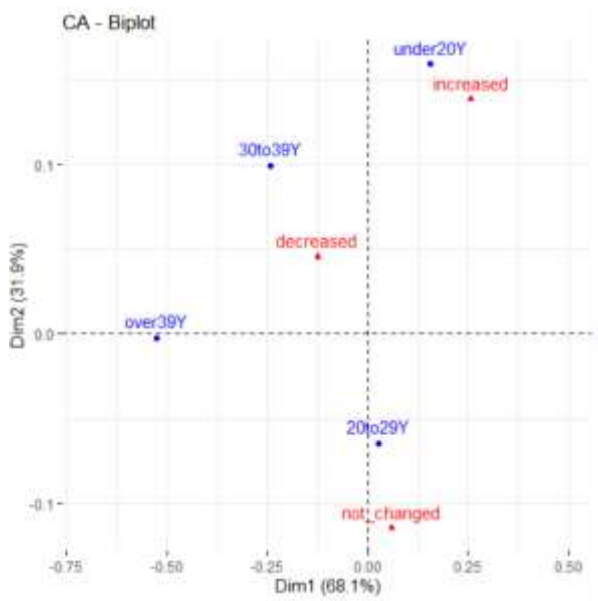


Fig. 4: Use of public transportation

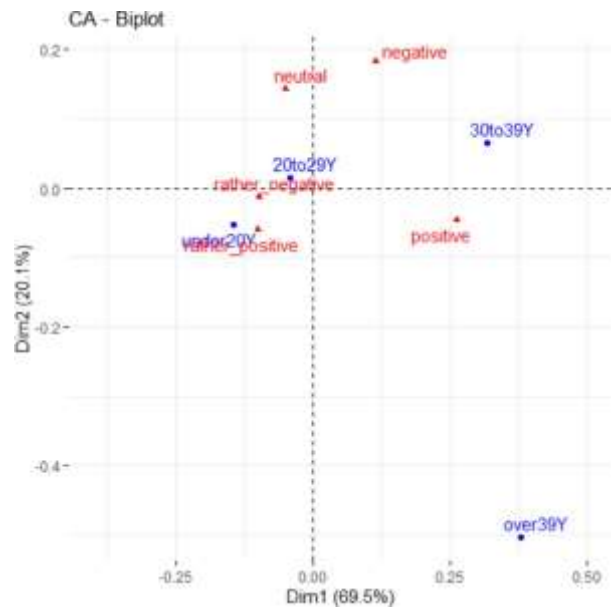


Fig. 6: Travel to Japan after Covid-19

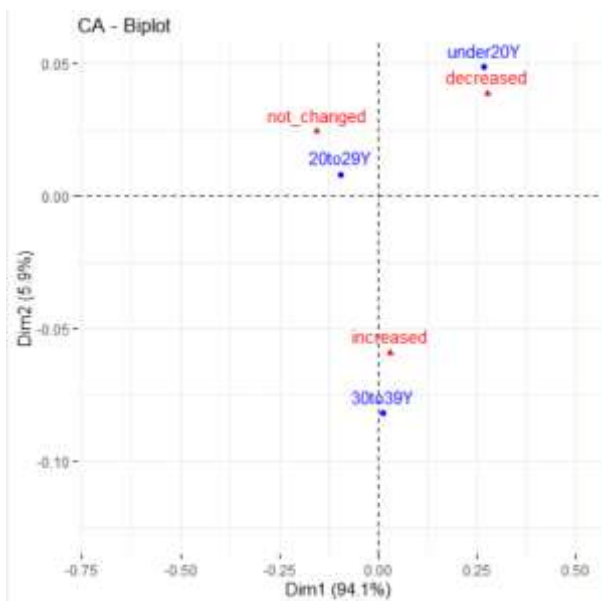


Fig. 5: Use of own car

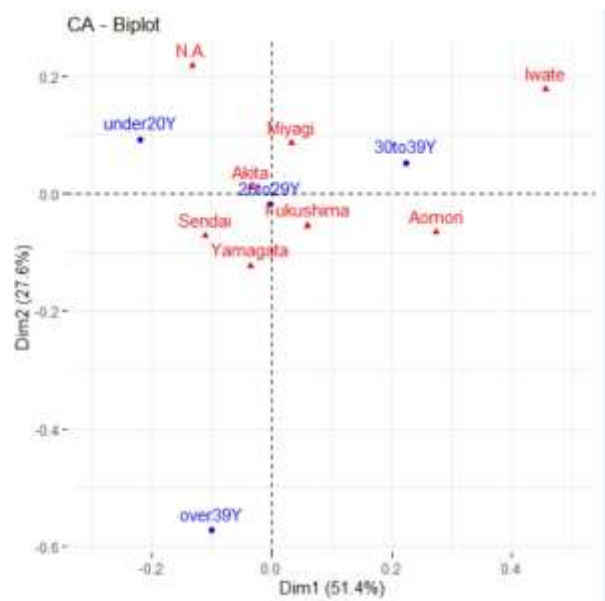


Fig. 7: Familiarity with Tohoku area in northeastern Japan

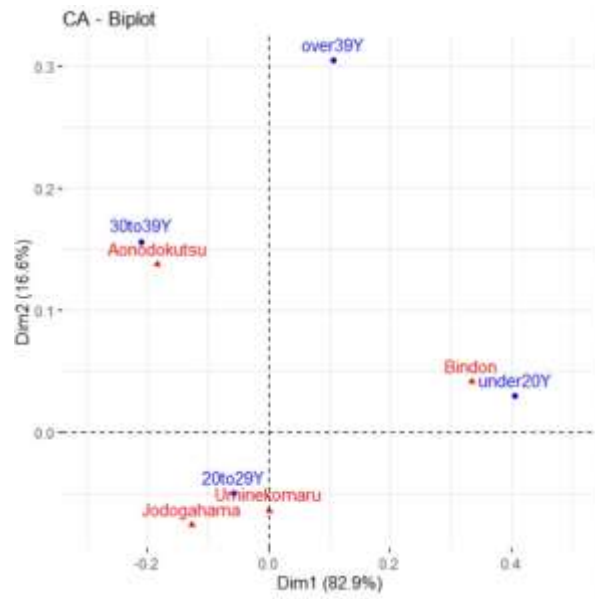


Fig. 8: Preference for Miyako City's spots in Tohoku