

## The tourist preference of cyber hot attractions: a case study of Xi'an, China

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**Keywords:** Internet hot spots, natural amenity

**Abstract:** Under the background of the increase of cyber hot attractions, this study takes Xi'an, China as a case to explore the tourists' preference of cyber hot attractions, and makes the conclusion as follows. First, male tourists prefer online celebrity songs and entertainment items, while female tourists prefer experience-type cyber hot attractions and gourmet. Natural landscape is popular with the public; Second, female tourists prefer uniqueness and aesthetics, male tourists prefer high quality. High-educated tourists prefer innovation and aesthetics, low-educated tourists prefer preferential price and popularity. And tourists who are occupied in tourism-related jobs prefer innovation and uniqueness; Last, Network media such as WeChat, Weibo and short video applications have become popular channels for the public.

### 1. Introduction

Cyber hot attractions refer to those attractions which are famous on the Internet and attract people to leave for and visit in real life, such as Brush-shaped Pastry, Tang Dynasty lady Tumbler, etc. With the development of mobile internet and the popularization of smart terminals in China, many tourism attractions, driven by network platforms such as short videos and live broadcasts, have attracted the attention of many netizens and made them leave for and visit, which have become genuinely cyber hot attractions. The increase of cyber hot attractions brings more choices for tourists, so tourists can choose destination according to their own preference. Preference plays an important role in tourists' decision, so it is necessary to explore the tourist preference of cyber hot attractions.

According to the literature review, we found that the former research focuses on the tourism attractions' concepts, classification, attractiveness and rational utilization. On the aspect of tourism attractions' concepts, Holloway believed that all things carried out in destinations can be called tourism attractions [1]. Bao argued that tourism attractions is the sum of all factors that make people leave for the destination, including tourism resource, reception facilities, first-class service, convenient transportation and so on [2]; On the aspect of tourism attractions' classification, John had divided them into four types: distinctive natural environment, man-made landscape originally not built to attract tourists, special event and man-made tourist areas built to attract tourists [3]. According to the degree of development, Luo divided tourism attractions into four categories: early developed, recently developed, under-developed and undeveloped[4]; On the aspect of tourism attractions' attractiveness, Bob conducted research on Hong Kong's cultural attractions from the perspective of supply and believed that cultural attractions must give full play to the functions to enhance their attractiveness [5]. Cave pointed out that the construction of a business and cultural center has strong appeal to Pacific island communities, but has limited appeal to dominant European migrant communities [6]; On the aspect of tourism attractions' rational utilization, the use of domestic and foreign tourism attractions has roughly gone through three stages: early development, medium-term protection, and sustainable use exploration. Kotler has always adhered to the idea of coexisting protection and utilization of the use of site tourism attractions [7]. Xu put forward a development strategy focusing on the development of cultural relics and historical resources while also speeding up the pace of natural resource development [8].

It can be found from the literature review that the scholars have made a great deal on the research of the traditional tourism attractions, and formed a theoretical foundation for the later related research. However, few scholars have paid attention to the cyber hot attractions. So this study takes Xi'an as a case to explore the tourist preference of cyber hot attractions.

## 2. Case Introduction and Data Acquisition

### 2.1. Case Introduction

This study chooses Xi'an as a case. Xi'an is the capital city of Shaanxi Province in China, and it is also a famous historical and cultural city around the world. As an excellent tourism city, Xi'an has been attracting a large number of domestic and foreign tourists. In recent years, based on the rise and popularity of short video, live broadcast and other network platforms, many cyber hot attractions in Xi'an, such as Tang Dynasty lady tumbler, have attracted people's attention and made people leave for and visit these tourism attractions. A great deal of cyber hot attractions has been developing in Xi'an, which has also made Xi'an an online celebrity city. Therefore, Xi'an is a typical and representative place to study the tourist preference of cyber hot attractions.

### 2.2. Data Acquisition

The data of this study includes two parts. One is the tourists' demographic characteristics, such as gender, age, education and occupation. The other is the information of tourists' preference about types, attributes and transmission modes of cyber hot attractions, etc. All these data were obtained from the questionnaires of tourists.

This survey is mainly completed through online distribution. A total of 305 questionnaires were collected and 305 questionnaires were valid, the effective rate is 100%. In this survey, male tourists accounted for 47.87% and females accounted for 52.13%. The ratio of male to female was relatively balanced. The age is mainly concentrated in the post-90s generation, accounting for 69.84%. This group is young and vibrant, and has a large demand for tourism. And they are also the main focus group of cyber hot attractions. The educational level of tourists is generally high, with the largest proportion of bachelor's degree, 79.02%. Among the occupations surveyed, the number of students was the largest, accounting for 52.79%. The statistical information on demographic characteristics of tourists is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Statistics of Tourists' Demographic Characteristics

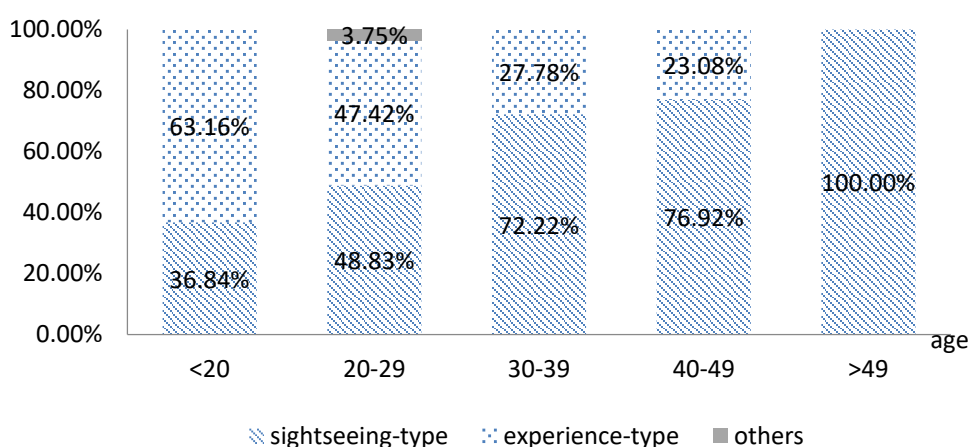
Demographics	Index	sample size	percentage	Demographics	Index	sample size	percentage
Gender	male	146	47.87	Education	Junior and below	3	0.98
	female	159	52.13		senior	20	6.56
Age	<20	19	6.23		college	241	79.02
	20-29	213	69.84		graduate and above	41	13.44
	30-39	36	11.8		student	161	52.79
	40-49	26	8.52	Internet industry	28	9.18	
	>49	11	3.61	tourism-related	20	6.56	
				Others	96	31.48	

### 3. The Characteristics of Tourists' Preference for Cyber Hot Attractions

#### 3.1. Tourists' Preference of Types of Cyber Hot Attractions

##### 3.1.1. Younger Groups and Female Tourists Are More Interested in Experience-type

The types of cyber hot attractions have been divided into three types: sightseeing-type, experience-type and others. As shown in Figure 1, the younger group (<20 years old) prefer experience-type cyber hot attractions instead of sightseeing-type, which shows that the main people who pay attention to cyber hot attractions not only focus on traditional tours, but also focus on engaging and interacting, and are more willing to try and experience new things. From the data, it was found that 46.54% of female tourists prefer experience-type, but male tourists only accounted for 37.67%. The main reason is that experience-type of cyber hot attractions contains many romantic elements, and women prefer romantic things to men.



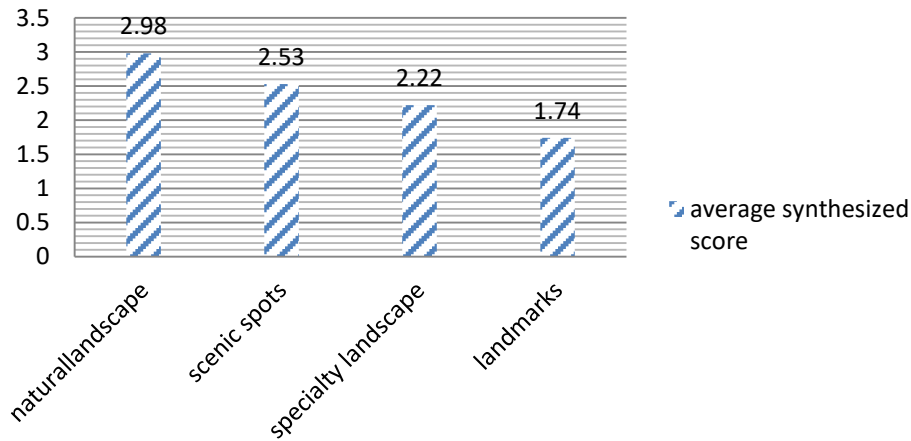
**Figure 1.** Tourists' Preference of Cyber Hot Attractions' Types from the Perspective of Age

##### 3.1.2. Male Tourists Prefer Entertainment Items and Female Tourists Prefer Specialty Food

According to the data statistics, the degree of tourists' preference for the five experience-type cyber hot attractions is presented as “specialty food > entertainment items > special transportation > filming locations > characteristic hotels”. The comprehensive score of specialty food and entertainment items is significantly different from the other three items, with an average synthesized score of 3.29 and 3.21, which means gourmet and entertainment items are the main choices of the experience-type cyber hot attractions. Analyzing the reasons we can see, the male tourists prefer entertainment items because they are more receptive to some challenging activities, and the female tourists are more inclined to release stress through gourmet.

##### 3.1.3. Natural Landscape Is Universally Loved by the Public

Sightseeing-type cyber hot attractions are comprised of natural landscape, scenic spots, specialty landscape and landmarks. The data statistics (Figure 2) show the degree of tourists' preference for the four sightseeing-type cyber hot attractions is manifested as “natural landscape > scenic spots > specialty landscape > landmarks”. Male and female tourists, the groups of all ages have basically the same degree of preference for sightseeing-type cyber hot attractions, indicating that the natural landscape is the most popular. People can relax through natural landscape and share some charming pictures with others through network platforms.



**Figure 2.** Tourists' Preference of the Sightseeing-type of Cyber Hot Attractions

### 3.1.4. Male and Highly Educated Groups Prefer the Cyber Hot Songs

Some folk songs, such as *Chengdu, Xi'an people's song*, are very popular on the Internet, and liked by people. Many tourists leave for the city mentioned in songs, and would like to explore the beautiful scenes and places in songs. So these folk songs have become cyber hot attractions. The data statistics show that, 79.02% of the tourists prefer online celebrity songs, and 20.98% of them prefer online celebrities. It can be seen that online celebrities have not played a significant role in the cyber hot attractions system. On the contrary, people have particular emotions for the city through the cyber hot songs, and have longing for the scenes and places where appeared in the songs. The statistics indicate that 81.51% of male tourists and 76.73% of female tourists prefer cyber hot songs, which means male tourists' love for cyber hot songs is more than female. The more education tourists get, the more they like the cyber hot songs, indicating that tourists with higher education backgrounds pay more attention to the cultural connotation of the cyber hot attractions and can appreciate the charm of a city through songs.

## 3.2. Tourists' Attributes Preference of Cyber Hot Attractions

### 3.2.1. The Female Tourists Prefer Uniqueness and Aesthetics, While Male Tourists Prefer Quality

The attributes of cyber hot attractions can be concluded as high quality, innovation, preferential price, popularity, uniqueness, aesthetics and others. From the Table 2 we can see that female tourists pay more attention to the uniqueness and the aesthetics of cyber hot attractions, but male tourists focus on the quality. And there is little difference in innovation, popularity, price and others between female and male tourists. Female tourists are more emotional, so they are easier to be attracted by romantic cyber hot attractions. Male are more rational, so they put more emphasis on quality.

### 3.2.2. The Well-educated Tourists Prefer Innovation and Aesthetics

It is shown from the perspective of education background that the well-educated tourists have more requirements for the innovation and aesthetics of cyber hot attractions. Analyzing the causes we can see, because well-educated tourists often have higher income, so they are insensitive to price and usually pay more attention to the novelty and beauty of cyber hot attractions. For the low-educated tourists, their income is relatively lower, so the price can influence their choice of destination. In addition, low-educated tourists tend to visit some popular places. (The number of junior high schools and below is too small to be representative, so they are not taken into considered here.)

**Table 2.** Statistics of Tourists' Attributes Preference of Cyber Hot Attractions

<i>Demographics</i>	<i>Index</i>	<i>High Quality</i> (%)	<i>Innovation</i> (%)	<i>Preferential Price</i> (%)	<i>Popularity</i> (%)	<i>Uniqueness</i> (%)	<i>Aesthetics</i> (%)	<i>Others</i> (%)
Gender	male	68.49	65.07	47.26	32.19	61.64	50.68	1.37
	female	59.75	69.81	54.72	35.22	80.50	67.92	3.77
Education	Junior and below	33.33	33.33	100	0	33.33	66.67	0
	senior collage	65	50	65	40	75	45	5
	graduate and above	65.56	69.29	51.87	34.02	70.12	60.17	2.90
	student	56.10	68.29	36.59	31.71	80.49	63.41	0
Occupation	Internet industry	67.08	67.70	52.17	39.13	71.43	60.87	3.11
	tourism-related	67.86	67.86	35.71	28.57	57.14	64.29	0
	others	45	80	35	30	80	55	0
		61.46	64.58	57.29	27.08	73.96	57.29	3.13

### 3.2.3. Tourists with Tourism-related Profession Prefer Innovation and Uniqueness

The data statistics (Table 2) show that the tourists who are engaged in tourism-related jobs are more concerned about the innovation and uniqueness of cyber hot attractions. Analyzing the reasons we can find, this group has high expectation for cyber hot attractions because of their job characteristics. They hope that each cyber hot attraction can be different and bring a new experience for tourists.

### 3.3. Tourists' Preference of Transmission Modes of Cyber Hot Attractions

#### 3.3.1. Young Tourists Prefer WeChat, Weibo, Short Video Applications and Other Network Media Channels

The data statistics (Table 3) indicate that 71.48% of the tourists have learned about the cyber hot attractions through short video applications or other network media, and 70.82% of the tourists have known through WeChat and Weibo. The other three types of transmission modes account for a small proportion, which means short video applications, WeChat, Weibo and other network media are the main transmission modes of cyber hot attractions. In recent years, some short video applications undoubtedly play an important role in spreading cyber hot attractions because of the fast speed, novel mode and wide range. Young people spend more time online, so they are more likely to get to know cyber hot attractions through network media.

#### 3.3.2. Highly Educated Tourists Prefer WeChat, Weibo and Travel Agencies

According to the statistics we can find that highly educated tourists are more inclined to learn about cyber hot attractions through WeChat, Weibo and travel agencies, while low-educated tourists have no obvious characteristics. High-educated tourists have more fragmented-time, so they are more likely to get to know cyber hot attractions by direct ways, such as WeChat, Weibo, etc. (The number of junior high schools and below is too small to be representative, so they are not taken into considered here.)

#### 3.3.3. Students Prefer WeChat, Weibo and Recommendation by Classmates and Friends, While Other Tourists Prefer Short Video Applications

The research shows the proportion of student introduced via WeChat, Weibo, classmates and friends is significantly greater than other occupations, which can be explained by the attributes of this profession. Students often communicate more with their classmates and friends, so they are more

likely to learn about cyber hot attractions through classmates and friends. Others tend to relax and appreciate new things through some short video applications due to their busy work.

**Table 3.** Statistics of Tourists' Transmission Modes Preference of Cyber Hot Attractions

<i>Demographics</i>	<i>Index</i>	<i>WeChat Weibo</i>	<i>Short video applications and other network media(%)</i>	<i>Travel agencies</i>	<i>Recommendation by classmates and friends (%)</i>	<i>Others (%)</i>
Age	>49	54.55	54.55	9.09	9.09	18.18
	40-49	57.69	57.69	7.69	26.92	15.38
	30-39	52.78	66.67	13.89	16.67	22.22
	20-29	74.65	74.65	12.68	44.13	16.90
	<20	89.47	73.68	10.53	52.63	15.79
Education	junior and below	66.67	33.33	0	0	0
	senior collage	35	65	0	40	15
	graduate and above	73.03	73.03	13.28	39.42	17.43
	student	75.61	68.29	12.20	36.59	19.51
Occupation	Internet industry	79.50	70.19	14.29	48.45	18.01
	tourism-related	57.14	85.71	7.14	21.43	7.14
	others	75	100	15	25	5
		59.38	63.54	9.38	30.21	21.88

#### 4. The Development Strategy of Cyber Hot Attractions

The popularity of cyber hot attractions is constantly rising. So tourist cities should seize this opportunity to effectively develop cyber hot attractions and pay attention to the sustainable development of cyber hot attractions. Based on tourists' preference, this part puts forward the sustainable development strategy of cyber hot attractions.

##### 4.1. Improve the Quality of Cyber Hot Attractions

High quality is the foundation for the sustainable development of cyber hot attractions. With the increase of tourism demand, tourists pay more and more attention to quality, so we should focus on improving the quality of cyber hot attractions. Tourism cities should lay emphasis on the differential development of cyber hot attractions, so that various types of cyber hot attractions can jointly form a complete system, which can make tourism cities more comprehensive and diversified.

##### 4.2. Develop Cyber Hot Attractions from a “New and Particular” Perspective

The characteristics of cyber hot attractions are new and particular. The novelty and uniqueness have aroused people's curiosity and attention, which has also prompted tourists to travel. Uniform cyber hot attractions will eventually be eliminated. Only innovation can make tourist cities reflect their personality and vitality, and also make them invincible in fierce competition.

##### 4.3. Enhance Cultural Connotation of Cyber Hot Attractions

Cyber hot attractions should pay attention to the establishment and promotion of cultural connotation, otherwise it will be a flash in the pan. Tourist cities can also develop further by improving cultural connotation of tourism attractions. So, cyber hot attractions should integrate with local traditional culture.

#### **4.4. Establish More Experience-type Cyber Hot Attractions**

Experience-type cyber hot attractions are deeply affected by the public because they break the limitation of traditional tourism attractions which are only for sightseeing, inject fresh elements, enhance participation and interaction, and bring deeper feelings to tourists. Young people, the major group who pay attention to cyber hot attractions, prefer experience-type, because it can bring freshness and excitement. So developing the experience-type cyber hot attractions is a new trend to promote the development of tourist cities.

#### **4.5. Avoid Homogeneity and Innovate Actively**

With the popularity of some cyber hot attractions, other cities have also imitated and plagiarized those attractions, so there has been a serious problem of homogeneity. Tourist cities should stop plagiarism and actively innovate, and manage to attract tourists with unique tourism attractions.

#### **4.6. Integrated Cyber Hot Attraction with Traditional Tourism Attractions**

From the research we can see that most tourists who come to the city due to the cyber hot attractions will also visit traditional tourism attractions. Therefore, while developing cyber hot attractions, we should also protect and innovate traditional tourism attractions, and achieve the integrated development of the two, which can jointly promote the development of tourism industry.

### **5. Conclusion**

Taking Xi'an as a case, this study explores the tourists' preference of cyber hot attractions. It can be seen that tourists with different demographic characteristics have different preference for types, attributes and transmission modes of cyber hot attractions. The detailed conclusions of this study are as follows:

(1) Aspect of the tourists' preference for types of cyber hot attractions. Male tourists prefer online celebrity songs and entertainment items, while female tourists prefer experience-type cyber hot attractions and gourmet. Natural landscape is popular with the public.

(2) Aspect of the tourists' preference for attributes of cyber hot attractions. Female tourists prefer uniqueness and aesthetics, male tourists prefer high quality; High-educated tourists prefer innovation and aesthetics, low-educated tourists prefer preferential price and popularity; And tourists who are occupied in tourism-related jobs prefer innovation and uniqueness.

(3) Aspect of the tourists' preference for transmission modes of cyber hot attractions. Network media such as WeChat, Weibo and short video applications have become popular channels for the public.

### **Acknowledgements**

This research was financially supported by Projects of Shaanxi Education Department (No. 17JK0628) and Xi'an International Studies University (No. 17XWA04).

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