

# Examining Religious Tourists' Behavior at the Beigang Chaotian Temple in Taiwan

Hsiao-Ming Chang<sup>1</sup>, Yen-Chen Huang<sup>2\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of Physical Education of Putian University in Fujian Province, China

<sup>2</sup>National Penghu University of Science and Technology, Department of Marine Recreation, Taiwan, R.O.C

**\*Corresponding Author:** Yen-Chen Huang, National Penghu University of Science and Technology, Department of Marine Recreation, Taiwan, R.O.C

**Abstract:** This study analyzed the influence of Mazu Temple's attractiveness, motivation for visiting, satisfaction, and the perceived value of the revisit intention of tourists. This study enrolled tourists visiting Beigang Chaotian Temple in Taiwan as research subjects using a non-random recruitment method. This study collected 321 valid questionnaires. After analyzing the returned valid questionnaires using descriptive statistics and partial least squares (PLS), this study found that the attractiveness of Mazu Temple affects tourists' motivation to visit, perceived satisfaction, and perceived value, which subsequently affects their revisit intention.

**Keywords:** Religious tourism, Attractiveness, Motivation, Satisfaction, Perceived Value, Revisit Intention, Mazu Belief

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Mazu belief is one of the most important folk beliefs in Taiwan and the Chinese world. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) listed Mazu belief as a intangible cultural heritage in 2009. Mazu belief attracts many believers worldwide. Presently, there are more than 10,000 Mazu temples in 46 countries and regions and more than 300 million believers. Furthermore, Mazu belief is the primary folk belief of the people of Taiwan. Beigang Chaotian Temple is one of the three major Mazu Temples in the world. In 1684, a Shubi Monk from the Linji school of Buddhism relocated the statue of Mazu from the Chaotian Pavilion of Mazu Temple on Meizhou Island, Fujian Province, China, to Taiwan, placing it in Bengang. According to Mazu's instructions, he built a temple at the current location (Beigang Town, Taiwan) [1]. During the Qing Dynasty, this temple became the center of Mazu belief in Taiwan. The primary reason was that believers went from the Mazu Temple of Nanyao Palace in Changhua to the Chaotian Temple for pilgrimage. The scale of the pilgrimage was significant, as was the number of believers. This pilgrimage affected other believers and brought many to the Chaotian Temple. The development of the railway during the Japanese colonial period and the improvement of road traffic after the war made it more convenient for believers in the north and south to travel to the Chaotian Temple for pilgrimage. It also increased the religious tourism attractiveness of Chaotian Temple, which benefited the expansion of Mazu belief. Many temples in Taiwan (the Chaotian Temple sub-temple, Mazu Temple, temples of other gods, etc.) have become holy places. Temples are also a leading destination for religious tourism during holidays. Previous studies have pointed out that famous religious sites are an important factor in attracting tourists to visit and travel [2]. So according to the above, why does the famous List of Mazu temples attract people to visit? What are their motives for worshipping Mazu? feeling? Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to explore the behavior of tourists (including Mazu believers) engaged in religious tourism, hoping that the research results can provide reference for tourism operators and departments to promote religious tourism.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW, CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK, AND HYPOTHESES

Gunn and Var (2002) pointed out that attraction is the driving force of the tourism system. If the tourism market is the "driving force" of tourists' actions, then tourism attraction provides the main "pulling force" [3]. From the perspective of tourism consumption process, tourism behavior can be

divided into pre visit decision-making, on-site experience, evaluation of experience satisfaction, and post visit behavioral intention and behavior [4]. Before tourists visit a destination, the most important thing is whether the area is attractive. If the destination lacks attractiveness, it will not be able to attract tourists to travel [3]. Therefore, the attractiveness of the destination is the core of every tourist destination.

Although religious motives have multiple importance, they may be the only main reason for pilgrimage [5], and one of the many reasons for religious tourism [6-7]. Similarly, religious customs may accompany travel, and tourism behavior may occur during religious travel [6]. However, with the continuous changes in social culture and economy, the motivation for religious tourism has become increasingly diverse. Believers visiting the famous Mazu Temple to worship not only pray for Mazu's blessings, but also have the motivation to travel [8]. Religious tourism is a term that refers to promoting religious destinations primarily to meet tourists' spiritual expectations and achieve the destinations' economic development goals [9]. The factors affecting tourists (or believers) engaging in religious tourism include the attractiveness of religious destinations and the motivation to visit religious destinations [10]. Past studies have indicated that after visiting Mazu Temple, the satisfaction and perceived value experienced on the spot affected the revisit behavioral intention of tourists [11]. Fornell pointed out that satisfaction is a comprehensive evaluation that reflects consumers' feelings of liking or dislike after receiving services or using products, including singularity and emotion [12]. Therefore, the satisfaction referred to in this study refers to the satisfaction of believers who go to List of Mazu temples to worship. After they worship, they feel satisfied physically and mentally, ask for help from Mazu, realize their aspirations, and are full of hope for future life and get guidance on their life direction.

Perceived value refers to the sacrifices made by consumers to obtain products or services, including monetary and non-monetary sacrifices. In terms of money, it is a sacrifice of time for a product or service, or in terms of spiritual effort to obtain a product or service [13]. The intention to revisit is a major research topic in tourism destinations and is considered an important behavioral intention [14]. It is usually defined as the degree of willingness to return to the same destination [15]. Therefore, the present study analyzed the religious attractiveness of Chaotian Temple and Mazu believers' motivation, satisfaction, perceived value, and revisit intention. As such, this study proposed the following six hypotheses:

- H1. Mazu Temple's attractiveness positively affects visit motivation.
- H2. The motivation of tourists visiting Mazu Temple positively affects satisfaction.
- H3. The motivation of tourists visiting Mazu Temple positively affects perceived value.
- H4. The satisfaction of tourists visiting Mazu Temple positively affects perceived value.
- H5. The satisfaction of tourists visiting Mazu Temple positively affects revisit intention.
- H6. The perceived value of tourists visiting Mazu Temple positively affects revisit intention.

### 3. METHOD

#### 3.1. Research Area

Chaotian Temple are located in Beigang Town, Yunlin County, Taiwan. The layout of the worship of Chaotian Temple, the main hall is dedicated to Mazu, and other gods are arranged according to their palaces, including Guanyin Buddha, the Holy Father and the Holy Mother (Mazu's parents), Zhusheng Niangniang (Linshui Madam-Chen Jinggu), the Three Officials, the Five Master Wenchang (Emperor Guansheng, Emperor Fuyou, Emperor Zitong, Master Zhu Yi, Master Kuixing), the god of local administration and the god of land. Every third month of the lunar calendar, in order to celebrate Mazu's birthday, temples dedicated to Mazu in various parts of Taiwan will have activities such as Mazu's tours and pilgrimages. Among them, when Chaotian Temple goes around the border, in addition to the special ceremony of exploding the sedan chair (setting off firecrackers under the divine sedan chair), there will be a wonderful art pavilion parade every year for believers to watch and participate.



**Figure1.** *Baishatun Mazu believers who pilgrimage to Chaotian Temple*



**Figure2.** *Chaotian Temple Main Hall*

### 3.2. Research Subjects and Sampling

This study focuses on tourists over 20 years' old who go to Chaotian Temple to worship Mazu. We used non-random sampling to conduct a questionnaire survey in the square in front of the temple, and collected a total of 321 valid questionnaires. Among the 321 returned valid questionnaires, 162 subjects were male (50.5%), and 159 were female (49.5%). Regarding marital status, 172 subjects (53.6%) were unmarried, and 149 subjects (46.4%) were married. Regarding age, the largest number of subjects were between 21 to 30 years (104 subjects; 32.4%), and the smallest group was subjects over 61 (21 subjects; 6.5%). Concerning educational level, the largest number of subjects were university graduates (153 subjects; 47.7%), and the smallest was junior high school graduates and under (24 subjects; 7.5%). Regarding occupation, the largest number of subjects worked in the service industry (101 subjects; 31.5%), and the smallest number of subjects were medical and nursing personnel (4 subjects; 1.2%). Regarding monthly income, the monthly income of the largest number of subjects was NT\$ 25,001-40,000 (12; 40.2%), and the smallest was NT\$ 100,001 (5 subjects; 1.6%). Concerning the frequency of visiting Mazu Temple, subjects visited very often (64 subjects; 19.9%), often (24.3%), occasionally (34.9%), rarely (11.8%), and very rarely (9%).

### 3.3. Measurements

The research questionnaire comprised six parts. Part 1 included the Beigang Chaotian Temple Attraction Scale, including 6 items. Part 2 was the motivation scale for believers to visit Mazu, with four factors (asking God to solve doubts, devout belief, spiritual comfort, and praying for blessings) and 12 items. Part 3 involved the satisfaction scale, with 5 items. Part 4 was the perceived value scale, with 3 items. Part 5 included the revisit intention scale, with 3 items. The last part involved collecting demographic variables, including gender, marital status, age, educational level, personal monthly income, occupation, and frequency of visiting Mazu Temple.

### 3.4. Data Analysis Methods

Statistical analysis on the returned valid questionnaires was performed as follows: (1) This study used SPSS software for Windows 21.0 to analyze the distribution of demographic variables of tourists visiting Beigang Chaotian Temple with frequency distribution and percentage of descriptive statistics; (2) This study used Warp PLS 8.0 statistical software to analyze the reliability and validity of the scales on Beigang Chaotian Mazu Temple's attractiveness, motivation, satisfaction, perceived value and revisit intention, as well as the relationship among the given variables using the statistical method of partial least squares (PLS). The composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  were used to

determine reliability and validity, and both needed to be equal to or greater than .70 [13-14]. Validity was based on whether the factor loading was up to .50, and all latent variable amounts of the average variation extraction (AVE) needed to be equal to or greater than .50 to determine whether the latent variables had convergent validity [18]. In terms of discriminant validity, the inspection method puts forward the individual latent variables of extracting the square root of the average variance, which should be greater than the latent variables and other latent variables in the model of covariant relations [16]. In addition, Venkatesh, Thong, and Xu (2012) suggested that the test standard of the AVE square root should be at least greater than or equal to .70 [20]. The model structure relationship analysis depends on: (1) whether the standardized path coefficient reaches statistical significance; and (2) the interpretation ability of the model in R2 [15].

**4. RESULTS**

**4.1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

Table 1 shows that the compositional reliability (CR) of the four latent variables in this study was above .80, and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value was above .70. Therefore, the reliability of each scale in this study was acceptable. Regarding validity, according to the analysis results, the AVE of each observation variable in this study was higher than .50, indicating that the scale had good convergent validity.

**Table1.** *Confirmatory factor analysis results*

Latent variables/Measure index	CR	Cronbach's $\alpha$	AVE
Attractiveness	.89	.85	.57
Motivation	.95	.94	.56
Satisfaction	.94	.92	.75
Perceived value	.92	.87	.79
Revisit intention	.97	.95	.91

From the results of Table 2, it could be seen that the square root of the AVE for all latent variables in the scale for tourists with religious tourism in this study was between .76 and .95. The AVE of each latent variable was greater than the value of all relevant coefficients in the same row and the same column. Therefore, the measurement model of this study had good discriminant validity.

**Table2.** *Discriminant validity analysis results*

Variables	ATT	MO	SA	PE	RE
Attractiveness	<b>.76</b>				
Motivation	.67	<b>.80</b>			
Satisfaction	.72	.77	<b>.86</b>		
Perceived value	.65	.75	.76	<b>.89</b>	
Revisit intention	.55	.54	.58	.52	<b>.95</b>

**4.2. Structural Pattern Analysis**

Figure 2 shows that the path coefficients are standardized regression coefficients (standardized regression coefficients,  $\beta$  value). First, the attractiveness of Chaotian Mazu Temple positively affects tourist motivation ( $\beta=.68, p<.01$ ). The motivation to visit positively affects satisfaction ( $\beta=.68, p<.01$ ) and perceived value ( $\beta=.40, p<.01$ ). Satisfaction positively affects perceived value ( $\beta=.38, p<.01$ ) and revisit intention ( $\beta=.46, p<.01$ ). Finally, perceived value ( $\beta=.18, p<.01$ ) has a positive effect on tourist revisit intention. The R2 value represents the predictive power of this study's research model. First, the attractiveness of Mazu Temple has a predictive power of 46% regarding the motivation to visit. Attractiveness has a predictive power of 61% for satisfaction through motivation to visit and a direct predictive power of 65% for perceived value. Finally, the predictive power of satisfaction and perceived value for revisit intention reached 37%.

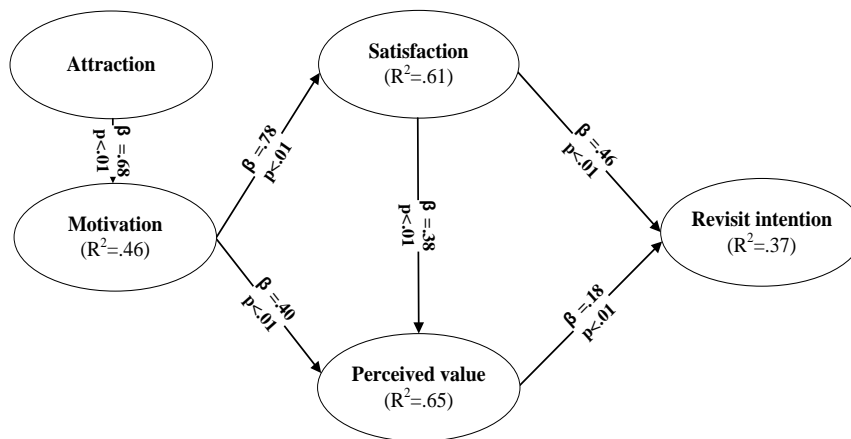


Figure3. Structural model

Table3. The Results of the Hypothesis Tests

Hypothesis	Path coefficients( $\beta$ )	Test result
H1: Attractiveness-Motivation	.68**	Supported
H2: Motivation-Satisfaction	.78**	Supported
H3: Motivation-Perceived value	.40**	Supported
H4: Satisfaction-Perceived value	.46**	Supported
H5: Satisfaction-Revisit intention	.46**	Supported
H6: Perceived value-Revisit intention	.18**	Supported
Model fit indicators: APC = .492 ( $p < .001$ ), ARS = .521 ( $p < .001$ ), AVIF = 2.418 (acceptable if $\leq 5$ , ideally $\leq 3.3$ )		

\*\* $P < .01$

The WarpPLS calculated three fit indices that are meaningful in the context of variance-based SEM [21]: average path coefficient (APC), average R-squared (ARS), and average variance inflation factor (AVIF). However, figures for APC and ARS should be under 2 and statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ), while the value for AVIF is suggested to be below 5. This study's model demonstrated an acceptable fit to the data for APC = .492 ( $p < .001$ ), ARS = .521 ( $p < .001$ ), and AVIF = 2.418. Table 2 illustrates the results of the hypothesis tests.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1. Conclusion

The results of this study found that: (1) Beigang Chaotian Temple is the center of Mazu belief. Its high popularity, cultural relics, local tourist attractions, famous snacks, and the fact that Mazu is said to be effective in blessing believers are the main reasons it attracts tourists. (2) When a tourist's motivation for visiting Mazu (asking God to solve doubts, devout belief, spiritual comfort, praying for blessings) is higher and more positive, their motivation is satisfied. Therefore, tourist satisfaction (prayers and wishes may be realized) will be higher, and their perceived value of religious tourism (spending money, time, physical energy, and spirit) will be higher. Their intention to revisit Chaotian Temple to worship Mazu will be higher.

### 5.2. Recommendations

Since Chaotian Temple is one of the three most well-known Mazu Temples worldwide, it is the center of Mazu belief in Taiwan. This study's findings suggest that in addition to maintaining the quality of the local environment and tourism, the quality of worship must be maintained inside and outside the temple. On important days (e.g., the first and fifteenth day of each month of the lunar calendar, during the Lunar New Year, Mazu's birthday, and Ascension Day), the temple should control the flow of people to avoid a negative impact caused by crowds. Moreover, regarding other religious places, due to the development of modern society, tourism activities become more important after believers or tourists take part in a pilgrimage. Therefore, local government tourism departments and operators must strengthen local accommodation and hospitality services and plan tourist attractions with different routes centered on religious places to meet the needs of religious tourists. Furthermore, future researchers should include variables related to religious beliefs to understand religious tourism behavior and Mazu believers in more detail.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This study was supported by a grant from Fujian Provincial Social Science Foundation Project, China (No.FJ2022T018).

### REFERENCES

- [1] Introduce of Beigang Chaotian Temple. Available: <http://www.matsu.org.tw/>
- [2] K. Shing. Chan, "Attractiveness of a religious theme site: The A-Ma Cultural Village in Macau, China," *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage*, Vol. 8, no. 8, pp.12-29, 2021.
- [3] Gunn, C. A., and Var. T, *Tourism planning: basics, concept, cases* (4thed). New York: Routledge, pp.41-43, 2002.
- [4] Ryan, C. From motivation to assessment. In C. Ryan (Ed.), *the tourist experience* (2nd ed). London: Continuum, pp.58-77, 2002.
- [5] G.Rinschede, "Forms of religious tourism," *Ann. Tour. Res*, vol.9, no.1, pp.51-67, 1992.
- [6] M. Santos, Religious tourism: Contributions towards a clarification of concepts. In C. Fernandes, F. McGettigan, J. Edwards (Eds.), *Religious tourism and pilgrimage: ATLAS –Special interest group 1st expert meeting* (pp. 27–41), Tourism Board of Leiria, 2003.
- [7] D. J. Timothy, and D. H. Olsen, *Tourism, religion and spiritual journey*, London, Routledge, 2006.
- [8] Hsiao-Ming. Chang, and Yen-Chen. Huang, "A study of the image, tourism quality, perceived value, and intention of Mazu Believers towards Religious Site," *Int. J. Res. Tour Hos*, vol.9, no.1, pp.9-16, 2023.
- [9] D. Iliev, "The evolution of religious tourism: Concept, segmentation and development of new identities," *J. Hosp. Tour. Manag*, no.45, pp.131-140, 2020.
- [10] M. Terzidoua, C. Scarlesb, and M. N. K. Saunders, "The complexities of religious tourism motivations: Sacred places, vows and visions," *An. Tour. Res*, no.70, 54-65, 2018.
- [11] Hsiao-Ming. Chang, Ching-Hui. Lin, and Yen-Chen. Huang, "A study of behavioral model on Mazuism religious tourism in Taiwan-An example of Dajia Jenn Lann Temple," *Int. J. Religious Tour Pilgrimage* vol.8, no.3, pp.47-59, 2020.
- [12] C. A.Fornell, "National customer satisfaction barometer: The Swedish experience," *J. Mark*, vol.56, no.1, pp.6-21, 1992.
- [13] J. J. JR. Cronin, M. K. Brady, and G. T. M. Hult, "Assessing the effects of quality, value, and customer satisfaction on consumer behavioral intentions in service environment," *J. Retail*, no.76, 193-218, 2000.
- [14] D. Jani, and H. Han, "Investigating the key factors affecting behavioral intentions: evidence from a full service restaurant setting. *Int. J. Contemp*," *Hosp. Manag*, vol.23, no.7, pp.1000–1018, 2011.
- [15] L. J. Callarisa and R. Fiol, "Palau-Saumell, Forgas-Coll, S. Urban destination loyalty drivers and crossnational moderator effects: The case of Barcelona," *Tour. Manag*, vol.33, no.6, pp.1309-1320, 2012.
- [16] C. Fornell, and D. F. Larcker, "Evaluating structural equations models with unobservable variables and measurement error," *J. Mark. Res*, vol.18, no.1, pp.39-50, 1981.
- [17] J. C. Nunnally, and H. Bernstein, *Psychometric theory* (3rd ed.). (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994).
- [18] W. W. Chin, "The partial least squares approach for structural equation modeling, in G. A. Marcoulides (ed.), *Modern Methods for Business Research*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Hillsdale, NJ, forthcoming, 1998.
- [19] J. F. Hair, W. C. Black, B. J. Babin, R. and and R. E. Anderson, *Multivariate data analysis*, 7th ed, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 2010.
- [20] V. L.Venkatesh, J. Y. and Thong, X. Xu, "Consumer acceptance and use of information technology: Extending the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology," *MIS Q* vol.36, no.1, pp.157-178, 2012.
- [21] Kock, N. "Using WarpPLS in e-collaboration studies: Descriptive statistics, settings, and key analysis results," *Int. J. e-Collaboration*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp.1-6, 2011.

**Citation:** Hsiao-Ming Chang & Yen-Chen Huang, "Examining Religious Tourists' Behavior at the Beigang Chaotian Temple in Taiwan". *International Journal of Research in Tourism and Hospitality (IJRTH)*, vol 10, no. 1, 2024, pp. 31-36. doi: <https://doi.org/10.20431/2455-0043.1001004>

**Copyright:** © 2024 Authors. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.