

TOURIST PERCEPTION OF RISK: CHENGDU RESEARCH BASE FOR GIANT PANDA BREEDING (CRBGPB)

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ABSTRACT:

The aim of this paper is to provide insight into wildlife tourists' risk perceptions relevant to the experience of interacting with giant pandas in a semi-captive setting. A survey of tourists to the Chengdu Research Base for Giant Panda Breeding (CRBGPB) resulted in 650 valid questionnaires. Descriptive statistics, independent-samples t-tests and one-way analysis of variances (ANOVAs) were used to explore the influence of demographic characteristics and tourist behaviour on risk perception. Perceptions relating to risks associated with the quality of the tourism experience were the most high, whilst physical risk perception was the lowest. The most important finding was that risk perception for the CRBGPB experience was low.

Keywords: wildlife tourism; risk perception; Giant Panda; semi-captive setting; China

INTRODUCTION

Humans have been concerned about risk for millennia in attempts to make sense out of the uncertainties and dangers associated with nature (Bernstein, 1996). This paper aims to evaluate the tourist experience and perception of risk in a semi-captive wildlife setting in China, the Chengdu Research Base for Giant Panda Breeding (CRBGPB). Much recent, western, literature in the study of tourism has focused on the emergence of the Chinese outbound tourism market (Pang, 2003; Zhang & Chou, 2004; Andreu, Claver, & Quer, 2013). In contrast, this paper explores the perceptions of tourists at a Chinese wildlife tourism destination. The aims are to provide an introductory analysis of risk perception of visitors to this Chinese, semi-captive, wildlife destination and also to provide suggestions for further research opportunities of multinational tourists at this destination. It is proposed that this exploration will provide a basis for further research of this growing, global, tourism market.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Risk perception in tourism

In the tourism context, risk has been defined as what is perceived and experienced by the tourists during the process of purchasing and consuming travel services (Tsaur, Tzeng, & Wang, 1997; Reisinger and Mavondo, 2005). According to Moutinho (2000), 'perceived risk is a function of uncertainty and its consequences' experienced during the purchase decision. Since travel products are of experiential nature tourists' perceptions and experiences can only be evaluated after the product is purchased and/or during the product consumption (Reisinger & Mavondo, 2006). Risk perception has a great influence on the tourists' behaviour and their intention to revisit. This paper evaluates the perception of risk on consumption of the product.

Risk perception has been examined in space tourism (Reddy, Nica, & Wilkes, 2012), adventure tourism (Gyimóthy & Mykletun, 2004), cruise tourism (Henthorne, George, & Smith, 2013), international tourism (Lepp & Gibson, 2003; Y. Reisinger & Mavondo, 2005), backpacker settings (Fuchs, 2013), shopping tourism (Yüksel & Yüksel, 2007) and mega-event tourism (Qi, Gibson, & Zhang, 2009; Schroeder, Pennington-Gray, Kaplanidou, & Zhan, 2013). In addition, some studies also focus on some scales in the destination, such as natural hazards (Wachinger, Renn, Begg, & Kuhlicke, 2013), crime-safety in destination (George, 2010), terrorism and disease (Rittichainuwat & Chakraborty, 2009), health risk in tourism (Jonas, Mansfeld, Paz, & Potasman, 2010). There has been a little research undertaken on risk perception in wildlife tourism, especially in the semi-captive setting.

In terms of expectation, tourists select a destination that best matches their needs and offers the most benefits for the least risk (Sonmez and Graefe 1998). The perceived risk is influenced by travel motivation, personality, motivation, and lifestyle (Reisinger & Mavondo, 2005). Fuchs and Reichel (2006) also found that those without past experience traveling to a destination had higher perceptions of human-induced and socio-physical risk, as well as food safety and weather related risk.

Whilst Sonmez and Graefe (1998) did not find age and gender to influence an individual's perception of risk, other researchers found that tolerance for risk related to tourism decreases with age (Gibson & Yiannakis, 2002) and differs according to gender (Carr, 2001). Reisinger & Mavondo (2005) suggest that future research might also consider testing the travel-risk-perception model on respondents from different age groups, gender groups, social classes, and family life stages to determine the differences in the strength of the relationships across various segments with different socio-demographic characteristics.

Perceptions of risk can also vary depending on the type of risk itself, for instance, risk perceptions associated with crime or terrorism (Rittichainuwat & Chakraborty, 2009; Sonmez, 1998). Within the anthropological literature, an individual's understanding and perceptions of risk are socially and culturally constructed (Quintal, Lee, & Soutar, 2010), and influenced by prior experience (Karamustafa, Fuchs, & Reichel, 2013). Therefore, perceptions of risk have been regarded as

“situation-specific (Lepp & Gibson, 2003; Schroeder et al., 2013; Williams & Baláz, 2013). A majority of the empirical research has explored the factors that may influence risk perceptions associated with travel in general; however, there is a need for examination of wildlife tourism risk perceptions after the event.

Scales of perceived risk in tourism

Certain risk factors (Lepp & Gibson, 2003), e.g. political instability, terrorism or strange food, have been identified in tourism. While such risk factors may give rise to judgments of different destinations as more or less risky (Wolff & Larsen, 2013); these judgments may be completely unrelated to how much tourists worry about travelling to such destinations (see Larsen, Brun, & Ogaard, 2008).

In terms of Alpine adventure tourism, literature indicates that tourists face four main risk sources for the alpine tourism destinations: health risks, crime risks, terrorism, and the risk of war and political instability (Schusterschitz, Schütz, & Wiedemann, 2010). In a study of visitors to Turkey, six risk dimensions were perceived by tourists. These dimensions were; time and social risk; financial risks; physical risks; pressing situation risk; experience-related risk; and weather and hotel risk (Karamustafa et al., 2013).

Other research has evaluated 13 different types of risk associated with tourism. These include; physical risks; equipment risks; risks of crime; cultural risks; financial risks; health risks; performance risks; political risks; psychological risks: satisfaction, social risks; risks of terrorism; and time risks (Cater, 2006; George, 2010; Henthorne et al., 2013; Reisinger & Mavondo, 2006; Schroeder et al., 2013; Schusterschitz et al., 2010; Uriely & Belhassen, 2006; Williams & Baláz, 2013).

In sum, financial risks, physical risks, social risks and health risks have all been suggested as important inhibitors to tourism related research. The measurement scale of risk perception developed for this research on wildlife tourism is based on the above literature and expert opinions.

Wildlife tourism

Wildlife tourism overlaps with general tourism, nature-based tourism, ecotourism and adventure tourism; and occurs in both aquatic and terrestrial environments. It also includes hunting, fishing and viewing wildlife in captive situations such as zoos and wildlife sanctuaries. Based on a review of the literature (using a variety of English, academic, databases), very few studies have reported on risk perception in semi-captive wildlife tourism settings, giant panda tourism (see Cong et al 2014) and no specific paper on the risk perceptions associated with giant panda tourism was found.

Wildlife risk for interaction with some species has been examined, such as, bottlenose dolphins (Smith, Samuels, & Bradley, 2008), sharks (Maljković & Côté, 2011; Topelko & Dearden, 2005), brown bear (Rode, Farley, & Robbins, 2006); whales (Catlin & Jones, 2010) cougars (Riley & Decker, 2000). This literature highlights the fact that risk perception, about certain aspects of human wildlife interaction, is species-specific. Recently, risk studies been incorporated into wildlife tourism (Smith,

Samuels, & Bradley, 2008), and as yet, there has been limited investigation into risk perception of tourists interacting with giant pandas.

METHODOLOGY

Study site

The giant panda is featured in the logo of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). WWF's "All Time Top 10 Species to See" ranks the giant panda as the top species in the world that people want to see (World Wildlife Fund, 2012). Moreover, tourism associated with giant pandas is one of the most unique tourism products provided within China. The dilemma is how to make the giant panda conservation projects sustainable and, at the same time, to satisfy tourist needs for close interactions with giant pandas.

The Chengdu Research Base for Giant Panda Breeding (CRBGPB) is located in the northeast of downtown Chengdu, in Sichuan Province, and covers an area of 36.5 hectares. The CRBGPB is a non-profit organization engaged in wildlife research, captive breeding, conservation, education, and educational tourism. It was founded in 1987 with six giant pandas rescued from the wild. By the end of 2011, it had succeeded in having 109 births and a total of 161 baby pandas (through multiple, successful births). The CRBGPB is different from normal zoos as its main function is for giant panda breeding research. The CRBGPB's facilities include a Tourist Services Center, Giant Panda Museum, Research Center, Panda Story Cinema, Red Panda Enclosures, Giant Panda Nursery, Giant Panda Cub Enclosure, Adult Panda Enclosure, No. 14 Enclosure, Sub-adult Panda Enclosure, Giant Panda Hospital, Giant Panda Kitchen, Swan Lake, and Restaurant. The goals of the CRBGPB are to be a world-class research facility, a conservation education center, and an international educational tourism destination. It is regarded as a semi-captive setting for the giant pandas.

Data collection and validity and sampling adequacy

Interviewer administrated surveys were conducted with tourists at CRBGPB from July 07 to July, 26, 2013. The survey instrument was conveniently administered to tourists by teams of ten research assistants who had been trained on how to survey the tourists to ensure consistency in their work. A schedule was established whereby data were collected at each site during different days of the week and at different times of the day to maximize the chances of obtaining a representative sample.

Questions on the survey included those covering environmental attitudes of visitors, their perception of risk of the experience and their involvement with the giant panda tourism experience. Visitors were informed that the survey was supported by Peking University, that individuals would remain anonymous and that the information would be used for conservation and tourism development at the CRBGPB. The survey took approximately 20 minutes to complete and the assistants collected the surveys immediately upon their completion. When the interviewer and the visitor had completed the survey, the interviewer approached the next person to exit the center. A response rate of 93% resulted in the collection of 650 survey questionnaires for data analysis. This paper focuses on the questions

relating to risk perception. Descriptive and multivariate analyses were undertaken using SPSS version 21.

In terms of the validity of the scale of nine items used to explore risk perception for this research, SPSS analysis indicated Cronbach's alpha of 0.822. Nunally (1978) indicates that 0.80 or higher reflects a high level of reliability of internal consistency for the scale. Further the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy for the scale was 0.837 reflecting "great" sampling adequacy (Field, 2005, p640).

Profile of the sample

The demographic characteristics of the sample are highlighted in Table 1. The sample consisted of an even distribution between males (50.0%) and females (50.0%). Most of the respondents were single (63.8%), students (46.5%), aged between 20 and 29 years (40.8%) and with an educational background at the Bachelor level (43.2). Most of the respondents had an annual household income less than US\$10,000 (48.3%).

Table 1 The profile of the sample

	Variable	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	325	50.0%
	Female	325	50.0%
Age	Under 10	10	1.5%
	10-19	154	23.7%
	20-29	265	40.8%
	30-39	127	19.5%
	40-49	55	8.5%
	50-59	30	4.6%
	Above 60	9	1.4%
Educational background	Under Junior Middle School	65	10.0%
	High School	90	13.8%
	Vocational School	90	13.8%
	Bachelor	281	43.2%
	Master & Doctor	109	16.8%
	Doctor	15	2.3%
Occupation	Student	302	46.5%
	Military	1	0.2%
	Official	20	3.1%
	White-Collar	41	6.3%
	Blue-Collar	5	0.8%
	Farmer	1	0.2%
	Technician	108	16.6%
	Business Man	35	5.4%
	Retired	18	2.8%
	Unemployed	15	2.3%
	Else	63	9.7%
Average Household Annual Income (SUS)	No income	242	37.2%
	Less than 10,000	72	11.1%
	10,000-19,000	65	10.0%
	20,000-49,999	144	22.2%
	50,000-99,000	70	10.8%
	100,000-199,999	36	5.5%
More than 200,000	21	3.2%	
Family background	Single	415	63.8%
	Married with no children	38	5.8%
	Married with one child	147	22.6%
	Married with two children and above	49	7.5%

Data analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the perceptions that wildlife tourists have with the giant panda interaction in the CRBGPB. The results are presented as follows. Initially the overall mean responses to the nine items of risk perception are provided in order of highest to lowest perceptions. Demographic characteristics are then explored in order to determine if there are significant differences in perceptions of risk according to gender, age or family status. Further, tourist behavioral differences are presented to determine their influence on risk perception; these include whether the tourists are first time visitors or repeat visitors to the CRBGPB; their levels of satisfaction with their wildlife experience; and whether or not they intend to revisit the CRBGPB.

RESULTS

Perceptions of giant panda based tourism risk

Table 2 details the mean score for perception of risk on nine items. The items have been ranked according to the level of risk perceived. It can be suggested that perceived level of risk was generally low among tourists. The mean scores for the nine items ranged from 2.77 to 2.24 based on a five-point scale (1=Very weak perception to 5=Very strong perception). Furthermore, the responses relating to quality of the tourism experience were the most high, whilst physical risk perception was the lowest. Responses for financial risk, time risk and safety risk all ranked in the mid-range of the mean scores. Based on these findings, it can be suggested that overall, tourists perceive that the experience of interacting with giant panda, in this semi-captive setting, to be relatively safe in terms of wildlife tourism risk.

Table 2 Ranking of risk perception items

Item	N	Mean	Std Deviation
Worry that there is less chance to encounter wildlife in the destination.	650	2.77	1.10
Worry that facilities are not well developed.	648	2.67	1.22
Worry that traffic access will be affected by natural disasters such as earthquake or flood.	650	2.55	1.13
Worry that the time spent is worthwhile.	650	2.52	1.12
Worry that experience is not as good as expected	650	2.52	0.98
Worry that accidents may happen	650	2.42	1.12
Worry that actual spend is beyond expected costs	649	2.36	1.08
Worry about a wildlife attack	650	2.32	1.16
Worry about ability to adapt to the local environment	650	2.24	1.07

Analysis of the form of contact tourists had with the giant panda was conducted and reflected that most visitors were involved in activities with no physical contact where 84% of visitors viewed panda behavior from a distance and 80% of visitors took a photo from a distance. In terms of activities where tourist interaction with the giant pandas involved physical contact, 12% of visitors actually held a panda, 10% had their photo taken with a panda and 5% of respondents were involved in the volunteer program. Analysis of the results of a t-test based on 'contact and no contact' with the nine items of risk perception indicated that there was no significant difference in the level of contact with the giant panda and the visitors perception of risk

A t-test for probability of differences was used to examine the different risk perception between genders during interactions with the giant panda. The results are shown in Table 3. It is indicated that there was no significant difference between wildlife tourism risk perceptions according to gender. Across all items, females had a slightly higher perception of wildlife tourism risk, associated with interaction with giant pandas, than males. The risk associated with the quality of the tourism experience (*Worried that there is less chance to encounter wildlife in the destination*) was one item that both male and female ranked the highest. Physical risk (*Worry about a wildlife attack*) was the item that they worried least about.

Table 3 Relationship between gender and risk perception

Item	Male		Female		p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Worry that there is less chance to encounter wildlife in the destination.	2.75	1.16	2.8	1.04	0.589
Worry that facilities are not well developed.	2.61	1.23	2.71	1.2	0.306
Worry that traffic access will be affected by natural disasters such as earthquake or flood.	2.53	1.13	2.57	1.13	0.645
Worry that the time spent is worthwhile.	2.48	1.01	2.57	0.95	0.278
Worry that experience is not as good as expected	2.48	1.14	2.57	1.11	0.292
Worry that accidents may happen	2.44	1.14	2.41	1.11	0.798
Worry that actual spend is beyond expected costs	2.29	1.11	2.43	1.05	0.105
Worry about a wildlife attack	2.27	1.17	2.38	1.14	0.230
Worry about ability to adapt to the local environment	2.21	1.09	2.26	1.05	0.608

Results of a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), shown below in Table 4, revealed statistically significant differences at $p < .05$ in perceptions of risk among the 7 age groups. More specifically, age influenced the perception of financial risk (*Worry that actual spend is beyond expected costs*) and time risk (*Worry that the time spent is worthwhile*). Different age group had different highest risk items; the over 60 age group had the highest level of worry about costs. The 50-59 age group, worried

most that the destination experience might not be as good as expected. The age groups, 10-19, 20-29, 30-39 and 40-49, had the highest risk perception on the item 'Worry that there is less chance to encounter wildlife in the destination'. This indicates that age groups except for the over 60s, were most concerned with the risk associated with the quality of the tourism experience. It is interesting to note that in general the age group 20-29 had the highest risk perceptions to the nine items.

Table 4 Relationship between age and risk

Item	<10 n=10	10-19 n=154	20-29 n=265	30-39 n=126	40-49 n=55	50-59 n=30	60=> n=9	All N=649	F
Worry that there is less chance to encounter wildlife in the destination.	2.2	2.9	2.84	2.69	2.65	2.43	2.33	2.77	1.92
Worry that facilities are not well developed.	2	2.82	2.72	2.59	2.45	2.48	2.11	2.67	1.82
Worry that traffic access will be affected by natural disasters such as earthquake or flood.	2.1	2.53	2.62	2.63	2.29	2.4	2.55	2.55	1.1
Worry that the time spent is worthwhile.	2.2	2.6	2.61	2.4	2.31	2.47	2.11	2.52	1.77
Worry that experience is not as good as expected	2.1	2.72 ^a	2.56 ^b	2.52	2.05 ^{ab}	2.53	1.78	2.52	3.38*
Worry that accidents may happen	2.2	2.44	2.49	2.22	2.51	2.4	2.44	2.42	0.97
Worry that actual spend is beyond expected costs	2.2	2.39	2.53 ^a	2.10 ^a	2.09	2.27	2.75	2.36	3.25*
Worry about a wildlife attack	1.9	2.32	2.32	2.42	2.42	1.93	1.78	2.32	1.34
Worry about ability to adapt to the local environment	2	2.16	2.31	2.17	2.35	2.27	1.78	2.24	0.919

*p<.05

Superscript indicates which are the significant differences are, Tukey's HSD test.

Table 5 below provides the results of an analysis of variance (ANOVA), which revealed that there were significant differences at $p < .05$ among the four family groups for two of the nine wildlife tourism risk perception variables, these were financial risk and physical risk.

The group that was married with one child reflected a significant difference to the group of singles in terms of the financial risk (*Worry that actual spend is beyond expected costs*). Further, the single group, the group that were married with one child and the group that were married with 2 or more children had significant differences for the physical risk (*Worry about a wildlife attack*). Again, the highest risk perception related to the quality of the tourism experience and the lowest perception

related to physical risk.

Table 5 Relationship between family status and risk perception

Item	Single	Married	Married	Married 2 or more Children	All N=649	F
		No Children	One Child			
Worry that there is less chance to encounter wildlife in the destination.	2.84	2.68	2.67	2.57	2.77	1.569
Worry that facilities are not well developed.	2.70	2.55	2.74	2.25	2.67	2.275
Worry that traffic access will be affected by natural disasters such as earthquake or flood.	2.58	2.47	2.55	2.41	2.55	0.399
Worry that the time spent is worthwhile.	2.56	2.58	2.50	2.25	2.52	1.559
Worry that experience is not as good as expected	2.53	2.58	2.57	2.22	2.52	1.300
Worry that accidents may happen	2.41	2.18	2.53	2.31	2.42	1.202
Worry that actual spend is beyond expected costs	2.43 ^a	2.61	2.14 ^a	2.27	2.36	3.448*
Worry about a wildlife attack	2.25 ^a	2.34	2.59 ^{ab}	2.10 ^b	2.32	3.912*
Worry about ability to adapt to the local environment	2.20	2.34	2.37	2.08	2.24	1.488

*p<.05

Superscript indicates which are the significant differences are, Tukey's HSD test.

Survey questions elicited responses from tourists, relating to their behaviour in terms of visitation, satisfaction with, and intention to revisit the CRBGPB. First time visitors represented 70% of respondents (n=456). Repeat visitors included 20% who were on their second visit (n=127) and 10% who had visited more than twice (n=74). Risk perceptions were examined through a t-test analysis between first time and repeat visitors. Table 6 shows the mean response of these groups and reports on the level of significant difference from the t-test.

Table 6 Risk perception by visitation

Item	Sample Mean N=650	First Visit n=456	Repeat Visit n=168	p
Worry that there is less chance to encounter wildlife in the destination.	2.77	2.73	2.85	0.262
Worry that facilities are not well developed.	2.67	2.65	2.72	0.475
Worry that traffic access will be affected by natural disasters such as earthquake or flood.	2.55	2.54	2.58	0.652
Worry that the time spent is worthwhile.	2.52	2.52	2.54	0.858
Worry that experience is not as good as expected	2.52	2.51	2.49	0.886
Worry that accidents may happen	2.42	2.43	2.36	0.488
Worry that actual spend is beyond expected costs	2.36	2.37	2.26	0.262
Worry about a wildlife attack	2.25	2.70	2.33	0.812
Worry about ability to adapt to the local environment	2.20	2.23	2.20	0.735

Table 6 indicates that there are no significant differences in risk perception dependent upon the level of visitation to the CRBGPB. On average, repeat visitors appear to have higher perception of risk, whilst a calculation of the effect of the size of the difference r , showed a minimal sized effect.

One survey question asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement with the following statement, 'Overall, I am satisfied with the giant panda tour'. Satisfaction was evaluated using a 5 point likert scale with 1= Totally disagree, 2= Partly disagree, 3=Not sure, 4=Partly agree and 5=Totally agree. The mean response to this statement was 4.11 (SD 0.90), reflecting a high level of satisfaction with the CRBGPB experience. In order to explore the effect of satisfaction on risk perception, a new variable was calculated where values 1-3 were re-coded into Not Satisfied (n=102) and values 4-5 were re-coded as Satisfied (n=546). Table 7 highlights the mean scores for the items of risk perception and also indicates the level of significant difference from the t-test.

Table 7 Risk perception by satisfaction

Item	Sample Mean N=650	Satisfied n=546	Not Satisfied n=102	<i>p</i>
Worry that there is less chance to encounter wildlife in the destination.	2.77	2.81	2.62	0.116
Worry that facilities are not well developed.	2.67	2.67	2.61	0.621
Worry that traffic access will be affected by natural disasters such as earthquake or flood.	2.55	2.55	2.54	0.921
Worry that the time spent is worthwhile.	2.52	2.5	2.63	0.3
Worry that experience is not as good as expected	2.52	2.53	2.51	0.895
Worry that accidents may happen	2.42	2.46	2.25	0.091
Worry that actual spend is beyond expected costs	2.36	2.39	2.3	0.567
Worry about a wildlife attack	2.32	2.31	2.35	0.739
Worry about ability to adapt to the local environment	2.24	2.24	2.2	0.693

For all nine risk items, there were no significant differences at $p < .05$ between the two satisfaction groups. In general, the satisfied group appears to have higher risk perception than the not satisfied group, whilst again the size of the effect r was also minimal. Both groups worried about the risk associated with the quality of the tourism experience most and worried about the physical risk least. Safety-facility risk, time risk and financial risk were ranked in the mid-range.

The survey further asked respondents about their intention to return to the CRBGPB. In a manner similar to the question relating to satisfaction, a 5 point likert scale elicited responses to the statement, 'In the next 5 years, I am likely to revisit the CRBGPB'. The response to this question provided a mean score of 3.64 (SD 1.17), reflecting a medium likelihood of return from the visitors. In order to explore the re-visitation intention of visitors against risk perception, a new variable was calculated where 1-3 was recoded as *no intent to revisit* ($n=291$) and 4-5 was recoded as *intention to revisit* ($n=357$). Table 8 reports on the means in risk perception for these groups and includes p for a t-test for significant difference.

Table 8 reflects $p > 0.05$ for all nine variables, indicating that there are no significant differences among the two groups. In general, the group with intention to revisit seemed to have higher risk perception than the group who did not intend to revisit. They both worried about risk relating to the quality of the tourism experience most and worried about physical risk least. Safety-facility risk, time risk and financial risk were in the middle range of their risk perception. The finding is very similar to the satisfaction groups.

Table 8 Risk perception by intent to revisit

Item	Sample Mean N=650	Intend to revisit n=356	No Intention to revisit n=289	<i>p</i>
Worry that there is less chance to encounter wildlife in the destination.	2.77	2.84	2.7	0.122
Worry that facilities are not well developed.	2.67	2.69	2.63	0.544
Worry that traffic access will be affected by natural disasters such as earthquake or flood.	2.55	2.56	2.53	0.723
Worry that the time spent is worthwhile.	2.52	2.56	2.48	0.399
Worry that experience is not as good as expected	2.52	2.58	2.45	0.099
Worry that accidents may happen	2.42	2.46	2.38	0.426
Worry that actual spend is beyond expected costs	2.36	2.36	2.35	0.971
Worry about a wildlife attack	2.32	2.41	2.21	0.029
Worry about ability to adapt to the local environment	2.24	2.24	2.23	0.903

DISCUSSION

This research made several contributions to the scholarly work and practice of tourism management related to the nexus between tourists risk perception and wildlife. The majority of respondents in this study were students with bachelor degree and with annual income less than US\$10,000, the gender breakdown is even.

Perhaps one of the most significant findings of this study was the overall of the risk perception for the giant panda is in the weak range. Based on these findings, it can be suggested that, overall, tourists perceive interacting with giant panda in semi-captive setting to be relatively safe in terms of wildlife tourism risk. In general, risk relating to the quality of the tourism experience is the highest and physical risk is the lowest; tourist responses were neutral for financial risk, time risk and safety-facilities risk. It may be suggested that in terms of wildlife encounters, the giant panda is less aggressive than other animals and that the CRBGPB manages its tourism settings in order to minimize risk to visitors.

Demographic factors that the literature indicates may influence risk perception were examined and included; gender, age and family status. It is interesting to note that females had slightly higher perceptions of wildlife tourism risk associated with giant panda in semi-captive setting than males; however, the difference was not significant. The relationship between age and wildlife tourism risk perception showed some significant differences in terms of financial and time risks. Further perceptions of financial risk, physical risk were influenced by the type of family group that the visitor

was with.

Tourist behavioural factors such as levels of visitation to the center; satisfaction with the experience; and the intention to revisit were also examined. Very little in the way of any significant differences were found between the various demographic and behavioural groups of the visitors to the CRBGPB.

CONCLUSION

Limitations of this paper include that the sample was taken from one week in July, resulting in a high level of student respondents that may be reflective of the summer break and also the educational goals of the CRBGPB. There exists an opportunity to explore issues of educational research in conservation based settings and another sample from CRBPG at a different time could be useful. Further, the survey was taken as an exit survey and a future research approach could be to elicit risk perception prior to entry and again on exit.

The significance of this paper resides in its contribution of baseline data on wildlife tourists to a semi-captive, Chinese setting. This paper provides a strong basis for exploration of further issues of risk perception in semi-captive settings. Given that very little significant differences were found between various groupings of tourists it may be suggested that the CRBGPB has management strategies in place to limit any feelings of risk for the visitors, it would be interesting to undertake further research that examines the risk perception between wildlife tourists and other types of tourists. Given that this research explores a famous and unique Chinese tourism destination and provides strong baseline data on visitation to a Chinese wildlife tourism setting, there is a possibility to explore the differences between Chinese and other visitors in terms of risk perception in semi-captive wildlife tourism settings.

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