Chapter 5

Tourist Encounter Preferences: Online Survey with a Visual Approach

5.0   Introduction

The previous chapter presented the methodology and findings of Study Two, which investigated the stereotypical ideas of Japanese and American tourists. Apart from the findings of the study, it also directed attention to the method of researching the tourist encounter phenomenon.   It became rather apparent that to ask people about their perceptions and preferences in a questionnaire when they are not in at the location in question is effectively seeks generalisations across a range of settings and circumstances.   However, it is also not very practical and even annoying for tourists when asked to participate in a questionnaire survey while actually at the tourist attraction spot.

In such cases, one of the approaches that may be suggested is a visual approach as introduced in Chapter 2.   As already discussed, a visual approach using photographic images as a form of stimulation has been used in environmental studies and recently in leisure studies to provide valid data for analysis.   This could be applied to tourism studies as well.   The present chapter introduces Study Three, which investigated the tourists' preferences in encountering other tourists through an online survey, using a visual approach.   As the review of literature in Chapter 1 suggested, both internal and external factors may influence the encounter preferences, therefore the present study will examine some of these factors as well. However, the present study was designed to be more experimental in nature to test if the proposed visual approach using edited photographic images would be adequate to measure the preferences of the observers, and could be applied for more in-depth data collection in Chapter 6.   Therefore, the discussion of the results are brief because more detailed analysis and similar discussion points arise in the next

chapter, Chapter 6. In particular, this study focuses on Japanese samples. Major surveys using photographic images have been conducted in the U.S. with American samples, however, there are no formal studies reported employing this type of technique with Japanese samples. A supplementary objective of this study is to test the adequacy of using the technique through spontaneous responses or negative evaluations from Japanese sample.

The present chapter presents the methodology, results, and discussion of Study Three, which analyses Japanese preferences for encountering tourists at reef and rainforest settings and explores influential internal and external factors. In the study, the internal factors which are examined include demographic and travel characteristics of the respondents, while the external factors are the numbers and the appearance of people observed in the visual simulations.

5.1 Research Questions

The particular objective of this study is to examine the preferences of Japanese toward seeing other tourists at rainforest and reef settings. Specific research questions are set as follows:

Research Question 1

Do Japanese have particular preferences concerning the number of other tourists they encounter?

Research Question 2

Do Japanese have particular preferences concerning the appearance of other tourists they encounter?

Research Question 3

Do variables such as gender, age, travel arrangements, familiarity with English, and travel experience affect encounter preferences of Japanese?

5.2   Methodology

To explore the above research questions, a questionnaire was developed employing a visual approach with edited photographic images as an encounter simulation.   Each photo consisted of a different combination of numbers of people and physical appearances of people, so that testing the people's preferences among those photos was expected to reflect their encounter preferences at the tourist destination.   The original homepage created for Study 2 was used to deliver the questionnaire.

5.2.1   Instrument

The questionnaire was developed by consulting the existing literature.   The questionnaire simply consisted of two sections.   Section 1 asked about respondents' preferences to the range of provided photographic images.   Section 2 collected data about respondents' demographic information and travel behaviour. The original Web page developed for Study 2 was used to deliver the questionnaire so that there was no need to construct another Web page, as this is a time-consuming task.   The questionnaire and the messages on the original Website were developed in the Japanese language, because the target sample for this study was Japanese.

Prior to the actual survey, a pilot test was conducted to test the contents of the questionnaire as well as the accessibility of the Website.   Two Japanese students were asked to access the given homepage address to complete the questionnaire and also to provide the feedback.   Based on the feedback from this pilot test, some

phrases were changed and the number of photos was reduced to five photos per set (originally it was nine) for easier ranking. A copy of the final draft of the questionnaire form appears in Appendix E (an English translation version is included for reference purposes).

Construction of Section 1

In Section 1, the visual approach was employed by using image capture technology to create a series of five photographs depicting a range of visitors. The construction of Section 1 followed the work of Manning and his colleagues (Manning et al.,1996, 1999), who used photographic images as stimulation in a questionnaire to measure crowding norms. As already mentioned in Chapter 2, the questionnaire using visual images as simulations has been established as an effective alternative to conventional text-based measurement (Inglis et al., 1999; Manning et al., 1996 1999; Pearce & Black, 1996). Two popular international tourist attraction sites in North Queensland in Australia, namely the outer reef and the rainforest, were chosen to be used as photo settings.

A selection of photographs at reef and rainforest settings was first captured by a digital camera and provided samples of public spaces in reef and rainforest settings in North Queeensland, Australia. The images were copied onto a Macintosh computer (ibook) at 2400 x 1800 pixel with a fine colour quality. Once the images were stored in the computer, Adobe PhotoDeluxe (version2.0 for Macintosh), an image-editing computer software program, was used to create two sets (one for reef and the other for rainforest setting) of five images representing the range of visitors present. The appearance (Caucasian or Asian) as well as the number of the people in each photo were systematically manipulated.

To develop the set of reef photos, a photo with no human subjects on the pontoon was selected as the base set (photo A). To create photo B, two Asian people, a male and a female in front, an Asian male at the back and a Caucasian female in the middle were selected from the photos captured in the computer. Photo C was created in the same way, except that the front two people were both Caucasians. Backgrounds of other people were inserted in both Photos B and C to create Photos D and E: seven Asian and another seven Caucasian people were selected from the original photo actually taken at the reef and were arranged as background visitors. A comparison to people in actual images of reef settings from the same point ensured correct scale and size of people. The five images, Photos A, B, C, D, and E, were digitally recorded onto the computer and were in turn developed into colour photographic images to be placed on the Web. Photos for the rainforest set were created in the same way based on the photo with no people at the boardwalk, and digitally recorded for Web use as well. The sizes of those images needed to be adjusted to be appropriately placed in the Website, and each of them became the size of 5.2 by 7 centimetres. Figures 5.1 and 5.2 are the results of the image editing explained above. While the images would be clearer in larger sizes, such sizes were not recommended because it would cause a slower download process, which may discourage participation in the survey. On the actual Website for the survey, however, the viewer could obtain a larger and clearer view of the photos (almost full screen, 13.8 by 18.4 centimetre) by clicking the individual photo, if viewers wanted to do so.

Five edited images in each set were constructed according to the number of and appearance of the people observed. As Table 5.1 demonstrates, there were photos based on absence of, a small number of and a large number of people. Also there were photos emphasising the presence of Asian people and Caucasian people, depending on the appearance of the people in the front. This was because the

literature reported that the observers received a strong impression from the people in the front in the photos rather than in the background (Inglis et al., 1999). The analysis of the results for the type of the preference of photo was based on the following categories, rather than each individual photo: number of people (absence of, small or large number of people) and appearance of front people (Asian or Caucasian).

Table 5.1 Photo by Categories

		Photo by Appearance of Front People		
		N / A	Asian-Looking	Caucasian-Looking
Photo by Number of People	Nobody	A		
	Small Number		B	C
	Large Number		D	E

Photo A

Photo B

Photo C

Photo D

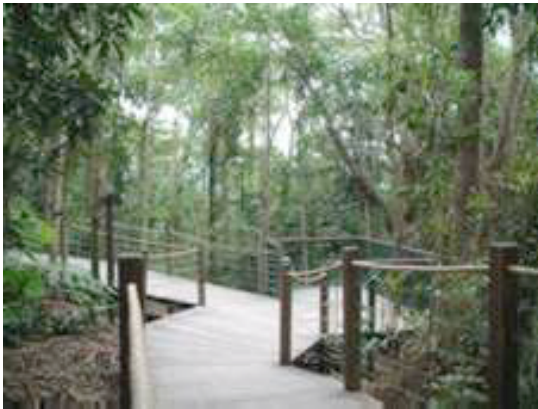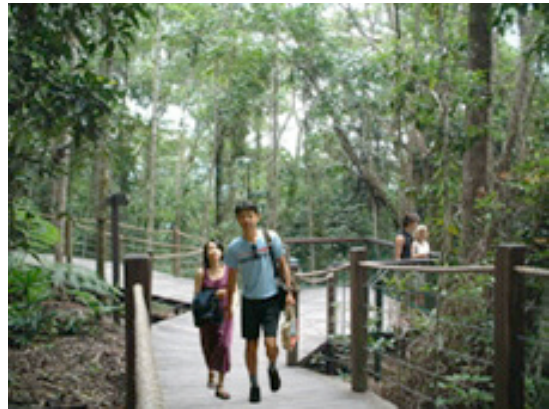Photo E

Figure 5.1   A Set of Reef Photos

Photo A

Photo B
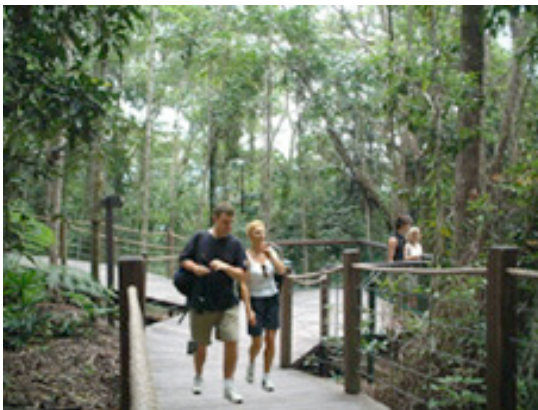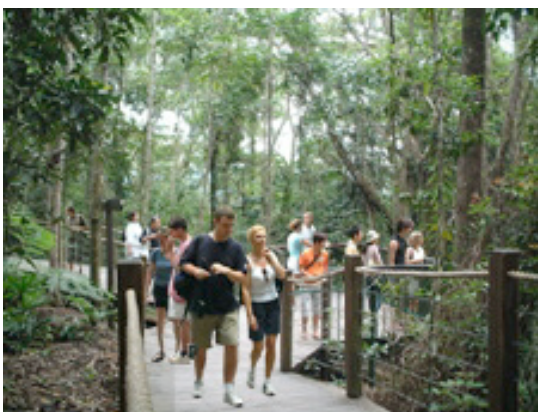

Photo C

Photo D

Photo E

Figure 5.2   A Set of Rainforest Photos

Section 2 – Demographic data collection

To obtain the characteristics of the respondents as well for the purposes for comparison, demographic data were collected in the Section 2 of the survey. Question about gender, age, travel arrangement usually used, English language familiarity, and travel experiences were asked.

The Website

The questionnaire in this study was delivered through the original homepage on the Internet server of James Cook University, developed for the previous study, Study 2.　The first screen of the survey is shown in Figure 5.3 as it appeared on the computer screen.　Just like the previous questionnaire, the respondents were asked to fill in the questionnaire by selecting the numbers and ticking the box of his/her choice.　Upon pressing the "send" button at the end of the survey, the answered questionnaires were sent to the researcher's e-mail account.

5.2.2　Data collection

Data were collected between March and May 2001, when the homepage was available for general access.　To invite participation in the survey, the same tactics were used, namely incentives, registration to "search engines" and the snowballing technique, as used for the previous study on the web (refer to 4.3.2 Data Collection, Chapter 4).

A total of 82 Japanese participated in the survey.　There were three unreadable responses due to technical problems, leaving the sample size as 79 participants.
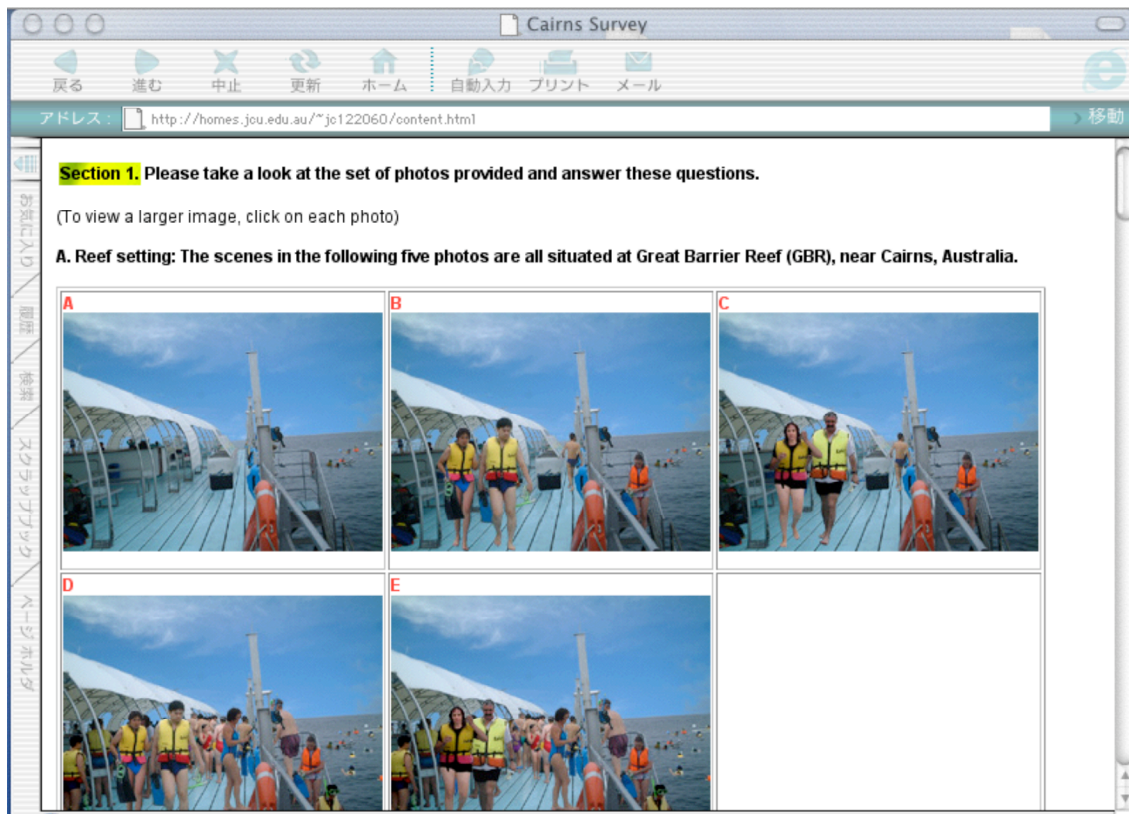
Figure 5.3　Questionnaire on the Computer Screen

5. 2. 3　Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 5.2 illustrates demographic and other characteristics of the samples. The percentage scores represent a ratio of the respondents to the survey in the questionnaire items.

Of the total number of respondents, 28 percent were males and 72 percent were females, indicating that the majority of the samples, three quarters of them in fact, were female respondents.　Also more than half of the respondents belonged to the age group of 25 to 35 years.　As for the travel arrangements, almost half of the respondents usually used some form of package tours, either full package (including

transportation, accommodation and arranged excursion tours) or partly package tours (with transportation and accommodation only). The other half of the respondents said that they usually arranged all the travel needs independently. One quarter of the respondents expressed no problems in communicating in English, while about 30 percent said they could somehow survive communicating in English, and 20 percent admitted that they did not have any confidence in their English communication skills. Finally, when asked about their travel experiences, one quarter of the respondents said that they were currently living in English-speaking countries, almost half of the respondents had been to English-speaking countries, and only 10 percent of the total respondents reported that they had no experience visiting English-speaking countries.

Table 5.2 Demographics and Other Profiles of Samples

Characteristics	% *
Male : Female	27.8 : 72.2
Age Group	
> 17 year old	1.3
18 ~ 24	17.7
25 ~ 35	70.9
36 ~ 45	5.1
46 ~ 55	1.3
> 56 year old	3.8
Travel Arrangement	
partly package tour	30.4
full package tour	10.1
individual travel	58.2
others	1.3
English Language Familiarity	
native speaker	0.0
no problem	32.9
can survive	41.8
no confidence	25.3
Travel Experience	
living in English speaking country	27.8
been to English speaking country	59.5
never been to English speaking country	12.7

* Note: Sample Size = 79

It became apparent that the sample characteristics were rather biased due to the data gathering methods. Online surveys permit only those persons who have access to computers and Internet connections. In addition, using the snowball method especially attracted certain types of people to the survey. As a result, the samples tend to be more likely to be females, in their mid 20s to mid 30s, those who are more independent when travelling, and those who have more experience in English speaking countries and exposure to the English language. However in spite of these sample characteristics, the study can serve its purpose as an experimental one methodologically and from which the following studies could be developed.

5. 3   Results and Discussion

Frequency counting and cross-tabulations were run on SPSS. The Pearson chi-square tests were also administered to see if there were any significant differences. From this point, the results of the analysis and discussion were reported under each research question related to the "most preferred photos" and "least preferred photos" chosen by the survey respondents.

5. 3. 1   Results and Discussion – Research Question 1

Do Japanese have particular preferences concerning the number of other tourists they encounter?

The results for Research Question 1 will be presented in this section one at a time based on frequency counting. First, rainforest setting preferences by number of people in the photo are examined and this is followed by reef setting preferences by number of people in the photo.

Table 5.3 shows the results of frequency counting for most and least preferred rainforest setting by number of people in the photo. The photo with a small number

of people was most popular, selected as the most preferred photo by almost half of the respondents.   The photo without people was most preferred by 35 percent of the respondents, while the photo with a large number of people was chosen by only 16 percent of respondents as their most preferred photo.   On the other hand, the photo with a large number of people was least preferred by almost 60 percent of respondents, followed by the photo without people (33%) and the photo with small number of people (8%).

Table 5.3 Rainforest Photo Preferences by Number of People in the Photo:
Japanese Online

	Most Preferred Rainforest Photo	Least Preferred Rainforest Photo
No People	27 (35.1)	26 (33.3)
Small Number of People	38 (49.4)	6 (7.7)
Large Number of People	12 (15.6)	46 (59.0)
Total	77 (100.0)	78 (100.0)

Note 1: Figures are number of respondents who chose the type of photo with percentages in parentheses

Table 5.4 shows the results of frequency counting for the most and least preferred reef setting by number of people in the photo.   The photo with a small number of people was most popular, and was selected as the most preferred photo by almost half of the respondents.   The photo with a large number of people was most preferred by 23 percent of the respondents, while no people in the photo was chosen by less than 30 percent of respondents. On the other hand, the photo with a large number of people was least preferred by almost 60 percent of respondents, followed by the photo with no people (40%).   Very few respondents selected the photo with a small number of people as their least preferred photo.
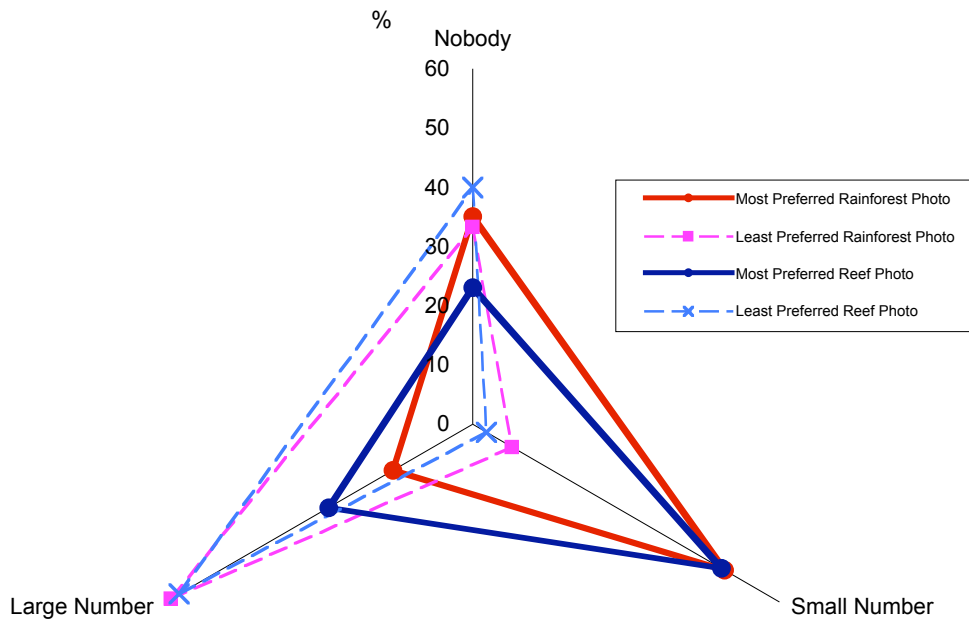
Table 5.4 Reef Photo Preferences by Number of People in the Photo: Japanese Online

	Most Preferred Reef Photo	Least Preferred Reef Photo
No People	18 (23.1)	30 (40.0)
Small Number of People	38 (48.7)	2 (2.7)
Large Number of People	22 (28.2)	43 (57.3)
Total	78 (100.0)	75 (100.0)

Note 1: Figures are number of respondents who choose the type of photo with percentages in parentheses

Figures 5.4 summarises the results for both rainforest and reef settings reported above in the form of a radar chart. Overall, a similar pattern can be observed for both reef setting and rainforest settings. Regarding the number of people in the photo, a small number tends to be preferred the most.   The photo with a large number of people tends to be least preferable.

About half of the respondents chose the photo with a small number of people as their most preferred photo for both reef and rainforest settings. For the reef setting, the second most popular photo was one with a large number of people, followed by the photo with no people.   On the other hand, the photo with no people was second in popularity, followed by the one with a large number of people in the rainforest set of photos.   The reef and rainforest settings shared the situation of having the photo with a large number of people being the least preferred followed by the photo with no people, and the photo with a small number of people became the last choice with a very few people selecting it.

%
Nobody

Figure 5.4 Overall Photo Preference by Number of People in the Photo: Japanese Online

The results showed a clear contrast between the most preferred and least preferred photos chosen by respondents. For both reef and rainforest settings, Japanese seem to prefer seeing some presence of people. They do not prefer having too many people, but at the same time a total absence of people is also not viewed very positively. There seems to be some psychological comfort brought about by the presence of people but more than a certain number of people appears to be too many to feel comfortable with for the Japanese sample in this study with these kinds of settings.

5. 3. 2   Results and Discussion – Research Question 2

Do Japanese have particular preferences concerning the appearance of other tourists they encounter?

The results for Research Question 2 which are based on frequency counting are presented in this section.   First, rainforest setting preferences by appearance of front people in the photo are examined followed by reef setting preferences by appearance of front people in the photo.   Those respondents who chose "no people in the photo" were not considered in this analysis simply because the category would not apply.

Table 5.5 shows the results of frequency counting for most and least preferred rainforest setting by appearance of front people in the photo.   The photo with Caucasian people in front was more popular (selected by 74% of respondents) than the photo with Asian people in front (selected by 26%).   On the other hand, the photo with Asian people in front was least preferred by almost 70 percent of respondents, while over 30 percent of respondents chose Caucasian people in front as their least preferred.

Table 5.5 Rainforest Photo Preferences

by Appearance of Front People in the Photo: Japanese Online

	Most Preferred Rainforest Photo		Least Preferred Rainforest Photo	
Asian	13	(26.0)	36	(69.2)
Caucasian	37	(74.0)	16	(30.8)
Total	50	(100.0)	52	(100.0)

Note 1: Figures are number of respondents who choose the type of photo with percentages in parentheses

Note 2: "Nobody in the Photo" category was not included in this analysis

Table 5.6 shows the results of frequency counting for the most and least preferred reef setting by appearance of front people in the photo. The photo with Caucasian people in front was the more popular (selected by 72% of respondents) than the photo Asian people in front (selected by 28%). The photo with Asian people in front was least preferred by almost 60 percent of respondents, while over 40 percent of respondents chose Caucasian people photo as their least preferred.
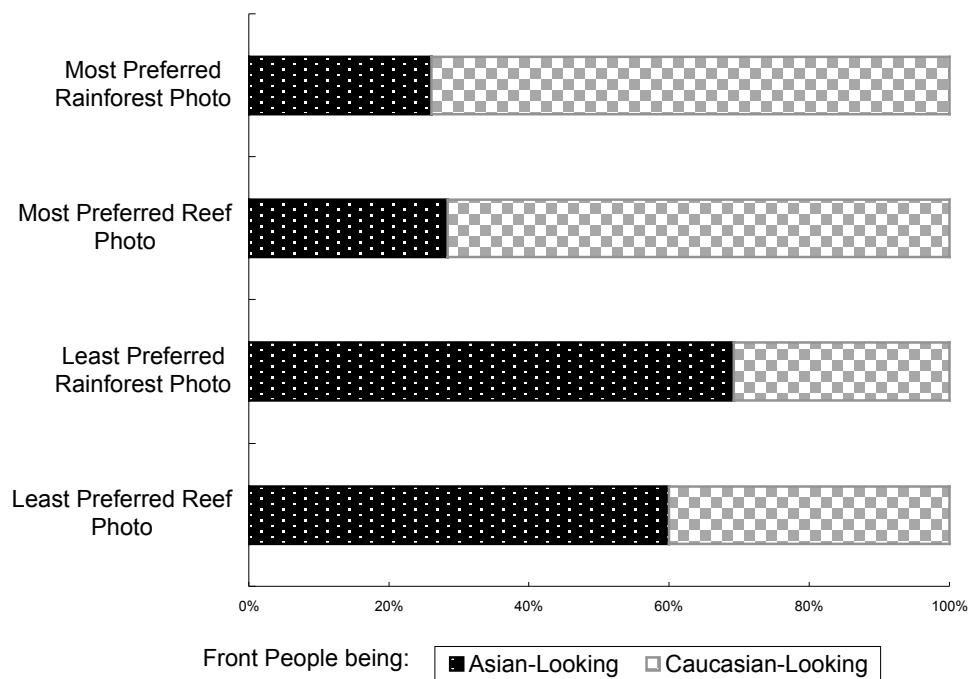
Table 5.6 Reef Photo Preferences by Appearance of Front People in the Photo:

Japanese Online

	Most Preferred Reef Photo		Least Preferred Reef Photo	
Asian	17	(28.3)	27	(60.0)
Caucasian	43	(71.7)	18	(40.0)
Total	60	(100.0)	45	(100.0)

Note 1: Figures are number of respondents who choose the type of photo with percentages in parentheses

Note 2: "Nobody in the Photo" category was not included in this analysis

Figures 5.5 summarises the results for both rainforest and reef settings reported above, in forms of a bar chart. The pattern seems quite clear that the preference of front people in those photos of both reef and rainforest settings is strong for Caucasian rather than Asian. In other words, when the preference toward the appearance of the people in the photo was examined, it was Caucasian people who were preferred to be viewed while Asian persons were given relatively fewer preferences. Also, it is interesting to note that Japanese noticed and made clear distinctions between Asian and Caucasian people at the front of the photo preferring the photos with Caucasians rather than Asian people.

Figure 5.5 Overall Photo Preference by Appearance of People in the Photo:
Japanese Online

5. 3. 2   Results -- Research Question 3

Do variables such as gender, age, travel arrangement, familiarity with English, and travel experience affect encounter preferences of Japanese?

Cross-tabulations were conducted to compare the difference in the preference depending upon the internal characteristics of the respondents.   However, due to the violation of the chi-square rule (more than 20% cells have expected count less than five), most of the tests were not valid.   These results appear in Appendix F.

The study results failed to demonstrate the differences between the photo preferences and demographic and other internal characteristics of the observers. This is mostly because the preferences towards the type of photos were similar among the respondents.   Those measured characteristics of respondents did not

have any influence over their preference toward the type of the photos. This in turn means that the preference patterns of the encounter settings was similar across the respondents regardless of their gender, age, travel arrangement, English familiarity, and travel experiences.

5.3.4 Discussion – Summary

To integrate the results for both Research Questions 1 and 2, Figures 5.6 and 5.7 have been presented as diagrams illustrating the relationship between the preferred photos by number and by appearance of people. Figure 5.6 represents "most preferred photo" and Figure 5.7 represents "least preferred photo" for both reef and rainforest settings.
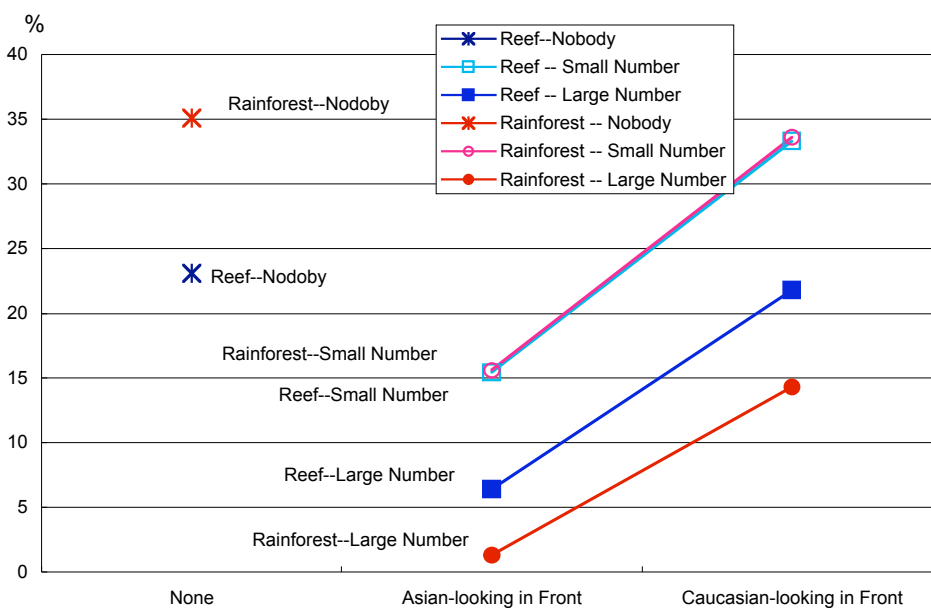
Figure 5.6 Pattern of Preference by Number and Appearance of People in the Photo: Japanese Online (Most Preferred)
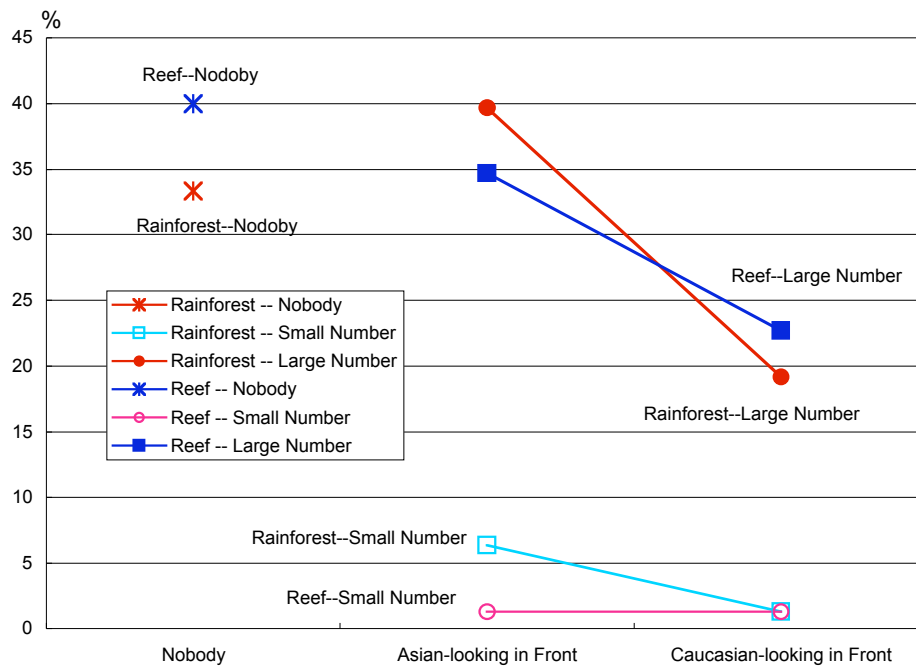
Figure 5.7 Pattern of Preference by Number and Appearance of People in the Photo: Japanese Online (Least Preferred)

Distinct patterns were observed for the preference by number and appearance of people in the photo.   For both reef and rainforest settings, it is clear that the photo with a small number of people is preferred to the one with a large number, while the photo with nobody is likely to be preferred to the one with a large number of people, but not as favourably accepted as the photo with a small number of people.   At the same time, the photo with no people is likely to be least chosen as a preferred photo. As for the appearance of the front people, Caucasian people were always accepted favourably and Asian people, especially when they were in large numbers, were rather unpopular.   The results of Research Question 3 suggested that these patterns were quite steady across different variables of the respondents in this study, such as their gender, age, travel arrangement, English familiarity, and travel experiences.   More detailed discussion will be developed in the next chapter in conjunction with the results from the next study.