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The Effects of Consumer Innovativeness and Market Mavenism on Intention to Visit Expo 2025

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This study aims to clarify how personal characteristics influence the intention to visit Expo 2025 in Osaka, Japan. Specifically, this study focuses on the concepts of consumer innovativeness and market mavenism, which are related to cutting-edge consumers, as the world Expo is an event where people can expect to experience new technologies, products, and services. Multiple regression analysis using data from a web-based questionnaire survey of consumers in urban areas around Tokyo and Osaka confirms that consumer innovativeness and market mavenism had a positive effect on the intention to visit Expo 2025. This study also analyzes the daily information search behavior of consumers with high consumer innovativeness and market mavenism. They were tended to use television and portal sites the most. These results can provide useful insights for marketers worldwide involved in Expo events.

Keywords: *mega-event, consumer innovativeness, market mavenism*

JEL Classification: *L83, M31*

1. Introduction

Osaka City will host the Japan International Exposition 2025 ("Expo 2025" hereafter) from April to October 2025. Japan hosted Expo 1970 Osaka and Expo 2005 Aichi, and Expo 2025 represents Japan's first opportunity to host a World Expo in 20 years. Large-scale events such as the World Expo, the Olympic and Paralympic Games, and the FIFA World Cup are referred to as "mega-events" (Al Hallaq et al., 2020; Müller, 2015). Mega-events are expected to have a variety of effects on the host city's tourism industry. These effects include not only the economic impacts of increased tourism due to the mega-event but also effects that persist after the event, such as an increased awareness of the host city and an improved image as a tourist destination (Knot, Fyall, and Jones, 2015; Kim and Morrison, 2005) due to media coverage of the mega-event.

Among these effects, this study focuses on the economic impact of tourist visits. Increasing the tourism-related economic impact of the World Expo requires understanding the consumer segments that are likely to visit the event as early as possible beforehand. The number of tourists, which is the basis of the projected economic impact, is expected to increase if information is provided to them effectively and if this leads to actual visits. Identifying the clienteles that have a high intention to visit requires a deep understanding

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of the personal characteristics that affect it. However, while a number of studies have examined tourists who have visited mega-events (e.g., Deng and Li, 2014; Kang et al., 2016; Swart et al., 2018; Wang and Xia, 2012), few studies have examined the factors that influence the intention to visit them.

Therefore, this study aims to clarify how personal characteristics influence the intention to visit Expo 2025. The study focuses on the concepts of consumer innovativeness and market mavenism, which involve cutting-edge consumers, as the Expo is an event where people can expect to experience new technologies, products, and services.

The remainder of this paper proceeds as follows. First, an overview of Expo 2025 is provided. Then, hypotheses are formulated based on studies of consumer innovativeness and market mavenism. Next, the results of the hypothesis testing using web-based questionnaire survey data and of an additional analysis are presented. Finally, the study's discussions and conclusions are presented.

2. Overview of Expo 2025

As mentioned, Expo 2025 will be held from April to October 2025. The venue is Yumeshima, a man-made island located in the coastal area of Osaka City, with an area of approximately 155 ha. The target numbers of participating organizations are 150 countries and 25 international organizations (Japan Association for the 2025 World Exposition, 2020). The total cost for the construction and operation of the venue is 265.9 billion yen.

The theme of the Expo is "Designing a Future Society for Our Lives," with an eye to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), for which 2030 is the target year (Japan Association for the 2025 World Exposition, 2020). The concept for realizing the theme is "People's Living Lab: A Laboratory for a Future Society." On the basis of this concept, in addition to setting up various pavilions and holding events, there are plans to launch a Future Society Showcase Project, which will implement cutting-edge technologies such as 5G networks, automatic translation, and robotics; and the Virtual Expo, which will utilize virtual technologies such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) for exhibitions and information transmission both inside and outside the Expo site.

It is estimated that 28.2 million people will visit the Expo. Of these, approximately 3.5 million visitors are expected to come from overseas. These figures were estimated before the spread of the new coronavirus (COVID-19) infection, but, depending on how the infection is controlled, these tourists may assist in the recovery of Japan's foreign visitor market. Admission tickets are due to come on sale in 2023.

3. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

3.1. Effects of Consumer Innovativeness

Consumer innovators are individuals who adopt a new product or service ahead of others (Goldsmith, Flynn, and Goldsmith, 2003; Yamamoto, 2014). The study of consumer innovators began with sociologist E. M. Rogers's diffusion theory (Rogers, 1962). The innovators of multiple products and services share a tendency to seek out new stimuli, experiences, and information (Bartels and Reinders, 2011; Roehrich, 2004). The author will refer to this personality trait as "consumer innovativeness," following the literature (Bartels and Reinders, 2011; Im, Bayus and Mason, 2003; Roehrich, 2004).

Thus, the higher the consumer innovativeness, the higher the interest in new technologies, products, and services. As mentioned, the Expo allows people to experience new technologies, products, and services. For example, Expo 1970 Osaka featured exhibits on cellphones and electric cars, while Expo 2005 Aichi saw the practical application of IC chip-enabled entrance tickets and dry mist (Japan Association for the 2025 World Exposition, 2021). Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that the higher the consumer innovativeness, the higher the intention to visit Expo 2025, where new technologies, products, and services can be experienced. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Consumer innovativeness positively influences the intention to visit Expo 2025.

3.2. Effects of Market Mavenism

Market mavens are individuals who possess information about the market, such as on different types of products and places to shop, and who discuss it with consumers or respond to information requests from them (Feick and Price, 1987). The literature (Goldsmith et al., 2003; Shimizu, 2013) indicates that there are two differences between market mavens and consumer innovators. First, they are interested in information other than that on new products. Second, consumer innovators have less influence on others; market mavens

have more influence because they provide information to others. Since consumers tend to value information from those around them more than information sent by companies, market mavens are increasingly being asked by companies for help in developing their marketing (Shimizu, 2013). Opinion leaders are similar to market mavens; however, opinion leaders have information specific to a single product or service category, while market mavens are all-rounders who are knowledgeable about multiple product and service categories (Clark and Goldsmith, 2005; Feick and Price, 1987).

Market mavenism describes the degree to which consumers have market maven tendencies (Zhang and Lee, 2013). It can be assumed that individuals with high market mavenism have all kinds of information about the market, including information about new products and services. In addition, individuals with high market mavenism have been found to actively search for information in order to constantly update their wealth of knowledge (Feick and Price, 1987). Visitors to the Expo can obtain information on not only new technologies, products, and services but also on products and cuisines related to various nations at the pavilions of each country, as well as on the business activities of various companies at the corporate pavilions. Therefore, since Expo 2025 is a good opportunity to acquire various types of information, it is reasonable to assume that the higher the market mavenism, the higher the intention to visit Expo 2025. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Market mavenism positively influences the intention to visit Expo 2025.

Figure 1 shows the research model used in this study. The arrows in the figure represent the assumed causal relationships between the concepts, and the numbers on the arrows represent the corresponding hypothesis numbers. This study sets the basic personal characteristics of gender, age, and place of residence as control variables.

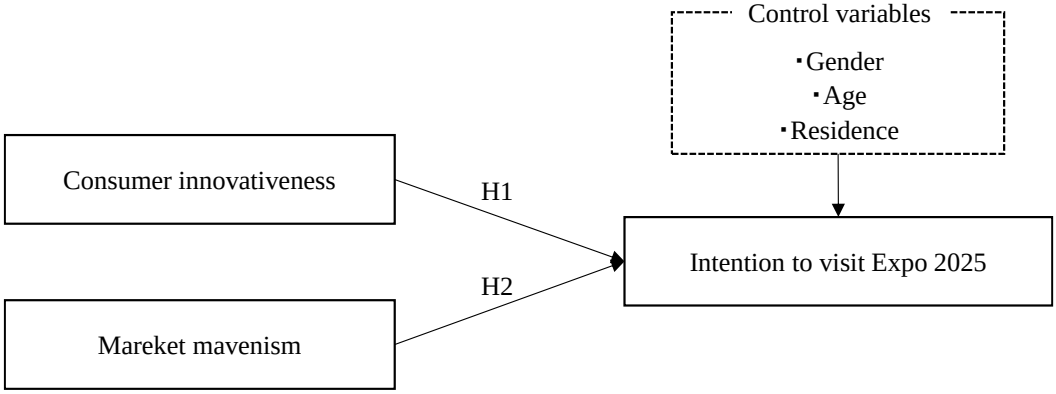

Figure 1. *Research model of study*

4. Research Methodology

This study used data from a research-supported survey conducted by the Yoshida Hideo Memorial Foundation in the first half of fiscal year 2019. This was a web-based questionnaire survey targeting individuals aged 15 to 64 years living in 10 prefectures in urban areas around Tokyo and Osaka (Saitama, Chiba, Tokyo, Kanagawa, Shiga, Kyoto, Osaka, Hyogo, Nara, and Wakayama). The survey was conducted from April 17 to April 23, 2019, and the sample size was 5,124.

Among the questions asked in the research support survey for the first half of fiscal year 2019 of the Yoshida Hideo Memorial Foundation, this study used items asking about consumer innovativeness, market mavenism, and intention to visit Expo 2025, as well as questions about basic personal characteristics (gender, age, and place of residence).

Consumer innovativeness was measured using a five-point scale (from “completely agree” to “completely disagree”), for a total of five items, following Steenkamp and Gielen (2003). For these questionnaire items, the option reflecting the highest consumer innovativeness was scored as 5, and the option reflecting the lowest consumer innovativeness was scored as 1. We also measured the reliability coefficients (Cronbach’s alpha) of the five items and found that they were below 0.6 (Hair et al., 2014), which is considered

an acceptable value. Therefore, when one item was excluded, the reliability coefficient exceeded 0.6, so the mean scores of the final four items (see Table 1) were used in the analyses.

Market mavenism was measured using a five-point scale (from "completely agree" to "completely disagree"), for a total of four items, following Steenkamp and Gielen (2003). The option reflecting the highest market mavenism was scored as 5, while the option reflecting the lowest market mavenism was scored as 1. We also measured the reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) of the four items and found that they were below 0.6, which is considered an acceptable value. When two items were excluded, the reliability coefficients exceeded 0.6, so the mean scores of the final two items (see Table 1) were used in the analyses.

Intention to visit Expo 2025 was measured using a five-point scale (from "definitely" to "not at all") for one item (see Table 1). For this questionnaire, the option reflecting the highest intention to visit was scored as 5, and the option reflecting the lowest intention was scored as 1.

The gender of the respondents was measured using a single selection format. The ages of the respondents were measured by entering a number. Place of residence was measured in terms of the prefecture.

***Table 1**. Measurement Items*

	Item details	**Cronbach's alpha**
Consumer innovativeness	If I like a brand, I rarely switch from it just to try something new. (*)	0.646
	When I see a new product on the shelf, I'm reluctant to give it a try. (*)	
	I rarely buy brands about which I am uncertain how they will perform. (*)	
	I do not like to buy a new product before other people do. (*)	
Market mavenism	I like introducing new brands and products to my friends.	0.792
	My friends and neighbors often come to me for advice.	
Intention to visit Expo 2025	Do you plan to go to the Osaka Expo when it is held in 2025?	–

(*) Reversed score item

5. Analysis and Results

5.1. Profile of Respondents

The profiles of the respondents are presented in Table 2. The number of respondents by gender and age was allocated based on the basic resident register population, indicating that the respondents were evenly distributed.

***Table 2**. Measurement Items*

		Frequency	**Percent**
Gender	Male	2,611	51.0%
	Female	2,513	49.0%
Age	15 to 19 years old	376	7.3%
	20s	888	17.3%
	30s	1,050	20.5%
	40s	1,320	25.8%
	50s	1,038	20.3%
	60 to 64 years old	452	8.8%
Residence	Saitama	612	11.9%
	Chiba	546	10.7%
	Tokyo	1,405	27.4%
	Kanagawa	821	16.0%
	Shiga	91	1.8%
	Kyoto	232	4.5%
	Osaka	769	15.0%
	Hyogo	462	9.0%
	Nara	130	2.5%
	Wakayama	56	1.1%

5.2. Hypothesis Testing

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to test hypotheses H1 and H2, using HAD statistical software (Shimizu, 2016). The gender of the control variable was analyzed by setting a dummy variable (male = 0, female = 1). For respondent age, the age data entered by the respondents were used in the analysis. For place of residence, a dummy variable reflecting whether the respondent lived in the Kansai region (non-Kansai = 0, Kansai = 1) was used in the analysis, since it was assumed that the respondents who lived relatively close to the Expo 2025 venue would have a higher intention to visit because of its accessibility. The Kansai region includes Shiga, Kyoto, Osaka, Hyogo, Nara, and Wakayama prefectures.

The descriptive statistics of the concepts related to the hypotheses are shown in Table 3, and the results of the multiple regression analysis are shown in Table 4. Based on the value of VIF, an indicator used to check for multicollinearity, it was determined that multicollinearity did not occur because the VIF of any one variable was less than 10.

***Table 3**. Descriptive Statistics*

	Mean	**SD**
Consumer innovativeness	3.258	0.604
Market mavenism	2.522	0.943
Intention to visit Expo 2025	2.704	1.297

***Table 4**. Results of Multiple Regression Analysis*

	Standardized coefficients (β)	*** p< 0.05**	**VIF**
（Explanatory variables）			
Consumer innovativeness	0.039	*	1.018
Market mavenism	0.193	*	1.030
（Control variables）			
Gender	-0.017		1.006
Age	-0.014		1.015
Residence (Kansai region dummy)	0.246	*	1.002
R^2	0.102	*	

Given the effects of the control variables, the effects of gender and age on the intention to visit Expo 2025 were found to be not statistically significant at the 5% level. The impact of living in the Kansai region was found to be statistically significant at the 5% level, as expected

Regarding the individual hypotheses, consumer innovativeness was found to have a positive effect on the intention to visit Expo 2025 ($\beta = 0.039$, $p < 0.05$); hence, Hypothesis H1 was supported. It was also confirmed that market mavenism positively influenced intention to visit Expo 2025 ($\beta = 0.193$, $p < 0.05$); hence, Hypothesis H2 was supported. Thus, all the hypotheses were supported, even after the study statistically controlled for the basic personal characteristics of the respondents. The values of the standardized coefficients suggest that market mavenism has a greater effect on the intention to visit Expo 2025 than consumer innovativeness does.

5.3. Analysis of Information Search Behavior

The results of the previous section confirm that individuals with higher consumer innovativeness or market mavenism have a higher intention to visit Expo 2025. Therefore, individuals with high levels of innovativeness and market mavenism can be regarded as consumer segments with a high intention to visit Expo 2025. Generating actual visits requires providing information to them effectively, and this requires understanding the information sources they use. Therefore, this study conducted an additional analysis by examining the information sources that consumers with high consumer innovativeness and market mavenism refer to.

First, the respondents were grouped into three groups: high group (mean plus 1SD or more), low group (mean minus 1SD or less), and medium group (all others). The respondents with high innovativeness and market mavenism were in the high group. Table 5 shows the number of respondents in each group.

***Table 5**. Results of Grouping*

	Low	**Medium**	**High**
Consumer innovativeness	510	3,903	711
Market mavenism	1,110	3,040	974

Next, we analyzed the response data for the question (multiple response format) on the daily use of 25 types of information sources (see the appendix), which was asked in the research support survey for the first half of fiscal year 2019 by the Yoshida Hideo Memorial Foundation. The study extracted the top five information sources with the highest usage rates for the high consumer innovativeness and market mavenism groups (see Tables 6 and 7). Both groups were found to use television (terrestrial broadcasting) the most. In addition, portal sites (e.g., Google, Yahoo!), review sites, and television (satellite broadcasting) were all in the top five for both groups. E-mail was in the top five for the high consumer innovativeness group, and newspapers were in the top five for the high market mavenism group. These results suggest that focusing on television and portal sites would be an effective way to disseminate information about the Expo to consumers with high consumer innovativeness and market mavenism levels.

***Table 6**. Usage Rate of Information Sources of High Consumer Innovativeness Group (Top Five Types)*

	Percent
Television (terrestrial broadcasting)	86.4%
Portal sites	44.9%
E-mail	39.2%
Review sites	38.7%
Television (satellite broadcasting)	37.0%

***Table 7**. Usage Rate of Information Sources of High Market Mavenism Group (Top Five Types)*

	Percent
Television (terrestrial broadcasting)	84.6%
Review sites	40.6%
Portal sites	38.9%
Television (satellite broadcasting)	36.3%
Newspapers	34.2%

6. Discussion and Conclusion

This study examined how personal characteristics influence the intention to visit Expo 2025. Analysis of data from a web-based questionnaire survey of consumers in urban areas around Tokyo and Osaka confirmed that consumer innovativeness and market mavenism have a positive effect on the intention to visit Expo 2025. This study also analyzed the daily information search behavior of consumers with high consumer innovativeness and market mavenism and obtained findings that can be used as a reference for future information dissemination efforts.

This study contributes to the literature by revealing that consumer innovativeness and market mavenism are personal characteristics that influence the intention to visit the Expo. Little research has been conducted on the factors that influence the intention to visit mega-events. This study provides an opportunity for further research on the mechanisms that shape intentions to visit such events.

The study also has practical implications. First, consumers with high levels of consumer innovativeness and market mavenism are promising target segments for Expo 2025. Consumers with a high level of market mavenism are particularly promising because they have the power to influence others by becoming information providers. Second, disseminating information about the Expo through television and portal sites would be an effective way to maintain high levels of intention to visit and lead to actual visits among consumers with high levels of consumer innovativeness and market mavenism.

This study has several limitations. First, the study's analysis was based on the results of a survey conducted in 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic began. Since the pandemic is thought to have altered

consumer attitudes toward events where many people gather, further studies should be conducted based on the latest data. Second, it is important to understand additional personal characteristics that influence the intention to visit the Expo beyond consumer innovativeness and market mavenism in order to more precisely identify the consumer segments that have high intention-to-visit levels.

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Appendix: List of Information Sources

Television (terrestrial broadcasting)
Television (satellite broadcasting)
Newspapers
Magazines
Radio
Outdoor and indoor vehicle advertisements
Newspaper inserts
Pamphlets
Mail order catalogs
Direct mail
E-mail
Review sites
Official websites of manufacturers and stores
Internet community
Portal sites (e.g., Google, Yahoo!)
Promotional materials in stores (e.g., POP materials)
Information from store staff
Information from acquaintances and friends
Information from family
Facebook
Instagram
Twitter
LINE (News pages)
LINE (Corporate account)
Blogs