

Understanding Chinese Tourists' Travel Motivations: Investigating the Perceptions of Jordan Held by Chinese Tourists

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the perceptions of Jordan held by Chinese Tourists. The research will investigate the inbound Chinese market to Jordan and will focus on identifying factors that influence the decision of Chinese tourists to travel to Jordan, their needs, motivations and expectations in order to establish the potential of this market. Subsequently through empirical research, based on standard survey techniques to investigate and to explore patterns with the overall objective of establishing broad indicators as to whether this particular market holds potential for promotion and development in Jordan. The findings of this research lead to the proposal that Chinese tourists are a potentially valuable market in which Jordan should be seeking to develop.

Key Words: Middle East Tourism, Motivations, Chinese Tourists, Jordan Tourism, Destination Choice

1. Introduction

A review of the tourism marketing and promotion of Jordan over the last two decades finds that it has been dominated by attention to traditional markets e.g. North America and continental Europe with little attention to other source areas, with the exception of the Middle East region. There is no doubting that marketers cannot afford to ignore traditional markets nor that activity based tourism demand is increasing. However and especially given the highly competitive international marketplace that destinations operate in, there is a need to search for other markets with potential for development.

Although the development of Chinese outbound tourism is a relatively recent phenomenon, China has quickly become a major tourist-generating market drawing worldwide awareness (Pan, Li, Zhang, & Smith, 2007; Ryan & Gu, 2008). The attention given to China over recent years suggests that this is a market that is growing steadily (Dai, 2008) cited in Li, Lai, Harrill, Kline, and Wang (2011). As a result, during the past few years the importance of the Chinese market in Jordan as a tourist destination has been emphasized for different reasons; Chinese market seems to be the fastest growing in our industry and Jordan seems to have greater potential to attract a larger number of tourists from China than it is currently doing, which in a way depriving itself of millions of dollars.

Much of this attention seemed to come from a lack of understanding of but increasing interest in Chinese outbound travelers and the Chinese market, and raise questions such as: What kind of services should we deliver to Chinese tourists and what are their needs and expectations? This paper attempts to provide some preliminary insight into these questions. It is therefore, a market that is being explored and investigated here. The aim first is to establish the main characteristics of Chinese tourists and also whether perceptions of increasing demand are well founded. Secondly, to investigate motivations, needs and expectations of Chinese tourists when going to Jordan to gain insights into the market's potential economic contribution; a fundamental factor as regards whether or not to promote this promising market. The focus then turns to the findings of research undertaken directly into Chinese tourists in Jordan.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Chinese Tourists

Chinese outbound tourism starting point could be tracked back to 1983, when Mainland Chinese citizens were allowed to visit Hong Kong and Macao under special arrangements (Zhang and Heung, 2001). Today the rapid growth of Chinese outbound tourism has been frequently associated and related to the country's fast economic development, rising individual wealth, and the relaxation of much travel restrictions imposed by authorities. The Chinese outbound tourism market grew at an average rate of 21 percent per year from 1997 to 2007 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2008), indeed, the unleashed demand for travel abroad is so large that the growth rate of China's outbound travel surpassed that of the country's national economy, inbound and domestic tourism, and primarily all other Asian and developed countries (Guo, Seongseop and Timothy, 2007). In the year of 2009, despite the global economic slowdown, Mainland Chinese citizens made approximately 47.66 million trips outside Mainland China, the outbound tourism market maintained a 4-percent growth rate (Qian, 2010).

A recent study estimated that the current Chinese outbound travel market comprises approximately 22 million people who have traveled or plan to travel to destinations outside Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Macao. Among them, 11.5 million have traveled or plan to travel to destinations outside Asia (Li, Harrill, Uysal, Burnett, and Zhan, 2010). Further, despite the current global economic slowdown, China's economy is in good shape. Chinese outbound travel is hence expected to continue growing steadily and "contribute to the stability of the world's tourism economy" (Dai, 2008). This will probably make China an even more important target market for destination marketing organisations (DMOs) worldwide.

It is forecasted that the People's Republic of China (PRC) will emerge as one of the most significant outbound markets in the world by 2020 (World Tourism Organization, 2003). The Asia-Pacific marketplace is sizeable but highly competitive, thus, those hospitality service firms that can best meet their guests' needs will gain a market share. As a result, there is a continuing need for destinations to be better equipped to understand and manage these tourists (Reisinger & Turner, 2003).

Studies that have examined tourist satisfaction and market segmentation suggest that it is crucial for destination managers to develop better understanding of specific segments of consumers to accommodate their distinct needs and wants and establish efficient and effective marketing and promotion strategies (Kim, Wei and Ruys, 2003). Since many attractions and tourist destinations rely heavily on the repeat visitor segment, it would be of prime interest for destination managers to gain more knowledge of tourists' needs and wants.

2.2 Tourist Behaviour and Reasons for Going on a Holiday

Why and how a tourist selects a particular destination is a crucial part of the study of tourism. A tourist's destination selection has been understood as a sequential process and has been used to explain the process of determining the final destination choice. Matzler and Siller (2003) argue that to understand the consumer decision making process it is crucial to link the perception of a destination to the travellers' motivations. "If a destination is perceived to meet the motivations it is more likely to be chosen by the potential guests and eventually it will satisfy them" Matzler and Siller (2003: p. 7). According to Crompton (1992) there are three types of criteria that affect this process: personal motivations (push factors), destination attributes (pull factors), and situational inhibitors (constraints). Push and pull factors are argued to play an important role in filtering the number of destinations in the initial stage. Push factors have a greater influence over deciding whether or not to travel than deciding where to go, whereas pull factors are more related to the destination attributes.

The theory of push and pull factors were developed from the earlier work of Dann (1977) who explains that push factors are those that make people want to travel and pull factors are those that affect where we travel. According to Goodall (1991) motivations of holidaymakers represent push factors, while the attractions of a destination are pull factors. Push factors are internal to individuals and make people want to travel, whereas the pull factors are external and affects where, when, and how individuals travel (Jang and Cai, 2002). This is also found in the work of Goossens (2000) and Klenosky (2002) who point out that push factors create the desire to go on a holiday and refer to the specific forces in our lives that lead to the decision to take a holiday, while pull factors influence the choice of a destination and refer to those factors that lead to the selection of a destination once the decision of travel has been made. According to Goodall (1991), motivations push a holidaymaker into decision while attractions pull him towards a particular holiday and destination. He argues that these push and pull factors are fundamental to an understanding of holiday behaviour.

2.3 Factors Influencing Destination Choice

As it has been mentioned before, a tourist's destination selection has been understood as a sequential process to determine the final destination. Crompton (1992) explains a destination is chosen when an individual perceives that its attributes (i.e., pull factors) would satisfy their needs (i.e., push factors). Crompton argue pull factors play an important role in reducing the number of alternatives from the early set to the late set, it is likely that people first categorise the alternatives based on the criteria of the pull factors, such as image, time availability, and financial circumstances and then reject alternatives which do not meet the individual's needs or preferences (push factors).

Gilbert (1991) examined the consumer behaviour process and shows that tourism holiday choice is influenced by a combination of different factors such as availability of time and funds, image of the destination and perception and expectation built on experience and information gathered. This is also found in the work of Goodall (1991) who emphasised the importance of financial circumstances on the holiday-maker as they restrict their choice as to what is affordable, as well as the influence of availability of time- when a holiday can be taken, and the role of destination image as an essential part in understanding the holiday or destination choice.

Milman and Pizam (1995) suggested that a destination's image consists of three components: the product, the behaviour and attitude of employees who come into direct contact with the tourist, and the environment such as the weather, type of accommodation, and physical safety. Several factors influence the destination's image and tourists' decisions on which destination to visit. According to Baloglu and Mangalolu (2001) tour operators and travel agents have been suggested as being significant information sources and distribution channels influencing the images and decisions of travellers. First time travellers mostly rely on professional sources such as travel intermediaries in their information searches (Snepenger, Meged, Snelling, and Worrall, 1990).

However, in order to understand the whole concept of destination choice facility, the need to understand the destination's attraction systems and how it affects the tourist or traveller choice is necessary. Pull factors are argued to be the main factor that influence the destination choice; Goodall (1991) refers to the attractions of a destination as the pull factors. Others like Klenosky (2002) shows that pull factors have been characterised in terms of the features, attractions, or attributes of the destination, such as sunshine, beaches, or sports facilities. Others like Dan (1996) cited in Smith (2001) points out the importance of the destination and the nature of its attractions in influencing tourists to take a holiday.

3. The Study/Methodology

From the foregoing discussion, it appears that China outbound tourism is growing and has the potential to provide additional benefits to the host destination. However, there is a lack of studies regarding the inbound Chinese market to Jordan in the literature review. To address this comparative paucity of attention and particularly to investigate the development potential of this market to Jordan, a survey of Chinese tourists in Jordan was undertaken with the primary aim of establishing a general profile and the main characteristics of these tourists. The target population was Chinese tourists who were traveling to Jordan. A pilot test was conducted with 25 respondents to obtain feedback on the clarity and appropriateness of the questionnaire. Based on the pilot test, some wordings of the questions were modified to ensure respondents could understand and choose an appropriate answer.

A total of 37 motivational items were generated for each set of push and pull factors. The questionnaire was designed in English and consisted of three sections. The first section was aimed at ascertaining socio-demographic characteristics of respondents. In the second section, containing push factors (reasons/desires for traveling to go on holiday), respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with the statements describing their reasons for going on holiday - for example, "*one of main reasons why I go on holiday is to experience cultures that are different from mine*". Respondents were presented with a five point Likert-type scale to express their opinions, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The third section dealt with pull factors (destination-based attributes/ choosing Jordan as their holiday destination), where respondents were asked to rate the attractiveness of destination attributes that draw them to Jordan. For instance, they were asked "*do you think Jordanian culture and local people's way of life are important factor in attracting you to Jordan?*" Like push factor, the same five-point Likert-type scale was used to identify the attractiveness of pull factors.

Amman, as the main arrival/departure point for Jordan, was chosen as a suitable location for the empirical research. It has several hotels from which a balanced selection comprising 3 to 5 star hotels was made. In recognition of the possibility of there being significant differences between tourists at different locations in Jordan, a 4 star hotel in the city of Irbid – North of Jordan - was included thereby enabling an element of comparative analysis between the two locations.

The questionnaires were distributed in person to tourists at hotels on different days and at different times over few months period. The participation was voluntary and only the respondents who were willing to participate in the survey were asked to complete the questionnaires. Small souvenirs (i.e. postcards) were given to respondents who completed the questionnaires. To ensure a high return and usable rate, questionnaires were collected on location and checked for completeness. Two trained graduate students helped collect the data during the surveys. In total, 177 usable questionnaires were obtained.

Few problems were experienced during the implementation of the survey. Due largely to gaining access to premises and permissions, language barrier as well as some tourists reluctant to participate due to time constraints i.e. some tourists did not have time to participate and being busy or not interested. A profile of respondents is presented in Table 1.

4. Findings/Results and Discussions

4.1 Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1 shows that 57.6 per cent of respondents were males while the remaining 42.4 per cent were females. 79.6.1 per cent were above 30 years old. Nearly half of respondents 50.8 per cent were married, with majority 81.4 per cent having at least a university degree. Respondents visiting Jordan for the first time were 45.8 per cent, with nearly more than half 57.6 per cent staying up to five nights and booked their holiday to Jordan through organized package tours 47.6 per cent.

4.2 Analysis and Results

The data analysis of this study consisted of analyzing each set of the 37 motivational items (16 push factors and 21 pull factors) through factor analysis by using a varimax rotation procedure to delineate the underlying dimensions that were associated with tourist motivations.

Tables 2 and 3, respectively, shows the mean values of push and pull motive items. In Table 2 – the push factors – six items recorded mean values above 3.5 while ten items were placed between the ranges of 2.96 to 3.49. The items 'To travel to a country that I have not visited before' and 'To see something different that I don't normally see - something new and exciting' recorded the highest mean value of 3.86, while item 'For business purposes' scored the lowest mean value of 2.96. In Table 3 – the pull factors – 'Safety and Security' obtained the highest mean value of 3.84 followed by 'the Weather' with a mean value of 3.77. The item for 'Cultural and historical places' also considered significant pull factor as they obtained high mean value of 3.62. 'Quality of tourist places and facilities' and 'Travelling and airline cost' were placed at the lower range with mean values of 3.15 and 3.25 respectively.

4.3 Discussion and Conclusion

The present study used the theory of push and pull motivations to investigate travel motivations of Chinese tourists to Jordan. Based on factor analysis, this study identified different push and pull factor dimensions. The main three push factors were (1) 'To travel to a country that I have not visited before', (2) 'To see something different that I don't normally see - something new and exciting', and (3) 'To experience cultures that are different from mine', while the main three pull factors included: (1) 'Safety and Security', (2) 'Weather', and (3) 'Cultural and historical places'. These were viewed as the most important push and pull factors influencing Chinese tourists to Jordan.

By using cluster analysis, this study showed that it is possible to segment Chinese tourists to Jordan based on push and pull motivational factors. The three segments regarding push factors were labeled as 'Novelty & Knowledge-seeking', 'Rest & relaxation' and 'Prestige & Ego-enhancement'. While the three segments regarding pull factors were labeled as 'Weather, Safety, and Cleanliness', 'Cultural & historical attractions' and 'Travel arrangements & Convenience'.

Outbound holidays have been positively accepted by more and more Chinese, while at the same time for the Chinese tourists, Jordan has also increased in its popularity. This is due to many of Jordan's attributes matching Chinese tourists' preferences such as novelty, culture and historical attractions. In spite of Jordan's negative attributes of distance and cost, security at the destination was considered as a positive aspect which differentiated Jordan from other neighbouring destinations. Jordan currently meet the Chinese need based upon novelty, however, when considering the future of this market, creating repeat visits will reduce the novelty aspect.

The results also show that images held by Chinese tourists are significant factors. This raises the issue of image and its place in the marketing of Jordan. It is necessary to ask if Jordan is promoted in an appropriate way to attract more Chinese tourists. Therefore, Jordan should consider the need to create alternative images in order to meet the different needs of Chinese tourists. The results and findings of this study contribute to better understand Chinese tourists' motivations to visit Middle Eastern countries, especially Jordan. The findings are also useful for destination marketers to develop effective marketing programmes to approach this segment.

5. References

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Table 1: Socio-Demographic Profile of Chinese Tourists to Jordan

Gender					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	102	57.6	57.6	57.6
	Female	75	42.4	42.4	100.0
	Total	177	100.0	100.0	
Age					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-29	36	20.3	20.3	20.3
	30 - 49	102	57.6	57.6	78.0
	50 and above	39	22.0	22.0	100.0
	Total	177	100.0	100.0	
Marital Status					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Single	45	25.4	25.4	25.4
	Married	90	50.8	50.8	76.3
	Divorced	42	23.7	23.7	100.0
	Total	177	100.0	100.0	
Education					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High school	33	18.6	18.6	18.6
	College degree	60	33.9	33.9	52.5
	University	69	39.0	39.0	91.5
	postgraduate	15	8.5	8.5	100.0
	Total	177	100.0	100.0	
Annual Income					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	\$20.000	57	32.2	32.2	32.2
	\$20.000-39.999	33	18.6	18.6	50.8
	\$40.000-59.999	57	32.2	32.2	83.1
	60.000-79.999	24	13.6	13.6	96.6
	\$80.000 or over	6	3.4	3.4	100.0
	Total	177	100.0	100.0	
Frequency of Visits to Jordan					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	First time	81	45.8	45.8	45.8
	Two-three times	48	27.1	27.1	72.9
	Four times or more	48	27.1	27.1	100.0
	Total	177	100.0	100.0	
Average Length of Stay on their Current Visit					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	One-two nights stay	30	16.9	16.9	16.9
	Three-Five nights stay	102	57.6	57.6	74.6
	Six nights or more	45	25.4	25.4	100.0
	Total	177	100.0	100.0	
Mode of Travel to Jordan					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Through organized package tour	84	47.5	47.5	47.5
	Individual	63	35.6	35.6	83.1
	Other, Please specify	30	16.9	16.9	100.0
	Total	177	100.0	100.0	

Table 2: Mean Values of Push Factors**Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
q1	177	1.00	5.00	3.8644	.83512
q2	177	2.00	5.00	3.8644	.62498
q3	177	1.00	5.00	3.4915	.85359
q4	177	2.00	5.00	3.6271	.78113
q5	177	1.00	5.00	3.6441	1.00729
q6	177	1.00	5.00	3.6441	.88091
q7	177	1.00	5.00	3.0678	.93901
q8	177	2.00	5.00	3.2542	1.05410
q9	177	1.00	5.00	3.1186	1.01273
q10	177	1.00	5.00	3.2373	1.03362
q11	177	1.00	5.00	3.0000	.99430
q12	177	1.00	5.00	3.3559	1.08862
q13	177	1.00	5.00	3.1525	1.08942
q14	177	2.00	5.00	3.4915	1.00067
q15	177	1.00	5.00	3.5424	.91058
q16	177	1.00	5.00	2.9661	1.10730
Push	177	2.19	4.38	3.3951	.44311
Valid N (list wise)	177				

Table 3: Mean Values of Pull Factors**Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
q17	177	1.00	5.00	3.5424	1.24301
q18	177	2.00	5.00	3.5085	.83338
q19	177	1.00	5.00	3.5763	.87002
q20	177	1.00	5.00	3.3898	1.07688
q21	177	1.00	5.00	3.3220	1.01870
q22	177	1.00	5.00	3.2542	1.03781
q23	177	1.00	5.00	3.3390	1.00471
q24	177	1.00	5.00	3.3898	1.04474
q25	177	1.00	5.00	3.3898	1.02830
q26	177	1.00	5.00	3.4915	1.18762
q27	177	1.00	5.00	3.2034	1.17907
q28	177	2.00	5.00	3.6271	.93963
q29	177	1.00	5.00	3.2542	1.14703
q30	177	1.00	5.00	3.1864	1.05218
q31	177	1.00	5.00	3.1525	1.13538
q32	177	1.00	5.00	3.5424	1.14299
q33	177	1.00	5.00	3.4407	1.08090
q34	177	1.00	5.00	3.8475	.90101
q35	177	1.00	5.00	3.5593	.90963
q36	177	1.00	5.00	3.7797	.96061
q37	177	1.00	5.00	3.4237	1.25504
Pull	177	2.14	4.38	3.4391	.50324
Valid N (list wise)	177				