
3 New edges from China: Emerging tourism markets driven by young Chinese

Jing Li and Ding Xu

The objectives of this chapter are to:

- Establish the understanding of developmental tourist behaviours of young Chinese;
- Categorise emerging activities popular among young Chinese tourists;
- Link tourist behaviours of young Chinese to their shared values and characteristics;
- Forecast prominent Chinese tourism fashions driven by young generations;
- Conclude promising styles of tourism products and services catering rising markets.

Keywords: Chinese tourist markets; young Chinese tourists; emerging trends; cultural values; video blogs.

Introduction

China's situation of remarkable development growth has attracted global research attention across a wide set of fields, including tourism. The rapid expansion of Chinese tourist markets has particularly drawn the attention of tourism researchers and marketers (Li et al, 2010). China is now a major tourist-generating market source for several countries; for example, it was the second top source of international visitors in 2018 for both Australia and New Zealand (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2019; Statistics New Zealand, 2019). For 2018, there were 84.3 million outbound trips by Chinese, and the

China Tourism Academy estimated an increase (China Tourism Academy, and Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China, 2019).

At the time of writing this chapter, there are global concerns about the new coronavirus in all countries where tourist-generating market source travel. This widespread concern reinforces two key points: the disruptions to markets that such pandemics and major shocks can cause to twenty-first-century mobility, and the increasing reliance on the Chinese market to provide growth for many countries. The authors of this chapter take the view that disruptions such as the coronavirus may be on a grand and alarming scale, but historically tourism has recovered from these kinds of disasters because of the overriding desire people have to see other places and fulfil their travel dreams (Pearce, 2019).

Fuelled by these kinds of concerns and the sheer volume of both domestic and outbound tourism, China is perhaps on its way to becoming the world's greatest 'tourism laboratory', where researchers are able to test, monitor and confirm or refute some of the tourism industry's most widely held fears and assumptions (Wang, Bickle and Harrill, 2010). Clearly, China's tourism has become a popular research field for scholars within and outside of Mainland China (Zhong, Wu and Morrison, 2013) and continues to be at the forefront of much academic writing in tourism (Johnson, Xu and Arlt, 2020).

More specifically, Chinese millennials have emerged as a key consumer group in the world's second-largest economy. It has been predicted that millennials will comprise the majority of Chinese tourists in the next decade (Goldman Sachs, 2015). Millennials also play an increasingly important role in making travel decisions for their families (Ma, 2018). Therefore, in the present chapter the authors attempt to identify and categorise emerging trends of tourism within China, as driven by younger Chinese. These aims are served by examining two forms of user-generated blogs, including video blogs and microblogs on prevalent Chinese sharing platforms. Together these resources enable the researchers to identify new market edges from China.

Understanding Chinese tourists

The behaviours of Chinese tourists have been studied from multiple perspectives, such as cultural norms, values, lifestyles and networking custom. A Triple-C Gaze approach, which incorporates Consumerism, Confucianism and Communism, has been developed to understand common behaviours of Chinese outbound tourists (Pearce, Wu and Osmond, 2013).

Further, the cultural values of contemporary Chinese have also been reconfigured as underpinning factors shaping Chinese tourists' motivations

and behavioural characteristics (Hsu and Huang, 2016). In their studies of cultural values, Hsu and Huang (2016) argued that contemporary values are largely different from traditional Chinese concerns. Modern terminal values identified include convenience, indulgence, leisure, liberation, self-interest, and ostentation (Hsu and Huang, 2016). These modern values variously extend, modify or sometimes override traditional instrumental values such as courtesy, morality, honesty, respect for history, and thrift. Additionally, there are also modification and re-interpretations of traditional terminal values, such as the benefits of broadening views, gaining knowledge and education, enhancing family orientation/kinship, and appreciating stability and security (Hsu and Huang, 2016). As a further re-orientation, there is some weakening of the interpersonal values of conformity. These Chinese value items, both in their contemporary interpretation and through the continuity of traditional perspectives serve the understanding of new trends among Chinese tourists, most especially among those in the younger age groups.

Confident Chinese millennials: a force driving tourism fashion

The economic optimism existing among young Chinese citizens is revealed in part by millennials' consumption representing a widening share of the national economy (Thibaud, 2017). In particular, Chinese millennials' consumption behaviours are characterised by their rising demands in seeking premium options and personalised experiences, underpinned by concerns about ethical, social and environmental values in the purchased products and services (Euromonitor International, 2018). Moreover, young Chinese can be quite discerning and tend to be less sensitive to price, while attaching much importance to performance. These features of Chinese millennial consumers are particularly demonstrated in their consumption of luxury and high-quality goods.

Furthermore, young Chinese are willing to spend a lot on entertainment and other experiential products and services, especially those customised programs (Euromonitor International, 2018; Thibaud, 2017). The large amounts of experiential consumption reflect Chinese millennials' desire for finding their own subjective value. Specifically, shopping has been increasingly viewed by Chinese as a desirable social activity with substantial entertainment value (Thibaud, 2017).

The tourism lifestyle industries are prompting significant spending among young Chinese. Declining price sensitivity amongst millennials and increasing disposable incomes nationwide have stoked millennials' discretionary spending, especially in health, lifestyle and travel (Thibaud, 2017).