

Using means-end chain theory to explore travel motivation: An examination of Chinese outbound tourists

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This study examines the travel motivation of Chinese outbound tourists at the attribute, consequence and values levels based on means-end chain (MEC) theory and its associated laddering technique. In-depth interviews with respondents were analysed to identify six key means-end chains. The two major travel motivation chains are: (1) respondents visit destinations that are ‘famous’ or have a ‘good environment’ because they value ‘the beauty of nature’ and ‘pleasure’; (2) respondents want to visit ‘different’ destinations, because they value experiences and knowledge. These results illustrate the use of MEC theory in understanding travel markets and demonstrate the use of motivation chains as the basis for segmenting the Chinese market. The research findings contribute to the travel motivation literature by identifying directed, hierarchically organized motivation structures with interconnected levels of attributes, consequences, and values. Further marketing and product development implications are provided to help attract this emerging market.

Keywords: Travel motivation, Chinese outbound market, means-end chain, laddering technique, destination marketing

Introduction

Travel motivation has been defined as ‘a meaningful state of mind which adequately disposes an actor or group of actors to travel, and which is subsequently interpretable by others as a valid explanation for such a decision’ (Dann, 1981, p.205). The decision to visit a particular place is the result of a destination choice process which is influenced by a tourist’s values, motives and background (Lue, Crompton, & Fesenmaier, 1993; Um & Crompton, 1990). Knowledge of travel motivation plays a significant role in developing marketing plans and delivering the required level of service (Prebensen, Skallerud, & Chen, 2010). As a result it is essential for industry operators to understand travel motivations in order to meet their customers’ needs and to offer more personalized services and memorable experiences (Huang & Hsu, 2009).

The Chinese outbound market is experiencing rapid development and exploring travel motivation in the context of Chinese outbound leisure tourists will help to better understand this emerging market. A number of studies have been conducted into the Chinese outbound tourism market, mostly since 2005 (i.e., Huang & Hsu, 2009; Hsu, Cai, & Li, 2010; Hsu, Cai, & Wong,

2007; Jang & Wu, 2006; Johanson, 2008; Kim & Prideaux, 2005; Li & Cai, 2011). These studies have enriched the motivation literature of about the Chinese outbound market in tourism motivation research, and provided some useful suggestions for further study. However, within Although these studies, used although a variety of different models (push and pull, grounded theory approach, expectancy theory EMA model) were used, along with and other variables (travel-related characteristics, expectation, attitude, past experience, perceived constraint), most scholars use the motivation items used were in the main selected from small-developed from scale a small number of in-depth interviews or based on motivation factors previously identified in the international travel literature (Kim & Prideaux, 2005). Although While these methods can improve the validity of measurement in to some degree, it is they are limited because it they cannot guarantee the motivation items match the motives are suitable forof all respondents in data collection. As a result, respondents were are ‘forced’ to make their choices from the those motivational items listed questionnaire based on a small group of interviewees or previous research, so that and therefore standard questionnaire items often the results may misrepresent attitude, orientations, circumstances, and experiences (Babbie, 2004) as there are a wide range of possible human needs (French, Craig-Smith, & Collier, 1995) that provide a. Motivation as the driving force behind all actions travel (Crompton, 1979), leads to challenges for researchers to examine travel motivation because of both the wide range of human needs and methodological difficulties (French, Craig-Smith, & Collier, 1995). Overall, it is widely accepted that there is no uniform feature of human motivation on which to base tourism studies (Iso-Ahola, 1980; Kay & Meyer, 2013; Pearce & Lee, 2005). Moreover, it is suggested that a good motivation theory should be multi-motive, dynamic, measurable, and relatively easy to communicate (Hsu and Huang, 2008).

Literature Review

Travel Motivation

According to Pearce (2011), travel motivation is a special subset of the wider interest area of human motivation, and is the total network of biological and cultural forces which give value and direction to travel choice, behaviour, and experience. In the last three decades, different theories of travel motivation have made contributions to tourism research. Table 1 provides an overview of travel motivation studies using these different theories and perspectives.

Table 1. Some main travel motivation theories.

Research Approach	Theory or Model	Proposition	Author(s) and Year
Psychographic	Plog's Psychocentric-Allocentrism Model	Tourists' travel patterns and preferences are determined by their personality characteristics. As a result, a personality scale may help to explain why destinations rise and fall in popularity.	Plog (1974, 1987, 2001)
Socio-Psychological	Seeking and Escaping	Any leisure activity consists of seeking and escaping. These two motivational forces are affected by personal and interpersonal factors.	Iso-Ahola (1980, 1982) Mannell and Iso-Ahola (1987)
	Travel Career Theory	The travel career ladder (TCL) describes travel motivation at five hierarchical levels of needs and motives. A travel career pattern (TCP) emphasizes the pattern of motivations and their structure rather than steps on a ladder or hierarchy.	Pearce (1988, 1993, 2005, 2011)
Sociological	Functional Theory	The reasons people undertake leisure travel is that the vacation serves (satisfies) to meet psychological functions (needs) for an individual.	Fodness (1994)
	Push and Pull Theory	People travel because they are pushed and pulled to do so. Pull factors are the specific attractions of the destination which induce the traveller to go there once the prior decision to travel has been made. Push factors are internally generated drives that cause the tourist to search for signs in objects, situations, and events that contain the promise of reducing prevalent drives.	Dann (1977, 1981) Crompton (1979)
	Expectancy Theory of Travel Motivation	There are a wide variety of different reasons for travel and these reasons vary widely between people. The strength of a tendency to act in a certain way depends on the strength of an expectancy that the act will be followed by a given consequence (or outcome) and on the value or attractiveness of that consequence or outcome to the actor.	Witt and Wright (1992)

Travel motivation research requires exploration of why people travel (Crompton, 1979). Overall, it is widely accepted that there is no single feature of human motivation on which to base tourism studies (Iso-Ahola, 1980; Kay & Meyer, 2013; Pearce & Lee, 2005). A good motivation theory should be multi-motive, dynamic, measurable, and relatively easy to communicate (Hsu & Huang, 2008). This study follows the suggestion of Kim and Prideaux (2005) that an understanding of the personal values that underpin travel motivations is required.

Means-End Chain Theory

The concept of a means-end chain (MEC) has been widely used in marketing research to understand consumer behaviour (e.g., Walker & Olson, 1991; Olson & Reynolds 2001;Wagner, 2007). MEC is based on expectancy-value theory and describes the hierarchical relationships between products attributes (the means), the consequences for the consumer provided by these attributes (benefits), and the personal values (the ends) these consequences reinforce (Gutman, 1982) as shown in Figure 1. Specifically, *attributes* represent aspects of the product or service and are physical or abstract depending on the way the product is perceived (Gutman, 1997). *Consequences* refer to any result (physiological or psychological) accruing directly or indirectly to the consumer from his/her behaviour and are also termed benefits (Gutman, 1982). *Values* are ‘learned beliefs that serve as guiding principles about how individuals ought to behave’ (Parks & Guay, 2009, p. 676). Values related to modes of conduct are called instrumental values, while those related to end-states of existence are called terminal values (Rokeach, 1973). Therefore, motivation can be uncovered as underlying reasons why certain attributes or expected consequences are desired (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988)

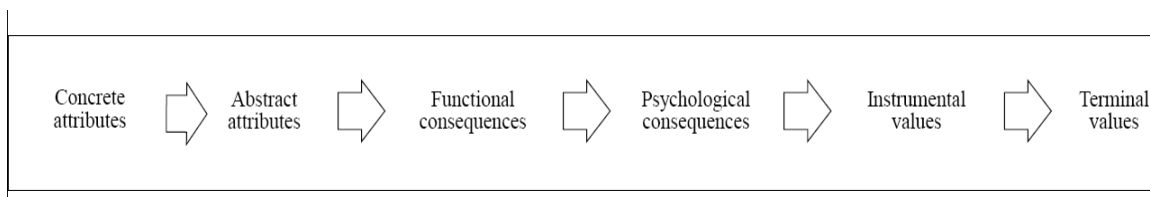


Figure 1. Six-level means-end chain model.
 Source: Adapted from Olson and Reynolds (2001)

MEC theory posits that motivation can be studied to reveal the underlying reasons why certain attributes or expected consequences are desired (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988) and seeks to identify linked cognitive structures or ‘ladders of motives’ (Bagozzi, Bergami, & Leone 2003, p. 918). Cohen and Warlop (2001) consider the hierarchical levels inherent in a chain as ‘motivational layers’. In this view, attributes, consequences, and values all represent different motivational layers in an MEC analytic investigation of a person’s travel choice behaviour (Wagner, 2007). MEC theory is widely used in marketing research to understand consumer behaviour and explore psychological factors driving product use.

MEC has been used in a number of studies by scholars in the tourism field (McDonald, Thyne, & McMorland, 2008; McIntosh & Thyne, 2005). These authors argue that MEC theory is particularly useful for understanding personal values, and has relevant and potential application in tourism research to study tourist behavior (McIntosh & Thyne, 2005). These studies have focused on particular destination (Klenosky & Gengler, 1993) or accommodation choice (Mattila, 1999; Thyne & Lawson, 2001), museum and heritage visitors (Crotts & van Rekom, 1999; Jansen-Verbeke & van Rekom, 1996; Frauman, Norman, & Klenosky, 1998; McIntosh, 1999; Thyne, 2001), and nature-based experiences (Frauman & Cunningham, 2001; Klenosky, Frauman, Norman, & Gengler, 1998). One study conducted by Klenosky (2002) provides a thoughtful discussion of the push-pull motivational framework. Based on the discussion of how and why push and pull theory is related to the MEC approach, this author notes that an MEC study focused explicitly on push factors could be a useful direction for future research (Klenosky, 2002).

The above studies enriched the literature of MEC theory in tourism research and provided some useful suggestions for MEC theory applying in tourism research. However, the MEC approach has not been used for motivation studies of leisure travel, especially for Chinese outbound tourists. Indeed, since the Chinese people are significantly influenced in their actions by Confucian philosophy (Kwek & Lee, 2010), “there may be specific factors unique to the Chinese culture, language and also expectation” that affect travel behaviour (Junek, Binney, & Deery, 2004, p. 150). As a result, identifying travel motivation at the attributes, benefits, and values levels may help to better understand Chinese travellers and provide useful information on their travel behaviour (Klenosky, 2002). In summary, the use of means-end chain theory in

tourism is not well developed and this theory “has relevant and potential application in tourism research and, as such, should receive wider academic debate” (McIntosh & Thyne, 2005, p. 259).

In tourism research field, it is believed that MEC theory could (1) probe what is most appropriate to many respondents (Jewell & Crofts, 2001); (2) be aware of new variables during laddering interview, (3) allow researchers examine how the motivation items relate to each other (McIntosh & Thyne, 2005), and (4) explore the motivations within deeper reasons at value level (McDonald, Thyne, & McMorland, 2008). The aim of this study is to address difficulties in determining motivation to travel by adopting means-end chain (MEC) theory, and its associated laddering technique, which uses in-depth interviews as the data collection method. As a result, this study explores Chinese travel motivation in a more integrated manner than previous studies. Specifically, the objectives of this study are (1) to explore the hierarchical leisure travel motivation of Chinese outbound travellers, at the attributes, consequences and values levels; and (2) to identify key motivation chains showing the relationships between motivations items at each level of a means-end chain.

Methodology

The interviewees in this study were Chinese citizens who had already travelled overseas and who planned to undertake another leisure trip to an overseas destination in the next year. Qualitative research requires information-rich participants and people who have experience of outbound travel are more likely to have a clearer idea of their motivation for travel to the next destination. These motivation perceptions will be influenced by their post-experience satisfaction (Dunn Ross & Iso-Ahola, 1991). Purposive sampling was used to identify respondents with the initial respondents sourced from the friends or relatives of the researcher. These first respondents were then asked to recommend other candidates who were maximally different in terms of personal characteristics, occupation, family stage, as well as their degree of outbound travel experience. This was done to obtain a range of means-end chains. Data collection was undertaken from February to May 2012 and 34 interviews were conducted in the cities of Beijing and Qingdao, China.

Face-to-face in-depth interviews using the laddering technique were used to collect the data needed. *Laddering* is the standard method associated with MEC theory (Reynolds &

Gutman, 1988). It is an in-depth, one-on-one interviewing technique used to uncover consumers' motivations ranging from preference-based attributes to personal values as modelled by a means-end chain (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988). During these interviews, the researcher first asked about the next destinations considered for outbound leisure travel and between two to six destinations were recorded. The respondents were then probed about their motivations at the attribute level by asking what kind of features these destinations had that attracted the interviewee to choose them. The answers usually revealed between three and seven motivations at the attribute level. For each attribute, the researcher applied the laddering technique by asking 'why is that important to you?' to probe the motivations at the consequence and values levels. This was continued until the respondents could not provide further reasons. The interview for each respondent lasted about 30 to 60 minutes, and at the end of each interview, an outbound travel guidebook was presented as a small gift to each respondent.

The interviews were transcribed and content analysis was conducted to determine the content codes describing travel motivation. A standard typology of motivations at each level was established and used in the coding process. This typology was determined from studies of travel motivations (mostly at the attribute and benefit level), as well as from the literature on human values such as Rokeach's Value Survey (RVS) (1973), Kahle's List of Value (LOV) (1996), and some studies of Chinese values (Chen, 2001; Lew, 1998; Mok & Defranco, 2000; Tsang, 2011). Interviews were conducted in Chinese language, using Chinese concepts, and therefore no issues of decentring of meanings occurred in this study (Nes, Abma, Jonsson, & Deeg, 2010). Because this research is presented in English, an accurate and appropriate translation from Chinese to English is important and necessary. To achieve this purpose, a Chinese and English version of the content codes was prepared by the first author, and the third author who is not only an experienced scholar but also speaks Chinese, was asked to double check and compare the two versions where seven significant variations were noted. After discussion of these content codes by three authors of this study, changes in the English wording were made.

Through this coding process 112 concept codes were identified and then were grouped into 24 summary content codes for further analysis (see Table 1). These summary codes include nine attributes, eight consequences, and seven values. These codes were then used in developing a Hierarchical Value Map (HVM).

Table 1. Summary content codes for respondents' travel motivation

Code	Concepts	Code	Concepts
Attributes			
1	history/culture/art	5	shopping
2	local customs	6	gift to relative and friends
3	natural scenery	7	famous
4	activity in nature	8	good environment
		9	featured/ unique style
Consequences			
10	experience differences	14	relaxation
11	improve personal relationship	15	be close to the nature
12	get to know deeper and comprehensively	16	enrich one's life
13	be fond of/ be interested in	17	enjoyable
Values			
18	reciprocation of greetings, favours, and gifts	22	self-realization
19	self-improvement	23	true friendship and love
20	an experienced person	24	aesthetics
21	hedonic pleasure		

A HVM summarises the links across levels of abstraction for all the respondents (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988) and in this study shows the reasons why Chinese people are motivated to undertake outbound leisure travel (Figure 2). The thicker the line, the more times two codes were mentioned in relation to one another related by the respondents. As a result these thicker lines identify the key MECs. According to previous literature (e.g., Klenosky, 2002; Reynolds & Gutman, 1988), in order to portrays the main relations in the matrix, the *cut-off* level is usually between two and five, which decides what number of times a link has been mentioned by respondents could be shown in the HVM. In this study, different *cut-off* levels were tried to compare the percentage of total ladders summarized from the raw data, and a cut-off value of three was used which was most suitable to represent the data results, so that the relations mentioned less than three times are not shown in the HVM.

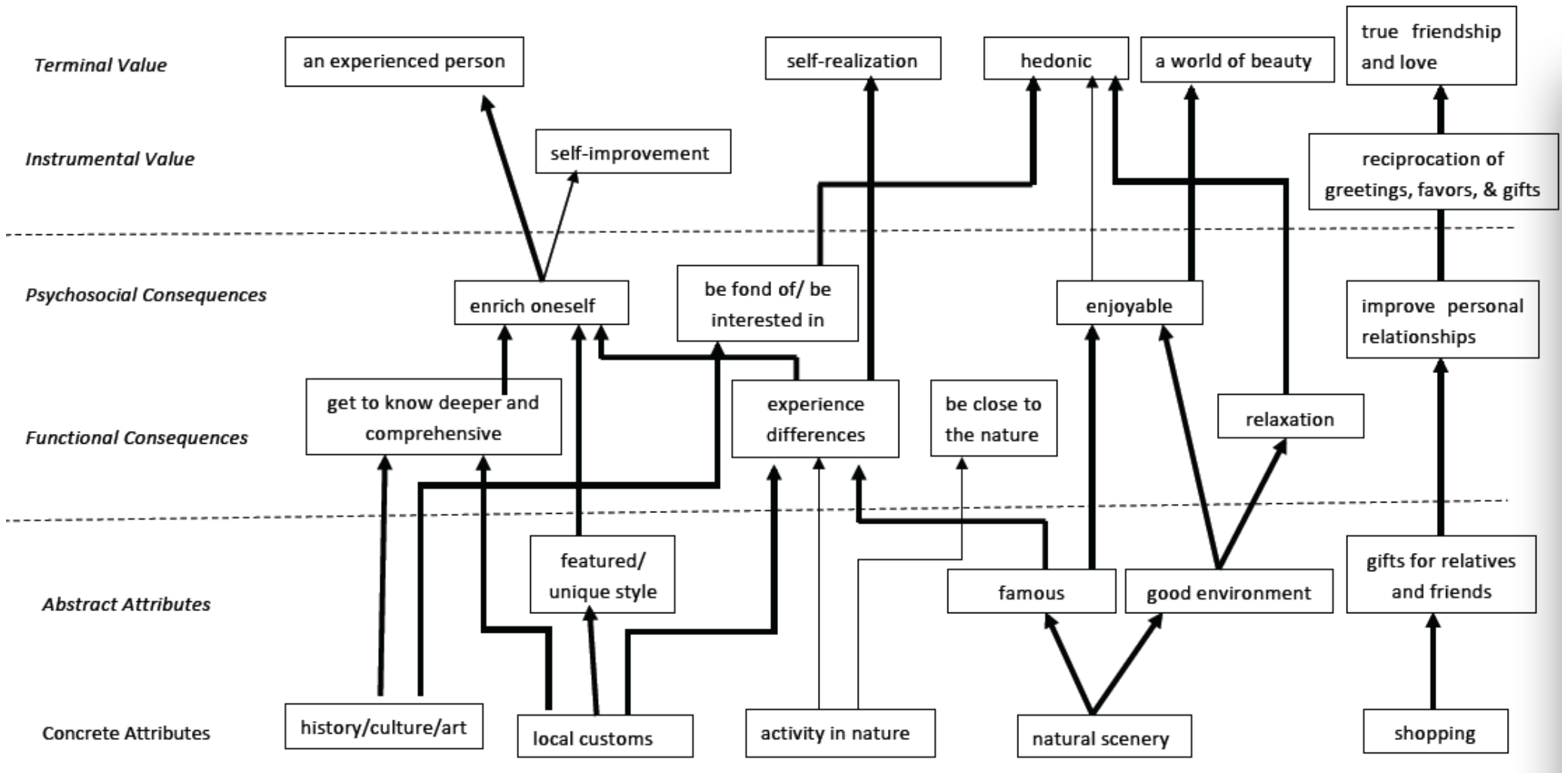


Figure 2. Hierarchical Value Map for Chinese Outbound Travel

1 **Results**

2 All respondents had previously undertaken outbound leisure travel with a range in
 3 number of countries previously visited evident ranging from one to more than 20. On
 4 average respondents had visited about five to six countries or destinations overseas.
 5 Europe and Southeast Asia were the potential destinations that most respondents
 6 preferred but destinations such as Australia and the USA were also popular. Their
 7 previous travel experiences indicated that the respondents were familiar with outbound
 8 leisure travel, which enabled them to better discuss their motivations for visiting
 9 overseas destinations. A summary of the respondent characteristics is shown in Table 2.
 10

11 **Table 2.** Demographic profile of the respondents.

Characteristics	Frequency	Characteristics	Frequency
<i>Gender</i>		<i>Location</i>	
Male	10	Beijing	17
Female	24	Qingdao	17
<i>Age</i>		<i>Annual Income (RMB)</i>	
18- 30 years	3	Below 100,000	11
31-40 years	13	100,000-150,000	7
41-50 years	12	150,001-25,000	6
51-60 years	5	250,001-350,000	5
Above 60 years	1	Above 350,000	5
<i>Education</i>			
Below College Degree	8		
College Degree	16		
Master Degree	9		
PhD Degree	1		

12
 13 Six key MECs emerged from the data analysis, providing insights into the
 14 motivations of Chinese tourists for outbound travel. The first MEC was labelled ‘natural
 15 scenery-enjoyable-the world of beauty’. Table 3 shows the direct and indirect relations
 16 from levels of attributes to consequences to values in this chain. Specifically, the
 17 number to the left of the decimal in each cell of the six MECs of Table 4 shows the how
 18 many times two motivation items at different levels were mentioned as linked together
 19 directly and the number to the right of the decimal shows the number of indirect
 20 relations (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988). For example, in the first MEC, ‘natural scenery’
 21 has eight direct linkages to ‘good environment’, meaning that this *direct relation* has
 22 been mentioned by eight respondents in the interviews. Also, there are nine indirect

1 linkages between ‘nature scenery’ and ‘the world of beauty’, meaning that within the
 2 laddering process, when the researcher probed the motivation behind wanting to see
 3 ‘nature scenery’ at the attributes level, nine respondents mentioned ‘the world of
 4 beauty’ as their motivation at the values level. These nine respondents may have had
 5 different motivations at the consequences level, but because they have the same
 6 motivations both at the attributes and consequences level, these chains are considered as
 7 indicating an *indirect relationship*. Each of the six key MECs are discussed below.

8 **Table 3.** MECs of respondents’ travel motivations.

9 MEC 1: Natural scenery → A world of beauty

Code	Nature scenery	Famous	Good environment	Enjoyable	A world of beauty	Sub-total
Nature scenery	0.00	6.00	8.00	2.07	0.09	16.16
Famous	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.01	0.03	4.04
Good environment	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.01
Enjoyable	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.00	4.00
Hedonic	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
					Total	24.21

10

11 MEC 2: Natural scenery → Pleasure

Code	Nature scenery	Good environment	Relaxation	Hedonic	Sub-total
Nature scenery	0.00	8.00	3.03	0.09	11.12
Good environment	0.00	0.00	5.02	0.04	5.06
Relaxation	0.00	0.00	0.00	7.00	7.00
Hedonic	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
				Total	23.18

12

13 MEC 3: Local customs; Natural scenery → Self-realization

Code	Local customs	Natural scenery	Famous	Experience differences	Self-realization	Sub-total
Local customs	0.00	0.00	0.00	8.02	0.04	8.06
Natural scenery	0.00	0.00	6.00	5.04	0.04	11.08

Code	Local customs	Natural scenery	Famous	Experience differences	Self-realization	Sub-total
Famous	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.00	0.03	5.03
Experience differences	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.04	5.04
Self-realization	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
					Total	29.21

1

2 MEC 4: History/culture/art → Hedonic

Code	History/culture/art	Be fond of/ be interested in	Hedonic	Sub-total
History/culture/art	0.00	4.01	0.04	4.05
Be fond of/ be interested in	0.00	0.00	5.00	5.00
Hedonic	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
			Total	9.05

3

4 MEC 5: Local customs; History/culture/art → To be an experienced person

Code	History/ culture/ art	Local customs	Featured/ unique style	Get to know deeper and comprehensively	Enrich one's life	An experienced person	Sub-total
History/ culture/ art	0.00	0.00	2.00	5.00	4.04	0.04	11.08
Local customs	0.00	0.00	4.00	8.02	2.03	0.10	14.15
Featured/ unique style	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.20	5.01	0.06	5.27
Get to know deeper and comprehensively	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.04	5.02	9.06
Enrich one's life	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	9.05	9.05
An experienced person	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
						Total	48.61

5

6 MEC 6: Shopping → True friendship and love

Code	Shopping	Gift to relative and friends	Improve personal relationship	Reciprocation of greetings, favours, and gifts	True friendship and love	Sub-total
Shopping	0.00	8.00	5.03	0.04	0.06	13.13
Gift to relative and friends	0.00	0.00	7.01	0.80	0.04	7.85

Code	Shopping	Gift to relative and friends	Improve personal relationship	Reciprocation of greetings, favours, and gifts	True friendship and love	Sub-total
Improve personal relationship	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.00	4.05	9.05
Reciprocation of greetings, favours, and gifts	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00	2.00
True friendship and love	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total						32.03

1

2 **MEC 1:** ‘Natural scenery’ is attractive to the respondents because they prefer these
3 ‘good environment’ or the ‘famous’ places to satisfy their ‘enjoy[ment]’ as a benefit, to
4 allow them to experience ‘a world of beauty’. In the coding scheme used, ‘natural
5 scenery’ refers to things like ‘*mountains*’, ‘*rivers*’, ‘*savannah*’, ‘*waterfalls*’, ‘*canyons*’,
6 and ‘*beaches*’. Abstract attributes such as ‘famous’ and ‘a good environment’ were also
7 identified. The code ‘famous’ refers to ‘*advertised in the media*’, ‘*word-of-mouth*’, or ‘*a*
8 *place with a good reputation*’; ‘good environment’ refers to ‘*clean*’, ‘*good weather*’,
9 ‘*quiet environment*’, ‘*less people*’, or ‘*leisure atmosphere*’. Respondents preferred
10 famous destinations or those with a good environment because they wanted to ‘enjoy’
11 the natural scenery, which ultimately helped them to experience ‘a world of beauty’,
12 meaning the ‘*appreciation of beautiful nature*’. In all, there are 24 direct relations and
13 21 indirect relations in this chain.

14 **MEC 2:** ‘Natural scenery’ is important for respondents because they want to
15 relax within the ‘good environment’, to satisfy their ‘hedonic’ values. In the second
16 MEC, ‘natural scenery’ was linked to the consequence of ‘relaxation’ and a ‘good
17 environment’, or one which provides a relaxing atmosphere. For the respondents,
18 ‘relaxation’ means ‘*release from work pressure*’ and ‘*having leisure time*’. All the
19 respondents lived in large cities and experienced highly pressured working conditions.
20 The respondents believe that ‘relaxation’ will help them to achieve ‘hedonic pleasure’,
21 which in the respondents’ own words refers to ‘*being happy*’, ‘*joyful*’, ‘*cheerful*’,
22 ‘*having a pleasing life*’, ‘*enjoying*’, or ‘*being comfortable*’. As shown in MEC 2, there
23 are 23 direct relations and 18 indirect relations in this chain.

1 **MEC 3:** In this MEC, there are two frequent start points at the attribute level
2 that converge at the consequence level and connect to the same value. Some
3 respondents want to see ‘local customs’ because they want to ‘experience difference’,
4 so that they can achieve their terminal motivation of ‘self-realization’; while other
5 respondents want to see natural scenery, to get the same benefit of ‘experience
6 differences’ from a ‘good environment’, and to achieve the same terminal motivation of
7 ‘self-realization’. In the third MEC, the attribute of ‘local customs’ is strongly linked to
8 the consequence of ‘experience[ing] differences’ with eight direct and two indirect
9 relations. Respondents seek to experience differences in the ‘local customs’ when
10 travelling to another country. The local customs they are interested in include *‘the*
11 *courtesy of local people’*, *‘city views’*, *‘countryside views’*, *‘local street views (i.e.*
12 *markets, food streets, etc.)’*, and *‘local bars’*. At the same time, the attribute of ‘natural
13 scenery’ is also strongly linked to the consequence of ‘experience[ing] differences’ with
14 11 direct and eight indirect relations. For these respondents, to ‘experience differences’
15 means *‘going to a place I have not been to’*, *‘having new or different experiences’*,
16 *‘getting to know things that China does not have’*, *‘seeing new things’*, and *‘willing to*
17 *see as much as I can’*. With 18 direct and six indirect relations, ‘experience differences’
18 is an important consequence that respondents wish to pursue during their outbound
19 travel. Interviewees hope to accomplish ‘self-realization’ because they ‘experience
20 differences’ when they travel overseas, where ‘self-realization’ means they *‘feel no*
21 *regrets’*, *‘realize a wish’*, or *‘pursue an internal desire’*, and *‘being able to say I “have*
22 *been there”’*. As shown in the table, there are totally 29 direct and 21 indirect relations
23 in this MEC.

24 **MEC 4:** The fourth key MEC, shown in the table, centres on respondents’
25 personal interests in ‘history/culture/art’. Tangible objects grouped under
26 ‘history/culture/ art’ are *‘historical attractions’*, *‘museum tours’* and *‘works of art’*. The
27 reasons why respondents chose these attributes is because they are ‘fond of/ interested
28 in’ them. This consequence highlights the importance of satisfying the respondent’s
29 need for the things they love or are interested in. Doing so leads to ‘hedonic pleasure’
30 for the respondents. The value ‘hedonic pleasure’ is an essential purpose of outbound
31 tourism, with nine direct and five indirect connections in the chain in total.

32 **MEC 5:** As shown in Figure 2, ‘history/culture/art’ attributes were linked with
33 the consequence of ‘get to know deeper and comprehensively’, which means *‘observe*

1 *the local residents' life*, *'see the authentic situation'*, *'see what on earth it looks like'*,
2 or *'know the things further'*. At the same time, the 'featured and unique style' of 'local
3 customs' is also attractive to the respondents who want to enrich themselves during the
4 outbound travel. These two types of respondents both seek to 'enrich one's life', so as to
5 become a person with more experience. Here, 'enrich one's life' means *'learn some*
6 *technique or ability'*, *'broaden horizons'*, or *'increase knowledge and experience'*.

7 There is a Chinese saying: *'Reading 10,000 books and travelling 10,000 miles'*
8 which means that travel provides useful experience. 'An experienced person' is
9 respected in Chinese culture, and is one of the most important reasons to travel. This is
10 shown in the 14 direct and 27 indirect links to the personal value of 'an experienced
11 person'. According to the interviews, *'Respect for knowledge/experience'* and *'to be*
12 *experienced'* is a culture value for Chinese, especially when travelling outbound in
13 tourism context. This is because outbound tourism is regarded as *'a very good chance'*
14 for Chinese tourists to *'open (their) eyes'* and *'see the outside world'*. In summary, as
15 shown in the table, there are 48 direct and 61 indirect relations in this MEC.

16 **MEC 6:** The connection between 'Shopping and 'True friendship and love' explains
17 respondents' interest and concern for shopping while overseas. Respondents considered
18 it very important to buy gifts for their relatives and friends on their trip. These 'gifts'
19 may be *'featured souvenirs'* or *'luxury brands'* of clothes, cosmetic, and handbags. In
20 Chinese culture, 'reciprocation of greetings, favours, and gifts' is valued as a means of
21 establishing or reinforcing interpersonal relationships, especially when arriving back
22 from an overseas trip. As a result many respondents consider it important because *'it is*
23 *a tradition'* and *'others do this all the time'* and that a gift to a friend or a relative will
24 'improve personal relationships', and ultimately show their 'true love and friendship'.
25 Based on the information from the interviews, shopping may not be a primary motive
26 for travel outbound, but for most Chinese tourists, shopping will be an important
27 activity during their travel, and they *'are willing to spend big money to bring gifts*
28 *back'*, because they do want to be *'having face'* with fancy or expensive gifts. In all,
29 there are 32 direct relations and three indirect relations in this chain.

30 **Discussion and Implication**

31 From an analysis of respondent travel MECs and considering motivation at the
32 values level, two motivational groups may be distinguished. One group of respondents

1 are primarily pursuing values related to ‘pleasure’. They may ‘enjoy’ a ‘good
2 environment’ with ‘natural scenery’, may ‘relax’ in a natural setting, or visit historical,
3 cultural, and artistic attractions to enjoy the thing they are ‘interested in/ fond of’. These
4 are all ways of achieving values related to ‘pleasure’. According to Krippendorf (1987),
5 human happiness is a harmonious, trouble and tension-free state, and associated with
6 self-realization. It is also believed that the probability of experiencing this state of
7 happiness is much greater during holidays than in everyday life. Variety seeking
8 (novelty seeking) is also associated with tourism (San Martín & Rodríguez del Bosque,
9 2008). When the individual comprehends an environment as too familiar, they tire of
10 that setting and seek arousal through incongruent, novel, and complex situations (Crotts,
11 1993). Relaxation and escape from a routine life are two important reasons for taking a
12 vacation (Hill, McDonald, & Uysal, 1990; J. Krippendorf, 1987; Xu, Li, & Weaver,
13 2010). The findings of this research highlighted that ‘enjoyment’ and ‘pleasure’ are very
14 important travel motivations in Chinese leisure travel.

15 A second group of respondents were intent on experiencing cultural differences
16 such as in local customs, history, and the arts, in order to ‘enrich themselves’ by
17 increasing their knowledge and experience. For this group, a primary value of travel is
18 ‘to be an experienced person’. Therefore they want to ‘get to know things more deeply’,
19 or ‘experience differences’, and they seek ‘self-realization’ and ‘self-improvement’
20 when travelling outbound. Self-realization is defined here as ‘a person's dynamic
21 relationship between the real and the ideal self-concept’ (Grunow-Lutter, 1983, p. 76).
22 Self-realization is not a state but a process of decreasing the distance between these two
23 cognitive systems, which themselves are subject to continuous change (Gnoth, 1997). In
24 this research, outbound leisure tourism is still a kind of luxurious tourism product that
25 not every Chinese could afford or easily get. It is about going to a place they dreamed of
26 or admired, and therefore it means to realize a wish that ‘I have been there’.
27 Importantly, in Confucianism, to achieve personal success means to learn more through
28 personal experiences apart from book knowledge, and travelling is regarded as the most
29 important method to broaden one’s horizons (Xu, 2007; Yang, 2008). For these
30 respondents, outbound tourism is regarded as ‘*a very good chance*’ for Chinese tourists
31 to increase their experiences and knowledge

32 Travel motivation is of central interest to tourism marketers and managers in the
33 design, planning, and promotion of tourism destinations. The core of marketing is to
34 understand what motivates a consumer to buy a product. In the tourism industry, this

1 refers to understanding what motivates tourists to travel and to buy a tourism product. In
2 this sense, the MEC approach allows a deeper understanding of why certain activities
3 are undertaken while travelling. This study has determined the travel motivations of a
4 sample of Chinese travellers on three hierarchical levels and also determined the
5 relationships between motivation items across these levels. The research findings
6 contribute to the travel motivation literature by identifying directed, hierarchically
7 organized motivation structures with interconnected levels of attributes, consequences,
8 and values. This research provides meaningful information on Chinese outbound leisure
9 tourists as an emerging market with strong potential. As was suggested, since this is
10 what customers want, then this attribute should be included in positioning decisions and
11 promotional efforts (Reich, 1997). For example, some important concrete attributes of a
12 destination such as *local customs, history/ culture/ art, nature scenery, and shopping* are
13 preferred by Chinese outbound travellers. At the same time, abstract attributes of the
14 destination such as *unique style and characteristics, fame, and good environment*, are
15 also important. It is suggested that more accessible knowledge about places of interest
16 should be provided, and culture differences should be accentuated to address the desires
17 of Chinese tourists. For example, marketers may consider undertaking more promotion
18 highlighting nature, culture, history, and art attractions, to establish an image as a
19 relaxing, and unique destination with a good environment.

20 The research findings here not only provide insight into the preferred attributes
21 motivating respondents to outbound leisure travel, but also indicate what kinds of
22 benefit the respondents would like to get from these specific attributes, and what values
23 could be satisfied by these benefits or consequences, to provide a complete motivational
24 picture. For example, Chinese travellers provide gifts for their friends and relatives at
25 home and favour '*featured souvenirs*' or '*luxury brands*' that meet their needs of *having*
26 *face* and *harmony*. This is because that in Chinese culture value, *having face* and *group*
27 *conformity* are influential predictors in determining behavioural intentions (Lee, 1990).
28 Thus the MEC approach links attributes of a destination such as 'souvenirs' to higher
29 motivational constructs. To address this issue and better cater for Chinese tourists, more
30 information on duty-free shops, souvenirs, and gift shops could be provided. It is
31 believed that in this way, the MEC approach provides a better understanding of why
32 certain activities are undertaken while travelling, and the result is more comprehensive
33 and distinct in terms of practical usage in the marketing field.

1 The need for understanding personal values in travel motivations has been noted
2 (Kim & Prideaux, 2005) in previous travel motivation studies, since tourist motivation
3 is not a simple short-term process (Uysal & Hagan, 1993). On these criteria, MEC
4 theory has the advantages compared with other approaches, and deserves more attention
5 and application in travel motivation research. Clearly the perception of a destination
6 may be significantly influenced by psychological factors, such as motivation and
7 cultural values (San Martín & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008). In line with the MEC
8 approach, destination image should be considered in an individual's belief or
9 knowledge about the place's attributes (San Martín & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008).
10 The findings of this research suggest that destination products should be developed and
11 promoted to satisfy Chinese tourists' values of hedonic/pleasure, offer new knowledge
12 and experiences, and an opportunity to appreciate the beauty of nature, culture, and the
13 arts.

14 **Conclusion and Further Study**

15 This study examines the travel motivation of Chinese outbound tourists at the attribute,
16 consequence and values levels based on means-end chain (MEC) theory and its
17 associated laddering technique. In-depth interviews with respondents were analysed to
18 identify six key means-end chains. This research is the first work to discuss Chinese
19 outbound travellers' motivation in terms of hierarchical levels of attributes,
20 consequences, and values. MEC theory and laddering technique, this research
21 encourages respondents to think about the underlying motivations distinct from their
22 superficial motivations, and allow the respondents to express their motivation with their
23 own words.

24 The application of MEC theory to the study of travel motivation has a number of
25 significant advantages. At a theoretical level, first, MEC theory seeks to identify
26 tourists' long-term goals by examining travel motivation at the values level; second, it
27 can explore the multiple causes of behaviour by determining the attributes,
28 consequences, and values that motivate travel behaviour; and third, it identifies the
29 relationships among attributes, consequences, and values to uncover a hierarchy of
30 travel motivations. At the methodological level, first, its use can provide items at
31 different levels of motivation measurement; and second, it is superior in allowing
32 respondents to think about their underlying motivations distinct from their surface
33 reasons using the laddering technique. It is believed that this research will contribute to

1 the motivation research field by providing insights on methodology in terms of the
2 connection between destination attributes, consequence motivation, and personal value
3 as long-term motivation.

4 One of the limitations of this study is that it uses convenience sampling and
5 relative a small number of people were interviewed. As a result this can only be seen as
6 an exploratory study. The Chinese outbound travel market is the context for this
7 research and one where there is much current interest. Further research should use a
8 larger sample size and different sampling methods to confirm, extend and validate the
9 findings. Furthermore, Chinese tourists' motivations may vary across different segments
10 and destinations, so more empirical researches are needed. In this way, marketers may
11 obtain insight to refine their targeting efforts.

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