

Females and tourism activities: An insight for all-female tours in Hong Kong

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Abstract

Although all-female tours have become popular in Western and Asian countries, until now researchers haven't paid much attention to this niche but important market. This study aims to explore the female tourists' desired activities towards an "all-female activity-based outbound tour" in Hong Kong. A survey was administered to tourists who joined short- and long-haul outbound packages from Hong Kong. Female's preferred tourism activities can be grouped into: *Sightseeing*; *Sports*; *Relaxation*, and *Entertainment*. This study found that all-female tourists are not homogenous, which can be segmented into three clusters: Omnivores, Univores, and Sporadic. The similarity between these three clusters was the high interests in *relaxation* activities. There were significant differences between the three clusters in terms of age, and marital status. The findings reported would indicate direction to tourism marketers in formulating marketing strategies towards the Hong Kong market.

Keywords: All-female tour, Female tourist, Tourism activity, Market segmentation, Hong Kong

Introduction

Previously, women's social role and gendered location as females highly and intensely constrained them to access satisfying leisure and tourism activities (Wilson & Little, 2005). However, their social roles are rapidly changing in developed countries (Mitten, 1992). For instance, the social expectations towards women in Australia were strongly linked to the stereotypical image of 'marriage and children'. However, nowadays, the society has less pressure towards women in terms of getting married and having children (Wilson & Little, 2005). Similar phenomenon on Chinese women's social status also exists in the Chinese society. Rather than being a wife and mother to take family responsibilities, nowadays, a large number of Chinese women, particularly those born in 1970s and 1980s, decide to not get married (Y. Li & Yang, 2008). Women's higher social autonomy and greater social acceptance has opened more opportunities for them to pursue different types of tourism and leisure activities (Berdychevsky, Gibson, & Bell, 2016; H. J. Gibson, Berdychevsky, & Bell, 2012; Wilson & Little, 2005). Chinese women consider travel and leisure activity as a way to reaffirm their sense of self-worth, and also a way to enhance their independent being (Zhang & Hitchcock, 2017).

One possible reason of women's enhanced social status is the increased financial autonomy, which enables women to have a greater purchasing power than ever before (Granot, Greene, & Brashear, 2010). Nowadays, women have more opportunity to earn equitable income compared with men, owing to the equal employment opportunity (Bryson, 1994; Y. Li & Yang, 2008). Women are becoming one of the most powerful and

influential segments in the consumer market in some developed countries, such as the United States (Silverstein & Sayre, 2009). In the tourism context, more than 70 percent of all travel decisions were made by females, including the choice of destinations, accommodation and transportation (Lin & Lehto, 2006). As female's significant role in the travel decision-making process, such as tourism products selection, a growing number of tourism industry practitioners have developed female specific products to cater to the special needs of female customers (Junek, Binney, & Winn, 2006).

In order to provide excellent service to the powerful women market, some international hotel chains, such as Marriott, and Wyndham, have been offering all-female floors in their hotels to female guests. Possible reasons could be women are more concerning about elements, such as extra safety, hygiene and the extra amenities tailored to women (Kelly, 2011). In addition to hotel product, tourism operators also offer female-only tours to customers. This type of product is different from other general tourism products, in that all group members are females. Women can travel by themselves or with mothers, sisters, daughters, friends, or colleagues by joining this type of tour (Junek et al., 2006). All-female tours provide time and space for intense and unfiltered woman-to-woman/women interaction, which is different from sharing time and space with men (Berdychevsky et al., 2016). The distinctive feature of women-only tours is the more relaxed, comfortable, congenial and intimate atmosphere, which provides female tour members with the opportunity to share interests and topics, to do girly things, and to indulge more freely in the tour activities (Junek et al., 2006).

All-female travel, as a significant trend in the tourism industry, is popular in some countries, such as the United States, Canada, Australia, Japan, and South Korea. The target markets of all-female tours in different countries are slightly different. In the United States, Canada and Australia, all-female tours are usually named women-only tours and tend to target women between the age of mid-30s to late 50s offering trips for recreational activities, adventure, cultural, spiritual and spa experiences (Sights and Soul Travels, 2015; Women Traveling Together, 2015). Whereas in Asia (e.g., Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, and India), ladies-only tours targeting younger generation, such as mid-20s or above, has evolved and had a blast in providing getaways for girls (Kesari Tour, 2015).

The gradually increasing popularity of all-female travel is identified as a social phenomenon. Although this social phenomenon has becoming popular in Western and Asian countries, until now only limited studies have paid attention to this niche but important market (e.g., Berdychevsky, Gibson, & Bell, 2013; Berdychevsky et al., 2016; Junek et al., 2006; Khoo-Lattimore & Gibson, 2016; Khoo-Lattimore & Prayag, 2015). Among these limited studies, most of the all-female studies were conducted in the Western context (i.e., Canada, the United States, and Australia); only two studies were investigated in the Eastern context (i.e., Malaysia). Therefore, studies should be conducted in the Eastern context in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the social phenomenon, all-female tours. Due to cultural differences, females from the East and the West may have different interpretations towards the social phenomenon. It is expected that the Eastern studies can be utilised to compare with the Western studies in the future.

It is believed that different females have various interests in the tourism activity, no matter in the all-female tour context or the mix-gender tour context. Numbers of leisure studies have examined females' adventure outdoor activities, such as canoeing, in the all-female context (McDermott, 2004). It should be noted that outdoor adventure activities are only a small component of the general tourism activities. All-female tours have become a social phenomenon in the tourism industry, and lots of females participate in not only the outdoor adventure activities, but also a variety of general tourism activities. Therefore, there is a necessary to understand females' activity preferences. However, an understanding of females' general tourism activity preferences in the all-female tour context has remained unknown. It is expected that the current study will contribute to the literature by providing insights into all-female tourists' activity preferences.

Female tourists are not homogenous (Khoo-Lattimore & Prayag, 2015), so all-female tourists may not be homogenous. However, no evidence shows that whether all-female tourists are same or not. Additionally, females during different stages of the life cycle may interest in different types of tourism activities. Even though some qualitative studies have identified the different characteristics of all-female tourists during the different life course in the Western context (H. J. Gibson et al., 2012). However, no quantitative study has been conducted to empirically test the relationship between the tourism activity preference and the life cycle. In doing so, this study uses the quantitative approach to segment different types of all-female tourists and characterise these different segment based on demographic variables, such as stages of life cycle.

This study chooses Hong Kong as the context to examine this important product. There are a growing number of economic independent females in Hong Kong, and female travellers are assumed to have a great potential to become an important market segment in Hong Kong's tourism industry. In addition, Hong Kong is a tourist-generating region, and Hong Kong females are frequent travellers in outbound tourism. Therefore, understanding Hong Kong female's travel preference is extremely important.

Research objectives

This study aims to explore the Hong Kong female tourists' desired activities towards an "all-female activity-based outbound tour". Specifically, the objectives of this study were: 1) to explore the interested activities for all-female tourists; 2) to identify the major types of tourism activities for all-female tourists; 3) to identify the segments of the market based on tourism activities; and 4) to explore the characteristics of the segments of these female tourists.

Literature review

Female tourists

From a gender view, women's extremely high commitment to household and family responsibilities limits their equal economic opportunities, therefore, women have been

always portrayed as less economic independence (Scheiner, 2014). In media, women are often portrayed as dependent, domestic, docile and subservient to men, and having rather limited positions of credibility and authority (Berdychevsky et al., 2016). In tourism promotional materials, women's stereotypical image was domestic, caregiving, sexy, submissive, vulnerable and dependent-on-men roles (Berdychevsky et al., 2016), showing that women's image has been narrowed and negatively presented. The stereotypical image is possibly formed by the historical and traditional view on women's role as a family caregiver who is responsible for the household tasks.

Generally, women's image is always linked to the lens of traditional, dependent, caregiving, and domestic femininity (Berdychevsky et al., 2016). For instance, while women have been historically assigned to the role of family caregiver in charge of household tasks (Cambronero-Saiz, 2013; Wilson & Little, 2005). The role of being a family caregiver constraints women to travelling or to enjoying the holiday, so they search for certain levels of freedom from some tourist experiences, such as, all-female tours (Junek et al., 2006). The female's image in tourism has been changing recently, and now they are portrayed as 'to search for independence, adventure, and self-values' in the travel experience (Cockburn-Wooten, Friend, & McIntosh, 2006; Wilson & Harris, 2006; Zhang & Hitchcock, 2017).

In terms of female travellers' need, Lin and Lehto (2006) categorized the female's travel psychological needs into four types: relaxation, self-development, self-esteem, and relationship oriented. They also examined female's family life cycle, such as employed

and non-employed, married and non-married, with kids and no kids, etc. Their study showed that the needs of relaxation were much more important to the employed female travellers than the unemployed female travellers. In addition, the needs of relaxation were considered to be essential across different stages of female travellers, except older female travellers without children. One of the interesting findings is that the unemployed female travellers showed a higher level of needs in self-development than the employed female travellers. However, the employed female travellers might have other channels to fulfil needs of self-development such as from their work achievements. In addition, the unemployed female travellers sought to visit places that they had not visited and to gain more knowledge about places, people, and things.

Female tourists are interested in certain tourism activities. For example, Cai and Combrink (2000) examined Japanese female traveller's preferred activities, and found that shopping is the most popular travel activity for outbound tourism. In addition, female is the major market for some specific travel segment, such as health and wellness tourism (Smith & Puczkó, 2009). By examining the relationship between gender and leisure activity preferences, Barnett (2011) found that males and females have significant differences in activity preferences (i.e., outdoor activities, sports, social, general interest, and health/fitness, and performing arts). Specifically, females participated more frequently in outdoor (non-sport) activities, and males participated in sports more than females (Barnett, 2011). Studies have examined female travellers' characteristics, such as business and leisure, travel motivation, and life cycle. However, limited studies have been found on the tourism activity preferences among all-female tourists.

All-female tours

The growing popularity of the all-female pleasure-travel group makes it a global phenomenon in women's travel (Khoo-Lattimore & Prayag, 2015). In the current literature, two terms, all-female tours and girlfriend getaways, describe the phenomenon that females travelling with other females. All-female tours focus on the package tour itself, where all females travelling together; whereas girlfriend getaways may be not related to package tour, and it only focuses on the phenomenon of all females travelling together. Specifically, girlfriend getaways are characterised by women taking trips with female friends, family members, or relatives (Berdychevsky et al., 2013; Khoo-Lattimore & Gibson, 2016). In the literature, both all-female tours and girlfriend getaway haven't been well examined, only quite a small number of studies can be found on both topics.

Women participate in all-female holidays (girlfriend getaways) throughout the life course, and girlfriend getaways fulfil various psychological needs for women during the different stages of the life course, such as adolescence, early adulthood, middle adulthood, and later adulthood (H. J. Gibson et al., 2012). During adolescence, girlfriend getaways are an opportunity for the teenage needs of exclusivity, rebellion, and individuation. The girlfriend getaway is important for long-term bonding and strengthening childhood friendship. During early adulthood, the main socio-psychological tasks are exploration, adventure, a time to 'try on' different identities before settling on a direction. In middle adulthood, girlfriend getaways are described as: guilt, escape, and fulfil bucket lists. They

also exhibit the common themes of reconnecting with friends, transitions, and escape. Girlfriend getaways in late adulthood are associated with stereotypes, entitlement, and appreciation (H. J. Gibson et al., 2012). H. Gibson and Yiannakis (2002) also found the patterns of stability and change in preference for different types of tourism over the adult life course among female tourists. For example, preference for thrill-seeking-type behaviours while on vacation tended to decline while interest in cultural and educational travel tended to increase in middle and late adulthood.

All-female outdoor recreational experiences have three features: the provision of a supportive, non-competitive environment for learning physical skills; their underlying philosophical approach regarding the human-nature relationship; and the belief that women have a desire to spend time in the company of other, like-minded women (McDermott, 2004). Girlfriend getaway experience also contributes to females' wellbeing from four perspectives: escapism, gender dynamics, authenticity, and empowerment (Berdychevsky et al., 2013). Escapism refers to various breaks from the routine and everyday stress. Gender dynamics refers to the differences as being underpinned by gender specific ways of thinking and interacting. Existential authenticity means that participants were able to experience an authentic woman-to-woman time and to take a break from performing the gendered aspects of their identities when in the company of women. Empowerment is derived from escapism, gender dynamics, and authenticity. The women particularly noted a sense of freedom from social structures and gendered expectations.

In the hospitality context, researchers (i.e., Khoo-Lattimore & Gibson, 2016; Khoo-Lattimore & Prayag, 2015) examined females' accommodation preferences in the context of girlfriend getaway. Khoo-Lattimore and Prayag (2015) segmented the accommodation and service preferences of females who participated in girlfriend getaways, and found that girlfriend market is heterogeneous in its accommodation and service preferences but homogeneous in its demographic characteristics. Specifically, they identified five distinct clusters of preferences: safety conscious; safety and amenities driven, food and beverage driven, safety and activities driven, and desirables. Khoo-Lattimore and Gibson (2016) also examined women's accommodation experiences on girlfriend getaways, and found that four themes: appreciating the female amenities; reflections about the trip; need to feel safe; and favourite activities. They also found that the needs of female leisure-travellers are distinct from those of women who travel on business. Previous studies found that businesswomen concern a lot about safety issues, such as safe transportation or safe location (Carr, 2001). However, Lattimore and Gibson (2016) found that women in their study rarely discussed the safety issues. They believed that the possible reasons are: women travelling together are less concerned about safety issues than female business travellers or sole female travellers.

Reasons to participate in all-female tours

This section summarises the reasons of participating in all-female tours from the current literature. The tourism space has been described as gendered and sexualised (Pritchard & Morgan, 2000) and females tourists sometimes are sensitive and vulnerable in the certain

outdoor tourism (or adventure) activities. All-female tours offer the environment of non-males, so females can fully escape imposed gender roles. Through participating in all-female tourism activities, females enjoy freedom, express their own feelings, and perceive a sense of equality in all-female tour groups (Doran, 2016; Mitten, 1992). In addition, females have a better opportunity to learn and practice skills and share common interests in the all-female tour context (Mitten, 1992). Consequently, they can increase their confidence, self-understanding, independence, and self-belief with other like-minded women in the all-female tour context (Doran, 2016; Whittington, Mack, Budbill, & McKenney, 2011). In addition, safety and security concern during the trip is another reason why many women join a group of other female travellers. Joining such all-female tours can stop females feeling conspicuous, excluded, and isolated in couple- and family-oriented holiday spaces (Berdychevsky et al., 2016; Doran, 2016). Shared experiences are another reason to drive females to join all-female tour. Females can enjoy a sense of community through meeting like-minded people, and developing the friendship with others (Berdychevsky et al., 2016).

McDermott (2004) examined female only leisure activity, and identified three major themes regarding why females purposely chose a single-gender canoeing experience: the opportunity to meet and be with other women; their perceived sense of 'equality' in a single-gender setting; and their preference for a female-only setting for learning and performing the physical skills encompassing canoeing. Specifically, meeting and being with other women 'who were also interested in physical activity' were the key reasons. This sense of 'freedom' and 'equality' to which the women spoke was specifically related

to the division of labour, as they all believed they more likely would have taken a 'back seat' with men present.

Activity segmentation

There are many variables to segment the travel market, for example, trip purpose, geography, socio-demographics, psychographics, behaviour, and product-related. Some researchers implemented motivation (Özel & Kozak, 2012), lifestyle (Scott & Parfitt, 2005), benefit sought (Pennington-Gray & Kerstetter, 2001), decision-making pattern (Kang, Hsu, & Wolfe, 2003), and demographic and travel characteristics (Hsu & Kang, 2007) to segment travellers. Tourism activity can be used to segment the travel market, and activity segmentation is a viable approach in the travel and tourism industry (Lang, O'Leary, & Morrison, 1993). Yan, So, Morrison, and Sun (2007) utilised the activity segmentation approach to categorise international tourists visiting Taiwan into three clusters: heritage, shopping, and non-specialists. The results show that the heritage group had a high participation rate in visiting heritage relics, and shopping group had a strong interest in shopping activities. These three groups had different major motivational and socio-demographic differences. The heritage tourists were a group of visitors with relatively younger ages, and middle levels of income. In addition, Choi and Tsang (2000) segmented Hong Kong travellers into four groups based on their preferred travel activities: sightseeing, outdoor sports, entertainment and outdoor activities, and friends/relatives visiting. Statistically significant differences among activity-based clusters were found in socio-economic, demographic and trip related variables.

In the female tourist context, Lang et al. (1993) noted that female tourists are not homogenous. Using the activity segmentation approach, they segmented Japanese female travellers into five types: outdoor sports; sightseeing; life-seeing; activity combo; and naturalist (Lang et al., 1993). They found that statistical differences between these five clusters in terms of age. The outdoor sports group was the youngest, while sightseeing described the oldest group.

Activity segmentation can be combined with psychographic segmentation to segment the travel market. For example, Dolnicar and Leisch (2003) used travel motivation (psychographic segmentation) and vacation activities (behavioural segmentation) to cluster the ski tourists. They combined these two methods, and generated five clusters: 1) fun and snow; 2) relaxation and health; 3) moderate culture tourist; 4) pure culture tourist; and 5) fun, snow, snowboard, and discos. Demographic and travel characteristics of these five clusters were significantly different.

In addition to the activity segmentation approach, researchers also used other approaches to segment travellers. For example, Barbieri and Mahoney (2010) examined the audience attending live performing arts events during one year at a US performing arts centre. They used two criteria, the frequency of activity, and variety of activity, to segment three categories: sporadic, univores and omnivores. The omnivores segment is interested in the arts and tourism. Omnivores attend more and a greater variety (e.g., genres, venues, fee and free) of performances, which may be due to their higher incomes and education

levels. The univores are frequent attendees to live performances but within a narrow variety. The sporadic are infrequent attendees to live performances having a low current and past engagement in cultural activities, maybe due to their young age and low income. McKercher (2002) used two dimensions, importance of cultural tourism in the decision to visit a destination, and experience sought, to segment cultural tourists. He identified five types of cultural tourists: sightseeing cultural tourist, casual cultural tourist, incidental cultural tourist, purposeful cultural tourist, and serendipitous cultural tourist. The only major differences were that purposeful and sightseeing cultural tourists were more likely to be first time visitors and members of tour groups. Casual, incidental, and serendipitous cultural tourists were more likely to be visiting on business.

Methodology

Questionnaire design

The questionnaire includes sections about screening questions, the preference of tourism activities, and demographic information. The screening questions aim to identify the target respondents who were female and aged 18 or above. They were asked to indicate whether they were interested in joining an all-female outbound tour. An explanation of the concept ‘an all-female outbound tour’ was also provided in the questionnaire. If they were interested, then they were invited to fill the second section that aimed to evaluate their interests in the tourism activities in the section 2. Items of tourism activities were developed from a comprehensive literature review (e.g., Choi & Tsang, 2000; Lang et al.,

1993; Lehto, Lin, Chen, & Choi, 2012; Morrison, Hsieh, & O'leary, 1994; Yan et al., 2007) and a discussion between a team of four tourism researchers. According to Bryman and Bell (2015), the involvement of expertise in the field ensures the high validity of the questionnaire measurement. In this study, these four tourism academics discussed to ensure that the activities being identified were applicable to the context of Hong Kong females, and that all statements were comprehensible to the respondents. Finally, all 23 items were asked on a 5-point scale ranging from “5 = strongly agree” to “1 = strongly disagree” to evaluate women’s interests in the travel activity when they considering an all-female outbound tour. The last section collected demographic information, including age, marital status, occupation, educational level and monthly income.

The questionnaire was developed in English and translated into Chinese using back translation method. Ten women, selected with a convenience sampling approach, were invited to complete the pilot test to ensure the correctness of the words and expressions. As some participants were not sure about some questions, the research team made some amendment accordingly. Then the questionnaire was finalized.

Data collection

This study implemented convenience sampling to collect data. The data collection included several steps. First, the researchers of this study mailed ten invitations to the general managers of travel agencies in Hong Kong to invite them to participate in this study, then a friendly reminder was send out two weeks later. Two travel agencies

accepted the invitation and would like to join this study. However, one of the two travel agencies preferred to have a short questionnaire, and finally gave up this study. The travel agency participated in this study is one of the largest travel agencies in Hong Kong. It has received numerous awards from the National Tourist Organization, international airlines and hotels. For the past ten consecutive years, this travel agency has had the highest number of outbound passengers in Hong Kong. Given the popularity of this travel agency in Hong Kong, the sample of travellers from this travel agency was considered acceptable. Short- and long-haul outbound packages departing from Hong Kong to overseas countries were randomly selected, and adult females were invited to fill the survey. With the help from an assistant to the general manager, 450 questionnaires were delivered to tour groups between June and August 2013. Participants were invited to complete the questionnaire survey during the periods, such as having a break on the bus, waiting ferries or airplanes, and so on. A total of 263 questionnaires were returned. After sorting out those incomplete and extreme cases, 177 questionnaires were used for analysis.

Data analysis

The IBM SPSS 22 was utilised to analyse the data. Descriptive statistics, factor analysis, cluster analysis were conducted in order to address the research objectives. Firstly, descriptive statistics provide the brief information about the sample of this study. Secondly, factor analysis was used to group 23 tourism activity items into small number of higher level of categories. A maximum likelihood factor analysis using direct oblimin rotation was adopted to delineate the underlying major types of tourism activities for all-

female tourists. Thirdly, a two-stage cluster analysis was conducted by following the studies (e.g., Hsu & Lee, 2002; Lee & Sparks, 2007) to segment all of the participants based on preferences of travel activities. The cluster-based approach relies on multidimensional statistical analyses to group customers in such a way that each segment is homogeneous with respect to a set of descriptors but the segments are heterogeneous across segments (Clopton, Stoddard, & Dave, 2006). Specifically, the K-means iterative partitioning approach was implemented (Clopton et al., 2006). Finally, one-way analysis of variance (one-way ANOVA) test was conducted to find the significant differences among the demographic variables with the clusters of the females.

Results and discussion

Respondent Profile

In this study, women between 40 and 49 accounted for 28.8% of the respondents. The next most common age group was 18 to 29 (24.9%), followed by 30 to 39 (20.3%) and 50 to 59 (16.9%). Married women made up 58.8% of the respondents and 33.9% were single. The most common occupation was housewife (26.6%), followed by professional (20.3%), and front-line operational staff (12.4%). Almost half of the respondents (44.1%) had completed secondary school and 22.6% had a university degree. Around one third of the respondents had a monthly income of HK\$10,001-20,000 (USD 1,280-2,570), followed by 28.2% of the respondents with no income.

Rank of the tourism activities

This study evaluated 23 tourism activities, and found that females' top five preferred tourism activities were: 1) *Enjoy hot spring/spas/massage/fitness/weight control/wellness*, 2) *Enjoy local cuisine/cookery class*, 3) *City sightseeing/scenic landmarks*, 4) *Shopping*, and 5) *Visit national parks/forests/mountains/rivers/lakes/streams/rare wildlife/wilderness areas*. According to Table 1, the mean value of these top five tourism activities was above 3.9. This result is quite similar with a study on American and Canadian women (Berdychevsky et al., 2016) stating that the girlfriend getaway is most commonly associated with activities such as *beach*, *spa*, *shopping*, and *city sightseeing*. It seems that, no matter it is an Eastern country or a Western country, females within an all-female context have similar travel interests in *spa*, *shopping*, and *city sightseeing*. Khoo-Lattimore and Prayag (2015) also mentioned that *shopping* and *spa* activities were quite important to some Asian female tourists. However, Hong Kong females and Western females have different preference towards some activities. For example, American and Canadian females are interested in *beach*; however, Hong Kong females were less interested in beach activities. Possible reasons could be: Westerners consider visiting beach, such as sunbathing, a part of their life style; whereas Easterners normally link different types of water or marina activities to *beach* (in the current study, the researcher also asked scuba diving, water sports/fishing/swimming/beach activity together in the questionnaire). In addition, women from Hong Kong are also interested in *enjoying local cuisine/cookery class*; however, Berdychevsky et al. (2016) only identified a narrow category of cuisine, wine, as a popular all-female activity.

(Table 1 here)

One possible explanation for *Enjoy hot spring/spas/massage/fitness/weight control/wellness* being the most preferred tourism activity for all-female tourists in Hong Kong is that female is always the major market for health and wellness tourism segment (Smith & Puczkó, 2009). Even all-female tour itself has the potential positive impacts on females' health stress management and sense of wellbeing (Berdychevsky et al., 2013). As a consequence, the combination of all-female tour context and the health and wellness activities, such as hot spring, spas, massage, fitness, and weight control, could create a positive impact on female. It seems that these health and wellness activities come up with the top priority when a group of females are gathering together. Shopping was also quite popular among females, which supports previous research stating that females consider shopping as one of the major tourism activities during the holiday (Cai & Combrink, 2000; M. Li, Wen, & Leung, 2011; Pennington-Gray & Kerstetter, 2001). Previous studies did not analyse the all-female tours, but Lin and Lehto (2006) identified that shopping tours, wellness and spa tours, and fine dining tours are some examples of the specialized or themed products for female tourists. It seems that these activities are appropriate not only for females travelling alone, but also for a group of females travelling together.

The current study found that females were less interested in sports activities, such as 1) *Hiking/climbing/horse riding/snow skiing/winter sports*, 2) *Bungee jump/sky*

diving/paragliding/rafting, and 3) *Golf/ball games/car racing events*. The results are consistent with previous studies stating that females were more likely to participate in moderate activity than vigorous activity, and more likely to participate in non-sports activities than sports activities (Barnett, 2011). Although there are different types of outdoor recreation activities, such as *scuba diving*, *skiing*, *biking*, and *mountain climbing*, targeting at all-female tours in the United States and Australia (Berdychevsky et al., 2016; Junek et al., 2006), these so-called sports activities still haven't had much popularity among the potential Hong Kong all-female tourists.

Major tourism activity categories

Factor analysis was conducted to extract underlying factors and reduce the items pool with 23 tourism activities in the main survey. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) of the study was .824, and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is 1589.143 with significance lower than .005, which supported the use of factor analysis for these items. The factors derived following the suggestions of Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2010) that eigenvalue should be higher than 1.0 and factor loading should be .50 or above .50. After the factor analysis, three items: *City sightseeing/scenic landmarks*, *Attend festivals/carnivals*, and *Contacting local inhabitants/language learning*, were removed as their factor loadings are lower than .50 (Hair et al., 2010). Results of factor analysis as shown in Table 2 reveal that 20 tourism activities out of 23 items were condensed into four dimensions — including *Factor 1: Sightseeing*; *Factor 2: Sports*; *Factor 3: Relaxation*, and *Factor 4: Entertainment*.

(Table 2 here)

Factor 1: Sightseeing, explaining 32.98% of the total variance, includes eight items. The majority of the items loaded on this dimension are related to sightseeing, such as natural, historical, and cultural attractions. According to Table 3, the mean value of this factor was 3.55, ranking the second in all of the four factors, showing that females were interested in sightseeing. *Factor 2: Sports* is mainly about different sport and adventure activities about water and land. The mean value of this factor was 3.05, which was the lowest one, showing that females were less interested in sports activities. *Factor 3: Relaxation* is mainly about feminine-related activities, such as spa, hot spring, shopping, local cuisine, night markets, and beauty. The mean value of this factor was 3.79, showing that females had a strong interest in the relaxation activities. *Factor 4: Entertainment* is the final factor, referred to the entertainment activities, such as casinos, amusement, and events. It seems that females were also less interested in the entertainment activities with mean value of 3.16.

(Table 3 here)

These four categories, i.e., *sightseeing*, *sports*, *relaxation*, and *entertainment*, clearly distinguish different types of tourism activities in this study. Table 3 shows that females show their strong interests in *relaxation* activities, and less interests in *sports* activities, which confirms with previous studies (e.g., Barnett, 2011; M. Li et al., 2011; Smith &

Puczkó, 2009). Escapism (e.g., relaxation) is one of the key elements in girlfriend getaways in the Western context (Berdychevsky et al., 2013), this study found that Hong Kong females were also interested in *relaxation* activities (e.g., hot springs, spas, massage, fitness, weight control, wellness, shopping, local cuisine, cookery class, night markets, harbour night cruises, nightlife, beauty, make-up, and plastic surgery), which create a relaxing atmosphere for all-females and also an opportunity to do some interested activities together to enhance the relationship with each other. In addition, due to the characteristics of some relaxation activities, such as spas, massage, fitness, weight control, shopping, beauty, make-up, and plastic surgery, it seems that it's appropriate to participate in these relaxation activities with their female companions.

Hong Kong females were less likely to travel with other females to participate in *sports* activities (e.g., hiking, climbing, horse riding, snow skiing, winter sports, scuba diving, water sports, fishing, swimming, beach activity, bungee jump, sky diving, paragliding, rafting, golf, and ball games). The Western literature on gender and leisure has shown that some females seek to attend outdoor/adventure activities in a less competitiveness and more supportive environment, such as an all-female context (Doran, 2016; McDermott, 2004). According to the result of the current study, it seems that only a small percentage of females are interested in sports/adventure activities when comparing with the large market of female tourists in Hong Kong. A possible reason for the less popularity of sports activities among females could be females may consider these activities risky (Randy J. Virden, 1999). Another possible reason could be the gender difference. Previous literature shows that males are interested in 'activities and fun;' whereas

females are interested in ‘relaxation experience’ (Meng & Uysal, 2008). Furthermore, female tourists had medium level of interests in terms of sightseeing and entertainment. Possible reasons could be females can travel with either males or females to participate the activities on sightseeing and entertainment.

Segmentation of female travellers

Once identified the factors, the researcher then conducted the cluster analysis to classify all-female tourists into homogenous segments. This study implemented the two-step cluster approach to identify the number of clusters. A three-cluster option was chosen because it had the smallest Schwarz’s Bayesian Criterion (BIC) value, with a relatively large ratio of BIC change (.371) and of distance measure (1.912). Then, the k-cluster generated three clusters of all-female tourists according to the desired tourism activities, and produced the value differences between the four factors and three clusters. The researchers also found that three-cluster solution exhibit a distinct profile which is interpretable. The result is shown in Table 4.

(Table 4 here)

As presented in Table 4, all three segments differ significantly in terms of four factors. Cluster 1 had 39 females, which was the smallest and comprised 22% of the respondents. The mean value of this cluster signified that respondents in this segment had a broad interest in all types of activities, such as sightseeing, sports, relaxation, and entertainment.

Therefore, Cluster 1 was named as Omnivores. Cluster 2 had 87 females (49.2%), which was the largest segment among all of the three clusters. This group had a medium level of travel interests into all-female tours, and had specific tourism preferences, such as sightseeing and relaxation activities. Therefore, the Cluster 2 was named as Univores. Cluster 3 had 51 female (28.8%), which had the lowest interests into all-female tours. This segment was only interested in relaxation activities. In the future, they may join all-female tours on relaxation activities. Therefore, Cluster 3 was named as Sporadic. The similarity between these three clusters was the high interests in relaxation activities. The above section provides a brief summary of the three types of female tourists. The following section describes the profile of these three segments.

The current study utilised the tourist category by Barbieri and Mahoney (2010) to segment the tourists. Compared with previous literature which segmented the tourists based on travel interests, Barbieri and Mahoney (2010) segmented the tourists based on the variety and frequency of the travel interests. Different from Barbieri and Mahoney (2010) that these three segments are different, the current study found that the three segments share some similarities. For example, all of the three segments have highest interests in relaxation activity, even though they have different types of travel interests.

Profile of three types of all-female tourist segments

The one-way ANOVA test was conducted to identify any significant differences between the three clusters and the demographic variables. Results show that there were significant

differences between three clusters in terms of age, and marital status. Table 5 shows the percentage of the demographic variable items of these three clusters.

(Table 5 here)

This study found that there were significant differences between three clusters in terms of age, and marital status. For example, Cluster 1 was comparatively young with almost 40% of Cluster 1 were aged 18-29. Cluster 2 and 3 were quite mature (aged above 40) with 40-49 being the most popular age group. The results show that young women tended to be Cluster 1, while middle-aged women tended to be Cluster 2 and 3. Similar with the age differences between these three clusters, this study also found the marital status differences between these three clusters. Nearly half of Cluster 1 was single, however, only 21-36% of Clusters 2 and 3 were singles.

It seems that with the increase of the age, females are likely to be less omnivores and more sporadic. Also, married females tend to be less omnivores and more sporadic. The results show that middle-aged and married females are more interested in one type of tourism activities (i.e., relaxation) rather than interested in all types of tourism activities. The results on Hong Kong all-female tourists' preferred tourism activities during the different stages of the life cycle are similar with the Western literature in that age and marital status are major reasons contributing to the preferred tourism activities during the different stages of the life cycle. The major difference for the different stages of life cycle lies in the involvement on the sport activities. The result shows that single females aged

20s are more likely to participate in sports activities than other age cohorts. This can be explained by Doran (2016) who identified a relationship between females' life-course stage and their participations in adventure outdoor activities (similar with sports activities). Specifically, female's participation in adventure outdoor activities decreases and changes with age. Young females aged 20s are likely to participate in adventure tourism before they are expected to get married. Once they become a mother, partner or wife in 30s, they have limited time to participate in adventure tourism activities, therefore they may stop, replace or adjust their preferred type of adventure tourism (Doran, 2016; Fendt & Wilson, 2012). Age also plays a significant role in determining Japanese females' tourism activity, for example, Lang et al. (1993) found that young females were likely to participate outdoor sports, while older females preferred sightseeing. Other studies (e.g., H. Gibson & Yiannakis, 2002; Lin & Lehto, 2006) also identified a relationship between the life cycle and tourism activities. H. Gibson and Yiannakis (2002) found some patterns of stability and change in terms of the preference of different types of tourism or tourist roles over the adult life course among female tourists. For example, preference for thrill-seeking-type behaviours while on vacation tended to decline while interest in cultural and educational travel tended to increase in middle and late adulthood.

Theoretical implications

The gradually increasing popularity of all-female travel is identified as a social phenomenon. Although this social phenomenon has become popular in the Western and Eastern countries, limited studies about this topic can be found (Berdychevsky et al.,

2013; Khoo-Lattimore & Prayag, 2015). Among these limited studies, most of them were about female tourists experience in the Western context (e.g., Canada and Australia) (Berdychevsky et al., 2013; Junek et al., 2006) and the experience of accommodation in the Eastern context (e.g., Malaysia) (Khoo-Lattimore & Prayag, 2015). Females from the East and the West may have different interpretations towards all-female tours. Therefore, in order to gain an in-depth understanding of this social phenomenon, all-female tours, more research should be conducted, especially in the Eastern context. Currently, no studies have been found on the general tourism activity preferences in the all-female tour context, excepting some studies focusing on some outdoor adventure activities (McDermott, 2004). Therefore, there is a knowledge gap of examining all-female tourists' preferred tourism activities in the Eastern context. This study contributes to the literature by providing insights into all-female tourists' preferences.

Previous studies mainly used the qualitative approach to explore the social phenomenon of all-female tours. This study, using the quantitative approach, examined Hong Kong female tourists' preferred activities towards all-female tours in Hong Kong. Similar with a study on American and Canadian women (Berdychevsky et al., 2016), the current study also found that females within an all-female context in Hong Kong have a strong interest in *spa*, *shopping*, and *city sightseeing*. The result also is consistent with the Malaysian context in Asia that shopping and spa activities were quite important to some Asian female tourists. However, American and Canadian all-female tourists are interested in *beach*; however, Hong Kong females were less interested in beach activities.

This study found that female tourists are not homogenous. Following the tourist categorisation by Barbieri and Mahoney (2010), the current study found that all-female tourists can be segmented into three clusters. This is the first empirical study to systematically map three distinct clusters of all-female tourists' preferences. This study also confirms with previous studies (e.g., Berdychevsky et al., 2013; Lin & Lehto, 2006) that female travel behaviours are highly associated with the life course stage. Previous literature focused mainly on the Western context, this study also found that such a relationship between the tourist activities and the life course stage also exists in the Eastern context. Specifically, this study found that age and marital status are important indicators for female tourists' travel interests.

Practical implications

This study clearly demonstrated the characteristics of all-female tourists' activity preference. It should be noted that without empirical data it is difficult for tour operators to explore the feasibility of developing all-female tours. Accordingly, this study is extremely important for tour product development in the tourism industry. Specifically, this study showed that activity type was a viable basis to segment the Hong Kong females travel market. Females had a high level of interest in some activities, such as relaxation activities. Travel agencies in Hong Kong could develop some package tours on the relaxation activities, such as spa, shopping, massage, make up, etc. The findings reported would indicate direction to tourism marketers in formulating marketing strategies towards

the Hong Kong market. Specifically, the tourism practitioners of host countries could design specific tourism packages (or activities) to attract groups of female tourists.

This study also indicated that there is not a prototype of all-female tourists in Hong Kong, and there are three types of all-female tourists within Hong Kong all-female tourists market. Tourism practitioners should also pay attention to this uniqueness of every segment (e.g., omnivores, univores, and sporadic). Distinct demographic characteristics for the three segments indicate unique submarket of demand. As all three segments were strongly interested in relaxation activities, some specialized or themed travel products include shopping tours, wellness and spa tours, and fine dining tours can be developed in order to attract a specific niche market. In addition, nearly half of omnivores are young and single females, who have a high interest in sports activities. Travel agency in Hong Kong and overseas destinations may work together to target this segment to develop some sports and adventure tourism all-female package tours.

Limitation and future research

Through one of the largest travel agencies in Hong Kong, 450 questionnaires were delivered to tourists who joined the package tour. However, only 177 questionnaires were valid for analysis. The usable response was quite low, thus the sample size was comparatively small. Possible reasons for the comparatively low usable response could be the fact that no incentives were given to participants, who possibly failed to complete all of the questions. Further studies may use incentives to encourage participants to

complete the questionnaire successfully. In addition, as there is no such an all-female tour in Hong Kong currently, the respondents in the current study were not actual all-female travellers. Therefore the results may not be generalizable to all-female travellers in Hong Kong. Future studies should collect data from actual all-female tourists in Hong Kong.

In addition to Hong Kong, future studies should expand this study using a larger, more diverse sample in other destinations, such as Mainland China, to find the travel pattern. More detailed information about how to promote this type of product could be given to travel agencies. Future studies could explore the deeper understanding of why females like these all-female tour activities in the Eastern context. Travel motivation of joining such an all-female tours in the Eastern context can provide insights to tourism academia and industry.

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Table 1: The rank of tourism activities

Tourism activity	Mean value	SD
19 Enjoy hot spring/spas/massage/fitness/weight control/wellness	4.02	.882
21 Enjoy local cuisine/cookery class	3.98	.815
1 City sightseeing/scenic landmarks	3.98	1.101
22 Shopping	3.92	.965
3 Visit national parks/forests/mountains/rivers/lakes/streams/rare wildlife/wilderness areas	3.90	.812
4 Visit archaeological sites/monuments/commemorative/historic significant places	3.76	.853
2 Visit night markets/harbour night cruises/enjoy nightlife	3.71	.874
11 Attend festivals/carnivals	3.69	.872
6 Visit castles/palaces/museums/national libraries/art galleries/antique appreciation	3.64	.967
7 Tour countryside/visit farms/farm stay	3.60	.961
8 Visit vineyard	3.59	.913
13 Contacting local inhabitants/language learning	3.49	.847
9 Visit amusement/theme parks/films sets	3.49	.954
18 Photography/painting/pottery/local arts & crafts/flower/tea ceremony appreciation	3.43	.981
5 Visit temples/churches/religious sites	3.34	.970
15 Scuba diving/water sports/fishing/swimming/beach activity	3.34	1.039
20 Beauty/make-up/plastic surgery	3.30	1.085
12 Attend World Expo or international sports events: Olympics or World Cup etc	3.19	1.014
23 Philharmonic/orchestra/opera/musical/dance/repertory/pop concert & show	3.16	1.051
16 Hiking/climbing/horse riding/snow skiing/winter sports	3.10	1.096
17 Bungee jump/sky diving/paragliding/rafting	3.00	1.061
10 Visit casinos/gambling	2.80	1.082
14 Golf/ball games	2.76	.886

Table 2: Four major tourism activity categories

	Factor loading	Eigenvalue	Variance explained (%)	Cronbach's Alpha
Factor 1: Sightseeing		6.595	32.977	0.85
6 Visit castles/palaces/museums/national libraries/art galleries/antique appreciation	0.834			
4 Visit archaeological sites/monuments/commemorative/historic significant places	0.729			
7 Tour countryside/visit farms/farm stay	0.715			
3 Visit national parks/forests/mountains/rivers/lakes/streams/rare wildlife/wilderness areas	0.648			
5 Visit temples/churches/religious sites	0.59			
18 Photography/painting/pottery/local arts & crafts/flower/tea ceremony appreciation	0.436			
8 Visit vineyard	0.435			
23 Philharmonic/orchestra/opera/musical/dance/repertory/pop concert & show	0.425			
Factor 2: Sports		2.28	11.398	0.847
16 Hiking/climbing/horse riding/snow skiing/winter sports	0.782			
15 Scuba diving/water sports/fishing/ swimming/beach activity	0.692			
17 Adventure activities: bungee jump/sky diving/paragliding/rafting	0.69			
14 Golf/ball games	0.597			
Factor 3: Relaxation		1.585	7.926	0.72
19 Enjoy hot spring/spas/massage/ fitness/weight control/wellness	0.671			
22 Shopping	0.576			
21 Enjoy local cuisine/cookery class	0.493			
2 Visit night markets/harbour night cruises/ enjoy nightlife	0.483			
20 Beauty/make-up/plastic surgery	0.453			
Factor 4: Entertainment		1.399	6.995	0.75
10 Visit casinos/gambling	0.678			
9 Visit amusement/theme parks/films sets	0.578			
12 Attend World Expo or international sports events	0.577			

Note: KMO= .824; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: chi-square =1589.143, df = 190, sig= .000

Table 3: Comparison of four tourism activity categories

Factor	Factor name	Factor mean	Ranking
Factor 3	Relaxation	3.79	1
Factor 1	Sightseeing	3.55	2
Factor 4	Entertainment	3.16	3
Factor 2	Sports	3.05	4

Table 4: Major tourism activities and three cluster

	Cluster 1: Omnivores	Cluster 2: Univores	Cluster 3: Sporadic	F	Sig.
	39 (22%)	87 (49.2%)	51 (28.8%)		
Factor 1: Sightseeing	4.21	3.70	2.80	53.22	0.00
Factor 2: Sports	3.88	3.05	2.41	107.98	0.00
Factor 3: Relaxation	4.44	3.72	3.40	68.13	0.00
Factor 4: Entertainment	4.12	3.05	2.61	80.50	0.00

Table 5: Profile of three clusters

	Cluster 1: Omnivores	Cluster 2: Univores	Cluster 3: Sporadic	X ² value	
Frequency	45	47	85		
Percentage	25%	27%	48%		
Age				5.323	*
18-29	40%	13%	24%		
30-39	18%	19%	22%		
40-49	27%	32%	28%		
50-59	13%	23%	15%		
60 and above	2%	13%	11%		
Marital status				3.696	*
Single	42%	21%	36%		
Married	53%	68%	56%		
Separated	2%	0%	6%		
Divorced	0%	6%	1%		
Widowed	2%	4%	0%		
Occupation					
Owner/Proprietor	7%	0%	2%		
Manager	7%	9%	11%		
Administrator	7%	6%	5%		
Front line operational staff	7%	15%	14%		
Professional	29%	13%	20%		
Student	11%	9%	13%		
Housewife	27%	32%	24%		
Retired	2%	6%	6%		
Others	4%	11%	6%		
Educational level					
Primary	4%	15%	6%		
Secondary	44%	49%	41%		
Diploma/Higher Diploma/Associate Degree	16%	9%	24%		
University degree	22%	23%	22%		
Postgraduate (Master/Doctorate)	13%	4%	7%		
Monthly income (HK\$)					
None	33%	21%	29%		
10,000 or below	13%	21%	19%		
10,001 - 20,000	31%	38%	24%		
20,001 - 30,000	9%	6%	15%		
30,001 - 40,000	4%	11%	4%		
40,001 or above	9%	2%	9%		