Exploring the travel patterns, preferences and recommendations of Chinese university students living in Australia

*Karen Hughes  
UQ School of Business  
Building 39A  
University of Queensland  
St Lucia, Q4072  
E: k.hughes2@uq.edu.au  
T: +61 7 439 001886  
F: +61 7 3346 8716

Jie Wang  
UQ School of Business  
Building 39A  
University of Queensland  
St Lucia, Q4072  
E: j.wang@business.uq.edu.au

Mengya Shu  
UQ School of Business  
Building 39A  
University of Queensland  
St Lucia, Q4072  
E: mengya.shu@uqconnect.edu.au

*Corresponding author

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ABSTRACT

China is an important and growing market for the Australian tourism industry, yet our understanding of what Chinese independent tourists seek in the way of experiences is limited. Studies in Europe, USA and Australia show that Chinese international students tend to travel extensively while studying overseas, and consequently are able to provide insights into the needs, preferences and perceptions of the emerging Chinese independent market. Using Chinese tertiary students studying in Australia as participants, this research explores their preferences for, and perceptions of, Australian tourism products. Responses from surveys and follow-up focus group interviews reveal that iconic attractions, nature-based activities and photography are particularly attractive to this market. The Internet and word-of-mouth advertising are important sources of information; while costs, distances and lack of time are barriers to travel. Personal safety is also a key concern in natural environments. Students’ travel plans for visiting friends and family and their suggestions for tailoring tourism products to meet the needs of independent Chinese visitors are also discussed.
1. INTRODUCTION

The Chinese population has become more affluent in recent years, a trend that has seen a corresponding growth in the number of Chinese tourists travelling overseas (Sparks & Pan, 2009). Records indicate that since the start of the millennium, Chinese outbound tourism has more than doubled to approximately 80 million trips worldwide (Baggio, 2013). The number of Chinese tourists travelling to Australia has also increased dramatically, and in the year ending September 2012, China usurped the United Kingdom to become Australia’s second-largest source of international visitors (Tourism Research Australia, 2012). This trend is predicted to continue, with the 2020 Tourism Industry Potential Report (Tourism Australia, 2004) forecasting that by 2020, the Chinese tourism market will become Australia’s biggest source market and will contribute between $4.6 billion and $6.3 billion to the economy.

Despite the rapid rise in Chinese arrivals, we are only just beginning to understand this market’s travel motives, needs, preferences and perceptions. Studies exploring international tourists’ experiences in an Australian context have traditionally focused on aspects such as the facilities, activities and services offered at tourist attractions and destinations (Chen & Chen, 2010). Although these are useful in building a picture of tourists’ expectations and perceptions, there has also been a recent recognition that tourists’ attributes and characteristics are important in determining the psychological outcomes of participating in visitor experiences. For example, it is widely believed that differences in tourists’ perceptions, expectations, beliefs, needs and preferences are all likely to impact on how sites are viewed and experienced, and that these differences are likely to be related to the individual’s cultural background (Poria et al., 2005). This suggests that to capture this market effectively, we need to understand common preferences, perceptions and needs of Chinese visitors, as well as identify factors that either facilitate or hinder their access to various tourism attractions, services and experiences.
As well as an overall increase in the numbers of Chinese visitors travelling to Australia, there have also been more Chinese visitors choosing to travel independently rather than in tour groups (Cai, 2014). Unlike package travellers in a structured group with structured itinerary, these independent travellers generally only book a minimum of their transportation and accommodation arrangements prior to departure (Hyde, 2008; Tourism Australia, 2012). Researchers often note that regardless of whether they are travelling independently or in groups, Chinese visitors are difficult to access due to language barriers, restricted itineraries, and very short international trips (Weiler & Yu, 2007). To overcome these challenges, the current research samples from a group that is not limited by language difficulties and short stays, namely, international students from China.

International students are not generally categorised as tourists as their study commitments generally exceed the one year stipulation of ‘tourist’ (Weaver & Lawton, 2002); however, researchers have argued that this market regularly participate in a range of short trips and should therefore be considered as unique segment in the domestic tourism market (Min-En, 2006; Shanka et al., 2002). Indeed, the propensity for Chinese students to travel in university holidays has been noted by researchers in Europe, USA and Australia (Field, 1999; Huang & Tian, 2013; Kim & Jogaratnam, 2003), with some researchers referring to Chinese international students as China’s first wave of independent travellers (King & Gardiner, in press). As such, this market can provide a valuable insight into the travel needs and behaviour of the emerging and rapidly expanding Chinese independent traveller, not only for Australia but for other international destinations.

To further explore the needs and preferences of the Chinese market as well as investigate opportunities for developing products that appeal to Chinese visitors travelling independently, the proposed study examines the preferences, perceptions and travel needs of Chinese students studying in Australia via questionnaires and follow-up focus group
interviews. Researchers were particularly interested in ascertaining students’ current and prospective travel experiences, perceived barriers and facilitators to travel, planned visits by family and friends (VFR), and suggestions for how tourism experiences can be enhanced to appeal to the Chinese market.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chinese outbound tourists: Motives, preferences and perceptions

Before the policy of ‘reform and opening’, temporary travel outside of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) was rare. This situation changed when the Chinese government decided to gradually liberalize the practice of international tourism (Taunay, 2013). In 1997 China’s Approved Destination Status (ADS) scheme was formally promulgated to allow Chinese citizens to travel in groups to foreign countries which had been granted ADS status, for leisure, at their own expense, and on private passports. In 1999, Australia became the first western country (along with New Zealand) to be granted ADS (Tourism Australia, 2012).

Despite the fact that 83.2 million border crossings in 2012 elevated the PRC to the status of the world’s largest outbound tourism source market, research into this phenomenon remains limited (Arlt & Burns, 2013). As Arlt and Burns (2013) explain, even in China, tourism research has traditionally focused on tourism management issues within China. This focus is gradually changing, however, with researchers in China’s key overseas travel destinations starting to explore the travel motives, preferences and perceptions of this rapidly emerging travel market. For example, a study conducted with 175 Chinese visitors in Brisbane, Australia (Packer et al., 2011) suggests that Chinese tourists want to see famous Australian attractions, natural landscapes, cities, beaches and Australian wildlife. They are interested in taking photographs, walking on the beach, touching wildlife, eating Australian cuisine, meeting locals, and learning about the Australian lifestyle. Respondents expressed high
satisfaction with aspects such as seeing attractions and beaches, and with other aspects of
their visit, such as cleanliness of accommodation, service, personal safety, and the
friendliness of the local people. They were less satisfied with opportunities to learn and find
out about Australia, particularly in relation to accessing information in Chinese, accessing
maps, and experiencing the Australian lifestyle. They were also disappointed with the limited
opportunities to walk on the beach, touch wildlife, and eat the local cuisine.

Similar results were reported by Weiler and Yu (2006) who surveyed 401 Chinese visitors as
they departed through Melbourne airport in Victoria, Australia. Respondents felt the most
satisfactory aspects of the visit were the quality of the natural environment (mentioned by
22% of the sample), quality of specific tourist attractions (mentioned by 19%), and seeing
beautiful scenery (mentioned by 16.5%). Twelve per cent also listed experiencing Australian
lifestyle/culture. While contact with locals was a ‘satisfier,’ it was also an area where the
travel experience fell short of expectations. In fact, 88% of respondents wanted more contact
with locals than was experienced. The main reasons were to learn more about the lifestyle
and to gain an understanding of Australian culture and values. Perhaps not surprisingly, those
who were more experienced travellers were also more likely to want contact with locals. It
should be noted, however, that experiencing Western cultures does not usually extend to
visiting ‘cultural’ attractions such as visiting museums, galleries, theme parks, theatres, and
special events because it is difficult for those from a non-English speaking and Confucian
background to understand Western operas and sports (Yu et al., 2001).

Many of the respondents in Weiler and Yu’s (2006) study also expressed dissatisfaction with
the quality of food/restaurants (mentioned by 14%), poor service hours (also mentioned by
14%) and issues related to duty-free shopping (mentioned by 5% of the sample). Similar
responses were obtained by Hossain, Salma, and Rolin (2004) and Li and Carr (2004), who
reported that Chinese visitors’ satisfaction with Australia’s natural attractions, friendly people
and the climate was high, but that they were less satisfied with shopping and dining
experiences. Given that the Euromonitor International (2013) has identified the two main
reasons for outbound leisure trips as sightseeing and luxury shopping, these perceptions of
Australia’s shopping opportunities are a concern. One of the factors attributing to the low
satisfaction with shopping may be the unethical traditional practices of forced shopping and
payments for activities not covered in the fixed tour itineraries (Dwyer et al., 2007; Schaal,
2013). It is important to note that one of positive aspects of China’s new Tourism Law, which
came into effect on 1 October 2013, is to eliminate malpractices like Zero-Dollar tours based
on broken promises and forced shopping (COTRI, 2013). Tourism Australia (2014) claims
that this legislation has the potential to both improve Chinese travellers’ experiences and
deliver benefits to the Australian tourism industry..

Some of the responses obtained in the studies reviewed to this point may reflect the fact that
Chinese tourists tend to travel in tour groups, both within China and overseas (Huang &
Weiler, 2010). This trend can be attributed to a range of factors including limited English
language competency, lack of overseas travel experience and the controlled nature of
overseas travel by Chinese tourism organisations. Most Chinese visit Australia as part of a
guided tour. In many cases, guided tours are relatively short and rarely offer opportunities to
interact with locals (Weiler & Yu, 2006). Despite this shortcoming, Sparks and Pan’s (2009)
survey of 548 potential tourists in Shanghai revealed that this was still the preferred mode of
travel for approximately two-thirds of their sample. The researchers did stress, however, that
approximately half the sample expressed a preference for individual travel if the holiday was
more than one week’s duration.

These studies all suggest that there are barriers and facilitators in regards to Chinese
outbound travel, and that identifying these will enable international destinations to tailor their
products for the Chinese market. Results also suggest there may be an emerging and growing
need to develop products that encourage Chinese travellers to stay longer and travel independently.

2.2 Chinese outbound tourists: A shifting focus

Traditionally, Chinese tourists have tended to travel in packaged groups, hastily ‘ticking off’ sight after sight and country after country’ (Arlt, 2013, p. 126). Today, however, there is a growing trend towards travelling independently, with Chinese visitors searching for experiences rather than monuments (Arlt, 2013; Tourism Australia, 2012). The rising popularity of online travel agents has also helped stimulate demand for independent travel amongst the Chinese (Bremner, 2013).

Research confirms that the Chinese outbound tourism market has segmented into two main branches of travellers: first, those on mass-market packaged tours of low price and inferior quality, a segment that is still in the majority; and second, an increasing number of self-organised travellers, called the new Chinese tourists (NCTs) who travel to exotic locations and stay for more than just a snapshot (Arlt, 2013). In reality, many NCTs are ‘half-organised,’ with travel agent arranging visas, airfares and accommodation and travellers arranging the rest of the holiday themselves (Tourism Australia, 2012). NCTs are not under the direction of a commission-driven tour guide when choosing where to shop and what to buy, thus the forms of travel and shopping abroad are moving away from passive consumption to active travel experiences (Arlt, 2013). Although group travel remains the dominant segment out of the market, under the new China Tourism Law, independent travel is actually growing at a faster rate (Tourism Australia, 2014).

According to Wu and Pearce (2013), independent Chinese outbound travellers tend to be more experienced travellers who are well-educated, relatively young and predominantly experience seekers and self-challengers. They are one of the most economically and socially
profitable markets for many destinations. Recognising the potential of the China outbound market, the Australian tourism industry started to build relationships with airlines and key industry partners from 1993 (Tourism Australia, 2012). After two decades, China has been recognised as Australia’s most important trading partner, in terms of both international education and tourism, accounting for $4.3 billion (or 28%) of Australia’s export income from international education and $3.5 billion (or 15%) of Australia’s tourism exports (ABS, 2013).

In 2013, China was Australia’s second largest inbound market for visitor arrivals and the largest market for total expenditure and visitor nights (Tourism Australia, 2014). Developing an understanding of the needs, preferences and behaviour of future Chinese independent travellers is paramount if Australia is to capitalise on the growth of this emerging market. Chinese international students, as a particular type of independent Chinese traveller, are regarded as a potentially rich source of information in regards to how well Western tourism products and services meet the needs and preferences of Chinese travellers. Accordingly, studies examining the travel patterns of international and Chinese students are reviewed in the following section.

2.3 International students as tourists

International students are those who have left their country of origin and moved to another country for the purpose of study (OECD, 2013). This market has considerable potential to contribute to the tourism industry as they have relatively large blocks of time free from work and/or school commitments (Babin & Kim, 2001; Huang & Tian, 2013; Mattila et al., 2001). International students are also motivated to travel while studying abroad in an effort to better understand the national culture and people (Babin & Kim, 2001). Additionally, university students are among the age group (15–29 years) that contribute the highest average
expenditure per visitor ($13,101), accounting for 70% of total expenditure by international visitors (Tourism Research Australia, 2011).

It is apparent that the international student market represents a significant opportunity for the tourism industries of host countries. However, international students are generally not seen as a tourist segment due to the definition of tourists as people ‘who travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes’ (WTO, 1995, p. 1). Despite its growing scope and importance, youth and student travel has not been studied in great detail, due to a combination of measurement problems and a misconception that this market is of low value (Babin & Kim, 2001; Gallarzaa & Saura, 2006; Richards & Wilson, 2003). In reality, however, the length of stay of this group is longer, and most spending is made with local businesses; consequently, the local economic impact can be greater than for other types of tourists. Indeed, according to Data from the Australian International Visitor Survey (IVS), Chinese international students stay almost five times as long and spend five times more than the average international visitor (Keating & Godfrey, 2013). Furthermore, studies in the UK, Europe, USA and Australia reveal that international students play a major role in attracting friends and relatives as visitors to their place of study (Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis, 2007; Davidson et al., 2010; Huang & Tian, 2013) which also adds to their potential to contribute to the local economy and engage in tourism-related activities.

2.4 Chinese international students as tourists in Australia

Amongst Australia’s five major international education markets (China, India, Korea, Vietnam and Malaysia), China has the greatest number of international students, accounting for approximately 28 per cent of Australia’s international education exports (Keating & Godfrey, 2013). An Australian survey of international tertiary students conducted in 2009
revealed that Chinese students are more likely to travel with friends who are also Chinese students (Davidson et al., 2010). The survey also showed that 88.5% expected their parents to travel to Australia for graduation, 83% thought at least one friend would visit during their study, and 90% expected a family member to visit (Davidson et al., 2010). Again, these figures highlight the potential of international students to generate awareness and visitation from their home country.

A recent analysis of Australia’s International Visitor Survey (IVS) data by Keating and Godrey (2013) found that Chinese study tourists’ patterns of travel were relatively limited geographically, with sixty-five per cent of visits being to the capital cities of Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane. Other popular destinations in order of preference included the Gold Coast, Adelaide, Tropical North Queensland, Perth, and Canberra. In terms of activities, Chinese students expressed an interest in social activities (mentioned by 28%), outdoor/nature activities (22%), and local attractions (19%). Keating and Godfrey’s (2013) analysis suggests that Chinese students are similar to other Chinese travellers in terms of activity preferences, supporting the argument that this group can provide a valuable insight into the needs of other Chinese independent travellers.

While there is considerable potential for Chinese students and tourists to contribute to the tourism economy of host countries, researchers also warn that there are a number of barriers that could constrain their engagement in tourism-related activities. Gardiner, King and Wilkins (2013) surveyed 4633 international students studying at nine universities in Australia about their travel activities and perceived barriers to travel. The most common constraint to travel for the 1303 Chinese students was financial (worries about finances and shortage of money) which rated 3.89 on a five point scale. This was followed by lack of student packages and discounts (mean = 3.58) and temporal constraints such as lack of time and extensive study commitments (mean = 3.45). Results suggest that high tuition and living
costs associated with studying abroad may inhibit travel, but that few student packages and the pressures of study are also key factors influencing Chinese students’ travel behaviour.

In addition to travel behaviour, researchers have also explored international students’ perceptions of Australia’s tourism products. In 2005, Son and Pearce (2005) surveyed 365 international students studying at English Language Centres in Sydney and Melbourne about their images of Australia. Key items were extrapolated from previous studies on images of Australia, and included scenery, climate, cultural attractions, natural attractions, food, accommodation, transportation, water sports, personal safety, entertainment, value for money, local people, and shopping opportunities. International students who were classified as East Asian (from Japan, Korea, China, and Taiwan) were more positive about Australia’s water sports, natural attractions and the scenery than those from other regions. They were, however, less positive than other students about Australia’s nightlife, personal safety, value for money, shopping opportunities, and transport convenience. Students in Son and Pearce’s (2005) study were also asked to rate twelve photographs in terms of how well they represented their image of Australia on a seven-point scale. The top four images for East Asians were Sydney Opera House (rated 6.18), koala (also rated 6.18), kangaroo (rated 6.09), and Uluru (rated 5.68). Least representative were photographs of rainforest (4.14), good weather (4.49) and the Outback (4.5).

To summarise, research to date indicates that international students undertake multiple trips within Australia (though these tend to focus on capital cities), that they rely on one another for travel information, and that most host visits from Chinese friends and family during their studies. To further explore the needs and preferences of the Chinese market, as well as investigate opportunities for developing products that appeal to Chinese visitors traveling independently, this study investigated the travel preferences, perceptions and behaviour of
Chinese students living in Brisbane, Australia. Using a survey questionnaire and follow-up focus group interviews, this project aimed to:

- investigate students’ awareness and perceptions of Australia’s current tourism products
- document students’ preferences for, perceptions of, and access to, a range of Australian tourism experiences/attractions
- identify barriers and facilitators associated with participating in tourism experiences
- describe common decision-making strategies used by Chinese students
- explore how the design and marketing of tourism experiences can be enhanced to appeal to the Chinese market.

Responses were expected to enrich our understanding of the travel needs, preferences and experiences of Chinese students, who, as the ‘first wave of independent travellers’ (King & Gardiner, in press), have the potential to provide an insight into the design of services and experiences that can meet the needs of the emerging Chinese market.

3. METHOD

Stage One

A self-administered online questionnaire was emailed to 1,600 undergraduate and postgraduate Chinese students enrolled in business, economics, law, and tourism programs at the University of Queensland. The covering email stressed that participation was voluntary and anonymous, and included a link to the online survey and an incentive of prize draw
(winning an iPad) was offered to encourage participation. The survey questions were designed to explore six key issues:

- students’ preferences in terms of tourist attractions and experiences
- attractions they had visited or would like to visit while studying in Australia
- sources of information used when planning their travel
- barriers preventing Chinese students and visitors engaging in tourism activities
- recommendations for other Chinese students coming to Australia
- places students would take visiting family and friends.

Because this research was exploratory, most questions were open-ended. Exceptions included a shorter version of Packer et al.’s (2011) scale, which asks students to rate the importance of participating in 21 tourism experiences; and a scale developed from the results of Ruhanen and McLennan’s (2010) and Son and Pearce’s (2005) research into international students’ reasons for choosing Australia as a study destination. In response to Son and Pearce’s (2005) observation that distributing questionnaires only in English probably limited the depth of responses obtained, the present study provided respondents with the option of completing the questionnaire in Mandarin. The two Chinese authors translated and back-translated the English version of the questionnaire and were also responsible for translating students’ responses back into English for analysis.

Two hundred and twenty-four students (15% of those emailed) submitted usable questionnaires, with just under half opting to complete the Mandarin version. Most respondents had been in Australia for less than two years, with the highest proportion being 1–2 years (25%) or less than six months (23%). The majority (57%) were female, 25% were males and 18% chose not to answer this question. Most were either 22–25 years old (69%) or 21 and under (20%). There were slightly more postgraduate respondents (53%) than undergraduates.
Stage Two

Responses were analysed using SPSS Version 22. Key themes extracted from the quantitative and qualitative items informed the development of four questions for the follow-up focus group interviews. These were designed to examine respondents’ travel experiences, explore their views of nature-based tourism, identify perceived barriers to their own and other Chinese visitors’ travel, and obtain suggestions for tailoring the Australian travel product to meet the needs of Chinese students and visitors.

All students who had completed Stage One were invited via email to participate in focus group interviews. Ten students volunteered, consequently, two focus group interviews, each comprising five students, were conducted. These were facilitated by one of the Chinese authors and conducted in Chinese in the hope this would result in rich and comprehensive responses. Interviews were recorded then independently translated into English by both Chinese authors.

4. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

In this section, results from the questionnaire and follow-up focus group interviews will be integrated under topics rather than presented separately. Initially, students were asked to reflect on their travels within Australia, and nominate the key sources of information used to plan their trips. Figure 1 indicates that the Internet is an important information source for this group, probably due to respondents’ age and familiarity with computer-based technology. Recommendations from other Chinese students were also widely sought; however, non-Chinese students were much less likely to be consulted. Travel books/brochures and recommendations from family and friends living in China were also used by nearly half of the group.
A similar reliance on the recommendations of friends and the internet was reported by Sparks and Pan (2009), though it must be noted that their study only interviewed potential tourists in Shanghai, not those who had actually travelled. The emphasis on consulting other Chinese students in the present study may reflect the fact that respondents were in a foreign destination and therefore highly likely to be interacting with, and seeking recommendations from, those of similar backgrounds. This would also align with Davidson et al.’s (2010) finding that the Chinese were more likely to travel with students of their own nationality than were any other international group.

Figure 1 also shows that relatively few respondents nominated education agents as a key source of information used to plan their trip. This is probably because educational agents are primarily used for pre-arrival planning such as university and visa applications. Most students would not consider travelling until after commencing study, at which point the contact between agents and students would be minimal. This suggests there is considerable scope for the host university to take on a facilitator role in this regard and for greater
collaboration between the tourism and education sectors to ensure that tourist information is easily available to students.

The findings discussed above highlight the role social contacts and electronic media play in influencing the travel behaviour of Chinese students and suggest that online resources that promote tourism businesses and experiences (such as social media networks, virtual postcards, blogs, and links that allow users to forward the website to others) are likely to appeal to this market. When asked about the role of social media in travel, focus group participants highlighted the importance of sharing stories and photos online as part of the travel experience, and described in detail the physical poses that their friends make, the editing that occurs prior to uploading, and the fact that Chinese tourists photograph themselves in-situ as concrete proof of their visitation. Students mentioned that they took considerable care to ensure that the composition of photographs was artistic and that wherever possible, included themselves in front of beautiful views and/or enjoying luxury experiences. They also explained how the best images were uploaded to a wide variety of social media platforms to ‘show off’ to friends and family.

Figure 2 depicts respondents’ ratings of the importance of participating in a range of Australian travel experiences on a scale from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (extremely important). Nature-based experiences (for example, seeing natural landscapes, seeing Australian animals and walking on the beach) rated highly, as did participating in uniquely Australian experiences such as seeing famous Australian attractions and being part of the Australian lifestyle.
FIGURE 2: Importance of participating in particular travel experiences while in Australia

Interestingly, the top three experiences (seeing natural landscapes, seeing famous Australian attractions and seeing Australian animals) exactly match the top three nominated by Chinese visitors in Packer et al.’s (2011) study, suggesting that Chinese students and Chinese visitors have similar travel preferences. The outdoors and nature also emerged as a major drawcard in Australia’s 2013 International Visitor Survey data (Keating & Godfrey, 2013), both for Chinese students (25% engaged in nature-based activities during their stay) and Chinese visitors generally (24% engaged in such activities). Outdoor activities also featured strongly
in King and Gardiner’s (2013) study of Chinese students, with 81% reporting that they visited beaches and national parks in their local region. When travelling further afield, 75% reported that they visited natural attractions. These studies all suggest that Australia’s natural environment is a powerful magnet for the Chinese market and as such, should be the focus of efforts to engage them in tourism-related activities.

In the present study, the types of nature-based experiences particularly attractive to Chinese visitors can be divided into three key attractions: beaches, the Great Barrier Reef, and deserts. For all three, it was the novel and unique characteristics that were appealing, with students commenting on the beautiful scenery, the variety of activities available, and the fact that these environments were typically Australian and not available in China. Figure 2 also shows that while viewing Australian animals was rated highly, touching or holding them was less attractive. Similarly, immersive or more adventurous experiences such as swimming in the ocean and visiting the Outback were viewed as less important. Respondents’ interest in nature-based activities was more aligned to ‘look but don’t touch’ than ‘experiencing’ it per se, suggesting that tourism organisations hoping to attract the Chinese market may need to design activities that are relatively structured and low risk. This is supported by the many comments elicited in the focus group interviews relating to students’ fear for their own personal safety, particularly in relation to threats from Australian wildlife (snakes and insects featured extensively), getting lost in wilderness environments, and being exposed to environmental hazards such as heat-stroke, sunburn and personal discomfort from camping and bushwalking. It should be noted that these concerns were ‘top of mind’ when discussing nature-based tourism activities in focus group interviews but that they did not emerge as a key constraint to travel in general (discussed later in relation to Table 2). Perhaps this is because when thinking about travel in general, perceptions of safety are likely to relate to a range of elements (opportunistic or organised criminal activities, terrorism, safety of public
transport, travel regulations etc.) for which Australia is generally regarded as low-risk. When focusing on activities in the natural environment, however, Australia’s reputation for dangerous wildlife (venomous snakes and spiders, sharks, crocodiles), its harsh climate, and its inhospitable terrain is less benign. Consequently, it is not surprising that concerns for personal safety come to the forefront of respondents’ attention when considering nature-based activities.

Students’ concerns about personal safety in the natural environment support Wen and Ximing’s (2008) claims that there is little interest amongst Chinese tourists in immersive or ‘hard’ ecotourism experiences, and for them, ecotourism only differs from mass tourism in that it occurs in natural settings. Further, these researchers argue that many domestic Chinese tourists regard ecotourism as a moderate activity that doesn’t require much strength and energy. While physical activity was not specifically mentioned in the present study, respondents did feel that the travel choices of Chinese students were restricted by their lack of experience. This in turn restricted their willingness to opt for outdoor activities, as is evident in comments made in focus group interviews:

- We have very limited access to immersive nature-based experiences back home, and because we are not familiar with this type of experiences, we are not daring to try. Just being conservative, backpacking is still unpopular in China.
- We’re not adventurous; we don’t have enough outdoor living skills.
- We often hear on the news that an adventurer died. This has made us very frightened to go to the wild.

Similar concerns about safety risks were expressed by 60% of respondents in Sparks and Pan’s (2009) study. This, together with previous studies in USA (Field, 1999; Kim & Jogaratnam, 2003), Japan (Shi et al., 2010) and Australia (Davidson et al., 2010; King & Gardiner, in press) that show Asian students very rarely stayed in campgrounds, suggest that ‘roughing it’ in nature is unlikely to appeal to this market. Rather, care needs to be taken to provide structured and well-organised ecotourism experiences that give visitors a choice of
low-risk immersion/adventure activities. Organisations offering nature-based experiences should emphasise their health and safety credentials and do their best to allay fears of insects, wild animals and getting lost. Messages regarding safety precautions need to be clearly displayed, but the personal risk of undertaking the activities downplayed wherever possible, to encourage participation. Giving visitors information about basic survival skills (carry water, stay on tracks, tell people where you’re going) would also be useful in this context.

Another point of interest in Figure 2 is that activities associated with the stereotypical Chinese visitor (such as taking guided tours, meeting Chinese people, and eating Chinese food) are rated as the least important. Again, this mirrors results reported by Packer et al. (2011), who found that Chinese visitors assigned meeting Chinese people and eating Chinese food low priority - 22nd and 24th out of 26 experiences respectively. Thus, it seems that while travelling at least, experiencing the ‘real’ Australia is more important to Chinese students and visitors than connecting with familiar aspects of their own culture.

Given the importance of word-of-mouth advertising to Chinese students (Figure 1), it is interesting to note that when asked to nominate the top five things they would recommend to other Chinese students, responses revolve around famous or iconic Australian sites and experiences, many of which are nature based (see Table 1). Thus, iconic animals such as koalas and kangaroos, and seeing natural wonders such as the Great Barrier Reef rate highly.
The second column of Table 1 shows that attractions and destinations were nominated mainly because of their uniqueness or iconic status. These findings match results of Son and Pearce’s
(2005) study, in which Asian students rated the Sydney Opera House, koalas, kangaroos, and Uluru as the top iconic images of Australia; and Spark and Pan’s (2009) findings, that icons are important in attracting Chinese tourists. Students explained that it is more the fame of the attraction and the fact that everyone recognises and acknowledges their personal experiences that is important. This supports earlier focus group interview comments relating to the use of social media and suggests that gaining status through positive comments from friends and family may even determine the choice of travel destinations and experiences. One student even commented “I don’t like Sydney and Melbourne, but when I go back to China, all my friends will ask if I went to Sydney and Melbourne, so the pressure from my family and friends pushed me to go there.”

These responses suggest that promotional efforts highlighting the one-off, special or novel aspects of particular tourism attractions, activities or products are likely to resonate well with the Chinese market. While respondents stressed the importance of the icons, they did acknowledge that this fame has its downside; namely, that there were often many other Chinese visitors at the site and that in fact, it was difficult to avoid other Chinese. This highlights one of the paradoxes of travel for the Chinese: they want to go to famous places to prove they’ve done something different and unique, but the number of other Chinese tourists there can make it look and feel like downtown Beijing. Their solution was to ‘frame’ photographs to ensure they do not depict other Chinese tourists – as students explained in focus group interviews “you need to look like you’re the only one.” Respondents also hypothesised that in future the fame of the site may not be as important as avoiding other Chinese travellers.

While students had participated in a range of travel products and experiences, they did identify a number of constraints preventing them travelling extensively in Australia (see Table 2). Perhaps unsurprisingly for students, the expense of travel ($M = 3.91$), study
commitments \((M = 3.56)\), and distances \((M = 3.18)\) were the key barriers to travel. In addition, many do not own a vehicle, and thus rely on public transport, further limiting their travel options. Despite having sufficient English skills to be accepted into tertiary study, factors such as difficulty getting information \((M = 2.39)\), not knowing where to go \((M = 2.28)\), and language barriers \((M = 2.24)\) were still considered moderate barriers to travel.

**TABLE 2. Descriptive analysis of travel constraints**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item (constraints)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>1.063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too busy with study</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>1.226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too far to travel (within Australia)</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>1.200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of transport</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>1.307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone to travel with (lack of company)</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>1.407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried about safety</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>1.206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to get information</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>1.178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know where to go</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>1.207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language barriers</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>1.212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried about traveling in a different country</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>1.107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried about cultural differences</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>0.951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried about food</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>0.950</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 1 = not at all, 2 = to a small extent, 3 = to a moderate extent, 4 = to a great extent, and 5 = to a very great extent

Prior to conducting an exploratory factor analysis on these factors, the reliability of the travel constraints was assessed (Brace et al., 2009). There were strong indications that ‘cost’ was not a consistent part of the scale as the item-total correlation was very low (.103), \(R^2\) was also low (.104), and deleting this item increased the Cronbach’s alpha to .851. Thus, this item was deleted. When the reliability analyses on the remaining items were repeated, for the constraint item ‘too busy with study,’ the item-total correlation was low (.355), \(R^2\) was also
low (.189), and the Cronbach’s alpha was increased to .853 when this item was deleted. This
item was also deleted. A principal component analysis with VARIMAX rotation was used to
reduce the 10 constraints to a smaller set of uncorrelated factors. The constraint item
‘someone to travel with (lack of company)’ was deleted because of low factor loading = .346
(< .40). The process resulted in a two-factor solution explaining 59.92% of the total variance,
with Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy of .792, which was higher than the
recommended index of .60 (Brace et al., 2009). The Cronbach’s alpha of the total scale was
.850 (see Table 3).

**TABLE 3. Barriers inhibiting Chinese students’ travel within Australia**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Factor loading</th>
<th>Eigenvalue</th>
<th>Variance explained</th>
<th>Reliability α</th>
<th>Composite mean*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Component 1: Intrinsic barriers</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.166</td>
<td>46.284</td>
<td>.813</td>
<td>2.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language barriers</td>
<td>.573</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried about safety</td>
<td>.731</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried about traveling in a different country</td>
<td>.843</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried about cultural differences</td>
<td>.830</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried about food</td>
<td>.644</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Component 2: Extrinsic barriers</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.227</td>
<td>13.634</td>
<td>.763</td>
<td>2.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to get information</td>
<td>.636</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of transport</td>
<td>.837</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too far to travel (within Australia)</td>
<td>.795</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know where to go</td>
<td>.562</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>59.918</td>
<td></td>
<td>.850</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy = .792, Bartlett’s test of Sphericity: $\chi^2 = 672.786, p = .000$

*: 1 = not at all, 2 = to a small extent, 3 = to a moderate extent, 4 = to a great extent, and 5 = to a very
great extent
It is important to note that the three omitted factors (‘cost’, ‘time’ and ‘companion’) were not included because of internal inconsistency. This does not mean they are not important barriers, but rather that they have no correlation with other barriers. These three barriers were named ‘control barriers’ as they independently constrain students’ travel behaviour. From a practical viewpoint, this means that if Chinese students cannot afford to travel, don’t have time to travel and/or lack a companion, they are unlikely to do so, regardless of how well travel products are designed and delivered. These results are consistent with earlier studies that suggested financial concerns, time constraints and inability to find a suitable travel partner are key constrains (Crawford et al., 1991; Gardiner et al., 2013).

Besides the three key control barriers, the remaining nine barriers were reduced to two components. The first, explaining 46.284% of the total variance, includes five constraint items. Since all the items loaded on this component reflected individual psychological states and attributes, this component was labelled *intrinsic barriers*. Examples tend to relate to stress, anxiety, perceived self-skills, and subjective evaluation of the appropriateness and availability of various leisure activities (Crawford et al., 1991). As indicated in Table 3, intrinsic barriers that inhibit Chinese students’ travel within Australia include perceived language skills, and worry about safety, cultural differences, food and travelling in a different country. However, these intrinsic barriers were of reasonably low importance for students (Mean=2.12), probably because they have met the English requirement for university study and are currently living in Australia. The second component, which explains 13.634% of the construct variance, consists of four items. This dimension is related to respondents’ limited understanding of the destination due to lack of information as well as physical conditions such as lack of transport. This constraint was labelled *extrinsic barriers* and was of moderate importance in restricting travel (Mean=2.73). From these results the researchers propose that there is a hierarchy of barriers restricting Chinese students’ travel, and that if the lower level
of barriers (i.e., control barriers) cannot be overcome then the other two components (intrinsic and extrinsic) are incidental. This proposition is illustrated in Figure 3.

Li, Zhang, Mao and Deng (2011) argue that understanding travel constraints is important in designing more effective travel marketing programs; consequently, ways in which the Australian tourism industry could overcome these perceived barriers were explored in the follow-up focus group interviews. Students felt that it was beyond the scope of the tourism industry to address the control barriers of ‘time’ and ‘lack of companion’, but unanimously agreed that discount packages for students would be favourably regarded. Other suggestions given by focus group participants tended to focus on removing extrinsic barriers, with particular emphasis being given to the provision of multilingual signs and service personnel. Respondents explained that although their English was sufficient to gain entry to an

FIGURE 3: Hierarchy barriers inhibiting Chinese students’ travel within Australia
Australian university, even they had difficulty understanding tourist information and signage. They recommended more signs be written in Chinese, and that tourist information centres provide translation services and travel itineraries specifically targeting the needs and preferences of the Chinese market. Many were concerned that Chinese students and visitors lacked the skills and knowledge to develop their own travel plans, and felt pre-constructed itineraries would help both groups make informed decisions.

Given the importance of the Internet as a source of information in the current (Figure 1), developing online travel modules that can be packaged into itineraries for the Chinese market should also be considered. These could be extrapolated from the Chinese version of the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse’s national database, which contains a description of 23,000 products and 2,000 services in simplified and traditional Chinese.

To ascertain the potential VFR travel generated by Chinese students studying in Australia, respondents were asked to indicate the number of visitors they expected during their study, as well as the likely duration of their stay. Table 4 illustrates that most expected one to four visitors, with the mean number being 2.63. In terms of visit duration, most were expected to stay for 1–2 weeks, although 39% were expected to stay longer. These responses indicate that there is considerable potential for international students to attract Chinese visitors, a trend that has been identified in earlier studies (Davidson et al., 2010; International, 2013; Michael et al., 2003).
TABLE 4. Number of friends and family expected and likely duration of stay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of visitors (n = 202; mean = 2.63)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1–2</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>33.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3–4</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>22.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of visit (n = 177)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 week</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1–2 weeks</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>55.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3–4 weeks</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 4 weeks</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked to list places that they would take family and friends in order of preference, respondents tended to suggest the same places as those they would recommend to Chinese students. Thus, the Great Barrier Reef, the Gold Coast, Sydney Opera House, and Sydney all featured heavily in students’ first preferences (see Table 5). When viewed as a whole, the Gold Coast, Great Barrier Reef, Melbourne, and Sydney were the most frequently mentioned. Again, these tend to be iconic, famous places and experiences. They also tend to be those most commonly visited by Chinese students, as 2013 IVS data illustrates that the major capital cities of Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane account for more than 65 per cent of their visits (Keating & Godfrey, 2013). Interestingly, koala sanctuaries and places like Uluru (which are on the student must-do lists) were not featured as strongly here. Whether this is because parents are considered less adventurous or whether this is due to time constraints (particularly for Uluru) is not clear. It must also be noted that respondents lived in south-east Queensland, which may have influenced their choice of travel destinations and experiences.
TABLE 5. Places respondents would take family and friends (ordered in terms of 1st preference)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place to visit</th>
<th>1st pref</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
<th>4th</th>
<th>5th</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great Barrier Reef</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>105 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold Coast</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>153 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney Opera House</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>65 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>92 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UQ campus</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cairns</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>98 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane CBD</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Ocean Rd</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koala sanctuaries</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia Zoo</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uluru</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme parks</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To explore whether distance has an influence on travel preferences and recommendations, attractions were combined with their destination (for example, theme parks combined with Gold Coast; Sydney Opera House with Sydney). These were then plotted against the distance from St Lucia, Brisbane (the suburb where most respondents resided). Figure 4 suggests that the further the distance, the less likely the destination will feature in respondents’ preferences. The only exception to this was the Brisbane city attractions, which, although they were the closest, may not have been considered a tourism destination because respondents already lived there. This propensity for respondents in the current study to take short trips supports earlier research by King and Gardiner (in press) who found that during their most recent trip, the majority of Chinese students took either day trips (34%) or trips of 1-3 nights duration (37%). Very few were away for more than one week.
In line with earlier findings, immersive ecotourism experiences did not feature strongly in students’ recommendations. Despite this, focus group responses suggest that if travel agents arranged outdoor activities as part of an itinerary (including aspects such as tents, safety instructions, travel insurance and food), visiting family and friends might be willing to participate. There seemed to be a general reluctance amongst students to plan such activities themselves, as illustrated in the following explanation: “We would not dare to arrange [camping] for our parents or friends. We don’t have enough knowledge and skills.”

The focus group interviews also revealed that students are keen to ensure their visitors obtained value for money. Respondents emphasised the once-in-a-lifetime nature of the trip for Chinese visitors and the consequent importance visitors place on making the most of limited time and funds. Again, respondents described the role of taking photographs and engaging in experiences not available in China, and the fact that for Chinese visitors memorising and capturing the whole trip, rather than relaxing, was paramount. Students felt
this was a key difference between Chinese visitors and visitors from other countries, as illustrated in following quote:

> When Chinese come to Australia for travel, they think ‘I cuddled the koala, so I’d better “show off” what I did here’. But getting more knowledge about koalas, or having a very relaxing holiday — they don’t care. I think this is one of the main differences between Chinese visitors and other visitors. If Australians go to Europe for a holiday, it’s because they feel they are busy and tired and need a relaxing holiday, or they want to experience another culture. But Chinese visitors don’t think this way.

From these comments it seems logical to suggest that promotional campaigns for the Chinese market should focus less on rest, relaxation, peace, and serenity; and more on variety, photo opportunities, and multiple destinations/experiences. The more activities and sights available (particularly if they are iconic, unique, or different), the more the destination is likely to appeal to this market. Lookouts, vantage points, photo spots, and access to the services of professional photographers for group photographs and action shots are also likely to enhance the tourist experience. Demarcating photographic vantage points (like those found in Disney’s Magic Kingdom) could also be considered. These could be accompanied by signs that incorporate the site’s name and a short explanation of its significance to assist recall and promotion.

**5. CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH**

Through the use of survey questionnaires and focus group interviews, this research has contributed to our understanding of the travel needs, preferences and perceptions of Chinese students, and in doing so, has provided an insight into the likely travel requirements of future independent Chinese travellers. It identifies the importance of Australia’s natural environment and iconic features (both natural and man-made) in attracting the Chinese, and suggests that these should form the focus of future promotional efforts. Despite the
attractiveness of destinations such as the Great Barrier Reef and Uluru, a number of factors preventing travel were consistently identified. Building on previous research, these were categorised into control barriers, extrinsic barriers and intrinsic barriers. Based on responses from focus group interviews, the authors propose that these are hierarchical, and that unless control barriers can be overcome, the presence of other barriers is incidental. The authors also argue that although perceived barriers to travel were obtained in an Australian context, similar factors are likely to inhibit Chinese students’ travel in other Western countries.

In terms of practical contribution, results obtained highlight the need for Western countries to design new tourism products and services that enrich the travel experiences of both Chinese students and visitors. In particular, they allude to the importance of developing support mechanisms that facilitate travel for Chinese travellers and creating opportunities that encourage Chinese visitors to venture beyond capital cities. Responses from both the survey and focus group interviews suggest that the tourism industry should continue to promote Australia using iconic and unique experiences, and that this should incorporate native flora and fauna, as well as distinctive built and natural attractions. While ecotourism activities are valued, ‘roughing it’ (camping, bush walking and so on) is not as appealing due to safety concerns. Thus, ‘soft’ ecotourism activities are recommended for this market (even for younger, more adventurous students who have travelled to Australia independently for study). Although this new generation of younger Chinese travellers may be more willing to participate in adventurous travel (Sparks & Pan, 2009), the tourism industry still needs to find ways of facilitating this in a safe, supportive environment. Some basic skills training may also be necessary, because many Chinese have very little experience of nature-based or adventure tourism.

Iconic species, landscapes and experiences play a pivotal role in Chinese travel decisions. Those that differ markedly from what can be found in China are particularly attractive, as are
those that feature heavily in marketing campaigns. The importance of carefully monitoring
the marketing of ‘iconic’ attractions cannot be overstated. Responses also indicate that
Chinese students and tourists are searching for opportunities to photograph genuine
Australian experiences and landscapes. These photographs serve as souvenirs of their travels
and are widely circulated amongst friends and family. Strategies to facilitate and leverage off
this ‘free’ form of word-of-mouth advertising (for example, innovative online
postcards/blogs, competitions, discounts for encouraging others to visit) could also be
devised.

This study also suggests that in order to support Chinese international students’ travel within
Australia, the tourism industry should devise discounted short-stay travel packages, utilize
internet marketing tools to post multilingual information about the destination and transport,
and use social media to encourage positive word-of-mouth advertising and allay safety
concerns. The provision of travel information kits at the time of student enrolment and
orientation could also be beneficial (Michael et al., 2003).

Further research with Chinese tourists travelling independently is needed to ascertain whether
the views expressed here are consistent with the ‘average’ Chinese tourist. It is
acknowledged that by sampling from a university population, responses may largely reflect
the preferences and perceptions of younger, more educated individuals and may therefore
have limited applicability to the general travelling population. That aside, the study has
provided a starting point for discussion regarding the elements and experiences that are likely
to attract and satisfy this emerging and fast-growing market.

Finally, translating the questionnaire into respondents’ first language appeared to generate a
richer data set and fewer unanswered items than in previous similar research. Conducting the
focus group interviews in Chinese also produced detailed responses that would not have been
obtained if these sessions had been in English and is therefore recommended for future studies where possible.

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