

CHINA'S IMAGE AS A TRAVEL DESTINATION:  
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

By

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### International Tourism Industry in China

According to the World Tourism Organization (2002), China has become the fifth biggest international travel destination in the world, and it will be the largest international travel destination by 2020. The number of international tourist arrivals to China increased 53-fold in 24 years, from 1.8 million in 1978 to 97.9 million in 2002 (CNTA, 2003a). The international tourism revenue increased from US\$ 263 million to US\$ 20,390 million in 2002, which is a 77-fold increase. This rapid growth was attributed to sound economic growth, positive government policies, the recent entry into the World Trade Organization, and a supportive international environment (Zhang & Lew, 2003). Among all these, the most important factor is the success of the market-oriented reforms.

China began to develop its tourism industry after its adoption of the open-door policy in 1978. The tourism industry was initiated mainly for political and diplomatic purposes, as well as a way to attract the foreign capital for socialist economic development. Inbound tourism, thus, received all the attention from the central government. Accommodation facilities, transportation and attractions were developed through the past two decades. In



1978, there were only 137 star-rated hotels of 30,740 rooms in the entire country (CNTA, 2001). By 2002, China had a total of 8,880 star-rated hotels of 897, 200 rooms (CNTA, 2003b). Airplane transportation is an important tool for the modern tourism development in a broad scale. Simultaneously, the aviation industry grew rapidly from one company - the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) - with 70 domestic and international air routes in 1978 to thirty-four airlines with 1,115 air routes flown in 1999, among which many are small and local airlines (Mak, 2003). New roads and highways were built, and more facilities were added to the coastal ports and docks.

### Tourism Marketing in China

Resided in China National Tourism Administration (CNTA), Department of Marketing & International Liaison is responsible for promoting and marketing China throughout the world via its thirteen overseas offices in Europe, America, Asia Pacific area (Wang & Ap, 2003). Before 1978, tourism mainly served as a political tool to expand China's influence and strengthen friendships (Han, 1994). From 1978 to 1990, China enjoyed a seller's market with an influx of international tourists (Zhang, G., Pine, & Zhang, H., 2000). However, the inbound tourism market of China turned into a buyer's market due to reduced demand and increased supply. Then CNTA realized the importance of promotion and marketing and launched the first promotional campaign-"Tourism Year of Dragon" in 1988 (Zhang, Chong, & Ap, 1999). By 1991, CNTA's marketing budget increased to US\$ 3.2 million (TTG Asia, 1994). Nevertheless, the marketing budget was still small when compared to Korea, Singapore and Malaysia, which annually spent more than US\$ 32 million respectively (Wang & Ap, 2003).

In the 1980s, China marketed tourism through participating in international travel trade shows and inviting travel journalists from other countries to visit China (Wang & Ap, 2003). For example, Xian's terracotta warriors were made famous overnight by an invited team of photographers and writers from National Geographic by CNTA in the early 1980s (Zhang et al., 1999). In the 1990s, CNTA employed a theme travel campaign for the inbound tourism market. Every year, a theme featuring a different aspect of China's tourism resources was emphasized (Table 1).

Table 1 Travel Themes of China since 1992

| Year | Theme                           |
|------|---------------------------------|
| 1992 | Visit China '92                 |
| 1993 | China Landscape Tour '93        |
| 1994 | China Heritage Tour '94         |
| 1995 | China Folklore Tour '95         |
| 1996 | China Holiday Resort '96        |
| 1997 | Visit China '97                 |
| 1998 | China City and Country Tour '98 |
| 1999 | China Eco-tour '99              |
| 2000 | The New Millennium Tour '00     |
| 2001 | Health & Fitness-China '01      |
| 2002 | Folk Arts-China '02             |
| 2003 | Culinary Kingdom-China '03      |
| 2004 | Catch the Lifestyle-China '04   |

*Source:* CNTA, 2003

Besides the theme travels, CNTA differentiated the inbound tourism markets into "Major Market" which had a strong annual growth potential and "Niche Market" which were only interested in some specific routes (Zhang et al., 1999). For instance, the Silk Road tour is more appealing to tourists from Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries.

With limited funding of marketing, the annual changing travel themes could not project a unified image of China but rather confuse the potential visitors (Wang & Ap, 2003).

Furthermore, a country's tourist image was linked to its own national image in general (World Tourism Organization, 1980; Kotler, 1987). The country image of China was dominated and influenced by the Western media in European and North American countries, which was even more influential than CNTA's promotional campaigns. That was completely beyond the control of CNTA.

### The Importance of Destination Image

According to Leiper (1995), a destination was a place where travelers visited and where they chose to stay for a certain amount of time in order to experience the features or characteristics of that place. Bigne, Sanchez, M., and Sanchez, J. (2001) found that the image of a destination was the most relevant precursor of service quality and satisfaction to attract tourists. Therefore, destination marketers should strive to manipulate the manageable elements, such as advertising, tourist information offices, public relations, advising travel agents and tour operators, and promotional instruments. With the intensifying competition in international tourism market, destination image became the key in attracting tourists (Leisen, 2001) and market positioning (Calantone, Di Benedetto, Hakam, & Bojanic, 1989; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). China was viewed as an educational destination instead of vocational destination (Hu & Ritchie, 1993). A vague current image of China was probably due to the physical, cultural and psychological distances of most potential tourists in Europe and America (Richards, 2001).

## Problem Statement

With ever-increasing competition among destinations, marketing and promotions are important for further tourism growth in China. But the annual changing travel themes confused rather than attracted potential visitors to China (Wang & Ap, 2003). What is the best image to represent China as an international travel destination? How do travelers think of China as a travel destination? How can China market itself in the competitive global environment and improve its destination image?

## Purpose of the Study

In review of the vague image of China as an international travel destination, this study intends to identify China's image as a travel destination perceived by international tourists and assess the major attributes that attract international travelers.

## Objectives of the Study

1. Identify the relative importance of China's image attributes as a travel destination;
2. Discover the underlying dimensions of China's image as a travel destination perceived by international travelers;
3. Assess the relative impacts of derived image dimensions (factors) on international travelers' overall image of China and determine the best predictor (factor) of China's overall image as a travel destination;

4. Discover the difference of perceived image of China between travelers who have been to China and travelers who have not;
5. Investigate whether the perceived destination image of China differed by travelers' demographic profiles;
6. Examine whether China's perceived image differed by travelers' traveling behavior; and
7. Recommend marketing strategies to enhance China's image.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Definition of Destination Image

The first extensive research on destination image literature dated back in 1970s by Hunt (1975). Destination image was defined as “perceptions held by potential visitors about an area.” Gartner and Hunt (1987) referred to image as “impressions that a person or persons hold about a state in which they do not reside.” Image was expressed as the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person had of a destination (Crompton, 1979; Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1994). Cognitive and evaluative components of the image were added by Embacher & Buttle (1989). Fakeye & Crompton (1991) recognized image as “a mental construct developed by a potential tourist on the basis of a few selected impressions among the flood of total impressions.” Gartner (1993, 1996) emphasized on the three different components –cognitive, affective and conative– of the image formation. In this study, destination image is defined as individuals’ mental construct based on the sum of beliefs, ideas, attitudes, perceptions and impressions towards a destination.

Relationships between destination image and tourist behavior were examined at different levels of geographic contexts , such as countries (Goodrich, 1978; Haahti, 1986; Calantone, Di Benedetto, Hakam, & Bojanic, 1989; Embacher & Buttle, 1989; Chon, 1991; Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Driscoll, Lawson, & Niven, 1994; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999b; Baloglu, 2001), cities (Sternquist Witter, 1985; Chon, 1992; Dadgostar & Isotalo, 1995; Muller, 1995; Oppermann, 1996a, 1996b) and resorts (Guthrie & Gale, 1991; Carmichael, 1992). Personal interests, needs and motives, expectations, personality, social position, and demographics influenced travelers' image (Mayo & Jarvis, 1981).

### Image Formation Process

Gunn (1972) identified two types of image: organic and induced image. The organic image came from non-tourist information, such as history and geography books, news reports, magazines, television reports, etc. The other was induced image, which was directed by the destination organizations' marketing efforts of detailed brochures, travel articles in magazines, television advertisements, guiding information at travel agencies, on-site promotion presentations, etc. Cognitive and affective components were derived from Gunn's (1972) original proposition on image formation (Holbrook, 1978; Burgess, 1978; Zimmer & Golden, 1988; Embacher & Buttle, 1989; Walmsley & Jenkins, 1993; Gartner, 1993; Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a). Cognitive component was the knowledge about a destination's objective attributes, while affective component were the feelings about them. Affective evaluation and responses were formed after the cognitive processing of the physical objects or attributes in travelers' minds. Cognitive assessment of visual materials was the major component toward

destination image for the travelers from unfamiliar market segments and affective assessment for the travelers from familiar segments (MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997). Based on the cognitive and affective assessments, an overall image was formed (Stern & Krakover, 1993; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a). Gartner (1986) stated that an interaction of travelers' perceptions toward various destination attributes would form an overall image of a destination. However, perceptual/cognitive component was more likely to influence overall image than affective component (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a).

Gartner (1993) proposed that cognitive, affective and conative were three different but hierarchically interrelated components of image. He defined cognitive as "the sum of beliefs and attitudes of the object leading to some internally accepted picture of its attitudes" and affective as "related to motives in the sense that it was how a person values the object under consideration." While conative was similar to behavior, which occurred after a tourist weighted the external and internal stimuli and decided whether to travel or not to a particular destination (Gartner, 1993). Furthermore in 1996, Gartner suggested that there were eight continual stages from the induced to organic agents. They were Overt Induced I, Overt Induced II, Covert Induced I, Covert Induced II, Autonomous, Unsolicited organic, Solicited organic, and Organic.



Table 2 Eight Image Change Agent by Gartner (1996)

| Image Change Agent  | Credibility | Market Penetration | Destination Cost |
|---|-------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Overt Induced I<br>Traditional forms of advertising, (e.g., brochures, TV, radio, print billboard, etc.)                    | Low         | High               | high             |
| Overt Induced II<br>Information received from tour operator, wholesalers  | Medium      | Medium             | Indirect         |
| Covert Induced I<br>Second-party endorsement of products via traditional forms of advertising                               | Low/Medium  | High               | High             |
| Covert Induced II<br>Second party endorsement through apparently unbiased reports (e.g., newspaper travel section articles) | Medium      | Medium             | Medium           |
| Autonomous<br>New and popular culture: documentaries, reports, news stories, movies, TV programs                            | High        | Medium/High        | Indirect         |
| Unsolicited Organic<br>Unsolicited information received from friends and relatives  | Medium      | Low                | Indirect         |
| Solicited Organic<br>Solicited information received from friends and relatives  | High        | Low                | Indirect         |
| Organic<br>Actual visitation  | High        | -                  | indirect         |

Source: Gartner (1996, p472.)

An image was processed over a number of stages when several factors or elements influenced and interrelated (Gallarza, Saura, & Garcia, 2002). Gartner (1996) stated that different individual perceptual filters rendered image differences among potential tourists toward the same destination. Different information sources and volumes of information received regarding a destination and socio-demographics of tourists influenced the cognition of a destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a). The most powerful information source was word-of-mouth in image formation.

## Destination Image Characteristics

Destination image was subjective and complex (Chon, 1991; Ecthner & Ritchie, 1991, 1993; Gartner, 1996; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; Gallarza et al., 2002). Moreover, the formation of destination image was constantly changing and dynamic (Chon, 1991; Gartner, 1996; Gallarza et al., 2002). Four different features or characteristics of travel destination images were important for destination promoters (Gartner, 1996).

1. Touristic images change slowly; the larger the entity the more slowly the image changes.
2. Induced image formation attempts must be focused and long-term.
3. The smaller the entity in relation to the whole, the less of a chance to develop an independent image.
4. To be effective, image change depends on an assessment of present images.

Additionally, travel destination image was mixed with positive and negative aspects (McLellan & Foushee, 1983; Willits, Bealer & Timbers, 1990; Ahmed, 1991; Milman & Pizam, 1995; Chen & Kerstetter, 1999; Rittichainuwat, Qu, & Brown, 2001). Further, it was hard to correct negative images in tourists' minds, as Ahmed (1991) concluded that "once a negative image is established in the minds of potential travelers, even a full range of marketing activities cannot reverse it." Therefore, it was very important for destination marketers to present a positive image or at least a neutral image, which could be changed into a positive image through destinations marketing efforts. Dearth of awareness of a destination resulted in a neutral or weak image of that place (Woodside & Lysonski,

1989). Nevertheless, the gap between image and reality of a destination could adversely affect travelers' satisfaction and resulted in anger and disappointment (Britton, 1979). The marketing efforts should also realistically reflect the reality of a destination (Eyster, 1976).

### Travel Decision Making Process

There were at least three processes in perceptions: awareness, categorizing and associating (Woodside and Lysonski, 1989). Destination awareness included consideration set, inert set, unavailable set and inept set. The cognitive component of an image helped to select destinations that might be considered (Gartner, 1996). An effective marketing strategy should focus on potential tourists who already had the destination in consideration set after the mental processes of categorizing the destinations into four different sets (Woodside and Lysonski, 1989).

The traveler sought additional information at the second stage which might change the perceptual/cognitive components; they checked time and money availabilities for that particular trip. Thus, choices were narrowed down (Gartner, 1996). The traveler considered the affective association, which was the specific feelings (positive and negative) linked with a specific destination. Meanwhile, the traveler weight the specific attributes and benefits that a destination offered and his alternatives. Consequently, tracking the affective association that was mostly referred by target customers was

meaningful for destination marketers because travel preferences were derived from destination awareness and affective association (Woodside and Lysonski, 1989).

In addition to consideration set, three additional sets were formed: inert set, inept set and evoked set (Narayana & Makin, 1975). Inept set referred to destinations that did not meet the criteria and were rejected. Neither positive nor negative images were associated with the inert set. The most important set was evoked set, which consisted of destinations that met travelers' travel requirements at that time. Evoked set was smaller than the awareness set (Howard, 1963), containing only three destinations (Thompson & Cooper, 1979). In the final decision stage, whichever destination could provide the most benefits to travelers was the winner (Gartner, 1996). Since the traveler was unable to test-try a destination before purchase, the decision-making process was built on the imaginary benefits offered by destinations. Therefore, the image of destination was extremely important in the final stage. Based on the information obtained from the induced image, potential buyers sought more information regarding the evoked destination. Potential tourists of international long-haul travel market would engage in extensive information search to form a final decision (Gartner, 1989). Travelers were less likely to include the destinations that were hard to categorize or differentiate from other similar destinations in the evoked set (Mayo & Jarvis, 1981).

According to Clawson and Ketch (1996), a traveler's purchase process was not a single stage process but multi-phased, including the following five steps.

1. Anticipation: planning and thinking about the trip.

2. Travel to the site: getting to the destination.
3. On-site behavior: behavior on site or destination region.
4. Return travel: travel home.
5. Recollection: recall, reflection, and memory of trip.

Similarly Gunn (1988) listed seven phases of the travel experiences:

1. Accumulation of mental images about vacation experiences.
2. Modification of those images by further information.
3. Decision to take a vacation trip.
4. Travel to the destination.
5. Participation at the destination.
6. Return home.
7. Modification of images based on the vacation experience.

The anticipation phase was the most important in travel and tourism marketing promotion (Clawson & Ketch, 1996) as Gunn (1988) agreed that image accumulation, modification and its further influence on individuals' travel decisions were most important in a decision-making process.

### Conceptual Frameworks of Destination Image

Conceptualization of the destination image started as early as 1970s (Gunn, 1972; Hunt, 1975). Two levels of image components (organic and induced image) were developed by Gunn (1972) and followed by many other researchers on the same research line such as Fakeye & Crompton (1991) and Gartner (1993, 1996).

Gartner (1989) used multi-dimensional scaling (MDS) technique to analyze the different image positions through products promoted by Wyoming, Colorado, Montana and Utah. MDS technique was proved useful in determining the strengths and weaknesses of the image positioning among these four different states by offering a product-related attribute overview of the image. Though it did not lead to an ideal positioning recommendation, marketers could use the results to reposition products with respect to specific market segments.

Chon (1990) proposed a model incorporating destination image, traveler buying process, traveler satisfaction and dissatisfaction, push and pull factors, and the evaluative congruity approach to understand consumer behavior. Push factors refer to the socio-psychological motivations that drive tourists to travel; the pull factors refer to those attracting tourists to a certain destinations (Crompton, 1978; Christensen, 1983). The framework showed that image was a dynamically changing factor, which was constantly modified by travelers through the followings:

1. Push to travel (different needs) and pull to travel (attractiveness of destination).
2. Travel motivation.
3. Construction of primary image.
4. Tentative decision to travel.
5. Anticipation includes four processes: accumulated images, information search, modification of image, and performance expectancy.
6. Decision to travel or consider alternative destination.
7. Travel to.

8. Participation.
9. Return home.
10. Recollection, evaluation of performance outcome.
11. Evaluative congruity, satisfaction/dissatisfaction.
12. Further modification of image

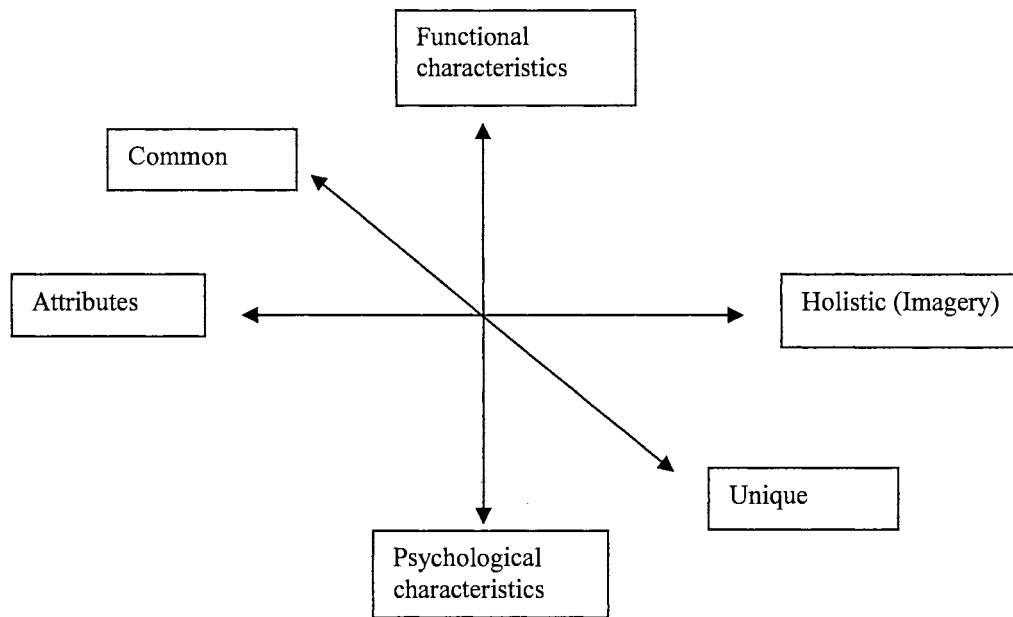
This framework was similar to the proposals of Gunn (1988) and Clawson and Ketch (1996).

Fakeye & Crompton (1991) described that image was formed from three stages: organic, induced and complex. Organic image represented cognition of a destination before searching promotional materials. Induced image was based reviewing brochures and modified against organic images. The complex image was resulted from actual visitation and experience. Moreover, these three image stages were linked with three promotional functions: to inform, to persuade, and to remind.

Three continua with six components to interpret the image of destination (Figure 1) were proposed by Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993). They were functional/psychological, common/unique, and holistic/attribute-based. While the measurable and observable characteristics of images were functional, the hard-to-measure or less tangible characteristics were psychological. The common features of destinations included the quality of infrastructures, transportation, climate, etc. The unique features referred to either attractions or events unique to that particular destination. The last continuum, attribute/holistic, was interpreted as “perceptions of individual attributes (such as climate,

accommodation facilities, friendliness of the people) as well as more holistic impressions (mental pictures or imagery) of the place” (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991).

Figure 1 the Components of Destination Image



Source: Echtner and Ritchie (1993)

Mazanec’s work (1994) illustrated that relationships among variables on images were in three dimensions: subjects, objects and attributes. The perceptions of the subjects were measured (1<sup>st</sup> dimension) on objects or destinations (2<sup>nd</sup> dimension) about certain characteristics or attributes of that destination (3<sup>rd</sup> dimension).

Baloglu & McCleary (1999a) proposed a path model of destination image formation, including components of perceptual/cognitive and affective components, overall image, information source, socio-psychological motivation, and demographic variables. Their model stated that demographic variables, sources of information and variety (amount) of



information sources formed the perceptual/cognitive evaluation. While demographic variables, socio-psychological motivation and cognitive formed the affective evaluation. Finally, the overall image of destination was composed of cognitive and affective image components.

Gallarza et al. (2002) summarized the two different types of investigations of tourism destination image, which were “either based on effective destination positioning” (Carmichale 1992; Crompton, Fakeye and Lue 1992; Reilly 1990) “or on the destination selection process” (Goodrich 1978; Gunn 1972; Hunt 1975; Oppermann 1996b). Founded on previous image studies and taxonomy, their new model of image comprised complex (not unequivocal), multiple (in elements and processes), relativistic (subjective and generally comparative), and dynamic (varying with the dimensions of time and space). In addition, the tourism destination image was an important component in analysis, action, strategy and tactics in destination marketing.

### Studies on China’s Destination Images

The boom of China’s tourism industry attracted researchers’ attentions. Analysis of China’s inbound markets such as the United Kingdom and the United States was conducted. Jeffrey & Xie (1995) analyzed and segmented the UK tourist market for China based on the evaluation of holiday activities. A clearly differentiated dominant market segment with seven dimensions of the holiday activities and eight potential travel groups was discovered. In terms of demographics and socioeconomics, a homogeneous

market of choosing mainland China/HK as their destinations was found among the U.S. pleasure travelers (Cai, Morrison, Braunlich, & O'Leary, 1996). The study concluded that the higher the income figure and the older the visitor was, the more likely a visitor would choose China/HK as an Asian destination. The more education a respondent had received, the more likely US pleasure travelers to choose to visit China/HK.

Different ways of promoting China or its image were examined by scholars in UK and Netherlands. The role of promotional materials on destination image of China among British tour operators was investigated (Santos, 1997). Analysis of the materials revealed seven major images, including heritage, culture, landscape, food, shopping, wildlife (panda) and mountains. Most of the British operators tended to promote the heritage image composed of culture and landscapes. The image formation of China was regarded as one without organic images because of the lack of word-of-mouth or personal experiences (Santos, 1997). Richards (2001) examined the use of cultural theme parks such as "Florida Splendid China" in U.S. and "Sweet Lake China" in Netherlands as a strategy to market China overseas. Findings showed that the development of cultural parks such as Sweet Lake China could be a useful means to motivate potential visitors' interests and to awaken curiosity sufficiently for their first trips. Given that actual visitation improved the induced image held by tourists, it was important to stimulate the initial visitation. Additionally, landmarks such as the Great Wall, the Forbidden City were mostly identified by potential Dutch travelers.

Comparison studies with regard to China's destination image were carried out. Gartner & Shen (1992) did a comparative study on China's tourism image before and after the Tiananmen Square incidence. Travelers' perceptions of safety and security, pleasant attitudes of service personnel, receptiveness of local people to tourists, and cleanliness of environment were all downgraded in the post-incidence questionnaire. In another similar study by Roehl (1990), travel agents' attitudes toward promoting tour packages to China were examined. Most of agents disagreed on boycotting travel to China, but the decision to travel or not was left to the customers. Hu & Ritchie (1993) carried out a study to "examine two different types of vacation experiences as the experimental factors and incorporates a context specific approach into the measurement of destination attractiveness." Five destinations, Hawaii, Australia, Greece, France and China, were compared in the study. China was ranked both the least attractive educational destination as well as vocational destination. Nonetheless, respondents rated China more attractive for an educational than for recreational vacation experience.

## Hypothesis

Based on the previous literature review, the following hypotheses were proposed for this study.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference on the perception toward China's image between travelers who have been to China and who have never been to China.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference on perceived China image among travelers with different demographic variables.

- Hypothesis 2.1: There is no significant difference on perceived China image between female travelers and male travelers.
- Hypothesis 2.2: There is no significant difference on perceived China image among travelers in different age groups.
- Hypothesis 2.3: There is no significant difference on perceived China image among travelers with different education level.
- Hypothesis 2.4: There is no significant difference on perceived China image among travelers with different occupations.
- Hypothesis 2.5: There is no significant difference on perceived China image among travelers with different residency.
- Hypothesis 2.6: There is no significant difference on perceived China image among travelers with different income levels.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference on perceived China image among international travelers with different traveling characteristics.

- Hypothesis 3.1: There is no significant difference on perceived China image among travelers with different purposes.
- Hypothesis 3.2: There is no significant difference on perceived China image among travelers with variant length of stay in China.
- Hypothesis 3.3: There is no significant difference on perceived China image between packaged tourists and individual tourists.
- Hypothesis 3.4: There is no significant difference on perceived China image among travelers with different companions.

Hypothesis 4: There is no relationship between international travelers' ratings on China's image attributes and their rating of China's overall image.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Research Design

The descriptive research design was used in this study. The objective was to determine international travelers' perceptions of China as a travel destination and examine the determinant factors affecting China's overall image. A cross-sectional questionnaire was used to evaluate international tourists' perception of China as a travel destination.

#### Instrument

A self-administered web-based questionnaire was developed with four parts: 1) respondents' travel behavioral characteristics, 2) destination image attributes, 3) overall rating of China's travel image and visitors' likelihood of visiting or revisiting China, and 4) demographics. Part one was the general information about the respondents travel characteristics, such as travel modes, times of visits and information search. Part two was the main body of the questionnaire, containing 32 destination image attributes (Table 3) adapted from previous studies by Gartner & Shen (1992), Echtner & Ritchie (1993), Chen & Kerstetter (1999), and Rittichainuwat et al. (2001). The image attributes

measured how travelers viewed China as a destination. A five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) was employed. Part three was the overall impression of China as a travel destination and visit intention to China in 6 months, 12 months and 2 years. Part four collected demographics including gender, age, education, income level, nationality, and career.

Table 3 Selected Image Attributes by Previous Studies

| Attributes                           | Gartner & Shen (1992) | Echtner & Ritchie (1993) | Chen & Kerstetter (1997) | Rittichainuwat et al. (2001) | This study |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|------------|
| Tourist sites/activities             |                       | √                        |                          |                              |            |
| National parks/wilderness activities | √                     | √                        |                          |                              | √          |
| Historical sites/museums             | √                     | √                        |                          | √                            | √          |
| Ancient tombs, pagodas, towers       | √                     |                          |                          |                              | √          |
| Ancient temples                      | √                     |                          |                          |                              | √          |
| Cultural/historical attractions      |                       | √                        |                          | √                            | √          |
| Architecture/building                | √                     | √                        |                          | √                            | √          |
| Handicrafts and local crafts         | √                     |                          | √                        |                              | √          |
| Martial arts                         | √                     |                          |                          |                              | √          |
| Drama/Peking opera                   | √                     |                          |                          |                              | √          |
| Traditional music/dance              | √                     |                          |                          |                              | √          |
| Beaches                              |                       | √                        |                          |                              | √          |
| Fairs, exhibits, festivals           |                       | √                        |                          |                              | √          |
| Natural scenery and attraction       |                       | √                        |                          | √                            | √          |
| Waters, gorges, rivers               | √                     |                          |                          |                              | √          |
| Mountains/caves                      | √                     |                          |                          |                              | √          |
| Coastlines                           | √                     |                          |                          |                              |            |
| Fresh air                            |                       |                          | √                        |                              | √          |
| Sports/outdoor activities/facilities |                       | √                        | √                        | √                            | √          |
| Good golf course                     |                       |                          |                          | √                            |            |
| Lots of open spaces                  |                       |                          | √                        |                              |            |
| Climate                              |                       | √                        | √                        | √                            | √          |
| Nightlife and entertainment          | √                     | √                        | √                        | √                            | √          |
| Lots of things to do in the evening  |                       |                          | √                        |                              |            |
| Shopping facilities                  |                       | √                        | √                        | √                            |            |
| Bargain shopping                     |                       |                          |                          | √                            | √          |
| Local tours                          |                       |                          | √                        |                              |            |
| Availability of tourist information  |                       | √                        | √                        | √                            | √          |
| Local transportation/infrastructure  | √                     | √                        | √                        | √                            | √          |
| Traffic jams                         |                       |                          | √                        | √                            |            |
| Cities                               |                       | √                        |                          |                              |            |
| Accommodation/restaurants            | √                     | √                        | √                        | √                            | √          |
| Recreation activities                |                       |                          | √                        |                              |            |

(Continued)

| Attributes                                    | Gartner & Shen (1992) | Echtner & Ritchie (1993) | Chen & Kerstetter (1997) | Rittichainuwat et al. (2001) | This study |
|---|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|------------|
| Cost/price/value for money                    |                       | √                        | √                        | √                            |            |
| Crowdedness                                   |                       | √                        |                          | √                            |            |
| Sanitation and cleanliness                    | √                     | √                        | √                        | √                            |            |
| Degree of urbanization                        | √                     | √                        |                          |                              |            |
| Economic development                          |                       | √                        |                          |                              |            |
| Extent of commercialization                   |                       | √                        | √                        |                              |            |
| Stable political situation                    |                       | √                        |                          | √                            |            |
| Accessibility                                 |                       | √                        | √                        | √                            |            |
| Safe place to travel                          | √                     | √                        | √                        | √                            | √          |
| Ease of communications                        |                       | √                        | √                        | √                            | √          |
| Customs/culture                               | √                     | √                        | √                        | √                            | √          |
| Variety of food/cuisine                       |                       | √                        | √                        | √                            | √          |
| Traditional home cooking                      |                       |                          | √                        |                              |            |
| Friendly/helpful local people                 | √                     | √                        | √                        | √                            | √          |
| Relaxing atmosphere                           | √                     | √                        | √                        | √                            | √          |
| Familiar or exotic atmosphere                 |                       | √                        |                          |                              |            |
| Opportunity for adventures                    |                       | √                        |                          | √                            |            |
| Opportunity to increase knowledge             |                       | √                        | √                        |                              | √          |
| Good vacation place for families and children |                       | √                        | √                        | √                            | √          |
| Adult oriented place                          |                       | √                        |                          | √                            |            |
| Quality of service                            | √                     | √                        | √                        |                              |            |
| On-time arrivals and departures               | √                     |                          |                          |                              |            |
| Reliability of reservation system             | √                     |                          |                          |                              |            |
| Fame/reputation                               |                       | √                        |                          |                              |            |
| Heavy pollutions                              |                       |                          |                          | √                            |            |
| Gap between poor and rich                     |                       |                          |                          | √                            |            |
| Risky destination due to AIDS problems        |                       |                          |                          | √                            |            |
| Many places of interest to visit              |                       |                          | √                        |                              | √          |
| High standards of living                      |                       |                          | √                        |                              |            |
| Many farms                                    |                       |                          | √                        |                              |            |
| Simple lifestyle/way of living                | √                     |                          | √                        |                              |            |
| Peaceful/tranquil/quiet                       |                       |                          | √                        |                              |            |
| Rural countryside life                        | √                     |                          |                          |                              |            |
| Homogeneous population                        |                       |                          | √                        |                              |            |
| Older population                              |                       |                          | √                        |                              |            |
| Technologically advanced                      |                       |                          | √                        |                              |            |

A pilot test was conducted among 21 international/American students. A reliability analysis of the 32 image attributes showed a Cronbach's Alpha of .885. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient equaled or exceeded 0.70 was considered acceptable and was a good indicator of construct reliability (Nunnally, 1978). Therefore, the measurement attributes



were considered reliable. Three questions regarding travelers' internet behavior were added to the questionnaire after the pilot test.

### Sampling Plan

The target population of this study was international travelers who were interested in visiting China. To sample this population, a convenient sampling of online discussion groups on travel and tourism were utilized. The current members of the 13 online discussion groups (Table 4) between August 18, 2003 and September 26, 2003 were invited to participate in the web-based survey through a notification email. The total number of subscribers to the groups was 9,434. However, it was impossible to estimate how many subscribers read the message due to the following reasons. First, when people sign up for these discussion groups, they could choose either to check group messages in their mail boxes or surf through the web. Secondly, some members seldom check their emails after signing up for the groups. Thirdly, because this was a voluntary participation, the subscribers can ignore the email notification and the survey too. 248 responses were received and 237 responses were retained after eliminating the repeated and incomplete responses. The response rate was 2.62%.

Table 4 Online Discussion Groups Description

|    | Name                                       | Introduction  | Members |
|----|--|---|---------|
| 1  | Lotus Travel<br>China Talk<br>(Yahoo)      | Lotus Travel's "China Talk" list is a great place for adoptive families to come and ask questions about our adoption travel services and Heritage Discovery Tours, learn more about the culture of China, explore sightseeing options, discuss travel tips, packing ideas, travel stories and more. Come join us for some China Talk!   | 130     |
| 2  | Backpack<br>China<br>(Yahoo)               | This community group is for everyone who is exploring the wonderfully vast country of China on a tight budget and a lean backpack. By land or river, and the occasional airplane, the modern backpacking tourist is either a visitor from abroad, or a Chinese backpacker finding his or her ethnic roots. Share your tales, misadventures, victories, and tips with others on the road in the Middle Kingdom!  | 43      |
| 3  | China Tour2<br>(Yahoo)                     | Welcome everyone!!! in here we can talk about our tour in China, what China looks like, what kind of impression it gives. If u really about the far east country with 5000 years history, u've come to the right place.   | 39      |
| 4  | China-Info<br>(Yahoo)                      | English speaking mailing and discussions list about all aspects of CHINA (travel, culture, language, politics, business, trade).  | 303     |
| 5  | China Travel<br>(Yahoo)                    | Information very specific to *Travel* details on an Adoption Trip to China! Details on airlines, hotels, transportation, China travel agents, sightseeing, tours, itineraries, and pricing. Please use the LINKS (formerly Bookmarks)!Links (and some FILES) store your important info! Checklists too! Links > Links > Links! Enough said.   | 1614    |
| 6  | Asia Travel<br>(Yahoo)                     | Looking for practical travel information? Do you want to share your latest travel experiences? Or talk about the ancient cultures and modern societies of Asian countries? Then, you've come to the right place. Welcome! We are always looking for new pictures, if you have one or two you would like to contribute, please email them with a brief description to <a href="mailto:asiatravel@travelphoto.net">asiatravel@travelphoto.net</a>           | 915     |
| 7  | Travel<br>Corner<br>(Yahoo)                | Welcome to the Travel Corner! A great place to find tips, details and inside information on all your favorite destinations. To see view some exciting destinations please visit our photo gallery and visit or featured link of the week Roadside America clicking on the founders page link below! Have fun.....   | 2321    |
| 8  | Backpacker's<br>land<br>(Yahoo)            | This is the place to talk about future and past travels; exchange tips and experiences. This is also the place to meet travel friends.  | 788     |
| 9  | Backpacker<br>Tips<br>(Yahoo)              | HELLO backpackers - wherever you are ! this is the place to ask and say everything about traveling out of your countries , find temporarily jobs , best places to visit all over the world and photos from the most beautiful places in the world. if you are NOW in a trip and you are looking for pen pal or for friend with the same experience, join us and start the adventure!!!  | 380     |
| 10 | Discovery<br>travel<br>(Yahoo)             | Discovery Travel is a place to post your travel stories and photos, learn about different countries and exchange opinions about customs and cultures. An international meeting place for those who love diversity and seek to learn about the world. Feel at home: you're a citizen of the world  | 1614    |
| 11 | Adventure<br>Travel Photo<br>Site<br>(MSN) | Whether leisurely strolling through quaint villages and sipping tea in quiet European cafes or trekking, hiking, camping, climbing and kayaking through some of the most exotic, remote and dangerous settings in the world; you are bound to find it here. Share your stories and photos. Exchange information with others about your destinations. This is a very active group with cross-cultural perspective. All are welcome; the more, the merrier. | 579     |
| 12 | Beijing Chat<br>(MSN)                      | a website (discussion group, chat room and photo gallery) for people who love to talk about Beijing.  | 118     |

(Continued)



| Name | Introduction  | Members |
|------|---|---------|
| 13   | THE ORIENTAL-LIST is a moderated list for those who prefer to discuss travel in China or have their questions answered without wading through irrelevant cross-postings and 'spam'. The list is moderated, with the intention of keeping it free, as far as possible, from intolerant, irrelevant, and immoderate postings, and from commercial postings and 'spam'. The list of members is not made available to any individual or third party organization. Membership is, of course, free, and members include those planning their first trips to China, experienced Asia travelers, and professional travel writers. | 590     |

## Data Analysis

Data was processed and analyzed by the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Window Version 11.0 (SPSS) program. In order to achieve the objectives of this study, different statistical tests, such as frequency, mean, independent sample t-test, factor analysis, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and multiple regressions, were used.

Data analysis had five steps. First, descriptive statistics employing frequency and mean were used. Frequency was first computed to examine demographics and travel characteristics of the respondents. The mean scores of the 32 destination image attributes of China were ranked. Second, factor analysis was applied to discover the underlying dimensions of image attributes of China as a travel destination. A principal component analysis with Varimax rotation was used. The purpose of using the component analysis was to predict the minimum number of dimensions which account for the maximum portion of variances in the original data variables and could be used for subsequent regression analysis. Items with factor loading of 0.5 or above and eigenvalues greater than or equal to 1 were considered significant and important for this study (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1995). Summated scales were suggested by Hair et al. (1995) for the analysis of multiple regression instead of the factor scores. Summated

scale was obtained by combining only selected variables while the factor scores were based on the factor loadings. Through summated scales, researchers obtained a more “well-rounded” perspective and a more reliable measurement (Hair et al., 1995).

Third, based on the underlying image dimensions (factors) derived from factor analysis, multiple regression analysis was employed to predict and examine the strength of associations between dependent and independent variables (Hair, Anderson & Tatham, 1987). The dependent variable was the respondents’ rating of overall China image, while the independent variables were the derived factors. The significant factors remained in the model were listed in the order of importance through standardized beta coefficients. The higher the standardized beta coefficient, the more a factor explained travelers’ overall image of China.

The equation of the regression analysis could be written as the following:

$$Y = \beta_0 + B_1 X_1 + B_2 X_2 + \dots + B_n X_n + \varepsilon$$

Where,

Y = Dependent Variable: Travelers’ overall image of China

$\beta_0$  = Constant (Coefficient of intercept)

$X_1 - X_n$  = Latent independent variables

$B_1 \dots B_n$  = Regression Coefficient of latent independent variables

$\varepsilon$  = Random error

Fourth, in order to test the perception differences between visitors and non-visitors on the overall image of China and the derived image dimensions, independent sample t-test was used. Summated scale of every derived factor from previous factor analysis was calculated to obtain the factor means. In this study, mean differences of the overall image of China and the derived underlying image dimension were compared between two groups: the travelers who had been to China and travelers who had never been to China. T-value, degree of freedom and 2-tail significance were examined to determine the significance of the differences (Morgan, Griego, & Gloeckner, 2001). If the significance level was less than .05, the difference between the means was considered significant.

Finally, ANOVA was utilized to find out the different perceptions of China as a travel destination for travelers with different demographics and different travel characteristics. Post Hoc Tukey's test was conducted to examine the differences between groups.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

#### Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The survey collected the respondents' demographic information on gender, age, education, occupation, and income (Table 5). Male respondents (58.3%) accounted for a higher percentage of the respondents. Four age groups had almost equal percentage over the entire sample: 26-35 (23%), 36-45 (23.4%), 46-55 (25.5%), and 56 or above (21.7%), totaling 93.7% of the respondents. Bachelor-degree holders (42.6%) and master or above degree holders (34.2%) comprised the majority of the respondents.

In terms of occupation, 28.8% were professionals, followed by self-employed (16.1%) and retired people (14.4%). 154 respondents (65.5%) came from North America; 15.3% were from West Europe and 9.8% were from Asia. Almost half of the respondents (54.6%) earned more than US\$60,000 annually; 13.4% had an annual income of between US\$50,000 and US\$59,999; 10.2% were between US\$20,000 and US\$29,999; and 10.2% earned less than US\$20,000.

Table 5 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

|  | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|
| <b>Gender</b>  |           |            |
| Male   | 137       | 58.3       |
| Female   | 98        | 41.7       |
| Total  | 235       | 100        |
| <b>Age</b>   |           |            |
| 46-55  | 60        | 25.5       |
| 36-45  | 55        | 23.4       |
| 26-35  | 54        | 23.0       |
| 56 Or Above  | 51        | 21.7       |
| 18-25  | 15        | 6.4        |
| Total  | 235       | 100        |
| <b>Education</b>                                     |           |            |
| Bachelor   | 101       | 42.6       |
| Master Or Above                                      | 81        | 34.2       |
| 1-3 Year Technical, Vocational, Professional College | 38        | 16.0       |
| High School  | 17        | 7.2        |
| Total  | 237       | 100        |
| <b>Occupation</b>                                    |           |            |
| Professional   | 68        | 28.8       |
| Self-Employed  | 38        | 16.1       |
| Retired  | 34        | 14.4       |
| Admin/Mgmt   | 24        | 10.2       |
| Others   | 21        | 8.9        |
| Production/Technical                                 | 15        | 6.4        |
| Student  | 15        | 6.4        |
| Sales And Related                                    | 13        | 5.5        |
| Clerical And Related Worker                          | 4         | 1.7        |
| Gov/Military   | 4         | 1.7        |
| Total  | 236       | 100        |
| <b>Income</b>  |           |            |
| \$ 60,000 or above                                   | 118       | 54.6       |
| \$ 50, 000- 59, 999                                  | 29        | 13.4       |
| less than \$ 20,000                                  | 22        | 10.2       |
| \$ 20,000 - 29, 999                                  | 22        | 10.2       |
| \$ 40,000 - 49,999                                   | 14        | 6.5        |
| \$ 30,000- 39,999                                    | 11        | 5.1        |
| Total  | 216       | 100        |
| <b>Residency</b>                                     |           |            |
| North America  | 154       | 65.5       |
| West Europe  | 36        | 15.3       |
| Asia   | 23        | 9.8        |
| Australia/New Zealand                                | 14        | 6.0        |
| East Europe  | 4         | 1.7        |
| South America  | 2         | .9         |
| Africa   | 1         | .4         |
| Other  | 1         | .4         |
| Total  | 235       | 100        |



## Visitors' Travel Behavior Profile

Among the 237 respondents, 164 of them visited China and 73 had never been to China. Table 6 shows the travel characteristics of visitors who have been to China. 57.1% of the visitors were leisure and vacationers; 14.1% traveled for a combination of business and leisure; and 12.3% visited friends and relatives in China. More than half of the travelers (60.2%) stayed in China for 11 days or more. Only 27.6% of the tourists traveled with a tour group. The majority (70.2%) arranged their own trips. In terms of the motives to travel, 28.8% traveled for business/pleasure, followed by education (16%), relaxation (14.7%), and exploration of self (12.3%). With regard to companion, independent travelers accounted for 33.1%; 28.8% of visitors traveled with friends and 20.9% with spouses.

Table 6 Travel Characteristics of Actual Visitors

|                                    | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| <b>Purpose</b>                     |           |            |
| Leisure/vacation                   | 93        | 57.1       |
| Business/leisure                   | 23        | 14.1       |
| visit friends/relatives            | 20        | 12.3       |
| Other                              | 16        | 9.8        |
| Business only                      | 10        | 6.1        |
| conference/convention              | 1         | .6         |
| Total                              | 163       | 100        |
| <b>Length of stay</b>              |           |            |
| 11 days or more                    | 97        | 60.2       |
| 7 to 10 days                       | 27        | 16.8       |
| 4 to 6 days                        | 26        | 16.1       |
| 1 to 3 days                        | 11        | 6.8        |
| Total                              | 161       | 100        |
| <b>Package or not</b>              |           |            |
| No                                 | 118       | 72.4       |
| Yes                                | 45        | 27.6       |
| Total                              | 163       | 100        |
| <b>Companion</b>                   |           |            |
| By yourself                        | 54        | 33.1       |
| with friends/relatives             | 47        | 28.8       |
| with your spouse                   | 34        | 20.9       |
| with family and children           | 19        | 11.7       |
| with business associates           | 9         | 5.5        |
| Total                              | 163       | 100        |
| <b>Motive</b>                      |           |            |
| business/pleasure                  | 47        | 28.8       |
| Education                          | 26        | 16.0       |
| Relaxation                         | 24        | 14.7       |
| exploration and evaluation of self | 20        | 12.3       |
| enhance of kinship relationship    | 19        | 11.7       |
| Novelty                            | 16        | 9.8        |
| facilitation of social interaction | 7         | 4.3        |
| Escape                             | 4         | 2.5        |
| Total                              | 163       | 100        |

## Image Attributes

The objective of identifying the relative importance of China's image attributes as a travel destination was achieved through mean rating of 32 image attributes listed in Table 7. "Unique and interesting culture and customs" ranked on top of the list. Respondents had a very favorable image of China on the attributes of "unique/interesting culture," "many places to visit," "increase knowledge," "historical sites and remains," "tomb, tower and pagoda," "architecture and building," and "cultural attraction." All these attributes had a mean score over four out of a five-point Likert-scale. There were several attributes rated below average. They were "wildlife birds," "outdoor sports activities," "beaches," "few language barriers," and "air, water soil." Their mean ratings ranged from 2.81 to 2.03.

Table 7 Mean Ranking of the Image Attributes

|    | Image attributes  | Valid N | Mean* | Std. Deviation |
|----|---|---------|-------|----------------|
| 1  | Interesting and unique culture and customs                                | 237     | 4.70  | .637           |
| 2  | Many places of interest to visit  | 237     | 4.51  | .779           |
| 3  | Good opportunity to increase knowledge                                    | 236     | 4.42  | .748           |
| 4  | Many historical sites and remains   | 236     | 4.34  | .817           |
| 5  | Grandiose ancient tombs, towers and pagodas                               | 237     | 4.24  | .865           |
| 6  | Magnificent architecture and buildings (grand palace/temples/monasteries) | 236     | 4.20  | .884           |
| 7  | Numerous splendid cultural attractions                                    | 237     | 4.19  | .963           |
| 8  | Friendly and hospitable local people                                      | 237     | 3.90  | 1.051          |
| 9  | A wide variety of excellent food/cuisine choices                          | 233     | 3.90  | 1.012          |
| 10 | Plenty of beautiful mountains and lakes                                   | 235     | 3.85  | 1.025          |
| 11 | Grand gorges, waterfalls and rivers                                       | 235     | 3.82  | 1.022          |
| 12 | Good bargain shopping   | 237     | 3.79  | .998           |
| 13 | Splendorous local crafts and handiworks                                   | 235     | 3.77  | 1.049          |
| 14 | A diversity of different ethnic groups                                    | 236     | 3.77  | 1.130          |
| 15 | Amazing Chinese dance, music and Peking opera                             | 236     | 3.72  | 1.031          |
| 16 | A great number of cultural and festival events                            | 236     | 3.69  | .981           |
| 17 | Safety and security to travel   | 236     | 3.58  | 1.090          |
| 18 | Many museums and art galleries  | 237     | 3.54  | .927           |
| 19 | Availability of international standard accommodations                     | 235     | 3.47  | .997           |
| 20 | Authentic martial arts and Kung Fu  | 234     | 3.28  | 1.047          |
| 21 | Restful and relaxing atmosphere   | 234     | 3.25  | 1.043          |
| 22 | Colorful night life and entertainments                                    | 236     | 3.22  | .930           |
| 23 | Efficient local transportation system (Buses, trains, taxis)              | 237     | 3.21  | 1.104          |
| 24 | Availability of tourist information                                       | 236     | 3.11  | 1.131          |
| 25 | Many fine dining restaurants and Western restaurants                      | 236     | 3.10  | 1.049          |
| 26 | Good vacation place for children & families                               | 235     | 3.04  | 1.115          |
| 27 | Nice weather and mild climate   | 236     | 3.02  | .959           |
| 28 | Good opportunity to observe wild life and birds                           | 235     | 2.81  | .992           |
| 29 | Plenty of outdoor sports activities                                       | 234     | 2.59  | .927           |
| 30 | Various nice beaches  | 233     | 2.32  | .984           |
| 31 | Few language barrier  | 237     | 2.26  | 1.149          |
| 32 | Good quality of fresh air, clean water and soil                           | 236     | 2.03  | 1.002          |

\* Scale: 5-strongly agree, 4-agree, 3-neutral, 2-disagree, 1-strongly disagree

### Overall Image of China and Likelihood of Visit or Revisit

Table 8 indicated that respondents' overall image of China was above average with a mean score of 4.21 (5-very favorable, 4-favorable, 3-neutral, 2-unfavorable, 1-very unfavorable). As for the intention to visit or revisit China in 6 months and 12 months, the likelihood (2.47) and (2.88) were very low. But the intention to visit in 2 years was

relatively higher (3.82). This finding coincided with the novelty seeking of international long-haul travelers. Even though travelers were satisfied with a place, they might choose a different destination in next long-haul trip.

Table 8 Overall Image of China and Likelihood of Visit or Revisit

|                                  | Minimum | Maximum | Mean* | Std. Deviation |
|----------------------------------|---------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Overall image of China           | 1       | 5       | 4.21  | .920           |
| Likelihood to visit in 6 months  | 1       | 5       | 2.47  | 1.660          |
| Likelihood to visit in 12 months | 1       | 5       | 2.88  | 1.634          |
| Likelihood to visit in 2 years   | 1       | 5       | 3.82  | 1.418          |

### Image Dimensions

Factor analysis was employed to identify the underlying dimensions of China's image among international travelers (Table 9). In order to perform a factor analysis, the sample size should be as many as four or five times of the variables to be studied (Hair et al., 1987). With 237 usable responses and 32 image variables, this study had surpassed and exceeded this requirement. A principal component analysis with Varimax rotation was used and summated scales of the derived factors were calculated for subsequent multiple regression analysis.

Table 9 Factor Analysis Results of Perceptions of China's Image among International Travelers

|   | F1       | F2    | F3    | F4    | F5    | CM*  |
|---|----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| <b>F1 Culture/History</b>                             |          |       |       |       |       |      |
| Many places of interest to visit                      | .773     |       |       |       |       | .688 |
| Grandiose ancient tombs, towers and pagodas           | .764     |       |       |       |       | .643 |
| Many historical sites and remains                     | .758     |       |       |       |       | .657 |
| Magnificent architecture and buildings                | .757     |       |       |       |       | .666 |
| Interesting and unique culture and customs            | .722     |       |       |       |       | .584 |
| Numerous splendid cultural attractions                | .713     |       |       |       |       | .705 |
| <b>F2 Travel Infrastructure/Vacation Amenity</b>      |          |       |       |       |       |      |
| Availability of international standard accommodations |          | .716  |       |       |       | .648 |
| Many fine dining restaurants and Western restaurants  |          | .703  |       |       |       | .605 |
| Few language barriers                                 |          | .655  |       |       |       | .444 |
| Safety and security to travel                         |          | .635  |       |       |       | .629 |
| Availability of tourist information                   |          | .621  |       |       |       | .671 |
| Good vacation places for children and families        |          | .598  |       |       |       | .577 |
| Restful and relaxing atmosphere                       |          | .579  |       |       |       | .549 |
| A wide variety of excellent food/cuisine choices      |          | .571  |       |       |       | .424 |
| Efficient local transportation system                 |          | .549  |       |       |       | .518 |
| <b>F3 Nature</b>                                      |          |       |       |       |       |      |
| Nice weather and mild climate                         |          |       | .739  |       |       | .684 |
| Good opportunity to observe wild life and birds       |          |       | .662  |       |       | .674 |
| Plenty of beautiful mountains and lakes               |          |       | .646  |       |       | .613 |
| Good quality of fresh air, clean water and soil       |          |       | .634  |       |       | .683 |
| Grand gorges, waterfalls and rivers                   |          |       | .609  |       |       | .507 |
| <b>F4 Traditional Chinese Folklore</b>                |          |       |       |       |       |      |
| Amazing Chinese dance, music and Peking opera         |          |       |       | .679  |       | .573 |
| Authentic martial arts and Kung Fu                    |          |       |       | .656  |       | .671 |
| Many museums and art galleries                        |          |       |       | .614  |       | .643 |
| A great number of cultural and festival events        |          |       |       | .591  |       | .598 |
| <b>F5 Outdoor Activities</b>                          |          |       |       |       |       |      |
| Plenty of outdoor sports activities                   |          |       |       |       | .737  | .619 |
| Various nice beaches                                  |          |       |       |       | .647  | .744 |
| Eigenvalues   | 4.802    | 4.036 | 2.839 | 2.569 | 1.774 |      |
| Percentage of variance (%)                            | 18.47    | 15.53 | 10.92 | 9.88  | 6.82  |      |
| Cumulative variance                                   | 18.47    | 34.00 | 44.92 | 54.80 | 61.62 |      |
| Cronbach's Alpha                                      | .8953    | .8739 | .8120 | .7946 | .7546 |      |
| Bartlett Test of Sphericity                           | 3204.084 |       |       |       |       |      |
| KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy                      | .895     |       |       |       |       |      |

Principal Component Analysis with Varimax Rotation

\*Communality

Five factors with eigenvalues over 1 were extracted. They were “culture/history,” “travel infrastructure/vacation amenity,” “nature,” “traditional Chinese folklore,” and “outdoor activities,” explaining 61.62% of the variance of the original 32 variables. Six items were reduced from the original 32 items because only factor loadings equal or greater than 0.5

were considered acceptable in a factor analysis (Hair et al., 1995). “Good bargain shopping” (.347), “good opportunity to increase knowledge” (.347), “handicrafts and crafts” (.459), “different ethnic groups” (.398), “nightlife and entertainment” (.368), “friendly local people” (.416) were reduced due to low factor loadings. The average communality of the all the remaining 26 variables was .616, which indicated that more than half of the original variables were explained by the five common factors.

Bartlett Test of Sphericity and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistics were conducted to examine the appropriateness of factor analysis. The Bartlett test of Sphericity resulted in 3204.048 ( $p= 0.000$ ) and the measure of sampling adequacy of KMO was .895, which was meritorious and the scales were reliable and suitable for factor analysis (Hair et al., 1995). The anti-image correlations of all items ranged from .818 to .946, which had exceeded the minimum criterion of .800 (Hair et al., 1995). Additionally, the Cronbach’s Alpha test was conducted to check the reliability of the five derived factors. The Alpha coefficients (Table 9) ranged from .7546 to .8953, exceeding the minimum acceptable value of .70 (Hair et al., 1995). Therefore, the five new factors were considered reliable.

The international travelers’ perceptions on China’s image had five underlying dimensions. Factor 1 “culture/history” contained “many places of interest to visit,” “grandiose ancient tombs, towers and pagoda,” “many historical sites and remains,” “magnificent architecture and buildings,” “interesting and unique culture and customs,” and “numerous splendid cultural attractions.” These six items accounted for 18.47% of the variance with an eigenvalue of 4.802.

Factor 2 was labeled as “travel infrastructure/vacation amenity,” which explained 15.53% of the variance with an eigenvalue of 4.036. It included “availability of international standard accommodations,” “many fine dining restaurants and Western restaurants,” “few language barriers,” “safety and security to travel,” “availability of tourist information,” “good vacation places for children and families,” “restful and relaxing atmosphere,” “a wide variety of excellent food/cuisine choices,” and “efficient local transportation system.”

Factor 3 “nature” was associated with five items: “nice weather and mild climate,” “good opportunity to observe wild life and birds,” “plenty of beautiful mountains and lakes,” “good quality of fresh air, clean water and soil,” and “grand gorges, waterfalls and rivers.” 10.92% of the variance was explained by this factor with an eigenvalue of 2.839.

With an eigenvalue of 2.569 and 9.88% of the variance explained, factor 4 “traditional Chinese folklore” captured four attributes. They were “amazing Chinese dance, music and Peking opera,” “authentic martial arts and Kung Fu,” “many museums and art galleries,” and “a great number of cultural and festival events.”

The last factor was named “outdoor activities” and included two items: “plenty of outdoor sports activities” and “various nice beaches.” “Outdoor activities,” with an eigenvalue of 1.774, explained 6.82% of the variance.

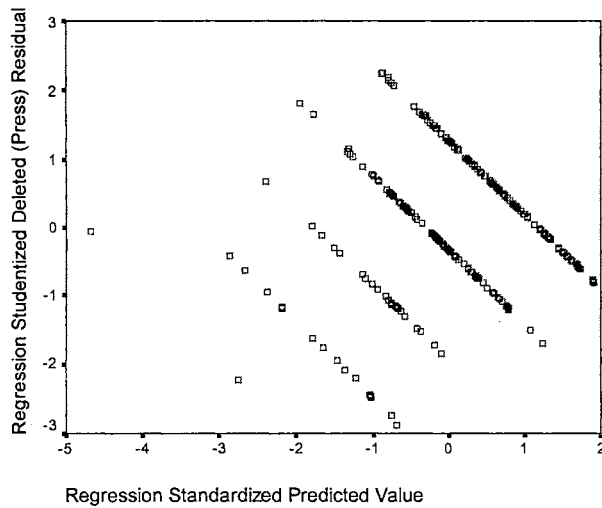


## Determinants of International Travelers' Overall Image of China

The relative importance of the five derived dimensions of China's image (independent variables) among international travelers in contributing to their overall image of China (dependent variable) was examined by multiple regression analysis. Hair et al. (1995) suggested that multiple regression analysis had four assumptions: the linearity of the phenomenon, the constant variance of the error term, the independence of the error terms, and the normality of the error term distribution. The four assumptions of regression analysis and collinearity between variables were examined.

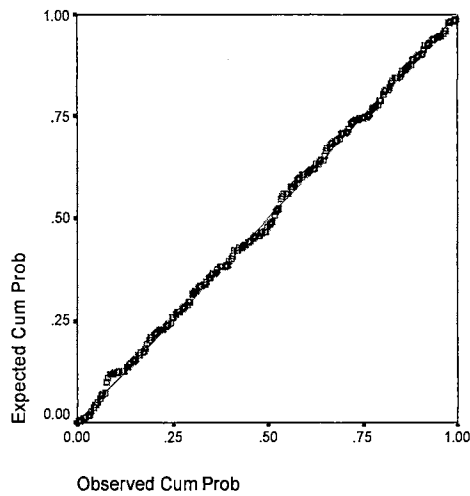
Linearity of the regression was examined through a plot of the studentized residuals versus the predicted values (Hair et al., 1995). The shape of the scatterplot (Figure 2) was due to the nature of the categorical scales for the item "overall image of China." The residuals fall into a generally random pattern. The scatterplot shows a linear relationship between residuals and predicted values. In addition, the residual values had no sign of increasing or decreasing, indicating the error terms of residuals were constant. Therefore, the second assumption of error term consistency was met.

Figure 2 Scatterplot of Standardized Predicted Value versus Studentized Residuals



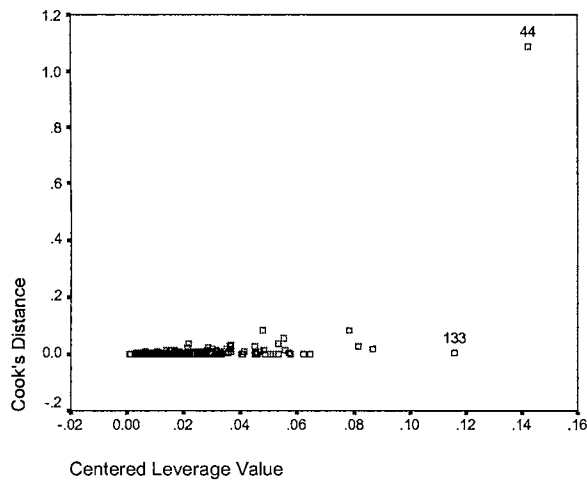
The third assumption was the independence of the error terms. Each observation was obtained individually from thirteen different online discussion groups; hence, an independence of the error terms can be concluded. Then the normality of the error term of the variate was examined through the normality probability plot of the residuals shown in Figure 3 (Hair et al., 1995). As shown in Figure 3, the values fall closely along the diagonal line. Thus, the residuals were considered to have normal distribution.

Figure 3 Normality Probability Plot of Regression Standardized Residuals



Finally, the influential observations of the analysis was identified through a scatterplot of Cook's distance and centered leverage value, which were two representative measurement of the influential points (Hair et al., 1995). One outlier (Case 44) was identified in Figure 4. In order to have a more accurate result in the regression model, Case 44 was removed. Linear regression was rerun and the R square of the regression model improved from .480 to .541. Table 10 shows the results of the improved multiple regression analysis.

Figure 4 Scatterplot of Outliers



Furthermore, collinearity diagnostic tests were conducted to assess the independence among the independent variables (five factors) in the regression model. Tolerance, variable inflation factor (VIF) and condition index were examined. If the tolerance value was greater than 0.10, the VIF was less than 10, and the condition index were less than 30 (Belsley, Kuh, & Welsch, 1980), the four variables were not correlated with each other. The tolerance was the percentage of the variance in a given predictor that cannot be explained by the other predictors (Hair et al., 1995). Table 10 shows all five predicting variables had met the above mentioned criteria. Hence, no collinearity was found among the five predictors.

Table 10 Regression Analysis Results of International Travelers' Overall Image with China in Relation to the Five Derived Image Dimensions

|   |   |                                  |                 |        |
|---|---|----------------------------------|-----------------|--------|
| Dependent variable                        | Overall Image of China as international travel destination                |                                  |                 |        |
| Independent variables                     | Five orthogonal factors representing the components of the image of China |                                  |                 |        |
| Multiple R                                | .735  |                                  |                 |        |
| R Square                                  | .541  |                                  |                 |        |
| Adjusted R Square                         | .531  |                                  |                 |        |
| Standard Error                            | .631  |                                  |                 |        |
| Analysis of Variance                      |   |                                  |                 |        |
|   | DF  | Sum of Squares                   | Mean Square     |        |
| Regression                                | 5   | 106.031                          | 21.206          |        |
| Residual                                  | 226   | 90.038                           | .398            |        |
| F=53.229                                  | Sig. at .000  |                                  |                 |        |
| Independent Variables in the equation     | Unstandardized Coefficients ( $\beta$ )                                   | Standardized Coefficients (Beta) | T-value         | Sig.   |
| Constant                                  | -.118   |                                  |                 | .690   |
| F1 Culture/history                        | .489  | .338                             | 5.528           | .000*  |
| F2 Travel infrastructure/vacation amenity | .564  | .449                             | 7.876           | .000*  |
| F3 Nature                                 | .255  | .205                             | 3.511           | .001*  |
| F5 Outdoor activities                     | -.111   | -.103                            | -1.797          | .074** |
| Independent Variables NOT in the equation | Unstandardized Coefficients ( $\beta$ )                                   | Standardized Coefficients (Beta) | T-value         | Sig.   |
| F4 Traditional Chinese folklore           | -4.49E-02   | -.038                            | -.603           | .547   |
| Collinearity Diagnostics:                 |   |                                  |                 |        |
|   | Tolerance   | Variable Inflation Factor (VIF)  | Condition Index |        |
| F1 Culture/history                        | .544  | 1.837                            | 9.093           |        |
| F2 Travel infrastructure/vacation amenity | .627  | 1.596                            | 14.262          |        |
| F3 Nature                                 | .599  | 1.671                            | 15.835          |        |
| F4 Traditional Chinese Folklore           | .523  | 1.911                            | 16.389          |        |
| F5 Outdoor activities                     | .619  | 1.615                            | 26.967          |        |

\* $p \leq 0.05$

\*\* $p \leq 0.10$

The multiple coefficient (R) indicated the strength of the association between dependent variable and independent variables, which ranged from -1 to +1. The larger the absolute value of the coefficient R, the more correlated between the dependant and independent variables (Hair et al., 1995). The sign (- or +) only affected the direction of the line. In this study, multiple coefficient (R) equaled to .735, which meant that the dependent variable and independent variable were highly correlated. The coefficient of

determination ( $R^2$ ), which measured the amount of variance of the dependent variable explained by the independent, was .541. These four factors explained about 54.1% of the variance of travelers' overall image of China. The F-ratio of 53.229 ( $p = .000$ ) indicated the results of the regression analysis could not occur by chance. In this regression model, four factors "culture/history," "travel infrastructure/vacation amenity/vacation amenity," "nature," and "outdoor activities" were incorporated because they were significant at 0.10 level. However, "traditional Chinese folklore" was not included the equation model because it was not significant ( $p = .547$ ).

Therefore, the model was written as below:

$$Y = -.118 + .564X_1 + .489X_2 + .255X_3 - .111X_4$$

Where

Y = International travelers' overall image of China

$X_1$  = Travel infrastructure/vacation amenity

$X_2$  = Culture/history

$X_3$  = Nature

$X_4$  = Outdoor activities

Hypothesis 4: There is no relationship between international travelers' ratings on China's image attributes and their rating of China's overall image.

Hypothesis 4 is rejected because the regression analysis shows that four factors were significant at the level of 0.10 (Table 10) in contributing to international travelers' overall image of China.

In order to find out the relative importance of the significant four factors, standardized coefficients (Beta) of the model were examined. In the order of importance, the main factor influencing international travelers' overall image of China were: Factor 2 (Travel infrastructure/vacation amenity, beta =.449); followed by Factor 1 (Culture/history, beta =.338); Factor 3 (Nature, beta =.205); and Factor 5 (Outdoor activities, beta= -.103). Hence, the equation could be interpreted that one unit increase in Factor 2 Travel infrastructure/vacation amenity would lead to 0.564 unit (56.4%) increase in travelers' overall image toward China, if other factors being held constant.

#### Image Differences by Previous Visitation

An independent sample t-test was employed to see whether there was a significant difference between visitors and non-visitors on the overall image of China and the derived five image dimensions. The test variable was overall image of China and the five image dimensions respectively and the grouping variable was whether travelers had been to China or not. Summated scales of all five factors were obtained as every factor mean. Table 11 and Table 12 report the results.

Table 11 Perceived Image Difference by Previous Visitation

|                        | Visit<br>China | N   | Mean | Std.<br>Deviation | df  | T     | Sig.<br>(2-tailed) |
|------------------------|----------------|-----|------|-------------------|-----|-------|--------------------|
| Overall image of China | Yes            | 163 | 4.39 | .834              | 232 | 4.532 | <b>.000*</b>       |
|                        | No             | 71  | 3.82 | .990              |     |       |                    |

\*  $p \leq 0.05$

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference on the perception toward China's image between travelers who have been to China and who have not been to China.

Hypothesis 1 is rejected due to the differences found between travelers' ratings on China's overall image. A significant difference on perceptions of China's image between visitors and non-visitors was found ( $t=4.532, p \leq .000$ ). Travelers who had been to China had a more favorable perception toward China than travelers who had never been to China.

Table 12 Difference on Five Image Dimensions

|  | Visit China | N   | Mean   | Std. Deviation | df  | T      | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|--|-------------|-----|--------|----------------|-----|--------|-----------------|
| Culture/history                            | Yes         | 164 | 4.3784 | .68169         | 235 | .495   | .621            |
|  | No          | 73  | 4.3315 | .65458         |     |        |                 |
| Travel infrastructure/<br>vacation amenity | Yes         | 164 | 3.3007 | .69915         | 235 | 2.787  | <b>.006*</b>    |
|  | No          | 73  | 3.0153 | .78936         |     |        |                 |
| Nature                                     | Yes         | 164 | 3.0908 | .73161         | 235 | -.440  | .660            |
|  | No          | 73  | 3.1368 | .76480         |     |        |                 |
| Traditional Chinese<br>folklore            | Yes         | 164 | 3.4954 | .78550         | 235 | -1.881 | .061            |
|  | No          | 73  | 3.7015 | .76221         |     |        |                 |
| Outdoor activities                         | Yes         | 164 | 2.4603 | .83754         | 235 | .126   | .900            |
|  | No          | 73  | 2.4452 | .88413         |     |        |                 |

\*  $p \leq 0.05$

Table 12 represents that the difference between visitors and non-visitors on the dimensions of "travel infrastructure/vacation amenity" was significant ( $t=2.787, p \leq .006$ ). The travelers who have been to China had a more positive perception of the "travel infrastructure/vacation amenity" in China.



## Image Differences by Demographics

One-way ANOVA was used to determine whether there was any significant mean difference in the perceived image of China across international travelers on different demographic backgrounds. The five derived image dimensions were “culture/history,” “travel infrastructure/vacation amenity,” “nature,” “traditional Chinese folklore,” and “outdoor activities.” The different demographic variables were gender, age, education, occupation, residency and income level. Table 13 reports the results.

Table 13 Image Differences by Demographics

| Demographic Profile   | The Dimensions of Image of China |   |  |                                    |                       |
|---|----------------------------------|---|--|------------------------------------|-----------------------|
|   | Culture/<br>History              | Travel<br>infrastructure/<br>vacation amenity | Nature                                   | Traditional<br>Chinese<br>Folklore | Outdoor<br>Activities |
| <b>Gender</b>   |                                  |   |  |                                    |                       |
| Male  | 4.29                             | 3.14  | 3.05                                     | 3.41                               | 2.38                  |
| Female  | 4.46                             | 3.28  | 3.17                                     | 3.74                               | 2.55                  |
| F Value   | 3.77                             | 2.03  | 1.60                                     | 10.99                              | 2.24                  |
| Degree of Freedom   | 234                              | 234   | 234                                      | 234                                | 234                   |
| P Value   | .053                             | .156  | .207                                     | <b>.001</b>                        | .136                  |
| <b>Age</b>  |                                  |   |  |                                    |                       |
| <b>Group 1:</b> 18-25 years old   | 4.50                             | 3.44  | 3.20                                     | 3.80                               | 2.47                  |
| <b>Group 2:</b> 26-35   | 4.41                             | 3.17  | 3.24                                     | 3.44                               | 2.36                  |
| <b>Group 3:</b> 36-45   | 4.33                             | 3.20  | 2.97                                     | 3.71                               | 2.40                  |
| <b>Group 4:</b> 46-55   | 4.41                             | 3.26  | 3.07                                     | 3.64                               | 2.53                  |
| <b>Group 5:</b> 56 or above   | 4.26                             | 3.12  | 3.12                                     | 3.34                               | 2.51                  |
| F Value   | .61                              | .66   | 1.00                                     | 2.39                               | .40                   |
| Degree of Freedom   | 234                              | 234   | 234                                      | 234                                | 234                   |
| P Value   | .658                             | .620  | .407                                     | .052                               | .808                  |
| <b>Education</b>  |                                  |   |  |                                    |                       |
| <b>Group 1:</b> high school   | 4.40                             | 3.29  | 3.52                                     | 3.53                               | 2.54                  |
| <b>Group 2:</b> 1-3 year technical,<br>vocational, professional college | 4.11                             | 3.17  | 3.20                                     | 3.51                               | 2.60                  |
| <b>Group 3:</b> bachelor  | 4.42                             | 3.17  | 3.11                                     | 3.61                               | 2.42                  |
| <b>Group 4:</b> master or above   | 4.41                             | 3.27  | 2.97                                     | 3.52                               | 2.41                  |
| F Value   | 2.12                             | .33   | 2.94                                     | .28                                | .53                   |
| Degree of Freedom   | 236                              | 236   | 236                                      | 236                                | 236                   |
| P Value   | .098                             | .804  | <b>.034</b>                              | .840                               | .663                  |
| Post Hoc Test (Tukey)   |                                  |   | <b>1&gt;4 (<math>p \leq .028</math>)</b> |                                    |                       |

(Continued)

| Demographic Profile                | The Dimensions of Image of China |   |                       |                                    |                       |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|-----------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|
|                                    | Culture/<br>History              | Travel<br>infrastructure/<br>vacation amenity | Nature                | Traditional<br>Chinese<br>Folklore | Outdoor<br>Activities |
| <b>Occupation</b>                  |                                  |   |                       |                                    |                       |
| clerical and related worker        | 3.92                             | 3.39  | 2.89                  | 2.75                               | 2.38                  |
| production/technical               | 4.50                             | 3.08  | 2.99                  | 3.60                               | 2.17                  |
| professional                       | 4.35                             | 3.10  | 2.97                  | 3.51                               | 2.49                  |
| admin/mgmt                         | 4.49                             | 3.42  | 3.26                  | 3.63                               | 2.72                  |
| gov/military                       | 4.46                             | 2.86  | 3.25                  | 3.44                               | 2.00                  |
| sales and related                  | 4.65                             | 3.15  | 3.18                  | 3.90                               | 2.35                  |
| retired                            | 4.19                             | 3.05  | 3.12                  | 3.39                               | 2.54                  |
| student                            | 4.38                             | 3.34  | 3.43                  | 3.63                               | 2.33                  |
| self-employed                      | 4.26                             | 3.33  | 3.06                  | 3.61                               | 2.37                  |
| others                             | 4.50                             | 3.41  | 3.25                  | 3.65                               | 2.55                  |
| F Value                            | 1.091                            | 1.08  | .90                   | 1.07                               | .75                   |
| Degree of Freedom                  | 235                              | 235   | 235                   | 235                                | 235                   |
| P Value                            | .370                             | .379  | .523                  | .388                               | .659                  |
| <b>Residency</b>                   |                                  |   |                       |                                    |                       |
| North America                      | 4.43                             | 3.27  | 3.04                  | 3.62                               | 2.49                  |
| South America                      | 4.92                             | 3.94  | 4.20                  | 3.88                               | 2.75                  |
| Asia                               | 4.14                             | 2.89  | 3.42                  | 3.51                               | 2.39                  |
| west Europe                        | 4.26                             | 3.20  | 3.03                  | 3.38                               | 2.40                  |
| east Europe                        | 4.04                             | 3.06  | 3.20                  | 3.38                               | 2.63                  |
| Australia/New Zealand              | 4.17                             | 2.95  | 3.01                  | 3.39                               | 1.96                  |
| Africa                             | 4.83                             | 4.33  | 5.00                  | 5.00                               | 5.00                  |
| other                              | 4.33                             | 3.11  | 4.40                  | 3.71                               | 3.00                  |
| F Value                            | 1.68                             | 1.89  | 2.13                  | .86                                | 1.16                  |
| Degree of Freedom                  | 232                              | 232   | 232                   | 232                                | 232                   |
| P Value                            | .140                             | .098  | .062                  | .509                               | .329                  |
| <b>Income</b>                      |                                  |   |                       |                                    |                       |
| <b>Group1:</b> less than \$ 20,000 | 4.30                             | 3.20  | <b>3.52</b>           | 3.58                               | 2.48                  |
| <b>Group2:</b> \$ 20,000 - 29, 999 | <b>4.04</b>                      | 3.07  | 3.17                  | 3.23                               | 2.32                  |
| <b>Group3:</b> 30,000- 39,999      | 4.32                             | 3.49  | 3.42                  | 3.60                               | 2.70                  |
| <b>Group4:</b> 40,000 - 49,999     | 4.21                             | 3.24  | 3.35                  | 3.77                               | 2.88                  |
| <b>Group5:</b> 50, 000- 59, 999    | <b>4.62</b>                      | <b>3.60</b>                                   | 3.33                  | 3.80                               | 2.56                  |
| <b>Group6:</b> \$ 60,000 or above  | 4.41                             | <b>3.16</b>                                   | <b>2.93</b>           | 3.58                               | 2.36                  |
| F Value                            | 2.44                             | 2.27  | 4.19                  | 1.57                               | 1.40                  |
| Degree of Freedom                  | 215                              | 215   | 215                   | 215                                | 215                   |
| P Value                            | <b>.036</b>                      | <b>.049</b>                                   | <b>.001</b>           | .169                               | .227                  |
| Post Hoc Test (Tukey)              | 2<5 ( $p \leq .017$ )            | 5>6 ( $p \leq .041$ )                         | 1>6 ( $p \leq .007$ ) |                                    |                       |

\*  $p \leq 0.05$

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference on perceived China image among travelers with different demographic variables.

- Hypothesis 2.1: There is no significant difference on perceived China image between female travelers and male travelers.
- Hypothesis 2.2: There is no significant difference on perceived China image among travelers in different age groups.
- Hypothesis 2.3: There is no significant difference on perceived China image among travelers with different education level.
- Hypothesis 2.4: There is no significant difference on perceived China image among travelers with different occupations.
- Hypothesis 2.5: There is no significant difference on perceived China image among travelers with different residency.
- Hypothesis 2.6: There is no significant difference on perceived China image among travelers with different income levels.

The ANOVA test showed that there were significant differences on gender, education and income level. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was partially rejected. On “traditional Chinese folklore,” the female travelers had a higher level of agreement than male counterparts ( $F=10.99, p \leq .001$ ). Hence, Hypothesis 2.1 was rejected. Since no significant differences were found among travelers with different age, occupation, and residency. Hypothesis 2.2, Hypothesis 2.4 and Hypothesis 2.5 were not rejected. In addition, high school graduates had a stronger perception of China in the dimension of “nature” than master-or-above-degree holders. Therefore, Hypothesis 2.3 was rejected. Finally, travelers with

different income levels had significant different image perceptions of China. Therefore, Hypothesis 2.6 was rejected. Post Hoc Tukey test was employed to discover the differences between groups. Travelers with income level of US\$ 20,000-29,999 (Group 2) perceived less positive on “culture/history” than travelers with US\$50,000- 59,999 (Group 5). In terms of “travel infrastructure/vacation amenity,” travelers with US\$50,000-59,999 (Group 5) had relatively higher perceptions than travelers with US\$60,000 or above (Group 6). Travelers earning less than US\$20,000 (Group 1) perceived the dimension of “nature” slightly higher than travelers with an annual income of US\$60,000 or above (Group6).

#### Image Differences by Travel Characteristics

ANOVA was used to determine whether there was any significant difference in the perceived image of China across international travelers on different travel behaviors. The dependent variables were the five derived image dimensions: “culture/history,” “travel infrastructure/vacation amenity,” “nature,” “traditional Chinese folklore,” and “outdoor activities.” The demographic variables were the length of stay, whether they traveled with a tour group, traveler’s companion, and the purpose of the trip.

Table 14 Image Differences by Travel Characteristics

| Traveling Behavior              | The Dimensions of Image of China |   |        |                                    |                       |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|--------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|
|                                 | Culture/<br>History              | Travel<br>infrastructure/<br>vacation amenity | Nature | Traditional<br>Chinese<br>Folklore | Outdoor<br>Activities |
| <b>Purpose</b>                  |                                  |   |        |                                    |                       |
| Group1: Leisure/vacation        | 4.39                             | 3.26  | 3.10   | 3.47                               | 2.49                  |
| Group2: Business only           | 4.43                             | <b>2.81</b>                                   | 3.18   | 3.65                               | 2.20                  |
| Group3: Business/leisure        | 4.30                             | 3.32  | 3.30   | 3.46                               | 2.52                  |
| Group4: conference/convention   | 3.00                             | 1.56  | 1.40   | 2.25                               | 2.00                  |
| Group5: Visit friends/relatives | 4.37                             | 3.48  | 3.17   | 3.55                               | 2.46                  |
| Group6: Other                   | 4.49                             | <b>3.71</b>                                   | 2.74   | 3.67                               | 2.26                  |
| F-value                         | .21                              | 3.22  | 1.54   | .33                                | .52                   |
| Degree of Freedom               | 161                              | 161   | 161    | 161                                | 161                   |
| P Value                         | .934                             | <b>.014*</b>                                  | .194   | .856                               | .719                  |
| Post Hoc Test (Tukey)           |                                  | <b>6&gt;2 (<math>p \leq .010</math>)</b>      |        |                                    |                       |
| <b>Length of Stay</b>           |                                  |   |        |                                    |                       |
| Group1: 1 to 3 days             | 4.18                             | <b>2.58</b>                                   | 2.84   | 3.50                               | 2.09                  |
| Group2: 4 to 6 days             | 4.47                             | <b>3.25</b>                                   | 3.24   | 3.53                               | 2.53                  |
| Group3: 7 to 10 days            | 4.44                             | <b>3.44</b>                                   | 3.11   | 3.52                               | 2.61                  |
| Group4: 11 days or more         | 4.34                             | <b>3.32</b>                                   | 3.06   | 3.46                               | 2.41                  |
| F-value                         | .62                              | 4.84  | .85    | .08                                | 1.18                  |
| Degree of Freedom               | 160                              | 160   | 160    | 160                                | 160                   |
| P Value                         | .603                             | <b>.003*</b>                                  | .468   | .970                               | .319                  |
| Post Hoc Test (Tukey)           |                                  | <b>2&gt;1 (<math>p \leq .025</math>)</b>      |        |                                    |                       |
|                                 |                                  | <b>3&gt;1 (<math>p \leq .002</math>)</b>      |        |                                    |                       |
|                                 |                                  | <b>4&gt;1 (<math>p \leq .003</math>)</b>      |        |                                    |                       |
| <b>Package or not</b>           |                                  |   |        |                                    |                       |
| Packaged tourists               | 4.51                             | 3.45  | 3.18   | <b>3.72</b>                        | 2.55                  |
| Individual tourists             | 4.32                             | 3.23  | 3.05   | <b>3.40</b>                        | 2.41                  |
| F-value                         | 2.38                             | 3.16  | 1.13   | 5.60                               | .81                   |
| Degree of Freedom               | 163                              | 163   | 163    | 163                                | 163                   |
| P Value                         | .125                             | .077  | .289   | <b>.019*</b>                       | .370                  |
| <b>Travel Companion</b>         |                                  |   |        |                                    |                       |
| By yourself                     | 4.32                             | 3.16  | 3.18   | 3.44                               | 2.49                  |
| with your spouse                | 4.34                             | 3.34  | 2.97   | 3.59                               | 2.43                  |
| with family and children        | 4.54                             | 3.66  | 3.12   | 3.51                               | 2.66                  |
| with friends/relatives          | 4.42                             | 3.32  | 3.09   | 3.52                               | 2.40                  |
| with business associates        | 4.33                             | 3.07  | 2.82   | 3.28                               | 2.17                  |
| F-value                         | .43                              | .209  | .75    | .36                                | .63                   |
| Degree of Freedom               | 162                              | 162   | 162    | 162                                | 162                   |
| P Value                         | .788                             | .085  | .563   | .840                               | .641                  |

\*  $p \leq 0.05$

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference on perceived China image among international travelers with different traveling characteristics.

- Hypothesis 3.1: There is no significant difference on perceived China image among travelers with different purposes.
- Hypothesis 3.2: There is no significant difference on perceived China image among travelers with variant length of stay in China.
- Hypothesis 3.3: There is no significant difference on perceived China image between packaged tourists and individual tourists.
- Hypothesis 3.4: There is no significant difference on perceived China image among travelers with different companions.

The aggregate Hypothesis 3 was partially rejected because perception differences were found among travelers with different purposes, duration of time and travel mode. As shown in Table 17, business travelers had a significantly lower perception toward the “travel infrastructure/vacation amenity” in China than travelers with “other” purpose ( $F=3.22, p \leq .014$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 3.1 was rejected. In terms of length of stay, Hypothesis 3.2 was rejected because travelers who spent more than 1-3 days in China had stronger perceptions of China on “travel infrastructure/vacation amenity” ( $F=4.84, p \leq .003$ ). The difference existed between 1 to 3 days and every other lengths of stay in the questionnaire. In addition, travelers in packaged tours had a higher level of agreement on “traditional Chinese folklore” than the individual tourists ( $F=5.60, p \leq .019$ ). Therefore, we can conclude that Hypothesis 3.3 was rejected. Finally, Hypothesis 3.4 was not

rejected because no significant difference was found among travelers with different companions on perceived China's image.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

#### Discussion

The primary objective of this study was to discover the underlying dimensions of international travelers' perceptions of China's current image. Using factor analysis, five image dimensions with 26 attributes were identified: "culture/history," "travel infrastructure/vacation amenity," "nature," "traditional Chinese folklore," and "outdoor activities." These were the primary dimensions identified by Hu and Ritchie (1993), Jeffery and Xie (1995), Chen and Kerstetter (1997), Santos (1997), Heung and Qu (2000), Rittichainuwat et al. (2001), and Rezende-Parker, Morrison, and Ismail (2002). This complements the five tourism attraction dimensions summarized by Gearing, Swart, and Var (1974): 1) natural factors, 2) social factors, 3) historical factors, 4) recreational and shopping facilities and 5) infrastructure, food and shelter. Factor analysis results supported that China was a cultural destination in that travelers had the strongest perception of the "interesting and unique culture and customs" of China. The attributes which had mean scores above four were from the "culture/history" dimension, such as, "many places of interest to visit," "good opportunity to increase knowledge," "grandiose



ancient tombs, towers and pagodas,” “magnificent architecture and buildings,” and “numerous splendid cultural attraction.” Travelers perceived China as a cultural, historical and educational destination. This coincides with findings from Hu and Ritchie (1993), Santos (1997), and Richards (2001).

In terms of regression analysis results, four of the image dimensions were found significant in affecting travelers’ overall image of China. “Travel infrastructure/vacation amenity” was the most influential factor in contributing to travelers’ overall China image. The “travel infrastructure/vacation amenity” contained “availability of international standard accommodations,” “many fine dining restaurants and Western restaurants,” “few language barriers,” “safety and security to travel,” “availability of tourist information,” “good vacation places for children and families,” “restful and relaxing atmosphere,” “a wide variety of excellent food/cuisine choices,” and “efficient local transportation system.” It revealed that China had interesting culture and history, but travelers might not consider it as a choice unless comfortable service facilities can be provided. China was also perceived to have lower capacities to provide satisfactory accommodations, transportation, easy communications, and accessibility in a comparison study with Australia, Hawaii, France, and Greece (Hu & Ritchie, 1993). Compared with the countries generating the inbound tourists, China was less developed and had a lower Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Therefore, the travel infrastructure/vacation amenity in some areas of China is not as good as those in other countries due to the imbalanced economic development in China. Marketers should accentuate the recent economic

development in China and its improvements on hotels, restaurants, transportation, accommodation, restaurants and tourist information to form a positive image of China.

The “culture/history” factor ranked second in contributing to the overall image of China among international travelers. It included “many places of interest to visit,” “grandiose ancient tombs, towers and pagoda,” “many historical sites and remains,” “magnificent architecture and buildings,” “interesting and unique culture and customs,” and “numerous splendid cultural attractions.” This factor confirms that China was a cultural and historical destination. The long history and rich culture of China were deeply engraved in travelers’ minds. Richards (2001) indicated that Dutch people were strongly attracted to Chinese culture and history even though they had never been to China. CNTA has already emphasized the “culture/history” dimension as a theme in four separate years out of a twelve-year-period. British tour operators promoted heritage, history and landscape images in their holiday brochures (Santos, 1997). Marketers should emphasize the different aspects of Chinese culture and history and further segment the market so as to develop more tourist products.

The third determinant (factor) “nature” contained “nice weather and mild climate,” “good opportunity to observe wild life and birds,” “plenty of beautiful mountains and lakes,” “good quality of fresh air, clean water and soil,” and “grand gorges, waterfalls and rivers.” The factor mean of “nature” was 3.11, slightly above average, which showed that travelers averagely had a moderate agreement on China as a nature-oriented destination. This is also echoed in the content analysis of Santos (1997) on the tour operators’

brochures of China. Marketers should take advantage of the widespread of ecotourism and promote the beautiful natural scenery to capture the segment of nature tourists.

The last determinant in the model was “outdoor activities” which included two items: “plenty of outdoor sports activities” and “various nice beaches.” With a mean of 2.45, this dimension had the least agreement compared to the previous four factors. China did not seem to provide many outdoor sports or recreational activities when compared with other competitors in Asia, such as Singapore, Malaysia or Thailand. Marketers can match the strong recreational outdoor activities in China with travelers’ preferences to develop new products. For instance, the Hainan Island, located in the south of China, was a popular resort product among German leisure tourists (Wang & Ap, 2003).

Although the “traditional Chinese folklore” factor was not found to be an important dimension in affecting international travelers’ overall image of China, it should not be neglected. This factor was associated with “amazing Chinese dance, music and Peking opera,” “authentic martial arts and Kung Fu,” “many museums and art galleries,” and “a great number of cultural and festival events.” Most of these attributes were the unique traditional Chinese folk arts and customs in China. In previous studies, this factor was blended into the cultural dimension. More research needs to be conducted to have a better understanding of this factor. Chinese traditional music, dances, opera and martial arts can be promoted to unique cultural explorers.

Previous visitation had a positive effect on destination image because it increased the familiarity with a destination (Mishler, 1965; Hunt, 1975; Goodrich, 1978; Gartner & Hunt, 1987; Fridgen, 1987; Chon, 1991; Ahmed, 1991; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999b). The more familiar traveler was with a destination, the more positive image travelers tended to possess (Baloglu, 2001). The independent sample t-test in this study shows that travelers who had visited China (mean=4.39) rated overall image of China higher than travelers who had never been to China (mean=3.82). Also, previous visitors had more favorable impression of the “travel infrastructure/vacation amenity” dimension. Actual visitation resulted in experiential familiarity, which had a strong correlation with perceptions of a destination (Baloglu, 2001). Additionally, the results showed that tourists who stayed longer in China agreed more on “travel infrastructure/vacation amenity.” If tourists stay long in a destination, they will be more familiar with the destination and thus have a more positive destination image.

Furthermore, tourist demographics did make differences on image perceptions. Gender differences affected travelers’ perceptions on “traditional Chinese folklore.” Female travelers had a more positive rating of “traditional Chinese folklore.” This could be due to the fact that females were more detail-oriented and interested in arts, customs and cultures. Jeffrey and Xie (1995) discovered that women valued cultural exploration activities such as visiting galleries and museums, studying Chinese arts and attending special cultural events. These activities were similar to the composites of “traditional Chinese folklore” in this study. Another variable that generated difference among travelers’ perceptions was income level. Travelers with different income levels differed

on “culture/history,” “travel infrastructure/vacation amenity,” and “nature.” It is interesting to note that travelers with an income over US\$60,000 have a more negative opinion on “travel infrastructure/vacation amenity” and “nature.” This could be explained that the wealthier people were, the more demanding they were on service facilities.

ANOVA test revealed that image differences were found among travelers with different travel characteristics. Business travelers were less likely to agree on “travel infrastructure/vacation amenity” than travelers with “other” purposes. Result showed that 50% of the “other” purposes were education. The travelers were either teacher or students. Business travelers were known to have a higher expectation of service facilities than leisure travelers. Additionally, tourists in packaged tours were more likely to agree on “traditional Chinese folklore” than non-packaged tourists. This could be due to the fact that most of the travel agents arranged trips to local folk art museums and Peking operas for inbound tourists in China. Non-packaged tourists might not be exposed to as much information regarding folklore arts and tradition as the packaged tourists. Most of travelers visited China for the purpose of leisure, stayed in China for more than two weeks and arranged their own trips. CNTA should shift its marketing focus from group tours to individual tourists and design routes catered to individual tourists. The service quality needs more attentions and improvements. Nonetheless, quality control is difficult because the wide spectrum of service levels provided in so many different places in China.

## Conclusion

This study aimed to identify the underlying dimensions of China's current image and the relative importance of each derived factor with the overall image of China among international visitors. It has successfully discovered five image dimensions:

“culture/history,” “travel infrastructure/vacation amenity,” “nature,” “traditional Chinese folklore,” and “outdoor activities.” All of them except “traditional Chinese folklore” were found significant in contributing to travelers' perception of the overall image of China.

Unlike previous studies on China's destination image conducted under geographical constraints, this study was able to examine international tourists from major continents through the online survey.

Image data was helpful to develop effective marketing strategies to motivate potential visitors and differentiate the destination from its competitors. From a theoretical standpoint, the study confirms that actual visitation had a positive effect on travelers' image of a destination. The finding shows that overall image of China (holistic) was composed of factors (attributes). The image factors were determinants in travelers' overall impression of a place. Since the most influential factor was “travel infrastructure/vacation amenity” in affecting travelers' overall China image, CNTA should emphasize this factor in marketing campaigns, trade shows and promotions. With an annual 7% economic growth rate, the tourism industry is developing rapidly as China's economy thrives. However, service infrastructure facilities were still perceived undeveloped and poor in international travelers' minds. Hence, increasing the awareness

of the tremendous economic achievements in tourism infrastructure should be CNTA's marketing priority. That helps to enhance travelers' overall China image and motivate potential travelers. The next important determinant "culture/history" needs to be stressed further in CNTA's marketing campaigns. CNTA should further segment the culture-oriented market into smaller niche markets and design new tourist routes or programs accordingly. "Nature" and "outdoor activities" image dimensions are valuable market segments for CNTA to strengthen its eco-tourism products, such as hiking, rock climbing, Himalayan mountain climbing, bird watching. Although the factor "traditional Chinese folklore" was not significant in the regression analysis, this factor should not be neglected. CNTA should develop new products featuring this particular segment. Given the growth potential of China's tourism industry, it is necessary to continue research in this area. Further research can be conducted to compare China with its competitors such as Thailand, Japan, South Korea, and Singapore. Understanding and knowing a destination's strengths and weakness will contribute to the success of destination positioning.

#### Limitations of this Study

Several limitations need to be addressed. First, due to the application of convenient sampling, the results of this study might limit the representativeness and generalization to the target populations. Results need to be validated through further research and precautions are needed when applying the findings. Second, the response rate of the study was low if the number of online group members was counted. The perceptions of other

members in these travel groups could be different. However, not everyone received the email notification in their mailboxes. The subscribers can choose to view the group messages according to their convenience. Besides, some members never log on to the groups after signing up these groups. Therefore, it is impossible to estimate how many people received and read the notification email. Third, the results of this study were limited to only 13 online discussion groups surveyed. Travelers from other online discussion groups might have different perception toward China's image. In addition, stratified sampling procedure is recommended for future studies for more representative results.



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## APPENDIXES

## APPENDIX A: EMAIL NOTIFICATION

Dear Sir or Madam,

My name is Pan Su, and I am currently a master student at Oklahoma State University in the United States. I am conducting a survey about international travelers' perception toward China as a travel destination for my master's thesis. Your responses and comments are of much importance for my study and for China to improve its travel image among potential customers and to provide better service for the travelers.

It will take you a few minutes to complete the survey by a few clicks. Your responses will be kept anonymous and completely confidential, and your participation is absolutely voluntary and you are not required to disclose your name. All data obtained will be analyzed collectively on an aggregate basis, and confidentiality will be maintained. The data will be destroyed upon completion of the analysis. [Click here to go to the survey](#)

If you have any further question about the survey, please feel free to contact me at [pans@okstate.edu](mailto:pans@okstate.edu) or Ms. Sharon Bacher, the IRB executive secretary of the Oklahoma State University at 305 Whitehurst, Stillwater, OK 74078 (Tel.: (405) 744-5700).

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation on this study.

Sincerely,

Pan Su

Graduate Student  
School of Hotel and Restaurant Administration  
Oklahoma State University  
1-405-332-0354

## APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Please indicate all the places that you have visited. Check ALL that apply.

- |  |                                 |  |
|--|---------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> North America | <input type="checkbox"/> Mexico | <input type="checkbox"/> Central America/Caribbean |
| <input type="checkbox"/> South America | <input type="checkbox"/> Europe | <input type="checkbox"/> Australia/New Zealand     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Middle East   | <input type="checkbox"/> Africa | <input type="checkbox"/> Asia                      |

2. If you have been to Asia, please indicate the places that you have visited. Check ALL that apply.

- |                                    |  |                                      |
|------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thailand  | <input type="checkbox"/> Hong Kong/Macau | <input type="checkbox"/> Japan       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Singapore | <input type="checkbox"/> Malaysia        | <input type="checkbox"/> South Korea |
| <input type="checkbox"/> India     | <input type="checkbox"/> Pakistan        | <input type="checkbox"/> Nepal       |

3. Have you ever been to Mainland China?

- Yes                       No

If **YES**, please answer **Question # 4-10** and complete the rest of the questionnaire.  
If **NO**, please go to **Question #11** and complete the rest of the questionnaire.

4. When was your last trip to China?

Please kindly provide your best estimate of time in month and year

5. What was the PRIMARY purpose of your last trip to China?

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Leisure/vacation      | <input type="radio"/> Business ONLY           | <input type="radio"/> Business/Leisure                            |
| <input type="radio"/> Conference/convention | <input type="radio"/> Visit friends/relatives | <input type="radio"/> Others, please specify <input type="text"/> |

6. How long did you stay in China for that trip?

- 1 to 3 Days               4 to 9 Days               10 to 14 Days               15 days or more

7. Was it a package trip (i.e., you paid one price includes flights, hotels and meals)?

- Yes                               No

8. In your last trip to China, you traveled

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> By yourself            | <input type="radio"/> With your spouse         | <input type="radio"/> With family & children |
| <input type="radio"/> With friends/relatives | <input type="radio"/> With business associates |  |

9. Where did you gather information on that trip to China? Please check ALL that apply.

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Internet          | <input type="checkbox"/> Travel Agents  | <input type="checkbox"/> Friends/Relatives |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Embassy/consulate | <input type="checkbox"/> Printed materials (Magazines, books, brochures, newspaper, etc.) |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Airlines          | <input type="checkbox"/> TV Shows/Travel Documentaries about China                        |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Movies            | <input type="checkbox"/> Others, please specify <input type="text"/>                      |  |

10. What was the motive of your trip to China?

- Relaxation                       Business/pleasure                       Escape

- Novelty
- Education
- Prestige
- Exploration and evaluation of self
- Facilitation of social interaction
- Enhance of kinship relationship

continue

11. Please indicate the level to which you agree regarding the image of China as an international travel destination. Your perception can be based on anything you have seen, heard or read regarding trips to China. It does NOT necessarily based on your actual travel experience, it could be what you think of China. Please choose only ONE number for each statement.

-----1----- 2-----3-----4-----5-----  
 Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly Agree  
 SD                              D                              N                              A                              SA

| <b>China offers</b>   | Level of Agreement      |                         |                         |                         |                         |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
|   | Low                     |                         |                         |                         | High                    |
|   | SD                      | D                       | N                       | A                       | SA                      |
| Interesting and unique culture and customs                                | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| Many museums and art galleries  | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| Numerous splendid cultural attractions                                    | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| A great number of cultural and festival events                            | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| Amazing Chinese dance, music and Peking opera                             | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| Authentic martial arts and Kung Fu  | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| Splendorous local crafts and handiworks                                   | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| A diversity of different ethnic groups                                    | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| Nice weather and mild climate   | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| Good quality of fresh air, clean water and soil                           | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| Plenty of beautiful mountains and lakes                                   | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| Grand gorges, waterfalls and rivers                                       | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| Good opportunity to observe wild life and birds                           | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| Various nice beaches  | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| Plenty of outdoor sports activities                                       | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| Magnificent architecture and buildings (grand palace/temples/monasteries) | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| Grandiose ancient tombs, towers and pagodas                               | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| Many historical sites and remains   | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |

- Availability of international standard accommodations  1  2  3  4  5
- Availability of tourist information  1  2  3  4  5
- Many fine dining restaurants and Western restaurants  1  2  3  4  5
- A wide variety of excellent food/cuisine choices  1  2  3  4  5
- Efficient local transportation system (Buses, trains, taxis)  1  2  3  4  5
- Good bargain shopping  1  2  3  4  5
- Colorful night life and entertainments  1  2  3  4  5
- Friendly and hospitable local people  1  2  3  4  5
- Few language barriers  1  2  3  4  5
- Safety and security to travel  1  2  3  4  5
- Good opportunity to increase knowledge  1  2  3  4  5
- Restful and relaxing atmosphere  1  2  3  4  5
- Good vacation places for children and families  1  2  3  4  5
- Many places of interest to visit  1  2  3  4  5

continue

12. What is your overall image of **China** as a travel destination? Very Unfavorable-----Very Favorable  
 1  2  3  4  5
13. What is your overall image of **Asia** as a travel destination? Very Unfavorable-----Very Favorable  
 1  2  3  4  5
14. Please rate your likelihood of visiting or revisiting China  
 Within **6** months Very Unlikely-----Very Likely  
 1  2  3  4  5  
 Within **12** months  1  2  3  4  5  
 Within **2** years  1  2  3  4  5
15. What is your gender?  
 Male  Female
16. What is your age group?  
 18 – 25 years old  26-35  36-45  
 46-55  56 or above
17. What is the highest degree in your education?  
 High school  1-3 year technical, vocational, professional college



18. What is your occupation?
- |   |   |                               |
|---|---|-------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Bachelor's degree           | <input type="radio"/> Master's degree or above                |                               |
| <input type="radio"/> Clerical and related worker | <input type="radio"/> Production/Technical and related worker |                               |
| <input type="radio"/> Professional                | <input type="radio"/> Administrative and managerial worker    |                               |
| <input type="radio"/> Government/military         | <input type="radio"/> Sales & Related                         | <input type="radio"/> Retired |
| <input type="radio"/> Student                     | <input type="radio"/> Self-employed                           | <input type="radio"/> Others  |
19. What is your place of residency?
- |                                     |                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="radio"/> North America | <input type="radio"/> South America | <input type="radio"/> Asia                  |
| <input type="radio"/> West Europe   | <input type="radio"/> East Europe   | <input type="radio"/> Australia/New Zealand |
| <input type="radio"/> Middle East   | <input type="radio"/> Africa        | <input type="radio"/> Others                |
20. What is your annual household income – include all members of your household?
- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Less than US\$20,000  | <input type="radio"/> US\$20,000 - \$29,999 | <input type="radio"/> US\$30,000 - \$39,999 |
| <input type="radio"/> US\$40,000 - \$49,999 | <input type="radio"/> US\$50,000 - \$59,999 | <input type="radio"/> US\$60,000 or above   |
21. How many hours a day do you spend on the internet/email?
- |   |                                 |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Less than 2 hours | <input type="radio"/> 2-6 hours | <input type="radio"/> 7 hours or more |
|---|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
22. Is internet the FIRST option for you to search travel related information (i.e., flights, hotels and car rentals)?
- |                           |                          |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Yes | <input type="radio"/> No |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
23. Please check the TWO major TWO travel websites that you often surf.
- |   |                                      |   |
|---|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Travelocity.com          | <input type="checkbox"/> Expedia.com | <input type="checkbox"/> Lowestfare.com |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cheaptickets.com         | <input type="checkbox"/> Orbitz.com  | <input type="checkbox"/> Priceline.com  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Others (please specify): | <input type="text"/>                 |   |

|                                       |                                      |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="button" value="Submit"/> | <input type="button" value="Reset"/> |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|

APPENDIX C: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FORM

Oklahoma State University  
Institutional Review Board

Protocol Expires: 8/5/2004

Date: Wednesday, August 06, 2003

IRB Application No HE045

Proposal Title: DESTINATION IMAGE POSITIONING: A CASE STUDY OF CHINA

Principal  
Investigator(s):

Pan Su  
North 18, Univ Pl., Apt 4  
Stillwater, OK 74075

Bo Hu  
210 HES West  
Stillwater, OK 74078

Reviewed and  
Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

---

Dear PI :

Your IRB application referenced above has been approved for one calendar year. Please make note of the expiration date indicated above. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Sharon Bacher, the Executive Secretary to the IRB, in 415 Whitehurst (phone: 405-744-5700; sbacher@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Carol Olson, Chair  
Institutional Review Board

VITA



Pan Su

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: CHINA'S IMAGE AS A TRAVEL DESTINATION: AN EXPLORATORY  
STUDY

Major Field: Hotel and Restaurant Administration

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Sanya, Hainan Province, P. R. China, On May 17, 1976,  
the daughter of Shiwen Su and Qixia Wu.

Education: Received Bachelor of Arts degree in Tourism and English from  
Nankai University, Tianjin, P. R. China in July 1997. Completed the  
requirements for the Master of Science degree with a major in Hotel and  
Restaurant Administration in December, 2003.

Experience: Employed as a Front Office Manager Assistant by Zhuhai Holiday  
Resort Hotel from 1997 to 1999; employed as a Trade Marketer by  
MeetChina.Com from 1999 to 2001; employed as an Office Manager by  
Swatch Group (HK), LTD Shenzhen from 2001 to 2002; employed as a  
Research Assistant by Oklahoma State University, School of Hotel and  
Restaurant Administration from 2002 to 2003.