



Chinese Tourists' Shopping Behavior in the United States

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Background and purposes: With significant increase of personal income and living levels, Chinese citizens are traveling more frequently as domestic and international tourists. According to Chinese Tourist Bureau, for the first time the number of Chinese outbound tourists reached over 107 million in the year 2014, which is a 19.49% increase from the year 2013 (2014 zhongguo chujing lvyou, 2015). According to Chinese Citizen Outbound Tourist Market Report (2014-2015), Chinese tourists accounted for 9.58% of the world outbound tourists, expending 165 million US dollars 2014, a 28 % increase compared to the year 2013. Chinese tourists' expenditures accounts for 11% of total international tourist expenditures. It is also estimated that in the next five years, over 600 million Chinese will travel overseas, and this number will steadily increase each year. In recent years, more Chinese tourists are turning their attention to the United States.

Because of large numbers of Chinese tourists and their purchasing power, it is very important for US retailers and service industries to understand their consumption and shopping behavior. Although some researchers and media have reported on certain Chinese tourists' outbound consumption behavior, so far there is no systematic academic research. In China, studies on outbound tourist shopping behavior mainly focus on consumption and expenditure characteristics. Within limited publications, most research on this topic focused on Asian tourist markets and destinations as Korea, Japan and Hong Kong. Few studied Chinese tourists' consumption and shopping behavior in the United States. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate Chinese tourists' shopping behavior when they travel in the United States. Specifically, this study intended to explore Chinese tourists' shopping motivations and decision-making process.

Methodology: A qualitative methodology was used to gain insight into Chinese tourists' shopping behavior. In-depth interviews with fifteen adult Chinese tourists who visited the United States in the year 2014 and 2015 were conducted using Chinese social media, WeChat. Interview questions focused on exploring shopping motivations and factors affecting their shopping experiences. The interviews were conducted in Chinese. They were audio-recorded upon participants' agreement, and transcribed into text later. Content analysis method was used to analyze the data. Several cycles of part-to-whole interpretive procedures were conducted to organize the raw data and to generate conceptual schemes based on the data (Spiggle, 1994). Quotes were translated into English and then back-translated into Chinese to ensure accuracy of the English translation.

Findings: The data reveal that shopping is essential for participants' travel experiences in the United States. They shop in US mainly for two reasons: price value and product quality. The

value orientation is evident in the choices of product/brand and shopping destination. Most of the participants were not interested in purchasing souvenirs. They mainly focused on branded apparel, cosmetics, handbags, and shoes. Participants' favorite apparel brands include Polo, North Face and Nautica. Their top choices of shoe brands are Ecco and Nike; handbags are Coach and MK; and the main cosmetic brand is Lancôme. Those are most popular US brands consumed in China. However, those brands are all positioned themselves as luxury brands in the Chinese market. Consequently, the price points in the United States are much lower than prices in China. So purchasing branded products is a great deal for participants. Also, because of time limitations and value orientation, most participants favored outlets as their tourist and shopping destination. They usually allocate considerable amount of time shopping there. Participants also emphasized product quality as an important shopping motivation. Supporting Davis, Peyrefitte and Hodges's (2012) finding, authenticity is a big concern in China because of large quantities of fake goods in the Chinese market. Although consumers can easily purchase what they want in China, they concerned about product quality because of unethical practices of some retailers. However, they trust retailers in the United States. Therefore, shopping in the US is very pleasant for them because they do not need to worry about the quality and authenticity of the products.

Conclusions and discussions: Shopping has become a major activity for tourists and accounts for a large portion of their expenditures (Tomori, 2010). This is especially true for Chinese tourists when they travel overseas. However, tourists from different countries shop differently. The findings of this study contribute to our understanding of Chinese tourists' shopping behavior in the United State. This study reveals that the major appeal of the US market is competitive pricing and quality/authentic goods; however, besides price and quality value, US retailers may want to explore other types of shopping value that Chinese tourists desire. For example, unique designs that incorporate more American cultural elements and products that can satisfy Chinese consumers' lifestyle can become more competitive. In addition, language, shipping, and tax refund services can add consumer shopping value.

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