UNDERSTANDING CHINESE OUTBOUND TOURISTS AND THEIR INTERNET
USE FOR TRAVEL DECISION-MAKING

BY

ZHU ZHU

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation Studies
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
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Chapter I

Introduction

Background to Internet use in tourism

With the rapid development of information technology in the past 20th century, the

tourism industry around the world is now faced with both great challenges and

opportunities. A new way of doing business, promoting travel destinations via the Internet,

is receiving increased attention by ambitious travel businesses. Almost all tourism

companies and travel promotional organizations have launched their Web sites and

millions of individuals now search for travel information and use services online from

their homes, organizations and institutes. As the Internet becomes more accessible and less

expensive compared with other traditional travel providers, there is no doubt that its user

base will keep increasing (Bonn, Furr, & Susskind, 1999). According to the World

Tourism Organization (WTO), online travel revenue will comprise 23 percent of world

travel revenue in five years and its proportion in e-commerce will increase to 20 to 25

percent in four years (Yu & Yin, 2003). In Canada, where travel is sold over the Internet

more than any other consumer product, $4.2 billion in online travel revenue is expected in

the year 2004 (Forrester Research Inc., 1993). There is a bright future for online travel

promotion.

With the call for developing worldwide e-commerce, China has been making every

effort to promote its Internet use and great achievements are seen all the time. According to

China Internet Network Information Centre (CNNIC), of the 45.8 million Web users on

China's mainland at the end of June 2002, 16.3 percent were 17 years old or younger while those between 18 and 24 comprised another 37.2 percent (Huang, 2002). Among these Internet users, 33 percent said they had purchased online in the past 12 months, and seven percent spent more than 200 RMB a month on Internet connection (Huang, 2002). In Hong Kong, between 2.6 to 2.9 million people between the ages of 6 and 84 used the Internet at least one hour per week and 42 percent spent 101-200 HKD on Internet connection per month (Zhu, 2003). Among these Internet users, 41 percent were under 24 years old while 28 percent were from 25 to 35 years of age (Zhu, 2003).

China, like many other countries that are rich in tourism resources and stand as popular international tourism destinations, is making every effort to transform traditional travel sales to online travel sales and hence bring new opportunities for its outbound tourism. Now in China, travel suppliers, such as airlines, hotels and travel agencies, have started to do business via the Internet and to use information technology (IT) for setting up and maintaining their computerized reservation systems. People in China also keep demanding establishment of more travel-related Web sites, which are devoted to all kinds of travel solutions for both pleasure and business travelers.

China's outbound tourism

From ancient times, China has played an important role in the field of tourism with its unparalleled rich travel resources in both nature and culture. Thanks to the open policies since 1978, China experienced speedy economic development, which, resulted in a new stage of the tourism industry in China. Now, more and more Chinese with high incomes

are going abroad not only for business but for private purposes as well, and some have even come to regard travelling abroad as part of their leisure. According to the Tourism Bureau of China, by the end of November 2002, the total number of Chinese outbound tourists was 15.4 million, up 39 percent from the previous November (Qian, 2003). The annual expenditures of Chinese outbound business tourists came to over 2.4 billion USD in 2002 and will keep increasing by 20 percent each year (Liu & Chen, 2002). As more foreign countries and districts have been accepted by China as international destinations for Chinese tourists, people now are able to go abroad not only for sightseeing and visiting family/friends but also for educational programs. According to Liu and Chen (2002), each winter and summer vacations are high seasons for Chinese educational travel, which usually lasts up to 23 days. The most popular destinations are such English-speaking countries as Australia, New Zealand and those in Europe, where students can live with local residents for learning English.

Chinese tourists are also reported to spend more money on site than local residents with total spending of at least 20 billion USD per year (Zheng, 2002). Currently, 29 countries and districts have been accepted by China as international destinations for leisure travel, including Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, Japan, Vietnam, South Africa, Egypt, Germany, and India (Li, 2002). It is even predicted that China will rank fourth among the world's top tourist generating countries by 2010 since its tourist market will be totally open to the world in 2005 upon its agreement with the World Tourism Organization (WTO), which will definitely bring more

choices for Chinese outbound tourists (Li, 2002).

Purpose of study

It is obvious that China is on its way to a stage of rapid outbound tourism growth with the help of the Internet. Until recently, however, relatively few studies have been carried out concerning Chinese who are traveling abroad and those who are searching for and/or purchasing travel products via the Internet. A review of the literature on Internet use in tourism reveals that the majority of online tourism research has been done with North American markets because of their advanced level of technology development and Internet use (Zhang, Pine, & Zhang, 2000). This lag in research will affect outbound tourism promotion in China since understanding current and potential online consumers will permit marketing professionals and service providers to assemble services in a manner best suited to a specific consumer group's characteristics (Mazanec, 1992). Therefore, it is urgent and important to understand and profile these current and potential outbound tourists in China. In other words, studies should be carried out that examine Chinese tourists' characteristics and travel decision-making patterns.

The research reported here aims to understand these current and potential Chinese outbound tourists and their use of the Internet to seek and purchase travel products. Using several current models of information search and travel decision-making as the guiding conceptual framework, an online travel information search and purchase model was proposed and tested by identifying certain socio-demographic, psychographic and behavioural attributes and relationships among them. To explore these characteristics of

4

Chinese outbound tourists and how they use the Internet for travel decision-making, the research presented here has: (a) described their socio-demographical characteristics; (b) examined their past travel experience; (c) examined what influences their online travel information search and purchase patterns; and (d) explored perceived barriers to purchase and/or repurchase of travel products via the Internet.

The results of this exploratory study will contribute to the literature on Internet travel information search and purchase in China, an important and rising outbound travel market segment; a profile of current and potential Chinese outbound tourists who use the Internet as a tool for seeking and/or purchasing travel products; a first-stage model of Chinese outbound tourists' travel information search and decision-making via the Internet; recommendations for increasing the Internet use by Chinese outbound tourists in their travel decision-making; and suggestions for future travel Web sites' improvement, which target or are going to target Chinese outbound tourists. Since much of the current research on information search and decision-making models relies on North America samples, this study will have both conceptual and practical implications.

As referred to this research, the term "travel products" is defined as the main components that comprise a trip such as lodging, transportation, rental and tour packages, which can be purchased via the Internet. The term "online travel product purchase" is defined as the behaviour of buying travel products via online credit card transactions.

Chapter II

Literature Review

Past research in tourism was reviewed in order to ascertain the importance of understanding Chinese outbound tourists and their Internet use behaviour for travel decision-making. Five related issues were examined in terms of: online tourism development; profiles of Internet users; patterns of Internet use; barriers to Internet use; and travel information search.

Online tourism development

In response to the increasing demand for online tourism information, a large number of travel-related Web sites have been set up and have become one of the most popular and useful categories on the Internet since 1997 (Bell & Tang, 1998). Traditional travel suppliers provide an example. Since 2001, many major airlines have set up their united and/or own Web sites in order to sell air tickets directly to travelers. Launched in 2001, Orbitz is owned by five major airlines in the United States: American, Continental, Delta, Northwest, and United. Through its global distribution systems, users of Orbitz are able to search fares and buy tickets from more than 450 airlines (Maroney, 2000). In the following year 2002, Delta and American also launched their own Web sites named Delta.com and AA.com. Their new sites allowed customers to book frequent-flier-mile trips online without having to contact a call-center representative. In the U.S. lodging industry, IT has been employed in many hotels to improve their reservation systems by taking orders via the Internet and distributing lodging information such as occupancy, rates,

special offers and local maps. However, this advanced technology is only widely used for certain lodging types such as convention hotels, conference centers, and casinos while lower for other types such as motels and bed-and-breakfast (Siguaw, Enz, & Namasivayam, 2000). In the case of traditional travel agencies, the Internet is regarded as a serious threat rather than an opportunity since ticketless travel increases with direct access to information, booking and electronic payments (Baines, 1998). In 2002, Delta Airlines first announced the elimination of commissions for travel agents on their ticket sales, which was followed by similar announcements from American Airlines, Continental, Northwest, United and US Airways (Maselli, 2002). It was believed that the highly competitive nature of the travel industry and declining commissions paid by airlines would lead to widespread travel agency consolidation (Lewis, Semeijin, & Et, 1998).

When most traditional travel suppliers were experiencing a decrease in business volumes after the events of September 11, 2001, Web agencies proved to be the only segment of the travel industry that had recovered from the recession (Beirne, 2002). These new travel Web sites differ greatly in business size, online information and customer services. The most popular ones are sites such as Travelocity (www.travelocity.com) and Expedia (www.expedia.com), which not only offer detailed trip information but also customized reservation services through their partnerships with major airlines and hotels. Some Web sites do not contain such a comprehensive range of information and services but are devoted to a specific segment of the travel market. As the Webby Award Winner for best travel site in 2002, Lonely Planet (www.lonelyplanet.com) is more like an interactive

travel magazine that excels at catering to the needs of travelers who like to learn more about their destinations by chatting to locals, walking in the streets, and sampling the food (Tsao, 2002). Also, due to a strong demand among business travelers for the Web as a travel information source and booking medium, travel Web sites tailored for business travel solutions were set up and provided both time and money savings (Gilbert, Perry, & Widijoso, 1999). One outstanding example is Biztravel (www.biztravel.com). Based on the parameters and guidelines set by managers for travel and expenses, Biztravel.com helps companies develop and customize a Web site, where employees' bookings can be blocked according to the originally set prices and rates (Williams, 2000). Two distinct features of Biztravel.com are FareGuard (the lowest fares based on time of departure) and BizReservations (travel recommendations based on user preferences) (Williams, 2000). Other travel Web sites are more specific to their customers. For example, BlackSingles (www.blacksingles.com) and KatTrax Tours' (www.kattrax.com) offer solo vacation solutions for those tourists that prefer traveling and planning trips on their own while sites for those demanding really high-level services on their trips include Luxury Link (www.luxurylink.com), VacationSpot.com (www.vacationspot.com) and Spa Finder (www.spafinder.com) (Bishop, 2001; MacNeil, 2002). There are also sites designed for travelers with disabilities such as Access-able Travel Source (www.access-able.com), Accessible Journeys (www.disabilitytravel.com) and Global Access (www.geocities.com/Paris/1502).

Profiles of Internet users

Estimates of current and potential Internet users in the literature vary considerably because of the different sources of statistics (Weber & Roehl, 1999). In the past, major demographic characteristics like age, gender, education, income and occupation were agreed to have an influence on Internet use. People who were most likely to use the Internet were male, white, and had high socioeconomic status (Pitkow & Kehoe, 1996). In more recent studies, however, researchers suggest that there is no gender or race difference between Internet users and nonusers (Weber & Roehl, 1999). Also, compared with other World Wide Web users, those who search for or purchase travel online are more likely to be 26 to 55 years of age; college-educated owners of computers; employed in management, professional, or computer-related occupations; have higher incomes; have more years of experience online; stay more often in commercial lodging establishments; and spend more money each day while traveling (Weber & Roehl, 1999; Bonn, Furr & Susskind, 1999).

The majority of research in this field, however, was done in North America and several reasons account for the difference in Internet user numbers among studies (Hoffman, Kalsbeck, & Novak, 1996). Firstly, apart from methodological flaws and survey bias, researchers suggest that the definition adopted for the term "Internet use" differs, with some studies being less restrictive in terms of inclusion than others. Take the 2002 investigation report of Hong Kong Internet development for example. Two definitions of Internet users were applied. On one hand, WIP (World Internet Project) defined Internet users as people who used or had used the Internet before, and there were about 2.4 million

Internet users between 18 to 84 years old in Hong Kong by the year 2002. When the CNNIC definition was employed, however, Internet users referred to people who used the Internet at least one hour per week and the number of Internet users between 6 and 84 in Hong Kong rose to about 2.8 million (Zhu, 2003). Moreover, as the geographic and cultural spread is often much wider, understanding online customers becomes even more important now (Smith & Chaffey, 2002). According to the 11th investigation report of Internet development in Mainland China (2003), Internet users are more likely to be under 35 years old (82.1%), unmarried (57.8%) male (59.3%) with secondary (30.6%) or postsecondary education (30.4%). Among them, 37.8 percent live in prosperous areas such as Guangdong, Jiangsu, Shanghai, Beijing and Shandong, and 44.4 percent have average monthly income 1000 RMB. Although some research has been carried out concerning these Internet users in China, little is known about how they use the Internet for their travel decision-making.

Patterns of Internet use

Reservation services, which were previously offered by travel intermediaries, have become the major revenue source for many travel-related Web sites. There are two main reasons for this trend in the tourism industry. First, as travel agents are moving to the Internet themselves to find out deals and charge $50 fees for their services, more travelers are booking trips on their own to save money (Shapiro, 2001). On the other hand, virtually every supplier – airlines, hotels, car-rental companies, trains, cruise lines, even national limousine services – now has its own Web site, and many offer bonus frequent-flier points

to those who shop directly (Rosen, 2000). With the benefits offered by the Web such as freedom, flexibility, versatility, and directness, travelers are able to comparison-shop among different suppliers rather than feel pressed to commit themselves to choose one of the few options offered by travel agents (Jacso, 2001).

The benefits that the Internet provides are in accordance with its unique characteristics. Firstly, the Internet minimizes a customer's transaction costs such as time spent traveling to a store to purchase a product (Athlyaman, 2002) and makes shopping possible during unconventional hours as the sites are open all the time (Furger 1997). Secondly, the Internet is highly relevant for purchases of comparable goods rather than differentiated or unique goods because the Internet enables comprehensive inspection of a large number of options (Athlyaman, 2002). This is very important since potential travelers always look for better vacation package offers, lodging rates and transportation fares. By comparing among different suppliers online, travelers can even get lower fares than their travel agents could offer (Loftus, 1997). Once they decide to purchase, travelers can make reservations through the secure online ordering system and develop their own itineraries (Scisco, 1998).

The Internet also provides additional information and value-added services to their online purchasers. For example, travelers can register for personal profiles on the Web. Therefore, in future, the site will email bulletins to alert the potential travelers about especially cheap fares to favorite destinations according to their travel preferences stored (Scisco, 1998). Other forms of value-added services relate to online community building.

To some Internet users, part of the enjoyment of traveling is in the planning (Hickey &

Dunkin, 1999). Online travel consultants, special interest forums, chat rooms and message

boards offer potential travelers both professional and personal recommendations and

sharing experiences.

Although the picture for online tourism promotion seems so bright and promising,

many online travel information seekers still book and purchase offline rather than online.

In Mainland China, only 0.8 % Internet users book transportation and lodging via the

Internet while in Hong Kong, less than 0.1% Internet users use online tourist reservation

systems (Zhu, 2003). However, as China becomes more and more open to the world

international tourist market, it is imperative to carry out research on traveler

decision-making and the potential to increase its online travel sales.

Barriers to Internet use

Why do many travelers still use offline sources for planning trips or remain

'lookers' rather than 'bookers' when they use the Internet for travel information? When

investigating these questions about today's online tourism services use, several issues arise.

First of all, since its birth, the World Wide Web has also been referred to the "World Wide

Wait". It has been found that potential travelers are satisfied with 10-second interactions

only at the beginning of seeking tourist information online when there is a lot of

information to read, that is, finding and choosing options (Seveik, 2002). However, as a

transaction progresses to where each page represents a single element of information such

as price, attractions, order confirmation, people want to download as quickly as four

seconds (Seveik, 2002). Otherwise, potential travelers become impatient and turn back to their travel agents for help.

Secondly, in the past, individuals were used to seeking travel information and purchasing travel products in physical stores. If a travel Web site fails to approximate its offline counterparts and lacks environmental richness these physical stores enjoy, it will probably result in lack of decision confidence on the part of consumers, and lead to reduced user satisfaction and reduced purchase intention (Jahng, Jain, & Ramamurthy, 2001). Therefore, it is very important for each online supplier to rethink how it presents its products and to satisfy customers' needs while realizing that users regard the Web site design and company products/services as one unit, and that immediate information and reliable service/experience are key to customer satisfaction (Buhalis & Dombey, 2001; Zhang, Dran, Blake & Pipithsuksunt, 2001). Six major features of a successful Web site are, in rank order, ease of navigation, appropriate explanatory text, clear layout of information, customer service, ease of ordering, accuracy of information, and information displayed in different formats (Zhang, et al., 2001). Furthermore, in order to communicate to consumers that it is trustworthy, a Web site should also focus on features such as: appropriate interface and information about the company, informal method of communicating, consumer testimonials, free services, security assurances, honesty, design quality, up-front disclosure, comprehensive, correct and current content, and connectivity (McCole, 2002; Zemke & Connellan, 2001).

'Another problem relates to the rapid increase in travel Web sites' use but slow

increase in online travel product purchasing. Weber and Roehl (1999) indicated that three features were rated very important by more than 80% of those purchasing travel online. These features are "security of sensitive information, quality of information about purchase choices" and "Internet vendor's reliability". Individuals who had purchased travel online and those who had purchased travel only offline differed in the most important reasons regarding their unwillingness to buy more products online (Weber & Roehl, 1999). Offline travel purchasers were more likely to cite reasons such as, "credit card security", "no assessment of product quality", "privacy issues", "prefer personal contact", "not comfortable with idea", "bad word of mouth", and "do not have credit card". When taking security into consideration, offline purchasers were observed to be more likely to agree or strongly agree with the statements "providing credit card information through the Web is plain foolish" and "providing credit card information through the Web is the single most important reason they do not buy more often from online travel sources" (Weber & Roehl, 1999). In contrast, online travel purchasers were more likely to indicate that providing credit card information would not matter much if "the prices were considerably lower", "the products / services were of a higher quality", and "the web vendors were well known and reliable" (Weber & Roehl, 1999). As for those people who tried online purchases of tourist products but decide to cease repurchasing in the future, the problem stems mainly from online reservation services. Although more and more online travel information seekers are turning to the Internet for purchasing travel products, complaints keep arising about these tourists' online booking experience. One serious

problem is failure of booking and notification. The result is when travelers arrive at the airport or hotel and are ready to check in, they are told that there is no record of their reservation.

Travel information search

One trend of today's tourism industry is the rapid development of international/overseas tourism, where the Internet stands superior for tourist information distribution. When investigating tourists' perceptions of overseas destination image and their information needs, researchers agree that people within a culture usually share common beliefs, attitudes, customs, meanings and behaviour norms, and that the manner in which people view images of a destination is mediated by cultural background (MacKay & Fesenmaier, 2000). Therefore, in order to better understand Chinese tourists' attitudes toward traveling abroad, it is important for researchers to know how these travelers acquire information, how their perception screens out some offers and filters in others, and how the Internet can deal with its multicultural clientele (Smith & Chaffey, 2002).

Information acquisition and evaluation processes refer to the gathering of information needed for choice from either memory or the external environment (Bettman, 1979). In tourism, which is basically a service, consumers acquire information as a strategy of risk reduction in the face of the specific uncertainty (Murray, 1991). In the past, tourism researchers have contributed much to the study of consumer information search behaviour in areas such as information search strategies, information needs and sources. In the literature, at least three distinct strategies for tourist information search have been

identified, which are labeled as spatial (internal vs. external), temporal (ongoing vs.

prepurchase) and operational (decisive vs. contributory), and travelers' choices of these

information search strategies are suggested to be affected by their decision type, traveling

party composition, purpose of trip, and income status (see Figure 1) (Fodness & Murray,

1999). Firstly, the spatial dimension of information search strategy reflects the locus of

search activity: internal or external. Internal search refers to the acquisition of information

that is available in memory (Bettman, 1979). It is hypothesized that when faced with a

choice to make, consumers in general first engage in internal search, examining memory

for available information. During internal search, interruptions can arise based upon lack of

needed information, conflicting information, or recall of previously forgotten goals. One

major response to such interruptions may be formation of a goal for external search, which

is the acquisition of information from sources other than memory, such as friends,

advertisements, magazines, the Internet and so forth (Bettman, 1979). Secondly, the

temporal dimension represents the timing of search activity (Fodness & Murray, 1999).

Search can be either ongoing, building up a knowledge base for unspecified future

purchase decisions, or pre-purchase, in response to a current purchase problem. Lastly, the

operational dimension reflects the conduct of search and focuses on the particular sources

used and their relative effectiveness for problem solving and decision-making (Fodness &

Murray, 1999). In other words, this dimension manifests itself in terms of differentiating

information sources that tend to be used in combination with other sources from those that

are used as the sole source for trip planning. For instance, commercial guidebooks, state

travel guides and brochures all tend to be used in conjunction with other sources while personal experience, travel agencies, and friends or relatives are the sources most likely to be used alone. Therefore, the former group of sources clearly serves to contribute to trip planning, however, the latter sources appear to be decisive in that they are used as sole sources of information on where to go, what to do, where to eat, where to stay, and so on. (Fodness & Murray, 1999).

Take Fodness and Murray's study of Florida travelers in 1999 for example, people traveling on vacation were the most likely to apply an ongoing and external information search strategy while people traveling to visit friends/relatives were the most likely to apply an internal strategy, that is, consulting their friends/relatives. Also, it was found that people with lower incomes rely more on their friends or relatives to search information compared to those with higher incomes who reported a greater use of governmental tourist information sources such as welcome centres, local tourist offices, and state travel guides. Fodness and Murray also concluded that the nature of information
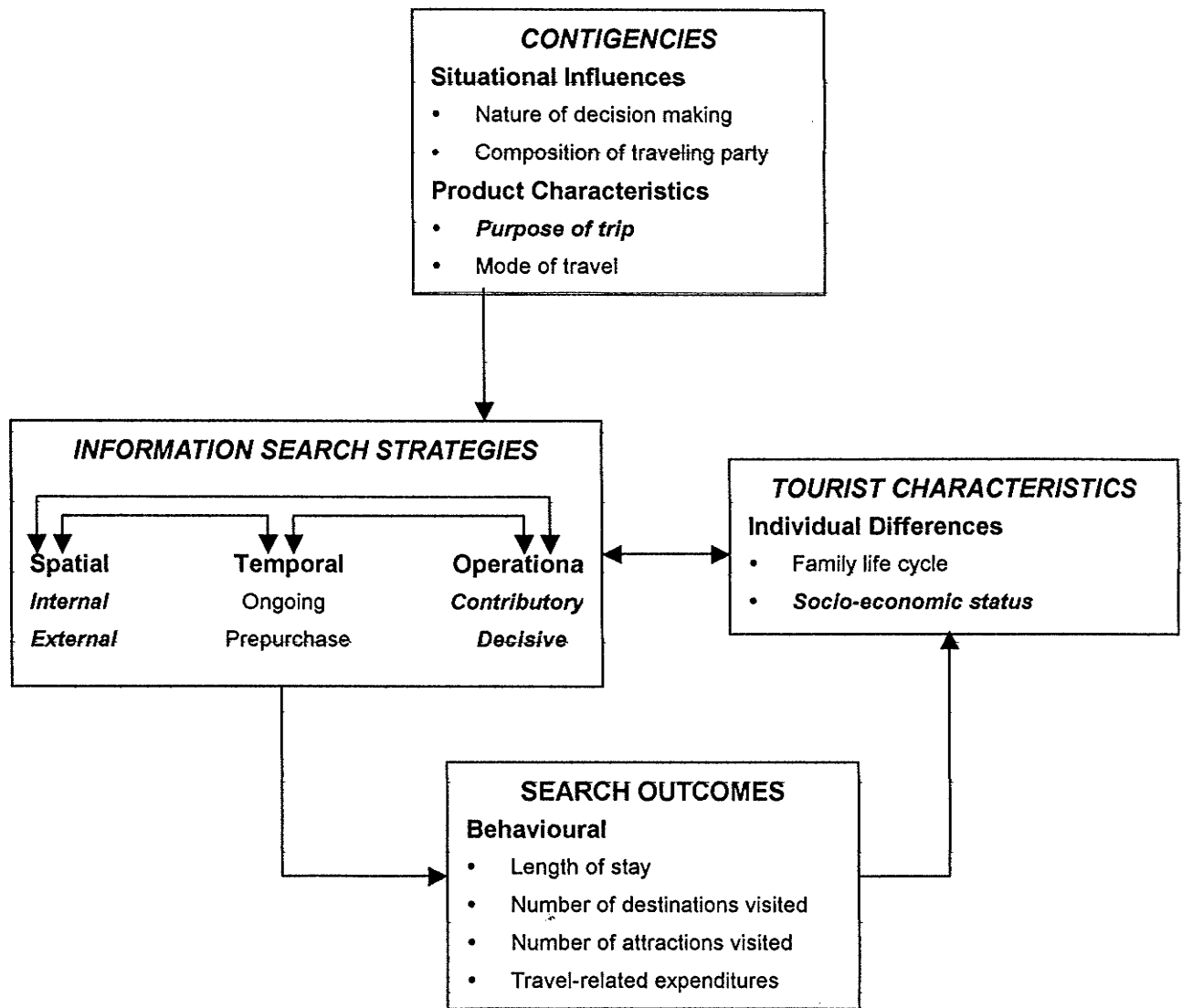
Figure1. Tourist Information Search Behaviour Model

(Fodness & Murray, 1999)

search could influence both qualitative and quantitative outcomes, in other words, the level of search effort increased along with increases in rates of consumption. Those travelers in the Florida sample who used the greatest number of sources also stayed the longest whereas those who made the fewest overnight stops consulted the fewest sources (Fodness & Murray, 1999).

Bettman indicates that information acquisition and evaluation processes are complex and intertwined with processes of deciding among alternatives; that is, informational and choice processes can go on simultaneously and are continually cycling. Then, after a choice has been made and the alternative chosen has been consumed, the outcomes experienced also provide information to the consumer. The traveler's purchase assessment process is fundamental since it adds to his or her store of experiences and provides feedback by adjusting the frame of reference for future purchase intentions (Pizam & Mansfeld, 2000). In a study of travelers' repeat buying probabilities of travel products and services, four cases were identified: straight rebuy, future rebuy, modified rebuy behaviour (change to new products or search for better quality) and either hesitation or a refusal to buy the product again (Pizam & Mansfeld, 2000). Therefore, decisions on what information to provide to consumers, how much to provide, and how to provide that information require knowledge of how consumers process, interpret and integrate that information in making choices. Also from this perspective, information processing is a central component of choice behaviour (Bettman, 1979).

In 1991, Um and Crompton developed a complete model of the pleasure travel

destination choice process employing three sets of variables: external inputs, internal

inputs and cognitive constructs (see Figure 2). External inputs represent influences from

both the social and marketing environment. They are classified into significative

(destination attributes), symbolic (promotional messages), and social stimuli. Internal

inputs derive from the vacationer's sociopsychological characteristics such as personal

characteristics, motives, values, and attitudes. Cognitive constructs represent the

"integration of the internal and external inputs, into the awareness set of destinations and

the evoked set of destinations" (Um & Crompton, 1991).

According to the travel decision model of Moutinho in 2000 (see Figure 3), the

decision process will be shaped by such social and personal determinants of travel

behaviour as personality, socioeconomic status, attitudes and values, reference groups, and

so on. The travel assessment of the different alternatives includes the analysis of a variety

of factors, such as cost/value relations, attractions and amenities within each destination,

travel opportunity and arrangements as well as the quality and quantity of available travel

information (Moutinho, 2000). Other external variables, such as confidence in the travel

agent, the overall image of the alternative destinations and services, the tourist's previous

travel experience, travel constraints (time, cost, etc.), and the degree of perceived risks

(financial, functional, social, physical and psychological) are important determinants in

the information search component of the travel decision model (Moutinho, 2000).

Research on the functional and nonfunctional aspects of tourist information

acquisition indicates that information needs pertaining to decision-making are at

External Inputs   Cognitive Constructs   Internal Inputs

```
┌─────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────┐
│ Stimuli display │───────▶│  Awareness set  │        │ Socio-psychological
│                 │        └────────┬────────┘        │ set             │
│ • Significative │                 │                 │                 │
│ • Symbolic      │                 ▼         ◀────────│ • Personal      │
│ • Social        │───────▶│   Evoked set    │        │   characteristics
│                 │        └────────┬────────┘        │ • Motives       │
│                 │                 │                 │ • Values        │
│                 │                 ▼                 │ • Attitudes     │
└─────────────────┘        ┌─────────────────┐        └─────────────────┘
                           │     Travel      │
                           │  destination    │
                           └─────────────────┘
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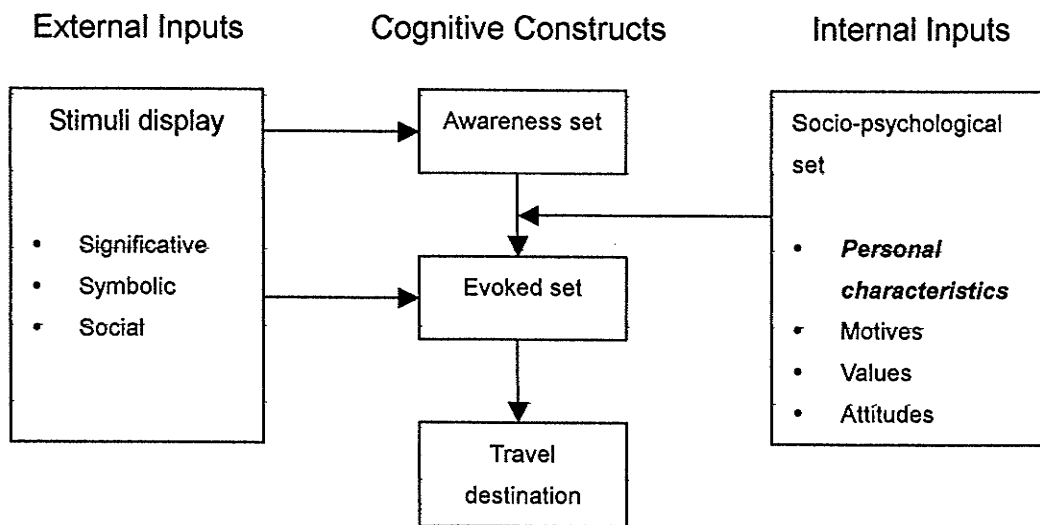
Figure 2. Model of the Pleasure Travel Destination Choice Process

(Um & Crompton, 1991)

the core of information acquisition while efficiency and aesthetic needs are to be considered periphery needs (Vogt, Fesenmaier, & MacKay, 1993). When planning a trip, an individual tourist actively seeks such information as lodging, transportation, on-site activities and trip cost in order to be more informed. Sometimes, tourists search for information beyond what is trip-related because the process of seeking and acquiring this aesthetic and efficient travel information can provide them with a great sense of satisfaction, such as enhancing one's knowledge about an unfamiliar destination or obtaining graphic information that conveys the physical attractiveness of a remote place (Vogt, et al., 1993). These less trip-related information needs are identified as, for example, to learn about the beauty of a place, to see places never visited, and to locate information difficult to find at the destination (Vogt, et al., 1993).

The three models reviewed in the above section included an exclusively travel information search model, and two destination choice/travel decision making models that showed the role of information search in travel/destination decision making but also incorporated factors beyond information. By reviewing the both offline and online travel decision-making literature based on the North America markets, a conceptual framework for this research about Chinese outbound tourists and their use of the Internet for travel information search and product purchase was developed. A proposed model was constructed upon the knowledge of past travel information search strategies in literature and the specific characteristics of Chinese outbound tourists and Internet users as well.

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┌─────────────────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│ Travel stimuli:             │        │ Social and personal determinants of │
│  • Advertising              │        │ travel behaviour:               │
│  • Travel literature        │        │  • Socio-economic status        │
│  • Travel reports           │        │  • Personality features         │
│  • Travel trade recommendations │    │  • Social influence and aspirations │
│                             │        │  • Attitudes and values         │
└─────────────────────────────┘        └─────────────────────────────────┘
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┌──────────────┐     ┌──────────────┐     ┌──────────────┐
│  Motivation  │     │ Desires/needs│     │ Expectation  │
└──────────────┘     └──────────────┘     └──────────────┘

┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────────┐
│ Travel desire│   │ Information research  │   │  Travel assessment   │
└──────────────┘   └──────────────────────┘   └──────────────────────┘

                                              ┌──────────────────┐
                                              │     Travel       │
                                              │  decision/deman  │
                                              └──────────────────┘
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┌────────────────────────────────┐     ┌────────────────────────────────────┐
│ External variables:            │     │ Destination considerations:        │
│  • Confidence in travel trade  │     │  • Costs/value relations           │
│    intermediary                │     │  • Attractions/amenities           │
│  • Image of destination/service│     │  • Travel opportunity              │
│  • Previous travel experience  │     │  • Travel arrangements             │
│  • Travel constraints, time cost│    │  • Quality/quantity of travel information │
└────────────────────────────────┘     └────────────────────────────────────┘
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Figure 3. Travel Decision Model

(Moutinho, 2000)

Chapter III

Conceptual Framework

This research investigated current and potential Chinese outbound tourists and how they use the Internet to seek and purchase travel products. Specifically, the primary research objectives were: (1) to explore the relationships of key variables in Chinese outbound tourists' socio-demographic and behavioural attributes to their online travel information search and product purchase behaviour; (2) to explore barriers to their purchase and/or repurchase of online travel products; (3) to provide recommendations for increasing the Internet use by Chinese outbound tourists in their travel decision-making and suggestions for future travel Web sites' improvement, which target Chinese outbound tourists.

To guide this study on Chinese outbound tourists' information search and decision-making via the Internet and fulfill the above research objectives, an online travel information search and purchase model (See Figure 4) was drafted based on the review of current information search and travel decision-making models. Two prominent models of travel decision-making were consulted (Um & Crompton, 1991; Moutinho, 2000) and integrated with consumer information acquisition literature and models (Fodness & Murray, 1999; Bettman, 1979; Vogt, et al., 1993). The proposed model incorporates prior research on travel information search and travel decision-making in general and suggests a series of hypotheses related to travel product information acquisition and purchase behaviour via the Internet among Chinese outbound tourists.
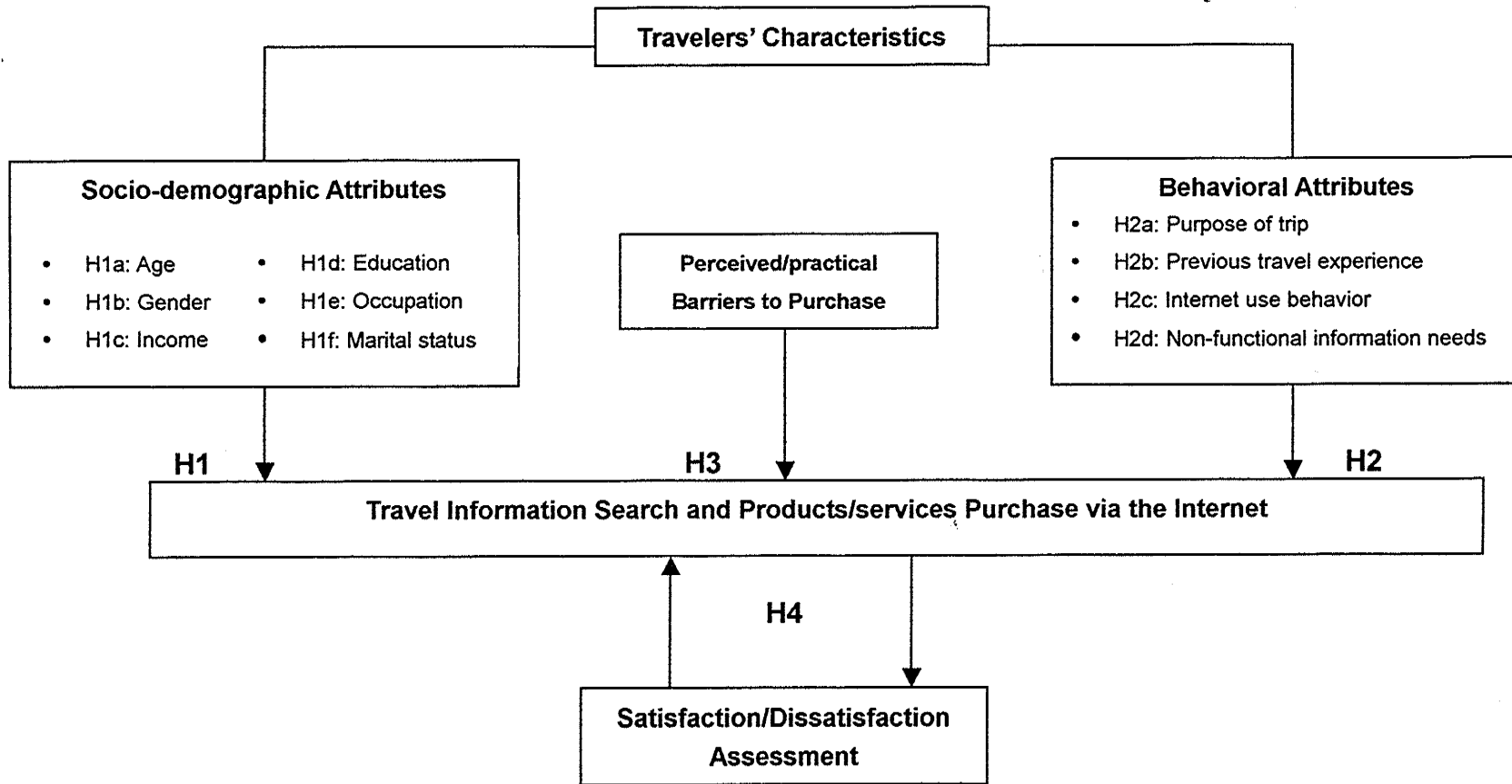
Figure 4. Proposed Online Travel Information Search and Product Purchase Model

(Sources: Fodness & Murray, 1999; Um & Crompton, 1991; Moutinho, 2000)

According to the model, two sets of travelers' characteristics are suggested to be antecedent to both their online travel information search and travel product purchase behaviours. These are travelers' sociodemographic characteristics and behavioural characteristics related to Internet use, information needs and travel experience. In addition, consequent factors, such as satisfaction assessments of the search and purchase process, are also important factors for future online information search and purchase. Since many travelers still use offline sources for planning trips or remain "lookers" rather than "bookers" when they use the Internet for travel information, another key variable "perceived/practical barriers to purchase" is incorporated into the model. A rationale for and description of the specific model components and their associated hypotheses are provided below.

In this proposed model, "online travel information search" refers to source of information (online vs. offline) used and the role of online information (contributory or decisive) in the decision process. "Travel product purchase" refers to the behaviour of buying these main trip components such as lodging, transportation, rental and tour packages via online credit card transaction.

Travelers' socio-demographic attributes including age, gender, income, education, occupation and marital status were selected because they have been found to have an influence on people's Internet use in both information search and product purchase (Bonn, Furr, & Susskind, 1999; Fodness & Murray, 1999; Moutinho, 2000; Pitkow & Kehoe, 1996; Um & Crompton, 1991; Weber & Roehl, 1999). These findings, based on North

American samples, suggest that people who are male, 26 to 55 years of age; college-educated; employed in management, professional, or computer-related occupations; and/or have higher incomes are more likely to use the Internet for information and travel product purchase. In the case of Chinese Internet users, the demographic profile is somewhat different according to the 11[th] Investigation Report of Internet Development in Mainland China (2003), which leads to hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 1: Use of travel Web sites for searching travel information and purchasing travel products will vary as a function of travelers' socio-demographic attributes such as age, gender, income, education, occupation and marital status. Specifically, H1(a) People who are 26 to 35 years of age are more likely to use the Internet for travel information search and product purchase. H1(b) People who are male are more likely to use the Internet for travel information search and product purchase. H1(c) People who have higher income are more likely to use the Internet for travel information search and product purchase. H1(d) People who received college or higher education are more likely to use the Internet for travel information search and product purchase. H1(e) People who are in management or administration positions are more likely to use the Internet for travel information search and product purchase. H1(f) People who are unmarried are more likely to use the Internet for travel information search and product purchase.

Another set of important travelers' attributes common to the above travel information search and decision-making models (Fodness & Murray, 1999; Moutinho, 2000; Um & Crompton, 1991), are travel behaviours, specifically purpose of trip (business,

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pleasure, visiting friends or relatives), and previous travel experience (times and destinations of outbound trips). Also since the model is set in an Internet context, general Internet use behaviours (online time, access place, spending, skills and experience) were incorporated as an important component of the model. The role of travel information has been associated with search and purchase behaviours (Fodness & Murray, 1999; Moutinho, 2000; Um & Crompton, 1991; Vogt, et al., 1993). Non-functional information needs (those not related specifically to the trip), which have been found in literature related to people's travel information search and product purchase, also will be tested on their effects in the case of Chinese outbound tourists' use of Internet. Based on the above discussion, hypothesis 2 was developed.

Hypothesis 2: Use of travel Web sites for searching for travel information and purchasing travel products will vary as a function of travelers' behavioural attributes such as purpose of trip, previous travel experience, Internet use behaviour and non-functional information needs.

H2(a) Different purposes of trip (business, pleasure and friends/relatives visiting trips) have been found to have an effect on travelers' online travel information search and product purchase. Based on their study of Florida travelers, Fodness and Murray (1999) indicated that people traveling on vacation were the most likely to apply an ongoing and external information search strategy while people traveling to visit friends/relatives were the most likely to apply an internal strategy, that is, consulting their friends/relatives. Since there's no literature on Chinese outbound tourists' trip purposes, it was hypothesized that

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Chinese outbound tourists who travel for pleasure are most likely to use the Internet for travel information search and product purchase while tourists who travel for visiting friends/relatives are least likely to use the Internet for travel information search and product purchase.

H2(b) Since people traveling for vacation were found most likely to rely on their personal experience (Fodness & Murray, 1999), in this research of Chinese outbound tourists, it is predicted that people who have traveled to a destination outside of China more times will be more likely to use the Internet for travel information search and product purchase.

H2(c) People who have higher level of Internet use are more likely to use the Internet for travel information search and product purchase. It is obvious that people's level of Internet use is positively associated with their preference for online services. Therefore, it is predicted that people who have more years of online experience; stay more often online; mainly access the Internet from home and work, and are more comfortable with their Internet use skills will be more likely to search travel information and purchase travel product online.

H2(d) People who have information needs other than those that are trip-related will be more likely to use the Internet for travel information search and product purchase. It is indicated that information acquisition and evaluation processes are continually cycling (Bettman, 1979) and acquiring certain aesthetic and efficient travel information can provide travelers with a great sense of satisfaction (Vogt, et al., 1993). In this research, such

non-functional information needs include enhancing one's knowledge about an unfamiliar destination, obtaining graphic information that conveys the physical attractiveness of a remote place, and travel information exchange with other Internet users.

In the tourism literature, barriers such as time cost, information presentation, ease of navigation, security of credit card information, quality of information, Internet vendor reliability and online reservation services have been identified to affect travelers' purchase/repurchase of online travel products via the Internet (Buhalis & Dombey, 2001; Seveik, 2002; Weber & Roehl, 1999; Zhang, Dran, Blake & Pipithsuksunt, 2001). Certain relationships between these frequently reported barriers and Chinese outbound tourists' online travel product buying behaviour are expected on the basis of past research in these fields and lead to hypothesis 3.

Hypothesis 3: Decision to purchase travel products via the Internet is negatively associated with certain perceived/practical barriers according to travelers. In other words, people who perceive certain barriers will be less likely to purchase travel products online and people who perceive more barriers will be less likely to purchase travel products via the Internet.

If travelers successfully overcome these perceived barriers and buy travel products online, they would evaluate their online product purchase experience and decide on the possibilities of re-search and repurchase online in the future (Pizam & Mansfeld, 2000). Postpurchase evaluation/satisfaction literature suggests that travelers' purchase assessment process is fundamental since it adds to his or her store of experiences and

provides feedback by adjusting the frame of reference for future purchase intentions

(Pizam & Mansfeld, 2000). In this research, hypothesis four has been developed to test the

relationships under the situation of Chinese outbound tourism.

Hypothesis 4: Intention to use the Internet for travel information search and

product purchase in the future is positively associated with travelers' satisfaction with their

online travel information search and product purchase experience. In other words,

travelers who are more satisfied with their searching and purchasing experience online will

be more likely to continue to search and purchase travel products online in the future.

Chapter IV

Method

In this chapter, details about research design, sampling, instrument development, measurement, validity, data collection and analyses strategies are presented.

Research design

This exploratory study was conducted using a Web survey with Chinese Internet users. Initially, travel Web sites in China and/or Canada for Chinese outbound tourists were targeted as the dissemination channel based on Web sites' popularity and availability. According to a search using the key word "travel agencies" in Yahoo, twelve travel Web sites in China and Canada with online reservation services for Chinese outbound tourists were identified (see Appendix A). These sites were sent an invitation letter by email to seek agreement to participate with the incentive of a final report on the profile of current and potential Chinese outbound tourists and their attitudes towards use of the Internet for travel decision-making (see Appendix B). Once the Web sites agreed to participate, a "Travel Survey" icon was to be put on these selected travel Web sites, which would link to a separate Web page set up for the online survey. However, one month after the invitation emails were sent, there was no reply. Considering that the lack of response might have been due to the high seasons of Christmas and New Year, another invitation letter was sent to these twelve travel Web sites. During the following two weeks, there was still no response from them.

Based on the lack of response from the desired survey distribution channels, an

alternative approach was needed to reach the target population. Instead of linking to several popular travel Web sites, the Web survey was posted on an individual Web site (http://zhuzhu01.tripod.com) specifically designed for this purpose (see Appendix C). Since this revised approach had implications for sampling, an amendment to the research protocol was submitted and approved by the Research Ethics Board.

Sample

Being at the early stage of investigating Chinese outbound tourists and their use of the Internet for travel information and product purchase, this study was carried out with a nonprobability sample. In the literature, nonprobability samples have been used quite frequently in market research and public opinion surveys (Levy & Lemeshow, 1999). They are used because probability sampling is often a time-consuming and expensive procedure and, in fact, may not be feasible in many situations (Cohen et al., 1958; Levy & Lemeshow, 1999). When the goal of a survey is to gather as much information as possible and solicit the views of a broader spectrum of the population than would be readily at hand in some other way, such a nonprobability sample may serve the purpose well (Fowler, 1993).

Due to time constraints created by the difficulties explained above, snowball sampling was conducted. Advantages of a snowball sample include efficiency in locating and approaching a small, scattered target group among a distant large population (e.g., Chinese outbound tourists who use the Internet for travel information and product purchase) and when precautions are taken, yield of useful information on little-surveyed

populations for which resources do not permit the usual, more accurate sampling procedures (Welch, 1975). In contrast, possible disadvantages consist of undersampling isolated members of the community and oversampling those with more extensive contacts and acquaintances, therefore, leading to possible biases in the educational, social class, and income level of the respondents since people with higher education and income are more likely to have wider circles of friends and greater participation in various organized groups. Also, by adopting a less statistically pure sampling design and trying to gather as much substantive information as possible, the consequent problems of estimating sampling error and reliability of results may arise (Welch, 1975). One way to minimize these biases relates to a larger sample size (Welch, 1975). A quota sample with 150 – 200 participants was targeted with a goal of fifty percent of those that have purchased travel products online before. However, due to the absence of random sampling, generalizability of the results is limited (Singleton & Straits, 1999).

The nonprobability sample was drawn from two sources: one in Canada and one in China. In Canada, invitations were sent by email to fifty Chinese students and scholars in Canada that the researcher knew in person to initiate a snowball sample (see Appendix D). People contacted were asked to participate and forward the invitation to people they knew who were qualified (i.e., met the sample criteria).

For the Chinese sample, eighteen Chinese comprehensive Web sites, of which many were for overseas Chinese students and scholars, were used as the dissemination channels for the Web survey (see Appendix E). After registering as a member, the

researcher posted invitations on the online travel forums under these Web sites (see Appendix F). Two of the sites, 163.ca and T-Canada.com, were interested in the research and agreed to put the invitation on their main pages. People who visited these Chinese Web sites and their sub-forums on travel were encouraged to fill out the questionnaire anonymously. To ensure that questionnaires were completed only once by a respondent, use of a pass code and blocking repeat accounts were applied.

Since the recruitment approach introduced here depended on the Internet, there was a bias toward more frequent and experienced Internet users. In this research, it was expected that the majority of participants were frequent email users and/or registered members of these online travel forums. Therefore, this information could be beneficial for these travel promoters in their marketing strategies since it indicated true online travel consumers (Weber & Roehl, 1999).

Recruited through invitations by personal emails and postings on these eighteen popular Chinese tourism forums from all over the world, participants were first invited to read and agree to an informed consent form. People were screened as eligible to participate by agreeing to the statement that they were "18 years of age or older Chinese or permanent residents in China, and traveled out of China at least once." All those who said "Yes, I agree" were regarded as Chinese outbound tourists in this research and invited to continue the survey. People saying "No, I do not agree" were thanked and advanced to the debriefing Web site notice. No characteristics made respondents vulnerable.

People were encouraged to participate by informing them of the purposes of this

research and that they would help tourism researchers and operators better understand

Chinese outbound tourism. Therefore, they could receive better online services for

outbound tourism offered by online travel companies in the near future. It is a basic

premise of ethical research that respondents should be informed about what they were

volunteering for and hence be able to make a decision. To achieve informed consent, key

information was provided to potential respondents (Fowler, 1993). This included 1) the

name of the organization that is carrying out the research – Graduate Studies of the

University of Manitoba; 2) the Web sites supporting the research – 163.ca and

T-Canada.com; 3) a reasonably accurate and brief description of purposes of the research;

4) assurance that cooperation is voluntary; 5) assurance that respondents can skip any

questions that they do not want to answer; and 6) assurance of confidentiality of personal

information. The informed consent was presented in Chinese before the survey started.

People who claimed "I agree" proceeded to the questionnaire (see Appendix G).

Data collection

The data were collected using a Web survey with Internet users completing a

questionnaire posted on the Web. The reasons for employing a Web survey in this

research relate to three important aspects. Firstly, to profile Chinese outbound tourists

who use the Internet to search and purchase travel products, a Web survey serves as the

most effective means of offering detailed and precise information about this large

heterogeneous population in China. Therefore, when cost and efficiency are taken into

consideration, a Web survey is an inexpensive way to reach a remote population. Secondly, since the focus of this study is on Chinese outbound tourists' Internet use behaviour, the topics of interest may range from behavioural and personal characteristics to more subjective information, which can be known only by asking participants themselves. Finally, through the use of a Web survey, the security of data can be guaranteed. That is to say, once the data are collected, it is unlikely that the data will be misplaced or lost, and no one other than the researcher has access to it (Fowler, 1993).

In general, a Web survey has two major potential weaknesses. One relates to a biased sample that tends to exclude those less frequent and experienced Internet users. In this research of Chinese outbound tourists and their use of the Internet for travel products search and purchase, however, use of the Web compared to other survey modalities is a more efficient and less biased way of reaching relevant participants. Secondly, due to the exclusive reliance of surveys on participants' reports of behaviour and opinion, measurement errors may be produced by respondents' lack of truthfulness and misunderstanding of questions. Therefore, Fowler suggests that when interpreting the data gathered from the survey, it should be kept in mind that any inference of relationships should be made with great caution (Fowler, 1993).

Instrument development

In this research, a series of questions were developed in order to gather detailed information on different aspects of these Chinese outbound tourists. The questionnaire (see Appendix H & I), which was presented in Chinese, included items to assess the

variables in the proposed model; that is, respondents' socio-demographics (e.g., age, gender, income, education, occupation and marital status), past travel experience (e.g., trip characteristics), online travel information gathering and purchasing behaviour (e.g., information needs and decision making), barriers to purchase and/or repurchase travel products via the Internet (e.g., location, security and confidence in travel trade intermediary), and satisfaction with using online travel information (e.g., five levels from very dissatisfied to very satisfied).

All questions are close-ended and based mainly on those in the Graphics, Visualization, and Usability (GVU) Center WWW User Surveys (Weber & Roehl, 1999). With the aim of monitoring and tracking the growth of any changes in the Web user base, the GVU Center at Georgia Tech has been playing a major role in conducting WWW User Survey online since 1994 and has developed a series of highly standardized measures in this research area (Weber & Roehl, 1999). Since all these questions are highly standardized and close-ended, validity is enhanced by offering participants a set of standard options to choose from, which helps them to understand the questions and recall the answer (Fowler, 1993).

Since the online questionnaire is for investigating Chinese outbound tourists, it was necessary to present all the questions in Chinese and, hence, a translation – backtranslation procedure was applied. Questions were originally developed in English, translated into Chinese by the researcher, and independently backtranslated into English by a professional English interpreter in China. Three professors at the University of

Manitoba who are native English-speakers judged the accuracy of translation by comparing the original with the backtranslation. Based on their feedback, revisions were made to questions 10, 17, 20 and 21. For example, an instruction phrase was added for participants to mark only one option for question 20 since there was a possibility of multiple industry roles while question 21 was modified by adding an option of "Junior middle school" and combining "Master's", "Doctoral" and "Professional degrees" into one option "Postgraduate degrees".

When translating a research instrument into another language, three types of biases may arise. These are construct bias (related to nonequivalence of constructs across cultural groups), method bias (resulting from instrument administration problems), and item bias (often a result of inadequate translation such as incorrect word choice) (Van de & Hambleton, 1996). When a research instrument is translated into another language as a whole, instead of partly, an assumption is made that a literal translation of the instrument would yield an instrument in the target group with good coverage of the theoretical construct and an adequate instrument format. In other words, both construct and method biases are then assumed to be absent and only item bias needs to be examined (Van de & Hambleton, 1996). In this research, an application of translating all these original questions developed in English for online tourists was adopted and possible item clarity was examined by carrying out a pilot test.

Once the questionnaire was formatted, a pilot test was conducted with five Chinese students at University of Manitoba to check for time to complete, clarity of

instructions, response categories and wording of questions due to the specific situation in China such as income levels and education classification. All five students were of Chinese origin and had a similar level of Internet use required by respondents in this research. After the pilot test of the questionnaire was completed, interviews with the respondents were conducted and there were no questions raised about the survey by these respondents. Since no further changes to the instrument were made, the data collected from the pilot test were used as valid data in this research as well (Fowler, 1993).

Measures

The response variables needed to operationalize the proposed model of online travel information search and purchase and to test the suggested hypotheses include: (1) travelers' socio-demographic attributes, (2) purpose of trip, (3) previous travel experience, (4) Internet use behaviour, (5) non-functional information needs, (6) online travel information search behaviour, (7) perceived/practical barriers to purchase online, (8) online travel product purchase behaviour, (9) Satisfaction/dissatisfaction assessment, (10) future online travel information search, and (11) future online travel. product purchase.

Travelers' *socio-demographic attributes* referred to demographic and socio-economic characteristics including age (Q25), gender (Q22), occupation (Q19 & 20), education (Q21), marital status (Q23) and personal annual income (Q24). Seven close-ended questions were included for participants to describe themselves. For example, the measure for occupation was split into two questions - question 19 asks about the industry participants primarily work in and question 20 asks about the role that

participants play in their industry.

Purpose of trip was identified by participants by choosing from "Business trip", "Personal pleasure trip" and "Visiting friends or relatives" with regards to their former outbound trips. Question 3 was developed for this purpose: "For which type of trips do you most often use the Internet either to gather information or make a purchase in the past?"

Previous travel experience mainly referred to participants' past outbound travel experience. Question 1 was used to indicate the approximate number of times participants have traveled abroad because people might not remember the exact number. Moreover, question 2 was asked for participants to indicate where they have traveled to a destination outside of China from a list of options.

Internet use behaviour was designed to understand participants' current skills for using the Web in general and travel Web sites in particular. Participants were asked three close-ended questions about Internet use - length of time using the Internet, frequency of use, and location of access/use. One more question on a 5-point scale (Q7) was used to identify how comfortable participants were with their use of the Internet.

Non-functional information needs were those aesthetic and efficient elements of information search including enhancing one's knowledge about an unfamiliar destination, obtaining graphic information that conveys the physical attractiveness of a remote place, and travel information exchange with other Internet users. Question 10 was designed as "What kind of travel information do you look for on the Internet?" with eight options to

choose from. Also, people were asked in question 11 to indicate how important each of these non-functional information needs was to their use of the Internet for travel information on a 5-point scale.

Online travel information search behaviour was examined by first asking about participants' travel information search in general, and then about their attitudes towards online travel information search. Three close-ended questions were developed: question 8 "Which of the following sources of information did you use to plan your trips to a destination outside of China during the past twelve months? (e.g., past experience, newspaper/archives/ads or travel-related Web sites)"; question 9 "What role does the Internet play in your travel information search? (i.e., none, contributory or decisive)"; and question 10 "What kind of travel information do you look for on the Internet? (e.g., functional and nonfunctional information". One more question using a 5-point rating scale asked (Q11) "How important is each of the following reasons when you search for travel information on the Internet?"

Perceived/practical barriers to purchase online referred to those factors that made participants feel hesitant to buy travel products via the Internet. Question 17 requested that participants choose from a variety of reported barriers ranging from "Not familiar with vendors", "Difficult to judge the quality of a product/service" to "Prefer to deal with people" and "Unguaranteed reservation services" (see Appendix J for a full listing).

Online travel product purchase behaviour was investigated by asking participants

(Q14) "During the past twelve months, how many times have you made purchases of travel products for yourself via the Internet?" If the participant indicated that he or she had never purchased online before, they advanced to question 17. Otherwise, they were asked one more question, that is, question 15 "Once you've decided to purchase a travel product/service, what percentage of the time do you place your order on the Internet (i.e. by filling out a form on the Web)?"

Satisfaction/dissatisfaction assessment referred to the degree of satisfaction/dissatisfaction participants indicated for their past travel information search and products/services purchase experience. First, question 12 was developed to measure participants' satisfaction level with the five aspects of online travel information, including "availability of information", "content of information", "ease of access to information", "reliability of information" and "presentation of information". In question 16, participants were asked to indicate on a 5-point scale how satisfied they were with the key aspects of their buying experience on the Internet, including "price/costs", "ease of purchase" and "security of purchase".

Future online travel information search was designed to look at the possibilities of continuing to search for travel information via the Internet in the future. Using a 5-point scale, participants were asked to rate (Q13) "How likely is it that you will search for travel information via the Internet for your next trip?"

Future online travel products/services purchase examined the possibilities of purchasing or repurchasing online travel products or services via the Internet in the future.

Participants were asked to indicate on a 5-point scale (Q18) "How likely is it that you will purchase or repurchase travel products or services via the Internet for your next trip?"

Validity

The measurement is valid when answers correspond to what questions are intended to measure (Fowler, 1993). Since the focus in this research was on explaining individual differences in the responses of the online travel questionnaire, construct validity was a concern (Kerlinger, 1973). Some steps have been applied to increase the validity of both factual and subjective questions originally developed in English but translated into Chinese for this study on Chinese outbound tourists and their use of the Internet for travel decision-making.

Respondents might answer some factual questions incorrectly because they either do not understand the question or cannot recall the answer (Fowler, 1993). Therefore, in the online questionnaire, key concepts (i.e., travel products and online purchase) and instructions were provided to make sure that all respondents obtain accurate meaning of the questions. To help respondents' recall on answers to detailed questions, comprehensive lists of options were available for them to choose from. Another consideration is the impact of social desirability. To assure that respondents would be willing to tell the researcher about these more sensitive questions, emphasis on the importance of accuracy and the neutrality of the data collection process were given in the welcome section (Fowler, 1993).

Efforts were also made concerning the subjective questions involved. Based on backtranslation judges' and pretest respondents' feedback, the ambiguity of wording on some questions was dealt with and more precise categories were used (Fowler, 1993). Examples included adding an explanation to the Internet roles in question 9 and specifying the purpose of information search (i.e., for a trip the respondent is planning) in question 10.

Data analyses

Data collected were first downloaded from the Web page into a personal email box, which was specifically set up for this research. After coding, the data then were hand entered into SPSS by the researcher. In order to understand current Chinese outbound tourists and how they used the Internet for travel decision-making, and to fulfill the four research objectives, including a) describing their socio-demographic characteristics; b) examining their past travel experience; c) examining influences on their online travel information search and purchase patterns; and d) exploring perceived barriers to purchase and/or repurchase of travel products via the Internet, two data analyses strategies were employed.

Firstly, descriptive statistics were run on all measures to describe respondents in terms of their socio-demographic attributes, purpose of trip, previous travel experience, Internet use behaviour, non-functional information needs, online travel information search behaviour, perceived/practical barriers to purchase online, online travel product purchase behaviour, postpurchase assessment, future online travel information search,

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and future online travel products/services purchase. Frequencies for each question were calculated to obtain a brief profile of current Chinese outbound tourists and their use of the Internet for travel information search and products/services purchase.

Secondly, to test key predictions (i.e., the four hypotheses) of the proposed model of online travel information search and purchase, bivariate analyses were applied (see Tables 1, 2 & 3). In this exploratory research, tests were decided by level of measures, ignoring which variable was supposed to be IV (independent variable) versus DV (dependent variable) conceptually. Therefore, four statistical procedures (T-test, ANOVA, Chi-Square and Correlation) were used according to different levels of measurement in each hypothesis as below.

First, variables for measuring *online travel information search behaviour* include Q8 (nominal), Q9 (ordinal), Q10 (nominal) and Q11 (interval) while measures for *online travel product purchase behaviour* are Q14 (ordinal) and Q15 (interval).

Hypothesis 1: Use of travel Web sites for searching travel information and purchasing travel products will vary as a function of travelers' socio-demographic attributes such as age, gender, income, education, occupation and marital status.

H1a: age, Q25 (ordinal)

=> People who are 26 to 35 years of age are more likely to use the Internet for travel information search and product purchase.

H1b: gender, Q22 (nominal)

=> People who are male are more likely to use the Internet for travel information

search and product purchase.

H1c: income, Q24 (interval)

=> People who have higher income are more likely to use the Internet for travel information search and product purchase.

H1d: education, Q21 (ordinal)

=> People who received college or higher education are more likely to use the Internet for travel information search and product purchase.

H1e: occupation, Q19 and Q20 (nominal)

=> People who are in management or administration positions are more likely to use the Internet for travel information search and product purchase.

H1f: marital status, Q23 (nominal)

=> People who are unmarried are more likely to use the Internet for travel information search and product purchase.

Hypothesis 2: Use of travel Web sites for searching travel information and purchasing travel products will vary as a function of travelers' behavioural attributes such as purpose of trip, previous travel experience, Internet use behaviour and non-functional information needs.

H2a: purpose of trip, Q3 (nominal)

=> Chinese outbound tourists who travel for pleasure are most likely to use the Internet for travel information search and product purchase while tourists who travel for visiting friends/relatives are least likely to use the Internet for travel information search

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and product purchase.

H2b: past experience, Q1 (ordinal)

=> People who have traveled to a destination outside of China more times will be more likely to use the Internet for travel information search and product purchase.

H2c: Internet use, Q4 (ordinal), Q5(ordinal), Q6(nominal) and Q7 (interval)

=> People who have more years of online experience; stay more often online; mainly access the Internet from home and work, and are more comfortable with their Internet use skills will be more likely to search travel information and purchase travel product online.

H2d: non-functional needs, Q10 (nominal)

=> People who have information needs other than those that are trip-related will be more likely to use the Internet for travel information search and product purchase.

Hypothesis 3: barriers, Q17 (nominal)

=> Decision to purchase travel products via the Internet is negatively associated with certain perceived/practical barriers according to travelers. In other words,

H3a) people who perceive certain barriers will be less likely to purchase travel products online; and

H3b) people who perceive more barriers will be less likely to purchase travel products via the Internet.

Hypothesis 4: satisfaction assessment, Q12 and Q16 (interval); future online information search and products/services purchase, Q13 and Q18 (interval)

=> Intention to use the Internet for travel information search and product purchase in the future is positively associated with travelers' satisfaction with their online travel information search and product purchase experience. In other words,

H4a) travelers who are more satisfied with their searching experience online will be more likely to continue to search travel products online in the future.

H4b) travelers who are more satisfied with their purchasing experience online will be more likely to continue to purchase travel products online in the future.

Table 1

Analysis Strategies for Hypothesis 1

(H1) Socio-demo		Online information search				Online purchase	
		Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q14	Q15
H1a (age): Q25		Chi-square	Correlation	Chi-square	Correlation	Correlation	T-test
H1b (gender): Q22		Chi-square	Chi-square	Chi-square	T-test	Chi-square	T-test
H1c (income): Q24		T-test	Correlation	T-test	Correlation	Correlation	Correlation
H1d (education): Q21		Chi-square	Correlation	Chi-square	Correlation	Correlation	Correlation
H1e (occupation):	Q19	Chi-square	Chi-square	Chi-square	ANOVA	Chi-square	ANOVA
	Q20	Chi-square	Chi-square	Chi-square	ANOVA	Chi-square	ANOVA
H1f: marital status Q23		Chi-square	Chi-square	Chi-square	ANOVA	Chi-square	ANOVA

Table 2

Analysis Strategies for Hypothesis 2

(H2) Behavioral attributes		Online information search				Online purchase	
		Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q14	Q15
H2a (purpose of trip): Q3		Chi-square	Chi-square	Chi-square	ANOVA	Chi-square	ANOVA
H2b (past experience): Q1		Chi-square	Correlation	Chi-square	Correlation	Correlation	Chi-square
	Q4	Chi-square	Correlation	Chi-square	Correlation	Correlation	Chi-square
H2c (Internet use):	Q5	Chi-square	Correlation	Chi-square	Correlation	Correlation	Chi-square
	Q6	Chi-square	Chi-square	Chi-square	ANOVA	Chi-square	ANOVA
	Q7	T-test	Correlation	T-test	Correlation	Correlation	Correlation
H2d (non-functional): Q10		Chi-square	Chi-square	Chi-square	T-test	Chi-square	T-test

Table 3

Analysis Strategies for Hypotheses 3 and 4

(H3) Barriers	Online purchase	
	Q14	Q15
Q17	Chi-square	T-test

(H4) Satisfaction vs. travel information search and products/services purchase via the Internet

Information search satisfaction: Q12		Future online information search: Q13
	Correlation	
Online purchase satisfaction: Q16		Future online purchase: Q18

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Chapter V

Results

A total of 170 respondents submitted the online questionnaire from February 22nd to April 19th, 2004. In this chapter, descriptive results are first presented with frequency tables, giving a brief profile of the respondents according to travelers' attributes and online travel information search and product purchase behaviour. Results of hypothesis testing for the proposed online travel information search and purchase model are also presented.

Socio-demographic characteristics

Respondents' socio-demographic attributes referred to their demographic and socio-economic attributes including age, gender, occupation, education, marital status and annual personal income. Table 4 shows that the sample was relatively young with 110 out of 170 (64.7%) between 18 to 25 years of age and 54 (31.8%) 26 – 35 years of age. Slightly more than half (55.3%) of the respondents were female while the majority (82.4%) were single, and 17.6 percent were married/common law. Almost all of the respondents had an education level of high school and above (95.9%), with 42.9 percent holding Bachelor degrees and 29.4% with postgraduate education. More than three-quarters of respondents (79.4%) were students and 44.7 percent indicated their industry role as employee. Almost three-quarters of the sample (74.7%) had an annual personal income less than RMB 40,000 while a small percentage (13.5%) indicated an income above RMB 80,000 annually. A series of crosstabulations and chi-square tests (see Appendix K) show respondents' age was related to most of their

socio-demographics such as main industry, education, marital status and annual

personal income.

Table 4

Respondents' Socio-demographic Characteristics

Socio-demographics	Frequency N = 170	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Q25. Age			
18-25	110	64.7	64.7
26-35	54	31.8	96.5
36-45	6	3.5	100.0
Q22. Gender			
Female	94	55.3	55.3
Male	76	44.7	100.0
Q19. Occupation			
Student	135	79.4	79.4
Unemployed	3	1.8	81.2
Computer-related	4	2.4	83.5
Services	8	4.7	88.2
Professional industry	8	4.7	92.9
Education	5	2.9	95.9
Other	7	4.1	100.0
Q20. Industry role			
Employee	76	44.7	44.7
Management	13	7.6	52.4
Administrative staff	4	2.4	54.7
Other	56	32.9	87.6
Not applicable	21	12.4	100.0
Q23. Marital status			
Single	140	82.4	82.4
Married/common law	30	17.6	100.0

Table 4

Respondents' Socio-demographic Characteristics (Continued)

Socio-demographics	Frequency N = 170	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Q21. Education			
Primary school	2	1.2	1.2
Vocational/technical school (2-year)	1	.6	1.8
High school or equivalent	20	11.8	13.5
College graduate (3-year)	20	11.8	25.3
Undergraduate (Bachelor)	73	42.9	68.2
Postgraduate	50	29.4	97.6
(Professional, Master & PhD)			
Other	4	2.4	100.0
Q24. Annual personal income			
Less than RMB 5,000	93	54.7	54.7
RMB 5,000-9,999	6	3.5	58.2
RMB 10,000-19,999	14	8.2	66.5
RMB 20,000-29,999	4	2.4	68.8
RMB 30,000-39,999	10	5.9	74.7
RMB 40,000-49,999	4	2.4	77.1
RMB 50,000-59,999	6	3.5	80.6
RMB 60,000-69,999	5	2.9	83.5
RMB 70,000-79,999	5	2.9	86.5
RMB 80,000-89,999	9	5.3	91.8
RMB 90,000-99,999	3	1.8	93.5
Over RMB 100,000	11	6.5	100.0

Behavioural attributes

Respondents' behavioural attributes were measured by a group of variables, including purpose of trip (Q3), previous travel experience (Q1 & Q2), Internet use behaviour (Q4, Q5, Q6 & Q7) and non-functional information needs (Q10).

Purpose of trip was identified by respondents indicating the type of trips they most often used the Internet for gathering travel information or making a purchase in the past. Table 5 shows that, of the 170 respondents, 38.2 percent claimed no use of the Internet for travel purposes, the majority of respondents (55.3%) used the Internet for their "personal pleasure trips", while very few used the Internet for trips for "visiting friends/relatives" (5.9%) or "business" (0.6%).

Previous travel experience mainly referred to respondents' past outbound travel experience. Table 5 illustrates that the majority of respondents (60.6%) have traveled to destinations out of China once or twice and another 20 percent have traveled internationally "3 – 4 times". For the option "over 6 times", a further 15.3 percent of respondents claimed that they did. When asked "to what destination outside of China have you previously traveled?" where multiple responses were allowed, "Canada" (52.9%), "Europe" (38.8%), "other areas in Asia" (29.4%), and "Southeast Asia" (26.5%) were the top four outbound tourism destinations identified. Almost half of these respondents (49.4%) only traveled to one outbound destination while 30 percent claimed trips to two destinations and 11.2 percent claimed three (see Figure 5).

Internet use behaviour was designed to understand participants' current skills for using the Web in general and travel Web sites in particular. Table 6 shows that

almost all the respondents (94.1%) have been using the Internet for at least three years with 61.2 percent having an Internet use history of "more than 3 years and up to six years" and 32.9 percent a history of "more than 6 years". Respondents said they used the Internet quite often since in fact 96.5 percent of these respondents went online every day and no one claimed use "monthly" or "less than once per month". The main Internet access location was identified as "home" for 83.5 percent of respondents, leaving the second most frequently identified access point as "school" with only a small percentage of 8.8. According to these experienced and frequent Internet users, 71 percent of them felt "comfortable" (38.2%) or "very comfortable" (32.9%) with their use of the Internet while 12.4 percent felt some level of discomfort and 16.5 percent were neutral.

Non-functional information needs, those aesthetic and efficient elements of information search, were another aspect of behavioural attributes in this research on Chinese outbound tourists' travel information search and decision-making via the Internet. According to Table 6, participants' responses to the question "what kind of travel information do you look for on the Internet?" indicated that the minority of these Chinese outbound tourists in their search for online travel information had looked for "enhancing knowledge about an unfamiliar place that they may never travel to" (37.1%) and "travel information from exchanges with other users (e.g., online chats)" (19.4%). In contrast, concerning the aesthetic need of "obtaining visual information about a remote place that they may never travel to", almost half of these respondents (47.6%) claimed that they did.

Table 5

Respondents' Travel Behaviour Attributes

Behaviour attributes	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
	N = 170		
Q3. Purpose of trip			
Not applicable	65	38.2	38.2
Business	1	.6	38.8
Personal pleasure	94	55.3	94.1
Visiting friends/relatives	10	5.9	100.0
Previous travel out of China			
Q1. Number of times			
1-2 times	103	60.6	60.6
3-4 times	34	20.0	80.6
5-6 times	7	4.1	84.7
Over 6 times	26	15.3	100.0
Q2. Destinations			
USA	23	13.5	
South America	2	1.2	
Europe	66	38.8	
Africa	4	2.4	
Canada	90	52.9	
Southeast Asia	45	26.5	
Other areas in Asia	50	29.4	
Australia/New Zealand	16	9.4	
Other areas	8	4.7	

Notes. Question 2 allows multiple responses.
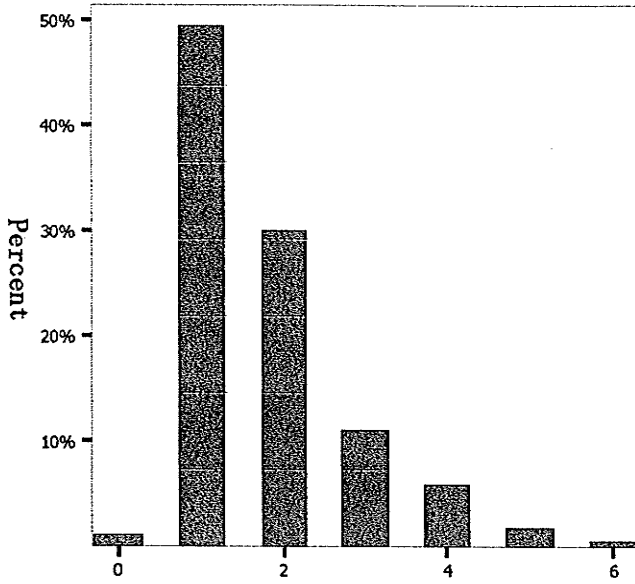
Bars show percents

Q2. Total number of outbound destinations

Figure 5. Total Number of Outbound Destinations

Table 6

Respondents' Internet Use Behaviour Attributes

Behaviour attributes	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
	N = 170		
Q4. Internet use history			
Less than 6 months	4	2.4	2.4
More than 1 year and up to 3 years	6	3.5	5.9
More than 3 years and up to six years	104	61.2	67.1
More than 6 years	56	32.9	100.0
Q5.How often use			
Weekly	6	3.5	3.5
Daily	164	96.5	100.0
Q6. Main access			
Home	142	83.5	83.5
Work	10	5.9	89.4
School	15	8.8	98.2
Other	3	1.8	100.0
Q7. Use comfort*		Mean = 3.85	
		Std. Deviation = 1.14	
Very uncomfortable	11	6.5	6.5
Uncomfortable	10	5.9	12.4
Neither uncomfortable nor comfortable	28	16.5	28.8
Comfortable	65	38.2	67.1
Very comfortable	56	32.9	100.0
Q10. Non-functional information needs**			
Knowledge enhancement	63	37.1	
Visual information	81	47.6	
Information exchange	33	19.4	

Notes. * 5-point rating scale: 1 = very uncomfortable, 5 = very comfortable

** Question 10 allows multiple responses.

Online travel information search behaviour

Online travel information search behaviour was understood by first asking about participants' travel information search in general then their attitudes towards online travel information search. Table 7 shows that the most popular travel information source was "travel agencies/tour operators" with a majority of respondents (61.8%) claiming use in their decision-making for outbound trips. Information sources such as "travel-related Web sites" and "advice from friends/relatives" were also noted by over half of the sample with a rate of 56.5 percent and 55.9 percent respectively. More than one-third (37.1%) of respondents regarded "newspaper/archives/ads" as a useful information source while 28.2 percent of respondents relied on their past travel experience for planning outbound trips. "TV advertising" was indicated as an infrequent source; however, no one used "radio advertising" in decision-making. Besides, several participants (33) also noted information sources other than those mentioned above. According to Figure 6, most of these Chinese outbound tourists (85.9%) used one to four information sources with 27.1 percent for three and 24.1 percent for only one source (Mean = 2.75).

As presented in Table 7, a majority of the sample (78.8%) thought that the Internet played a "contributory" role (i.e., one of the several sources used) in their search for travel information for outbound trips. Some (15.9%) of them even regarded the Internet as the "decisive" source while a few people (5.3%) denied its usefulness by indicating it had no role.

Answers to the question "what kind of travel information do you look for on the

Table 7

Online Travel Information Search Behaviour

Online travel information search behaviour	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
	N = 170		
Q8. Sources of travel information			
Past experience	48	28.2	
Radio advertising	0	00.0	
TV advertising	27	15.9	
Advice from friends/relatives	95	55.9	
Travel-related Web sites	96	56.5	
Newspaper/archives/ads	63	37.1	
Travel agencies/tour operators	105	61.8	
Other	33	19.4	
Q9. Internet role			
None	9	5.3	5.3
Contributory	134	78.8	84.1
Decisive	27	15.9	100.0
Q10. Types of travel information searched			
Not applicable	5	2.9	
Detailed travel product information	118	69.4	
Price comparisons	98	57.6	
Availability of product/service	104	61.2	
Knowledge enhancement	63	37.1	
Visual information	81	47.6	
Information exchange	33	19.4	

Notes: Questions 8 and 10 allow multiple responses.

Internet?" illustrated the types and roles of travel information searched. Table 7 shows

that the top three types of information were those for functional needs, including

"detailed travel product information" (69.4%), "availability of products/services"

(61.2%) and "price comparisons" (57.6%). As to the other three non-functional needs,

almost half of the 170 respondents (47.6%) used the Internet to "obtain visual

information about a remote place that they may never travel to" and 63 among them

(37.1%) also looked for "enhancing knowledge about an unfamiliar place that they

may never travel to". Participants who used the Internet for "travel information from

exchanges with other users (e.g. online chats)" were the smallest group (19.4%). When

answering a further question about their attitudes toward the importance of these

functional and non-functional information needs separately on a 5-point scale (see

Table 7), respondents claimed that "price comparisons" (Mean = 3.59), "detailed travel

product information" (Mean = 3.39), and "knowledge enhancement" (Mean = 3.11),

were of some importance to their search. "Visual information" (Mean = 2.80),

"information exchange" (Mean = 2.58) and "availability of products/services" (Mean =

2.49) were rated as less important.

Table 7

Online Travel Information Search Behaviour (Continued)

Q11. Importance of key reasons for online travel information search*	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
	N = 170			
Detailed travel product information			3.39	1.36
Not at all important	25	14.7		
Sort of unimportant	17	10.0		
Neither unimportant nor important	38	22.4		
Sort of important	46	27.1		
Very important	44	25.9		
Price comparisons			3.59	1.49
Not at all important	30	17.6		
Sort of unimportant	11	6.5		
Neither unimportant nor important	25	14.7		
Sort of important	37	21.8		
Very important	67	39.4		
Availability of products/services			2.49	1.29
Not at all important	64	37.6		
Sort of unimportant	13	7.6		
Neither unimportant nor important	40	23.5		
Sort of important	52	30.6		
Very important	1	.6		
Knowledge enhancement			3.11	1.55
Not at all important	42	24.7		
Sort of unimportant	20	11.8		
Neither unimportant nor important	34	20.0		
Sort of important	25	14.7		
Very important	49	28.8		

Note: * 5-point rating scale: 1 = very uncomfortable, 5 = very comfortable

Table 7

Online Travel Information Search Behaviour (Continued)

Q11. Importance of key reasons for online travel information search*	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
N = 170				
Visual information			2.80	1.51
Not at all important	53	31.2		
Sort of unimportant	19	11.2		
Neither unimportant nor important	41	24.1		
Sort of important	23	13.5		
Very important	34	20.0		
Information exchange			2.58	1.50
Not at all important	66	38.8		
Sort of unimportant	17	10.0		
Neither unimportant nor important	35	20.6		
Sort of important	26	15.3		
Very important	26	15.3		

Note: * 5-point rating scale: 1 = very uncomfortable, 5 = very comfortable

66
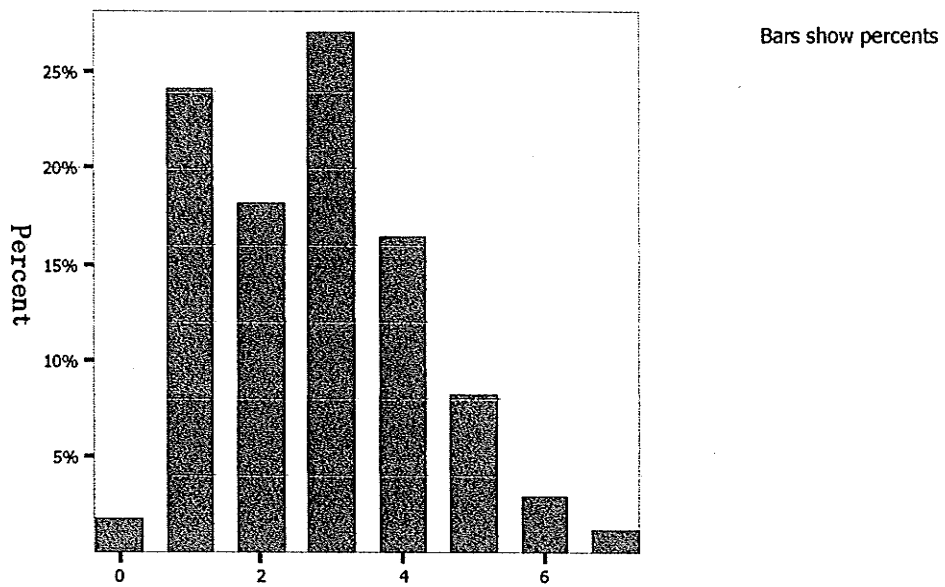
Q8. Total number of information sources

Figure 6. Total Number of Travel Information Sources

Online travel product purchase behaviour

43.6 percent of respondents claim to have purchased travel products for themselves via the Internet in the past twelve months. Among them, most had purchased "1 – 2 times" (see Table 8). Participants who were online travel product purchasers were asked "what percentage of the time do they place orders on the Internet (i.e. by filling out a form on the Web)?" As presented in Table 8, two groups of 24 among the 68 respondents (35.3%) placed their travel order on the Internet "a few times" and "half the time" respectively, while another 15 purchasers (22.1%) claimed a frequent ordering for "most" of their trips.

Table 8

Online Travel Product Purchase Behaviour

Online travel product purchase behaviour	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Q14. Purchase history			
n = 163, Missing = 7			
Not applicable	92	56.4	56.4
1-2 times	45	27.6	84.0
3-4 times	15	9.3	93.3
5-6 times	7	4.2	97.5
Over 6 times	4	2.5	100.0
Q15. Order percentage			
n = 68, Missing = 102			
Never (0%)	3	4.4	4.4
Few (25%)	24	35.3	39.7
Half (50%)	24	35.3	75.0
Most (75%)	15	22.1	97.1
All (100%)	2	2.9	100.0

Perceived/practical barriers to purchase online

Frequencies were counted for seventeen perceived/practical barriers to purchase/repurchase as shown in Table 9. The five most frequent barriers were "difficult to judge the quality of a product/service" (53.5%), "not familiar with vendor" (50.6%), "don't trust that my credit card number will be secure" (43.5%), "not enough information to make a decision" (39.4%), "faster/easier to purchase locally" (35.3%). Three barriers with a relatively low rate of votes were "difficult to find appropriate Web sites" (16.5%), "unguaranteed reservation services" (14.7%) and "don't have a credit card" (12.4%), which were noted by less than 30 of the 170 respondents. Least frequent barriers to online purchase included "generally uncomfortable with the idea" (6.5%), "site doesn't offer the option to purchase" (5.3%) and "had a bad experience in the past" (4.7%). In addition, about one-third of respondents identified between four (16.5%) and five (13%) barriers (Mean = 4.25), with another 22 respondents (13%) choosing only one major barrier concerning their online travel product purchase.

Table 9

Perceived/practical Barriers to Online Purchase/repurchase

Q17. Perceived/practical barriers	Frequency	Percent
N = 170		
Difficult to judge the quality of a product/service	91	53.5
Not familiar with vendor	86	50.6
Don't trust that my credit card number will be secure	74	43.5
Not enough information to make a decision	67	39.4
Faster/easier to purchase locally	60	35.3
Don't trust that my personal information will be kept private	51	30.0
Never tried it	49	28.8
Heard it's not a reliable/secure/trustworthy way to make purchases	49	28.8
Too complicated to place order	46	27.1
Prefer to deal with people	35	20.6
Difficult to find appropriate Web sites	28	16.5
Unguaranteed reservation services	25	14.7
Don't have a credit card	21	12.4
Other reasons	13	7.6
Generally uncomfortable with the idea	11	6.5
Site doesn't offer the option to purchase	9	5.3
Not applicable	8	4.7
Had a bad experience in the past	8	4.7

Note: Question 17 allows multiple responses

Satisfaction/dissatisfaction assessment

The degree of satisfaction/dissatisfaction participants had for past online travel information search and product purchase experience is displayed in Table 10. First, respondents' satisfaction levels with the five aspects of online travel information ranged from 1 = "Not at all satisfied" to 5 = "Very satisfied". Many respondents were very or somewhat satisfied with "availability of information" (52.4%), "ease of access to information" (50%) and "content of information" (43.5%). As to the other two aspects, "reliability of information" and "presentation of information", the largest percentage of respondents (45.9%) felt "neither unsatisfied nor satisfied". One-third of respondents also showed dissatisfaction with reliability since 31.2 percent of them were not satisfied including about 15 percent who even claimed "not at all satisfied". On the other side, although close to 23 percent respondents were not satisfied with the "presentation of information" on the Internet or felt indifferent, one third of them (30.2%) were still satisfied at some level.

The 67 Chinese outbound tourists who had purchased online for travel purposes were also asked to indicate on a 5-point scale how satisfied they were with aspects of the buying experience on the Internet. Table 11 shows that purchasers felt somewhat satisfied with "price/costs" (Mean = 3.54; SD =1.02), "ease of purchase" (Mean = 3.88; SD =1.01) and "security of purchase" (Mean = 3.35; SD =. 98). They were most satisfied with "ease of purchase" with 37.3 percent reporting "sort of satisfied" and 31.3 percent "very satisfied". Among these three aspects, respondent were least satisfied with "price/costs" since 20.9 percent of purchasers had some level of

dissatisfaction in their past experience. However, the largest number of respondents

(42.4%) felt "neither unsatisfied nor satisfied" with "security of purchase".

Table 10

Satisfaction with Online Travel Information Search

Satisfaction levels*	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
	N = 170				
Q12a. Availability of information					
Not at all satisfied	17	10.0	10.0	3.44	1.19
Sort of unsatisfied	14	8.2	18.2		
Neither unsatisfied nor satisfied	50	29.4	47.6		
Sort of satisfied	56	32.9	80.6		
Very satisfied	33	19.4	100.0		
Q12b. Content of information					
Not at all satisfied	19	11.2	11.2	3.21	1.15
Sort of unsatisfied	20	11.8	22.9		
Neither unsatisfied nor satisfied	57	33.5	56.5		
Sort of satisfied	54	31.8	88.2		
Very satisfied	20	11.8	100.0		
Q12c. Ease of access to information					
Not at all satisfied	24	14.1	14.1	3.36	1.32
Sort of unsatisfied	16	9.4	23.5		
Neither unsatisfied nor satisfied	45	26.5	50.0		
Sort of satisfied	45	26.5	76.5		
Very satisfied	40	23.5	100.0		
Q12d. Reliability of information					
Not at all satisfied	26	15.3	15.3	2.83	1.08
Sort of unsatisfied	27	15.9	31.2		
Neither unsatisfied nor satisfied	78	45.9	77.1		
Sort of satisfied	28	16.5	93.5		
Very satisfied	11	6.5	100.0		

Note: * 5-point rating scale: 1 = not at all satisfied, 5 = very satisfied

Table 10

Satisfaction with Online Travel Information Search (Continued)

Satisfaction levels*	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q12e. Presentation of information					
Not at all satisfied	22	12.9	12.9	3.02	1.05
Sort of unsatisfied	16	9.4	22.4		
Neither unsatisfied nor satisfied	78	45.9	68.2		
Sort of satisfied	44	25.9	94.1		
Very satisfied	10	5.9	100.0		

Note: * 5-point rating scale: 1 = not at all satisfied, 5 = very satisfied

Table 11

Satisfaction with Online Travel Product Purchase

Satisfaction levels*	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Purchasers Only: n = 67, (Q16a & Q16b); n = 66, (Q16c)					
Q16a. Price/costs					
Not at all satisfied	0	0.0	0.0	3.54	1.02
Sort of unsatisfied	14	20.9	20.9		
Neither unsatisfied nor satisfied	15	22.4	43.3		
Sort of satisfied	26	38.8	82.1		
Very satisfied	12	17.9	100.0		
Q16b. Ease of purchase					
Not at all satisfied	1	1.5	1.5	3.88	1.01
Sort of unsatisfied	6	8.9	10.4		
Neither unsatisfied nor satisfied	14	-20.9	31.3		
Sort of satisfied	25	37.4	68.7		
Very satisfied	21	31.3	100.0		
Q16c. Security of purchase					
Not at all satisfied	1	1.5	1.5	3.35	.98
Sort of unsatisfied	11	16.7	18.2		
Neither unsatisfied nor satisfied	28	42.4	60.6		
Sort of satisfied	16	24.2	84.8		
Very satisfied	10	15.2	100.0		

Note: * 5-point rating scale: 1 = not at all satisfied, 5 = very satisfied

Future online travel information search and product purchase likelihood

To examine future travel information search and product purchase/repurchase via the Internet, all respondents were asked to indicate their likelihood to do so on a 5-point scale of likelihood. According to Table 12, over half of the 170 respondents indicated an intention to search for travel information via the Internet in the future (Mean = 3.60, SD = 1.20). Over one third would be "likely" to search online while 24.7 percent claimed a very high possibility by choosing "extremely likely". Among those tourists who had purchased online before (N = 71), count of the responses represented a different distribution. Table 13 indicates that 35.2 percent purchasers would be "likely" and close to 40 percent would be "extremely likely" to search travel information via the Internet in the future.

Participants also were asked about the possibility of their purchase/repurchase of online travel products/services in the future (see Table 12). The largest percentage of them (35.3%) said that they would be "neither unlikely nor likely" to purchase while half of the rest claimed somewhat "unlikely" and the other half somewhat "likely". Again, responses from online purchasers showed a different distribution. Over 50 percent of them were interested in buying travel products online with 32.4 percent "likely" and 21.1 percent "extremely likely" in the future (see Table 13).

Table 12

Future Travel Information Search and Product Purchase Likelihood

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
		N = 170			
*Q13. Future online travel information search likelihood**				3.60	1.20
Extremely unlikely	16	9.4	9.4		
Unlikely	12	7.1	16.5		
Neither unlikely nor likely	38	22.4	38.8		
Likely	62	36.5	75.3		
Extremely likely	42	24.7	100.0		
*Q18. Future online travel product purchase likelihood**				2.93	1.21
Extremely unlikely	26	15.3	15.3		
Unlikely	32	18.8	34.1		
Neither unlikely nor likely	60	35.3	69.4		
Likely	32	18.8	88.2		
Extremely likely	20	11.8	100.0		

Note: * 5-point rating scale: 1 = extremely unlikely, 5 = extremely likely

Table 13

Future Travel Information Search and Product Purchase Likelihood vs. Purchasers/nonpurchasers
Crosstabulation

| | Q14. Online purchase history | | | |
| | N = 170 | | | |
	Online Purchasers	Percentage	Online nonpurchasers	Percentage
Q13. Future online travel information				
search likelihood*	n = 71		n = 92	
Extremely unlikely	3	4.23	11	11.96
Unlikely	3	4.23	9	9.78
Neither unlikely nor likely	12	16.9	25	27.17
Likely	25	35.21	35	38.04
Extremely likely	28	39.44	12	13.04
Q18. Future online travel product				
purchase likelihood*				
Extremely unlikely	5	7.04	20	21.74
Unlikely	6	8.45	25	27.17
Neither unlikely nor likely	22	30.99	35	38.04
Likely	23	32.39	8	8.7
Extremely likely	15	21.13	4	4.35

Note: * 5-point rating scale: 1 = extremely unlikely, 5 = extremely likely

Model hypotheses testing

An online travel information search and purchase model (See Figure 4) has been drafted, which incorporates prior research on travel information search and travel decision-making in general and suggests a series of hypotheses related to travel product information acquisition and purchase behaviour via the Internet among Chinese outbound tourists. Results of testing these hypotheses are presented below.

Hypothesis 1: Use of travel Web sites for searching for travel information and purchasing travel products will vary as a function of travelers' socio-demographic attributes such as age, gender, income, education, occupation and marital status.

H1a (Age): People who are 26 to 35 years of age are more likely to use the Internet for travel information search and product purchase.

Firstly, statistics were run on two age groups (i.e., "18 – 25" and "26 and above") instead of three because of the small number of respondents between 36 and 45. Table 14 shows that there was no significant relationship between respondents' age and their online travel information search, which was measured by use of travel-related Web sites, conception of Internet role and key aspects of travel information search. On the other hand, when examining online travel product purchase, since not all respondents gave their answers on questions 14 and 15, statistics were performed after weighing. As a result, respondents' age was found to be positively related to their online travel product purchase as people at an older age were more likely to have purchased online and more frequently ($r = .442, p < .05$). However, no significant relationship was found between people's age and the percentage of time that they put

orders on the Internet for travel products ($t[189.145] = -.1.391, p > .05$). Thus, H1a was not supported.

H1b (Gender): People who are male are more likely to use the Internet for travel information search and product purchase.

No gender difference was found related to participants' online travel information search behaviour since all significance values were higher than .05 (see Table 15). Some relationship was indicated between people's gender and their use of the Internet for purchasing. Table 15 shows that men were more likely to purchase travel products online and purchased more frequently than women in this research ($X^2[4] = 28.518, p < .05$). However, men and women were not significantly different in the percentage of time that they would place orders online for travel products ($t[191] = -.170, p > .05$). Again, H1b was not supported.

H1c (Income): People who have higher annual personal income are more likely to use the Internet for travel information search and product purchase.

Table 16 indicates significant differences among respondents' use of the Internet to search for detailed travel product information with regard to their annual personal income level. People with higher income were found to be more likely to search online ($t[168] = -3.189, p < .05$). Also shown in Table 16 is a significant relationship between respondents' income and online travel product purchase. People who had higher income were more likely to have purchased travel products online and more frequently ($r = .171, p < .05$) while they did not differ significantly in percentage of time of ordering online ($r = -.020, p > .05$), so H1c was also not supported.

Table 14

Relationship of Age to Online Travel Information Search and Product Purchase (H1a)

	Q25. Age		Test statistic	d.f.	p.
	Column Percentage (%) of Respondents				
	18 – 25	26 and above			
Online travel information search	n = 110	n = 60			
Q8d. Travel Web sites			X² = 1.777	1	.183
Yes	52.7	63.3			
Q9. Internet role			r = .100		.195
None	6.4	3.3			
Contributory	80	76.7			
Decisive	13.6	20			
Q10. Types of travel information searched					
Detailed travel products information	70	68.3	X² = .051	1	.822
Price comparisons	54.5	63.3	X² = 1.228	1	.268
Availability of products/services	58.2	66.7	X² = 1.177	1	.278
Knowledge enhancement	36.4	38.3	X² = .065	1	.799
Visual information	52.7	38.3	X² = 3.225	1	.073
Information exchange	21.8	15	X² = 1.154	1	.283
Online travel product purchase	-				
Q14. Purchase history	n = 105	n = 58	r = .442*		.000
Not applicable	66.7	37.9			
1-2 times	25.7	31			
3-4 times	6.7	13.8			
5-6 times	1	10.3			
Over 6 times		6.9			
Q15. Order percentage	n = 34	n = 34	t = -1.391	189.145	.166
Never (0%)	5.9	2.9			
Few (25%)	35.3	35.3			
Half (50%)	35.3	35.3			
Most (75%)	23.5	20.6			
All (100%)		5.9			

Notes. * Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

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Table 15

Relationship of Gender to Online Travel Information Search and Product Purchase (H1b)

	Q22. Gender		Test statistic	d.f.	*p.*
	Column Percentage (%) of Respondents				
	Female	Male			
Online travel information search	n = 94	n = 76			
Q8d. Travel Web sites			$X^2 = .824$	1	.364
Yes	59.6	52.6			
Q9. Internet role			$X^2 = .154$	2	.936
None	5.3	5.3			
Contributory	79.8	77.6			
Decisive	14.9	17.1			
Q10. Types of travel information searched					
Detailed travel products information	71.3	67.1	$X^2 = .344$	1	.557
Price comparisons	60.6	53.9	$X^2 = .771$	1	.380
Availability of products/services	63.8	57.9	$X^2 = .623$	1	.430
Knowledge enhancement	38.3	35.5	$X^2 = .138$	1	.710
Visual information	47.9	47.4	$X^2 = .004$	1	.948
Information exchange	20.2	18.4	$X^2 = .086$	1	.769
Online travel product purchase					
Q14. Purchase history	n = 105	n = 58	$X^2 = 28.518$	4	.000
Not applicable	61.5	50			
1-2 times	25.3	30.6			
3-4 times	11	6.9			
5-6 times	1.1	8.3			
Over 6 times	1.1	4.2			
Q15. Order percentage	n = 34	n = 34	t = -.170	191	.866
Never (0%)	5.9	2.9			
Few (25%)	29.4	41.2			
Half (50%)	38.2	32.4			
Most (75%)	26.5	17.6			
All (100%)		5.9			

Table 16

Relationship of Annual Personal Income to Online Travel Information Search and Product Purchase (H1c)

Online travel information search	Q24. Annual personal income	Test statistic	d.f.	*p.*
Q8d. Travel Web sites	N = 170	t = -1.694	168	.092
Q9. Internet role	N = 170	r = .136		.077
Q10. Types of travel information searched	N = 170			
Detailed travel product information		t = -3.189	168	.002
Price comparisons		t = -1.737	168	.084
Availability of products/services		t =.821	168	.413
Knowledge enhancement		t = -.540	168	.590
Visual information		t = -1.250	168	.213
Information exchange		t = -1.583	168	.121
Online travel product purchase				
Q14. Purchase history	N = 163	r = .171*		.004
Q15. Order percentage	N = 68	r = -.020		.780

Notes. * Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

H1d (Education): People who received college or higher education are more likely to use the Internet for travel information search and product purchase.

Among the measures of online travel information search, significant relationships were found between respondents' education level and their use of travel Web sites, search for detailed travel information and for availability of products/services online. Table 17 indicates that people who received higher education were more likely to use travel information on travel-related Web sites ($X^2[6] = 14.031$, $p < .05$). Moreover, concerning detailed travel information (e.g., transportation, accommodation, attractions and activities) and availability of online travel products/services, respondents showed significant difference among groups of various education levels when people having some level of postsecondary education were more likely to search online ($X^2[6] = 13.351, p < .05; X^2[6] = 17.744, p < .05$).

Results of correlation statistics show that respondents' education level was also positively related to their online travel product purchase behaviour. Table 17 presents that people who attained higher education level were more likely to purchase online and purchase more frequently ($r = .216, p < .05$). However, no significant relationship was found concerning respondents' percentage of time placing orders on the Internet ($r = .120, p > .05$). As a result, H1d was not supported.

Table 17

Relationship of Education to Online Travel Information Search and Product Purchase (H1d)

Online travel information search	Q21. Education	Test statistic	d.f.	*p.*
Q8d. Travel Web sites	N = 170	$X^2 = 14.031$	6	.029
Q9. Internet role	N = 170	$r = .111$		.151
Q10. Types of travel information searched	N = 170			
Detailed travel product information		$X^2 = 13.351$	6	.038
Price comparisons		$X^2 = 8.791$	6	.186
Availability of products/services		$X^2 = 17.744$	6	.007
Knowledge enhancement		$X^2 = 3.401$	6	.757
Visual information		$X^2 = 4.425$	6	.619
Information exchange		$X^2 = 7.778$	6	.255
Online travel product purchase				
Q14. Purchase history	N = 163	$r = .216^*$		.000
Q15. Order percentage	N = 68	$r = .120$		.098

Notes. * Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

H1e (Occupation): People who are in management or administration positions are more likely to use the Internet for travel information search and product purchase.

Travelers' occupations were measured by two variables, i.e., the main industry they worked in (Q19) and related industry roles (Q20). No significant relationship was found between respondents' occupation and their use of travel-related Web sites and conception of Internet role in search for travel information online (see Tables 18 & 19). However, respondents' occupation was found to be significantly related to two of the key types of travel information searched via the Internet. In other words, people who were employed in computer-related or service industries were more like to search visual travel information online ($X^2[6] = 14.395, p < .05$) while people who identified their industry role as "employee" or "other" tended to search for the "availability of products/services" via the Internet ($X^2[3] = 25.959, p < .05$).

As to online travel product purchase, respondents in various occupation groups differed significantly. According to Tables 18 and 19, relationships exist between people's occupations and their use of the Internet to purchase travel products ($X^2[24] = 126.627, p < .05; X^2[12] = 41.840, p < .05$) Therefore, respondents who were in management positions and employed in computer-related industry were most likely to purchase online while those in professional and services industries were more likely to purchase online for more than four times. On the other hand, people who worked mainly in education were more likely to place orders for travel products via the Internet ($F[6, 186] = 3.639, p < .05$) while people's industry role was not related to their online ordering behaviour ($F[3, 158] = .626, p > .05$). Therefore, H1e was not supported.

Table 18

Relationship of Main Industry to Online Travel Information Search and Product Purchase (H1e)

Online travel information search	Q19. Respondents' main industry	Test statistic	d.f.	*p.*
Q8d. Travel Web sites	N = 170	$X^2 = 3.294$	6	.771
Q9. Internet role	N = 170	$X^2 = 4.097$	12	.982
Q10. Types of travel information searched	N = 170			
Detailed travel product information		$X^2 = 5.355$	6	.499
Price comparisons		$X^2 = 9.625$	6	.141
Availability of products/services		$X^2 = 4.923$	6	.554
Knowledge enhancement		$X^2 = 5.233$	6	.514
Visual information		$X^2 = 14.395$	6	.026
Information exchange		$X^2 = 10.352$	6	.111
Online travel product purchase				
Q14. Purchase history	N = 163	$X^2 = 126.627$	24	.000
Q15. Order percentage	N = 68	F = 3.639	6 186	.002

Table 19

Relationship of Industry Role to Online Travel Information Search and Product Purchase (H1e)

Online travel information search	Q20. Industry role	Test statistic	d.f.	*p.*
Q8d. Travel Web sites	N = 170	$X^2 = 3.746$	3	.290
Q9. Internet role	N = 170	$X^2 = 7.622$	6	.267
Q10. Types of travel information searched	N = 170			
Detailed travel product information		$X^2 = 3.123$	3	.373
Price comparisons		$X^2 = 2.814$	3	.421
Availability of products/services		$X^2 = 25.959$	3	.000
Knowledge enhancement		$X^2 = 7.832$	3	.050
Visual information		$X^2 = 1.701$	3	.637
Information exchange		$X^2 = 1.058$	3	.787
Online travel product purchase				
Q14. Purchase history	N = 163	$X^2 = 41.840$	12	.000
Q15. Order percentage	N = 68	$F = .626$	3 158	.599

H1f (Marital status): People who are unmarried are more likely to use the Internet for travel information search and product purchase.

No statistically significant relationships were revealed about respondent's online travel information search behaviour except one relating to price comparisons (see Table 20). However, contrary to the hypothesis, people who were unmarried were less likely to search information for comparing travel prices ($X^2[1] = 5.397, p < .05$). Table 20 also indicates that respondents who were married were more likely to have purchased travel products via the Internet and purchased more frequently than those who were unmarried ($X^2[4] = 15.427, p < .05$). Their marital status was not significantly related to the percentage of time they chose to order online ($F[1, 191] = 3.376, p > .05$) and once again the hypothesis (H1f) was not supported.

The results presented above show that although the hypotheses (H1) about Chinese outbound tourists' socio-demographic attributes and their use of the Internet for travel information search and product purchase were not supported, testing of these subhypotheses revealed different implications about respondents' search and purchase behaviour. First, regarding people's online travel information search, only respondents who received higher education were found to be more likely to use the travel information on the Internet; however, they did not differ significantly in search for travel information via the Internet according to other characteristics, including age, gender, annual personal income, occupation and marital status. Functional travel information search (i.e., detailed travel product information, price comparisons and availability of products/services) was related to income, education, occupation and

marital status. Visual information of a remote travel destination was the only

non-functional information search item related to respondents' socio-demographics

(i.e., the main industry that they worked in). As to purchase behaviour, some

relationships were indicated between travelers' socio-demographics and their use of the

Internet for purchasing travel products. As hypothesized in the model, all the attributes

were significantly related to respondents' past online buying experience. However,

statistics showed that the percentage of time they placed orders via the Internet was not

related to any characteristics other than respondents' main industry.

Table 20

Relationship of Marital Status to Online Travel Information Search and Product Purchase (H1f)

	Q23. Marital status		Test statistic	d.f.	*p.*
	Column Percentage (%) of Respondents				
	Single	Married			
Online travel information search	n = 140	n = 30			
Q8d. Travel Web sites			$X^2 = 1.541$	1	.215
Yes	54.3	66.7			
Q9. Internet role			$X^2 = .675$	2	.714
None	5.7	3.3			
Contributory	79.3	76.7			
Decisive	15	20			
Q10. Types of travel information searched					
Detailed travel products information	70	66.7	$X^2 = .129$	1	.719
Price comparisons	53.6	76.7	$X^2 = 5.397$	1	.020
Availability of products/services	62.1	56.7	$X^2 = .312$	1	.576
Knowledge enhancement	37.1	36.7	$X^2 = .002$	1	.961
Visual information	49.3	40	$X^2 = .854$	1	.355
Information exchange	20	16.7	$X^2 = .175$	1	.675
Online travel product purchase	~				
Q14. Purchase history	n = 143	n = 29	$X^2 = 15.427$	4	.004
Not applicable	56.7	55.2			
1-2 times	29.1	20.7			
3-4 times	9	10.3			
5-6 times	3.7	6.9			
Over 6 times	1.5	6.9			
Q15. Order percentage	n = 56	n = 12	F = 3.376	1 191	.068
Never (0%)	3.6	8.3			
Few (25%)	41.1	8.3			
Half (50%)	30.4	58.3			
Most (75%)	23.2	16.7			
All (100%)	1.8	8.3			

Hypothesis 2: Use of travel Web sites for searching travel information and purchasing travel products will vary as a function of travelers' behavioural attributes such as purpose of trip, previous travel experience, Internet use behaviour and non-functional information needs.

H2a (Purpose of trip): Chinese outbound tourists who travel for pleasure are most likely to use the Internet for travel information search and product purchase while tourists who travel for visiting friends/relatives are least likely to use the Internet for travel information search and product purchase.

As presented in Table 21, among these Chinese outbound tourists who searched for travel information online, no significant relationships were found between their purpose of trip (i.e., business, personal pleasure & visiting friends/relatives) and use of travel Web sites, conception of Internet roles and most of the key aspects of online travel information. The one exception to this was personal pleasure travelers who were more likely to search for "availability of online travel products/services" in comparison to those friends/relatives visitors ($X^2[2] = 6.675, p < .05$). However, travelers showed differences in their online purchase behaviour with personal pleasure travelers more likely to purchase online ($X^2[8] = 22.290, p < .05$) and to place orders on the Web when they made a purchase decision ($F[1, 152] = 10.072, p < .05$). Hence, H2a was not supported.

Table 21

Relationship of Purpose of Trip to Online Travel Information Search and Product Purchase (H2a)

	Q3. Purpose of trip			Test statistic	d.f.	p.
	Column Percentage (%) of Respondents					
	Business	Personal pleasure	Visiting friends /relatives			
Online travel information search	n = 1	n = 94	n = 10			
Q8d. Travel Web sites				X^2 = 5.593	2	.061
Yes	0	75.5	50			
Q9. Internet role				X^2 = 4.554	4	.336
None		1.1	10			
Contributory	100	78.7	80			
Decisive		20.2	10			
Q10. Types of travel information searched						
Detailed travel products information	100	79.8	60	X^2 = 2.352	2	.309
Price comparisons	100	71.3	60	X^2 = .975	2	.614
Availability of products/services	100	69.1	30	X^2 = 6.675	2	.036
Knowledge enhancement	100	40.4	40	X^2 = 1.456	2	.483
Visual information	100	55.3	30	X^2 = 3.211	2	.201
Information exchange	100	21.3	30	X^2 = 3.798	2	.150
Online travel product purchase						
Q14. Purchase history	n = 1	n = 91	n = 9	X^2 = 22.290	8	.004
Not applicable	100	46.2	33.3			
1-2 times		35.2	22.2			
3-4 times		9.9	22.2			
5-6 times		4.4	22.2			
Over 6 times		4.4				
Q15. Order percentage	n = 0	n = 46	n = 6	F = 10.072	1,152	.002
Never (0%)		2.2	16.7			
Few (25%)		26.1	33.3			
Half (50%)		39.1	50			
Most (75%)		30.4				
. All (100%)		2.2				

H2b (Past experience): People who have traveled to a destination out of China more times will be more likely to use the Internet for travel information search and product purchase.

According to results presented in Table 22, respondents' past travel experience was not statistically related to their online travel information search behaviour, which referred to their use of travel Web sites ($X^2[3] = 5.164, p > .05$), Internet role in travel information search ($r = -.084, p > .05$) and key aspects of online travel information. When considering their online purchase behaviour, although there was no significant relationship for the number of times that respondents had traveled to a destination outside of China and percentage of time that they would place orders online ($r = -.009$, $p > .05$), Table 22 indicates that outbound travelers who had traveled more times tended to have purchased travel products online and purchased more frequently in the past year ($r = .158, p < .05$). Thus H2b was not supported.

Table 22

Relationship of Past Travel Experience to Online Travel Information Search and Product Purchase (H2b)

	Q1. Previous travel experience				Test statistic	d.f.	p.
	Column Percentage (%) of Respondents						
	1-2 times	3-4 times	5-6 times	Over 6 times			
Online travel information search	n = 103	n = 34	n = 7	n = 26			
Q8d. Travel Web sites					X² = 5.164	3	.160
Yes	50.5	61.8	85.7	65.4			
Q9. Internet role					r = -.084		.276
None	4.9	5.9		7.7			
Contributory	76.7	82.4	85.7	80.8			
Decisive	18.4	11.8	14.3	11.5			
Q10. Types of travel information searched							
Detailed travel products information	65	76.5	100	69.2	X² = 4.807	3	.187
Price comparisons	61.2	47.1	42.9	61.5	X² = 2.872	3	.412
Availability of products/services	57.3	64.7	85.7	65.4	X² = 2.805	3	.423
Knowledge enhancement	36.9	41.2	42.9	30.8	X² = .790	3	.852
Visual information	49.5	41.2	42.9	50	X² = .837	3	.841
Information exchange	17.5	26.5	28.6	15.4	X² = 1.975	3	.578
Online travel product purchase							
Q14. Purchase history	n = 96	n = 34	n = 7	n = 26	r = .158*		.008
Not applicable	62.5	61.8	14.3	38.5			
1-2 times	27.1	20.6	28.6	38.5			
3-4 times	3.1	17.6	14.3	19.2			
5-6 times	4.2		42.9				
Over 6 times	3.1			3.8			
Q15. Order percentage	n = 33	n = 13	n = 6	n = 16	r = -.009		.906
Never (0%)	6.1	7.7					
Few (25%)	36.4	23.1	16.7	50			
Half (50%)	33.3	30.8	50	37.5			
Most (75%)	24.2	38.5	16.7	6.3			
All (100%)			16.7	6.3			

Notes. * Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

H2c (Internet use): People who have more years of online experience; stay more often online; mainly access the Internet from home and work, and are more comfortable with their Internet use skills will be more likely to search travel information and purchase travel products online.

As shown in Tables 23 to 26, there were no significant relationships among respondents' Internet use and the key aspects of their search for online travel information. On the purchasing side, most of these aspects were statistically related to respondents' use of the Internet for purchasing online travel products. It was indicated in Table 25 that people who mainly accessed the Internet from work were most likely to have purchased travel products online ($X^2[8] = 71.612, p < .05$). Moreover, those who had more years of online experience (Table 23), stayed online daily rather than weekly (Table 24), and accessed the Internet mainly from work (Table 25) were more likely to order travel products on the Internet. Contrary to the hypothesis, no significant relationship was found between respondents' comfort level with Internet use and their online travel information search and product purchase behaviour (see Table 26). Once again H2c was not supported.

Table 23

Relationship of Internet Use History to Online Travel Information Search and Product Purchase (H2c)

	Q4. Internet use history			Test statistic	d.f.	*p.*
	Column Percentage (%) of Respondents					
	< 3 years	3 to 6 years	> 6 years			
Online travel information search	n = 10	n = 104	n = 56			
Q8d. Travel Web sites				X² = .698	2	.706
Yes	50	54.8	60.7			
Q9. Internet role				r = .092		.233
None	10	6.7	1.8			
Contributory	80	77.9	80.4			
Decisive	10	15.4	17.9			
Q10. Types of travel information searched						
Detailed travel products information	80	65.4	75	X² = 2.146	2	.342
Price comparisons	30	54.8	67.9	X² = 5.865	2	.053
Availability of products/services	70	62.5	57.1	X² = .788	2	.674
Knowledge enhancement	40	35.6	39.3	X² = .254	2	.881
Visual information	50	50	42.9	X² = .768	2	.681
Information exchange	30	19.2	17.9	X² = .805	2	.669
Online travel product purchase						
Q14. Purchase history	n = 10	n = 100	n = 53	r = -.029		.630
Not applicable	50	58	54.7			
1-2 times	10	29	28.3			
3-4 times	20	7	11.3			
5-6 times	20	4	1.9			
Over 6 times		2	3.8			
Q15. Order percentage	n = 5	n = 41	n = 22	r = .179*		.031
Never (0%)		7.3				
Few (25%)	40	41.5	22.7			
Half (50%)	20	36.6	36.4			
Most (75%)	40	9.8	40.9			
All (100%)		4.9				

Notes. * Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

Table 24

Relationship of Internet Use Frequency to Online Travel Information Search and Product Purchase (H2c)

	Q5. How often use		Test statistic	d.f.	*p.*
	Column Percentage (%) of Respondents				
	Weekly	Daily			
Online travel information search	n = 6	n = 164			
Q8d. Travel Web sites			$X^2 = .106$	1	.745
Yes	50	56.7			
Q9. Internet role			$r = .115$		.137
None	16.7	4.9			
Contributory	83.3	78.7			
Decisive		16.5			
Q10. Types of travel information searched					
Detailed travel products information	33.3	70.7	$X^2 = 3.813$	1	.051
Price comparisons	16.7	59.1	$X^2 = 4.278$	1	.039
Availability of products/services	50	61.6	$X^2 = .327$	1	.567
Knowledge enhancement	33.3	37.2	$X^2 = .037$	1	.847
Visual information	16.7	48.8	$X^2 = 2.393$	1	.122
Information exchange		20.1	$X^2 = 1.498$	1	.221
Online travel product purchase					
Q14. Purchase history	n = 6	n = 157	$r = -.012$		.843
Not applicable	66.7	56.1			
1-2 times	16.7	28			
3-4 times		9.6			
5-6 times	16.7	3.8			
Over 6 times		2.5			
Q15. Order percentage	n = 2	n =66	$r = .191^*$		.008
Never (0%)		4.5			
Few (25%)	100	33.3			
Half (50%)		36.4			
Most (75%)		22.7			
All (100%)		3			

Notes. * Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

Table 25

Relationship of Internet Main Access to Online Travel Information Search and Product Purchase (H2c)

	Q6. Main access			Test statistic	d.f.	*p.*
	Column Percentage (%) of Respondents					
	Home	Work	School			
Online travel information search	n = 142	n = 10	n = 15			
Q8d. Travel Web sites				$X^2 = 2.874$	2	.238
Yes	55.6	80	46.7			
Q9. Internet role				$r = 1.203$	4	.878
None	5.6		6.7			
Contributory	78.9	90	73.3			
Decisive	15.5	10	20			
Q10. Types of travel information searched						
Detailed travel products information	69.7	80	60	$X^2 = 1.161$	2	.560
Price comparisons	59.2	80	33.3	$X^2 = 5.814$	2	.055
Availability of products/services	59.2	70	80	$X^2 = 2.806$	2	.246
Knowledge enhancement	35.2	70	26.7	$X^2 = 5.568$	2	.062
Visual information	51.4	40	26.7	$X^2 = 3.633$	2	.163
Information exchange	19.7	20	20	$X^2 = .001$	2	.999
Online travel product purchase						
Q14. Purchase history	n = 10	n = 100	n = 53	$X^2 = 71.612$	8	.000
Not applicable	60.7	30	33.3			
1-2 times	25.9	40	40			
3-4 times	9.6		13.3			
5-6 times	1.5	30	6.7			
Over 6 times	2.2		6.7			
Q15. Order percentage	n = 5	n = 41	n = 22	$F = 4.882$	2 188	.009
Never (0%)	60					
Few (25%)	36	14.3	40			
Half (50%)	34	42.9	40			
Most (75%)	22	28.6	20			
All (100%)	2	14.3				

Table 26

Relationship of Internet Use Comfort to Online Travel Information Search and Product Purchase (H2c)

	Q7. Use comfort					Test statistic	d.f.	*p.*
	Column Percentage (%) of Respondents							
	Very uncomfortable	--	--	--	Very comfortable			
Online travel information search	n = 11	n = 10	n = 28	n = 65	n = 56			
Q8d. Travel Web sites						t = -1.103	168	.272
Yes	54.5	60	39.3	58.5	62.5			
Q9. Internet role						r = -.097		.210
None		10	7.1	4.6	5.4			
Contributory	54.5	70	71.4	87.7	78.6			
Decisive	45.5	20	21.4	7.7	16.1			
Q10. Types of travel information searched								
Detailed travel products information	81.8	80	57.1	73.8	66.1	t = .678	168	.499
Price comparisons	45.5	40	64.3	58.5	58.9	t = -.873	168	.384
Availability of products/services	81.8	50	64.3	52.3	67.9	t = .246	168	.806
Knowledge enhancement	45.5	40	28.6	32.3	44.6	t = -.454	168	.650
Visual information	45.5	20	46.4	49.2	51.8	t = -1.203	168	.231
Information exchange	27.3	30	10.7	18.5	21.4	t = .195	168	.846
Online travel product purchase								
Q14. Purchase history	n = 11	n = 9	n = 27	n = 61	n = 55	r = .090		.135
Not applicable	54.5	66.7	66.7	57.4	49.1			
1-2 times	18.2	22.2	14.8	34.4	29.1			
3-4 times	9.1	11.1	11.1	4.9	12.7			
5-6 times	18.2		3.7	3.3	3.6			
Over 6 times			3.7		5.5			
Q15. Order percentage	n = 5	n = 3	n = 8	n = 25	n = 28	r = .029		.687
Never (0%)			25	4.2				
Few (25%)	40	33.3		50	32.1			
Half (50%)	40	33.3	25	29.2	42.9			
Most (75%)	20	33.3	50	16.7	17.9			
All (100%)					7.1			

H2d (Non-functional information needs): People who have information needs other than those that are trip-related will be more likely to use the Internet for travel information search and product purchase.

Non-functional information needs in this research referred to enhancing one's knowledge about an unfamiliar destination, obtaining graphic information that conveyed the physical attractiveness of a remote place, and travel information exchange with other Internet users. Table 27 indicates that people who seek knowledge enhancement were more likely to use travel Web sites for travel information ($X^2[1] = 5.654, p < .05$). Table 27 shows that those who wanted to obtain information exchange about a remote place via the Internet were more likely to regard the Internet in a decisive role while those who did not were more likely to regard it in a contributory role ($X^2[2] = 14.992, p < .05$).

When testing online travel product purchase behaviour, only the visual information need was statistically related to respondents' online purchase history. People looking for visual information were more likely to purchase online "1 – 2 times" but less likely to purchase more than twice compared to those who did not have the need for visual information ($X^2[4] = 16.989, p < .05$). Once again the sub-hypothesis was not supported.

Table 27

Relationship of Non-functional Information Needs to Online Travel Information Search and Product Purchase (H2d)

	Q10e. Knowledge enhancement		Test statistic	d.f.	*p.*
	Column Percentage (%) of Respondents				
	No	Yes			
Online travel information search	n = 107	n= 63			
Q8d. Travel Web sites			X² = 5.654	1	.017
No	50.5	31.7			
Yes	49.5	68.3			
Q9. Internet role			X² = 5.219	2	.074
None	7.5	1.6			
Contributory	80.4	76.2			
Decisive	12.1	22.2			
Online travel product purchase					
Q14. Purchase history	n = 102	n = 61	X² = 5.709	4	.222
Not applicable	59.8	50.8			
1-2 times	23.5	34.4			
3-4 times	9.8	8.2			
5-6 times	3.9	4.9			
Over 6 times	2.9	1.6			
Q15. Order percentage	n = 39	n = 29	t = -1.400	191	.163
Never (0%)	2.6	6.9			
Few (25%)	38.5	31			
Half (50%)	38.5	31			
Most (75%)	17.9	27.6			
All (100%)	2.6	3.4			

Table 27

Relationship of Non-functional Information Needs to Online Travel Information Search and Product Purchase (H2d) (Continued)

	Q10f. Visual information		Test statistic	d.f.	*p.*
	Column Percentage (%) of Respondents				
	No	Yes			
Online travel information search	n = 89	n = 81			
Q8d. Travel Web sites			X² = .006	1	.936
No	43.8	43.2			
Yes	56.2	56.8			
Q9. Internet role			X² = .250	2	.883
None	5.6	4.9			
Contributory	79.8	77.8			
Decisive	14.6	17.3			
Online travel product purchase					
Q14. Purchase history	n = 87	n = 76	X² = 16.989	4	.002
Not applicable	55.2	57.9			
1-2 times	24.1	31.6			
3-4 times	10.3	7.9			
5-6 times	6.9	1.3			
Over 6 times	3.4	1.3			
Q15. Order percentage	n = 38	n = 30	t = -1.306	191	.193
Never (0%)	2.6	6.7			
Few (25%)	42.1	26.7			
Half (50%)	36.8	33.3			
Most (75%)	13.2	33.3			
All (100%)	5.3				

Table 27

Relationship of Non-functional Information Needs to Online Travel Information Search and Product Purchase (H2d) (Continuted)

	Q10g. Information exchange		Test statistic	d.f.	*p.*
	Column Percentage (%) of Respondents				
	No	Yes			
Online travel information search	n = 137	n = 33			
Q8d. *Travel Web sites*			X² = .855	1	.355
No	45.3	36.4			
Yes	54.7	63.6			
Q9. *Internet role*			X² = 14.992	2	.001
None	4.4	9.1			
Contributory	84.7	54.5			
Decisive	10.9	36.4			
Online travel product purchase					
Q14. *Purchase history*	n = 130	n = 33	X² = 8.066	4	.089
Not applicable	57.7	51.5			
1-2 times	26.2	33.3			
3-4 times	8.5	12.1			
5-6 times	4.6	3			
Over 6 times	3.1				
Q15. *Order percentage*	n = 52	n = 16	t = -.680	191	.497
Never (0%)	3.8	6.3			
Few (25%)	38.5	25			
Half (50%)	34.6	37.5			
Most (75%)	19.2	31.3			
All (100%)	3.8				

Hypothesis 3 (Barriers): Decision to purchase travel products via the Internet is negatively associated with certain perceived/practical barriers according to travelers. In other words, people who perceive certain barriers will be less likely to purchase travel products online and people who perceive more barriers will be less likely to purchase travel products via the Internet.

According to Tables 28 and 29, eight barriers were found to be significantly related to both respondents' online travel product purchase history and percentage of time that they would put orders on the Internet. These barriers were: "faster/easier to purchase locally", "not familiar with vendor", "don't trust that my credit card number will be secure", "difficult to judge the quality of a product/service", "not enough information to make a decision", "heard it's not a reliable/secure/trustworthy way to make purchases", "prefer to deal with people" and "difficult to find appropriate Web sites" ($p < .05$). Moreover, respondents who reported such barriers as "never tried it", "generally uncomfortable with the idea", "had a bad experience in the past" and "don't trust that my personal information will be kept private" were less likely to have purchased online travel products while those who thought it was "too complicated to place order" were less likely to put orders on the Internet when they made a decision to purchase. No difference was found among people who had and had not barriers like "don't have a credit card", "site doesn't offer the option to purchase" and "unguaranteed reservation services" when it was concerned with their online travel product purchase behaviour.

Since multiple comparisons were involved for testing these perceived barriers,

the probability of type 1 error was raised and an adjusted significant level was applied

(i.e., a Bonferroni correction) (Bonferroni, 2004, Explanation section). In other words,

for any relationship between these sixteen barriers and respondents' online product

purchase to be significant, the p value must be less than .05/16 = .003125. As a result,

people who perceived barriers as "faster/easier to purchase locally", "not familiar with

vendor", "not enough information to make a decision", "heard it's not a

reliable/secure/trustworthy way to make purchases" and "prefer to deal with people"

tended not to purchase travel products and place orders online. Those who "never tried

online purchase before" or "generally feel uncomfortable with the idea" were found

less likely to have purchased online while people thought it "too complicated to place

order", "difficult to judge the quality of a product/service" or "difficult to find

appropriate Web sites" were less likely to order travel products on the Internet.

Table 30 indicates strong negative relationships between the total number of

respondents' perceived/practical barriers and their online travel product purchase. In

other words, people who had more barriers were less likely to purchase online ($r =$

$-.355, p < .05$) and less likely to place orders for online travel products via the Internet

($r = -.386, p < .05$) as well. Therefore, H3 was supported.

Table 28

Relationship of Perceived/practical Barriers to Online Travel Product Purchase History (H3)

Q17. Barriers vs. Q14. purchase history N = 170	n	Test statistic	d.f.	p.
Q17b. Never tried it	49	$X^2 = 83.037$	4	.000**
Q17c. Too complicated to place order	46	$X^2 = 9.206$	4	.056
Q17d. Faster/easier to purchase locally	60	$X^2 = 16.112$	4	.003**
Q17e. Not familiar with vendor	86	$X^2 = 34.201$	4	.000**
Q17f. Don't trust that my credit card number will be secure	74	$X^2 = 12.071$	4	.017*
Q17g. Difficult to judge the quality of a product/service	91	$X^2 = 14.766$	4	.005*
Q17h. Not enough information to make a decision	67	$X^2 = 18.576$	4	.001**
Q17i. Generally uncomfortable with the idea	11	$X^2 = 22.792$	4	.000**
Q17j. Heard it's not a reliable/secure/trustworthy way to make purchases	49	$X^2 = 24.263$	4	.000**
Q17k. Had a bad experience in the past	8	$X^2 = 10.401$	4	.034*
Q17l. Don't trust that my personal information will be kept private	51	$X^2 = 12.734$	4	.013*
Q17m. Don't have a credit card	21	$X^2 = 9.038$	4	.060
Q17n. Prefer to deal with people	35	$X^2 = 19.003$	4	.001**
Q17o. Difficult to find appropriate Web sites	28	$X^2 = 10.233$	4	.037*
Q17p. Site doesn't offer the option to purchase	9	$X^2 = 8.085$	4	.089
Q17q. Unguaranteed reservation services	25	$X^2 = 8.723$	4	.068

Note: *Significant at p<.05

    **Significant at p<.00315

Table 29

Relationship of Perceived/practical Barriers to Online Travel Product Order Percentage (H3)

Q17. Barriers vs. Q15. online order percentage N = 68	n	Test statistic	d.f.	p.
Q17b. Never tried it	1	t = 1.797	191	.074
Q17c. Too complicated to place order	17	t = 3.093	191	.002**
Q17d. Faster/easier to purchase locally	19	t = 3.101	191	.002**
Q17e. Not familiar with vendor	26	t = 3.985	191	.000**
Q17f. Don't trust that my credit card number will be secure	27	t = 2.283	191	.024**
Q17g. Difficult to judge the quality of a product/service	33	t = 4.602	191	.000**
Q17h. Not enough information to make a decision	24	t = 5.936	191	.000**
Q17i. Generally uncomfortable with the idea	0	----	-----	----
Q17j. Heard it's not a reliable/secure/trustworthy way to make purchases	12	t = 3.176	191	.002**
Q17k. Had a bad experience in the past	6	t = 1.199	191	.232
Q17l. Don't trust that my personal information will be kept private	17	t = .432	191	.666
Q17m. Don't have a credit card	10	t = -1.707	191	.089
Q17n. Prefer to deal with people	7	t = 8.045	191	.000**
Q17o. Difficult to find appropriate Web sites	10	t = 5.004	191	.000**
Q17p. Site doesn't offer the option to purchase	5	t = 1.195	191	.234
Q17q. Unguaranteed reservation services	8	t = .931	191	.359

Note: *Significant at p<.05

　　　　**Significant at p<.00315

Table 30

Relationship of the Number of Perceived/practical Barriers to Online Travel Product Purchase (H3)

	Q14. Purchase history					Test statistic	p.
	Column Percentage (%) of Respondents						
	Zero	1-2 times	3-4 times	5-6 times	> 6 times		
Q17. The number of barriers to purchase	n = 92	n = 45	n = 15	n = 7	n = 4	r = -.355*	.000
0	7.6	15.6	6.7	42.9	25		
1	12	15.6	6.7		25		
2	6.5	8.9	20	14.3	25		
3	4.3	6.7	13.3	14.3	25		
4	12	20	26.7	28.6			
5	16.3	13.3	6.7				
6	10.9	6.7					
7	7.6	2.2	13.3				
8	9.8		6.7				
9	8.7	4.4					
10	2.2	4.4					
12		2.2					
13	1.1						
15	1.1						

Notes. * Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Table 30

Relationship of the Number of Perceived/practical Barriers to Online Travel Product Purchase (H3)
(Continued)

Q17. The number of barriers to purchase	Q15. Online order percentage					Test statistic	*p.*
	Column Percentage (%) of Respondents						
	Never	Few	Half	Most	All		
	n = 3	n = 24	n= 24	n = 15	n = 2	r = -.386*	.000
0		4.2	20.8	33.3	50		
1	33.3	8.3	16.7	13.3			
2		12.5	12.5	20			
3		8.3	12.5	6.7	50		
4	33.3	25	16.7	20			
5		16.7	4.2	6.7			
6		8.3	4.2				
7		4.2	4.2				
8		4.2					
9	33.3		4.2				
10		4.2	4.2				
12		4.2					

Notes. * Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

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Hypothesis 4 (Satisfaction/dissatisfaction assessment): Intention to use the Internet for travel information search and product purchase in the future is positively associated with travelers' satisfaction with their online travel information search and product purchase experience. In other words, travelers who are more satisfied with their searching and purchasing experience online will be more likely to continue to search and purchase travel products online in the future.

Table 31 shows that strong positive relationships existed between respondents' satisfaction/dissatisfaction assessment and their future use of the Internet for travel information search and product purchase. Therefore, people who were more satisfied with past online travel information search and product purchase experience were more likely to continue to search ($r = .330, p < .05$; $r = .134, p < .05$) and purchase travel products online in the future ($r = .219, p < .05$; $r = .300, p < .05$). Hypothesis 4 was supported. Further indicated in Table 32 was that respondents who were more satisfied with online travel information search tended to be more satisfied with their online travel product purchase ($r = .354, p < .05$) while people claiming more likely to search travel information on the Internet in the future also tended to purchase online travel products in the future ($r = .359, p < .05$).

Based on the findings regarding these current and potential Chinese outbound tourists and results of hypotheses testing on traveler attributes and use of the Internet for travel decision-making, the next chapter provides discussion of the results in this research and their connection with past literature.

Table 31

Relationship of Satisfaction/dissatisfaction Assessment to Future Online Travel Information Search and Product Purchase (H4)

	Q13. Future information search					Test statistic	p.
	Column Percentage (%) of Respondents						
	Extremely unlikely	-----	-----	-----	Extremely likely		
Q12. Satisfaction with online information	n = 16	n = 12	n = 38	n = 62	n = 42	r = .330**	.000
Not at all satisfied	43.8	16.7	5.2	4.8	9.5		
Sort of unsatisfied	18.9	24.9	18.5	19.4	9.6		
Neither unsatisfied nor satisfied	25	41.6	65.8	53.3	40.5		
Sort of satisfied	12.6	16.7	7.9	22.6	35.7		
Very satisfied			2.6		4.8		
Q16. Satisfaction with online purchase	n = 1	n = 3	n = 12	n = 20	n = 27	r = .134*	.044
Sort of unsatisfied			16.6	15	18.5		
Neither unsatisfied nor satisfied		100	49.9	55	25.9		
Sort of satisfied	100		33.3	20	40.7		
Very satisfied				10	14.8		
	Q18. Future online purchase						
	Extremely unlikely	-----	-----	-----	Extremely likely		
Q12. Satisfaction with online information	n = 26	n = 32	n = 60	n = 32	n = 20	r = .219**	.004
Not at all satisfied	19.2	12.5	9.9	6.3	5		
Sort of unsatisfied	15.2	25	16.7	12.5	15		
Neither unsatisfied nor satisfied	42.2	43.8	56.6	56.3	35		
Sort of satisfied	22.9	18.8	16.8	21.9	35		
Very satisfied				3.1	10		
Q16. Satisfaction with online purchase	n = 4	n = 5	n = 17	n = 23	n = 14	r = .300**	.000
Sort of unsatisfied		40	29.4	8.7	7.1		
Neither unsatisfied nor satisfied	50	40	52.8	52.1	14.2		
Sort of satisfied	50	20	11.8	30.4	57.1		
Very satisfied			5.9	8.7	21.4		

Notes. * Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

.   ** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

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Table 32

Relationships among Satisfaction/dissatisfaction Assessment and Future Online Travel Information Search and Product Purchase

	Q12. Satisfaction with online information					Test statistic	p.
	Column Percentage (%) of Respondents						
	Not at all satisfied	------	------	------	Very satisfied		
Q16. Satisfaction with online purchase	n = 2	n = 8	n = 33	n = 18	n = 2	r = .354*	.000
Not at all satisfied							
Sort of unsatisfied		50	15.2	5.56			
Neither unsatisfied nor satisfied	100	37.5	42.4	44.4			
Sort of satisfied		12.5	30.3	44.4	50		
Very satisfied			12.1	5.56	50		
	Q13. Future information search						
	Extremely unlikely	------	------	------	Extremely likely		
Q18. Future online purchase	n = 16	n = 12	n = 38	n = 62	n = 42	r = .359*	.000
Extremely unlikely	37.5	33.3	10.5	14.5	7.1		
Unlikely	25	41.7	23.7	14.5	11.9		
Neither unlikely nor likely	18.8	16.7	44.7	45.2	23.8		
Likely	6.3	8.3	18.4	22.6	21.4		
Extremely likely	12.5		2.6	3.2	35.7		

Notes. * Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Chapter VI

Discussion

This research has been carried out to explore the key characteristics of current and potential Chinese outbound tourists and how they used the Internet to seek and purchase travel products. Results of the online travel questionnaire, which revealed agreement with the past literature using North American based samples but also some different implications concerning the specific situation of China are discussed.

Profiles of Chinese outbound tourists

Chinese outbound tourists in this research were found to be mainly 18 to 35 years of age, unmarried students. Almost all of them had an education level of high school or above, among which 70 percent attained some post-secondary education. The number of male respondents was almost equal to that of female respondents. Close to half of them held an industry role as an employee and three-quarters had an annual personal income less than RMB 40,000 while 13.5 percent above RMB 80,000. This profile is likely due to the sampling strategy employed.

In this study, past travel experience, Internet experience, and travel information search behaviour were also examined. First of all, over one-third of respondents did not use the Internet for travel purposes; however for those who did, close to 90 percent were for personal pleasure trips. Again, this may be an artifact of the high student representation in the sample. The majority of these tourists went on vacation out of China once or twice while another 20 percent traveled internationally three to four times and 15 percent over 6 times, which suggested a reasonably experienced group of

travelers. The top international destinations noted by the sample in this research were Canada, Europe, other areas in Asia, and Southeast Asia. However, the popularity of Canada as an international destination for Chinese outbound tourists was most likely due to the group of respondents surveyed in Canada. Secondly, when investigating tourists' current skills for using the Internet and travel-related Web sites in particular, it was found that almost all of them had an Internet use history of at least three years and one-third had been using it for more than 6 years. These Internet users went online mainly from home and so often that most of them used the Internet everyday. Most of Chinese outbound tourists felt some level of comfort with their use of the Internet while very few felt uncomfortable. Therefore, this sample of Chinese outbound tourists represented a group of experienced Internet users. Finally, although information pertaining to decision-making (e.g., lodging, transportation, on-site activities, and trip costs) is at the core of travel information acquisition, many Chinese outbound tourists also searched for information that was less trip-related, such as enhancing one's knowledge about an unfamiliar destination and obtaining graphic information that conveys the physical attractiveness of a remote place.

Online travel information search and product purchase model

A research model was proposed based on the past literature of travel decision-making, which suggested a series of relationships concerning travel information acquisition and purchase behaviour via the Internet among Chinese outbound tourists (see Figure 4). Results of the hypotheses testing showed support for two of the four major hypotheses in the model with an interesting pattern of findings

between search and purchase behaviour, and about Chinese outbound tourists in particular.

Travelers' socio-demographics

In the literature, travelers' key socio-demographic attributes such as age, gender, income, education, occupation and marital status have been found to affect their Internet use in both information search and product purchase (Bonn, Furr, & Susskind, 1999; Fodness & Murray, 1999; Moutinho, 2000; Pitkow & Kehoe, 1996; Um & Crompton, 1991; Weber & Roehl, 1999). In general, people in North America who are male, 26 to 55 years of age, college-educated, employed in management, professional, or computer-related occupations, and/or have higher incomes are more likely to use the Internet for information and travel product purchase. From this literature and taking findings of the 11th Investigation Report of Internet Development in Mainland China (2003) into consideration, the model hypothesized (H1) that people who were unmarried; male; 26 to 35 years of age; college or above educated; employed in management or administration; and had higher annual personal income were more likely to use the Internet for travel information search and product purchase. However, results of this research revealed some level of disagreement.

Firstly, according to the results, education was the only attribute related to whether respondents searched for online travel information since respondents with higher education were more likely to acquire travel information via the use of travel-related Web sites. Secondly, when searching for online functional information such as detailed travel product information, price comparison and availability of

products/services, respondents who were married, with higher education and annual

personal income showed an intention. Besides, there was no major relationship

between Chinese outbound tourists' socio-demographic characteristics and their use of

the Internet for travel information search.

As suggested by the proposed model, however, travelers' socio-demographics

had an important influence on their online travel product purchase behaviour. Chinese

outbound tourists in this research who had purchased travel products via the Internet

and purchased more frequently tended to be 26 to 45 years of age; married; male; with

higher education and annual personal income; employed in management in industries

of computer, services and education. A major interesting finding revealed about

Chinese outbound tourists, in contrast to those in North America, was that people who

were married rather than unmarried tended to purchase travel products/services online.

As age, gender, marital status, education, and employment all were related to online

purchasing, the second part of the hypothesis about tourists' socio-demographics and

their online travel product purchase behaviour was supported.

Travelers' trip attributes

The tourism literature suggests that people's travel information search strategies

are affected by a series of travelers' trip attributes, such as purpose of trip, previous

travel experience and non-functional information needs (Fodness & Murray, 1999;

Bettman, 1979; Um & Crompton, 1991). When information search includes online

search in particular, travelers' general Internet use behaviour is believed to be an

influence as well (Weber & Roehl, 1999; Bonn, Furr & Susskind, 1999). In contrast, in

this research of Chinese outbound tourists, no major relationships were found to exist between their trip attributes (i.e., purpose of trip, previous travel experience, Internet use behaviour and non-functional information needs) and their search for travel information on the Internet. However, when looking for functional travel information, personal pleasure travelers were more likely to use the Internet for "availability of online travel products/services" than those travelling to visit friends/relatives visitors. Travelers who used the Internet more frequently (i.e., daily rather than weekly) were more likely to use it for "travel price comparisons".

When investigating online travel product purchase, it was found that individuals who had purchased travel products/services on the Internet before were more likely to have been using the Internet from work, for more years, and have traveled to a destination outside of China more times, for personal pleasure than those who had not purchased online. Moreover, among these purchasers, personal pleasure travelers who stayed online more frequently and accessed the Internet mainly from work were more likely to place orders online when they made a purchase decision for travel products.

In contrast to what might be expected from the literature, the comfort level that Chinese outbound tourists in this research had for Internet use did not influence on their online travel information search and product purchase behaviour; however, there were some implications raised by tourists' non-functional travel information needs. That is to say, tourists who wanted to obtain information exchange about a remote place via the Internet were more likely to regard the Internet in a decisive role in searching for travel information while others regarded it as contributory. Once again, travelers' key trip

attributes were mostly related to their online travel product purchase rather than online travel information acquisition.

Barriers to online travel product purchase/repurchase

In the tourism literature, barriers such as time cost, information presentation, ease of navigation, security of credit card information, quality of information, Internet vendor reliability and online reservation services have been identified to affect travelers' purchase/repurchase of online travel products via the Internet (Buhalis & Dombey, 2001; Seveik, 2002; Weber & Roehl, 1999; Zhang, Dran, Blake & Pipithsuksunt, 2001). According to Weber and Roehl (1999), offline travel purchasers were more likely to cite reasons such as, "credit card security", "no assessment of product quality", "privacy issues", "prefer personal contact", "not comfortable with idea", "bad word of mouth", and "do not have credit card" while for those people who tried online purchases of tourist products but decided to cease repurchasing in the future, the problem stemmed mainly from unguaranteed online reservation services.

Similar results were found in this research. The most frequent barriers related to issues of product quality, security, and convenience. Among those who perceived barriers in their online travel product purchase/repurchase, about one-third identified four to five.

Furthermore, tourists who identified that they were "not familiar with vendor", "did have enough information to make a decision", "preferred to deal with people", "heard it's not a reliable/secure/trustworthy way to make purchase" and "thought it would be faster/easier to purchase locally" were less likely to have purchased and

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ordered travel products via the Internet. The fact that respondents "never tried online purchase before" or "generally felt uncomfortable with the idea" had an influence on their use of the Internet for purchasing travel products. Also as might be expected, those respondents who thought it was "too complicated to place order", "difficult to judge the quality of a product /service" and "to find appropriate Web sites" were less likely to order on the Internet after they made a decision to purchase. However, it did not affect respondents' online purchase behaviour when they "did not have a credit card" or thought "sites did not offer the option to purchase". Contrary to the literature, unguaranteed reservation services were not related to online purchasing. As hypothesized in the proposed model, strong negative relationships existed between the total number of Chinese outbound tourists' perceived/practical barriers and their use of the Internet to purchase travel products. In other words, individuals who had more barriers were less likely to purchase online and less likely to place orders for travel products via the Internet as well. Therefore, the hypothesis of barriers was supported.

Satisfaction assessment and future online travel decision-making

When travelers successfully overcome these perceived barriers and buy travel products online, they evaluate their online product purchase experience and decide on the possibilities of re-search and repurchase online in the future (Pizam & Mansfeld, 2000). Previous researchers suggested that travelers' purchase assessment process was fundamental since it added to his or her store of experiences and provided feedback by adjusting the frame of reference for future purchase intentions (Pizam & Mansfeld, 2000).

In this research, assessment of Chinese outbound tourists' satisfaction with online travel information search revealed that the average individuals felt some level of satisfaction with the key aspects of online travel information. People were most satisfied with availability, accessibility, and content of information, and least satisfied with its reliability and presentation. As to tourists' online travel product purchase behaviour, the online purchasers indicated an average level of satisfaction with their online purchase experience. Among the three key aspects, they were most satisfied with "ease of purchase" and least satisfied with "price/costs". However, the largest group of respondents felt "neither unsatisfied nor satisfied" with "security of purchase".

In accordance with the literature, these Chinese outbound tourists' satisfaction assessment was highly related to their future online travel decision-making. However, investigation of these tourists' future Internet use for travel decision-making had different implications for those who had purchased travel products online before and those who had not. On one side, although the percentage of nonpurchasers who would be "likely" to search travel information via the Internet in the future (38%) was almost the same as that of purchasers (35%), a much higher percentage was reported by purchasers (39%) as being "extremely likely" compared to 13 percent of nonpurchasers. On the other side, the case was very similar to people's possible future purchase/repurchase of online travel products/services. When the majority of nonpurchasers (87%) said that it would be somewhat unlikely or indifferent for them to purchase online travel products in the future, those who had purchased before showed great interest in continuing to buy with over half being likely or extremely likely to do

so. Hence, the hypotheses about tourists' satisfaction assessment and future online

travel information search and product purchase were supported.

Chapter VII

Conclusions

In this final chapter are both contributions and limitations of this research on

Chinese outbound tourists and their use of the Internet for travel decision-making.

Based on the sampling strategy, the objectives of this research were more successfully

met with respect to theory development than broad understanding of the Chinese tourist

market. Specifically, contributions of this study were: (1) a profile of these surveyed

Chinese outbound tourists on their socio-demographic and behavioural characteristics;

(2) identification of relationships between Chinese outbound tourists'

socio-demographic and behavioural attributes to their online travel information search

and product purchase behaviour; (3) identification of barriers to their purchase and/or

repurchase of online travel products; and finally (4) recommendations for increasing

the Internet use by Chinese outbound tourists in their travel decision-making and for

future travel Web sites' improvement, which target Chinese outbound tourists. The

findings of this research have both practical implications for the Chinese outbound

travel industry and theoretical implications for understanding online travel information

search and product purchase behaviour. There are limitations of the study, however,

that are noted for considering the results, implications and conclusions.

Recommendations are also provided for future research in this area.

Practical implications

As travel-related Web sites were indicated as the second most used travel

information source for trip planning by this group of Chinese outbound tourists, and

some tourists have begun to use the Internet for major trip-related decision-making, the online travel promotion business for Chinese outbound tourism is now expected to have rapid development in the near future. To serve these current and potential online travel information searchers and product purchasers better, it is necessary for travel promoters and Web sites to develop suitable marketing strategies based on understanding the specific situation in China.

Firstly, although the information searched online was mainly functional (i.e., detailed travel product information, price comparisons and availability of products/services), there was still a large percentage of tourists looking for less trip-related information, such as enhancing one's knowledge, attaining visual information about remote travel destinations or exchanging travel information and experience with other Internet users. To meet these non-functional travel information needs, travel Web sites and promoters targeting at Chinese outbound tourists should involve more aesthetic and educational elements in future travel information presentation. Possible services include offering a variety of text and visual introduction to more outbound destinations. In addition, offering online travel forums or memberships may help build online tourist communities and hence keep a close connection with these site visitors and increase purchase opportunities.

Secondly, in this sample of Chinese outbound tourists, 43.6 percent have purchased travel products via the Internet at least once in the past twelve months, and when they have decided to purchase a travel product/service, the majority of purchasers indicated a possibility percentage of 25 to 50 of placing orders on the

Internet. However, the fact that many online travel information searchers still remain as lookers rather than bookers or have ceased to repurchase online may be due to barriers revealed in the research. It was found that the five most frequent barriers affecting Chinese outbound tourists' online purchase/non-purchase and ordering behaviour were "not familiar with vendor", "not enough information to make a decision", "faster/easier to purchase locally", "heard it's not a reliable/secure/trustworthy way to make purchases", and "prefer to deal with people". Three more barriers with minor influence were "difficult to judge the quality of a product/service", "don't trust that my credit card number will be secure", "difficult to find appropriate Web sites". Also found was that tourists who had more perceived/practical barriers would be much less likely to purchase/repurchase travel products online. Based on this knowledge, some recommendations were made for travel-related Web sites to reduce current/potential online purchasers' perceived barriers.

While the barriers were identified in the context of Internet purchase, the top two "not familiar with vendor" and "not enough information to make a decision" could be true in traditional purchase contexts as well. In particular, "difficult to judge the quality of a product/service" is worth noting as a barrier across all travel purchase contexts. Ample evidence suggests that the provision of quality can deliver repeat purchases as well as new customers (Hoffman & Bateson, 1997). However, the intangibility of tourism industry determines that quality of its products/services can only be judged after consumption (Moutinho, 2000) In this case of online travel promotion for Chinese outbound tourists, the possible distance between people's

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expectation of a travel product/service and perception of the quality actually to be delivered (i.e., service gap) could be closed or narrowed by online travel Web sites providing performance of high and consistent quality both on travel products/services delivery and the process of online decision-making (Hoffman & Bateson, 1997). In fact, a quality guarantee statement posted on the Web page would be useful for this purpose. Web-related barriers as "faster/easier to purchase locally" and "not enough information to make a decision" could be removed by informing people of uniqueness of online travel promotion in time and costs saving, ease of access, immediate transaction and the most comprehensive options of information and products (Furger, 1997; Athlyaman, 2002). For travelers who "prefer to deal with people", "don't trust that my credit card number will be secure" and "heard it's not a reliable/secure/trustworthy way to make purchases", former researchers suggested that a travel Web site approximate its offline counterparts and gain environmental richness that physical stores enjoy (Jahng, Jain, & Ramamurthy, 2001).

To communicate to consumers that it is trustworthy, a Web site should also focus on features such as: appropriate interface and information about the company, informal method of communicating, consumer testimonials, free services, security assurances, honesty, design quality, up-front disclosure, comprehensive, correct and current content, and connectivity (McCole, 2002; Zemke & Connellan, 2001). When a traveler refuses to purchase/repurchase via the Internet because of their "unfamiliarity with vendor", and "difficulty to find appropriate Web sites", proper but efficient advertising strategies should be applied. Just like traditional travel providers did offline,

travel e-businesses can utilize a variety of Web-based marketing efforts, including

search engine and directory listings, classified listings, banner ads, and viral and

affiliate programs (i.e., links to other popular Web sites) (Rayport & Jaworski, 2002).

Lastly, results of Chinese outbound tourists' satisfaction assessment with their

online travel decision-making suggest some essential implications for online travel

promoters and Web sites. First of all, since strong positive relationships were found

between tourists' satisfaction level and their future travel decision-making via the

Internet, more emphases should be given on promoting these most satisfying aspects of

online travel information and purchase, that is to say, "availability", "accessibility",

"content" of information and "ease" of purchase. As to least satisfying aspects such as

"reliability and presentation" of information and online travel products' "price/costs",

both travel promoters and Web sites should develop suitable strategies to increase

people's satisfaction. By providing an online reliability statement of travel information,

presenting information in a variety of ways to encourage searchers' interaction, or

offering bonus on costs for frequent purchasers, Web sites could increase satisfaction.

Theoretical implications

The online travel information search and product purchase model (see Figure 4),

which was tested in this research, incorporated prior research on travel information

search and travel decision-making in general, and suggested a series of hypotheses

related to travel product information acquisition and purchase behaviour via the

Internet among Chinese outbound tourists. Results primarily supported the parts of the

hypotheses that dealt with respondents' online travel product purchase but not their

online travel information search, which was somewhat different from current information search and travel decision-making literature and models (Bonn, Furr, & Susskind, 1999; et al).

In the literature, travelers' key socio-demographic attributes such as age, gender, income, education, occupation and marital status have been found to affect their Internet use in both information search and product purchase (Bonn, Furr, & Susskind, 1999; et al). People's travel information search strategies are suggested to be related to a series of travelers' trip attributes like purpose of trip, previous travel experience and non-functional information needs (Fodness & Murray, 1999; et al). When information search includes online search in particular, travelers' general Internet use behaviour was believed to be an influence as well (Weber & Roehl, 1999; Bonn, Furr & Susskind, 1999). However in this research about Chinese outbound tourists, contrary to the general profiles of North American samples in literature, no major relationships were found between travelers' characteristics and their use of the Internet to search for travel information. The possible reasons could mainly lie on the sampling strategies applied and specific situation in Chinese outbound tourism.

As hypothesized in the proposed model, people's online purchase/repurchase behaviour was negatively affected by certain perceived/practical barriers and the total number of barriers they identified. The findings were in accordance with the literature, however, the pattern of barriers in significance had different implications for Chinese outbound tourists.

The fourth and last part of the model was about respondents'

satisfaction/dissatisfaction assessment of their past online travel decision-making and its influence on their future use of the Internet for this purpose. It was confirmed that people who felt more satisfied with their past online experience would be more likely to make travel decisions via the Internet in the future. Based on the results of this study, the proposed model was revised by deleting "travel information search" from the model. And the revised model is presented in Figure 7.

Limitations of the Study

This exploratory research was carried out to understand Chinese outbound tourists and their use of the Internet for travel decision-making. Hence some limitations existed because of the nonprobability sample applied. The snowball sampling technique led to a largely student based sample with limited generalizability of results to the larger population of Chinese outbound tourists. As students, these tourists were also likely to be unmarried young people with relatively lower annual personal income, who mainly travel internationally for personal pleasure. The lack of variability in the data was also problematic for certain comparative analyses, for example, respondents' socio-demographic characteristics and their use of the Internet for travel information search and product purchase. To increase the ability to generalize the findings about travelers' characteristics and Internet use for travel information search and product purchase, a larger probability sample of Chinese outbound tourists is required.

Although some steps have been made to increase the validity of measurement in this research, limitations still exist concerning future research in this area. All the questions in this research of Chinese outbound tourists were developed on the basis of
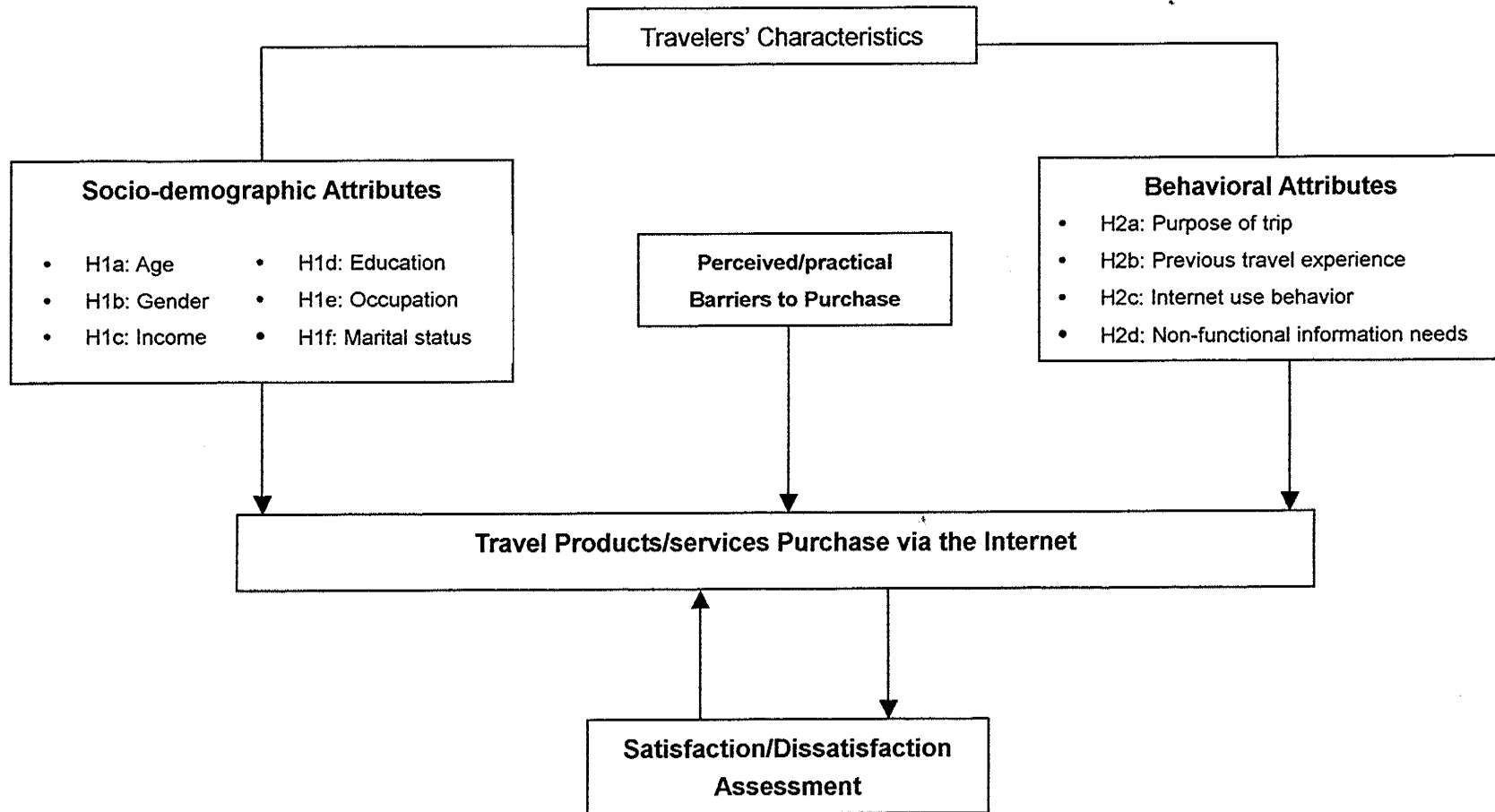
Figure 7. Revised Online Travel Product Purchase Model

standard North American surveys. However, with the findings in mind, measures such as travelers' occupation and those with the option "other" need to be refined with a more comprehensive list under the circumstances of Chinese outbound tourism. As to measures allowing for more than one response (e.g., travel information sources and perceived/practical barriers), asking multiple questions using ranking and/or rating scales could provide a more discriminating measure (Fowler, 1993).

Future Research

Due to the limited time and costs, this research about Chinese outbound tourists and their use of the Internet for travel decision-making was limited in its scope. It is suggested that, in the future, this Web survey should be refined and used in a way to track these Chinese outbound tourists and hence provide the most updated profiles of them. However, in order to reach this group of tourists, popular travel Web sites or travel companies targeting Chinese outbound tourism should be sought to work as dissemination channels; in other words, future long-term cooperation relationships between tourism researchers and online travel promoters should be established.

In the future, hypotheses supported in the tested model could be re-examined using a random sample with the cooperation of popular travel Web sites or travel companies. Therefore, if these hypotheses are supported again, the model could be modified and used to guide future research and development of online travel information acquisition and product purchase. Based on the understanding of these Chinese outbound tourists and their use of the Internet, future research on online travel decision-making should also be focused on how to apply these theoretical findings to

practical online travel services promotion. Findings from this research indicate some

differences between Chinese and North American respondents. Given the rapid

development of Chinese outbound tourism, more studies should be carried out on

developing suitable Internet marketing and promotion strategies for the circumstances

of China to meet needs of a country that has the potential be one the largest

international tourism markets in the world.

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Appendix A

First Twelve Travel Web Sites Contacted

Company Name	Web Site Address
AmericaAsia Travel Center Inc.	http://www.americaasia.com/
Et-China	http://www.et-china.com
Priceline	http://www.hpcln.com
Toureast	http://www.toureast.com/
Utour-Club	http://www.utour-club.com/
CMIT	http://www.goaroundchina.com/cn/
Jin Jiang Travel	http://www.jjtravel.com/
China Travel Serve Head Office	http://www.ctsho.com/
368.com	http://www.368.com.cn/
Ctrip	http://www.ctrip.com/
Spring International	http://www.china-sss.com/
China Tourism	http://www.cnta.gov.cn/

Appendix B

Invitation Email

Dear Sir or Madam:

My name is Zhu Zhu and I am a graduate student studying travel and tourism at the University of Manitoba, Canada. Under the guidance of my advisor, Dr. Kelly MacKay, I am conducting research for my Master thesis that aims to understand how Chinese outbound tourists use the Internet to seek and purchase travel products. The proposed research will: (1) explore the relationships of key characteristics of Chinese outbound tourists' online travel information search and product purchase behaviour; (2) explore barriers to their purchase and/or repurchase of online travel products; and (3) provide recommendations for increasing the Internet use by Chinese outbound tourists in their travel decision-making and suggestions for future travel Web sites' improvement, which target Chinese outbound tourists.

I am seeking two to three travel Web sites in China/Canada targeting Chinese outbound tourists to participate as the dissemination channels. If you agree to participate, a "Travel Survey" icon will be put on your site, which links to a separate Web page set up for an online questionnaire. People who visit your travel Web sites will be encouraged to fill out the questionnaire anonymously, which will last about 10 minutes. Two months after the survey is completed, you are promised a final report of the profile of current and potential Chinese outbound tourists and their attitudes towards use of the Internet for travel decision-making. Feedback will also be available for the survey participants by checking your site in six months after completion.

I will be most grateful if you agree to participate in this research. If you have any further questions, please send me an email. We are looking forward to your decision. Thank you!

Sincerely yours,

Zhu Zhu

1.

Faculty of Graduate Studies
University of Manitoba

Appendix C

Web Page for the Online Survey
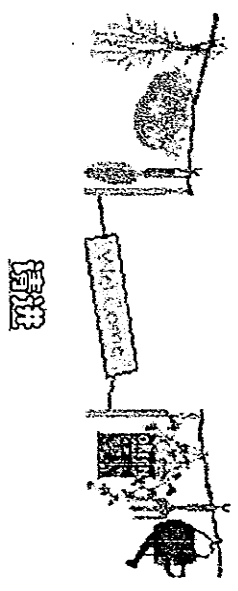
Appendix D

Personal Invitation Letter

Hi everyone:

I just want to ask you to do me a favor for my thesis research. Please visit this Website http://zhuzhu01.tripod.com and fill out an online questionnaire, which will take you up to 10 minutes. Also, could you please forward this email to anyone you know qualified to participate in this research? I actually need 150 - 200 samples. If you do decide to go and fill it out, please give me a reply. Then I will know everyone has been successfully contacted.

Thank you so much for your help and have a great day!

Zhuzhu

Appendix E

Chinese Comprehensive Web Sites

Chinese Web Sites	Web Page Address
163.ca	www.163.ca
T-Canada	www.t-canada.com
CSI	http://bbs.intlshop.com
Go2eu	www.go2eu.com
Etfr BBS	http://etfr.net
Dadasky	www.dadasky.com
Netbirds	http://netbirds.net
CSFnet	www.csfnet.com
VCWSS	http://vcwss.wh-stuttgart.de
VCSW-KA	http://www.kaforum.de/forum/portal.php
SgChinese	www.sgchinese.com
XinYuan.Us	www.madhforum.com
Powerapple	www.powerapple.com
Kuikui Home	www.kuikuihome.com
China-japan.com	www.china-japan.com
Chenshaochun.com	http://bbs.chenshaochun.com
Winnipeg Information Network	http://www.cwinnipeg.com
Chinesische Huette in Heideberg	http://heideberg.csfnet.com

Appendix F

Invitation on Online Travel Forums

Dear Sir or Madam:

My name is Zhu Zhu and I am a graduate student studying travel and tourism at the University of Manitoba, Canada. Under the guidance of my advisor, Dr. Kelly MacKay, I am conducting research for my Master thesis that aims to understand how Chinese outbound tourists use the Internet to seek and purchase travel products. The proposed research will: (1) explore the relationships of key characteristics of Chinese outbound tourists' online travel information search and product purchase behaviour; (2) explore barriers to their purchase and/or repurchase of online travel products; and (3) provide recommendations for increasing the Internet use by Chinese outbound tourists in their travel decision-making and suggestions for future travel Web sites' improvement, which target Chinese outbound tourists.

With the assistance of 163.ca and T-Canada, I am seeking Chinese outbound tourists who are 18 years of age or older as respondents in this research. If you agree to participate, please go to this Web page http://zhuzhu01.tripod.com and fill out the online questionnaire in Chinese, which will last about 10 minutes. Six months after the survey is completed, feedback will be available for you by checking on this Web page.

I will be most grateful if you agree to participate in this research. If you have any further questions, please reach me either by email or phone. We are looking forward to your help. Thank you very much!

Sincerely yours,

Zhu Zhu
1-

Faculty of Graduate Studies
University of Manitoba

Appendix G

Informed Consent

Dear Sir or Madam:

Thank you for your participation in this research on Chinese outbound tourists and their use of the Internet for travel products. The survey is being conducted as part of a Master's thesis at the University of Manitoba (Canada) and has been reviewed and approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board, which can be reached by calling the Human Ethics Secretariat at (1-204)-474-7122 for any concerns or complaints about this project. Two Chinese Web sites (163.ca and T-Canada) agree to serve as sponsors for this online survey. The objectives of this study are to (1) explore key characteristics of Chinese outbound tourists' online travel information search and product purchase behaviour; (2) explore barriers to their purchase and/or repurchase of online travel products or services; and (3) provide recommendations for increasing the Internet use by Chinese outbound tourists in their travel decision-making and suggestions for future travel Web sites' improvement.

The research involves an online questionnaire that will last about 10 minutes. Responses to the survey should come from individuals who are **18 years of age or older Chinese or permanent residents in China** and who **traveled out of China at least once**. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential and not linked to you as only group results will be reported. For any question that you feel uncomfortable about, you can skip without answering. During the survey, you are also free to withdraw from the study by choosing "Not Submit" at the end of the questionnaire at any time without penalty. In six months after the survey is completed, results will be available for you to see by visiting the survey Web site. If you have any questions about this survey, please contact us either at (1-204)-474-7087 or by the following mail addresses.

Dr. Kelly MacKay
Zhu Zhu:
University of Manitoba
HLHP Research Institute
307 Max Bell Centre
Winnipeg, MB
Canada R3T 2N2

We will be very grateful for your contribution. Do you agree to continue the survey?

⊙ Yes, I agree.　　　　　　　⊙ No, I do not agree.

Thank you for your time!

Original Questionnaire in English

Welcome: This online travel survey is divided into five sections. Please answer each question according to the instructions. Thank you for your input!

Part 1: Questions 1 to 3 ask about your travel experience

1. How many times have you traveled to a destination outside of China?

   ◯ One to two times

   ◯ Three to four times

   ◯ Five to six times

   ◯ More than six times

2. To what destination outside of China have you previously traveled? *(Please mark all that apply)*

   ◯ Canada   ◯ Europe

   ◯ United States   ◯ Africa

   ◯ South America   ◯ Australia or New Zealand

   ◯ Southeast Asia   ◯ Other

   ◯ Other part of Asia

3. For which type of trips do you most often use the Internet either to gather information or make a purchase in the past? *(Please mark one)*

   ◯ Not applicable. I didn't use the Internet to seek travel information or purchase travel products

   ◯ Business trip

   ◯ Personal pleasure trip

   ◯ Visiting friends or relatives

Part 2: Questions 4 to 7 ask about your Internet use

4. How long have you been using the Internet (including using email, etc.)?

    ○ Less than 6 months

    ○ 6 to 12 months

    ○ More than 1 year and up to 3 years

    ○ More than 3 years and up to 6 years

    ○ More than 6 years

5. How frequently do you access the Internet?

    ○ Daily

    ○ Weekly

    ○ Monthly

    ○ Less than once per month

6. Where is the place you mainly access the Internet from?

    ○ Home

    ○ Work

    ○ School

    ○ Other

7. How comfortable do you feel using the Internet? *(Please mark the appropriate number)*

Very uncomfortable	Neither uncomfortable nor comfortable			Very comfortable
○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5

Part 3: Questions 8 to 13 ask about your travel information search behaviour

8. Which of the following sources of information did you use to plan your trips to a destination outside of China during the past twelve months? *(Please mark all that apply)*

   ○ Past experience   ○ Travel agencies/tour operators

   ○ Radio advertising   ○ Advice from friends/relatives

   ○ TV advertising   ○ Travel-related Web sites

   ○ Newspaper/archives/ads   ○ Other

9. What role does the Internet play in your travel information search?

   ○ Decisive (It is the major source I use)

   ○ Contributory (It is one of the several sources I use)

   ○ None

10. What kind of travel information do you look for on the Internet? *(Please mark all that apply)*

    ○ Not applicable. I do not look for travel information on the Internet

    ○ Detailed travel product information (transportation, accommodation, attractions and activities) for a trip I am planning

    ○ Price comparisons for a trip I am planning

    ○ Availability of product/service for a trip I am planning

    ○ Enhancing my knowledge about an unfamiliar place that I may never travel to

    ○ Obtaining visual information about a remote place that I may never travel to

    ○ Travel information from exchanges with other users (e.g. online chats)

    ○ Other

11. How important is each of the following reasons when you search for travel information on the Internet? *(Please mark the appropriate number)*

	Not at all important				Very important
Detailed travel product information	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
Price comparisons	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
Availability of product/service	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
Enhancing my knowledge about an unfamiliar destination	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
Obtaining visual information about a remote destination	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
Travel information from exchanges with other users	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5

12. How satisfied are you with the following aspects of travel information on the Internet? *(Please mark the appropriate number)*

	Not at all satisfied				Very satisfied
Availability of information	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
Content of information	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
Ease of access to information	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
Reliability of information	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
Presentation of information	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5

13. How likely is it that you will search for travel information via the Internet for your next trip? *(Please mark the appropriate number)*

Extremely unlikely		Neither unlikely nor likely		Extremely likely
○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5

Part 4: Questions 14 to18 ask about the purchases of travel products you have made online

14. During the past twelve months, how many times have you made purchases of travel products for yourself via the Internet?

    ○ Not applicable. I did not make any purchases of travel products online before *(will automatically skip to Question 17)*

    ○ One to two times

    ○ Three to four times

    ○ Five to six times

    ○ More than six times

15. Once you've decided to purchase an online travel product/service, what percentage of the time do you place your order on the Internet (i.e. by filling out a form on the web)?

    ○ None (close to 0%)

    ○ Few (close to 25%)

    ○ Half (close to 50%)

    ○ Most (close to 75%)

    ○ All (close to 100%)

16. How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your buying experience on the Internet? *(Please mark the appropriate number)*

	Not at all satisfied				Very satisfied
Price/costs	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
Ease of purchase	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
Security of purchase	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5

17. What are the main reasons you don't purchase or have stopped purchasing travel products and services for yourself on the Internet? *(Please mark all that apply)*

○ Not applicable. I do purchase travel products on the Internet

○ Never tried it

○ Too complicated to place order

○ Faster/easier to purchase locally

○ Not familiar with vendor

○ Don't trust that my credit card number will be secure

○ Difficult to judge the quality of a product/service

○ Not enough information to make a decision

○ Generally uncomfortable with the idea

○ Heard it's not a reliable/secure/trustworthy way to make purchases

○ Had a bad experience in the past

○ Don't trust that my personal information will be kept private

○ Don't have a credit card

○ Prefer to deal with people

○ Difficult to find appropriate Web sites

○ Site doesn't offer the option to purchase

○ Unguaranteed reservation services

○ Other reasons

18. How likely is it that you will purchase or repurchase travel products via the Internet for your next trip? *(Please mark the appropriate number)*

Extremely unlikely		Neither unlikely nor likely		Extremely likely
○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5

Part 5: Please tell us about yourself

19. Which of the following categories best describes the **industry** you primarily work in (regardless of your actual position)? Or **mark here if you are**

- ○ A student or

- ○ Unemployed or

- ○ Retired

○ Computer-related industry	○ Education
○ Services industry	○ Government and Public Administration
○ Professional industry	○ Other Industry

20. Which of the following best describes your role in industry?

○ Employee	○ Management
○ Administrative Staff	○ Other
○ Not applicable	

21. Please indicate the highest level of education completed:

○ Primary School	○ Master's Degree
○ High School or equivalent	○ Doctoral Degree
○ Vocational/Technical School (2 year)	○ Professional Degree
○ College Graduate (2-3 year)	○ Other
○ Bachelor Degree	

22. What is your gender?
(Note: Although this is a sensitive question, the answer can help the researcher to understand current travel Web site users in China. It is not intended to offend)

- ○ Female

- ○ Male

23. What is your current marital status?

- ○ Single
- ○ Married/common law
- ○ Divorced/widow

24. Please indicate your current **annual personal** income in RMB:

- ○ Under RMB 5,000
- ○ RMB 5,000- RMB 9,999
- ○ RMB 10,000- RMB 19,999
- ○ RMB 20,000- RMB 29,999
- ○ RMB 30,000- RMB 39,999
- ○ RMB 40,000- RMB 49,999

- ○ RMB 50,000- RMB 59,999
- ○ RMB 60,000- RMB 69,999
- ○ RMB 70,000- RMB 79,999
- ○ RMB 80,000- RMB 89,999
- ○ RMB 90,000- RMB 99,999
- ○ Over RMB 100,000

25. What is your age?
(Note: Although this is a sensitive question, the answer can help the researcher to understand current travel Web site users in China. It is not intended to offend.)

- ○ 18 - 25
- ○ 26 - 35
- ○ 36 - 45
- ○ 46 - 55
- ○ Rather not say

- ○ 56 - 65
- ○ 66 - 75
- ○ 76 - 85
- ○ Over 85

Appendix I

<u>Translated Questionnaire in Chinese</u>

欢迎：本份旅游问卷包括五个部分，请按照指导回答以下各问题。感谢您的参与！

第一部分（问题一至三）：您过去的旅游经历

1. 您出境旅游的次数是多少？

    ○ 一至两次

    ○ 三至四次

    ○ 五至六次

    ○ 六次以上

2. 您之前出境游的目的地都有哪些？　*（请选择所有适合项）*

    ○ 美国   ○ 加拿大

    ○ 南美洲   ○ 东南亚

    ○ 欧洲   ○ 亚洲其他地区

    ○ 非洲   ○ 澳大利亚或新西兰

    ○ 其他地区

3. 以下哪种类型的旅游，您会经常在网上收集旅游资讯或有直接从网上订购过？*（请选择一项）*

    ○ 不适合，我没有在网上收集过旅游资讯或订购过旅游服务

    ○ 商务游

    ○ 个人观光游

    ○ 亲友探访

第二部分 (问题四至七) : 您使用互联网的情况

4. 您使用互联网已有多久的时间（包括收发电子邮件等）?

   ○ 少于六个月

   ○ 六个月至一年

   ○ 一年以上，三年以下

   ○ 三年以上，六年以下

   ○ 六年以上

5. 您平均多久上网一次 ?

   ○ 每日

   ○ 每周

   ○ 每月

   ○ 每月不足一次

6. 您主要在哪里上网 ?

   ○ 家中

   ○ 工作单位

   ○ 学校

   ○ 其他地点

7. 您使用互联网的舒适度如何 ? *(请选择对应的数字)*

   非常不舒适　　　　　　　　没有差别　　　　　　　　非常舒适

   ○ 1　　　○ 2　　　○ 3　　　○ 4　　　○ 5

第三部分（问题八至十三）：您收集旅游资讯的方式

8. 在过去的一年中，您采用了一下哪些资讯来源来安排您的出境游？*（请选择所有适合项）*

　　○ 过去的个人经验　　　　　　　　○ 广播广告

　　○ 电视广告　　　　　　　　　　　○ 报纸/杂志/文字广告

　　○ 亲友的建议　　　　　　　　　　○ 旅行社/旅行公司

　　○ 相关的旅游网站　　　　　　　　○ 其他

9. 互联网在您收集旅游资讯的过程中有怎样的作用？

　　○ 决定性的（是我收集旅游资讯的主要来源）

　　○ 参考性的（是我采用的几种资讯来源之一）

　　○ 没有作用

10. 您通过互联网收集以下哪些旅游资讯呢？*（请选择所有适合项）*

　　○ 不适合，我不在互联网上收集旅游资讯

　　○ 与我旅游计划相关的细节性资讯（如：交通，住宿，景点和当地活动等）

　　○ 与我旅游计划相关的价格比较

　　○ 与我旅游计划相关的旅游产品/服务

　　○ 增加对某个陌生旅游目的地的了解

　　○ 获取有关某远途目的地的视觉信息

　　○ 与其他互联网用户交流旅游资讯（如：网上聊天）

　　○ 其他

11. 下列各项原因在您使用互联网收集旅游资讯的活动中各占怎样重要的成分？*(请选择对应的数字)*

	完全不重要		没有差别		非常重要
细节性的旅游资讯	1	2	3	4	5
价格对比	1	2	3	4	5
旅游产品/服务	1	2	3	4	5
增加对某个陌生旅游目的地的了解	1	2	3	4	5
获取有关某远途目的地的视觉信息	1	2	3	4	5
与其他网络用户交流旅游资讯	1	2	3	4	5

12. 对于下列网上旅游资讯的各个方面，您满意吗？*(请选择对应的数字)*

	完全不满意		没有差别		非常满意
资讯的可获得性	1	2	3	4	5
资讯的内容	1	2	3	4	5
资讯的易获得性	1	2	3	4	5
资讯的可靠性	1	2	3	4	5
资讯的呈现	1	2	3	4	5

13. 您会从网上收集旅游资讯来安排您下一次的旅游计划吗？*(请选择对应的数字)*

非常不可能		没有差别		非常可能
1	2	3	4	5

第四部分 (问题十四至十八)：有关您在网上购买旅游产品的经历

14. 在过去的一年中，您通过互联网共为自己订购过几次旅游产品或服务？

- ○ 不适合，我从未在网上订购过旅游产品或服务 *(自动转到问题十七)*

- ○ 一至两次

- ○ 三至四次

- ○ 五至六次

- ○ 超过六次

15. 当您决定购买某一网上旅游产品或服务时，多少情况下您会从网上订购？（如：通过填写网上订货单的方式）

- ○ 从不（近乎 0%的可能性）

- ○ 很少（25%的可能性）

- ○ 参半（50 的可能性）

- ○ 大多数时候（75%的可能性）

- ○ 总是（近乎 100%的可能性）

16. 您对过去在网上购物的经历满意吗？ *(请选择对应的数字)*

	完全不满意		没有差别		非常满意
价格/成本	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
定购的便利度	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
定购的安全度	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5

17. 以下哪些原因促使您从不或停止为自己在网上定购旅游产品或服务 *(请选择所有适合项)*

- ○ 不适合，我在网上定购旅游产品或服务

- ○ 从未试过网上订购

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○ 订购程序太复杂

○ 在当地购买更加快捷，便利

○ 对供应商不熟悉

○ 不相信自己的信用卡号可以得到完全地保密

○ 很难判断产品/服务的质量

○ 缺少足够的信息来做决定

○ 就是不喜欢从网上定购

○ 听说不可靠，不安全

○ 在过去有不愉快的经历

○ 不能确信个人信息会得到完全地保密

○ 没有信用卡

○ 更倾向与人购买

○ 很难找到适合的网站

○ 网站不提供订购服务

○ 预定/预留服务得不到保证

○ 其它原因

18. 在安排下一次的旅行计划时，您会从网上定购相关的旅游产品吗？ *(请选择对应的数字)*

非常不可能   没有差别   非常可能

○ 1   ○ 2   ○ 3   ○ 4   ○ 5

第五部分（问题十九至二十五）：有关您的一些个人信息

19. 您的工作主要属于以下哪一种行业（不必考虑您的实际职务），**或者如果您属于下列情况，请注明**

   ○ 学生   ○ 待业中

   ○ 退休

  ○ 计算机相关行业   ○ 教育业

  ○ 服务性行业   ○ 政府和公共行政业

  ○ 专业人士   ○ 其它行业

20. 您在本行业中主要担当以下哪种角色？

  ○ 一般员工   ○ 管理人员

  ○ 行政人员   ○ 其他

  ○ 不适合

21. 您的最高教育程度是？

  ○ 小学   ○ 初中

  ○ 高中或相当学力   ○ 技校或职校（两年制）

  ○ 大专（两至三年制）   ○ 学士学位

  ○ 硕士学位   ○ 博士学位

  ○ 其他

22. 您的性别？
 （注：虽然这是一个敏感问题，但您的回答将帮助我们更好地了解目前中国旅游网站的用户情况。我们并没有任何触犯的意思。）

  ○ 女   ○ 男

23. 您目前的婚姻状态是？

    ○ 单身   ○ 已婚/同居

    ○ 离异/丧偶

24. 您一年的个人收入是多少？

    ○ 少于人民币 5,000   ○ 人民币 5,000 - 人民币 9,999

    ○ 人民币 10,000 - 人民币 19,999   ○ 人民币 20,000 - 人民币 29,999

    ○ 人民币 30,000 - 人民币 39,999   ○ 人民币 40,000 - 人民币 49,999

    ○ 人民币 50,000 - 人民币 59,999   ○ 人民币 60,000 - 人民币 69,999

    ○ 人民币 70,000 - 人民币 79,999   ○ 人民币 80,000 - 人民币 89,999

    ○ 人民币 90,000 - 人民币 99,999   ○ 超过人民币 100,000

25. 您的年龄是？
（注：虽然这是一个敏感问题，但您的回答将帮助我们更好地了解目前中国旅游网站的用户情况。我们并没有任何触犯的意思。）

    ○ 18 - 25   ○ 56 - 65

    ○ 26 - 35   ○ 66 - 75

    ○ 36 - 45   ○ 76 - 85

    ○ 46 - 55   ○ Over 85

    ○ 不想说

○ 提交

○ 不提交

Appendix J

Perceived/practical Barriers to Online Purchaser/repurchase

Q17. Perceived/practical barriers

Never tried it

Too complicated to place order

Faster/easier to purchase locally

Not familiar with vendor

Don't trust that my credit card number will be secure

Difficult to judge the quality of a product/service

Not enough information to make a decision

Generally uncomfortable with the idea

Heard it's not a reliable/secure/trustworthy way to make purchases

Had a bad experience in the past

Don't trust that my personal information will be kept private

Don't have a credit card

Prefer to deal with people

Difficult to find appropriate Web sites

Site doesn't offer the option to purchase

Unguaranteed reservation services

Appendix K

Crosstabulations of Age by Sociodemographics

Newq25.Age * Q19. Main Industry Crosstabulation

Count

		Q19. Main Industry							Total
		Student	Unemployeed	Computer-related	Services	Professional industry	Education	Other	Total
Newq25.Age	18-25	103		1	1	1	1	3	110
	26+	32	3	3	7	7	4	4	60
Total		135	3	4	8	8	5	7	170

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	41.136[a]	6	.000
Likelihood Ratio	41.761	6	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	26.002	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	170		

a. 10 cells (71.4%) have expected count less than 5.
The minimum expected count is 1.06.

Q25. Age * Q20. Industry role Crosstabulation

Count

		Q20. Industry role					Total
		Employee	Management	Administrative staff	Other	Not applicable	Total
Q25. Age	18-25	52	5	1	37	15	110
	26-35	20	8	2	18	6	54
	36-45	4		1	1		6
Total		76	13	4	56	21	170

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	15.065[a]	8	.058
Likelihood Ratio	12.986	8	.112
Linear-by-Linear Association	.269	1	.604
N of Valid Cases	170		

a. 8 cells (53.3%) have expected count less than 5. The
minimum expected count is .14.

Q25. Age * Q21. Education Crosstabulation

Count

		Q21. Education							
		Primary school	Vacational/te chnical school (2-yr)	High school or equivalent	College graduate (3-yr)	Undergraduat e (Bachelor)	Postgraduate (Professional, Master & PhD)	Other	Total
Q25. Age	18-25	1	1	17	17	54	16	4	110
	26-35	1		3	2	17	31		54
	36-45				1	2	3		6
Total		2	1	20	20	73	50	4	170

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	37.470ª	12	.000
Likelihood Ratio	39.870	12	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	11.167	1	.001
N of Valid Cases	170		

a. 13 cells (61.9%) have expected count less than 5.
The minimum expected count is .04.

Q25. Age * Q23. Marital status Crosstabulation

Count

		Q23. Marital status		
		Single	Married/co mmon law	Total
Q25. Age	18-25	104	6	110
	26-35	35	19	54
	36-45	1	5	6
Total		140	30	170

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	40.494ª	2	.000
Likelihood Ratio	36.415	2	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	39.327	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	170		

a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The
minimum expected count is 1.06.

Newq25.Age * Q24. Annual personal income Crosstabulation

Count

		Q24. Annual personal income												Total
		Less than RMB 5,000	5,000-9,999	10,000-19,999	20,000-29,999	30,000-39,999	40,000-49,999	50,000-59,999	60,000-69,999	70,000-79,999	80,000-89,999	90,000-99,999	Over RMB 100,000	
Newq25.Age	18-25	74	2	8	3	4	2	1	1	2	5	3	5	110
	26+	19	4	6	1	6	2	5	4	3	4		6	60
Total		93	6	14	4	10	4	6	5	5	9	3	11	170

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	30.698[a]	11	.001
Likelihood Ratio	31.643	11	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	11.605	1	.001
N of Valid Cases	170		

a. 18 cells (75.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.06.