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**Exploring the Relationship among Cultural
Values, Online Travel Reviews,
and Destination Image**

Evidence from Chinese Tourists Reviews about Tuscany

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前言

本论文将探讨中国文化价值观对旅游业的影响以及它对目的地形象的塑造 (DI)。此外, 通过这项研究, 作者旨在探索在线旅游评论 (OTRs) 对游客塑造目的地形象方面的作用, 目的地形象是指游客对目的地的感知和信念。具体来说, 作者将研究有机的形象信息代理, 如用户生成的内容和 OTRs, 如何促进 DI 的形成, 以及这一过程在不同文化中的差异。通过对 60 条在线旅游评论样本的定量和定性分析, 作者将研究有机形象信息代理和中国文化价值观在塑造 DI 方面的相互作用。

OTRs 平台已经成为最受游客欢迎的信息来源之一。OTRs 为旅行者提供了一个用来分享自己对不同目的地、住宿和景点的经验和意见的平台, 这可以显著影响其他旅行者的决定。因此, 了解 OTRs 在塑造旅行者认知和动机方面的作用和影响已经成为旅游研究中的一个重要领域。本论文将通过揭示 DI 复杂的形成过程, 以及为目的地营销者和政策制定者更好地理解 and 利用 OTRs 的力量提供见解, 对旅游文学作出贡献。

本篇论文的研究目的是确定构成托斯卡纳目的地形象的关键属性, 并更加全面地了解中国游客访问托斯卡纳的原因。研究问题包括: 确认中国游客在旅行评论中所提到的托斯卡纳的旅游属性、探索托斯卡纳对中国游客的拉动因素以及它们与通过文献确定的推动因素之间的关联、并分析推动因素 (文化价值) 和拉动因素 (目的地吸引力) 之间的相互作用, 了解它们对中国游客旅游动机的影响。

托斯卡纳位于意大利中部地区, 以其美丽的风景、丰富的历史、艺术和文化而闻名。该地区凭借着佛罗伦萨、比萨与锡耶纳等历史名城丰富的文化遗产、风景如画的山顶小镇, 拥有着葡萄园和橄榄树的美丽乡村, 以及著名的饮食和葡萄酒文化, 每年吸引着来自世界各地成千上万的游客。此外, 托斯卡纳也拥有一些联合国教科文组织评定的世界遗产, 其中包括佛罗伦萨与锡耶纳的历史中心和比萨大教堂广场。托斯卡纳的旅游业是当地经济的重要支柱, 是意大利旅游业的重要组成部分。意大利长期以来一直是中国游客的热门旅行目的地, 近年来托斯卡纳的中国游客数量一直在稳步增长。作为世界上最大的出境旅游市场, 中国游客已经成为全球旅游业中越来越重要的一部分。因此, 必须更好地了解中国游客到托斯卡纳旅游的原因、喜好和行为, 以便制定有效的营销策略, 提供高质量的旅游服务, 来满足中国游客的具体需求和偏好。

为了实现研究目标, 作者将采用混合方法, 结合定量和定性的数据分析。定量分析意为对中国流行的旅游网站马蜂窝上发布的中国旅游博客和评论样本的内容进行整体分析和词频分析。

这种方法有助于得出托斯卡纳最常被游客提及的属性以及它们对中国游客的相对重要性。定性分析将涉及到对同一样本的旅游博客和评论的主题分析，以便更深入地了解中国游客描述托斯卡纳时所使用的语言背后的深层原因和动机。通过结合这两种方法，作者旨在全面了解托斯卡纳在中国游客眼中的形象，以及他们访问该地区的原因。拉动因素指的是托斯卡纳作为目的地所具备的内在吸引力，这点将与中国文化价值和社会规范的推动因素进行比较和对照。这种比较将使我们深入地了解推动因素和拉动因素在塑造中国游客到托斯卡纳旅游的原因时的相互作用。

之前的研究已经探讨了影响中国游客旅游行为和决策的因素，其中包括他们的旅游动机和线上旅游评论在塑造目的地形象方面的作用。例如，研究发现，中国游客在作旅行决定时，会极大地受到其他游客评论的影响，而线上旅游评论正是他们的一个重要信息来源。此外，之前的研究还发现了影响中国游客的旅游行为和旅游偏好的文化因素，例如团体旅行的重要性和对文化遗产体验的重视。然而，在了解托斯卡纳在中国游客心中最重要的属性以及这些属性如何影响他们的旅行动机方面，许多文献并未涉及。通过填补这一空白，本研究丰富了文献内容，并在如何吸引中国游客的方法上，为旅游业的专业人士和政策制定者提供了一些重要见解。

本研究由四章组成。第一章讨论了研究背景，其中包括中国旅游的历史模式、“批准的目的地地位”（或 ADS）系统、政府旅游机构、旅游经营者、批发商和零售旅行社、旅游签证、中国游客概况以及 COVID-19 疫情对中国旅游的影响。第二章探讨了文化和价值观对中国旅游的影响，包括中国文化常识，“和谐”、“面子”、家庭成员之间的关系、自我实现、对权威的尊重以及中国价值观的现代化的影响。

第三章介绍了理论框架和研究目的。这一部分讨论了目的地形象及其形成与动机，以及在线目的地形象和用户生成的内容，之后详细阐述了在本研究中所使用的分析方法。

第四章介绍了研究结果，其中包括对数据的概述，对定量和定性分析结果的介绍和讨论，以及对中国文化价值观在塑造目的地形象中的作用的研究。此项研究强调了有机形象信息代理对目的地功能和心理属性中所作出的重要贡献，比如在线旅游评论平台。该研究还阐明了目的地形象的关系性，以及它是如何通过有机形象信息代理，特别是如何通过在线旅游评论平台形成的。研究结果表明了每个目的地都有其独特的目的地属性尺度的观点。

本研究的作者在制定主题和目标时，从之前的一些研究中得到了启发。具体来讲，灵感主要来自于张(2020)：该研究主要分析访问挪威盖朗厄尔的中国游客的旅行经历。他们利用从

中国网站上收集到的旅游博客，分析了游客的旅行经历和他们旅行背后的动机。分析采用了混合方法并结合了定量和定性技术。定量分析了 196 篇博客文章中的关键情感词。

作者还利用 Guo et. al (2021) 的研究来调查不同旅游评论平台之间是否存在差异和相似性。本研究选择了五个中国本土的旅游评论平台，如携程、爱奇艺、马蜂窝、途牛和去哪儿网。由于目的地形象是在线评论研究中的一个热门话题，作者采用混合内容分析法从 10197 条简体中文旅游评论中提取出了芬兰在中国游客眼中的目的地形象。结果显示，芬兰在中国旅游评论平台上的形象有差异。这种差异在功能性和功能性-心理性混合的目的地属性维度上尤为明显。

此外，通过上述研究确定了研究的目标。根据 Guo et. al (2021)，DMO 应该密切关注游客的文化背景和人口特征对目的地认知的影响。目的地形象的形成不仅受到目的地信息来源（诱导的、自主的和有机的）的影响，也受到社会文化和社会人口特征的影响。这些研究结果表明，了解游客的特征，对 DI 形成原因的理解至关重要。

然而，这些早期研究使用的方法与本研究选择的方法略有不同。本研究选择的方法受到了之前两项研究的启发，特别是 Tseng 等人（2015）使用的 Leximancer 与关于中国的在线旅游博客的研究，以及前述的 Guo 等人（2021）的研究。这两项研究都对本研究所使用的方法提供了巨大的参考意义，并经过对两项研究的调整和加强来使其适应本研究的具体需要。特别是 Tseng 等人（2015）提供了数据收集的理论框架，而 Guo 等人（2021）提供了分析所收集数据的方法。

本研究所取得的成果不仅对托斯卡纳的旅游业专业人士和政策制定者有价值，对其他地区寻求吸引中国游客的人士也有重要意义。通过了解中国游客在考虑旅行目的地时最重要的要求和看法，旅游业的专业人士可以制定有针对性的营销策略以满足这些具体的需求和愿望。

例如，该研究发现，文化遗产、地方氛围、旅游休闲和娱乐是塑造中国游客对托斯卡纳目的地形象的重要因素。对于在其他地区并寻求吸引中国游客的旅游业人士来说，可以将这些信息与经验应用到他们自己的营销工作中。了解中国游客的独特偏好也可以帮助旅游业人士将他们所负责的目的地与竞争对手所负责的目的地地区分开来，并将自己的目的地打造成一个相较于其他目的地来说更具吸引力的选择。

此外，该研究还阐释了需要改进的地方，比如需要更好的交通和信息设施。解决这些问题可以帮助旅游业人士为中国游客提供更好的服务和体验，从而提高目的地的整体知名度，以求

在未来吸引更多游客。通过实施这些改进措施，托斯卡纳和其他地区可以将自己定位为对中国游客更加欢迎的地区和更加方便的地区，最终达到访问量和经济效益的增加。

总的来说，本研究获得的见解可以帮助旅游业的专业人士和政策制定者更好地了解中国游客在选择旅游目的地时最重要的考虑因素，并制定更有效的战略来吸引这一重要的市场群体。通过使用这些信息来改善他们的营销工作和服务，使旅游目的地可以更好地满足中国游客的需求，以此充分利用这一市场群体所具有的巨大经济潜力。

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Introduction

This thesis explores implications of Chinese cultural values for tourism and how they shape destination image (DI). Moreover, through this research the author aims to explore the role of online travel reviews (OTRs) in shaping destination image, which refers to the perceptions and beliefs that travellers have about a destination. Specifically, the author will investigate how organic image information agents, such as user-generated content and OTRs, contribute to the formation of DI, and how this process may differ across cultures. Through both quantitative and qualitative analyses of a sample of 60 online travel reviews, the author will examine the interplay between organic image information agents and Chinese cultural values in shaping DI.

OTRs platforms have become one of the most popular sources of information for travellers. OTRs provide a platform for travellers to share their experiences and opinions about different destinations, accommodations, and attractions, which can greatly influence other travellers' decisions. Therefore, understanding the role and influence of OTRs in shaping travellers' perceptions and motivation has become an important area of research in tourism studies. This study will contribute to the tourism literature by shedding light on the complex process of DI formation and providing insights for destination marketers and policymakers to better understand and leverage the power of OTRs.

The purpose of this research is to identify the key attributes that make up Tuscany's destination image and to gain a better understanding of Chinese tourists' motivation to visit Tuscany. The research questions include identifying Tuscany's tourism attributes mentioned by Chinese tourists in their travel reviews, exploring the pull factors of Tuscany for Chinese tourists and how they correlate with push factors identified through literature, and analysing the interplay between push factors (cultural values) and pull factors (destination appeal) to understand their influence on the travel motivation of Chinese tourists.

The tourism industry in Tuscany is an important contributor to the local economy and an essential part of Italy's tourism industry. With its rich cultural heritage, stunning landscapes, and renowned food and wine culture, Tuscany attracts millions of visitors from all over the world each year. While Italy has long been a popular destination for Chinese tourists, the number of Chinese visitors to Tuscany has been steadily increasing in recent years (ANSA, 2020). As the world's largest outbound travel market (Statista, 2021), Chinese tourists have become an increasingly important segment of the global tourism industry. Therefore, it is essential to gain a better understanding of Chinese tourists' motivations, preferences, and behaviours when visiting Tuscany to develop effective marketing strategies and provide high-quality tourism services that cater to their specific needs and preferences. In order to achieve the research objective, the author will employ a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data analyses. The quantitative analysis will involve word

frequency analysis of a sample of Chinese travel reviews posted on Mafengwo, a popular travel website in China. This approach will allow for the identification of the most frequently mentioned attributes of Tuscany and their relative importance to Chinese tourists. The qualitative analysis will involve a content analysis of the same sample of travel reviews, allowing for a deeper understanding of the underlying meanings and motivations behind the language used by Chinese tourists to describe Tuscany. By combining these two approaches, the author aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the destination image of Tuscany as perceived by Chinese tourists, as well as their motivations for visiting the region. The pull factors of Tuscany, which refer to the destination's inherent appeal, will be compared and contrasted with the push factors, which are derived from Chinese cultural values and social norms. This comparison will provide insights into the interplay between push and pull factors in shaping the travel motivations of Chinese tourists visiting Tuscany. This research is composed of four chapters. The research background, discussed in the first chapter of this research, covers the historical pattern of China's tourism, the "Approved Destination Status" (or ADS) system, government tourism bodies, tour operators, wholesalers, and retail travel agencies, tourism visas, the Chinese tourist profile, and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on Chinese tourism. The second chapter explores the implications of culture and values for Chinese tourism, including Chinese common knowledge, the implications of "Harmony", "Face", guanxi and family togetherness, self-realization, respect for authority, and the modernization of Chinese values. The third chapter describes the theoretical framework and research purpose. This section discusses destination image, destination image formation, motivation, online destination image, and user-generated content. Then describes in detail the methodology used in this study to analyse. In the fourth chapter, the findings are presented, which includes an overview of the data, the presentation and discussion of both quantitative and qualitative analysis results, as well as an examination of the role that Chinese cultural values play in shaping the destination image. The discussion highlights the significant contribution of organic image information agents, such as online travel review platforms, to both functional and psychological destination attributes. The study also sheds light on the relational nature of destination image and how it is formed through organic image information agents, specifically online travel review platforms. The findings of this study confirm the idea that each destination has its unique destination attribute scale.

1. Research Background: Chinese outbound tourism

Since 2004, changes in the Chinese policy concerning the concession to Chinese citizens of visas for tourists traveling in groups to approved destinations combined with the improving economic conditions, led to a situation in which China was (before the COVID-19 pandemic) the leading country in international tourist traffic, both for number of participants and for the volume of their expenditure abroad. Since 2012, China has been the world's number one source of international tourists. However, it should be noticed that only less than 6% of the population in China held passports allowing them to travel abroad, and the total number of overseas travels was only 3% of the total trips made in China in 2016.¹ In the same year, Chinese tourists made 135 million outbound travels and spent 261 billion US dollars on overseas purchases. Over 40% of Chinese tourists participated in group tours, either low-cost mass travel or relatively high budget customized groups. The remaining 60% were free independent travelers (FITs), who choose personalized and flexible products according to their individual needs.

In terms of destinations, according to McKinsey's "China & the World" 2019 analysis, excluding Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau, the top destinations by arrival in 2017 were Thailand, Japan, Vietnam, South Korea, US and Singapore. Asia was therefore confirmed as the most chosen destination, due to issues related to geographical proximity, ease of connection, lower travel costs and also to cultural and family ties with the numerous Chinese communities present in the area.

Before the 2020 pandemic outburst, the figures of visitor arrivals from China to Italy were positive and stable. Chinese tourists in Italy were 4.5 million in 2016, over 5 million in 2017, and 5.3 million in 2018, according to data from the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT, 2020). In 2019, there were more than 5.355 million tourists travelling from China to Italy total. Italy followed the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Russia as the sixth country in Europe in terms of arrivals from China. In just 40 years since the 1978 "Open Door" policy, China's tourism industry has shifted from solely focusing on inbound tourism with the aim to earn foreign currency, to be the largest domestic tourism market in the world and one of the most promising tourism economies as a whole². According to statistics³, in 2019, under the influence of income growth and tourism consumption promotion, there were 6.01 billion domestic tourists, among them, 4.471 billion were urban residents and 1535 million were rural residents. Domestic tourism revenue was 5.73 trillion yuan, with an

¹ World Tourism Organization (2017), Penetrating the Chinese Outbound Tourism Market – Successful Practices and Solutions, UNWTO, Madrid.

² In the late 1990s, the UNWTO forecast that the Chinese outbound tourism market would reach 100 million trips before 2020. However, statistics from the China Tourism Academy (CTA) show that this figure was surpassed by 2014.

³ China Statistical Yearbook 2021

increase of 11.7% over the previous year. Among them, the urban residents total spending was 4.75 trillion yuan, with an increase of 11.6%; whilst rural residents spent 0.97 trillion yuan, with an increase of 12.1%. Also, in 2019 the number of Chinese outbound tourists was 155 million, with an increase of 3.3%.

1.1 Historical Pattern of China's Tourism

To understand the modern Chinese tourists' motivation, needs and wants, it's essential to comprehend first the historical pattern of the Chinese tourism industry under different periods of policy guidance and industrial changes. Understanding the reasons behind the rapid development of China's tourism industry is also essential to predict future development. Moreover, history has influenced tourism growth in China in terms of both traveller motivations and destination choice.

The oldest form of travel in China is pilgrimage to places of culture and heritage, and still today tourists' travel motives are deeply rooted in the ancient country's culture (Jiang, Shan et. al, 2018). The theme of imperial pilgrimages originated in the Shang Dynasty period⁴ (second millennium B.C.) when emperors who were succeeding to the throne travelled to sacred sites to pay homage to gods and goddesses that resided in mountains, rivers and lakes. Specifically, nine pilgrimage sites evolved over the centuries: five sacred mountains and four sacred rivers. With the surge of Confucianism and Buddhism later on, even more sacred sites were added. Mandarins were guided by Confucianism principles «to seek ultimate truth from the landscape»⁵, so, to find inspiration for their creative talents (poetry, painting and calligraphy) they used to travel to remarkable sceneries. However, peasants and commoners living under the feudal system were forbidden from visiting most of the sacred places, and anyway under the economic conditions at the time they couldn't afford leisure activities. The tradition of visiting sacred sites disappeared during the 20th century due to years of internal unrest; eventually, the fall of the Qing dynasty and the declaration of a Republic in 1912 broke the linkage with annual imperial pilgrimages. Hence, even though tourism in China may be viewed as a relatively new phenomenon, it has roots dating far back into history and its characteristics were shaped by the patterns of historical change and economic development.

In the 1920s when a few travel agencies were founded in Shanghai, modern tourism started. These embryonal travel agencies managed both domestic and outbound tourism, as well as provided services for inbound tourists. However, these agencies were forced to close shortly after, and recreational travelling activities were no longer doable because of the internal agitation caused by the war against

⁴ Breda, Zelia. "Domestic Tourism in China: Observations on Its Growth and Structure." Research Gate, Jan. 2008

⁵ Sofield, and Li. *Tourism Development and Cultural Policies in China*. 1998.

Japan and then by decades of civil war. Before 1949, the only form of leisure travel for the common people was pilgrimages to Buddhist or Taoist temples.

After the foundation of the People's Republic of China and up until the implementation of the "Open Door" policy (1949-1978), inbound tourism wasn't permitted and internal travel was restricted: due to the household registration system, called *hukou* (户口), a permit was required for any travel outside one's local district and Chinese citizens were only allowed to travel for business trips, visiting relatives, studying and for health reasons. During the three and a half decades of Mao Zedong's regime leisure travelling was considered a useless bourgeois activity. For this reason, the statistics on tourism weren't collected at all, hence we can only speculate as to the exact figures, but experts believe pleasure travel would have been very limited⁶. Moreover, during the Cultural Revolution the "totalistic iconoclasm" vision was pursued, hence, traditional culture, religious practices and pilgrimages were forbidden.

In 1954, Zhou Enlai, then foreign minister, approved the foundation of the China International Travel Service (CITS), which is still today China's most influential travel agency. From this moment until the implementation of the "Open Door" policy, CITS was the only organization in China to deal with international tourism. This constituted a first step toward attracting foreign tourists to China, however, the responsibility carried out by CITS was at the time still limited to the reception of diplomats and delegations. As the Council of State Tourism had asserted, tourism was considered a propaganda tool rather than a proper form of development; it constituted a part of diplomatic work, and its purpose was to enhance China's political influence. In fact, from 1954 to 1978 the CITS played host to only 125,000 visitors⁷.

The necessary economic and physical conditions for the development of large-scale tourism did not exist in the pre-reform period. Only in 1978, with the implementation of Deng Xiaoping's "Open Door" policy, these trends were reversed. From 1979 to 1989 China was implementing systematic reform in all the sectors of its economy and was laying the foundation for its modernization programme. During this period, foreign revenue was needed to support the economic reform, hence, China adopted the principle of giving priority to attracting international tourists, in order to increase state foreign exchange earnings. The travel industry changed its purpose from a political propaganda machine to a foreign currency generator; therefore, no special steps were taken to encourage domestic tourism. Moreover, most tourism planners held that, since a low standard and inadequate supply of commodities, a shortage of food and accommodation facilities, and a limited transportation system

⁶ Wen, Zhang. "China's Domestic Tourism: Impetus, Development and Trends." *Tourism Management*, vol. 18, no. 8, 1997

⁷ Richter, Linda K. "The Politics of Tourism in Asia" University of Hawaii Press, 1 Jan. 1989.

prevented the growth of such an industry; for the sake of international tourism, domestic tourism should be controlled. However, despite these circumstances, domestic tourism was increasing because of the fast improvement of the country's comprehensive strength and national living standards.

From the middle 1980s, domestic tourism in China started to play a significant role. A tremendous growth in the country's economy⁸; which caused a major increase in the development of China's service industry and in the people's disposable income; has changed the structure of consumer spending considerably, and travel has rapidly become an important leisure activity pursued by many Chinese.

Besides great improvements in the Chinese economy, other non-economic factors have led to the development of the tourism market. In 1982, as part of the policy of separation of enterprise from administration, CITS specialised in all travel-related services, while it was created a new branch: China National Tourism Administration (CNTA), which specialized in national tourism management. In February 1983, the first China International Tourism Conference was held in Beijing. In October of the same year, China joined the World Tourism Organization. Through the tourism policy issued in 1984, the State Council decided that, for the first time, central government, localities, individual government departments, collectives and even individuals could invest in and operate tourism development projects. As a result, major improvements were done in domestic tourism supply.

Although domestic tourism has grown below the rate of international tourism before the early 1990s, it followed the same pattern, including a substantial decrease (20 percent) in the politically disruptive year of 1989. In 1992, in line with the change in policy direction, Deng Xiaoping delivered a speech on the Southern Tour, marking the decision to shape a favourable institutional environment and policy space for the development of tourism. The "Opinions on Actively Developing Domestic Tourism Industry" issued in 1993 clearly stated that domestic tourism should be included in the national economic and social development plan, and efforts should be made to develop mass tourism products. In the 1990s, and especially in the 2000s, as a result of this political and economic climate domestic tourism has developed at an unprecedented speed⁹. The five-day week system and the new national holiday system¹⁰, allowed Chinese citizens, especially urban citizens, to get much more free time. From 2000, May Day Holiday and the Chinese New Year were extended into full-week holidays. This new holiday system created the so-called "Golden Weeks", which are still today periods of

⁸ In 1989, China's national average per capita income reached 1.189 RMB, an increase of 3.44 times that of 1979. (W. Zhang, 1997).

⁹ China has witnessed a series of holiday-policy reforms, which are regarded as an important force shaping the development of domestic tourism.

¹⁰ Introduced in 1995 and 1999 respectively.

greatly heightened travel activity. As a result, many Chinese people have begun to change their traditional way of spending their days off, using the holidays to travel and enjoy longer vacations. These measures' purpose was to help expand the domestic tourism market and improve the national standard of living, as well as allow people to make long-distance family visits. With the launch of the "Approved Destination Status (ADS)" system in 1995 and, subsequently, of the "Provisional Regulation on the Management of Outbound Travel by Chinese Citizens at their own expenses", the practice of travelling outside the country at one's own expense, for personal purposes and outside the control of the government was finally possible. With the strengthening of China's integration into the global economy, bureaucratic procedures such as passports, currency exchange and visas were progressively simplified and liberalized.

In 2003, the tourism growth rates faced a decline, caused by the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) epidemic. In that year, The Chinese Labour Day holiday was shortened to discourage Chinese residents from travelling, and to control the potential spread of the epidemic. The impact of SARS was severe but domestic travel recovered very fast. In 2004, domestic tourists surpassed one billion, showing an increase of 27 percent over the previous year¹¹.

Through the promulgation of "Outline for the Development of Tourism Quality (2013–2020)" China proposed to redefine the tourism industry into a modern service industry, that may meet the people's growing needs in tourism and leisure and promote the sustainable development of the tourism industry. The "Guidelines for the Creation of All-for-one Tourism Demonstration Zones" issued in 2017, promoted the transformation of the tourism industry from the construction and management of single scenic spots to integrated destination services. Moreover, it revealed the important position of information technology applications in the development of China's tourism industry, encouraging the integrated development of mobile Internet, artificial intelligence, computer simulation, big data and other technical fields with tourism. In 2018, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism was established. This not only shows that the influence of the tourism industry has penetrated the national economy but also reflects the importance of the integrated development of tourism and cultural industries. The "Outline for Building a Powerful Transportation Country" issued by the State Council in September 2019 proposed to deepen the integrated development of transportation and tourism, and improved transportation facilities.

In 2019, following the outbreak of novel Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Wuhan, the government issued numerous preventive measures and anti-infection regulations. As a consequence of the suspension of business activities for tourism enterprises, the failure of Spring Festival golden week

¹¹ China Statistical Yearbook - 2004.

was inevitable, and the restrictions have greatly affected all three major tourism sectors. Among them, the biggest shock has affected the travel agencies, online travel agencies (OTAs) and exhibitions. It is widely acknowledged by travel agencies, that the business during the Spring Festival golden week is almost the source of half a year's income. Statistics show the effects of COVID-19 on China's domestic tourism sector by a 68% decline in the first quarter of 2020, followed by a forecasted 20.6% decline throughout 2020¹². Moreover, given the international spread of the epidemic, the Chinese government sealed its borders and imposed a compulsory 14-day hotel quarantine upon arrival of anyone entering the country. In terms of policies, from 2020 until the beginning of 2023 China resorted to non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) and a zero-tolerance approach to contain the epidemic, which means that the government's goal was to eliminate any trace of the virus in China, rather than live with it.

1.2 The “Approved Destination Status” (or ADS) system

In the early nineties, China introduced a special policy to manage the flow of outbound tourism called “Approved Destination Status” (or ADS). The procedure for issuing visas is included in the ADS agreement, a bilateral agreement stipulated between the People's Republic of China and a foreign country that intends to receive Chinese tourists. Hong Kong and Macao were the first foreign destinations to sign the ADS agreement in 1983, followed by Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and the Philippines. Since 2000, another 150 world destinations have been added. ADS visas are issued to tour groups (and not individual tourists) recommended by Chinese travel agencies. (CNTA, 2023). Official trips and business trips abroad are not covered by the ADS agreements. The system constitutes a control mechanism on the organization of both contracting parties of the ADS agreement (local travel agencies and international tour operators) in order to optimize tourist services for Chinese customers. An important aspect of the Approved Destination Status is to prevent any illegal immigration through the tourism channel, since all tour groups traveling in the ADS space are subject to monitoring by both Chinese and foreign authorities. To promote and organise tourist groups including visa application and payment of foreign currency to foreign parties is legally allowed only to certified ADS travel agencies. The certification process for travel agencies requires them to designate specific agents to handle visa applications. Destinations without an ADS agreement cannot receive tourist groups from China or promote tourism in China, and are limited to only hosting business and official travel groups. The CNTA maintains a list of approved tour operators for outbound travel, which is made available on their website for each destination country. Those listed

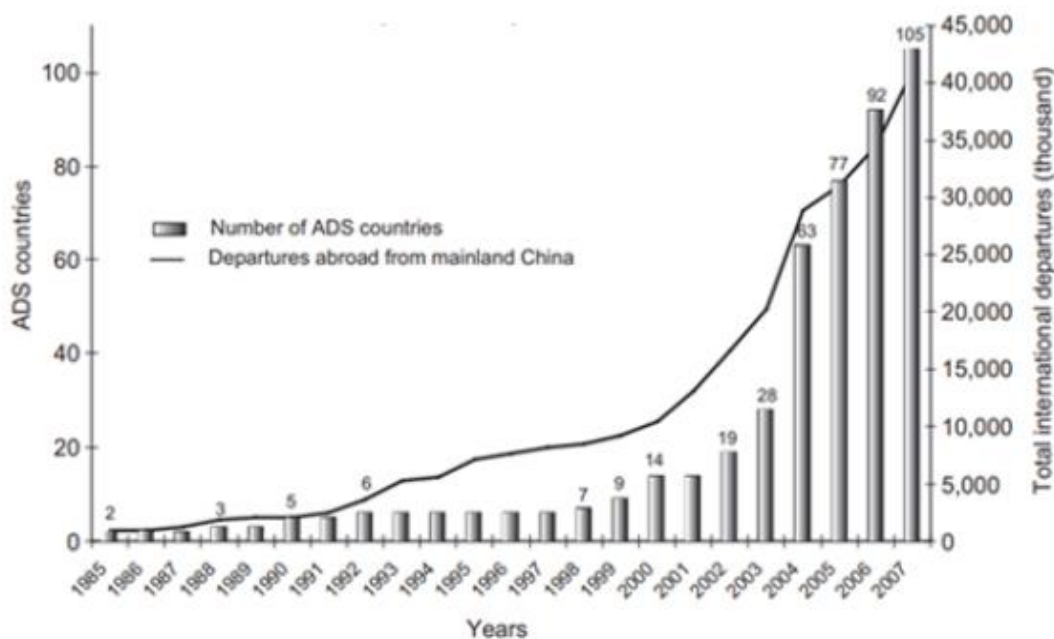
¹² “China: Coronavirus Impact on Domestic Tourism 2020.” Statista.

by CNTA have simpler procedures regarding guarantees, payments and visa applications (Yang, 2019).

The independent travel market is not regulated through any tourism agreement. It is up to each consulate to issue visas for individual tourists. For instance, the German embassy has been the most accessible for individual applications (Website of the Chinese Embassy in Germany).

An analysis conducted by the WTO on the ADS (World Tourism Organization, CNTA and Prof. Zélia Breda; 2007) noted that the number of visitors pre and post ADS highlights the heterogeneity of the impacts of ADS in different countries. Figure 1 summarizes the average growth rates of visitor arrivals from China in the three years before and three years after obtaining the ADS and compares them with the overall growth rate of international outbound travel from China during the corresponding periods. Growth rates of pre- and post-ADS Chinese visitor arrivals vary substantially between countries. These findings provide only empirical evidence that ADS status substantially increased Chinese visitor arrivals to ADS countries. The expansion of ADS agreements has also led to a certain shift in travel from existing and established destinations to new destinations in fresh ADS countries, previously unknown or little considered. It can therefore be said with certainty that the ADS agreements have significantly increased the number of mainland Chinese traveling to foreign destinations.

Figure 1. Number of ADS countries and departures from China per year.



Source: World Tourism Organization (2004, 2006, 2007), CNTA and Prof. Zélia Breda

1.3 Government tourism bodies

China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) is comparable to a Ministry of Tourism and financed by the government. It does not, however, have the full status of a ministry and lacks enforcement power. Its main functions are to define the legal framework and development strategy of the travel industry, and sign tourism agreements with foreign governments on behalf of the industry, promote inbound and domestic travel, oversee events concerning the foreign Chinese government. Each province and city have a tourism bureau that is a branch of CNTA; they are responsible for implementing the policies on tourism as defined by the CNTA. CNTA and the local tourism bureaux are partners of many European national tourist offices for marketing and promotions in China. CNTA is usually the official partner for organising travel of Chinese citizens to major cultural or sports events abroad.

The China National Tourism Office (CNTO) is the international representation of CNTA and has offices in some of countries that maintain diplomatic relations with China. CNTO operates independent offices in Los Angeles, New York, Toronto, Sydney, Seoul, Tokyo, Osaka, London, Paris, Madrid, Zurich, Frankfurt, Rome, Moscow, New Delhi, Kathmandu and Singapore. They primarily deal with promoting China as a destination but have the additional role of promoting bi-directional tourism links. Governmental institutions like CNTA are non-commercial and not allowed to directly cooperate with private companies (<http://www.china.org.cn/>).

1.4 Tour operators, wholesalers, and retail travel agencies

As per the competent Chinese authority, an outbound tour operator is a travel agency that has been approved by the State Council's administrative department of tourism in China and has legally acquired the authorization to conduct outbound tourism business. Outbound tour operators create, and design travel products and services based on market demand and on resources of their own such as flight tickets, visa couriers, and certified tour leaders, reselling package tours and travel services to long haul tourists through their distribution channels (<http://www.china.org.cn/>).

Over 4800 agencies in China are licensed to operate outbound travel¹³, and these travel agencies vary greatly in size. Outbound tour operators can be classified into three categories based on their primary business scope, as identified by professionals in the tourism industry. These categories are retailers, wholesalers, and large tourism groups. While some operators have branches throughout the country, others operate solely in specific regions.

¹³ Australia, Tourism. "Working in Market - China." [Www.tourism.australia.com](http://www.tourism.australia.com), 29 Sept. 2022, www.tourism.australia.com/en/insights/markets/greater-china/china/distribution-system-china.html. Accessed 9 Jan. 2023.

Wholesalers, which were officially recognized by the government from 2004, play an important role in the traditional industrial chain. Wholesalers sell packaged products concerning different destinations, as a hinge between the resource providers and retailers. The wholesalers consolidate and manage the fundamental resources to gain the best possible pricing advantage, and subsequently provide primarily standardized products to travel agencies and online platforms. In terms of distribution channels, handling the initial phase of the industrial chain does not only make wholesalers succeed; wholesalers also consolidate their advantages by distributing their products and services through the big numbers of offline stores and online platforms. In the procurement phase, wholesalers can concentrate on negotiating for bulk purchases with resource providers, such as airline companies, destination management organisations, restaurants, shopping malls, etc., thanks to the significant volume of tourist traffic gathered from the retailers. In addition, the wholesalers typically hold accreditation from both the CNTA and the Schengen nations to conduct the ADS group visa procedure at a number of Schengen country embassies and consulates in China. To accompany groups of at least 5 tourists, wholesalers work with a number of annually licensed tour leaders who speak English or the language of the destination.

The market still follows the model whereby online travel agents sell products provided by wholesalers but recently, a few online platforms have started to operate independently their business in the European market, attempting to acquire similar status as wholesalers, or to purchase directly from resource providers. There are also exceptional examples such as national level integrated tourism groups such as Utour, and Caissa, which have their own stores directly integrating the final client market through retail business. Moreover, recently, more travel agencies are getting used to sell their services and products at the counter to meet the demand of the growing number of customers. Customers are becoming more sophisticated and therefore demanding more quality and transparency. The travel sector is home to several well-known names. When all travel was governed by the government, these are the travel companies that were established. Despite having locations all around China, CTS, CITS, and CYTS shouldn't be regarded as either a wholesaler or a national brand. Each of their offices is run independently and is responsible for establishing its own reputation in the area in which it conducts business. Since the beginning of 2003, foreign-owned travel agencies are permitted to hold a majority interest in joint ventures under the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) that China signed when it joined the World Trade Organization, and from 2005, be fully owned by foreigners. CTI (which is owned by Hong Kong CTS), TUI, American Express and JTB can legally operate outbound travel via their joint ventures with Chinese travel agencies.

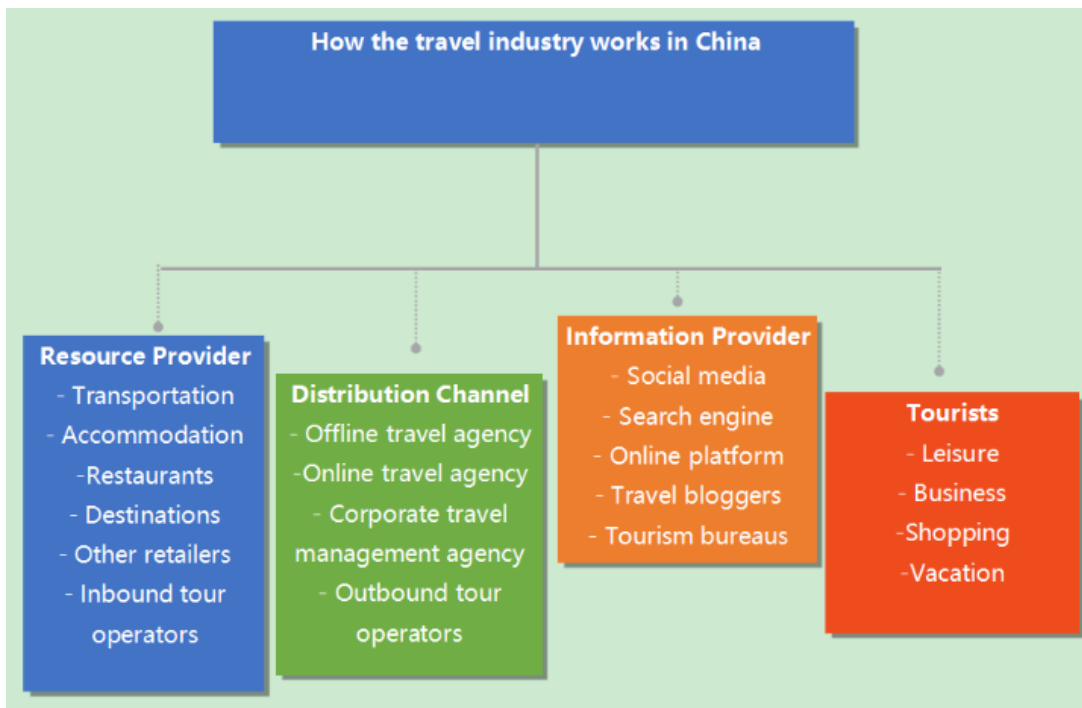
Over the past decade, online tourism has been reshaping the industry's value chain, affecting both conventional group leisure travel and independent travel. Online trading services have shortened the

value chain and reduced the gap between tourists and travel agents, resulting in more easily comparable offerings and increased availability and clarity of information. OTA also enhanced efficiency from purchase to distribution, reduced both the cost of labour and marketing, making the user experience more convenient. Despite the advancements made by online travel agencies, they still face challenges in effectively managing group travel in comparison to wholesalers. OTAs have a stronger presence in the independent travel market compared to group travel. As a result of their expertise in specific destinations and personalized service offerings, wholesalers are better equipped to sell their products to both online and traditional travel agencies for reaching their end customers in the group travel market. Consequently, the conventional industrial tourism chain remains the primary means of conducting Chinese outbound group tours.

Due to the lack of experience in the tourism sector, no Chinese tour operator specializes in a single tourist destination and most of the sales concern multi-destination trips. The great success of these packages could be due to the fact that, until 2005, the only travel agencies authorized to manage outgoing trips were the Chinese ones, i.e. public and accredited to foreign Embassies and Consulates thanks to the permission of the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA). As mentioned, the actual number of those operating solely on a specific market is very small, especially those recognized by the Italian consular network with permission to issue visas group. According to a survey by ENIT¹⁴, there are about forty, concentrated in Beijing, Shanghai and Canton, where in fact the Embassies and Consulates authorized to grant visas for countries in the Schengen Area also reside.

¹⁴ Bursi, Tiziano, and Giovanna Galli. "Approccio al Mercato Cinese Del Turismo (Approaching the Chinese Tourism Market)." Department of Economics (DEMB), 1 Oct. 2018, ideas.repec.org/p/mod/depeco/0135.html. Accessed 9 Jan. 2023.

Figure 2. Summary of the functioning of the travel industry in China



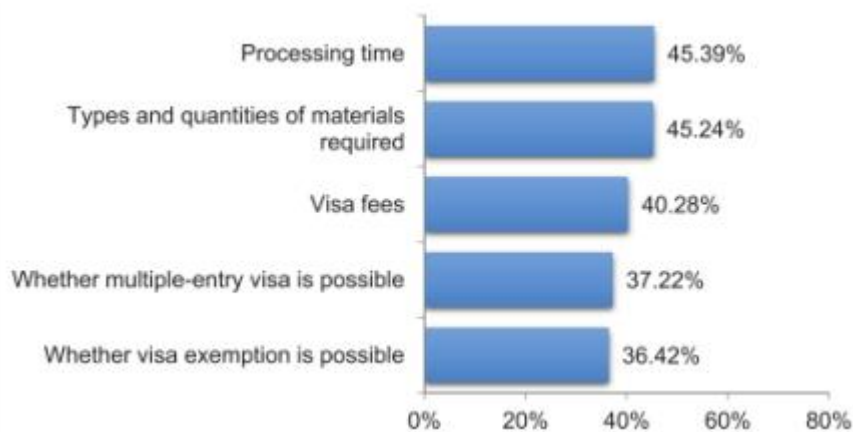
Source: Zhang, Paolo. “Chinese Outbound Tourism Trade and Italy.”

1.5 Tourism visas

Various sources report that one of the aspects that most influences the choice of destination for a Chinese tourist is the ease of obtaining a visa. According to a study by the World Tourism Cities Federation (WTCF) and Ipsos of 2018¹⁵, the main discriminant in the visa application process is the amount of time it takes to obtain it; followed by the type and quantity of documents to be compulsorily delivered and the costs of the procedures (Figure 3). For this reason, Chinese tourists choose much more willingly if there is the possibility of requesting a multi-entry visa or to be exempt from possession of visas.

¹⁵ Ipsos and World Tourism Cities Federation (Wtcf), Market Research Report on Chinese Outbound Tourist (City) Consumption (2017-2018), 2018: <https://en.wtcf.org.cn/Research/WTCFReports/2018091315941.html>.

Figure 3. Factors regarding visas influencing destination choice.



Source: Ipsos and World Tourism Cities Federation, Market Research Report on Chinese Outbound Tourist (City) Consumption (2017-2018)

Visa applications follow two different procedures depending on whether the trip is organized by a tour operator or if instead it is the individual requesting it. The two types of visas are:

- ADS visa: Tourists who choose organized group trips can apply for ADS (Approved Destination Status) visas by contacting tourism agencies which have been authorized by the CNTA and accredited by the Embassy of Schengen States. This type of visa has the function of guaranteeing a safe and reliable journey for the Chinese tourist, but it also has the purpose of monitoring and avoiding possible attempts at illegal immigration. The main difference between the ADS visa application procedure and the individual visa application procedure is given by two factors: 1) with an ADS application, applicants who have never travelled to Europe before, do not have the obligation to take the interview at the Embassy ; 2) ADS applicants only need to fill in the visa application form, and procure the documentation regarding economic sustainability, without having to interface, for example, with the Italian embassy or IVAC. (For the visa service, the Italian diplomatic officers collaborate with the Italy Visa Application Center (IVAC), which is a service provider managed by a private company, authorized by the Embassy to receive visa applications. However, the ultimate responsibility for evaluating and making decisions on requests lies with the Visa Office at the Embassy (Dall'Ara, 2013).
- Individual visa: The individual visa procedures are much more complex. The reasons for applying for an individual visa can vary from family reunification to business or study. If for these last two reasons, an invitation from a company, university, or other

body or institute is required. For family reunification, on the other hand, a certificate of kinship must be presented, for tourism purposes, hotel and return flight reservations are required. To apply for a visa for Italy, the applicant must be personally interviewed. For business visas it is possible to avoid the interview at the Embassy if the company issuing the invitation is recognized by the Italian Chamber of Commerce in China, by the Italian Embassy, by the Italy-China Foundation, or by the Institute for Foreign Trade (ICE). While for the categories of family reunification and tourism, if the applicant has never travelled to a country belonging to the European Union in the recent past, or if the journey does not belong to ADS organizations, the applicants must make an appointment with the Italian Embassy to the interview at least 3 weeks before the departure date, especially during the high season. Once the interview has been completed, the Schengen Visa Application Form can be filled in. The temporary limit for tourism travel is 90 days. It is also necessary to present the bank statement of the last 3 months, or in any case, to prove the solidity of one's economic position and one's interest in returning to China.

In the case of ADS visas, the procedures are much more simplified since the Chinese operator is responsible for the return of tourists to their homeland. France and Germany, for example, have signed a joint initiative to facilitate the granting of visas to Chinese tourists who want to visit both countries, activating a common visa centre in Beijing and entrusting the services to the specialized company TLScontact¹⁶. In any case, Italy has started to address these issues since 2015, by issuing visas for FIT tourists, subject to further special checks, within 36 hours of the arrival of the passport at the Consulate. This measure has favoured an increase in the number of individual tourist visas of more than 100% between 2014 and 2016: in 2015 a total of 473,224 tourist visas were issued to Chinese citizens, of which 127,362 were FIT visas and 345,862 were ADS visas. (Le Figaro, 2012) Furthermore, in order to cover the very large territory of China, in April 2016, 11 new visa centres were opened, and in December 2019, the last one was officially opened in Guangzhou. According to a 2017 ENIT report¹⁷, the city that issued the highest number of visas is Beijing, followed by Shanghai, Guangzhou and Chongqing.

¹⁶ "Des Visas Pour Capter La Rente Des Touristes Chinois." LEFIGARO, 30 Oct. 2012, www.lefigaro.fr/international/2012/10/30/01003-20121030ARTFIG00395-des-visas-pour-capter-la-rente-des-touristes-chinois.php

¹⁷ Agenzia Nazionale del Turismo - ENIT. Cina E Hong Kong Rapporto Congiunto Ambasciate/Consolati/ENIT 2017. 2017, www.enit.it/it/studi/focus-paese/category/8-rapporti-enitmae-rapporti-enitmae-asia-e-oceania.html?download=124:cina-e-hong-kong.

1.6 The Chinese tourist profile

Generically, it can be argued that we are seeing a modernization of the Chinese consumer, who is becoming more attentive and discerning, more interested in services than products, and more focused on premium categories than mass ones. It is obvious that he is now seeking more responsible travel and a balanced lifestyle where health, family, and experiences come first. (Gong et al. 2016). An increasing percentage of travelers investigate their destinations, activities, and meals before traveling. Chinese tourists prefer to have one day to themselves while on a tour so they can shop or unwind. Furthermore, Chinese tourists seek out trip plans that they can create in conjunction with a travel agency. The majority of customers prefer to organize their own tour groups with family or friends, even if it results in a higher cost, rather than joining a random tour group. These groups frequently consist of relatives spanning three generations, and their demands of the travel companies are higher. The ways of making purchases have changed along with consumer preferences. Customers now have access to more diversified, transparent, and comparable information because to the widespread use of the Internet. The new generation favours individual travel, which has led to the widespread adoption of specialized and tailored goods. (Shen, 2018)

Today it is no longer possible to refer to a single category of Chinese tourists, given the distinctive characteristics, such as of travel, class and personal motivations, denote a much more heterogeneous picture. If once the tourist offer was unique, corresponding to an organized tour in certain destinations such as the main and most famous European artistic cities, today we can witness a real explosion of diversification. In particular, we are witnessing the development of a new category of tourists who are increasingly younger and social, as well as inclined towards an independent travel method. They prefer smaller groups, made up of friends and/or relatives, rely less on travel agencies, preferring to search for information online, have many interests and typically have already been abroad. The definition of this category is Free Independent Tourist (FIT) (Arlt, 2016).

However, this does not mean that the classic Chinese tourist, who prefers traditional group holidays booked through state travel agencies, and who tries to see as many cities and attractions as possible in a very short time, has disappeared. Traditional group tourism continues to represent the most widespread way to travel abroad, both for a cultural factor and for an organizational factor. Furthermore, organized tours give Chinese people a sense of security, as they perceive language barriers less. Organized trips outside the continent are economically more advantageous than do-it-yourself trips, not to mention that they prepare the offer of multi-country packages, i.e. a travel package through multiple countries and multiple cities. Lastly, group travel considerably simplifies the bureaucratic process for obtaining a visa (Zhang, H., & Fu, X.; 2019).

According to the 2H2020 Travel Sentiment Survey by Ctrip's Tourism Big Data Lab, at the moment this mode of travel is still the most popular on the market. These data evidence the preference of the Chinese for ever smaller groups, for private groups or family trips: 59% of flight bookings for the summer on the platform were in fact for families with children. 50% of these are mothers who travel alone with their children. ¹⁸

Finally, despite the underlying cultural homogeneity, it should be noted that the behaviour of the Chinese tourist can also vary significantly, according to the province or district of origin. We must also take into account the fact that a significant portion of the increase in tourism abroad comes from second and third tier cities, whose inhabitants, still inexperienced tourists, still prefer organized tours. This disparity can also be explained by economic development, which occurred at different speeds between urban and rural areas, as well as between the different provinces. The most significant growth in GDP and therefore in per capita income has in fact occurred in the eastern and coastal areas, supporting and encouraging an improvement in services and the culture of tourism more rapidly than elsewhere in those areas (Zhang, H. et al., 2018)

Given the high stratification of Chinese demand, (as mentioned, based on the areas of origin, income, age and interests) Giancarlo Dall'Ara in his book "Il Mercato Turistico Cinese. Marketing, Casi E Buone Prassi" has identified three macro-segments: first generation tourists; second generation tourists and the new tourists.

According to Dall'Ara, the "first generation" tourists are the classic Chinese tourists who go around in groups, mainly at their first travel experience. These people have an average income, are over 35 and therefore are closely linked to their habits. They are not looking for new experiences, but rather for that typical souvenir and the typical experience that is universally recognized as belonging to that specific place.

"Second generation" tourists are distinguished the aforementioned ones by their greater economic availability and, consequently, by the possibility of choosing more personalized travel packages. Since they have already experimented with the group travel, they are now demanding an offer that contemplates the opportunity to carry out multiple activities, but with ample room for the freedom to discover or deepen their knowledge of a destination already visited, and, above all, without the help of a guide. They are tourists who visit a maximum of three countries, invariably oriented towards shopping but on average more experienced and more interested in the customs and traditions of the cultures they visit. The them the organized tour is now an outdated method. They are the young

¹⁸ Ctrip's Tourism Big Data Lab. (2020). 2H2020 Travel Sentiment Survey. <https://www.ctrip.com/html/insight/en/20201209/8.html>

Chinese, tourists who possess a very high level of information because they are their own tour operators: their curiosity comes from social networks and is consolidated through redundant word of mouth on the web. Naturally they are interested in shopping and big names, but on an equal footing we find a more adventurous and non-traditional spirit: for example, they often rent a car to fully enjoy the experience on the road. These tourists have three unique characteristics: 1. They find travel information on the web 2. They share their travel experiences on social networks (Weibo, Weixin, QQ, Youku) 3. They organize part of the trip independently, without relying completely on travel agencies.

Finally, according to Dall'Ara, the new tourists ask for personalized itineraries and proposals, such as skiing in the mountains, visiting a wine cellar, spending a stay in the countryside, etc. The wealthier ones do not disdain tours of a maximum of 2-3 regions, a sign that they wish to immerse themselves in a more intimate and contained atmosphere.

1.7 Effects of COVID-19 pandemic on Chinese tourism

The COVID-19 epidemic is unprecedented and may be bringing in a new normal context for human life, hence, the question of its impact on tourist psychology remains unique; as a result, only a few references in the literature may be used to comprehend the situation. Because the COVID-19 pandemic is a once-in-a-lifetime worldwide change condition for tourism, it's important to think of it as a ubiquitous context and see how it affects people's travel preferences. In general, the impact of the pandemic on Chinese nationals' perceptions of tourism, particularly their tourism preferences, appears to be a major worry for post-COVID-19 international tourism development.

Even with the current travel limitations, there are changes in Chinese traveller choices and behaviours that may persist. Travel firms should rethink about how they approach products, channels, and loyalty in this new environment.

When it comes to travel sentiment, as COVID-19 outbreaks continue, desire for travel has spiked and dipped. In fact, travel patterns mirror the fluctuations in travel desires. Between August and September 2021, the number of airline passengers climbed by 61%, then increased by 8% in October, before declining by 45% between October and November. In the same months, the number of train passengers increased by 47%, increased by 9%, and decreased by 42%.¹⁹ But despite the fluctuations, the study by Guang et al. (2022) shows that the desire for travel remains. At the time of the study, 42% of respondents intend to travel domestically for their next leisure trip, with 26% of these flights

¹⁹ Chen, Guang, et al. "China Tourism in 2022: Trends to Watch | McKinsey." www.mckinsey.com, 22 Feb. 2022.

lasting more than three hours. As a result, Chinese tourists show a desire to travel both domestically and internationally.

COVID-19's environmental pressures, laws, and global panic appear to be having long-term effects on travel, as well as related distribution and packaging. Recent research has indicated that due to increased perceptions of danger and dread of travel, inter-pandemic planned travel behaviour is likely to shift. Chinese visitors, for example, are more inclined – at least in the short term – to travel alone or in small groups to recuperate from self-isolation while remaining safe during the outbreak (i.e. outside large groups of people). They may also skip popular tourist destinations in favour of less well-known locations. (Qiu, 2021)

According to Qiu's (2021) research, visitors' impression of a site is influenced by their perceptions of risk. These risks generally concern safety and security, as well as health-related issues. As a result, foreign tourism locations affected by COVID-19 should work to demonstrate their ability to safeguard visitors from public health risks while traveling. Reassuring potential visitors of the availability of vital supplies and publicizing clinic and hospital locations are examples of such initiatives. After COVID-19, the quantity and quality of medical facilities in tourism destinations are anticipated to influence destination image and, as a result, places' ability to recruit Chinese tourists.

Before the reopening of international borders, new domestic travel solutions were developed to fill the gap left by international travel. Companies may examine ways to match product offers to current desires as consumers' travel expectations change. According to Guang et al. (2022), when it comes to what people want to do on their vacations, interest in visiting cultural or historical places has risen from 39 percent to 44 percent, making it the second most popular activity. Shopping and food visits, which previously ranked in the top five categories of interest, are no longer among the top five. The most popular picturesque sites are now those in the outdoors. Even while people prefer travels to their hometowns and surrounding places, they want more sophistication and fulfilment than just buying something new or trying different cuisine. Emotional fulfilment is becoming more and more important.

These findings are consistent with the trend prior to COVID-19 of shifting away from functional travel and toward experience and transformative travel. To put it another way, tourists want to learn something new or have a life-changing personal experience during their vacations.

2. Implications of culture and values for tourism in China

The topic of culture and values have been studied for decades²⁰, and it has been proved that cultural values influence people's preferences and expectations. Hofstede (1980) defined culture as «the collective programming of the human mind that distinguishes the members of one human group from those of another. Culture in this sense is a system of collectively held values». Hence cultural values are recognized as beliefs and norms commonly conceived by members of a society that affect various aspects of members' behaviour. Marketing theorists underline cultural values as one of the underlying determinants of consumer behaviours in tourism²¹. Since understanding the tourists' behaviours shaped by different cultural values and then providing quality service which meets customer expectations are the focal points for today's tourism marketers, it's essential to understand how values influence their consumption preferences and expectations. Moreover, culture is recognised as a crucial factor influencing Chinese tourist behaviour. Hence, examine Chinese tourists and their behaviours requires a thorough understanding of Chinese cultural values, which shape underlying behavioural roots such as motivations.

Chinese culture is an expression of one of the few unbroken civilisations in the world and today it's influencing 1.4 billion Chinese people only in mainland China. This history links to contemporary development in a way that is matched by few other countries. Many Chinese values originate in ancient times but find expression in contemporary tourism development all over China. For instance, many indigenous Chinese concepts such as harmony, *mianzi*, 面子(*face*), *guanxi*, 关系 (interpersonal relationships) and respect for authority, can be traced in the Hofstede's national cultural dimensions of large power distance and collectivism. However, Chinese values are also evolving under the influence of an array of economic, political, and social factors. The economic reform of the 1980s recognised the market economy principles and promoted competition and wealth; this is believed to have contributed to the transition into a more individualized society. In the social and economic transition described above, some modern values have emerged and gained society's wide acceptance. These values include individualism, materialism, and ostentation.

These attributes have important implications for tourism and marketing communication and understanding these values and applying them to the delivery of tourism experiences and products to Chinese tourists is likely to increase customer satisfaction. Hence, tourist destination authorities and industry practitioners are advised to attend to these values in their management and marketing responsibilities. However, given the profound differences in Chinese cultures, populations and

²⁰ e.g., Adler and Graham, 1989; Armstrong, Mok, Go, and Chan, 1997; Hofstede, 1980.

²¹ e.g., De Mooij, 2010, Woodside et al., 2004.

economies, the models conceived by scholars in western developed countries may not entirely apply to China. For instance, the Fu et al. (2017) study seems to account for the nuances and the range of motivations that Western frameworks failed to capture. For example, some of the primary Chinese motivations were found to be harmony with nature and family togetherness, which is different from the conventional novelty, escaping and relaxation driven travel motivations, which is typical in the Western tourists. The application of Confucian values will help destination managers understand how marketing practices fit with the personal or relational goals of Chinese tourists. A successful matching of motivations and activities that coincides with a tourist's desired value ends would make a destination more appealing.

2.1 Chinese common knowledge

Any approach to analysing the current state of tourist development in China must include the concept of Chinese common knowledge. This concept refers to *zhonghua wenhua*, 中华文化, which is generally translated as “Chinese common knowledge”²². *Zhonghua wenhua* relates to a broad range of information shared by millions of Chinese about the country's history, philosophies, religions, literary heritage, art, calligraphy, culture heroes and so forth that has been transmitted in a continuous fashion over 5000 years. This knowledge is transmitted using common templates used to learn to read and write classical Chinese script, which date back hundreds of years and are derived from imperial collections of leading calligraphers. Each individual character is embedded in a context (an ancient poem, an extract from a famous essay, an incident in history, etc.), and thus in learning how to write each character, the context is also absorbed. Chinese common knowledge is thus a bond each succeeding generation gain to the origins of Chinese civilisation. The influence of this body of knowledge continues to provide shape for much of the social, cultural and physical structure of what China is today, and its tourism development embraces these cultural elements to a degree that few other countries can match.

Sofield and Li (1998) stated that “when western tourists look at the Yangtze River, they see a river; the Chinese see a poem replete with philosophical ideals. Part of the “common knowledge” of Chineseness is to recognise representations of the picturesque hills of Guilin, the sea of clouds of Wu Shan, the Three Gorges of the Yangtze River, and the Yellow Crane Terrace pagoda. These images bring spiritual unity even if the people have never visited them; but when they visit the importance of these images is reinforced. Such philosophical interpretations of China's historical and sacred sites became a part of Chinese “common knowledge” and it still remains today, when millions of Chinese

²²Li, Fung Mei Sarah. Chinese Common Knowledge, Tourism and Natural Landscapes Gazing on 别有天地 “Bie You Tian Di” “an Altogether Different World.” 2005.

visit sites immortalized by their poets and artists. Visiting these famous places constitutes a statement of culture, community identity, or religious affiliation. Sofield and Li (1998) suggested that Chinese domestic tourism to such places constitutes «a voluntary cultural decision more akin to a pilgrimage to historical, cultural, and political centres» made in order «to validate the poetic knowledge of such places». This is represented by the traditional saying known to all Chinese “不到长城非好汉”, which literally means “he who fails to reach the Great Wall is not a true man”. Hence the concept for which visiting heritage sites, such as the Great Wall, is seen as an experience every Chinese must go through. Moreover, this implies that the Chinese tourist gaze extends beyond the merely visual and includes intangibles, giving Chinese tourists an experiential understanding impossible to reach to foreigners. This is related to the fact that authenticity is perceived differently by Chinese and Western people. Authenticity is a key concept in the tourist experience, yet it has a different meaning for Chinese. It is the place; an integration of physical building, spiritual meaning and the site itself; which matters to Chinese travellers. The Chinese would still consider a tourist site authentic even if it had been knocked down several times and rebuilt in a clumsy manner, because it is the place and the poems inspired by it that made the tourist site real.

2.2 Implications of “Harmony”

Harmony is defined as a harmonious state, obtained when different things are interrelated, but each is placed in its own appropriate position. The core idea is to avoid conflicts and fights.

Scholars have acknowledged²³ that harmony produces implications for nature-based tourism. The principle of *tian ren he yi* 天人合一 (the unity of man and heaven), which reflects the concept of harmony, regulates the relative position of human and nature (Xu et. al, 2014). The Chinese concept of harmony is reliant on ‘man improving on nature’, hence natural resources in China have been developed for tourism in ways which are often diametrically opposed to the western ideal of eco-centric conservation, where evidence of human presence is eliminated or suppressed. Because of this concept, all types of human endeavour²⁴ which are located in natural landscapes and modify the scenery are considered “natural”. Fundamental paradigms of the Chinese world view, Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, and the study of *feng shui* 风水 have formed the basis for an anthropocentric perspective with a sociological definition. Under this perspective man lives and works in harmony

²³ Trevor, Sofield. “China: Ecotourism and Cultural Tourism, Harmony or Dissonance?” ResearchGate, 2007.

Fu et al. “Framing Chinese Tourist Motivations through the Lenses of Confucianism.” *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, vol. 34, no. 2, 11 Mar. 2016, pp. 149–170.

²⁴ From pavilions and temples, trails and stairways, rock cliff engravings and calligraphy, paintings and stone tablets, ponds and lakes and gardens, carvings and other arts and craftwork.

with nature, and, because nature is imperfect, man has a responsibility to improve on nature. In this perception of the world, ‘harmony’ rather than ‘difference’ is dominant. Evidence of such human endeavour is the application of the principles of *feng shui* 风水, which ensures the achievement of harmony with the correct placement and orientation of human constructions in natural settings. It is thus distinct from a western perspective which views nature ideally as free from artificiality and human intervention.

Ecotourism in the western paradigm is defined as an integrated system of management of a natural resource for sustainable tourism, with the principle of conservation taking primacy over economic profit-making and human comfort. On the contrary, this cultural context of the unity of nature and humans continues in modern society, and translated into contemporary tourism development in China, it results in always modifying natural environments with human-made constructions. For ‘wilderness’ to be meaningful to the Chinese, humans must be part of the landscape, which is therefore not ‘wilderness’ in the idealised western sense. Without this, the Chinese essence of harmony is absent. Hence, in China, any nature-based tourism ventures tend to be classified as ‘ecotourism’, even though they generally are characterised by numerous built structures (hotels, restaurants, statues and calligraphy), whereas a western definition would define it as nature-based tourism or simply a tourism facility located outside the urban area. In effect, researchers (Fu et. al, 2014) indicated that Chinese tourists demonstrated more humanistic preferences and they were more likely to visit man-made spots than natural landscapes.

The inherent anthropocentrism is integral to the Chinese tourist experience and contributed significantly to a distinctive gaze, in the sense that the attractiveness of the mountains and scenic places is not evaluated according to their natural beauty per se, but according to their connections with these famous people and poets. Researchers have pointed out the impacts of the Chinese *shan shui* 山水 (mountain-water) poems and paintings developed since Weijin Dynasty (256–420 AD) on tourists’ expectations and experiences in natural sites ²⁵. These articles are carved on special stones and wood, which adds a special aspect to the Chinese landscape. Hence, natural landscapes in China are equally cultural landscapes to a Chinese tourist gaze; and tourists demonstrate a strong preference for landscapes that have become familiar through the images created by poets and artists throughout history. For instance, Tianlao Mountain became well known due to Li Bai's poem. The inseparable connection between cultural and natural heritage has been recognized by UNESCO, which has given Chinese scenic mountains the dual status of cultural and natural World Heritage Site.

²⁵These literary works and poetry are also part of Chinese common knowledge.

This heavy reliance on famous poets to increase the attractiveness of tourism sites still influences tourism planners and developers. As a consequence, huge numbers actively pursuing recreation and leisure at a scale generally unprecedented in western countries, in a way that inevitably the outcome is mass tourism and overcrowding of a few popular sites, again in contrast to western ecotourism which tends to be developed around relatively small visitation levels.

2.3 Implications of “Face”

Face is a sociological phenomenon that exists in every human society. It refers to a person’s image, position, or prestige within a particular community; it can be gained, lost, or enhanced. The concept of face is a reflection of the social psychological processes in Chinese society that emphasizes the importance placed on social status and expectations. When the local culture is characterized by collectivism, which as Hofstede theorized the Chinese culture to be, issues about face become emphasized. Hu (1944) noted that the Chinese language uses two words to represent face: 面 *mian* and 脸 *lian*. According to Hu, *lian* is the confidence and integrity of one's moral character and ego, where the loss of *lian* would diminish his status in society, whereas the more used *mian* is a person's success and prestige in life; *mian* is gained through tangible accomplishments achieved through high scholarly recognition, other forms of high status, or political powers and notable social success. In contrast, *lian* denotes the esteem of a group for an individual with a good moral reputation. In comparison, *lian* is more important than *mian* as *mian* can be regained more easily when one loses it; but the loss of *lian* represents the loss of one's integrity of character. To comprehend this concept better, one must understand that the standard and requirements of these social behaviours are social expectations held by the group with whom one is interacting. Hence, Chinese people tend to have keen face consciousness for themselves and their relatives, friends, and colleagues.

It's important to note that the definition of face evolves over time, affected by broader social and cultural norms and trends. According to Qi (2011), the significance of face is determined by whether it is socially shared or current rather than whether it has a positive evaluation. For example, in traditional Chinese society, individuals who have peak performance and success by working hard and overcoming adversity are seen as people with face. However, Fyall et al. (2017) found that Chinese Generation Y was more likely to be consumeristic and status-conscious: they perceive that their status can be enhanced by purchasing recognized brands, which are considered symbols of success, prestige, and wealth.

Several studies recognized that enhancing prestige and face are critical to understanding Chinese tourists' motivation, destination choice and travel behaviours. Status, which is similar but not identical to *mian*, was also found to be a primary motivation for Chinese people's travel and luxury

consumption, for choices of particular travel activities, and destinations. Although it is not overtly acknowledged among Chinese tourists, prestige-driven travel motivation plays an unignorable role in their destination choice decision-making process and travel behaviours. E.g., according to Chen et al. (2021), face-gaining experiences include excellent and personalized services, staying in luxurious hotels, afternoon tea at an eight-star hotel, dining in luxurious environments, and experiencing events/activities not easily accessible to other tourists; all activities which are fairly popular between Chinese tourists.

Social media has made the sharing of unique travel activities easy during the participation and experience phases. Thus, face can be enhanced during travel by posting exciting and unique experiences, and such posts can serve both as a testimony of the trip during post-travel recollection and to impress people. It is noteworthy that Chen et al. (2021) found that Chinese tourists' motivation to share travel experiences and photos on WeChat is to let them gain recognition and improve their social status. Moreover, sharing travel experiences on social media such as WeChat has connected travel engagement and post-travel, blurring the delineation between these two areas of travel; making it possible for tourists to gain face during both phases.

Although the influences of prestige-seeking travel motivations and behaviours have been revealed in relevant studies, tourists unwillingly admit or fail to perceive prestige-related travel motives. Furthermore, pursuing prestige intentionally is not considered desirable. Therefore, most research participants tend to be willing to perceive prestige as a motivating factor only in others' leisure travel behaviour. Chen et al. (2021) revealed that a majority of the study's respondents refused to admit that sharing their experiences on social media has something to do with face or showing off, but sharing their experiences was just another way of keeping their circles of friends informed about what they had been doing. Many participants tended to describe such behaviours (i.e., sharing photos to gain face) as "other people's actions," which echoed the findings of relevant studies that have indicated that prestige as a motivating factor for travel only to be admitted in the behaviour of others. Sharing their photographs with friends or colleagues is their way of gaining acknowledgement of their vacation experiences. Hence, in addition to merely informing the traveller's friends that they are traveling in another country, the sharing of exciting pictures and activities encourages them (social media friends) to ask questions, and this gives the traveller opportunities to make recommendations, having become by default an expert on attractions, food, and places to shop in the destination visited. Such behaviour, namely information sharing, is, according to Li (2020), another reason for sharing photographs on WeChat. This shows that Social Media boasting can have an intended effect of boosting the face of the sharer. Although the intention is not to gain face, tourists feel satisfied, enjoy the attention, and the positive feedback they receive due to their posts.

Practically, destination management organizations (DMOs) should pay attention to the influences of cultural values, on Chinese tourists' destination choices and travel behaviours. DMOs should properly position their destinations to offer face-gaining travel experiences if they want to increase Chinese tourist numbers and spending. Tourism planners and tour operators should examine what Chinese tourists deem face-worthy experiences while developing new tourism products and itineraries. The presence of iconic landmarks, beautiful sceneries, interaction with locals and unique experiences are some of them. Providing these psychological needs should be an efficient way to improve or enhance the destination's image in the minds of the Chinese traveller. Luxury and customized tours can be advertised to Chinese tourists who are concerned about face. Attractions and unusual tourist activities that are thought to be worthy of social media posts should be promoted as well. Offering products that can help create unique and memorable experiences can encourage social media postings, which can drum up more interest in the destination and help the tourist gain face to their social network. Chinese tourists are becoming more experienced and sophisticated, so offering products that can help create unique and memorable experiences can encourage social media postings, which can drum up more interest in the destination and help the tourist gain face to their social network. As a result, both the destination and the tourists can benefit from a win-win situation. Furthermore, DMOs should focus on electronic word-of-mouth communication and digital marketing on China-specific websites or social media platforms (e.g., WeChat, WeiBo, XiaoHongShu and Douyin) to significantly influence Chinese tourists' decision-making process. Collaborating with key opinion leaders or celebrities might generate the "celebrity effect", encouraging more prestige-seeking Chinese tourists to visit the same locations.

Lastly, the Chinese concept of face has also a particular implication for gift-giving. There are certain norms the Chinese obey when giving gifts. For example, people will lose face when presenting a gift that does not match their status or the status of the recipient; so, the gifts presented should be expensive enough to match the income of the donors, so that face is acquired by those who receive their gifts, and the donors gain face at the same time because they are thought of as being sincere. People who wrongly behave in gift-giving will cause the break of their relationships with the recipients. Gifts of comparable or even higher value should be returned as soon as possible. To give an idea of the importance of this phenomenon, it was reported that quite a few people in China spend about ten percent of their yearly income on gifts.²⁶ Tourists' gift-giving is motivated by social factors such as the need to maintain peaceful relationships and the need to demonstrate one's social and economic position, as these factors are critical to the social structure of the face and relationships.

²⁶ "Two Weddings, Two Funerals, No Fridge." *The Economist*, 30 Nov. 2013.

According to Gao and Hailian's study, self-face concerns influenced brand orientation and purchase cost, implying that the more self-face concerns there are, the more likely the donor will spend more money and give branded things as gifts. Therefore, for tourism organizations, the Chinese cultural value of face should be acknowledged and should feature prominently in personal selling strategies.

2.4 Implications of *guanxi* and family togetherness

The Chinese cultural values are largely formed and created from interpersonal relationships and social orientations, an example of this is the concept of *guanxi* 关系. The word *guanxi* is usually translated as “relationship” in English. However, *guanxi* has a wealth of meanings which go beyond the literal translation of “relationships”. It consists of two Chinese characters, *guan* and *xi* that respectively mean “relating” and “bonding”. It represents a personal connection between two persons, who are linked by a tacit psychological contract, which follows the social norms of commitment, loyalty and mutual obligations for an extended period of time (Chen et. al, 2004). This relationship is also built on the foundation of implicit exchange of favours and a commitment to others by a silent code of reciprocity and equity.

Originally, this was shown in Confucius’s teaching of the five cardinal bonds, whose doctrine is still a basic pillar of Chinese life today. The fundamental Confucian assumption is that man exists in relationship to others. Specifically, the family represents the prototype of all social organizations: a person is always considered as an integral part of the family and not as an individual in itself. Moreover, the concept of *guanxi* often relates to the concept of harmony, and the creation of harmonious relationships, hence it is essential to maintain group harmony even if this means limiting one's individuality. Extending from the kinship system, Chinese people consider one’s existence in society to be influenced primarily by one’s relationship with others, and this concept has been transferred into *guanxi*.

According to researchers, *guanxi* produces effects on tourism specifically in the dimensions of consolidating relationships with acquaintances during the travel, the importance of family togetherness and gift-giving behaviours.

First, Fu et. al (2015) show that many Chinese considered tourism as a chance for better and more intense interactions among friends and acquaintances. Many Chinese emphasize tourism’s role in social life and tourism seems to necessarily involve a relationship or a process by which a relationship is expected to come into being. Strengthening relationships with co-workers and friends is a goal in life, related to the concept of *guanxi*, that may be fulfilled with the help of tourism. In business, a group relationship is manifested in interpersonal connections, which overpower the formal

organizational structure in many cases. In fact, it's common for corporate employees to travel with colleagues in order to consolidate the relationship.

According to tourism literature (Mok and Defranco, 2000), Chinese tourists prefer to travel in groups rather than alone. For less experienced travellers this habitude is related to the need for help when being in a foreign land and being able to speak the language. Owing to their lack of knowledge of Western culture and communication skills in the English language, a high degree of dependence and reliance on the tour guide as well as other group members is inevitable. They adopt group goals and opinions in exchange for reciprocal care and protection. In other cases, travel in groups is seen as a mean to nurture relationships through reciprocal effort and in some cases a way of reciprocating a favour. Participants on package tours may also have the opportunity to meet new people and exchange ideas. According to researchers, this cultural value is constantly enacted and reflected in tour members' desire to adhere to the group's larger goals. Tourists feel safer in a package tour because the potential conflict of interest with group members can be minimal.

Chinese travellers' preference for traveling in groups by joining package tours might require special arrangements by hotels. Instead of catering to individual needs and requests, managers should focus on special arrangements for groups. Assigning rooms to tour group members on the same floor or preparing special breakfast items just for the groups are examples of how hotels can exceed customers' expectations. Destinations that plan to attract more Chinese tourists should create competitively packaged tours and advertise them with scenes of group members sharing their trip experiences. Moreover, a hybrid mode combining booking assistance and the freedom of setting personalized itineraries could meet the needs of both more experience travellers and less experienced ones.

Secondly, cultivation of the relationship between self and family is still a major concern for Chinese people. Enhancement of familial harmony, cohesiveness, and interactions is a salient theme expected to be achieved through collective experience. This concept reflects the findings that many families wanted to achieve, through travel, true love of family togetherness. The Chinese cultural value of harmonious relationships is also expressed through sharing memories and happiness with family. Vacation is expected to be a conduit of effective family communication and bonding. It also provides an opportunity for family to explore and experience the novelty of a destination and engage in activities that are different from the home setting.

Moreover, nowadays Chinese families have a strong child-centric motivation, and researchers (McNeal and Ji, 1999) have noted that Chinese parents place high importance on enabling children to venture beyond the limits of the school environment and broaden horizons and life perspectives

and nurture their intellectual development by learning about history, culture, and society²⁷. Parents are willing to invest based on children's needs, especially if they are education related, and on the other hand, rewarding children for school efforts is also related to children's learning performance. Hence children exert substantial influences on families' consumptive choices and travel decision making. For example, through surveys it has been shown that the motivation for visiting certain destinations (e.g., Austria for its music, and Antarctica for its research stations) was to broaden the horizon and knowledge base of children (Hsu and Huang, 2016).

In addition to meeting children's educational needs, the Confucian value of filial piety or devotion of the child to his parents has been reported as the prime motivation when touring with the elderly (Fu et. al, 2015). For the Chinese, reciprocity in intergenerational relationships is important and the open-door policy and economic growth made the pursuit of filial piety possible in more ways. With the economic growth experienced by China, it is very common for the generation of children to be significantly richer than that of their parents, so children see travel as a way of rewarding their parents for the efforts they made to raise them. This sense of obligation seems to be commonly shared across different ages, occupations, and household roles.

The conflict between an individualistic view of tourism and the social reality of a family vacation demands special consideration from management. The Chinese family vacation, like many others, is more about the family than it is about a group of individuals visiting a destination. Because of the social nature of the family vacation, managers must consider more than simply a collection of individual wills and consider how to care for this particular consumptive unit. Because family vacationers desire to foster a sense of unity while spending time with their loved ones, vacation experiences should be tailored to meet their specific needs. Destinations may provide a choice of family-friendly activities that will appeal to all members of the family. Considering the family togetherness needs along with the strong children's learning needs expressed, experiences encompassing both elements of education and entertainment should be effective in gratifying both children and parents. Moreover, also the restorative and stress-relieving roles of a destination environment are important to families. Last, Chinese respond more favourably to advertising with connected appeals (relational ties with significant others and interdependence), and the Chinese concept of family is one of the extended family, which includes even distant relatives. Therefore, for marketing implications, to persuade consumers to buy a family product advertisement often should include not only husband, wife and children, but should show a picture of other members of the extended family (Wang, Cheng and Lin, 2009).

²⁷ Historical and cultural literacy has been deemed as an essential component in Chinese children's intellectual development.

Lastly, gift shopping motivations have been found to be also related to *guanxi* and the enhancement of harmonious relationships. With the influence of this cultural value, Chinese appreciate the reciprocation of greetings, favours, and gifts as a mean to value true friendship and maintain the relationship with those back at home. Shopping for gifts such as featured souvenirs or luxury brands is mostly for sharing with family and friends.

This attribute has important implications for marketers, hotel and travel agencies. It is important to build long term relationships through tactful human skills. For example, giving thoughtful and appropriate gifts to potential clients is one way to establish relationships. The gifts do not need to be expensive or extravagant, it is the thoughtfulness that counts. Adding a personal touch to sales efforts will go a long way. In marketing products which can be regarded as gifts, the packaging of these products is extremely important. They should be presented in a prestigious and attractive red package, which symbolizes happiness and good fortune, and priced to match their packing. When such products are launched by well-known firms or manufacturers, the prices can be set higher than competitors' as the Chinese are often brand conscious and fond of luxury brands and established companies. Moreover, shopping facilities and varieties are important destination attractions for Chinese tourists. Hence, destination marketing communication should emphasize such facilities and package tours should allow ample time for shopping activities. Recommendations and advice from tour guides about shopping places, bargains, and special items will be welcome and appreciated.

As for advertising implications, according to Kindel (1985) Chinese consumers tend to rely more informal channels of communications, such as word of mouth communication, and, because of the high contact rate among group members, communications among Chinese consumers may be diffused very quickly. Furthermore, given that informal channels of communication carry both facts and rumour, Chinese consumers are much more likely to rely on, and make use of the rumour, rather than what is actually claimed for the product officially. Moreover, as said before, Chinese consumers often endeavour to conform to group norms and therefore tend to purchase the same brand or product other members of the group recommend. In other words, if a reference group has established a product as the normative standard, Chinese consumers are not likely to deviate from the accepted product on their own by switching to a competitive product.

2.5 Self realization

In Chinese cultural value, self-improvement and intelligence are seen as life-long pursuits. The Chinese saying *dú wàn juǎn shū, xíng wàn lǐ lù* 读万卷书, 行万里路, which means "read 10,000 books and travel 10,000 miles", originally written by the Ming Dynasty Master of Art, Dong Qichang around 1500; is still known today and cited often as an example of the primary reason to travel.

A substantial literature on leisure travel supports that Chinese travellers face a conscious desire to acknowledge their travel experience and that self-improvement of one's capability and experience are very important reasons for travel. For instance, according to Jiang et al. (2018), one of the most important value level motivations for Chinese tourists is to become an experienced person. Hence, Chinese tourists are often motivated to visit their dream destinations, so that they can become more experienced, improve their capabilities, learning the knowledge and gain wisdom. When travelling, Chinese tourists want to see unique things and famous landmarks that they only know about from media or word of mouth and intend to experience all kinds of cultural differences, such as local customs, traditions and arts. By doing this they feel their wishes are realized for experiencing and learning things, and they can leave without regrets. As a demonstration, Wen et al. (2019) found that exclusivity of the destination is important to Chinese tourists. The opportunity that some destinations provided to experience histories and cultures dissimilar to those of China were desirable and appeared to be connected to Chinese people's widely documented desire for escaping the routine. It has been reported that the expectation to better the self during the trips includes both intellectual enhancement and physical recuperation and restoration. Such goals were believed to be achievable in a vacation environment which helped tourists transcend mental and physical locality. In line with Hsu and Huang's (2012) discovery, the study participants mentioned three travel motivations, namely, relaxation, knowledge, and novelty, which correlated with the need for leisure, knowledge and education, and horizon broadening. Destinations that provide opportunities for education or novelty (e.g., representing a different culture) or relaxation (e.g., boasting beautiful natural sceneries) could easily attract Chinese tourist which values these motivations. Fu et al. (2015) pointed out that the self-realization domain and the relationship with others domain (*guanxi*) may complement each other. As said previously, Chinese also see tourism as a functional way to better position the self with others, which include family, social life, society, and nature. This is related because a refreshed body/mind was believed to facilitate other aspects in life, such as a harmonious relationship with others, while quality time spent together with family would contribute to the personal well-being.

In summary, to achieve the cultural value of self-enhancement, tourism is seen as a good way of becoming an experienced person, of achieving self-improvement of capability, of gaining wisdom, and exploring the unknown world, so as to become broad-minded, and knowing more about the world, thus having no regrets.

2.6 Respect for authority

The early root of the Chinese respect for authority is again in Confucius's five cardinal relations. Chinese people have to observe and act according to the norms prescribed for each instance of

interpersonal relations. As a result, conflict avoidance has been argued to be widespread in Chinese society, because open confrontations communicate disrespect and disrupt harmony. The aforementioned characteristics delineating the profile of a society based on a Confucian ideology match those found in a famous study conducted by Hofstede (1980) on cultural values, which showed that Chinese society has a high degree of Power Distance, medium degree of Uncertainty Avoidance and low Individualism. In fact, the Chinese today still prefer to address others in more hierarchical-type terms than Westerners. For example, it is uncommon to hear Chinese individuals refer to their parents, instructors, or senior relatives by their first names.

The concept of respect for authority is also related to the above-explained concepts of face and harmony. In the sense that, when a person's face is harmed, a sense of shame arises. As said earlier, trying to save each other's face is extremely important in maintaining good interpersonal relationships in Chinese society. Consistent with Hofstede's (1980) findings, in a static society where the importance of structural harmony within a group is emphasized, every person must conduct in a way to maintain one's place in a hierarchical order. They must pay attention to preserving others' face in social encounters, especially the face of superiors. Since exposing a person's mistake may provoke public reaction and create disharmony, Chinese usually show high reluctance to criticize others, and even when they do, they tend to use vague or moderate language to protect the face of those being criticized. In a society that emphasizes vertical relationships between superiors and subordinates and high-power distance, it is important for subordinates not only to demonstrate obedience, but also to be able to appear "obliging" and willing to not create any interpersonal disharmony.

The aforementioned statements reflect an underlying tendency to avoid conflicts and instead seek harmony even if it means that one has to endure and sacrifice for the sake of the whole group, which also relates to the identified theme of *guanxi* and conformity to the group. Conformity refers to situations whereby individuals are motivated to adhere to specific social behaviours and attitudes prevalent in that group. Given the Chinese peoples' pursuit of harmonious relationships with others, conflict avoidance naturally becomes a distinct feature in the social interaction of Chinese society by conforming to group norms. In Kwek and Lee (2010) findings, the Chinese tourists made efforts consciously and unconsciously, trying to display their respect for authority, showing their earnestness by conforming to the interests of their groups.

Since the Chinese tend not to take public stands when they encounter unsatisfactory products or services, this concerns complaining behaviour. Scholars have stated that influenced by Confucius' emphasis on harmony, even if they are dissatisfied with the items or services, Chinese individuals rarely complain to consumer councils or service providers. They are more prone to switch vendors or service providers without informing the previous ones. According to Mok and Defranco (2000)

objective measurement of dissatisfaction, such as frequency of complaints, does not adequately reflect the affective attitude of consumers towards products, and, thus, is not a good measure of marketing effectiveness. Therefore, marketing managers who wish to obtain data on the satisfaction/dissatisfaction of Chinese consumers should play a more active role, rather than waiting for the consumer to give feedback.

Lastly, the Chinese tendency to respect authority has important implications for marketing communication and advertising. Because of the Chinese people's high respect for authority, advertisements will tend to be more effective when opinion leaders stand up in commercials recommending products/services to their target consumers. Hence, airline, tour packages, or hotel advertisements using public figures and KOLs (Key Opinion Leaders) as endorsements to tourism products and services will tend to be more effective.

2.7 Modernization of Chinese values

An array of economic, political, and technological factors is considered to contribute to the evolution of Chinese culture, particularly to the formation of modern Chinese values (Hsu and Huang, 2016). In some cases, modern values coincide or evolve from traditional values, in others, they are new values, often imported from the West.

Along with the change from a planned economy to a market-oriented one in its economic system, China has also undergone rapid and significant sociocultural changes. Economic reform undertaken in 1978 in China resulted in the recognition and appreciation of market economy principles, which promote competition, efficiency, and wealth. The privatization of labour and the economy is believed to contribute to the transition of Chinese society into a more individualized one. On the political front, China's institutional changes, such as the privatization of housing and the marketization of education and medical care, have compelled Chinese citizens to engage in more market competition and progressively adjust to individualism rather than collectivism. Individuals in China began to establish a clearer sense of self with a set of rights and entitlements as the country's reform and opening-up progressed. Moreover, the Chinese seem to have integrated some foreign values, such as fashion and indulgence, into their modern values system. Quality of life, as well as the increasing desire of leisure and independence, are understandably developing in the Chinese value system as a result of economic progress and increased prosperity. For example, Hsu and Huang (2016) found that self-indulgence as a modern value suggests that Chinese people's life pursuits are becoming less collectivistic and more individualistic.

Moreover, the mass media is a strong catalyst for the emergence of new consumer culture. Commercial messages flood the media and change the orientation of the value systems of Chinese

citizens toward materialism. In fact, pursuing materialism and ostentation has emerged as a significant cultural phenomenon in modern China. Scholars (e.g. Li, Zhang, & Sun, 2015) found that people in China are facing social pressure and increasing societal competition, growing materialism, and feeling a lack of social and spiritual security. The participants of Hsu and Huang's (2016) study opined that ostentation, which is a by-product of economic development and increased disposable income, has become a serious problem in modern China.

With China's increased engagement with the outside world and economic development taken into account, shifts in Chinese citizens' consumption patterns have reshaped Chinese tourism. Social phenomena including relaxed government policy, increased leisure time, and more disposable income coupled with a relatively decreased cost of tourism and has been mentioned as factors changing the Chinese travel behaviours and motivations. In addition, the role of contemporary Chinese social reality in forming tourists' motivations cannot be overlooked. The one-child policy in China and the increasing pressures of urban life, for example, emphasize the importance of family and the need for a self-family relationship.

Under such rapid changes, young people in China, like their counterparts in the West, feel uncertain about the fast-changing society; consequently, feelings of confusion, anxiety and doubts about themselves and the future arise with this uncertainty. The demands for knowing oneself better and testing oneself, self-improvement and social interaction have been growing in society, especially among the Chinese youth. In addition to traditional cultural values, scholars have found that factors related to individualism have become significant motivations driving the younger Chinese generation to travel overseas. Younger Chinese generations are greatly impacted by Western society and seek adventure and new life experiences. For instance, younger generation, in particular, displays admiration for the advanced technologies and ideas invented in foreign cultures. These loadings suggest that modern personal values and life enrichment and quality are more important than traditional values in explaining travel motivations in younger generations (Wen et al., 2019).

Wen et al. (2019) found that, presumably, when Chinese tourists are more motivated by sightseeing and self-fulfilment, they tend to emphasise life enrichment and quality and modern personal values. Many Chinese experience visiting overseas as a mean to achieve personal or relational goals. Statistics²⁸ show that frequent travellers usually pursued diverse, lifestyle-related tourism experiences such as going on a cruise, a farm stay, and staying at spa resorts, in addition to the traditional sightseeing. An example of this is the emergence of backpacking in China.

²⁸ Fu, Xiaoxiao, et al. "A Confucian Analysis of Chinese Tourists' Motivations." *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, vol. 32, no. 3, 2 Mar. 2015, pp. 180–198, 10.1080/10548408.2014.896233.

Moreover, according to Wen et al. (2019), the quest of self-fulfilment (e.g., exhibiting courage) through visiting foreign places by Chinese visitors was particularly linked to modern personal values. Confucius' teaching 'Devout sons should not climb or be close to the deep valley' makes the Chinese extremely careful about making the decision to travel. Hence, traditional Chinese beliefs that traveling to new locations should be avoided to reduce travel-related hazards were debunked by relevant risk-taking behaviours. However, the new Chinese generation is much influenced by Western culture and follows the fashion of searching for adventure, for most people the traditional culture places constraints on travelling far to remote and unknown areas. For instance, according to Wen et al. (2019), visiting Israel provides Chinese tourists opportunities to fulfil personal desires and display their social prestige, reflecting modern personal values that strongly influence motivations and behaviours.

Hence, sociocultural norms evolve over time, but they still play crucial roles in explaining Chinese tourists' decisions. As mentioned previously, prestige or ego enhancement is still an essential motivation behind modern Chinese tourists' decisions to travel abroad. Meanwhile, Hsu and Huang (2016) discovered a new factor, ostentation, that partially explains why some Chinese visitors travel internationally. These variables (social prestige, ego enhancement, and ostentation) could be rooted in or derive from a broader socio-psychological construct in Chinese society, such as the aforementioned face, or they could be impacted by the emergence of a more individualistic society. This is an example where traditional and modern values seem to be evolving from each other. Another example of traditional values overlapping with modern values is the importance placed on knowledge and education. As mentioned before self-realization is a traditionally valued achievement for the Chinese, and it still remains an ambition for most tourists. However, knowledge and horizon-broadening could also be used to achieve another goal more related to modern values, which is fame and fortune.

Travel motivation is a subjective factor that affects both destination choices and tourist behaviours, and cultural factors play an essential role in Chinese tourists' motivation. Hence, it is essential that tourism workers understand the intricacies of the Chinese culture, thereby ensuring the smooth operation of the tours. Tourist destination authorities and industry practitioners are advised to attend to Confucian and modern values in their management and marketing responsibilities. Understanding these values and applying them while providing Chinese tourists with tourism experiences and products is likely to increase tourist satisfaction. At the same time, tourism practices should regularly incorporate leisure and life enjoyment components into tourist experience design. As the Chinese may see tourism as a means of self-fulfilment, innovative features in tourism experience design that

can foster tourists' learning and personal development as well as life enrichment should always be valued in the industry.

For instance, owing to the Chinese cultural values that place emphasis on respect for authority, conformity and guanxi, it has been observed by Kwek and Lee (2010) from fieldtrips that tour guides make a concerted effort to ensure that the leader of the group is assigned the best hotel room available to the group, the front seat on the coach, seeking the leader's approval in any decisions, the honourable seat at the dining table, and so forth. While this kind of practice was not unusual for the tour guides of Chinese descent, other industry personnel from the hotels, theme parks and other destinations visited were not aware of the cultural values and required constant "negotiation" through the tour guides. With a wider awareness of the Chinese cultural values from the industry practitioners, the service-negotiation point can be made wider, moving beyond usually a one-person point as the tour guide.

Lastly, one thing destination managements should be aware of is that the Chinese are well known to be superstitious, and they have many taboos. If one unknowingly behaves in a way that violates a Chinese taboo, it may lead to misunderstanding. These taboos are mainly based upon traditional beliefs and superstition. For instance, the numbers 6, 8, or 9 are believed to bring luck. The reason is that the pronunciation of these numbers is related to "eternity" and "wealth", hence these numbers combined together are even more preferred since they signify a "long lasting fortune". Chinese people will not hesitate to offer a high price for a lucky number. On the other hand, 4 is perceived as an unlucky number, because the 四 (sì, four) sounds similar to 死 (sǐ), which means "death" in Chinese. The presence of the number 4 is avoided in most public settings; aside from elevator buttons, addresses, ID numbers, phone numbers, license plates, and product names will normally exclude the number 4 to avoid inviting bad luck. Even tourists try hard to avoid this number as their assigned seat or room number. At present, these taboos about numbers have developed in tandem with commercial development. Hence, for instance, hotel receptionists and tour guides should avoid assigning rooms or floors which contain the number 4 to their Chinese guests.

3. Theoretical framework and research purpose

3.1 Destination image

Tourist destination image (TDI) refers to the perception held by tourists towards a destination. Crompton (1979) defined TDI as «the aggregate sum of beliefs, ideas, impressions and expectations that a tourist has about a tourist destination area». Tourist destination image has been proved to be an important component of tourism marketing. It is crucial in differentiating the destination from others and positioning the tourist destination in the market. For instance, Keller (1993) defines brand image as the perceived attitude toward a brand and its attributes and benefits. Hence, a destination can also be viewed as a brand that wishes to project a specific image. The success of promoting a tourist destination relies on having a strong positioning strategy. An important part of this strategy is determining and evaluating the destination's distinctive image, which is crucial in developing a successful positioning plan for the destination. (Echtner et al., 1991). Moreover, tourists frequently base their holiday decisions on DI and after visiting, their impressions of the destination determine whether they will return, and their recommendations influence the travel decisions of other potential tourists. Marine-Roig (2019) defines the DI as the decision an individual makes about a destination based on the evaluation of features, available activities, and potentially disruptive factors. These perceptions can be both positive and negative.

According to Gunn (1988), the formation of the DI can be divided into three categories. According to the author, the first category is the organic image, which describes tourists' impressions of a particular destination without having visited it. This image can be based on non-commercial sources such as word of mouth (WOM) from family and friends, as well as newspaper articles or television. The image is supplemented by marketing efforts of tourism authorities and travel agencies in the second category, which is known as induced image. The third dimension is known as complex image, and it is the result of the actual visit to the destination as well as the experiences had there. Aside from the first two stages, where the image is formed externally, the complex image is formed internally through the visit experience. As a result, the image formed in the final phase is much more differentiated and realistic than in the previous phases.

Moreover, Gunn's (1988) findings show that destination image plays a significant role in attracting and retaining tourists, and it can greatly impact the success of a tourist destination. This is particularly relevant in today's highly competitive tourist market, where destinations are constantly seeking to differentiate themselves and attract visitors. This study was one of the earliest studies on destination image. However, this definition has had a long-lasting impact on the tourism industry, and it is widely accepted and used as a standard for subsequent research on the subject.

Sirgy (1982) and Chon & Olsen (1991) categorize image into two types: functional and symbolic. The functional image refers to the practical aspects and features of the destination, such as its physical characteristics and activities. The symbolic image, on the other hand, encompasses the abstract, intangible elements of the destination, such as its atmosphere, mood, and psychological or personality traits.

Consequently, Echtner and Ritchie (1993) developed a DI model with three components based on a comprehensive review of previous image studies. The attribute-holistic component, the functional-psychological component, and the common-unique component. The goal was to demonstrate how the DI is made up of individual parts that can be both tangible and abstract in order to form a holistic image. Each component can be further classified as functional-psychological or common-unique. The attribute-holistic spectrum illustrates whether DI is represented as an individual attribute or as a holistic aggregate. The functional-psychological spectrum refers to attributes that are either functional (directly observable or measurable) or psychological (less tangible, difficult to measure). The common-unique spectrum also refers to common characteristics, attributes, and impressions that are used to compare destinations, as well as unique or destination-specific features. Echtner and Ritchie (1993) developed a 35-item destination attribute scale by introducing a three-dimensional DI framework, ranging from more functional attributes (such as tourist sites/activities, national parks, and historic sites) and mixed destination attributes (such as crowdedness, cleanliness, and political stability) to more psychological destination attributes (such as hospitality, place atmosphere, and safety).

In the same year, Gartner (1993) proposed that DI results from the interaction of three related parts. He classified these elements as cognitive, affective, and conative. Gartner (1993) defined cognitive image as intellectual evaluation of known attributes of a destination and affective images as emotional and related to individual motives in destination selection. In the context of DI, this refers to a person's knowledge and beliefs about a tourist destination, which can be measured by the perception of various attributes of a destination. Gartner's (1993) three-step process transforms knowledge and beliefs about a destination (cognitive) into individual feelings and attitudes (affective), which then add up to an overall behaviour toward the destination (conative). The conative DI, the third dimension, represents actions taken toward a destination, such as the likelihood of visiting the destination, the intention to return, or a recommendation to friends. The conative image is the result of the previous two dimensions.

Previously, also a study by Dobni and Zinkhan (1990) on brand image found that image is a subjective perception that is formed through consumers' rational and emotional interpretations, and it encompasses both cognitive and affective components. Many researchers since then have agreed that

destination images should also consist of both perceptual/cognitive and affective components (Gartner, 1993; Baloglu et al., 1997; Baloglu et al., 1999; Beerli et al., 2004b; Son et al., 2005). For instance, Baloglu et al. (1997) believe that the formation of an affective response is contingent upon a cognitive evaluation of objects or destinations. The affective components refer to the emotions that tourists have towards a destination. Tourists form their emotions based on their beliefs and opinions. Therefore, it is widely accepted that the cognitive image precedes the affective image. Furthermore, tourist destinations can have varying affective images, which can be made up of positive and negative elements.

Guided by the perceptual and emotional structure of destination image, Sonmez and Sirakaya (2002) investigated the role of destination image and traveller perception, along with other behavioural variables, in tourists' decision-making process for choosing a destination. Through a survey, they discovered that four cognitive image factors (perception of a safe and welcoming environment, general mood and vacation atmosphere, prior international travel experience, and perception of relaxation and authenticity of experience) and two affective image factors (local attractions and hospitality and comfort/safety) are significant predictors of the likelihood of travel to Turkey. Two other important factors were found to be the perception of Turkey's overall appeal and social and personal communication channels (as a source of information). They also emphasized that a thorough understanding of travellers' images of a destination is essential for creating effective marketing and positioning strategies.

Subsequently, some studies have proposed various scales to determine the destination attributes and measure the DI. For instance, the study by Beerli and Martin (2004) is focused on the measurement of destination image. The study aimed to develop and validate a reliable and valid measurement scale for destination image. The authors conducted a comprehensive literature review and developed a list of attributes that were believed to contribute to the formation of destination image. These attributes were then incorporated into a self-administered questionnaire that was distributed to a sample of potential tourists. The results of the study showed that the measurement scale was reliable and valid, and it was able to capture the multi-dimensional nature of destination image. The study also showed that destination image is influenced by a variety of factors, including personal experiences, media exposure, and recommendations from friends and family. Additionally, the authors carried out a quantitative study to examine the connection between various components of the perceived image and the factors that shape it in Lanzarote, Spain. Their research produced three significant findings: 1) motivations have an impact on the affective component of the image, 2) the vacation travel experience has a significant connection with both the cognitive and affective images, and 3) socio-demographic characteristics affect both the cognitive and affective evaluation of the image.

Moreover, new emerging factors that affect DI formation should be considered as research in related fields advances. For example, tourists from various cultures have varying perceptions and impressions of the destination. The relationship between tourists' cultural backgrounds and their perceptions of the destination must be considered in a tourism analysis.

Despite continuous improvements to these scales and the fact that they have been used to measure various samples, with modifications made to account for differences in tourist destinations, relatively little DI research has been studied from the perspective of Chinese tourists in a Western destination. Previous research on DI from the perspectives of various nationalities/regions has shown that cultural differences exist in terms of travel motivations, travel behaviour, and satisfaction.²⁹ For instance, Kluckhoh et al. (1951) use cultural value orientation to differentiate between different groups of tourists' perceptions of a destination, their attitudes toward it, and their travel behaviour. In support of this hypothesis, the aforementioned Beerli and Martin (2004) conducted a tourist survey to measure the cognitive component of the image, and concluded that country of origin had a significant influence on image formation. Ryan and Cave (2005) supported this conclusion by drawing different perceptual maps of Auckland based on subsamples of New Zealand, Chinese, Japanese and UK residents visiting the city. Earlier studies also found that images formed in the minds of tourists are mediated by cultural background (MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997). Hence a plethora of studies confirm that tourism organisations need to understand the motivations and the perceived image of that destination when attempting to promote a particular destination to a specific market (Sussmann & Ünel, 1999).

More recently, Liu et al.'s (2019) study show that Chinese tourists' perceptions and preferences differ from those from other international tourists. Furthermore, Chinese cultural norms play an important role in the formation of perceptions and the interpretation of Western destinations (Sun et al. 2015). These cultural norms, which include the desire for harmony and respect for authority, are discussed in the previous section of this research. Because Chinese and Western tourists come from different cultural backgrounds, there may be significant differences in their perceptions of the same destination. Furthermore, as discussed in the previous chapter of this study, Chinese tourists represent a cross-cultural setting that is markedly different from the Western context.

²⁹ Reisinger, Yvette, and Lindsay W. Turner. "Cultural differences between Asian tourist markets and Australian hosts, Part 1." *Journal of travel Research* 40.3 (2002): 295-315.
Zhang, H. M., and L. Lu. "A review of studies on cross-cultural tourist attitude and behavior." *Tour. Trib* 23 (2008): 82-87.

3.2 Destination image formation

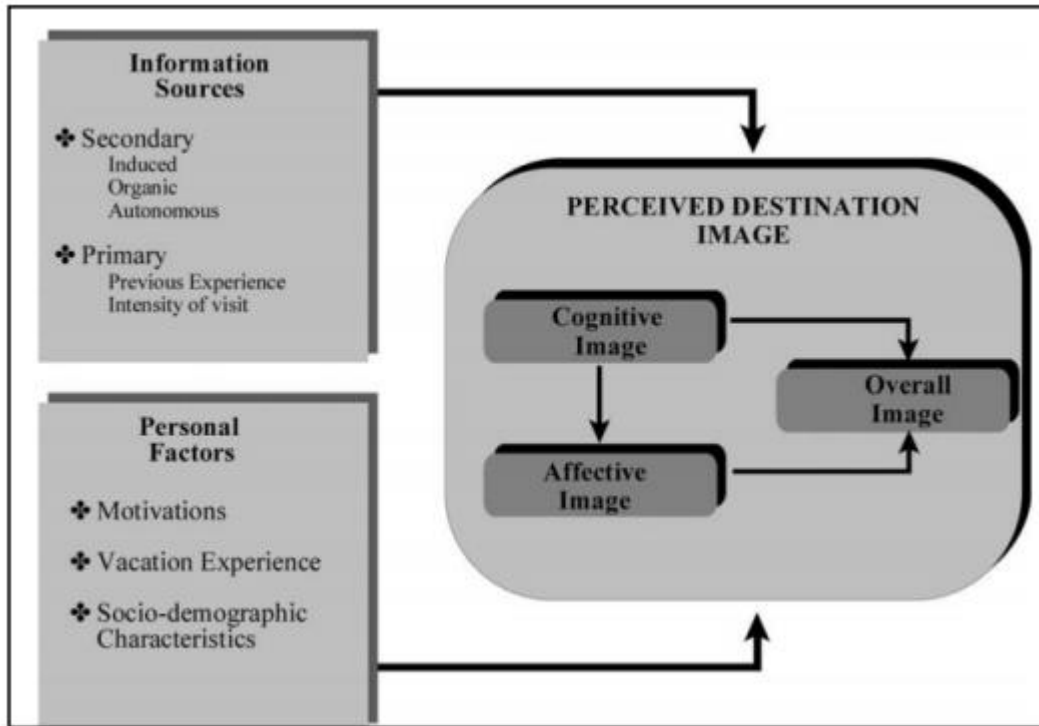
The formation of a destination's image is a widely discussed topic in the field of tourism literature. According to sources, Gunn (1972) believed that images are formed in two ways: organically and through induction. Organic images develop internally from a person's actual experience or visit, while induced images are formed from information received from external sources such as advertisements, news reports, and word-of-mouth. Gartner (1993) also believed that image formation is closely linked to the different types of information available and the credibility, cost, and market penetration of that information.

Baloglu and McCleary (1999a) put forward a general theoretical model for factors that impact the formation of images of a destination, which differentiates between information sources, previous experiences, and distribution (stimulus factors), and psychological and social factors (personal factors). Personal factors reflect the individual's characteristics and the way they distinguish between various destinations and are aware of the different images associated with each one. These factors also impact the destination's image as a person's understanding, interpretation, and evaluation of information sources depend on their personal beliefs and attitudes towards the place. Additionally, personal factors can impact a tourist's motivation to travel, as noted by Beerli and Martin (2004). Gartner (1993) described this evaluation of personal needs and motives as "push" determinants, which are internal stimuli that lead to the intention to travel.

Information sources that play a role in a tourist's decision to travel are referred to as stimulus factors. This includes things like promotional materials, information sources, previous experiences, and distribution channels. These information sources are often managed by destination marketers and are meant to act as a pull for potential tourists (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999). Additionally, some authors argue that the previously discussed cognitive image is directly shaped by external information stimuli (such as information sources) from outside sources (such as destination marketers) (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Beerli and Martin, 2004). For instance, according to Baloglu and McCleary (1999), information sources play a role in shaping the cognitive image of a destination. The cognitive image is largely based on information sources and tourists' previous experiences, while having no effect on the affective component. The combination of the cognitive and affective image creates the overall image of the destination. Baloglu and McCleary (1999) view the destination image as being formed by tourists' cognitive evaluations, which are linked to their knowledge and beliefs about the destination, and affective evaluations, which are connected to their emotions and feelings towards the destination. Moreover, according to the study by Baloglu and McCleary (1999), motivation is closely linked to the affective component of a destination image, as a tourist's emotions and feelings towards a destination influence their motivation. Also according to Beerli and Martin (2004), there is a strong

connection between emotions and a tourist's motivation to travel. These evaluations are influenced by factors such as age, motivations, and information sources, as illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Destination image formation



Source: Beerli, A., & Martin, J. D. (2004). Factors affecting destination image. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 31(3), 657-681. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2003.06.001>

The next step after identifying the attributes of a destination image is to understand the factors that shape it. Commonly recognized factors include motivation, demographic characteristics, information sources, and previous experiences. Several studies have found that motivation and demographic variables have a positive impact on destination image. Meanwhile, previous experiences can impact destination image through primary and secondary images. Additionally, the author of this research believes that cultural factors like religion and nationality may also have a positive impact on destination image through the psychological background of tourists.

Information sources have been shown to influence a tourist's perception of a destination in various studies (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Beerli and Martin, 2004a). Information sources can be categorized in several ways, such as personal or impersonal, controlled or uncontrolled by marketing agents (Carneiro, 2007), and induced, autonomous, or organic (Gartner, 1993). In the field of tourism, Baloglu (1999) identifies several information sources that communicate different images of a destination and can impact the behavior of the recipient of the information. It can be argued that the

image of a destination is determined by the type and amount of information sources that a traveler is exposed to, both before and after visiting the destination (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Gartner, 1994; Tasci and Gartner, 2007). The impact of information sources on destination image formation is primarily on the cognitive component and not the affective component. Information increases awareness and interest in a destination, leading to a desire to visit, which can result in action, such as destination selection. (Ana Mano and Rui Augusto da Costa, 2015).

The demographics of tourists, such as age, income, and marital status, have been found to have a significant impact on tourists' behavior and destination image. Studies have shown that demographic factors can influence the way a tourist perceives and forms opinions about a destination. For example, Prayag (2012) found differences in tourists' behavior based on their marital status, while Yacout and Hefny (2014) looked at the role that age and income play in shaping a tourist's perception of a destination and in their information-gathering process. A study by Yacout and Hefny (2014) found that age and income play a role in tourist information search and destination image formation. However, Lehto, O'Leary, and Morrison (2007) suggest that psychographic factors, rather than demographics, can be a more effective tool for understanding why certain tourists are drawn to particular vacation destinations.

Past experience with a destination is considered to be one of the most important factors in destination image formation and destination selection. Phelps (1986) proposed two types of past experience: secondary and primary. The secondary image is formed by exposure to various sources of information, while the primary image is created through personal experience of visiting the destination. Personal experience at a destination results in a more realistic and complex image of the destination compared to the image formed through secondary sources of information. Gunn (1988) suggests that visiting a destination can change the induced image that visitors had, leading to a modified or complex image. Personal experience at the destination is also one of the eight agents of image formation as proposed by Gartner (1994). He also reported that past experience also weakens the need for secondary information and is considered to be the most important source of information for destination selection. Moreover, personal visits to a destination are usually believed to result in a more realistic, complex image compared to the image formed by secondary sources of information (Phelps, 1986; Tasci and Gartner, 2007).

3.3 Motivation

To discuss problems like why tourists travel or why tourists visit a specific location, many academics have long studied the motivations underlying travellers' choices. It is a vital topic in tourist literature and fundamental to the growth of the industry. A variety of purposes, such as product development,

market segmentation, service quality evaluation, brand development, and promotional activities, could be made using insights into tourist motivation.

Motivation is also an important factor that influences destination image. According to research, motivational factors play a significant role in shaping individuals' perceptions and attitudes towards a destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martin, 2004a). The type of motivation, such as adventure, relaxation, cultural exploration, etc., determines the type of information individuals seek and the sources they trust (Gartner, 1993). The relationship between motivation and destination image is also evident in the destination selection process proposed by Goodall (1991). According to this model, motivation is a crucial factor that affects the level of awareness and interest in the destination, which in turn leads to a desire to visit (Beerli & Martin, 2004b). This highlights the importance of understanding the motivational factors of potential visitors in order to effectively communicate the desired image of the destination.

«A meaningful state of mind that appropriately disposes an actor or group of actors to travel, and which is thereafter interpretable by others as a viable explanation for such a decision» is how travel motivation is defined by Graham Dann³⁰. The choice of a destination is the result of a process that takes into account a tourist's background, values, and motivations (Lue, Crompton, & Fesenmaier, 1993). The choice of location is greatly influenced by travel motivations, thus understanding these motivations is crucial for creating marketing strategies and providing the necessary level of service. Although the significance of tourist motivation has been acknowledged, its challenges in research have also been emphasised. The motivations or underlying reasons for travel, in contrast to the purpose of travel, which tends to be self-explanatory and frequently assessed, represent personal human needs and goals that are hidden, varied, prone to change, and challenging to measure (Pearce, 2005). There is no commonly accepted theoretical framework to guide the empirical study of travel motivation due to the great variety of human requirements, methodological challenges, and cultural differences. Researchers generally concur that both internal personalities and psychographic traits of travellers as well as exterior social and cultural variables impact their motivations as tourists (Huang & Hsu, 2005). Literature on motivation frequently mentions elements like escape, novelty, cultural experience, social contact, and status. However, there isn't currently a conceptualization of the tourist motive construct that is widely accepted.

Despite these challenges, research efforts into tourist motivation have persisted. It has been demonstrated that the theories and models of travel motivation put forth by academics like Crompton

³⁰ Dann, Graham M.S. "Tourist Motivation an Appraisal." *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 8, no. 2, Jan. 1981, pp. 187–219, 10.1016/0160-7383(81)90082-7. Accessed 3 May 2019.

(1979), Dann (1977) and Pearce (2005), are helpful in assisting us in understanding why a tourist selects a particular location or why the tourist selects to engage in that particular type of activity.

Push and pull factors have been the subject of the majority of discussions. Push factors are internal motivations that lead travellers to seek out experiences that will lessen their requirements, such as the desire for solitude, adventure, status, and social connection. Pull factors, on the other hand, are forces generated by a destination and tourists' awareness of a place (Huang & Hsu, 2005). They symbolise the particular characteristics or qualities of the location that draw visitors there, such as the availability of sports facilities, beaches, and low airfare (Dann, 1981). The push-pull theory, taken together, contends that humans move because they are either pushed by internal or dragged by external forces. The model's "push" side helps make sense of tourists' desire to travel, while the "pull" side explains tourists' specific destination choices.

In addition to attempting to provide an answer to the general question of why tourists travel or why they choose a particular location, some researchers have started more focused studies to identify the reasons why people from a particular country or cultural background choose to travel abroad. The importance and necessity of such research have been confirmed by the findings of previous research, which has shown that differences between nations in their cultural values are reflected in differences in their residents' tourist motivations (Chen and Huang, 2013; Kim et. al, 2018; Wang et al, 2016). Moreover, across different countries and cultures, peoples' behavioural characteristics, values, and expectations can differ substantially. Findings of many cross-cultural studies on tourist motivation indicate the existence of differences in travel motivations between tourists from different countries or cultural backgrounds even when they choose to visit the same destinations (Gursoy et. al, 2013; Jang et. al, 2006; Kim et. al, 2018). For instance, noting the great potential of variability among cultures in terms of tourist motivation, Kim (1999) suggested that knowledge of cultural differences in motivation may contribute to enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of international tourism management.

In the case of Chinese tourists, Chinese values have been recognized as different from those of Westerners. As explained in the previous chapter, due to its unique cultural background, Chinese cultural values shape tourists' behaviour and preferences in many instances very differently from other international travellers. Just to give an example, Chinese tourists prefer travelling in groups rather than alone, as group activities are valued in Chinese culture. Hence, for most Western marketers who have limited experiences with Chinese customers, it is important to acknowledge that conventional marketing wisdom, mainly acquired from research and experiences with Western consumers, may not apply to Chinese tourists. The transformations associated with political

liberalization, the fast transition from a planned to a market-driven economy, and changing and diversifying sociocultural values have led to improved income and living standards, a greater emphasis on leisure and tourism, and a burgeoning middle class, resulting in a boom in outbound travel. In terms of cultural values, some studies have argued that Chinese values have been transformed by the rise of consumerism, whereas others have maintained that the millennia-old cultural heritage is still entrenched in many spheres of Chinese life and its deep influence cannot be easily eradicated. Moreover, ideological, psychological, social, and cultural barriers remain on the part of hosting communities to accept and embrace the Chinese tourists.

3.4 Online destination image and user-generated content

Due to the prevalence of online social media and we-media³¹, a massive new source of data known as user-generated content has emerged (UGC). Travel blogs, star ratings, tour tips, travel photos, and tourist reviews of spots, hotels, and destinations are some of the major UGC data currently available. Tourists use social media platforms to share tourism-related information such as travel reviews (OTRs) and experiences, making social media platforms one of the promising data sources.

Today, online travel reviews (OTRs) have a significant impact on destination image. This electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM), meaning noncommercial reviews and opinions, combined with the destinations' marketing activities creates a new information base for tourists (Lian & Yu, 2019). Thus, the online DI can be defined as "the online representation of the collective beliefs, knowledge, ideas, feelings and overall impressions of a destination" (Mak, 2017, p. 282). The DI theories discussed above can be applied equally to online DI, with the exception that in this new information era, tourist-generated content about a destination is becoming one of the most important sources for users to gather information about the holiday region and contributes significantly to their travel planning. Because tourists write reviews of their experiences based on the image they have after the trip, OTRs are also an indicator of a destination's post-visit destination image (González-Rodríguez et al. 2016). The proliferation of mainstream tourism websites, which allows tourists to post a plethora of reviews on social media during and after a trip, enables the collection of first-hand narrative information about tourists' travel experiences. Recent advances in computer science open up new possibilities for studying tourists' perceptions and experiences. As a result, DI is increasingly being studied using online textual data rather than traditional data collection methods such as interviews. New big data analysis methods enable us to gain in-depth knowledge from this vast social media data ocean.

³¹ We Media software refers to a type of online platform that enables users to create, share, and publish their own content. We Media software typically provides a range of tools and features to support content creation, such as text editors, image and video uploads, and social media integration. It also often includes mechanisms for community engagement and interaction, such as comments sections, ratings, and social sharing.

Furthermore, according to a variety of studies, UGC clearly differs from other sources, such as surveys or media reports, in determining DI. For instance, according to Költringer's and Dickinger's (2015) findings, UGC are the more diverse and richer source in identifying DI. Furthermore, DMOs can better align themselves by knowing which attractions in their area are most valued and which activities tourists are most likely to engage in. Previously, this information was frequently obtained in an expensive and time-consuming manner via surveys and questionnaires.

Given that the first two stages of DI formation (cognitive and affective) as proposed by Gartner (1994) are now influenced by online sources, and not just by traditional media and DMOs (Mak, 2017), it is critical for tourism marketers to capture and correctly interpret the prevailing online DI. Moreover, according to the aforementioned Beerli and Martin's (2004) study, in the image formation process, the Internet can be viewed as an induced information agent. As a result, online destination information can be regarded as an agent of either induced or organic image formation, both of which play an important role in the image formation process. Furthermore, when tourists obtain destination information from various online travel platforms, there may be a disparity in destination images based on official tourism website content (induced), travel blog platform content (autonomous), and travel review platform content (organic) (Marine-Roig and Ferrer-Rosell 2018). Also, official tourism website content (induced) and travel blog platform content (autonomous) are perceived differently. Therefore, the choice of studying Chinese tourists' reviews on Tuscany is justified due to their significant impact on tourist decision-making, their availability as a vast source of user-generated content (UGC), and their difference from other sources of destination image formation.

The number of Chinese outbound tourists in 2018 surpassed 149 million (iResearch 2019). The rise in outbound travel has also increased the use of online travel review platforms in China. China's tourism information services now cover the pre-travel, on-travel, and post-travel processes, thanks to the advancement of information technologies. OTR platforms are especially prominent: 51.4% of outbound tourists obtain travel recommendations and information from Chinese OTR platforms (iResearch 2019). Besides, 71.6% of Chinese outbound tourists share travel experiences on Chinese social media, and 39.9% of tourists share travel experiences on OTR platforms (iResearch 2019). All the evidence indicates that OTR platforms are very important in any attempt to understand outbound Chinese tourists.

In China, travel websites with review functions are divided into two categories: travel vertical platforms like Mafengwo and Qyer, and online tour agents like Ctrip, Tuniu, and Qunar. Vertical travel websites rely heavily on user-generated content and offer tourists generated travel information as well as related travel-specific services. Many travel-related services are available on Chinese OTA websites, including visa arrangements, tax refunds, and financial services, as well as travel

information. Many Chinese OTA websites now also include a review function where users can share their thoughts on destinations.

3.5 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this thesis is to identify the key attributes that compose Tuscany's destination image in order to gain a better understanding of Chinese tourists' motivation to visit Tuscany. The three research questions are: 1. What attributes of Tuscany are featured within posts and reviews written by Mainland Chinese travellers? 2. What are the pull factors of Tuscany for Chinese tourists and how do the pull factors correlate with push factors identified through literature? 3. How do the push factors (cultural values) and the pull factors (destination appeal) influence the travel motivation of Chinese tourists to Tuscany?

This research first gives an overview of Chinese outbound tourism, then proceed to analyse cultural values that drive Chinese tourists to travel through relevant literature. Examining Chinese tourists and their behaviours requires a thorough understanding of Chinese cultural values, which shape underlying behavioural roots such as motivations.

In order to gain a better understanding of Tuscany's perceived destination image, this thesis then investigate the various tourism attributes mentioned by Chinese tourists in their reviews on Mafengwo using content analysis and word frequency analysis.

Once the most frequent words have been identified and the relevant attributes coded into the selected attribute framework, this research then analyses the interplay between the push factors (cultural values) and the pull factors (destination appeal). The method for the second and third research question involves looking for correlations between cultural values and destination appeal, and analyse the interplay between these factors, by linking the scores for the categories of push factors to the data on pull factors collected through content analysis. The push factors represent the cultural values that drive Chinese tourists to travel, and the pull factors represent the destination appeal of Tuscany. For example, the score for the category of "personal development" will be linked to the frequency of mentions of historical and cultural attractions in the content analysis data. This helps to determine if Chinese tourists who place a high value on personal development are more likely to be drawn to Tuscany for its rich history and cultural heritage. This enables a better understanding of how the cultural values of Chinese tourists influence the motivation to travel to Tuscany, and how these values interact with the pull factors of Tuscany to shape travel behaviour.

This research will provide a deeper understanding of the role of destination image and cultural values in shaping the travel behaviour of Chinese tourists and will contribute to the development of marketing strategies that effectively target this market segment.

3.6 Methodology

This study employed a mixed methodology to identify the key factors of Tuscany's destination image perceived by Chinese tourists. Quantitative analysis in the form of computerized word frequency analysis was employed to count the frequency of words and phrases in the text. This method enabled the identification of the most common and salient terms, which provided a more objective and systematic way of analysing the data. Additionally, content analysis was employed for qualitative analysis, this research method can be used to conduct analysis of communication content. With this technique a set of procedures is used to categorise or classify communication in order to draw conclusions. It enables the interpretation of largely unstructured data in terms of meanings and expressive content. Through the analysis of textual data in a systematic way trends, patterns and categories can be identified. According to Mayring (2004), the basic concept of qualitative content analysis is to analyse texts systematically and to divide the material step by step, guided by theory, into categories that have been developed on the material. The goal is to create a summary that represents the meaning contained in the text in categories, which are organised in a system. The resulting system of categories, subcategories, and category definitions serves as a foundation for text interpretation.

In qualitative content analysis, data analysis is integrated into the coding process and to some extent also into the formulation of research questions. Often the result of the qualitative analysis is a composite picture of the studied phenomenon. As the researcher analyses the collected data to identify concepts and patterns consistent with the established research questions, relevant and important concepts and patterns may emerge that have not previously been considered. In this case, the researcher can modify previously made research questions and assumptions to pursue these new models. For qualitative coding, the first focal points of the researcher are not the coding structure established from the start, but the initial questions that is intended to be answered through the research. Various methods have been used in recent studies to investigate the relationships between destination image and destination evaluations. Many studies have relied on questionnaire surveys, which could be biased and do not fully reflect the destination's image and unique attributes. These methods are useful for verifying specific mechanisms and causal relationships, but they always face the challenge of sampling bias and survey time constraints. Furthermore, some researchers have suggested that survey respondents may exaggerate their participation levels and provide exaggerated answers in order to be helpful and friendly to the interviewers (Chase & Godbey, 1983).

In contrast to previous studies' methodologies, content analysis of travel reviews allows for a more holistic investigation of perceived destination image. Moreover, the types and numbers of groups

involved are more diverse, which can more effectively reflect the social destination image and the unique attributes perceived by tourists. This method has been used in perceived destination image studies (Pan et. al, 2007; Sun et. al, 2015) as well as projected destination image studies (Van et. al 2007).

Hence, a qualitative approach was chosen because it yields rich data and allows the identification of important attributes that influence Chinese tourists' perceptions of Tuscany's destination images. The content analysis method utilized in this study allows for a comprehensive examination of vast amounts of data, enabling the identification of tourists' preferences and behaviours. On the other hand, quantitative analysis is useful in providing a more objective and systematic way of analysing the data, identifying patterns and trends, and testing hypotheses and theories. By using both qualitative and quantitative analysis, the strengths of each method can be leveraged while compensating for their respective limitations. The combination of both approaches can lead to a more comprehensive, rigorous, and credible research that offers a more complete understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Moreover, the mixed methodology enhances the validity and reliability of the findings. This deeper understanding of the tourists' expectations and behaviours will aid in the development of more effective tourism strategies. Additionally, the method's ability to create custom analysis categories tailored to the specific needs of this thesis provides a systematic and consistent approach to categorizing the reviews of Chinese tourists.

3.6.1 Data collection

The dataset for this analysis will be composed of collection of reviews from Mafengwo, the largest Chinese-speaking travel communities. This website offers hotel reservations and flight ticket ordering services, in addition to UGCs such as reviews and presentations of destinations all over the world. The data will be collected in three steps: first, reviews about visiting Tuscany will be obtained by searching for keywords in Chinese that represent the names of Tuscany's most famous destinations and most popular attractions. Second, the reviews will be decluttered by removing superfluous symbols and words. In the third stage, texts about Tuscany trips will be chosen, and relevant text paragraphs will be extracted to serve as the data source for analysis.

Data collection will be conducted using a web crawler, Octoparse, which will be used to extract the required data information from the hypertext on the travel review webpages. The textual OTR content will include descriptions of attractions, hotels, restaurants, entertainment activities, and others.

3.6.2 Data analysis

The coding process is a crucial step in the content analysis method, and it involves categorizing the data into themes or codes. In this study, the coding process will be guided by the framework developed by Guo, Xinxin, et al. (2021) in their study "Comparing Online Travel Review Platforms as Destination Image Information Agents". This framework provides a structured approach to categorizing online travel reviews and provides insight into how tourists perceive and evaluate a destination. Using this framework, the coding process will be conducted in a systematic and consistent manner, ensuring that all relevant information is captured and analysed. The framework provided by Guo et al. will also ensure that the coding process aligns with the research objectives of this study, providing a more focused and relevant analysis.

Guo et al. (2021) developed an adapted framework for data analysis by combining the aforementioned Echtner and Ritchie's (1993) functional-psychological attribute scales and Beerli and Martn's (2004) attribute classification. Echtner and Ritchie's (1993) study incorporated 35-item destination attributes into a functional-psychological scale, which did not include all of the destination's universal attributes. As a result, the adapted framework was based on another frequently cited destination attribute study by Beerli and Martn (2004). Beerli and Martn's (2004) study classified destination attributes into nine dimensions, but they did not differentiate between functional and psychological attributes. Hence, Guo et al. (2021) created an adapted attribute framework that combines the benefits of Echtner and Ritchie's (1993) and Beerli and Martn's (2004) research. Guo et al.'s (2021) first step in developing the adapted attribute framework has been to incorporate Echtner and Ritchie's (1993) 35 identified destination attributes into Beerli and Martn's (2004) destination attribute classifications. The functional and psychological features of the attribute classification were then determined using Echtner and Ritchie's (1993) functional-psychological definition of the attribute. In Echtner and Ritchie's study, for example, tourist sites, tourist activities, sports activities, national parks, and tourist entertainment were regarded as functional destination attributes (1993). These characteristics were classified as a tourism leisure dimension in Beerli and Martn's (2004) study. As a result of some research group discussion, the tourism leisure dimension was determined to be a functional attribute. Furthermore, architecture and buildings, which were not covered in Echtner and Ritchie's (1993) study but were identified in Beerli and Martn's (2004) study, were considered as a functional destination attribute in the tourism leisure dimension.

Figure 5. Guo et al. (2021) adapted framework for data analysis

Functional destination attributes (Physical, measurable)	
Tourism leisure, recreation	Theme parks and activities; national parks and wilderness activities; sports facilities and activities; architecture and buildings; tourist entertainment and activities (nightlife, movie, shopping etc.)
Natural resources	Climate and weather; beaches; wealth of countryside; variety and uniqueness of flora and fauna
Tourism infrastructure	Accommodation; restaurants; bars, discos and clubs; destination accessibility; facilities for information and tours; network of tourist information
Culture, history, art	Historic sites, museums, monuments, etc.; festivals, fairs, exhibitions, concerts, etc.; handicrafts; different cuisine/food/drink; folklore; religion; customs and ways of life
General infrastructure	Development of the transportation system; private and public transportation facilities; development of health services; development of telecommunications; development of commercial infrastructure
Natural environment	Natural attractions and scenery; attractiveness of cities and towns; cleanliness; crowdedness; air and noise pollution; traffic congestion
Politics, economics	Political stability; political tendencies; degree of urbanization; economic development; personal safety; costs and price level
Social environment	Hospitality, friendliness and receptiveness of the local residents; underprivilege and poverty; quality of life and values; language barrier
Atmosphere of place	Good reputation; children-, adult-, or family-oriented place; opportunity for adventure; opportunity to increase knowledge; fun vs. boring; relaxing vs. stressful; attractive vs. unappealing; familiar vs. exotic; mystic vs. prosaic; luxurious vs. impoverished; fashionable vs. outdated
Psychological destination attributes (abstract)	

Source: Guo, Xinxin, et al. “Comparing Online Travel Review Platforms as Destination Image Information Agents.” *Information Technology & Tourism*, vol. 23, no. 2, 22 Apr. 2021, pp. 159–187, 10.1007/s40558-021-00201-w.

The adapted DI framework (Figure 5) depicts the destination attributes in nine dimensions, ranging from continuous functional to psychological characteristics. The dimensions of tourism leisure and recreation, natural resources, and tourism infrastructure are more functionally related. Culture, history, art, general infrastructure, and the natural environment, on the other hand, fall under the mixed functional-psychological level. Politics and economics, the social environment, and the atmosphere of the location are all abstract psychological attributes.

Both the coding process and the word frequency analysis of the data collected will be conducted through NVivo software. NVivo is a powerful software tool designed for qualitative data analysis, including content analysis. In content analysis, NVivo can be used to organize, categorize and analyse large amounts of textual data, such as interview transcripts, survey responses, or online reviews. NVivo provides a number of features to support content analysis, including the ability to import and organize data, code and categorize data, and perform data analysis using a range of techniques, including thematic analysis and word frequency analysis. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis software that is specifically designed to handle large amounts of unstructured data, such as text data from UGCs. This makes it ideal for analysing the vast amount of text data that is likely to be collected from Chinese tourists through travel review websites.

NVivo has advanced coding and categorization features that allow for the efficient and accurate categorization of UGCs based on specific themes or topics related to destination image. Additionally, NVivo has a robust data visualization and reporting function that allows researchers to present the results of their analysis in an intuitive and accessible manner.

NVivo has recently been used in travel-related literature, including studies on destination image. This means that there is a wealth of resources and support available to researchers who choose to use NVivo in their research, e.g. Garay (2019) and Garay and Morales Pérez (2019) analysed the DI of Spain via Twitter. NVivo software was also used by Mak (2017) for a visual content analysis.

The author of this research took inspiration from several previous studies for the formulation of the topic and the objectives of this research. Specifically, the inspiration was mainly taken from Zhang et al. (2020): the purpose of this study was to look into the experiences of Chinese tourists who visited the Norwegian tourist destination of Geiranger. They analysed the tourists' self-reported experiences and the motivation behind their trips using travel blogs collected from a Chinese website. A mixed-method approach was used in the analysis, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques. Key sentiment words from 196 blog posts were used in the quantitative analysis.

The author also used Guo et. al (2021) research to investigate whether or not there are discrepancies and similarities between different travel review platforms. Five native Chinese travel review platforms were chosen for the study: Ctrip, Qyer, Mafengwo, Tuniu, and Qunar. Finland's destination image was extracted from 10,197 travel reviews in Simplified Chinese using a mixed content analysis method, as destination image is a popular topic in online review research. The results show that the image of Finland on Chinese travel review platforms varies. This disparity is particularly noticeable in the dimension of functional and mixed functional-psychological destination attributes.

Furthermore, the aforementioned research was used to determine the research's target. According to Guo et. al (2021) DMOs should pay close attention to the impact of tourists' cultural backgrounds and demographic characteristics on destination perception. The formation of an image is influenced not only by destination information sources (induced, autonomous, and organic), but also by sociocultural and sociodemographic characteristics. These findings demonstrate that understanding the characteristics of tourists is extremely beneficial in understanding the causes of DI formation.

However, these earlier studies used slightly different methodologies than the one chosen for this research. The method chosen in this research was inspired by a mix of two previous studies, specifically Tseng et al. (2015) which uses Leximancer with online travel blogs about China, and the aforementioned Guo et. al (2021). Both studies made significant contributions to the methodology used in this work but have been adapted and enhanced to fit the specific needs of this study. In

particular, Tseng et al. (2015) provided the theoretical framework for data collection, while Guo et. al (2021) provided a methodology for analysing the collected data.

4. Results

4.1 Overview of the data

The data analysed in this study were online reviews posted by Chinese tourists on the travel review website Mafengwo. After conducting the initial data collection through the Octoparse software, a subset of 60 reviews was selected for manual coding. The reviews were selected based on their relevance to the research questions and their representativeness of the full dataset. The reviews covered the period from 2017 to 2019 and the reviews were in Chinese language. The reviews covered a wide range of topics, including the region's cultural heritage, local cuisine and wine, shopping, accommodations, and transportation. The reviewers also shared their experiences, recommendations, and opinions about visiting Tuscany as a tourist, and provided detailed descriptions of the attractions and activities that they enjoyed during their trips.

After analysing 60 reviews, it became clear that the themes and perceptions that emerged were becoming repetitive, and no new information was being gained from the analysis. Therefore, the author concluded that saturation had been reached, and further analysis of additional reviews was not necessary.

The 60 reviews that were analysed provided a representative sample of the full dataset and allowed the author to identify the most salient themes and perceptions that influenced the destination image of Tuscany among Chinese tourists. These findings are presented in the following sections of this chapter.

4.2 Analysis

The process of using a computerized quantitative content analysis involved two primary steps, data pre-processing and attribute identification. During data pre-processing, irrelevant words known as stop words are removed. Attribute identification in a quantitative content analysis involves detecting the frequency and significance of keywords or key phrases in the text by computer program, and then grouping them into categories of destination attributes (Marine-Roig and Clavé 2016). However, relying solely on the quantitative computerized approach often leads to overlooking the important contextual information present in the OTR data (Zhang and Cole 2016). In contrast, the qualitative content analysis approach involves subjectively interpreting the textual content to manually extract the DI from a limited number of tourists' descriptions (as studied by Sun et al. 2015 and Tegegne et al. 2018). In order to overcome the challenges of both extracting valuable information from review content and processing large amounts of OTR data, a novel approach that combines qualitative and quantitative methods was utilized in this study. The coding of the destination attributes and categorization were based on an adapted attribute framework from previous studies, which ensured

the validity of encoding and identifying the attributes. The use of this combined approach allowed for the extraction of the valuable contextual information embedded in the textual content while also being able to handle a large amount of data. In this process, the coding of the destination attributes and categorization followed the adapted attribute framework from previous studies (see Table 5).

The adapted attribute framework was used to ensure the accuracy of identifying the destination attributes and categorizing them. The coding of the data was carried out on Chinese text using the NVivo computer-assisted text analysis software. The data was considered to have reached a saturation point when no new information was discovered from additional OTRs. (Papathanassis and Knolle 2011). The coding manual was created through the following steps: reading an OTR thoroughly to identify the destination attributes based on the context of the review content, verifying the identified attribute against the adapted attribute framework, and confirming the code if the identified attribute was found in the framework. To eliminate commonly used words such as prepositions, conjunctions, and pronouns, a list of stop words was used. Additionally, the author added more stop words to the list identified through the initial runs of automated frequency analysis to only consider the most relevant words to the study.

4.3 Quantitative analysis results

The results of the frequency analysis revealed that the most commonly used words to describe Tuscany by Chinese tourists comprehend first of all the cities, namely Florence, Lucca, Pisa, Siena, San Gimignano, Rome, and the area of Val D'Orcia. Besides, general nouns for city's places were often cited, such as "church", "square", "architecture", "train station", "art gallery" and "centre".

Then the results also report famous landmarks, specifically Santa Maria del Fiore cathedral, Palazzo Vecchio, Leaning Tower of Pisa, Ponte Vecchio and the Uffizi Gallery. Moreover, words related to culture, art and history were also reported, specifically "Renaissance", "Saint", "art", "century", "style", "history" and "Michelangelo".

These results show that Chinese tourists visiting Tuscany generally perceived Tuscany as a leisure destination with various cultural, historic, and artistic elements.

In terms of adjectives the most cited are "beautiful" and "famous". Most cited verbs are "buy", "walk" and "eat". "Ticket" is also frequent, this is because reviews often contain instructions on where and how to buy tickets for attractions and museums. The frequency of the word "scenic spot" highlights the importance of taking memorable and aesthetic pictures.

An unexpected result was the frequency of the word "Mohamed Salah", who is a well-known Egyptian football player. He is popular in China due to his association with Liverpool Football Club, a team that has a large following in China and around the world. Additionally, Salah is also active on

social media and has worked with several Chinese brands, which has helped increase his popularity in the country. Salah has also been mentioned in reviews of Tuscany due to his time playing for Fiorentina, a football team based in Florence. This finding shows the importance placed on influencers and celebrities by the Chinese customers.

Moreover, Rome was cited because almost every reviews reported either coming from Rome or having Rome as the next destination of the trip.

In addition to specific words, the frequency analysis revealed some common themes that emerged from the reviews. The region's rich cultural heritage, including its art, history, and architecture, is clearly a common theme that emerged from the reviews and Chinese tourists clearly perceived Tuscany's cultural heritage as very famous and a must-see attribute of the destination. They expressed their admiration for the architectural beauty of the region and appreciated the preservation of the historic sites, which were seen as a testament to Tuscany's cultural legacy. The mention of the Val D'Orcia also suggested that the natural beauty of the region was an important factor for Chinese tourists. The frequent use of words like "buy" and "ticket" indicated that Chinese tourists valued convenience and accessibility when traveling.

Overall, the word frequency analysis provided valuable insights into the key words and themes that shaped the destination image of Tuscany for Chinese tourists. These findings are consistent with the qualitative findings and suggest that cultural heritage, art and history are key factors that influence the image of a destination among tourists.

The word frequency analysis results are presented in Table 1 in Chinese and translated into Table 2. The results presented in Table 1 show the words that were used consistently throughout the reviews, indicating that they played an important role in shaping the image of Tuscany in the minds of Chinese tourists.

Table 1. Word frequency analysis results.

Keyword	Frequency	Keyword	Frequency	Keyword	Frequency	Keyword	Frequency
佛罗伦萨	521	锡耶纳	113	火车站	73	著名	64
教堂	311	欧洲	96	走	72	老桥	61
意大利	301	文艺复兴	95	斜塔	71	博物馆	59
卢卡	276	圣	94	世纪	68	乌菲兹	58
广场	182	买	90	旅行	68	酒店	58
建筑	164	奥尔恰谷	85	票	68	中心	55
城市	142	圣母百花	83	吃	67	老	55
比萨	141	圣吉米尼亚诺	82	历史	65	萨拉赫	55
罗马	131	艺术	81	风格	65	景点	51
美	127	维琪奥王宫	79	美术馆	64	米开朗基罗	50

Table 2. Translated keywords.

Keyword	Frequency	Keyword	Frequency	Keyword	Frequency	Keyword	Frequency
Florence	521	Siena	113	train station	73	famous	64
church	311	Europe	96	walk	72	Ponte Vecchio	61
Italy	301	Renaissance	95	Leaning tower	71	museum	59
Lucca	276	Saint	94	century	68	Uffizi	58
Square	182	buy	90	travel	68	hotel	58
building (architecture)	164	Val D'Orcia	85	ticket	68	centre	55
city	142	Santa Maria del Fiore	83	eat	67	old	55
Pisa	141	San Gimignano	82	history	65	Mohamed Salah	55
Roma	131	art	81	style	65	scenic spot	51
beautiful	127	Palazzo Vecchio	79	art gallery	64	Michelangelo	50

4.4 Qualitative analysis results

Qualitative analysis of the 60 reviews was conducted using the DI adapted framework (Figure 5) to code the reviews for content analysis. The results are presented in Table 3.

The culture, history, and art dimensions had the largest amount of coding references, accounting for 29% of the total, followed by the tourism leisure and recreation dimensions, accounting for 23%. These two attribute dimensions accounted for a large share of the Tuscany's DI at the functional level. The largest dimension at the psychological level was the place atmosphere, with a 21% share of mentions. Furthermore, the shares of the dimensions encompassing Tuscany tourism infrastructure, general infrastructure, natural environment, natural resources and social environment were 10%, 6,7%, 4,8%, 3,73% and 1,9%. The proportions of the latter dimensions were much lower than the proportions of the first three dimensions.

Table 3 reports the results of the content analysis.

Table 3. Content analysis results

Functional destination attributes (physical, measurable)	
Tourism leisure and recreation (61)	Architecture and buildings (35); tourist entertainment and activities (26)
Natural resources (10)	Climate (3); wealth of countryside (7)
Tourism infrastructure (27)	Accommodation (20), restaurant (4), facilities for information (3),
Culture, history, art (77)	Historic sites, museums, monuments (48), art attractions (13), different cuisine (10), custom and way of life (6)
General infrastructure (18)	Private and public transportation facilities (18)
Natural environment (13)	Natural attractions and scenery (5), attractiveness of cities (3), cleanliness and crowdedness (5)
Politics, economics	Not present
Social environment (5)	Language barrier (5)
Atmosphere of place (57)	Ancient and historic atmosphere (16), Opportunity to increase knowledge (24), meaningful (8), interesting (7), opportunity for adventure (2)
Psychological destination attributes (abstract)	

Compared with the adapted DI framework (see Figure 5), the qualitative content analysis results show that Tuscany's Chinese OTR data-based DI covered eight of the nine destination attribute dimensions, from the functional to the psychological levels. However, within every attribute dimension, while some universal destination attributes did not appear new themes were under covered, for instance importance placed on family traveling together. Each attribute is described in more detail below:

- Tourism leisure and recreation emerged as one of the main themes from the analysis of the reviews. The most frequently cited attributes in this category were mentions of ancient buildings and magnificent architecture, which were perceived by Chinese tourists as the most appealing aspect of Tuscany. These comments were often associated with admiration for the region's rich cultural heritage, and its art, history, and architecture. Chinese tourists also

mentioned tourist entertainment and activities, such as shopping malls (specifically The Mall Firenze), opera concerts and thermal and spa stays, which were seen as adding to the overall experience of visiting Tuscany.

- Natural resources emerged as another theme, with the wealth of the countryside being cited mainly by tourists visiting the Val D'Orcia region. The reviews contained only a few comments about the climate, and these were mostly about high temperatures and sun exposure, which indicates that the weather may not be a major factor influencing Chinese tourists' decision to visit Tuscany.
- Tourism infrastructure: it was found that accommodations and restaurants were often reviewed in terms of how to reach them and how friendly the staff was. Tourists also mentioned facilities for information, such as tourist centres and maps, but surprisingly, these were not commonly reported. This finding could suggest that more efforts could be made to improve the provision of information to Chinese tourists in Tuscany.
- Culture, history and art: this section is the most frequently cited. The reviews highlighted the cultural heritage of Tuscany, with many tourists emphasizing the region's rich history, architecture, and art. They mentioned the many historical sites, including churches, museums and art galleries. The reviews also highlighted the local cuisine and wine as a key attraction. Moreover, few references to the customs and way of life were detected. Specifically, many Chinese tourists commented on the frequency of bars and cafes around the city and how Italians are accustomed to sitting outside while enjoying a drink and conversation.
- General infrastructure: the only reported findings in this category were about streets and parking facilities for self-driving tours and railways for tourists travelling by train. The reviews also discussed the transportation options available in Tuscany, with many tourists emphasizing the convenience and ease of getting around. They mentioned the variety of transportation options, including rental cars, trains, and buses, as well as the accessibility of the region's main attractions.
- Natural environment: The reviews also mentioned the natural beauty of Tuscany in some cases, with many tourists highlighting the region's picturesque landscapes, rolling hills, and scenic vineyards. They also mentioned the variety of activities available in nature, such as hiking, biking, and one review even mentioned the opportunity to go diving on Elba Island and enjoy ziplining.
- Politics, economics: the results of this study suggest that politics and economics were not significant factors in the reviews analysed since no comments were found that specifically addressed these topics.

- The social environment category in the content analysis was mentioned in only a few reviews, indicating that it was not a significant factor in shaping the tourists' overall experience in Tuscany. However, some of the tourists did note the challenge of language barriers, particularly when ordering food in restaurants due to their lack of familiarity with the names of products and dishes. This indicates that language support could be an area for improvement in the tourism industry in Tuscany.
- Atmosphere of place: atmosphere of place emerged as the second most frequent section in the manual coding results. Many tourists praised the unique atmosphere of Tuscany, with comments about the region's charming and artistic environment. They reported feeling like they were transported back in time while strolling through the city and being able to see landmarks they had dreamed of seeing for a long time. The majority of Chinese visitors mentioned Italy as the birthplace of the Renaissance and recognized it as home to world-class opera and numerous works of art, including many masterpieces of the visual arts. The beauty of the countryside was also mentioned, with tourists expressing appreciation for the scenic views and natural beauty of the region. These findings suggest that the overall atmosphere and environment of Tuscany play an important role in attracting Chinese tourists. Moreover, qualitative analysis allowed to get insights not reported by quantitative analysis. For example, cultural references involving Tuscany, which may not be as known in the Western public but clearly yet constitute important pull factors for Chinese tourists, such as often cited references to the movie "Under the Tuscan Sun" and poetry by Xu Zhimo (徐志摩), called "翡冷翠的一夜" – "A night in Florence".

4.5 The Role of Chinese Cultural Values in Shaping Destination Image

The results of the content analysis were also examined in the context of the Chinese cultural values that influence tourism. A review of the relevant literature identified several cultural values that have been found to shape Chinese tourists' travel behaviours and perceptions of destination image, which have been explained in detail in the second chapter of this research.

The fact that the most relevant attribute mentioned, which is culture, history and art, suggests that Tuscany has a unique advantage in attracting Chinese tourists who seek self-improvement through exposure to cultural and artistic experiences, which are highly valued in Chinese society, as explained earlier. Additionally, the emphasis on reputation and social standing aligns with the notion of conspicuous consumption, where consumers use luxury goods and experiences to signal their social status. By visiting and sharing their experiences in Tuscany, Chinese tourists can enhance their social image and status among their peers. Therefore, tourism operators in Tuscany can leverage their rich

cultural heritage and promote it as a destination for self-realization and status-enhancement for Chinese tourists. These findings are consistent with previous research that has highlighted the importance of cultural experiences in Chinese tourists' travel motivations and destination choices.

This also relates to the importance placed on the atmosphere of a place in reviews: this suggests that the atmosphere and environment of Italy play a crucial role in attracting Chinese tourists. Italian culture, with its emphasis on art, passion, and romance, seems to resonate with Chinese tourists' expectations and desires. The historical and architectural landmarks, as well as the luxury brands, are also seen as major attractions for Chinese visitors. Overall, these findings suggest that the cultural and atmospheric aspects of Italy are significant factors in attracting Chinese tourists to the country.

The references to Chinese poets in the reviews relates to the influence of Chinese common knowledge in influencing travel motivations. These findings highlight the importance of understanding and incorporating Chinese cultural references in destination marketing to attract Chinese tourists. This is especially true for destinations in Europe, where Chinese tourists may not have as much prior knowledge or exposure to local cultural icons and references. By incorporating Chinese cultural references, destinations can better appeal to the Chinese market and create a more welcoming and personalized experience for Chinese tourists. Examples of this could include featuring Chinese language guides or signage, highlighting famous Chinese figures who have visited or lived in the destination.

A theme not cited in the attribute framework but discovered through content analysis was the importance of family togetherness. This also suggests that Chinese tourists may also be motivated by the cultural value of *Guanxi*, which emphasizes the importance of relationships and connections. For Chinese tourists, traveling with family is seen as a way to strengthen family bonds and show respect for their elders. In fact, many reviews mentioned travelling with children, as a way to enrich their knowledge and personal experience and some others mentioned travelling with elderly to destinations they have always dreamed of, as a way of paying respect for the efforts made during the upbringing of children.

Besides, as mentioned Chinese culture traditionally sees nature as a source of inspiration and a symbol of balance and harmony. This is reflected in many Chinese cultural expressions, such as poetry, painting, and calligraphy. Given this cultural background, it's not surprising that Chinese tourists may be attracted to the natural beauty of Tuscany. The rolling hills, vineyards, and picturesque landscapes of the region could be seen as a manifestation of the balance and harmony that Chinese culture values. This could help explain why so many Chinese tourists appreciate the natural beauty of Tuscany and include it as a reason for their visit in their reviews.

Finally, the finding of the content analysis on Chinese tourists' motivations shows that traditional cultural values and modern personal values interact in shaping the travel decisions of Chinese tourists. The younger generation of Chinese people is influenced by Western culture and seeks adventure and new life experiences, reflecting modern personal values. However, sociocultural norms still play a crucial role in explaining Chinese tourists' decisions. For instance, prestige, ego enhancement, and ostentation are still essential motivations behind modern Chinese tourists' decisions to travel abroad. Hence, innovative features in tourism experience design that can foster tourists' learning and personal development as well as life enrichment should always be valued in the industry.

Understanding the cultural background of a target market can be crucial for developing effective tourism strategies. By understanding the values and beliefs of Chinese tourists, tourism providers in Tuscany can better tailor their services to meet the needs and expectations of this important market. Overall, the association between the content analysis results and the Chinese cultural values that influence tourism suggests that the destination image of Tuscany among Chinese tourists is shaped by a complex interplay between cultural values and the various attractions and amenities that the region has to offer.

4.6 Discussion

The results of the quantitative and qualitative analyses were found to be largely consistent with each other, with common themes and patterns emerging across both methods. The word frequency analysis revealed that words related to cultural heritage, such as “art”, “history”, and “architecture”, were among the most used in the reviews, while the manual coding identified cultural experiences and attractions as a key theme. The consistency between the two methods provides a more robust and comprehensive understanding of the destination image of Tuscany among Chinese tourists.

One of the most prominent themes that emerged from the analysis is the region's rich cultural heritage, including its art, history, and architecture. Chinese tourists clearly perceive Tuscany's cultural heritage as a very famous and must-see attribute of the destination. They expressed admiration for the architectural beauty of the region and appreciated the preservation of historic sites, which were seen as a testament to Tuscany's cultural legacy. The results of this study also revealed insights into the ways in which Chinese tourists perceive Tuscany in terms of tourism leisure and recreation, natural resources, tourism infrastructure, social environment, and atmosphere of place. Although most comments were positive, the reviews also highlighted areas for improvement, such as the need for better transportation and information facilities. The results expand our knowledge on the topics that tourists pay attention to when they are travelling and what factors can affect the perceived destination image. Furthermore, according to the results of this study, most Chinese tourists pay less

attention to the political attributes of Tuscany, including safety issues, the political environment, and political stability. This could be explained by the fact that now they have more diverse ways of obtaining destination information through social media where tourists assist each other especially through OTR platforms, which leads to a more comprehensive understanding of destinations and thus minimize their risk perception.

Overall, this study highlights the need for the tourism industry to continually adapt to changing cultural values and travel motivations in order to provide positive and meaningful experiences for Chinese tourists. By understanding and catering to these values, the industry can build stronger relationships with Chinese tourists and create experiences that meet their evolving needs and desires. The results of this study demonstrate the complex relationship between cultural values and travel motivation among Chinese tourists. Traditional cultural values still play a significant role in shaping Chinese tourists' decision-making. However, modern personal values such as individualism and the desire for self-fulfilment and enrichment are also becoming increasingly important, especially among younger generations. As Chinese society continues to modernize and become more connected with the outside world, it is likely that these modern personal values will become even more prominent in shaping travel behaviour. For the tourism industry, this means understanding and catering to these changing motivations and values in order to provide experiences that meet the needs and desires of Chinese tourists. This requires not only a deep understanding of these values, but also the ability to adapt to them in practical ways.

In conclusion, this research highlights the significant contribution of organic image information agents, such as OTRs, to both functional and psychological destination attributes. OTRs are particularly influential at the functional and mixed functional-psychological level. Moreover, this study sheds light on the relational nature of DI and how it is formed through organic image information agents, specifically OTR platforms. By doing so, it adds to the existing literature on tourism. The findings also confirm the idea that each destination has its own unique destination attribute scale, which aligns with the earlier research conducted by Beerli and Martín (2004).

4.7 Conclusion

In this study, the author investigated the perception of Chinese tourists toward Tuscany, by analysing online reviews of the region. The results of our study suggest that the reviews posted by Chinese tourists reflect a generally positive view of Tuscany, with several key themes emerging across both the word frequency analysis and manual coding. Overall, both analyses provided a detailed understanding of the themes and perceptions that influenced the destination image of Tuscany among Chinese tourists. The findings suggest that the cultural heritage, the atmosphere of the place and the

tourism leisure and recreation, accommodations, and transportation of Tuscany play an important role in shaping the image of the region among Chinese tourists. Additionally, the study identified areas for improvement, such as the need for better transportation and information facilities. Addressing these issues could help tourism industry professionals to provide better services and experiences for Chinese tourists, which could in turn improve the overall reputation of the destination and attract more tourists in the future.

The analysis of Chinese tourists' reviews of Tuscany reveals that the destination image of Tuscany among Chinese tourists is shaped by a complex interplay between cultural values and the various attractions and amenities that the region has to offer. The findings suggest that Tuscany has a unique advantage in attracting Chinese tourists who seek self-improvement through exposure to cultural and artistic experiences, which are highly valued in Chinese society. Additionally, the emphasis on reputation and social standing aligns with the notion of conspicuous consumption, where consumers use luxury goods and experiences to signal their social status. The cultural and atmospheric aspects of Italy are significant factors in attracting Chinese tourists to the country, including the natural beauty of Tuscany, which could be seen as a manifestation of the balance and harmony that Chinese culture values. Moreover, the importance of family togetherness in Chinese culture suggests that Chinese tourists may also be motivated by the cultural value of Guanxi, which emphasizes the importance of relationships and connections.

The results of this study provide valuable insights for tourism industry professionals and policymakers who are seeking to attract Chinese tourists. By understanding the specific themes and perceptions that are most important to Chinese tourists when they are considering a travel destination, tourism industry professionals can develop marketing strategies that are tailored to meet these specific needs and desires. For example, this study found that cultural heritage, atmosphere of the place, and tourism leisure and recreation were important factors in shaping the destination image of Tuscany among Chinese tourists. Tourism industry professionals who are seeking to attract Chinese tourists to other destinations could use this information to promote these types of experiences in their own marketing efforts. Overall, the insights gained from this study can help tourism industry professionals and policymakers to better understand the factors that are most important to Chinese tourists when they are choosing a travel destination, and to develop more effective strategies for attracting this important market segment. This study provides useful insights into the perception of Tuscany by Chinese tourists, which help to enhance the overall tourist experience. Further research could investigate the perception of other regions in Italy by Chinese tourists and compare these findings to the perception of Tuscany.

4.8 Limitations of the study

One of the limitations of this study is the relatively small sample size of reviews, as only 60 reviews were analysed and there is a possibility that it may not be representative of all Chinese tourists who visit Tuscany. However, the study used both quantitative analysis (word frequency) and qualitative analysis (content analysis) to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the data. Additionally, the study also examined the interplay between the findings and Chinese cultural values, which further enriched the analysis. The data collected was only from one online platform, and it may not reflect the opinions and experiences of Chinese tourists who may have used other platforms or did not leave a review at all. Additionally, the study only analysed text data, which may not capture the full extent of Chinese tourists' experiences in Tuscany, as other forms of media, such as images and videos, may also influence their perceptions of the destination. Finally, while the study examined the relationship between the content of the reviews and Chinese cultural values, it did not examine other factors that may have influenced Chinese tourists' travel behaviours and destination choices, such as demographic characteristics or individual preferences. Therefore, the generalizability of the findings may be limited, and future research may need to consider other factors that influence Chinese tourists' travel behaviours and perceptions of destinations.

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