

# Promoting Chinese youth visit and training programs: salient features of Hainan University students experience

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## Abstract

*In the recent years, Chinese government in higher education system has been promoting tourists who want to learn, explore and experience firsthand new places in and outside China. They do it by visiting not only major tourist attractions of China but also visiting nearby foreign countries. Taking Hainan University as an example, this study assesses pattern of tourism behavior, destination selection, of college students taking holiday vacations while travelling to various destinations. It employs a random survey approach and utilizes sample data analysis to detect the direction and demand for key tourist attractions. Suggestions are put forward regarding the current demand of students' main tourist markets. The paper concludes by describing further need to promote even more orchestrated assessment and an intensive approach to analysis and development of growing university students' tourist market.*

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## 1. Introduction

With China's rapidly growing economic and social well-being, many students and young people perceive growing new tourism industry as a way to tap and get involved in order to learn, visit and gain new and valuable experience for better working and attractive life. The rise in standard of living for many new middle class Chinese means more opportunities to travel and visit new places and new countries. Travel industry is trying to keep up with this high demand and shows vigorous opportunities to expand further. College students have a strong curiosity, and more free time to embrace new tourism market. For better exploration of tourism destinations this paper uses formal and informal questionnaires and surveys students' attitudes, motives and their key behavior characteristics. It uses a sample survey asking some 500 participants. In result it received 479 answers. Thus, representing effective rate at 96%. Time span ranges from 3 to 5 days (and up to 10 days at the most) on the average.

## 2. Research methods

### 2.1 Interview and questionnaire survey

In order to obtain the key characteristics of college students in Hainan University, the survey questionnaire designed a total of 30 questions. Also, the survey was open to all students of different majors, degrees and grades. The interview was made available on line and students were invited to participate a specified period of time and conducted at the University during the Spring Semester of 2018.

### 2.2 Statistical analysis

For this research paper, Excel spreadsheet and basic statistical methods were employed to draw some essential bar charts and pie charts. Also, simple analytical tools of questionnaires were used to arrive at meaningful calculations of college students' tourism behavior pattern.

## 3. Analysis of tourism characteristics of college students

### 3.1 Analysis of travel time characteristics of college students

(i) Travel time. College students choose to travel mainly during relatively short holiday periods. This is primarily because at these times, they are not under the pressure to gain income and do not usually have to work yet. In addition, to academic requirements, college students often consider traveling together, as a group. According to the survey results college students often travel with one or two companions.

(ii) Travel duration. More than half of the respondents chose to travel for 2-3 days within a week. The main factors they considered included time and cost. Holidays travels were all within just one week. Because the biggest cost of travel is mainly accommodation and food, travel time is proportional to the cost, and the consumption capacity of students is not very large. Therefore, 2 to 3 days of travel is most popular. Quarter of the respondents are willing to travel within a week. The number of longer time travel is relatively small.

### 3.2 Tourists' motives characteristics<sup>1</sup>

Tourist personal motivation is one of the major considerations of social interaction. Promoting tourism dynamics produces two outcomes: namely, novelty of positive experience, psychology of learning, and learning to cope with tension. Factors involving nostalgia, exploration or cultural tourism dynamics have also other ingredients, which are outside the scope of this paper. Research indicates that at the university, one of the largest expenses

<sup>1</sup> In recent years, individual factors have been considered more widely to find out their impacts on college students' travel behavior and have received much attention. (Gatersleben and Appleton, 2007; Dickinson et al., 2003; Kim and Ulfarsson, 2008)

for students is a travel fee. It most frequently determines tourism motivation, and selection of travel destination. Tourism destination helps us explain more fully, and allows us understand growing students travel demand. A more accurate picture that this paper aims to address, is to prompt, launch and target market demand of range of tourism projects that will eventually expand even more in years to come. The research on tourism psychology shows that there is a close relationship between tourism attitude and tourism behavior. According to the questionnaire, college students are generally fond of tourism, and 319 people agree or strongly, or just agree on positive values of tourism, which indicates that college students are becoming potentially solid customers in the growing tourism market.

(i) The value of tourism. There are a variety of factors influencing the choice of travel destination. People in different age groups reveal preferences for visiting tourist attractions such as scenery, calm spectacular views, or wild nature. Consumption of these types of tourism are very important factors influencing the choice of travel destination. Thanks to ubiquitous mobile Internet, college students' choice of tourism destination is based on viewing pictures that give the best first impression. Then, they gather relevant, additional tourism information. College students, responding to the questionnaire are motivated primarily as follows: eliminate the negative emotions (31.8%), relax, and/or release pressure (22%), appreciate the regional scenery (35.2%), open nature, and/or the air quality (15.6%). This shows that college students generally recognize that the main item tourism affords is to "watch the natural beauty of wild life", "away from the hubbub, close to nature", "rich experience and increase a sense of accomplishment", or increase knowledge, widen horizons, show the unique natural scenery, perfect ecological environment, experience rich species, resources -- comprise the core of tourism college attractive force. The other dynamic is very important also: gain experience, perform investigative study, experience the artistic creation", "entertainment", "strengthening physical health", etc. They are pursuing at the same time, diverse, deeper knowledge, and living entertainment, and/or local shows. Sometimes, of course, tourism is a simple form of entertainment. The nature of tourism, (to travel for this purpose) also accounted for 30.41% of total respondents.

On the whole, students' travel destination preference reflects individual customs and relaxation needs. Customs can be interpreted as the metropolis travel: go to some of the more remote areas, reflect the different customs of different nationalities, or different cultures. Traveling of this type is very extensive, and college students can interact well with local people, and enhance culture appreciation of rich ancient traditions. Unlike the metropolitan travel, it is often accompanied by shopping, manifesting yet another dimension or value of tourism. To relax, to restore energy, is most frequently the very first choice of most tourists, or college students, who go to places of historic interest, visiting with friends, family, or to get to know some cultural items related to their own professional knowledge. The majority of college students choose nature, cultural relics

and historical sites as their tourist destinations. It can be seen from the data of college students on the mobile Internet that outdoor adventure is the second important criterion. Many college students choose outdoor adventure as a travel project to exercise themselves during their holidays.

From the travel websites related to mobile Internet, it can be seen that the price of tourist attractions, weather and climate, service quality and infrastructure are the most important factors that determine the tourism decision. College students through the mobile Internet can view most recent information of tourist attractions, to ensure the safety of tourist attractions. This way can help college students choose more excellent tourist destinations.<sup>2</sup>

(ii) Financial ability. Where the college students choose to travel is particularly sensitive issue from the financial point of view. It is closely related to, their level of personal economic conditions. At the same time, college students spend money on accommodation and transportation. In addition, also the top attractions cost are relatively fixed and often rather high. The choice of places by college students is relatively small. How to allocate the budget on traveling is becoming the top priority of college students.

(iii) Tourism service quality. In the column: "college students"--evaluation of tourism service quality" in the questionnaire survey, the data in the table are evaluated by five grades: "very dissatisfied", "dissatisfied", "OK in general", "satisfied" and "very satisfied" respectively -- with corresponding values of 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. The average value of each choice is calculated by weighted average. The higher the value, the better the quality of the tourism service.

**Table 1: The evaluation of tourism service quality**

	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	OK in general	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Average
Accommodation	17	56	170	115	12	3.13
Catering	16	87	164	93	10	2.98
Transportation	6	49	169	138	8	3.25
Service	6	28	156	151	29	3.46
Shopping	23	87	173	74	13	2.91
Entertainment	5	59	162	124	20	3.26
Guidance	7	42	185	115	21	3.27
Overall	1	21	201	138	9	3.36

According to the statistical results, college students have the highest evaluation on the service quality of scenic nature spots (3.46). The second is tour guide service quality

<sup>2</sup> Tourist destinations as a key component in tourism research literature, describe values model such as Leiper's 1990 who write the concept of the "tourism system".

(3.27), followed by entertainment service quality (3.26), transportation service quality (3.25). The evaluation of accommodation service quality (3.13), catering service (2.98) and shopping service quality (2.91) – which is relatively low. In fact, college students usually go out to travel after their full preparation. However, China's catering, tourism shopping and other contents have long been facing problems of specific features such as homogenization of products. Generally speaking, college students have a basic satisfactory or general evaluation on the overall quality of tourism service (3.36). There is still a lot of room for improvement of tourism products involving college students in the near future.

### 3.3 Analysis of college students' choice of tourist destinations

When tourists make their travel decisions, their schedule is mainly determined by environment, the maximum benefits and tourism attractions. Travel preferences differ with age, occupation, education regarding tourism. Because of their interest, ability, temperament and personality, preference for tourist destinations also vary.

Based on these, our questionnaire analysis, tourism statistics of college students choose to visit scenic spots, traveling to displays in: natural scenery (32.40%), the original style (21.10%), exotic scenery (13.40%), the local people with taste of small community (12.40%). Thus, it suggests that college students are independent, adventurous, they pursue travel that reflects their personality. So they go toward choosing their tour of scenic spots. They pay more attention to personalized types to pursue. They love big visions, and have curiosity to explore cycle tour activities. They pursue some new attractions that contribute to the formation of their personal image of the world.

### 3.4 College student travel cost analysis

(i) Tourism consumption structure of college students. According to the survey, college students spend in general high fees that constitute large part of their budget. According to the results, tourist consumer spending items mesh roughly: ①transportation, ②tickets, ③souvenirs, ④ food, ⑤accommodation and other costs. Food, transportation, and accommodation is the biggest cost respectively: 63.84%, 45.21%, and 77.81%. This suggests that the college students' tourist spending structure is not balanced. The most of the cost constitutes basic food items. According to the questionnaires, good fruit, and travel cost around 1000 yuan, thus significantly increasing the overall costs.

(ii) Main factors affecting college students' consumption. The main factors to consider before students decide on a travel is the external environment of their destination and personal conditions while making tourism decisions. It includes the following 8 aspects<sup>3</sup>: price, distance, time,

<sup>3</sup> A research has found that student grade, school location city, public transit station coverage ratio (PTSCR) and family income, the 4 factors have influence on college student travel behavior.

Guangjun Zhan, Xuedong Yan, Shanjiang Zhu, Yun Wang. Using hierarchical tree-based regression model to examine university

transportation as well as features of scenic spots, safety, peers and physical conditions. College students do consider the price, safety and attractions before traveling. From this we can infer that the main factors restricting college students' travel are financial constraints.

Funding sources of tourism for college students, include parental support, work-study program, frugality, scholarships and other. The analysis results show that 69.23% of students' travel funds come from their parents, 68.21% from work-study programs, 60.26% from frugality (i.e. savings), and 45.64% from scholarships. This shows that college students are not completely independent, tourism funds mainly rely on the family support.

## 4. Tourism market analysis of college students

### 4.1 current situation of college students' tourism market

The current situation of tourism market development of college students is far from perfect. College students travel mainly in small groups<sup>4</sup>, some in larger groups, and great, diverse, individual interests. At the same time, some students travel thanks to agency cooperation, or a travel agency marketing promotion. To promote tourism, there are many students who choose this way to travel. Because of the acquaintance, that reliability is higher, however, the coverage of tourism projects is small, tourism projects don't have a lot of appeal.

(i) Tourism programs are common and do not reflect the uniqueness of student-oriented programs. College students born in the 1990s are most fond of an open nature, freshness, and are open to excitement. For such groups, travel agencies have no specific design, and the tourism products they provide are basically aimed at the public, which is not conducive to opening up the student market. In fact, it is related to the awareness and decision-making of travel agencies. According to the interview results, travel agencies do not have a long-term plan to develop the market of college students. They only take an ordinary view, leading to an open development of the market of college students.

(ii) Weak price competitiveness. In addition to scenic spots and tickets, students go for range of tourist attractions. They look for cheap tickets, and if there are no other discounts, then they will not go to the travel agency, but they will buy just tickets (avoiding travel agencies altogether) looking for best deals. The fact that travel agencies do

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student travel frequency and mode choice patterns in China[J]. Transport Policy, 2016,45. However, the mentioned research does not involve other important factors from this paper's online survey such as travel motivation, destination, and time selection, etc. So based on the results of author's survey, this paper integrated this view and propose eight (8) factors, which have significant impact on student travel.

<sup>4</sup> Travel with your friends is supposed to be not only a few days trip to suburbs or other places, but also is expected to include a lot of fun and valuable memory of undergraduate life. Joy (Zhuowei) Huang, Liping A. Cai. Destination choice model for transitional travel: College students in China[J]. Tourism Management, 2010, 32(3)

not always set other discounts for college students, makes that student seek other advice or help, by getting relevant information, and choosing best deals.

(iii) There are few travel agencies involved in the market of college students. Generally speaking, there are few travel agencies involved in college tourism. The level of involvement is very limited. The introduction of their own tourism products is generally simple, the routes are few, and the range of choices for students is too small, which leads to the low attention of students. The number of travel agencies is small and so is their competitiveness. This is not conducive to the innovation of tourism services and further expansion of the market. Undoubtedly, there is a lot of room for expanding college students' tourism market. Although the current market is developing, it is still in short supply. The supply of tourism products is also inconsistent with the diverse needs of college students. Travel agencies should seriously consider the problems encountered in the development of the market. Especially, in their own aspects, to occupy a more favorable position in the supply of college tourism products and the opening of the new markets.

#### **4.2 College students' tourism market constraints**

From the current situation of college students' travel market, it can be found that travel agencies have some investment in the development of the market. But do not have sustainable plans, which might lead to the development of travel market. The main factors restricting travel agencies are as follows:

(i) Travel agencies lack of marketing measures. Tourism products are single, which cannot satisfy the diversification of college students to choose travel agencies as market pioneers. The investment in college students' tourism market is insufficient. College students are often treated as ordinary tourists, rather than as tourists for targeted development and operation. Travel agencies not only do not distinguish between college students and general tourists, but also have no targeted design on the tourism products. Market segmentation and marketing planning are often missing. This is one of the key reasons why it is difficult for travel agencies to enter the market of college students. 70% of the respondents believe that travel agencies often only one and single tourism product, which is far from meeting the diversified choices. In particular, modern college students have a high requirement on cost budgeting. Products and destinations are the most direct and core factors for enterprises to win consumers' favor.

Although a lot of publicity are available for college students, the effects are not easy to quantity. This is just one aspect. More important is a student who has a lot of time for travel, and even with the limited budget can travel for a short vacation. The group characteristic determines the strong conformity of college students. Thus, the communication and win-win between 2 travel agencies and student groups is essential. But the survey indicates that the travel agency follows very simple strategy--not a very good use of the publicity effects on the community.

(ii) Lack of training for campus public relations. Travel agencies are mostly recruiting college students as their publicists. On the one hand, most frequently through acquaintances, in order to generate a trust. A lot of students on the other hand, use the relative marketing by specialized staff. However, the effect is not always very good, mainly because:

- travel agencies did not invest too much in the training of these students in the early stage;
- a degree of specialization of the training is low, not systematic, and the period is short;
- students do not have a deep understanding of tourism products, which is not conducive to the development of the market.

### **5. The college students' tourism development policy**

From the current situation of college tourism market products, college students have a great demand for tourism products. But travel agencies do not always respond in a timely manner. So the development of the market remains stagnated. In order to tap the potential of college students' tourism market, travel agencies should make greater efforts on their own and college students, especially from the internal sources, so as to better open the tourism market of college students.

#### **5.1 Break the traditional business thinking mode, stay close to the college students**

The overall train of thought to flexibility, at ease with a kind of line model. First tourism product requires the flexible combination of travel, tour, shopping, entertainment, for each project. Second, the diversification tourism party. For college students with different needs, design a variety as they choose walking, bicycles, ships, cars, trains, etc. Third, organization needs to be flexible. College travel needs to find some aspirations, such as visiting with close friends.

#### **5.2 Create an online tourism network**

The national university network is very well developed. The speed of information dissemination is very fast. So the vast majority of students use this information quite well. Traditional sales and distribution of leaflets are becoming out of date. More and more, people choose travel methods through the Internet, WeChat and APP travel software. Meanwhile, the publicity of scenic spots on the Internet has great attraction to students. Therefore, some colleges and universities can unite in Hainan to strengthen cooperation and form a tourism alliance. Through the release of tourism routes and products by the tourism alliance, tourism services for college students can be more convenient and more people can participate in tourism activities.

#### **5.3 New and diversified tourism products**

With strong curiosity and exploring travel spirit, can produce new characteristics, may attract big groups of students.

#### 5.4 Reasonable price setting

It is necessary to make price concessions for college students. College students command a huge market. Discretionary amount of money is not large. The price of travel is quite sensitive, therefore, enterprises should achieve greater benefits. They must use their market characteristics, to reduce approaches such as small profits, competitive price advantage to stimulate market and achieve desirable effects.

#### 5.5 Change the mode and invest manpower

The expansion of the market proportion is inseparable from the investment in marketing. In the development of college tourism market, the marketing of tourism products is very important. The current marketing model is only the travel agency. Travel agencies should send special staff to develop the tourism market of colleges and universities. So they can timely manage the growing tourism market of colleges and universities.

Travel agencies should invest more in the training on campus. So that they can have a deeper understanding of the marketing of tourism products, rather than simply regard their job as the source of passive income. Travel agencies should improve the incentive mechanism to provide certain support for college students with new marketing plans. On the one hand, we can mobilize the enthusiasm of

college students through various marketing contests. On the other hand, we can get good ideas to open the market through college students' professional marketing and apply such ideas in practice. In addition, it can expand the publicity of products, so that the majority of students understand the diversity of travel agency products. Doing this would combine the best of both worlds.

#### 6. Conclusion

College students are not only a special consumer group in the tourism market, but also a niche segment market with great growth potential. The development value of college students lies not only in the expanding market size, but also in the long-term value of college students' tourists and their influence on the travel purchasing decisions of their relatives and friends. Through investigation and analysis, college students have their own characteristics and attributes in obtaining information channels. Tourism consumption, travel time, way and destination are quite different from on-the-job employees. Therefore, the development and design of diversified, personalized college tourism products and services, targeted tourism marketing activities are conducive to stimulate the potential tourism demand of college students and further promote the booming development of college students' tourism market.

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