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Not All Chinese Immigrants Are Homogenous: Domestic Travel Behaviour Patterns in Canada

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Abstract

Domestic travel in Canada has seen a significant increase in recent years, however surprisingly little attention has been paid to it. As an important part of the Canadian population, immigrants, who bring both opportunities and challenges to the Canadian tourism industry, have seldom been studied in previous research, and the heterogeneity of immigrants is usually neglected. Therefore, this study examined the travel behaviour patterns of three segments of Chinese immigrants based on their country or region of birth: Canada, Hong Kong and mainland China. The findings evidenced that the Chinese immigrant market in Canada is not homogenous, although the travel patterns of native Canadians are similar to Chinese immigrants born in Canada. This research enables Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) to understand the differences between the three groups of immigrants, and provides insights into potential marketing approaches for DMOs to better attract and satisfy these markets.

Keywords

travel behaviour, culture, Chinese immigrants, multinomial logit model

Introduction

Domestic travel in Canada has seen a significant increase in recent years, making important contributions to the GDP (Tourism Industry Association of Canada 2013). The percentage of domestic travel expenditures in total travel expenditures in Canada increased from 65% in 2000 to 81% in 2012 (Canadian Chamber of Commerce 2013). This proportion is much larger than comparable expenditures in the UK, France and Spain (Tourism Industry Association of Canada 2012). Even though domestic travel plays a more important role in the Canadian tourism industry, surprisingly little attention has been paid to it.

Foreign-born residents comprised 20.6% of Canada's population (Statistics Canada 2011), making it larger than their share within the USA population at 13% (U.S. Department of Commerce 2012). In addition, Chinese immigrants accounted for the largest proportion (13%) of the new permanent residents of Canada in 2013 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2013). This large number of immigrants brings both opportunities and challenges to the tourism industry (Lee and Cox 2007). However, in spite of being such a dominant group, Chinese immigrants have seldom been studied in previous research. Additionally, they are usually considered as a homogenous market which may lead to challenges for destination marketers in gauging Chinese market demand and developing effective strategies.

Therefore, this study demographically and socio-behaviourally profiles Chinese immigrants based on their country or region of birth, namely Canada, Hong Kong and mainland China, and provides insights into their domestic travel behaviours. These three groups of Chinese immigrants are chosen for two reasons. First, the peak immigration periods are different for each group, and the time difference could influence their behaviours. Those born in Canada are mainly the offspring of the Chinese who came to Canada during the 19th century to build the railways and who stayed in Canada afterwards (Kobayashi and Preston 2007). Those born in Hong Kong mostly arrived in Canada during the late 1980 to 1997, and their movements were accelerated by the handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997 (Ho, Ip, and Bedford 2001). Immigrants born in mainland China arrived in Canada even more recently to seek better education and work opportunities (Teo 2007). Second, it is assumed that these three groups are influenced by different cultural and social backgrounds, which are likely to have impacts on their behaviours. This study explores the Chinese immigrant market of Canada by examining consumer travel preference, attitude and consumption patterns, and provides insights into potential marketing approaches for destination management organizations (DMOs) to better attract and satisfy these markets.

Literature Review and Hypotheses

Culture and Social Environment

Numerous researchers have focused on the definition and influences of culture. Culture is defined as customs, values, beliefs, habits, traditions, expectations and patterns of lifestyle shared by people or societies (Pizam and Jeong 1996; Reissinger and Turner 2003). Culture is also explained as ‘the specialised behavioural patterns, understandings, adaptations, and social systems that summarises a group of people’s learned way of life’ (Getis, Getis, and Fellmann 2004). The shared cultural identity leaves an indelible mark on people (Usunier and Lee 2013) who can therefore be classified into different social groups based on cultures (Chaney 2001).

Culture has different levels including national, individual, generational and organisational levels (White 2005). The national culture differs in four dimensions: power distance; masculinity/femininity; individualism/collectivism; and uncertainty avoidance. Asian and Western cultures have the most significant differences based on these four dimensions (Hofstede 1980). Sharing the same culture enables people to gain similar cognition and experiences, but different cultures lead to different thoughts and behaviours (Herbig 1998). Most scholars put forward that tourists are stereotyped with different characteristics based on nationalities (Pi-Sunyer 1977). However, Pizam and Sussman (1995) argued that visitors’ different behaviours are as a result of cultural background characteristics instead of geographical or linguistic factors.

Cultural Influences in Travel Behaviour

Culture significantly influences travel behaviour (Dejbakhsh, Arrowsmith, and Jackson 2011; Kim, Prideaux, and Kim 2002; Lee, Khan, and Ko 2008;). Scholars have investigated the influences of culture on tourist motivation (Kim and Lee 2000), special needs (Dejbakhsh, Arrowsmith, and Jackson 2011), expectation toward services and behaviour (Pizam and Sussmann 1995), adoption of information technologies (Sabiote, Frías, and Castañeda 2012), information acquisition (Sabiote, Frías, and Castañeda 2012), marketing responses (Lowe and

Corkindale 1998), behavioural intention (Maio and Olson 1995; Mattila 1999; White 2005), travel patterns (Ritter 1987; Zillinger 2007), travel behaviour (Pizam and Sussmann 1995; Pizam and Fleischer 2005), perceived service quality (Furrer, Liu, and Sudharshan 2000), evaluation of travel services (Crotts and Erdmann 2000), and tourist satisfaction (Sabiote, Frías, and Castañeda, 2012). Even though many scholars have investigated the cultural influences in travel behaviour, very few of them tested their travel behaviour patterns as a whole process including before, during and after their trip (Manrai and Manrai 2011; Vuuren and Slabbert 2011).

Various studies determined that because Western and Asian cultural backgrounds have the most significant differences, tourists from these two culturally distant origins behave in the most different ways (Chen and Sasias 2014; Reisinger and Turner 2003). The research conducted by Tourism Australia (2006) shows that tourists from Western countries (New Zealand, the UK, and the USA) prefer eating out at restaurants, participating in beach activities and visiting national or state parks, while tourists from Asia (Indonesia, Japan and China) are more likely to go market shopping, and visit gardens and wildlife parks (Dejbakhsh, Arrowsmith, and Jackson 2011).

Even though there are numerous cross-cultural studies of tourist behaviour, very little attention has been paid to that of immigrants. Most of previous studies investigated travel behaviour based on tourists' nationalities, neglecting the fact that a nation may consist of various ethnic groups (Lee and Sparks 2007).

In addition, Hofstede (1980) investigated travel behaviour of tourists from different national cultural groups based on the four main dimensions of culture. However, the four-dimension model has some limitations, so an alternative approach was suggested by many scholars (Moscardo 2004; Turner, Reisinger, and McQuilken 2001; Weiermair 2000) that is composed of two parts: listing the different aspects of tourist behaviour that might be impacted by culture, and testing these aspects across different cultural groups (Kang and Moscardo 2006). Our study used the latter approach to investigate the differences in travel behaviour patterns.

Having identified the gaps in previous literature, this study investigated immigrants' travel behaviour by comparing different aspects of this behaviour including before, during and after their trips.

Based on the different social environments of these three groups of immigrants, it can be assumed that those born in Canada are the most westernized, since they grew up in Canada and have absorbed more western culture; immigrants born in Hong Kong are the second most westernized, since Hong Kong used to be a colony of the United Kingdom. Thus, Hong Kong people could have accepted more foreign ideas than those from mainland China.

According to Hofstede (1980), culture is shared by the members of similar social environments through learning rather than genetically. It can be assumed that Chinese immigrants born in Canada have similar behaviour patterns to native Canadians because these two groups of people experience the same social environment. Therefore, the hypotheses are put forward as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Chinese immigrants born in Canada, Hong Kong and Mainland China have different travel behavioural patterns.

Hypothesis 2: The differences in travel behaviour between Chinese immigrants born in Mainland China and native Canadians are more significant than the differences in travel behaviour between Chinese immigrants born in Hong Kong and native Canadians.

Hypothesis 3: Chinese immigrants born in Canada have similar travel behaviours to native Canadians.

Methodology

This study used the secondary data obtained from Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation (OTMPC). OTMPC conducted both a mail-back questionnaire survey and an online survey in late April, 2012. The final cleaned and edited database consists of 69,093 respondents of which 18,907 are native Canadians (NC), and 1,573 respondents are Chinese who are citizens and permanent residents of Canada as well as those who consider themselves to be Chinese. Furthermore, the data were coded by the birth country or region of the respondents, with those not born in Canada, Hong Kong or mainland China treated as system missing. 1,389 questionnaires were completed by the Chinese immigrants born in Canada (CC) (12.8%), Hong Kong (HKC) (27.5%) and mainland China (MCC) (59.7%).

First, every group was divided into two parts randomly to test whether there are significant differences within each one. It was found that there are no significant differences. Second, exploratory factor analysis was used to find the main travel attitudes and motivation. Third, analysis of variance (ANOVA) and chi-square analysis were conducted in SPSS 22.0 to identify the significant differences in travel behaviours across these three groups of immigrants. Finally, the statistically different behaviour identified from the third step was put into multinomial logit model in STATA to test which are the most different travel behaviours across the four groups of people (CC, HKC, MCC and NC). Multinomial logit model has been successfully applied to compare different market segments in tourism studies (Brida, Osti, and Barquet 2010; De La Viña and Ford 2001).

Results

Travel behaviour and patterns have been recognized as an important field in tourism studies (Huang and Xiao 2000). This study analyzed the differences in the immigrants' behaviour patterns before, during and after their trip. To examine the first hypothesis, the differences in the travel behaviours of these three groups of immigrants were tested first.

The following variables were used to investigate behaviours before travelling: travel attitude, travel motivation, travel planning, and travel booking. Two out of the five types of travel attitudes were found to have statistically significant differences: authenticity ($F = 0.94, p = 0.39 > 0.05$), familiarity ($F = 26.23, p < 0.001$), memorable travel ($F = 51.94, p < 0.001$), popularity ($F = 0.25, p = 0.78 > 0.05$), carefree travel ($F = 2.16, p = 0.12 > 0.05$). The CC group is comfortable with unfamiliar locations, foods, people and languages, while the MCC group prefers to travel destinations that they know fairly well to avoid being nervous and anxious, while the HKC group tends to be more novelty seeking than the MCC counterparts.

Similarly, the four categories of travel motivations were found to be statistically different: to seek for different experience ($F = 10.82, p < 0.001$), to build relationship ($F = 9.65, p < 0.001$), to relax ($F = 33.19, p < 0.001$) and to satisfy emotional needs ($F = 36.77, p < 0.001$). Novelty seeking is a key motivator for the CC group while the MCC and HKC groups tend to be motivated by building social ties and/or family bonding.

The CC group plans and books their trips 73 days and 57 days in advance, respectively, but the other two groups of immigrants just begin to plan and book their travels approximately 40 days in advance. There are statistical differences in their booking behaviour as well. For example,

over 50% of the CC group books accommodations in advance, but only about 30% of the other groups do so. Both the MCC (12.2%) and CC (10.7%) book through an online travel agent, but the HKC prefers to book their travel in person or via the phone or mail (see Table 1 as an example).

[Insert Table 1]

Eight variables were analysed for behaviour during the trip: trip duration, travel companion, travel expenditure, transportation, accommodation, information acquisition, purchase details, and activities. The trip duration of the three groups of immigrants has no statistical differences. Most of the immigrants prefer to travel in July and August, and they usually spend one to four days at the destinations.

In terms of travel companion, 41.6% of the CC group travel with their spouse or partner; however, only 27.7% of the MCC are accompanied by their dependants. There are no statistically significances in total expenditure across these three groups even though spending patterns show statistical differences, especially in terms of who purchases accommodation, meals, transportation, and festival entrance fees during the trip (Table 2). The MCC and CC groups are more likely to take package tours, thus seldom purchase meals while travelling. The MCC group is more willing to pay performance tickets and festival entrance fees.

[Insert Table 2]

All three groups use different modes of transportation while travelling. The CC (27.0%) and HKC (20.4%) groups prefer a commercial plane, but the MCC group (12.7%) is less likely to do so. As regards accommodation, the CC group prefers to stay in relatively expensive accommodations, such as boutique hotels (40.4%) and resorts (8.4%), but the MCC group spends less on accommodation (e.g. motels, inns, apartment hotels and rental condos).

Table 3 shows that only 7.9% of the HKC group uses information from online reviews (e.g. trip advisor's) or blogs while travelling compared to the much higher incidence for the other two groups (CC 17.4%; MCC 11.2% respectively). With regards to activities, all three groups participate in city sightseeing, seeing scenic landmarks, dining in fine restaurants, and going shopping. Interestingly, the HKC group is more likely to have spa (8.1%) and recreational vehicle experiences (11.3%), while the CC group tends to visit museums and galleries (9.0%), historical places (10.1%), national or provincial nature parks (6.7%), and wineries (3.4%).

[Insert Table 3]

Satisfaction, perceived value and recommendation intention were used to compare behaviour after the trip. There is no statistical difference for satisfaction but there are differences for perceived value and recommendation behaviour. The CC group finds the highest perceived value ($X = 7.60$, $SD = 1.71$), followed by the MCC group ($X = 7.58$, $SD = 1.69$) and the HKC group ($X = 7.22$, $SD = 1.62$). The MCC group ($X = 8.04$, $SD = 1.63$) is more willing to recommend their travel experience to others than the CC group ($X = 7.84$, $SD = 2.24$) and the HCC group ($X = 7.57$, $SD = 1.58$).

The net promoter score is the difference between the percentages of promoters and detractors (Reichheld, 2003). It is 26.6%, 4.4% and 27.8% for the CC, HKC and MCC groups,

respectively. As the score is a way to evaluate customer loyalty, it indicates that the immigrants born in Canada and mainland China are highly loyal.

Overall, most of the travel behaviours across these three groups of Chinese immigrants have statistical differences, satisfying the first hypothesis. In order to further explore these different behaviours, all of them were put into multinomial logit model in STATA to distinguish these four groups of people (CC, HKC, MCC and NC). The NC group was used as the reference group, and it was found that the CC group has very few statistically significant differences with the NC group (Table 4), while the MCC group has the most differences with the NC group. The results proved the second and third hypotheses as well.

Compared to the NC group, the HKC group and MCC group have higher travel motivation of relaxation, building relationship and meeting emotional needs. Both the HKC group and MCC group are more likely to book online from travel agency, tour operator, and online travel agency, such as Travelocity and Expedia. The MCC group is more likely to stay in inns or rental apartments. Both the HKC and MCC groups are more likely to acquire information from local residents or people met at the destination, and to purchase accommodation and festival entrance fees during their trips. In addition, the NC group has a higher perception of value than the HKC and MCC groups.

Overall, both the HKC and MCC groups have statistically significant differences with the NC group in the following travel behaviours: attitude towards memory, motivation on relaxation, motivation on relationship, motivation on emotional needs, booking travel agency online, booking tour operator online, booking from online travel agency, acquiring information from local residents or people, accommodation purchase, festival entrance fees purchase, and perceived value. These parts should be taken into consideration when DMOs design travel products for domestic Chinese immigrant travellers.

[Insert Table 4]

Conclusions

This study examined the travel behaviour patterns of three Chinese groups in Canada and the findings evidenced that the Chinese market is not homogenous. Because of the cultural differences, the MCC group, who receive the most Chinese traditional culture, behaves most differently compared to the CC and NC groups. The HKC group, who has combined Asian and Western culture, also has different travel behaviours. However, the differences between the HKC group and the NC group are fewer than that between the MCC group and the NC group. In addition, this study found the travel patterns of the CC group, who has exposed to Western culture since birth, are similar to the general Canadian population.

This study not only provides insights into the differences in travel behaviour patterns of Chinese immigrants with different cultures, but also highlights implications for tourism planning and management. Because of the similar travel behaviour patterns of the CC group and NC group, marketers can treat the CC group as a part of the majority market. However, marketers need to pay special attention to the other two groups: Chinese immigrants born in Hong Kong and Mainland China. The MCC group tends to be less adventurous and spends less on accommodation. They are more willing to book trips online. In addition, the MCC group is more likely to spend less money on accommodation, but spends more money on watching

performances. Additionally, this group of immigrants has the highest net promoter score. The HKC group would like to stay in relatively expensive hotels, dine in fine restaurants and relax at spas. However, this group of immigrants has the lowest perceived value and net promoter score. According to the differences in travel behaviour patterns across these three groups, DMOs can manage and market tourism services more effectively by meeting tourists' needs. With regards to the limitations, the Chinese immigrants in this study were classified by their birth places. However, the other demographic backgrounds may also influence travel behaviour patterns. It could be considered in the future studies.

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Table 1. Booking Method

Booking Method	CC		HKC		MCC		Overall	
	Group (%)		Group (%)		Group (%)		Group (%)	
	Booked online	Booked offline						
Travel agency	5.1	6.7	7.3	10.5	11.9	6.3	9.8**	7.5*
Tour operator	2.2	1.1	3.7	7.9	8.1	4.8	6.1**	5.2**
Directly with the airline	10.7	0.0	9.4	7.3	10.4	4.6	10.2	4.8**
Directly with hotels	18.5	2.8	19.1	7.1	17.2	5.4	17.9	5.5
Directly with an attraction or activity provider	6.2	2.8	4.2	8.1	6.9	5.8	6.0	6.0*
Through an online travel agent like Travelocity or Expedia	10.7	0.0	7.1	7.3	12.2	5.4	10.6*	5.3**
Through a group buying site	2.8	0.0	3.1	7.3	6.3	5.3	5.0*	5.2**
Through destination website (e.g. visittoronto.com)	4.5	0.6	3.1	6.5	8.7	4.8	6.6**	4.8**
Other	6.7	3.9	4.7	8.6	7.6	4.8	6.7	5.8*

Note: Online means booking via internet; Offline means booking in person, via the phone or mail and so on. Book behaviours before travelling were measured using yes and no; *significant at the 0.05 level; **significant at the 0.01 level.

Table 2. Spending Patterns at Destination

Category	CC	HKC	MCC	Overall
	Group (%)	Group (%)	Group (%)	Group (%)
Transportation to/from destination	7.3	15.2	14.8	14.0*
Transportation at destination	10.1	11.5	11.6	11.4
Accommodation	7.3	14.4	20.6	17.2***
Meals	51.7	36.6	32.6	36.1***
Attractions tickets	19.7	16.0	20.7	19.3
Performing arts tickets	2.2	2.9	5.9	4.6*
Festival entrance fees	2.2	2.6	6.4	4.8**
Sporting event tickets	1.1	1.3	2.8	2.2
Other entertainment tickets	10.1	13.9	11.6	12.0
Equipment rental (e.g. kayaks, snowmobiles)	4.5	1.8	4.0	3.5
None of the above	9.0	7.0	4.9	6.3*

Note: Spending patterns during travelling were measured using yes and no; *significant at the 0.05 level; **significant at the 0.01 level; ***significant at 0.001 level.

Table 3. Information Search at Destination

Information Source	CC Group (%)	HKC Group (%)	MCC Group (%)	Overall (%)
Social networking	5.1	6.0	7.5	6.8
Online reviews / blogs	17.4	7.9	11.2	11.1**
Online travel site or agency	11.2	7.3	11.9	10.6
Hotel concierge	15.2	4.2	5.4	6.3***
Hotel website	14.6	13.9	11.7	12.7
Attraction website	12.4	11.3	13.6	12.8
Destination website	14.6	10.7	11.6	11.7
A travel information centre	6.7	5.2	8.8	7.6
Brochures picked up at hotels / attractions	16.9	11.0	9.7	10.9*
A local magazine	3.9	2.6	2.2	2.5
Local newspaper	3.9	2.6	2.4	2.7
A travel guide such as Fodor's or Michelin	3.9	1.0	2.3	2.2
Service staff in hotel, restaurants, bars, etc	7.3	3.4	4.2	4.4
Local residents or people met at the destination	8.4	3.7	4.3	4.7*
Did not seek any information during the trip	18.5	21.2	12.9	15.9**

Note: Types of information acquisition during travelling were measured using yes and no; *significant at the 0.05 level; **significant at the 0.01 level; ***significant at 0.001 level.

Table 4. The CC, HKC and MCC groups compared to the NC group (coefficients)

The identified different behaviours of the immigrants	CC Group	HKC Group	MCC Group
Attitude (familiarity)	-0.037	0.044	0.332***
Attitude (memory)	0.009	-0.543***	-0.535***
Motivation (experience)	0.298*	0.178	0.044
Motivation (relaxation)	-0.195	-0.375***	-0.444***
Motivation (relationship)	0.012	0.195*	0.300***
Motivation (emotional needs)	0.058	0.502***	0.435***
Companion (wife/ husband/ girlfriend/ boyfriend)	-0.088	0.238	-0.464**
Business associates	0.771	-0.953	-0.660
Planning (days in advance)	-0.003	-0.010***	-0.001
Booking (days in advance)	-0.001	0.002	-0.014***
Booking (transportation to/from destination)	-0.439	0.724***	0.226
Booking (accommodation)	0.144	-0.429*	-0.012
Booking (performing arts tickets)	-0.288	-1.271*	-0.334
Online (travel agency)	0.530	1.115***	1.773***
Online (tour operator)	0.371	1.525***	1.454***
Online (online travel agency, e.g. Expedia)	0.505	0.632*	1.327***
Online (a group buying site)	0.553	0.684	0.284

Online (destination website)	0.618	-0.350	0.795**
Offline (travel agency)	-0.010	0.357	0.999***
Offline (tour operator)	0.160	0.481	-0.516
Offline (directly with the airline)	-17.489	0.214	-0.610
Offline (directly with an attraction or activity provider)	0.328	0.178	-0.529
Offline (online travel agent via phone or mail)	-17.554	0.882	1.306**
Offline (a group buying site)	-19.576	1.257	0.759
Offline (destination website)	1.102	-0.464	0.995
Transportation (plane)	0.456	-0.423	-0.932***
Transportation (motorcycle)	-17.916	-13.894	1.917***
Transportation (train)	-0.091	-0.782	0.421
Accommodation (Hotel/boutique hotel)	-0.046	0.430*	0.080
Accommodation (Motel)	-1.347*	0.016	-0.040
Accommodation (inn/bed and breakfast)	0.127	0.464	1.658***
Accommodation (apartment hotel/ rental condo)	-0.911	0.560	0.667*
Information (online review/blogs)	0.727**	0.354	0.721***
Information (hotel concierge)	0.458	-0.586	-0.350
Information (brochures picked up at hotels/attractions)	-0.495	-0.166	-0.336
Information (local residents or people met at the destination)	-0.409	-1.072**	-0.727**
Information (none of the above)	-0.197	0.374	0.419*
Purchase on trips (transportation to/ from destination)	-1.134**	-0.503*	0.164
Purchase on trips (accommodation)	-0.133	-0.907***	-1.150***
Purchase on trips (meals)	-0.414	-0.213	0.405
Purchase on trips (performing arts tickets)	0.393	0.517	0.815**
Purchase on trips (festival entrance fees)	-0.423	-0.735*	-1.120***
Perceived value	-0.099	-0.183***	-0.159***
Recommendation	-0.047	-0.015	0.092*
Activities (water activities)	-0.187	-16.009	-0.783
Activities (city sightseeing on your own)	0.574*	0.268	0.340
Activities (visiting museums or galleries)	-0.091	-0.026	-0.471
Activities (visiting scenic landmarks)	0.032	0.400	0.397*
Activities (visiting places of historical interest)	-0.335	-0.097	-0.330
Activities (visiting national or provincial nature parks)	0.387	-0.210	0.323
Activities (attending ethnic cultural events/festivals)	-0.157	0.165	-2.093*
Activities (dining in fine restaurants)	0.050	0.466*	0.225
Activities (shopping)	-0.025	0.169	-0.160
Activities (visiting wineries)	0.471	-0.476	-0.345
Activities (touring by car or RV)	-0.734	0.472	0.782***
Activities (relaxing at a spa)	0.456	0.950**	-0.345

Note: *significant at the 0.05 level; **significant at the 0.01 level; ***significant at 0.001 level.