

Preference Analysis in Tourist Destination Selection: The Case of Chinese Travellers

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Between 2014 and 2015 the number of Chinese outbound tourists rose by 20% and reached around 130 million crossings, while spending almost doubled from 100 to 200 billion (Arlt, 2015). According to the COTRI (2015), the number of tourists that travelled to Europe from China in 2015 was 12.5 million and in 2016 it is expected to increase by another million. Primarily these guests are focusing on most popular European destinations, such as Paris, but are increasingly important also for other emerging and smaller tourist destinations. Due to their increasing number and purchasing power tourist destinations are interested in their motivations for visits and their preferences in order to provide a competitive service and satisfy the needs of the customers.

The goal of this paper is to examine the specific preferences of Chinese guests travelling to Europe by different categories of guests (business, leisure, etc.) and provide managerial implications for different types of tourist destination. Two main research questions will be answered: (1) What are the tourist destination characteristics that matter most to Chinese guests? (2) How Chinese guests differ in their tastes from European guests? By answering these two research questions, the paper provides important implications for service providers in tourism.

Methodologically, the analysis relies on mining consumer preferences from on-line user generated content, where users describe their experience and evaluate different aspects of tourist destinations and services. Main methods used will be text mining methods, including several techniques from sentiment analyses to topic modelling. These text-mining methods will be combined with standard statistical techniques to provide a thorough analysis of both the consumers as well as their characteristics. Generally, Chinese guests share many similarities with other nationalities, since the focus of their "criticism" lies on the basic service (hotel, room, staff, food, etc.). But results also indicate that they have a specific expectation about a location (due to the established location image) and focus a lot also on that.

Paper contributes to the existing academic literature in several important aspects, but primarily (1) from the theoretical and academic stance it extends cultural management to tourism relying on user-generated content, while from (2) managerial perspective it provides important implications for destinations that are experiencing increasing number of Chinese guests as the results provide important BI input that could help tailor the services to the needs of this specific group.

Keywords: China, tourism, destination management, user generated content, text-mining