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Research Paper

Domestic tourism of Chinese in Canada: Distinct differences

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ABSTRACT

Domestic tourism in Canada has seen a significant increase in recent years; however, surprisingly little attention has been paid to it. Immigrants are an important part of the Canadian population and bring both opportunities and challenges to its tourism industry. Yet they have seldom been studied in previous research, and their heterogeneity is usually neglected. Canadians of Chinese origin are the largest non-European ethnic group in Canada, and therefore represent an increasingly important segment. This study examines the tourist behaviors of three ethnic Chinese groups based on their birthplace: Canada, Hong Kong and Mainland China. The findings show that they do not represent a homogeneous segment in the Canadian domestic market, although the tourist behaviors of Caucasian Canadians are similar to Chinese born in the country, suggesting a certain assimilation by the second generation. This research enables destination management organizations to understand the differences between the three Chinese groups and provides insights into potential marketing approaches to better attract and satisfy these segments.

1. Introduction

Domestic tourism in Canada is a multi-billion dollar industry and has significantly increased over the last 10 years (Canadian Chamber of Commerce, 2013). Domestic tourism expenditures as a percentage of total tourism expenditures in Canada has dramatically grown from 67% in 2000 to 81% in 2012, making its share larger than those in the UK, Australia, France, and Spain (Tourism Industry Association of Canada, 2012). Domestic travel and tourism expenditure, including government individual spending, generated approximately \$43.9 billion in 2014 (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2015). Although it is clear that domestic tourism is the backbone of the Canadian tourism industry, surprisingly little attention has been paid to it, and few studies have been conducted to better understand this important market (Hudson & Ritchie, 2002).

Segmentation research in tourism insists that domestic tourists have common perceptions, cultural values, social norms, lifestyles, and behaviors (Lee, Lee, & Wicks, 2004; Shaw & Williams, 2004). Such a stereotypical attitude leads to some domestic tourists with the same ethnic background (e.g. Chinese tourists) being treated as homogeneous (Lee et al., 2004). This approach is particularly problematic for traditional settlement countries where the domestic market is quite heterogeneous (e.g. Australia, Canada, and the US, see Joppe, 2011) and multi-cultural in nature due to the huge portion of their population from immigration (Dmytrakova, 2010). Since immigrants tend to assimilate the culture of both their home country and the host country,

they are very likely to have different thoughts and behaviors (Berry, 1997). Ignoring these differences may lead to challenges for destination marketers in gauging demand and developing effective strategies.

Canada is one of the major immigration countries (Joppe, 2011), and foreign-born residents comprised 20.6% of the country's population in 2011 (Statistics Canada Census Program, 2011). China was the third largest source country for permanent residents, with 9.5% in 2014 (Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Canada, 2015). The total household expenditures of Chinese residents in Canada increased from 2012 to 2013 by 5%, which is more than twice that of average Canadians' household expenditures at 2% (Seoni & Brown, 2013). Despite being such a dominant and promising group, Chinese immigrants and their diversity have seldom been the object of previous tourism research (Irimiás, 2013).

The objectives of this study are therefore to investigate the differences in tourist motivation, attitudes, and behavior of three groups of ethnic Chinese: Canadian-born Chinese (CC), Chinese immigrants born in Hong Kong (HKC), and Chinese immigrants born in Mainland China (MCC). They were chosen for two reasons. First, the difference in the amount of time living in Canada between the three groups could influence their cultural assimilation and tourist behaviors. Second, it is assumed that each group is influenced by its different homeland culture, which may have impacts on their tourist behaviors. This study explores their consumption (travel purchase) behaviors before, during, and after a trip and provides insights into potential marketing approaches for destination management organizations

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(DMOs) to better attract and satisfy these segments.

2. Literature review

2.1. Acculturation theory

Cultural assimilation and acculturation theory can explain how immigrants adapt to the host country and its culture (Irimiás, 2013). According to the cultural assimilation processes, individuals' acculturation can be allocated to four categories: assimilation, integration, separation or marginalization (Berry, 1995). The time period (e.g. length of residence) and the context (e.g. the differences between cultures) can influence the extent to which they are motivated or able to maintain the culture of their home country and the extent to which they are motivated or able to accept the culture of the host country (Berry, 1995; Chen, Benet-Martinez, & Bond, 2008). The longer people stay in the host country, the more likely they positively adapt to its culture. The role of assimilation results in immigrants becoming more similar to their native counterparts over time (Blau, 2015). Additionally, the society of the people's origin, including political context, economic situation and demographic factors has an impact on people's acculturation experiences (Berry, 1995).

Ethnically speaking, the Chinese Canadian (CC), Hong Kong Canadian (HKC) and Mainland Chinese Canadian (MCC) groups are Chinese, but they could have undergone different cultural assimilation processes because they have stayed in Canada for different lengths and their home countries have somewhat different cultural characteristics. These two factors can have a great impact on their level of acculturation.

The CC can be classified as assimilated as they identify themselves mostly with Canadian culture. In the present study, the CC group was born in Canada. Their parents, who may originally have come from Mainland China, Hong Kong or other countries in Asia with ethnic Chinese populations, have some influence on their values and behaviors; however, they have received a Canadian education and assimilated Canadian culture since birth. Zhou (1997) suggests that the second generation is eager to acquire a host country's identity because they want to become indistinguishable from their peers.

The HKC belong to the category of integration, who have high identification with both Canadian and Chinese cultures. The HKC group arrived in Canada largely since the late 1980s as a result of the thriving Hong Kong property market and the booming Asian economy (Kobayashi & Preston, 2007). Their immigration was accelerated by the handover in 1997 of Hong Kong by the UK to China (Ho, Ip, & Bedford, 2001; Skeldon, 1994). Since Canada is a Commonwealth nation, it facilitated immigration of many Hong Kong residents. As a former colony of the United Kingdom, Hong Kong Chinese grew up in a bicultural environment. They were impacted by a long history of East-West cultural confluence, including a bilingual lifestyle and education system (Chen et al., 2008; Ng, 2007). It is not surprising that Hong Kong Chinese therefore have a certain amount of de-involvement with Mainstream Chinese culture (Chen et al., 2008). They have been seen as pluralistic, diverse and Westernized compared to Mainland Chinese (Ma, 2009).

Different from the CC and HKC groups, the MCC identify themselves mostly with the Chinese culture and they are in the category of separation. The MCC group is a more recent addition to Canada with many arriving since the early 2000s. In addition to the differences of length of residency, the difference between Chinese culture and Canadian culture as well as the language barrier make the MCC group more motivated to maintain mainstream Chinese culture (Chen et al., 2008). Mainland China is a communist state that used to have an anti-Western ideology (Chen et al., 2008). Before the Chinese government carried out the Reform and Opening-up Policy in 1978, Mainland China was relatively isolated from the outside world, and residents there were less likely to have been exposed to Western culture. With more foreign

trade and cultural communication, Mainland Chinese are going abroad to seek better education and work opportunities (Teo, 2007). For the most part, they moved to Canada as young adults and the culture of their home country had left a deep impression by that time. Therefore, this group of Chinese immigrants is most likely to maintain traditional Chinese culture.

2.2. The influence of Western and Asian cultures

Culture is defined as customs, values, beliefs, habits, traditions, expectations and patterns of lifestyle shared by people or societies (Pizam & Jeong, 1996). Western and Asian cultures have the most significant differences based on Hofstede (1980) four dimensions: power distance; masculinity/femininity; individualism/collectivism; and uncertainty avoidance. Asians are more collectivist and stress social values rather than individual needs. Westerners, on the other hand, emphasize individualistic values (Irimiás, 2013).

Due to the distinctive differences between Asian and Western cultures, people influenced by these cultures behave most differently (Chen & Sasias, 2014). Tourism Australia's (2006) study indicates that Western tourists (e.g. from the UK and the US) prefer going to pubs and clubs, while Asian tourists (e.g. from Indonesia, Japan and China) are more likely to go shopping, and visit gardens or wildlife parks (cited by Dejbakhsh, Arrowsmith, & Jackson, 2011).

The CC, HKC and MCC are all residents of Canada, but have been immersed in Chinese culture (Asian culture) and Canadian culture (Western culture) to different extents. Their levels of acculturation in turn impact their lifestyle and behaviors. No known studies have been undertaken on the travel behaviors of these three groups in Canada. Wang (2004) explored Chinese immigrants' consumer behavior in Canada, but did not include their travel behavior. Since Chinese immigrants play an important role in the Canadian tourism industry, investigating the differences in their travel behavior can give insights on how to attract these niche markets. As Reisinger and Turner (1998) insisted, if tourism marketers neglect the differences in value priorities of tourists, especially those who have significantly different Asian and Western cultures, they will lose profitable market opportunities.

Since Chinese immigrants to Canada and Chinese outbound travelers from China have the same ethnic identity, looking at studies on Chinese outbound travelers could give insights into this ethnic group. For Hong Kong Chinese, "relaxing physically and mentally" was considered the most important motivation compared to Mainland Chinese (McCartney, 2008). Safety, scenic beauty, price of trip, service in hotels and restaurants, and friendliness of local people are their top 5 destinations attributes (Mok & Armstrong, 1995). They prefer their spouse, children, or friends as travel companions (Zhang & Heung, 2002). Hong Kong outbound travelers also prefer shopping and dining as leisure activities (McCartney, 2008).

Impacted by traditional Chinese values (Hsu & Huang, 2016), Mainland Chinese prefer destinations with characteristics of safety and beautiful scenery (Kim, Guo, & Agrusa, 2005). Their decision is easily affected by family members because Chinese culture emphasizes conformity and family orientation. Additionally, they expect products and services with social and psychological familiarity and comfort since they need respect and cross-cultural understanding (Li, Lai, Harrill, Kline, & Wang, 2011). Therefore, good services and Mandarin language abilities are especially important to attract Mainland Chinese (Zhang & Chow, 2004). They also consider experiencing culture and nature-based activities to be the most important activity/experience factors, whereas outdoor recreational sports activities and entertainment are regarded as the least important factors (Yun & Joppe, 2011).

Even though some articles have explored the travel behavior of Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese outbound travelers, no known study tested how acculturation influences the tourist behavior of Canadian-born Chinese, Chinese immigrants born in Hong Kong, and Chinese

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