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## MASTER THESIS

Indigenous characteristics of the Chinese tourism in E.U countries  
Distinctiveness and perspectives

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## Contents

Introduction.....	3
Definition of Tourism.....	5
Historical review in tourism and leisure in China.....	5
Chinese consumer's psychology.....	8
Formulating the research topic.....	9
I) Social and economic environment.....	10
II) Political-legislations environment.....	10
Formulating the interviews and empirical observation.....	11
Data analysis.....	12
Research Limitations.....	13
Social and economic approaches to outbound travel.....	14
Political changes and tourism development.....	16
EU and China political and economic bonds.....	17
<b>INTERVIEW'S ANALYSIS.....</b>	<b>19</b>
I) Sightseeing travellers in EU.....	19
France.....	20
Italy .....	21
Austria.....	22
Nordic countries.....	22
Satisfaction from the services.....	23
Hotels.....	23
Shops- Bars.....	24
Resources of Information.....	24
II) Business travellers.....	25
III) Students travellers.....	27
Chinese attitudes towards Europeans.....	29
Conclusion .....	32

## **Abstract**

The rapid development of China's outbound tourism in European countries is receiving more and more attention from the European tourism industry. The improvements of the national economy, the characteristics of Chinese culture and the strengthening of the economic and cultural bonds between China and European Union countries have all played roles in its growth. This master thesis summarizes China's history in outbound travels before 1990 and the reason of China's isolation and discuss the inherent political, economic and social reasons for its boom throughout the 1990s. Moreover there is an effort to identify the nature of the Chinese tourism in Europe, the reasons which motivates Chinese to travel to Europe and to clarify which tourism activities they prefer to enjoy during their stay in Europe. The research was based on semi structured interviews of 26 travellers in popular European destinations and it was taken place in Shanghai. The model which adopted based on Triandis theory that there are unique characteristics, called emic, in every society that formulates the consumer's values and attitudes towards the tourist products. The comprehensive analysis of their preference could help in the creation of the Chinese tourist model and the adjustment of the European tourism industry products in their needs.

## **Introduction**

On 12 February 2004, the European Community and the China National Tourism Administration signed a landmark accord that will facilitate Chinese group tourism to Europe. Chinese tourists going through selected travel agencies will benefit from simplified and facilitated procedures to apply for tourist visas from the Member states of the European Union which have been granted "Approved Destination Status" (ADS) by China. The new accord entered into force on 1st of September 2004 will generate significant flows of Chinese visitors to Europe, thus boosting EU-China tourism exchanges and people to people contacts (European Union Committee, 2004).

So far the member states of EU have not been a traditional destination for the Chinese outbound tourists while, with the exception of Germany none of the EU member states is on the top ten destinations for outbound Chinese tourists (BBC, 2004). The main reason for the lack of mass travel of Chinese in EU was the political and economic isolation of

China and the geographical distance. Moreover, the underdevelopment and the low average income was an obstacle for Chinese to travel abroad (World Tourism Organization, 2003)

In the last twenty years the implementation of the market economy policy in China and the openness to the international community has resulted in more people travelling abroad. The huge population and the increase in consuming power of Chinese travellers make China a very attractive tourists market and a potential target for the international tourism industry. (World Tourism Organization, 2003)

The number of Chinese outbound tourists coming into Europe is increasing at an accelerating pace in accordance with the open policy, the degree of economic growth and the improvements of the living standards of the Chinese people (Roth, 1998). From 1998 to 2000 the average annual growth rate was 30% and in 2001 the figure of Chinese outbound passengers ascended to 12.3 million people. The estimation of the WTO is that China in 2020 will be ranked fourth country worldwide providing the global tourism market with 100 million travellers. To meet the increasing demand for outbound travel of the Chinese citizens, the government has approved more destinations for travel for the Chinese citizens (Roth, 1998).

These days the economic and political relationship between EU and China has been in the highest peak than ever before. In 2003, China became the EU 2nd biggest trading partner (after the US) and, according to China's statistic, the EU became China's 2<sup>nd</sup> biggest trading partner (Zhang &Heung 2001). The strengthening in trade and political relationships between EU and China has been accompanied with an increase in the number of the Chinese visiting Europe. In 2002, 645,000 Chinese tourists travelled to the E.U, while 1, 3 million European tourists visited China and the most popular destinations in 2000 were France (825.000 visitors), Germany (467.000 visitors) and Italy (579.000 visitors) (World Tourism Organization, 2003).

Nevertheless, it is a fact that so far, because of the geographical distance and the political isolation of China, European travel agencies and tourist operators have not been familiar with the Chinese market and with the special needs of the Chinese outbound tourist market and its consumers (Zhang &Heung 2001).

### **Definition of tourism**

Chinese citizens visit Europe for a variety of reasons including business activities, studies, and they have recently joined travel packets and participated in sightseeing tourism. First and foremost it should be clarified what the term “tourist” means, since the use of this word is broad and there are different categories describing tourism activities. Moreover, it is important to notify which of these activities we consider as crucial in each category and affect people’s final impression of the place they visit and make them willing to visit it again (Wickens, 2002).

The broadest accepted technical definition of tourism was proposed by the international union of official travel organizations (IUOTO) in 1963, which is also approved by the World Tourism organization in 1968. It is stated that international tourists are “ Temporary visitors staying at least twenty-four hours in the country visited and the purpose of whose journey can be classified under one of the following headings a) Leisure (recreation, holiday, health, study, religion and sport) and B) Business (family mission, meeting)”(Cohen, 2004)

### **Historical review in Tourism and leisure in China**

China went through a long way since 1979 when Deng Xiaoping made the great turnover in Chinese policy and gradually allowed Chinese people to travel abroad. The first steps of his effort to strengthen the diplomatic and economic relationship with the western countries came to the highest peak when China expressed the willingness to become a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and turned its close state centred economy into the liberal, market economy (Pan &Laws, 2001).

China, which until then had an introverted orientation in its economy, and cooperated at the political and economic level only with other communist countries, decided to follow an open door policy to Western countries concerning trade as well as political issues.

The notion of travelling and communication with other cultures has deep roots in China’s history and it has always been related to economic affluence and social stability.

Trade was a boost factor in ancient China. Even 4,000 years before intellectual interest, international and domestic trade as well as curiosity about unfamiliar lands and holy places constituted the initial purpose of travelling. Historically, economic prosperity made China the central of economic and cultural intercourse for all Asian people. In ancient times, dated back to the Tang (618-906 AD) era and the early Ming Dynasties (1368-1644), the economic prosperity of China provided them with the power to exchange with other nations and have trade and diplomatic contacts. At that time the most famous trade was the silk trade from China, which was carried on through the Silk Road, the main road between Asia and the Greek and Roman civilization on the other side.

During the Yuan dynasty (1260-1368), the open policy continued with the exchange of people from and out of China. Therefore, many Chinese went outside to serve the interests of China and many foreigners were engaged by the Chinese authority in administrative positions. This bilateral policy helped China to receive important knowledge from the rest of the world and assisted the rest of the countries to investigate China's personal characteristics.

However, this brilliant extroverted policy was interrupted between 1842 and 1949, when China suffered from a period of foreign invasions. The most striking one was the Sino-Japanese war and a series of internal civil wars. The Chinese travelled abroad to avoid the disastrous consequences of the wars. This became the dominant reason for travels in and out of China.

After 1949 and the domination of the communist party the number of the travels abroad was very limited. Members of the government or high-ranking people were the only one who travelled abroad and the main reason was for diplomatic activities and other political goals (Guo & Turner, 2001). During Mao's era the main political doctrine was that people should focus only to work and not do anything useless related to the luxurious life. People were forced to work hard and not spend their time on holidays, which were regarded as counterproductive to the production economy. Enjoying leisure through travel was also considered to create social inequality, and therefore be unethical and contrary to communist ideology. The only accepted excuses for travels were those for governmental and business activities, spring festival family reunion, school holidays,

and recovery of workers or medical treatment in special places and also visiting relatives and friends.

In 1978, the abandonment of the doctrine that “social stability comes from economic equality and its replacement with the new principle that China’s political stability can only be maintained if economic prosperity is achieved” resulted in the open-door policy and tourism and travel started to be recognized as important factors for the development of production and services. Travel and tourism became a new growth point of the economy and were promoted to the forefront of China’s economic reform and policy development.

In early 80s there was a very crucial political turning point to the free market and the effort to accept the laws of the liberal system. The first time that travels abroad were allowed was in the beginning of the 1980s. In 1983, private travel was allowed with the purpose of visiting overseas friends and relatives. Even earlier in 1981, the Chinese were allowed to join group leisure trips only to the countries of Southeast Asia (Roth, 1998). Since then, the demand for travelling has increased impressively and there is less and less limitation on travelling abroad.

At the same time economic growth appeared and the living standards were improved. In 1998, approximately 5% percent of the population could afford travelling abroad, which might seem small but in numbers it represents 60million people (Zhang & Heung, 2001). It is fair to say that China has been successful in eliminating mass poverty and using market oriented economic policies during the past 20 years, it has been able to create a large lower-middle class and bring more democratization to the mass travel (Sivadas, 1998). Many of them get benefits from professional trips and spend their free time in sightseeing in Europe. (Newman 1973)

Currently, after China’s success to become a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), China has established a bipolar way of openness to the western countries. This two-way openness from China to the world and from the world to China has reduced the entry-exit barriers for international visitors, and made the tourist flow much easier. As a result, the flow of the commodities, people, capital and others is more frequent and smooth (Zhang, 2001).

Very little has been written about the Chinese consumers' behavior and specifically about the outbound travellers and the factors affecting their choice of travel destination (Wen, 1997). The main reason was the political and economical isolation from the international community and the lack of freedom in tourist activities. The Chinese were not free to travel abroad except of specific reasons and only with state permission. The rise of the free market during the last years and the huge possibilities of China's market give rise to some research on the consuming behavior of Chinese and the factors affecting their decision. The tourism Market in China has just started to be liberalized as in the past it was totally controlled by the government (Moutinho, 1987).

### **Chinese consumer's psychology**

In general "consumer's psychology" theories claim that people's behavior is strongly related to the type of the product and the culture of the society within which they live (Pizam & Sussman, 1995). Reimer described travel and holidays as culturally constituted consumer goods, meaning that the cultural environment would affect the pattern of travel consumption and marketing.

Mouthino identifies two basic factors that shape travel and tourism behavior: Social influence and personal traits. Social factors are forces outside the individuals and include the influence of the other people, culture, subculture, and social class. Personal traits concern the individuals and their relation to the environment (Wong & Lau, 2001). Moreover, Pizam and Sussman (1995) confirmed that nationality was considered as a key variable in affecting the differences in tourism behavior (Bond, 1991). For instance, the concepts of filial piety, moderation (modesty), ordering relationships, reciprocation and a sense of shame are all unique concepts in the Chinese culture (Mok & R. Armstrong, 1995).

Bond defined Chinese social behavior in terms of authoritarianism, association trust and values (Tse DK, 1996). Moreover, they were considered to be more group oriented, and that social harmony stands as one of the founding principles of the Chinese culture. For example some tourism studies have found that Chinese people are more willing to travel in groups (Triandis, H.C 1994) and they mainly use consumption activities as a

means to foster social relationships, while gift giving behavior after travel can build up a relationship (Kotler. P., Bowen, J., and Makens J., 2003).

In the literature one of the most popular classifications of societies according to the cultural values, attitudes and behavior is that of “individualistic” and “collectivistic”. In “individualistic cultures”, in which Western societies are classified, people tend to prefer independent relationships and subordinate the goals of their in-group to their own personal goals. On the other hand, in collectivistic cultures, namely the eastern societies, individuals tend to prefer interdependent relationships to other and subordinate their personal goals to those of their in group (Maheswaran 2000). Moreover, in collectivistic societies people focus on enhancing the status of their in- group in competition with out-groups even when that entails sacrificing their own personal goals. Conformity in product choice may be a tendency specific to collectivistic cultures, in which respect to authority and in-group wishes is stressed.

In research focused on values four factors in Chinese tourists’ cultural values are mentioned: Social integration, Confucian work dynamism, personal well being, and moral discipline. Studies revealed that Hong Kong Chinese tourists preferred travelling in groups, being safe, and joining all free activities. Nevertheless, tourists place a low value on personal well being when joining group tour packages. Recommendation for the tour operators, including safe activities, social interaction, exposure to local cuisine, and photo taking are presented to improve tour group packets.

### **Formulating the research topic**

The intention of this research is to identify some of the reasons constituting what Moutinho (1987) describes as the two basic factors that shape travel and tourism behavior that is, social influence and personal traits in Chinese society. Chinese society is in a tremendous progress, and there are a lot of contradictions in Chinese society as a whole from one province to another and especially among rural and urban areas. Therefore we tried to focus on Shanghai, one of the metropolitan urban areas and one of the main providers of outbound tourism.

The tourism product is affected by many different factors, which constitute a subject of the Marketing. Both social conditions and personal needs affect what customers want

to buy, which location they prefer, which amenities are important to them, how they buy, and why they buy (Kotler.P; Bowen.J; Makenss.J 198:2003). According to Kotler, there are four pillars, which construct the personal characteristics affecting consumer behavior. These are the *Cultural* (culture, subculture, and social class), *Social* (reference groups, family roles and status), *personal* (age and lifecycle stage, occupation, economic circumstances, lifestyle, personal and self-concept) and *Psychological*: motivation, perception, learning, beliefs and attitudes (Kotler.P; Bowen.J; Makens.J 201: 2003). In our research we will try to identify their influence on the market.

### **I) Social and economic environment**

Nowadays, the fast social changes in the Chinese society and especially in big cities affect dramatically part of the traditional values and the consuming behavior related to tourism and travel. A new middle class has emerged from the urbanization and industrialization, which have created new social values and norms. Moreover, the openness of the Chinese economy has as a result that more Chinese people work for international companies and travel abroad for training, or studying in order to increase their qualifications

### **II) Political-legislations environment**

There is a tremendous and continuous progress between EU and China in foreign affairs. Tourism policy is affected by the policy-making in other sensitive diplomatic issues, such as the provision of visa issue for Chinese tourists within the Schengen zone, the ADS (Approved Destination Status) and what is included in it.

In this thesis we try to display the new profile of the Chinese travellers in Europe, their social background, the purpose of their travel, the satisfaction from the services in Europe. Moreover, since one of the reasons affecting people's impression is the interaction with the local people, we will try to formulate the Chinese thinking about the behaviour of European people.

### **Formulating the interviews and empirical observation**

The conceptual and methodological issues that are central to conducting cultural research include selecting or blending “emic” and “etic” research approaches. The “emic” approach favors culture investigation, arguing that theorizing is culture-specific and should, therefore, be inductive. This orientation requires that a structure is identified during the analysis of the culture. In contrast the “etic” approach advocates generalization and focuses on issues that are universal and common to all cultures. In our case, where we are interested in investigating the special characteristics of the Chinese tourist market the “emic” orientation approach would be appropriate (Maheswaran, 2000).

The purpose of the research, which is the evaluation of the interaction Chinese travellers, had with the European environment and the configuration of their travel preferences constitute a subject that is not well investigated with a typical close-questioned questionnaire. The aim to extract their opinions by stimulating them to say the place they consider to be more representative of Europe and give as general a narration primarily and gradually to focus more on the quality of the services and on what they believe about the locals people’s personality, without intervening as much as possible. In the last part they are asked to express an overall opinion about their experiences either positively or negatively. Davies claims that qualitative approaches rest on the view that multiple realities exist, can only be studied holistically and require an open system approach (Davies, 2003). Therefore, we select semi-structure interviews in order to detect the “emic” characteristics, the “Chinese reality” and to reach a model for the average Chinese traveller to Europe. The interviewees were free to express their opinion about the countries they travelled to, the services, their activities, what European culture means to them, their opinion about Europe and European people, what was the general impressions from the European countries they visited and make a small comparison between China and Europe having in mind that values, attributes, and beliefs are regarded as factors explaining the differences in the consumers behavior of different nationalities (

Appendix1)

Leisen says that for managers, understanding the distinction between these constructs is of vital importance in order to fully understand their customers’ views regarding a

service or product. For example, posing a question such as “What is your perception of London as a tourist destination” and what image comes to your mind when you think of London as a tourist destination” provides different insight into London as a tourist destination, and if so, how we can understand these differences assist in better managing our customer’s satisfaction levels and buying behavior?” (Leisen, 2001: 52).

### **Data analysis**

The research on Chinese travellers to Europe is based on interviews that were carried out in Shanghai between 27 of August and 15 September of 2004. 26 interviews from Chinese adults between 18 and 55 year old that have been to Europe were taken. Fourteen were females and twelve males and the main purpose of their travel was Business (10), studies (10) or leisure activities (6). Three of the interviewees were professors in Fudan University in Shanghai and they have been in Europe as guest professors. Ten of them have travelled to Europe in groups and sixteen individually. The names of the interviewees were received from travel agencies ticket lists and from announcements in Fudan University. We tried to include the most representative categories of travellers, which are those who have been for studies, profession-related and sightseeing tourism.

By far the most popular destinations for all of them are France, Italy and Germany. Paris and Rome are also considered by the majority of the interviewees to be the most representative places of the European culture.

Professional and middle class groups notoriously seek opportunities to combine work with travel valued for its own sake. All the interviewees, independently of the reason of their visit and their educational level, have the same preferences in what they consider to be the most popular destination and in what kind of activities they spend their leisure time. But it was noticed that people who had better educational level used to insist and be more detailed in the description of the cultural heritages and they were more outward to express their opinion about European people and what they regard as the main characteristic of the European culture. Chinese overseas travellers are mainly from high to middle class income groups, namely private enterprise owners, personnel of scientific organizations and representatives from media, sports and entertainment.

In order to support the validity of the travellers' responses and to cross-check them with other sources we receive interviews from owners and staff of travel agencies in Shanghai. They were asked about the function and the conditions in the outbound travel market and basically for information related with the Chinese travels to Europe, such as the reason for travelling, and the problems connected with their trip and their stay in Europe. The travel agencies that participate in our research was SHANGHAI CITS LTD, STAR SHANGHAI TRAVEL SERVICE C.O, LTD, CHINA TRAVEL INTERNATIONAL LTD, and CTS SHANGHAI PRIVATE OVERSEAS AFFAIRS CO., LTD

Moreover, trying to cover more explicitly the issue, we compare our findings with researches about the Chinese tourist attitudes, values that have taken place in countries with tradition in Chinese tourism such as Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, and Thailand. We also used primary and secondary resources such as formal documents, statistics, and the Internet resources released from both the Chinese government and the European Tourist Commission.

### **Research Limitations**

One of the striking reasons that motivate the Chinese to travel to Europe for sightseeing tourism is their preference for the European culture and that they are already positively preoccupied with Europe. Therefore, they had positive preconceived ideas about EU countries and their culture. The fact that they were interviewed by a citizen from the EU was a further reason to be more positive and exaggerate their reactions.

The language and the cultural gap was an obstacle during the interviewing, since many of the interviewees could not speak English and the mediation of a translator was necessary. Since in some of the questions words strongly related to the cultural values, such as what they consider to be the principle of good hospitality, were included, some of them could not understand the meaning of the word or they probably misunderstood the definitions. Therefore, during the translation many precious details that could not be translated were lost.

Although the interviews should have been taken in a place that there should not have been any external factors affecting the concentration of the interviews, in many cases it

was not possible to maintain this rule, since many of the interviews were taken in the working place of the interviewees and they tried to skip some of the questions or they said that they didn't have a clear opinion about some of them.

### **Social and economic approaches to outbound travel**

Tourism and mass travelling abroad became a major modern mass phenomenon after the World War II, when it came to embrace practically all social classes in industrialized western societies (Scheuch, 1981). This expansion was made possible by the rising standards of living, increase in the salaries and the shortening of the work year, which were accompanied by longer paid vacations in the industrialized Western countries and the rapid improvement in the means of transportation (Dumazdier, 1967; Scheuch, 1981). On the other hand the internationalization of the markets and the biggest competition in the scientific and trade level forced people to travel abroad for professional reasons. There has also been an increasing range of attractive tourism destinations made available and increased access to both formal and informal sources of information about these destinations. Finally, political stability, peace and free access to travel documents and accepted media of exchange have facilitated travel.

In China there are four factors affecting leisure. All of them are related to each other and are based on three pillars. The First is the low level of Chinese salaries, the political isolation of the country and the last fifty years principle that tourism related to bourgeoisie behaviour and that people should only focus on satisfying their basic needs.

Besides maintaining the daily expenses, most of the Chinese families devote their discretionary income to build or purchase houses, to children's education, to the marriage of sons and daughters, to the buying of durable products (such as TV sets, refrigerators, and air conditioners), as well as to the endless occasions of social activities tightening their bonds with their relatives of giving dinners and sending gifts in the family lifecycle. For most families, the inherent ideology of "working for the next generation" still strongly prevails. (Xiao, 1997)

Secondly, the scope of leisure activities in which people participate concerns only a limited number of people in China. The vast majority of the agricultural population hardly participated in any recreation and or leisure activities at all. Chinese adults with

dependent parents still look upon the traditional Confucian concentric saying as virtues. Eccentric and outgoing leisure behaviour is not encouraged. Thirdly, leisure as well as recreation is not pursued solely for their own sake. Business and visiting friends and relatives is very often incorporated into leisure behaviour. In terms of leisure time, irregular leisure activities of traditional holidays, festivals, and vacations outnumber the regular ones on weekends or after work (Stokowski, 1992). Fourth, the rapid intrusion of the new technologies in Chinese societies and the technological progress enhance the indoor leisure experience of families with such equipment as TV sets, VCRs, and karaoke players. (Xiao, 1997)

After 1979 and the gradual development of the domestic tourism industry the Chinese government was forced to promote the idea of leisure activities related to the tourism as well as to restore the worker's leave's and holidays system in order to give the time to the citizens to participate in the new tourism industry system. The Chinese holiday system was given a face-lift in 1996 to cater for the demand for tourism. The first step was that the two-day weekend was introduced, followed by three "golden" travel and tourism (long holiday) weeks institutionalized officially by the Chinese government to create more temporal opportunities for tourism development. In total, more than 110 days of holiday opportunities have been created in the Chinese legislated workday system. Partly because of these new policies, the Chinese economy has improved and an enormous growth in tourism has been achieved both locally and internationally (Guo & Turner, 2001). In China there is no nationwide summer vacation. Those people, including public servants, personnel and workers of companies and enterprises in the cities, take a vacation every year, but most people do not like spending their vacation in summer. Summer is not a golden season of tourism in China. Chinese people are used to relating their vacation to other public holidays, such as the Spring Festival (Chinese new year), International Labour Day (1<sup>st</sup> of May) and the National Day of China (1<sup>st</sup> of October). In these public holidays Chinese people usually have one-week holidays, and that is why these holidays are called Golden Weeks of tourism (Yali, 2003).

The transformation of China's societal policies, which has direct positive and negative effects on leisure, may be grouped into three factors. The first one is an increase in labour unionisation. The union's activity fund is now guaranteed, not only through public money

but also through money collected from a variety of sources. Unions have also achieved a wider scope of acceptance in industry. Most medium size private enterprises now have their own unions. In government and other public sector bodies, a labour union hierarchy has been established, and this is even down to the smallest work units (Xiao, 1997) Through such unionisation, the right of members can be better protected and their public welfare (such as group activities, weekend excursions and other leisure activities) can be extended to a wide cross-section of the society. Secondly, the nationwide pay rise, under the State Council Pay Rise Act for Public Sector and State-owned enterprises, enacted from October 1993, has left the salary –earning class with more disposal income and this has increased the likelihood of leisure expenditure. Thirdly, the 5-day working week introduced in China from May 1995 has lengthened the available leisure time in a week and, as a result, many public or private leisure facilities, recreation centres, and tourist attractions will experience a boom. The unionization of work, improved welfare, the nationwide pay rise, and the shortening of the working week will undoubtedly have a positive influence on leisure development. (Hanqin & Lam 1998)

### **Political changes and tourism development**

The modification of the economical conditions, which has lead to a flourishing holiday system and the great increase of people travelling abroad, gives rise to the establishment and the empowerment of new organizations concerning the control of the travel industries. After 1979, the Deng Xiaoping's guiding principle for the development of outbound tourism of China was organized, planed and controlled development of tourism.

In 1964, the Ministry in charge of tourism affairs in the Chinese government, which was called *China National Tourism Administration* (CNTA), was founded. It is directly regulated by the State council and is responsible for developing, promoting and regulating Chinese tourism industry. CNTA contains 6 departments and a publishing house *China Travel & Tourism Press*. Before 1979 it was also the only authority in charge of organizing travels abroad. This organization and its subordinates on provincial and municipal level has full authority to cope with the complaints of tourists (Roth, 1998)

Nowadays, the travel agencies market consists of both private and state owned travel agencies. In 1997, there were 67 travel agencies, which were qualified and authorized to organize travels out of the boundary of mainland of China for tourist purpose. Until the end of 2002, this number was increased to 528. In 1998, only in Beijing there were 41 international travel agencies. Chinese tourist authorities still put barriers in the operation of the private travel agencies and control them, but the evolution of the market is so fast that many of the regulations are out of time. On July 1, 1995, the Tourism Quality Control Institute of the CNTA was founded and its purpose was to protect the consumers of the travel products by supervising and controlling the quality of the travel agents services. Travel agencies must pass the annual inspection of the state tourist administrative authorities, otherwise the qualification and authority will be cancelled. It is strictly forbidden to run a travel agency without permission or with activities that are not approved of.

At the legislation level, the Chinese government had to modify the regulations concerning the facilitation of Chinese travelling abroad and on the other hand prevent phenomena of illegal immigration. According to the Chinese law, the Chinese are allowed to travel for tourism only in countries that have been officially approved by the state as travel destinations. These destination countries would be proposed by CNTA and agreed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Public security of China. The state council is the highest authority to approve the proposal. Travel to and from China is regulated by the CNTA and three different passports are available for travellers from China: public passports, private passports and passports for seamen

According to CNTA, a country must possess the following characteristics in order to be a destination country for the Chinese tourists: Be a tourism resource country of China; a friendly country for Chinese, have attractive tourist resource and standard tourist facilities, not have any limitations or discrimination in law and administration against Chinese tourists, be safe to Chinese tourists, and be easy to enter and travel.

### **EU and China political and economic bonds**

The number of Chinese people visiting EU countries has increased with an accelerating pace. Tourism development came as a result of the strong cooperation in

economic and political sectors in the last twenty years and visits of Chinese officials to EU and vice versa as well as bilateral agreements have been more frequent.

In 30 October, premier Wen Jiabao stated that China and EU relations have stepped into a sound path featured with stable, substantial and thorough dialogue and cooperation between both sides and that EU is playing more and more a significant role in international affairs. The EU is the fourth biggest investor to China. The bilateral trade volume has grown sharply and during the first three quarters of 2003 hit 89.06 billion US dollars, up 41.5 percent over the same period of last year and surpassing the figure of the whole year in 2002. Cooperation between China and the EU in the fields of science and technology, environmental protection and transportation has also delivered rich fruits (Chinese ministry of foreign affairs, 2004).

After the European integration and the launch of the Euro, the EU has fundamentally changed the world's economic structure and has successfully brought new cooperation opportunities to Sino-EU economic relations. The total trade volume has increased more than 40-fold since 1978, reaching US\$ 125 billion in 2003. China is now the EU's second largest trading partner. The EU was China's third largest trading partner last year and the second largest during the first two months of this year. The EU is China's biggest technology and equipment supplier. There were nearly 2,000 technology projects last year from the EU worth more than US\$3.3 billion. The EU is also an important foreign investor in China, ranked fourth in foreign direct investment (Peoples Daily, 2004). Moreover, for political reasons China supports European Union integration for enhancing the EU force in restructuring international multi-polar patterns. The European Union is considered by China the only power that could compete with US. Moreover, after the entrance of China in WTO in 2001, after 15 years of negotiation, the EU has already placed lot of projects in China.

The boost in Chinese visiting to Europe for tourism activities and the improvements in the status of living in China had as a result that many European tour operators insist on the improvement on the legislation which allows Chinese to travel to Europe. On the other hand, the Chinese government, which needs international allies, makes use of a potential accord on tourism as a way to tighten its relationship with the EU.

The fact that European Union does not have a common tourist policy put obstacles in reaching a tourism accord and China was forced to make bilateral agreements with some of the European countries, such as Germany. The “big moment” for EU- China tourism relationship was the signing of a memorandum between China and EU countries being in the Schengen zone except UK, Ireland and Denmark. Like other European countries, which are not member of the Schengen, Great Britain and Ireland have suffered from a relative decrease in tourist arrivals from China. These two countries are often not included in the tours of Europe, because they require separate visas.

However, the United Kingdom remains an interesting destination for Chinese in terms of education and language training. Children and adolescents are sent to language camps or even for school and university education (Roth, 1998).

Consequently, travel from China to Europe increased in recent months in the Schengen countries. Especially Germany, France, The Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg (the “Five of Europe”) are very attractive because of their geographical proximity and Chinese tourists’ habits to choose multinational travel packages in Europe. However, the interest in Italy is very strong too, followed by Austria and Spain. According to the memorandum that was signed on 4 February 2004 and came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2004, all the European countries were approved as an official destination by the Chinese government. On the other hand, the EU facilitates the issue of visa for the Chinese citizens. Moreover, with the accord the big issue of the illegal immigration of Chinese citizens in EU and the way that the illegal Chinese will be arrested and return back to China is arranged (Avilla, 2003).

## **INTERVIEW’S ANALYSIS**

### **i) Sightseeing travellers in EU**

Chinese sightseeing tourists to Europe are usually highly educated, have a high income, and are experienced and relatively sophisticated travellers. With nearly \$ 1,200 per capita, they represent almost twice the average spent by international tourists arriving in Europe, according to the WTO. That average figure could come down as mass tourism takes off among Chinese travellers, but they are likely to follow in the footsteps of the

East Asian tourists spending heavily on European branded goods. Shopping is also a popular activity among the Chinese, especially for souvenirs to be brought home to friends and relatives (Chen, 2002). A Chinese proverb says, “Economise at home, but take enough money en route.”

The variety of the cultures style in each country and the willingness for a holistic view of Europe from the travellers’ side forced the travel agencies to plan itineraries criss-cross Europe covering up to 10 countries. Almost all the routings includes France, Belgium, The Netherlands, Germany and Italy. But by far the most popular places are Paris and Rome.

All the interviewees’ respond that Paris is the most beautiful and representative place in the EU. The Chinese outbound travel to Europe is pure city tourism, with Chinese groups travelling from one European city to the next by bus tours. ZHUANG HUI, a professor in Fudan University, explains that to the Chinese mind the notion of tourism is strongly related to visiting big cosmopolitan cities. “...even now when we are saying in China that we are going on holidays most of us mean to visit one of the big Chinese cities...” The accomplishment of two main activities influence the choice of the visiting places, the number of famous and attractive tourist places and the capacity of the city shopping moles to satisfy the desire of them to buy famous brands of local products. It is pointed out by Jian Yu Geng, a 55- year- old college educated businessman who travelled to Europe for sightseeing tourism, that although in the Chinese market it is easy to find any of the famous European brands in clothes, shoes and other accessories it is still part of the ritual travelling in Europe to spend a lot of time in the shopping malls.

Moreover, people travelling for a second time prefer to have both city tour and sightseeing in the countryside. The pollution in big Chinese cities probably makes them evaluate the sustainable development in many of the European cities and the surrounding countryside.

## **France**

France is the most popular destination for the Chinese travelling to Europe. It is characterized as the city of art and “Romanticism” and it is considered to be the most

famous places in Europe and the most representative of the European culture. The interviewees considered high the quality of the architecture and the great museums. It is also characterized by them as the most popular worldwide place as far as famous brands in clothing and perfumes are concerned. It is considered a modern city with a well-organized network of means of transport and easy access to tourist places. The most famous of them are the Eiffel tower, the Louvre museum and the Elysian Fields. Dr FAN LIZHU, 43-year-old professor in the Sociology Department, travelled two times to Europe invited by a University in Paris.

“In Paris I liked that French people have well-organized public transport system and them used the metro a lot. I also liked that I was able to use both my bike and the public transports”. What it was mentioned as negative aspects in the city is that many of the signs are only in French and many people do not speak English. There were also interviewees that characterized some of the shopkeepers as rude and that they tried to get rid of them in an impolite way. Prices in Paris were also considered to be very high in comparison with Italy.

### **Italy**

The strong point of Italy is the famous historical monuments and the most popular places seem to be the Vatican, Venice and Rome. Italian people were considered to be more polite and warm in comparison with the French. HAI HONG, a postgraduate student in London who travels both in Paris and Rome, says, “...Italians are warm and polite but the French are rude and not willing to help a tourist. I remember when once I asked a French person something in English and he told me that he hates English. Italian are more outward and they willing to help you...” But the quality of services in Italy was considered to be lower than that in France. In Italy there are more complaints about the three stars Hotels. Moreover, in some Italian cities interviewees had the feeling that they are not safe. Another disadvantage of Italy for the Chinese is the lack of communication. It seems to be the worst of all the countries, as for example a lady visiting Italy said that people in the lobby could not even say the room number in English. Also all the interviewees who visited Italy considered it to be more polluted and dirty compared to other destinations.

### **Austria**

The interviewees that have been in Austria point out the architecture of the buildings in Vienna, the famous performance of classical music and the museums and furthermore they are impressed with the natural Alps scenery and the small villages in the countryside.

ZHU WEI YING, 36 years old and her husband HUANG WEI GEN who run a business, had been in Austria for holidays and they were impressed by the natural beauties and the balance people keep with the natural environment. HUANG WEI GEN remembered an incident when he saw in a park people feeding the animals. That satisfied him very much as he likes people respecting nature. They also seem to be very enthusiastic about the cleanliness and lack of pollution.

### **Nordic countries**

Scandinavian countries, such as Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden are famous for their fairy tales, Santa Claus and beautiful scenery. However, to many Chinese tourists they remain less interesting than Western European destinations. The climate and the generally higher prices make these destinations more difficult to sell. Additionally, the application for several visas is often too cumbersome for the Chinese travel agencies (Roth, 1998)

The Chinese who have been in Scandinavian countries keep a very good impression from people's behavior and they are considered very polite and willing to offer help. They are impressed with the natural scenery and the lack of pollution but they think that it is little bit boring to stay for many days because there are not a lot of things to see and museums to visit. EVA, who is a postgraduate student in Sweden, says: "I like the castles in Denmark, the nature in Norway and the design of the building in Finland. In Denmark I satisfied by the castles, in Norway by the nature, in Finland by the buildings but mostly I was impressed by peoples behavior and how polite they are. North Europeans appear to be more polite and distant in the beginning while after being familiar they are very sweet and considerate. I felt very safe in Sweden but what was not satisfying was the entertainment and the cost of travelling".

### **Satisfaction from the services**

In general, they are satisfied with their travel to Europe. The main factor affecting negatively their impression is the cost of living, since the big majority claims that they are not satisfied with the level of prices, especially in London and Paris. Disposable income is generally low in China and, therefore, for many potential tourists cost is an important factor in product choice, especially for first-time travellers

All of them pointed out that the architecture of the European cities impressed them but the nightlife entertainment is totally strange to them. Although it is not a crucial factor affecting their travelling preferences, all the interviewees mention that after the first week they missed the Chinese food and especially breakfast. They also said that participating in the travel packet of 10 or 13 destinations makes them feel very tired and they are not very satisfied with their stay in some cities.

### **Hotels**

According to the mainstream ideas about tourism, tourism development requires a number of basic conditions regarding the quality of hospitality to be met (Russo & van der Borg 2002).

Most Chinese travellers favour 3-4 star hotels (in total 93%). They like to show that they can afford to pay for higher standards and better quality of service. However, there is sometimes a slight disappointment when Chinese travellers have to stay in small-sized hotels in Europe. In China, hotels are generally bigger and 3 star hotels have normally big lobbies and many floors (Roth, 1998).

What Chinese people pay a lot of attention to, is to have hot water all day and as many brand-new electronic gadgets as possible. ZHUANG HUI, a teacher at the University, thinks that, as far as the hotels quality and services offered in Europe are concerned, they offer in average much better quality than that in China. "I liked very much that there was a hot water during the night and also that the electronic equipments and the TV set were brand new. In three or four stars hotels in China there are no the same facilities"

They also mind if the hotel is aged. They don't prefer hotels located in old classical buildings, which are attractive to many Europeans. They prefer brand new hotels. Moreover, like the average global tourists, the Chinese want to get access to as much information as possible from the reception. They prefer the lobby of the hotel to be big enough in order to enable group gathering. It is part of their culture to socialize discussing about the daily experiences. Most of them argued about the food and especially breakfast. It is necessary for them to have Chinese breakfast (Heug 2000).

### **Shops- Bars**

Some of the interviewees claim that they did not get the appropriate behavior from some of the shopkeepers, especially in France but also in other cities. Jennifer, who travels in Vienna for business, says that she did not like so much the shopkeepers' attitude " ... I remembers an incident when I went into a shop around 5 o'clock, the closing time, and the personnel tried to turn me out in an impolite way..." Moreover, while in China the shops used to be open all day, they are dissatisfied with the opening hours of the shops in Europe. They are disappointed by the fact that many shops were closed in afternoons and at weekends.

Furthermore, almost nobody of the interviewees seems to enjoy the nightlife and have had a pleasant time in bars, clubs and other places of the European nightlife entertainment. They argued that they do not like crowded places with noisy music and they would prefer the classical way of a Chinese place with karaoke. Also another important reason is the fact that they have to travel all day from one place to another (because the travel packet includes from 7 to 10 countries) and they are too tired to go out at night.

### **Resources of Information**

Chinese travellers are fond of getting a lot of information for new places they are going to visit. The youngest of the interviewees and those with higher education are used to taking information through the Internet. "Before I travel to Europe I tried to get as

much information as it was possible from the Internet”, says ZHUANG HUI, a student in Fudan University. Although the Chinese use a credit card, they still hesitate to make purchases on-line, since only one of the interviewees says that she uses the Internet for booking tickets and hotel rooms. Travel books and maps they bought in China were other sources of information that were mentioned apart from the Internet. One of the interviewees got information from a CD-ROM he received from an airline company.

Chinese travellers stressed the fact that there must be brochures with information, restaurant catalogues, and other instructions in tourist places written in Chinese. GRACE, who participated in exchange students program in France, said, “... I think it would be nice if there were some signs and explanations in Chinese in some important public places like metro, airport and hotel. I found information in French, English, and Japanese but not in Chinese. China is becoming the biggest source of tourism for Europe and many Chinese do not speak English and it is kind of inconvenient to visit Europe....”

## **II ) Business travellers**

The interviewees who travelled to Europe for professional activities mostly work for big companies that cooperate with relevant companies in EU or belong to headquarters of international companies.

The main reason for their travel is to attend training courses in the mother-company, investigate the European market or negotiate new kinds of cooperation and find European associates. They travel to Europe either with their colleges or individually on trips that are organized and funded by the companies. They are aged between 25 and 40 and are both male and female. They have high education and they have been affected by the Western culture (Yu; Weiler; Ham 2001). During their stay in EU they spend their free time in social activities organized by their companies, get socialized with their European colleagues and attend tour trips with multiple destinations. Business tourists typically prefer high-class accommodation (Wen Pan & Laws, 2001).

JIAN YU GENG, 27 years old went to Germany on a journey organized by Agfa’s partner Microform GmbH and his company. “...I went many times to Europe and I was going out with his colleagues in bars and was satisfied with the nightlife. We had a good contact and I still keep in touch with a service engineer of Agfa’s and they invited my to

their houses and I spent there a nice day ...”. They are used to being more accustomed to the European social environment in comparison with the sightseeing travellers and spend their time in more western activities, such as enjoying the nightlife and going to western places with their colleagues. They prefer spending their time with colleagues in common places, like bars drinking beer or cafes discussing their job rather than sightseeing.

The scope of their travel and of course their profession affect them in the aspects of the European life and in what they focus on. JIAN YU GENG says, “...the last time I visited Germany I was satisfied with the city scenery of Munich, headquarters of BMW and Benz, the castles, the beer and the fashion”.

Pearce claims that the motivation of the travel and the travellers’ personality is understood in terms of how it relates to the individual’s long term psychological needs and life plans; intrinsic motives such as self actualization seem to be particularly important (Pearce 1982:51). Hence, the contemporary intensive rhythm of living in urban areas, and the stress which springs from the pressure and the competition that the market economy cause are obvious in some of their responses. The tourist’s psychological perspective suggests that motivation for leisure and tourism activity emanate from two shared forces: to escape from routine and stressful environments and to seek recreational opportunities (Xiao, 1997).

JENNIFER, who works in a high ranking position for a big company, attempted like the rest of the business travellers who were interviewed, to get advantages from the business trip and travel to many destinations in her leisure time. “It was a very relaxing time there. When I am thinking about Europe the words peace and quite come to my mind.” To Jennifer another striking point was that in Europe nobody wants to work on Sunday and Saturday and at 6 o’ clock in the afternoon shops are closed. “...In Shanghai they are open nearly all day because it is good shopping time and it would be crazy to close them. I believe that this phenomenon is due to the economical differences between them but also is a matter of attitude. Chinese are continuously busy and if they stop they do not know what to do. They just want to work continuously and to earn more money. At least many of them...”, “... I do not like so much the passion of making money and I would prefer to have free time and to go for camping in the countryside and

the mountain. It is not possible to stay in the city because I am very busy here the rest of the week and as long as I stay here I feel a big pressure...”.

Chinese businessmen also have the chance to meet another aspect of the local people's life, since they have to cooperate with them at a professional level. They consider them well educated and well organized. ZANG says “... Europeans are very professional and quite accountable and precise in their work. I had to work hard with them and they are passionate and polite to me. They invited me for a dinner and they offer me a ride to the city...” He thinks that European people are gentle and hospitable. They are good at expressing themselves. They are enthusiastic to help foreigners and introduce their history and culture to tourists. On the other hand, Chinese people are always busy and are reluctant to help others initially.

Nevertheless, there are some disagreements by Dr ZHOU PING, a Professor in Molecular Biology who worked in Switzerland for half a year and at the University of Cambridge for two months. As far as her professional experience is concerned, she agrees with some of her colleagues that the Europeans are not very kind and helpful. “...in China if you have a problem with your job your colleagues try to help you but that does not happen so easy in Europe”.

### **III) Students travellers**

The growing demand for better educated personnel and the rise of competition in the Chinese market as well as the potential threat of being unemployed encourage many Chinese to send their children to Europe for studies at undergraduate or postgraduate level. On the other hand, even the Chinese universities have opened their doors to the West and they gradually participate in exchange programmes with European universities. ZHANG SHANSHAN and ZHUANG HUI have participated in an exchange program between the Fudan University and that of Vienna.

The young travellers seem to be fond of having more social contacts with the Europeans as well as looking for adventures and also having some sports activities included in their travel ZHANG SHANSHAN says, “I enjoyed the parks in Vienna and go swimming in the Danube, Vienna's river, as well as watching concerts in the Vienna Opera”.

The rapid social and economic changes in China, are leading to changes in the traditional values system. In the new generation in Shanghai the change in the culture and the adaptation to the western culture is obvious. ZHUANG HUI, a 20 year old student in political science, learns German and he attends all the events in Europe because it is related to his studies. "... but I know also that I am extremely influenced by the American culture. I think than Shanghai citizens and their style of life is influenced more from the American culture. I like Mc Donald's, I like chatting in the Internet and watching NBA games and this is part of America's culture for me but on the other side I know that European culture is deeper than America's". His terminal was Vienna but he also went to Belgium, France, Germany and Italy. What impressed him was the unique character of the buildings and how different they are from the Chinese ones. "I had seen a lot of time these places in TV but I could not get the spirit". Such changes were due to the influence of Western culture and the new symbols in Chinese society, modernization, migration and economic development.

They were also eager to learn more about the European culture. HAI HONG studied English literature in London and she likes the metropolitan cities where she can meet people from many places and could compare their cultures. Chinese are very interested in the "outside world" and want to learn about other cultures, especially western culture (Wen Pan & Laws, 2001). "... I remember when I was in Coventry on a tour in England and I saw a traditional English marriage. It was so strange and amazing to me..."

For some Europe is related to freedom and it is the alternative model to the suffocated conditions of the Chinese environment where the tight relationships make people feel that they are continuously under observation. Whenever they face the same problem or strict social rules in European societies they react negatively and they do not seem ready to comply with them. Freedom and innovation is what attracts them. They have cosmopolitan views and they want to travel in many countries and have contacts with the local people and cultures and make friends. HAI HONG admitted: "...I consider English very polite and willing to help the foreigners. On the other hand, I didn't like the fact that English seems to behave some times by following a "protocol of behaviour". "I feel that in England I had to be very careful with my manners and my behaviour..."

The youngest interviewees preferred to travel individually or in small groups. Most of them speak English and do not feel the need to follow a group with a travel guide in order to feel more secure. What was striking was ZHANG SHANSHAN's observation about European people that they have different travelling habits compared to the Chinese. "...Chinese people like travelling in groups and European people like travelling individually. I came to this conclusion after seeing the travellers to Austria where more of the European travelled individually. I like this way of travelling. I would prefer to travel in small groups of four or five people even in the city tours..." I would also like for my travelling in Europe the multi-countries packet and not to have a lot of activities included. I would like to be included the basic things like tickets and accommodation and then to be free to spent my time as I wanted".

One of the basic findings from the interviews is the desire for communication and the high level of interrelation with the social environment and the desire for response from the local people. Apart from the reason they came, they put much importance on the locals' attitude. While this is one of the "emic" characteristics of Chinese culture, which has been previously mentioned, it has been noted that some cultural values are rather difficult to change in any basic ways (Bond & Smith 1996). Moreover, as Yan claims, the social orientation and interpersonal relationships still remain basic pillars in Chinese ways of communication (Yau, 1994).

### **Chinese attitudes towards the Europeans**

The growing specialization of tourism and the sharp competition sophisticate the tools that tourism marketing use to attract new tourism. The interaction of the locals with the visitors is not only an economic profit but also a great opportunity for different cultures to come closer and the host and the visitor country's bonds to be tightened. Water claims that tourism improves international understanding. On the other hand, the importance that Chinese give to their interaction with the environment could in the future be one of the advantages that will affect their choice for their leisure travelling. The exposure of the tourist in the local place and the interaction with the locals could affect his perception of the place (Cohen, 1984).

Perce's position that "Holiday experiences tend to confirm pre-existing attitudes negative as well as positive ones" (Pearce, 1982:92) has been confirmed in the interviews. When the interviewees that had stayed for a short-time in Europe were asked to point out some of the Europeans characteristics that they consider outstanding of their identity they responded by using the same stereotypical ideas well known so far. We would say that the length of their travel and the events that affect them to formulate their attitudes towards the locals couldn't be characterized strong enough to support their attitudes. Many of the answers describe Germans as very well organised, English as gentlemen, Italians as very warm and open hearted and French dressed in fashion. JENNIFER is one of them who consider Germans and Austrians stubborn and difficult to change their mind. "I remember an event with the bus driver when the group leader told him that maybe they did not follow the right way and he insisted and only when he realized by himself the mistake he turned back".

Comments on the Europeans' professional behaviour were almost only positive and describe them as more innovative and flexible compared to the Chinese. ALLIES LIUP, who works as a civil engineer in a construction company and cooperates frequently with Europeans colleagues, believes that "...Europeans are more straightforward and flexible but Chinese are more conservative and they have to think about something many times in order to change their minds" and "they are different in educational background as well as they are wealthier than Chinese". Generally, interviewees characterized European behaviour as positive and had a positive attitude towards them. There are two main events that affect the tourists' conception of the place they visit. The first is their initial thoughts before they reach the place and, secondly, the small events that happened in the destination place and how they conceive it according to their social and personal characteristics (Kim; Forsythe; Gu; Moon 2002).

It was also observed that young people were more open and had even more positive attitude towards the Europeans. ZHANG SHANSHAN felt that European people are friendly and eager to help. She was impressed by the fact that, when they got lost in Vienna and people were watching them having a map in their hands they came to help them. That happened many times and they got the feeling that they are friendly. For her, one of the most important things is to make friends from Europe and keep the contact

with them. GRACE, who went as an exchange student in Netherlands, thinks that Europeans are open, extrovert, friendly, polite and creative.

The new generation seems to have been affected by ideas that are supposed to be main ideas of the Western culture, such as the worship of freedom, tendency to individuality and the dislike of tight social network controlling and observing people's behaviour. In Europe they met their ideas and they had a positive impact on them. HAI HONG, who lived in London for one year doing a Master, considers the social network to be the most striking difference between Chinese and Westerners. "Chinese people pay a lot of attention to the other people, what people think about them generally, and they try to know what people do in order to understand them and sometimes to help them and generally they interact with each other. In Europe you do that not have the feeling that people watch or care about other doing or they do not.", "... in Europe you feel more the freedom and you have more the feeling to do whatever you want. European mentality seems to be more individualistic than that of Asian..." She also believes that nowadays most of the young Chinese people tried to be independent and individual and start not to care about what other people are saying".

According to Jai ok Kim, values are formulated by the consumer needs and desire (Kim; Forsythe; Gu; Moon, 2002). It was striking that all the working people mentioned that they were impressed with the rhythm of life in Europe and the relaxed life that the Europeans seem to enjoy. They compare their style of living with that in Europe saying that they feel more pressed and exhausted by the intensive rhythm of life. ZHU WEI YING and HUANG WEI GEN said that the Chinese are more busy, suppressed and limited compare to the Europeans who are more free and sometimes they seem not to have anything to do and that European people are more relaxed than Chinese.

During EVA's interview the uncertainty of the young people about their future and the new working conditions that promote competition was obvious. She says, "Because of the large population, Asian society appears to be more competitive and busy. It is really good for them to visit Europe. This travel and the calm faces of the people will offer them the chance to become more relaxed..." Moreover, ZHUANG HUI, a Doctor at the Fudan University also believes that Europeans have more free time. "I was impressed

from the fact that I saw Europeans playing games and doing sports in the parks while this view is more and rarer to see in Chinese parks”.

When interviewees were asked to compare themselves with the Europeans, they tried to be more careful about their expressions and said that there are big differences without most of them being very specific. There were even cases where responses were contradictive and they varied depending on the places they visited and their social characteristics. But we dare to say that people who visited places that were considered having more extroverted people, such as the Mediterranean countries and France seemed to make Chinese feel closer to them.

It was claimed that the big differences between the Europeans and the Chinese was that the former have more self-confidence, enjoy life more, respect others' privacy and are more tolerant to differences and that the relationship between family members are different from that of Chinese people. LIN FAN, who visited and stayed in France, believes that “the Europeans are similar with the Chinese that they are kind, polite and warm-hearted. Both Chinese and French enjoy a long history and civilization, we both love food, take cooking as an art, we both care too much about vanity, we are very afraid of loosing face”. On the other hand, JENNIFER, who has been in Germany, said that although Europeans are friendly and prone to help Chinese tourists, they are so different that she cannot understand them.

## **Conclusion**

The research that was made here is one of the few empirical studies that had as a purpose the examination of the Chinese outbound travellers to the EU countries. It was based on qualitative semi structured interviews that were taken from three main categories of visitors; those that have been in Europe for professional reasons, studies and group tourism. This study reveals the need to assess the cultural differences, values, and lifestyle of the Chinese and formulate a pattern of the Chinese travel consumption in Europe. Hence, some unique travel patterns in Chinese tourism were identified.

The demand for travel has often been analyzed in terms of two sets of factors: travel facilitator that enable a person to travel and travel motivators that help explain why those people who are able to travel, actually choose to do (Collier, 1991). In our case of

Chinese travellers to Europe the main demand for travelling was so far related to professional activities and educational reasons and less to tourist packets group tourism. But besides the main reason of their travel to Europe, 23 out of the 26 interviewees spent their leisure time travelling around Europe and visiting well-known touristic places. There is no doubt that Chinese tourists are very curious about Western cultures and they are keen on experiencing the reality of life in Europe.

The Chinese place great emphasis on status, which leads them to visit the most popular attractions within a destination and document these visits by the extensive taking of photos (Wong & Lau, 2001). In other words, Chinese are “conservative tourists” and predictive in their choices.

The most worthy activities were sightseeing and purchasing in capital European cities shopping moles, visiting museums, historical places and monuments and the observation of architecture of the old city buildings. The activities in which they spend their leisure time expose their opinion about what Europe represents.

From the interviews it was revealed that the purpose of their travel did not seem to affect tremendously the kind of leisure activities they preferred. Businessman are used to travelling for more than one time, becoming familiar with the local environment and instead of participating in classical tourist activities they prefer to spend their time in social activities with their colleagues. As far as their beliefs about Europeans are concerned, they conclude that the image construct consisted of two components, cognitive and affective (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997). Cognitive was concerned with beliefs and knowledge about an object or destination, while the affective was related to feelings or emotions about an object. From the interviews it came out that most of the travellers that stayed in Europe reproduced the standard beliefs about the “Place” and the “People”. Chinese interviewees had prior views about Europe’s most representative places and stereotypic icons for the European’s lifestyle and behavior already shaped in their home place and they were tremendously influenced by them. (Cohen, 1984).

As in other parts of the world, research is the most important means to help understand the culture of Chinese tourists (Drobis, 1996). The Chinese nation has an age-old tradition of tourism, which is an inseparable part of Chinese traditional culture. The Chinese tourism tradition emphasizes in enlarging one’s knowledge, raising

understanding of the world and society, enhancing self cultivation, making friends and conducting cultural exchange (Wen, 1997).

It is likely that the outbound tourism will continue to grow provided the economic growth in China continues to raise people's income, particularly those of the middle class. If the Chinese government will not continue to artificially limit outbound travel, Chinese travellers will become a major global force, shaping the travel outbound industry in the next years and beyond (Zhang & Heung, 2001).

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**Interviews**

- 1) Jian Yu Geng
- 2) Eva
- 3) Hai Hong
- 4) Lin Fan
- 5) Mac Yu
- 6) Grace
- 7) Philip Qiming li
- 8) Peter Pang
- 9) Dr Zhou Ping
- 10) Dr Fan Lizhu
- 11) Zhang Shanshan
- 12) Zhang Chengyu
- 13) Zhuang Hui
- 14) Jennifer
- 15) Ms Wang
- 16) Miss Yang
- 17) Liu Dayong
- 18) Rong Pang
- 19) Vanessa Peng
- 20) Zang Ying
- 21) Ms Xu
- 22) Zhu Wei Ying
- 23) Huan Wei Gen

24) Allies Liup

25) Mr Tong Yiang

26) Serena Zhang

## Appendix 1

- 1) Age/Martial status/Education/Profession/Income
- 2) What was the main reason you have travelled to Europe and how did you get there?
- 3) Which countries did you visit during your stay in Europe? What did impress you more in each of them?
- 4) How do you evaluate the quality of the services in the places you have been? What do you think should be improved in the services?
- 5) In which kind of activities did you spend your time during your stay in Europe and what did you satisfied in each of them?
- 6) Please evaluate the below factors regarding your travel in Europe  
Tourism attractions / Cities scenery /Natural scenery /cost of travelling and living /safety /cleanliness /shopkeeper's attitude/cultural events/ tourism infrastructure/ Locals attitude/ Entertainment /shopping /value for money /food
- 7) Which do you consider as the most famous and representative places of the European culture and what are the main characteristics of the European culture for you?
- 8) What do you believe about European people mentality and personality (do you find any differences from one European country to another?)
- 9) Do you think that Europeans have similarities with Chinese people?
- 10) In what sense do you think that they are similar or different?
- 11) were the expectations and beliefs you had about Europe and European people met or not after your stay in Europe
- 12) Are you planning to go to Europe again and if yes in which countries and for what reason? Which kind of activities would you prefer to have included in your travel packet in Europe?