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**CHINESE PACKAGE TOURS TO LESS-VISITED
COUNTRIES**

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ABSTRACT

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<p>The purpose of this thesis was to analyze the market of organizing package tours from China to less-visited countries. The situation of tourism development in less-visited countries and the general situation about package tour market of China were both presented. The report also provided some business ideas for travel agencies in China who are interested in expending the market in less-visited tourism destinations. Some strategies for developing tourism industry in less-visited countries are listed. Presented ideas and strategies were based on both local tourism industry and opinions of tourists from China.</p> <p>During the research process, a questionnaire survey was conducted under quantitative research method. The final conclusion for Chinese travel agencies was written after the analysis of tourism industry in less-visited countries.</p>		
Key words		
Group tours, less-visited countries, package tours		

ABSTRACT

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1 INTRODUCTION

Tourism means people travel to another places outside their usual environment for a limited duration for leisure, recreation and business purposes. There are different types of tourism, domestic or international, individual or package tour. For each type of tourism, the purposes of the tourists are also varied. Some tourists travel for shopping, some tourists travel for adventure and some tourists travel for attractions. This thesis will analyze the situation of Chinese package tours to less-visited countries base on tourism source markets and tourism industry in destinations.

Nowadays in China, with the rapid social and economic development, tourism is becoming more and more popular. And China is recognized as the number one tourism source market in the world (UNWTO 2013). The business of travel agencies is facing to a bright future. Travel should be an act of pleasure, but the immutable traditional tourism model and few monotonous routes to several popular tourism destinations might be boring, especially for frequent traveller, then they may want to have some new routes as travel to experience something different could be a good choice, to travel to certain places where has amazing scenery that friends have not seen, but most time everyone seems to be on the same track. Unusual is beautiful, this is not only a reason to travel to less-visited contries but also a business strategy. (Trout and Rivkin 2008, preface)

Less-visited countries means the countries which few tourists visited, so there should be some reasons why it is not popular up to few tourists visit them. Maybe due to geographical location or chaos, many countries in the world have amazing sights and cultures to offer but have stayed far away from most tourists' sights. But the author thinks there are not only these few reasons which mentioned above, but also some other potential reasons, and it could be a easier way to visit those less-visited countries, some destinations seems even impossible for tourists to reach, but a travel

service company might be able to find a simplified way to organize package tour for customers to this kind of tourism destinations. In addition, visiting less-visited countries also has advantages, or we can say it is the potential of less-visited countries, for example, the most basic point, in most countries which do not have that many tourists, the local price level is cheaper than those most popular tourism countries, obviously this case can be a win-win situation for tourists and travel service companies. So the main purpose of this report is to find out the reasons about following questions. Why such countries are less visited? What are the weaknesses of their local tourism industry? How to organize a tour to visit such kind of countries? What requirements are needed? What are the advantages of visiting less-visited countries?

The analysis is based on two perspectives. Objective perspective on conditions of the tourism industry in some less-visited countries and subjective perspective of Chinese travellers that how do they think about visiting less-visited countries will be collected by a survey. Because the package tour consists of travellers and the local situation in destinations, so both of these two elements influence the market of package tours to this kind of tourism destinations.

This thesis consists of theoretical part and empirical part, theoretical part was done by theoretical study, and the empirical part was done by a survey which belongs to quantitative research. This report may also provide certain business ideas for those tourism related enterprises in China who would like to step into niche tourism markets.

2 BACKGROUND

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the market of package tours in China to less or least visited countries. This chapter will show certain basic definitions of less-visited countries and a general description of the local tourism industry status in this kind of tourism destinations. The information about some popular tourist destinations will also be shown, and it will be compared with less-visited countries later in the upcoming chapters.

2.1 Less-visited countries

A tourism destination can be popular cities and regions like Paris, Barcelona, Shanghai or California. Or they can be some places with untouched geographic scenery. When we ask our friends about which countries do they want to visit most if they go abroad for travelling, most of them may say they would like to visit France, Italy, Spain or US, because of these countries above have a lot of world-famous tourism attractions without a doubt, or we could say they are just quite popular. France had been confirmed as the most visited country in the world. In the other side, there are also some less-visited countries, these countries are totally beautiful and completely underrated or neglected by most tourists, every year, only few tourists go and visit those beautiful places, it means there are few crowds and pristine feeling has been keeping very well, totally untouched nature. The most of this kind of places are located in South America, Oceania and Africa, the rest of them is small islands in the ocean. Normally, for those countries or regions where the annual international visitors are less than 150000 could be called least-visited destinations. (Gadd 2014.)

2.2 Statistics about less-visited countries

To evaluate how popular a tourism destination is, the statistical data on the amount of international visitors on arrival is the most important one. The statistical data onto international visitors can be collected from border controls. It provides more visualized information.

In the year 2014, United Nations World Tourism Organisation has listed TOP 10 least-visited tourism destinations in the world according to their survey of international arrivals in the year 2013. They are Palau, Moldova, East Timor, Dominica, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Anguilla, Liechtenstein, Niue, Montserrat and Kiribati (UNWTO 2014).

Kiribati was ranking the least-visited country in the year 2013, Kiribati had received about only 6000 visitors. Palau had received around 105000 tourists in 2013. According to the number of visitors they had received, all of these 10 places are relatively least visited on the world, but less-visited places are not just 10, there are dozens. Palau and Kiribati have some common points, both of them are small islands, tropical themed tourism destinations, tourism is the pillar industry of them. Among those 10 places listed above, not only Palau and Kiribati are islands, but also other 6, just except Moldova and Liechtenstein, Moldova was the least visited country in Europe. All of them belong to tropical tourism destinations, most of them are isolated islands by geography and far away from continents. (UNWTO 2014.)

When people talk about visiting Europe, they are usually referring to Western Europe, people may not really know about Europe until they visit the mysterious eastern side (Tapon 2012, 1). This also means most less-visited countries in Europe are located on the eastern side. Eastern European countries have several negative properties limit the development of local economy and tourism industry. To compare Eastern Europe with Western Europe, Eastern Europe is more corrupt than Western Europe. In the year

2010, due to the report about corruption index by Transparency International, there was a scale up to 10, 10 means no corruption. In this report, all Western European countries scored above 6, except Italy. On the contrary, all Eastern European countries scored under 5, except Poland, Estonia and Finland. Another point is that Eastern Europeans are not likely to donate time to volunteer works and help strangers rather than Western Europeans. And it is not easy for Eastern Europeans to accept ethnic minorities. The percentage of satisfaction with living standard in Eastern European countries were all under 72%, whereas all Western European countries were all over 72%, except Portugal. (Tapon 2012, 704-707.)

The international tourism receipt is always in direct proportion to the amount of international tourists received, take Moldova as an example, in the year 2012, the international tourism receipt of Moldova was 294,000,000 US dollars, to compare with the one in 2011, 262,000,000 US dollars, it was increasing, but still very low if compare to France's 63,530,000,000 US dollars. The receipt of France is about 216 times more than the receipt of Moldova. Moldova is just the least-visited country in Europe, to have a look world wide, Palau had 164,000,000 US dollars, Dominica had 110,000,000 US dollars and Kiribati had only 2,700,000 US dollars in 2009. (The World Bank 2015.)

2.3 Popular tourist destinations

According to the UNWTO top 10 ranking of destination by receipts of the year 2012, they are United States, Spain, France, China and Italy, Macau (China), Germany, United Kingdom, Hong Kong (China) and Australia. All these 10 countries and regions above have relatively good economic development status, which means tourism industry and economic development in one geographic area interact each other.

Good economic strength can ensure good tourism related service supplement, for example, in those countries above, they have good transportation system like highway and railway, most of them have hub airports, hub airport means an airport which is used by a lot of airlines as a transfer point, and hub airport has very big passenger capacity, this enable tourists from different places can easily reach to the destinations, and the airport will be able to receive group tours. For accommodation, these countries have more choices of accommodation such as hotels, hostels and motels, it meets the need of tourists who have different travelling budget, so these countries are able to receive more tourist types. To have a look in US tourism market most visitors were from Asia and Europe, this means the disposable income in industrialized countries had raised and it seems Asian and European workers are starting to have more leisure time for holiday.

To compare with transportation and accommodation, tourist attraction is more important, tourist attraction is one of the central components of tourism. For all the countries mentioned in the first paragraph, they have quite many tourist attractions and especially UNESCO sites as products to attract tourists, and tourist attractions usually are the most important factor for providing tourists a good visitor experience. More famous attractions can also attract more tourism related business partners to get more investment base on the attraction sites. Normally, the most time of a visitor will be spent on visiting tourist attractions, because tourism attractions provide more vital elements to a visitor's satisfaction. (Page 2009, 341-343.)

3 TOURISM INDUSTRY IN LESS-VISITED COUNTRIES

The world is very big, different places in the world have different sights and attractions. With the existence of tourism, many of them became world-famous, but also many of them are isolated from public view. Tourism industry is important to other local industries of a place. Less-visited countries should explore a way to attract more tourists.

3.1 Tourism industry in less-visited countries

Most less-visited countries in the world are located in Africa, Caribbean and Oceania, the development of local tourism industry is quite limited, mainly because of geographical and economical reasons. For geographical elements, many less-visited countries such as Sao Tome and Principe, Comoros and Dominica, all these three countries received less than 80000 international visitors during the year 2013, all of them are either isolated islands or archipelagos, an isolated geographical situation may have an underdeveloped transportation network, transportation is an important section which connects people from one place with another place. So the destinations with a less-developed transportation system mean it is not convenient and cheap for most travellers to reach. (Garfors 2013.)

Most less-visited in the world also have a less developed economy, tourism industry and local economy usually have a mutual promotion, tourism can create more job opportunities, and especially some countries take tourism as their pillar industry. The development of the tourism industry can promote consumption. Tourism industry can also accelerate local economy development. In reverse, local economy also affects tourism industry, it may attract more business investment especially which are tourism service suppliers onto local tourism industry business by showing the potential

tourism market. It will lead the development of local tourism industry into a positive cycle. (Dingnan 2014.)

For this point, some less-visited countries have social and political instabilities, tourism industry is not a steady income source in those countries neither. Because it is affected by many variable factors, therefore the local economy is heavily depending on tourism revenues. For example, sometimes an incident may cause a sudden drop in the number of visitors. 1992 Cusco (Cuzco) in Peru, due to local extreme terrorist activities, visitors dropped by more than 80%, made 43 from 128 the local officially registered inn had been forced to close, and most of the rest hotels' occupancy rate was less than 30%, facing to difficulties to continue their operations. Other examples like in Kenya, Papua New Guinea, Egypt and Peru, some terrorist groups had killed tourists to subvert the governments in these countries which are heavily depending on tourism receipts. In the Philippines after a Japanese businessman was murdered, the Japanese travellers to the Philippines were decreased. After the decreasing of tourists to these countries, their economic development must also be slowed down, so these countries may not have enough funds to promote their tourism industry, fewer tourists by less developed tourism relating service, some tourists feel insecure to go, and thus there will be a vicious circle on tourism industry and local economy development. (Dingnan 2014.)

3.2 Opportunities and challenges

All less-visited countries have their own potential to develop themselves just because they are less-visited, this sounds interesting. Firstly, all less-visited countries are quite fresh for all travellers, most of tourists never been to such kind of less-visited place, in some less-visited countries, the touristic resources are unique, untouched and natural, those are keys to express a good impression for tourists. Secondly, the most attractive thing could be the local travelling cost, for instance, the average daily tourism cost per traveller in Moldova is about 30 US dollars to cover everything, in the year 2013,

Moldova only received 9000 international visitors, and it was the 1st least visited country in Europe (Earthpassword.com 2014). By contrast, in France, the 1st most visited European country, the average daily cost is about 129 Euros (Budget your trip 2014).

Less-visited countries also have rich natural tourism resources, like tourism development in Africa is very strong, depending on the region has a rich and unique tourism resources and unique natural and cultural resources. Natural tourism resources such as the River Nile, the Pyramids, the Sphinx, the Great Rift Valley, Masai Mara National Park, South Africa National Forest Park, not only sunshine, desert but also rugged natural landscape, and there are forests, sea, distinctive views of springs, grass, etc., these are all huge attractions for tourists. (Liu 2011)

Take Africa continent as a sample, most part of Africa continent is less-visited, for China market, it became more less-visited due to geographic distance and people's interests. Many African countries have unique tourism products, in addition to the pyramids of Egypt and the wonders of the world as the "Rainbow Nation" of South Africa which are popular tourism destinations, as well as the charming island of Mauritius; enjoy the "Africa's Hawaii," said the Seychelles, Seychelles is more less-visited than Egypt and Kenya especially for Asian market. Many African countries have exotic animals and vegetation, exotic cultural environment, flora and fauna here rarely by human intrusion and destruction, to maintain the natural and original character, well reflects the harmony between human and nature. Sub-Sahara area is rich in historical and cultural landscape, such as the tribal culture and its unique customs, etc., to attract foreign tourists for sightseeing. (Liu 2011)

Although tourism development in these countries have good prospects and some countries have made a great plan to development them, but now there are still many constraints. Less-visited countries are also facing to numerous challenges. In most less-visited countries, the capacity of the local airport is mostly limited, especially few

of them have direct flight connection with world's large exporter countries of tourist. Take Moldova as an example, the Chisinau Airport has only 14 airlines registered with no more than 30 international flight routes (Chisinau Airport 2014). This is a barrier of them to get more visitors. The airport capacity is still passable if compare with some African or Caribbean countries, and when tourists travel to Africa, the air ticket cost is relatively high rather than between Europe and Asia. Shortage of funds is an important barrier in tourism development in these countries, but also a common problem faced by all less-visited countries. For example, in some less-visited African countries, a shortage of funds African countries focused on three aspects: First, relatively heavy debt burden; Second, the domestic savings rate is very low; Third, the net inflow of external funds dwindling. This led African countries to a very limited capital investment in the tourism industry, some countries' tourism infrastructure is still not complete yet, poor accessibility, accommodation, reception etc. There are various problems directly affect the development of tourism in less-visited countries. At present, only a few domestic hotels can meet the international standard, most in small hotels and private hotel hospitality level and service capacity is still relatively low, and normally the package tours are operated in groups, not an individual backpacker, so the capacity of hotel is important. Although some of them have established national hotel associations, to coordinate and supervise the hotels, but the system is still relatively immature, the hotels in many cities and tourist areas have poor standard, the service quality and management level are relatively low, there is also outdated equipment and poor credibility (Dingnan Cai 2014).

In the year 2000 the World Tourism Organization published "Africa 2020 vision" report noted that the improvement of tourism infrastructure, tourism products, rich, and change the stereotype of Africa through promotion is the primary task of the future of tourism in Africa. In addition, in some countries, the development of information technology is low, the telecommunications industry is less underdeveloped, backward communication conditions, has become an important

factor that restrict the development of local tourism. For example, in eastern Africa, the submarine cable and the Internet have not communicated, therefore it is based on satellite Internet, the cost is quite expensive, and poor stability, which restricts the development of tourism in this region. (UNWTO 2000.)

3.3 Path of development

To improve the local industry in less-visited countries, there are several points as follows. First, local tourism authority may pay more attention to the development of tourism. Tourism is a pillar industry in these countries tends to have great potential which will promote local economic development, increase foreign exchange earnings, employment opportunity creations, economic development is an important key. However, some of them have awared the importance of tourism, paying attention to the development of tourism, also enacted a series of laws and regulations related to the tourism industry, and continue to increase investment, and allow private and foreign investment in tourism; but overall, some government departments did not work enough on the intensity, especially in the tourism policy formulation and planning regulations and changes, capital introduction, training and other aspects of tourism personnel to be improved. Less-visited countries should pay more attention to the development of tourism, drawing on each other's experience, especially on finance, human resource development policies and programs and so on. Second, these countries should broaden the financing channels, improve tourism infrastructure. For example, introduce some preferential policies to attract foreign capital to encourage the cooperation in the development of domestic natural recreation, adventure and sports tourism resources, attract foreign companies to participate in chain hotels, airport management, improve the management technology, hygiene condition and service quality. Third, visa is also important, simplify the procedure for foreign group package tours to apply the visa can attract more tourists, which belongs to diplomatic scope. Last but not least, security problems. Security risks have a very destructive

function for the image of a tourist destination, both for the safety of the destination image, or the value of traveller's experience, which may affect the potential tourist as some people get information about travel destinations from friends who have been somewhere. For travel agency, because the travel agency will be responsible for all group members, so if the destination is not safe enough the travel agency will take a greater risk, the operating cost will be increased due to the insurance price. Take some African countries as examples again. The first task in Africa is to take some effective measures to end civil wars in some African countries and unrest situation and achieve the peace. Steady is the basis of the development of tourism, only to achieve peace, after that tourism can become a core element of economic growth in Africa, sustainable development and social progress (Lipman). African countries should be able to provide various help for tourists, such as set up computer networking visitor information booths in public places and tourist attractions, visitors can simply press the "HELP" button and then get help from the police, medical and legal aspects. Tourist attractions, there are special tourist police patrols, the purpose is to make tourists feel particularly safe and be relaxed. Such as in a national park of Kenya, they have established a special police. (Nompumelelo, 2014)

4 PACKAGE TOURS IN CHINA

Tourism destination can be taken as a carrier of travelling, and tourists are the participants of travelling. The idea of tourists drives themselves to the place where they expect to go. This chapter will discuss about the general situation of package tours from China and Chinese package tours to less-visited countries and how to improve the package tour business.

4.1 Definition of package tour

Package Tour means a product organized and sold by a travel service company, it contains two or more services like accommodation, meals, transportsportations, tour guides and insurance are all included, and customers pay an all inclusive single price. The most package tours are in groups, if a package tour organized for an individual then it is called the customized tour. (Veronica 2011)

4.2 Outbound package tour market in China

Tourism is the development of the social productive forces to a certain stage in the product, reflecting the social development of a country or region. With the continuous improvement of the rapid development of China's economy and people's living standards, outbound tourism demand of Chinese is increasingly strong, outbound tourism has become a new consumption. On current and future trends, the prospect for China's outbound tourism market is bright. By the end of 2008, 136 countries and territories had officially become China's outbound tourism destination. (Jianguo & Xiaoming 2009)

By the end of November 2014, the number of China Mainland outbound tourists was more than one hundred million, most popular destinations for Chinese tourists are in Asia, 89.5% tourists traveled to Asian neighbour countries, Korea is the most-visited country by Chinese tourists. Europe occupied 3.5% and America occupied 2.7%, Oceania occupied only 1.1%. (China National Tourism Administration 2014)

With the improving of tourism e-commerce, some experts say that traditional travel agencies are gradually being marginalized, and in the tourism industry, there was a strong pessimism. For sure, with the development of network and e-commerce, hotel reservations, air tickets booking, tickets, holiday packages can be booked online, it takes customers from traditional travel agency. E-commerce makes the tourists' trip easier but it comes as a rival of traditional travel agencies. For example, in world wide, there are Skyscanner which is for air tickets booking and Booking.com for hotel booking, they have Chinese service, and China also has its own platforms which are like Ctrip.com and Qunar.com. This kind of online business is a competitor to traditional travel agency. (Thesis Web 2014)

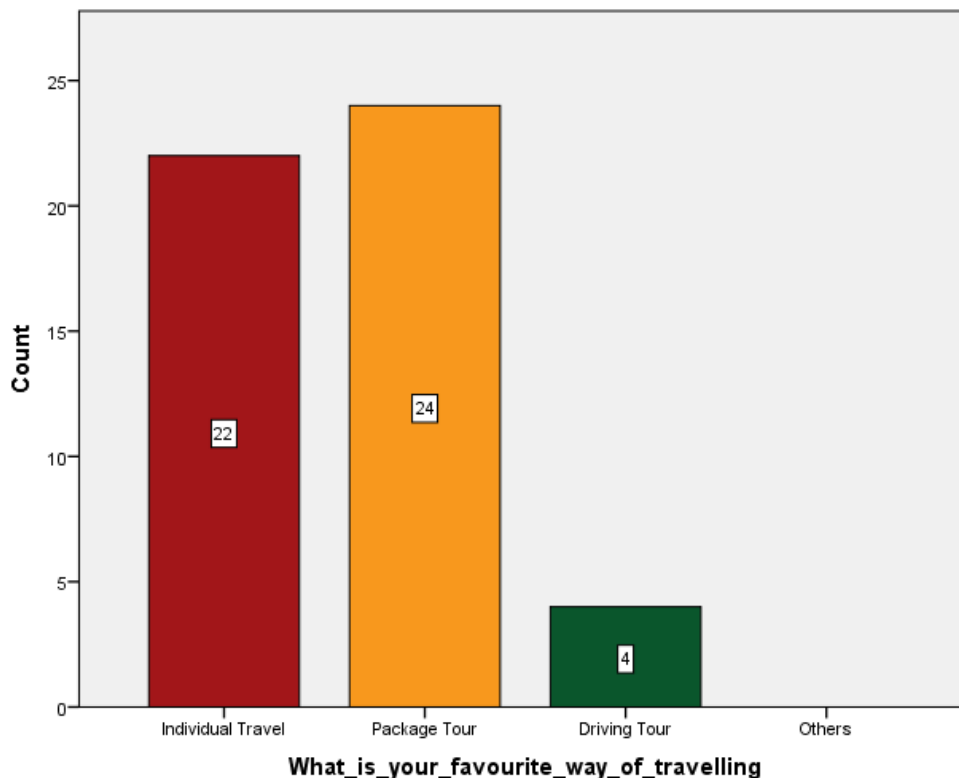
Most outbound package tours in China are in groups. Firstly, group tour has more visa-free destinations, which means a fixed amount of tourists do not need to obtain the visa for entering a country, for example, Russian and some French overseas territories, in the year 2012, Russian and China signed an agreement about mutual exemption of visa for group tours (Huanqiu.com). Chinese citizens need visa to travel to EU area, when apply a tourist visa, some people feel lazy to go to embassy and prepare documents by themselves, then they may choose go to Europe with a travel agency, which can make them be more relaxed. Secondly, most older people in China do not have any English language skills, it is easy for them to travel with a tour guide in a foreign country. After a tour arrives in an overseas destination, especially somewhere far from China, people usually travel not only one destination, here travel agency will schedule the entire itinerary for the entire group, which saves the energy of tourists on planning their routes, booking hotels and buying tickets. The most

important thing is travelling in group can save money, when a travel agency books hotels and tickets is different from an individual booking, travel agencies can make every deal as wholesale, which could be a cheaper price.

4.3 Operate package tour to less-visited countries

A package tour is produced by a tour operator which connects several elements of a trip together, normally, these elements include transportation companies like bus, ferry or flight companies, tourist service like local tour guide, pick-up and accommodation companies like hotels or hostels, after packing all those elements by a tour operator, a package tour will be sold to customers through distribution channels, a distribution channel could be the call center, internet or a travel agent. The basic elements of an inclusive tour are aircraft reservation, accommodation booking, airport shuttle and insurance.

The most important element about organizing package tour to less-visited countries from China is to use the favourable conditions in less-visited destinations as much as possible, because less-visited destinations have their own unique disadvantage as talked in previous chapter. For example, in last chapter shows the competition from e-commerce to traditional travel agency is fierce, but when implementing a trip to a less-visited destination, it will be harder than implementing a trip to a popular destination, because there are more unknowns than in popular destination for example travellers may have questions about visa, vaccines and security, these unknowns provide opportunities to travel agencies, which means travel agency could be a reliable operator for those tourists who want to visit less-visited destination, travel agency should get in touch with a local tour company in destination first in order to get more reliable support about local situation. Due to the result of the survey made by the author, Chinese people prefer to travel with package group tours rather than individual trip.



GRAPH 1. Favourite way of travelling

As we could see from Graph 1, In total 50 respondents, there are 22 of them who prefer to travel individually, 24 of them prefer to travel with package tours organized by travel agencies, the rest 4 prefer to travel by driving, driving tour could also be organized by a travel service company, for example, there is an advertisement about driving tours to Sri Lanka.

Normally there are no any direct flights from China to less-visited destinations, so a transfer in a hub airport might be needed, it means Chinese tourists need at least two flights to arrive the destination country. So here for first step, there is a high cost for air tickets, but if travelling with a group package tour by travel agency, tourists can save costs, because travel agency can get a special offer from airline companies as they purchase a wholesale. For booking the air tickets, the choices are not as many as fly to those popular destinations, for example, fly from Shanghai to Paris, there is a

daily direct flight, but if fly from China to Palau there is not direct flight, passenger may transfer in Japan or Singapore, the cost is high. It is easier to get a cheaper offer for travel organizer, because each airline companies know they are in a fierce marketing competition, they also need to create opportunities for finding a business partner, even some airline companies offer chartered flight for a travel agency, for instance, there is a direct chartered flight from Vaasa to Canary Islands. But it is different when it comes to less-visited countries, as mentioned above, there are not many air routes to reach some countries, so there are few choices when book the air tickets, or the air route is monopolized by a national owned airline company, the cost is more expensive, also the capacity of the aircraft, due to the airport lanes and passenger flow volume, the size of aircrafts might be small, for example, if fly to Balkan countries like Montenegro, Albania or BiH, the biggest aircraft to those destinations is Airbus A319 or others with the same capacity, most aircrafts have just 80~100 seats, so few seats cause higher price (Michael, 2014). China is a big country, when travelling abroad from Northern China, passengers have to leave from Beijing, and it takes time, now some travel agencies are starting to organize outbound tour from capital cities of each province to some exotic destinations by chartered flights, they could open up more routes.

For accommodation, it is the same, the package tour can not only provide a hosting place but also a cheaper price, because they always have long term cooperation with the hotel or holiday village. Travel to less-visited countries with a group tour together is also safer, the travel agencies who offer group package tours know more about situations in any particular places in destination countries, the most time, the tour will visit the destination in a group led by a local guide, so those individual criminals may not think of you, the tour guide will also warn the group members where they could go and where they should avoid, the risk is reduced.

It is also worth noting that visa restriction affects the way of travelling, some less-visited countries put a very complex visa application procedure into force, while

some most-visited countries are simplifying the visa procedure for Chinese citizens, and the visa application fee for those countries is also high, so when the travel agency arranges the tour, the total price for tourist will also be high, because the visa application fee is also included in total price, for other documents, a invitation letter is needed for some countries, like some countries from Eastern Europe, so the travel agencies also need to find an authorized local tour operator to get the invitation letter, most travel agencies who offer tour routes to less-visited countries have built a long term cooperation relation with a authorized local travel service enterprises, not only because of visa invitation letter or accommodation, but also for the security problem, every new destination is new for foreigners also for travel agencies. Some countries also support visa-free policy to group tours of Chinese citizens, for example, Russia supports visa-free policy to authorized Chinese group tours up to 6 persons (Russian Embassy in China). All of these elements help to increase the profit of travel agencies.

5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the empirical part of this thesis, quantitative research method was used. The analysis process contains statistical method, the report includes several graphs and tables, which could give readers a more visualized and detailed description of the analysis results. All graphs relating to statistics were done by the software SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), which enables the researchers to conduct statistical analyses of quantitative data (Gayle 2001, 303).

5.1 Quantitative research method

Quantitative methods emphasis on objective measurements and numerical analysis of data collected through polls, questionnaires or surveys. Quantitative research focuses on gathering numerical data and generalizing it across groups of people. In this thesis, the data collection will be done by a descriptive survey, which enables the author to gather the data and information about the characteristics of tourists. Some data will also be collected from other sources objectively such as books and e-books.

Two types of research are involved, one is face-to-face discussion, the author invited some tourism students to discuss the topic, and the other type is on-site survey by distributing questionnaires. The survey took place at a large travel agency in Shenyang, Liaoning Province, North Eastern China. When a customer visits the office of the travel agency was invited to fill the questionnaires, this helps to collect more responses which are from people who are interested in travelling. As a travel agency is a distribution channel as the point where package tours are organized and sold to customers, so it is like an on-site survey which is the most used form of survey in tourism (Gayle 2001, 239).

5.2 Survey

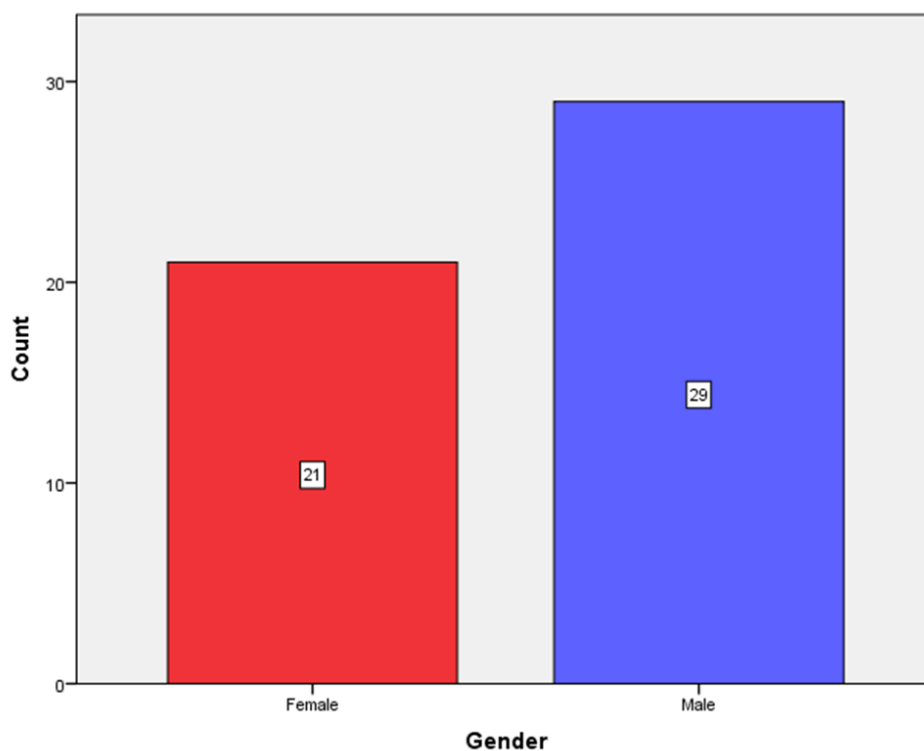
A survey has been done by distributing questionnaires, thus it is a written survey, in the questionnaire, most questions are open-ended with choices provided, choice questions can save participants' time, the questionnaire will be interviewer-completed, the respond rate might be lower than those completed by the author, but the people who would like to fill the questionnaire by themselves would show more interest on this topic (Gayle 2001, 263). The questions are relating to people's characteristics about travelling abroad and it has been done in Shenyang, China. As China became the number one tourism source market in the world (UNWTO), thus it is important to focus on the opinions and suggestions of Chinese people.

The author collected some useful information about different aspects through the questionnaire. The questionnaire contains some descriptive hypothesis questions after basic personal information as the key of variables. For the design of the questionnaire, after all choice questions, there is a place for comments or suggestions at the bottom of the questionnaire, up to the wish of respondent, the author could get some subjective opinions and open comments about the tourists. This is a little bit qualitative, but qualitative is sometimes relevant to quantitative as overlapping. For the questions, all questions are shortened, and they are single focused, some questions contain a rating scale to measure the attitudes of respondents on certain topics, in addition, due to some participants may not understand the definition of "less-visited country", so the questions are designed in order to get opinions from the side. (Gayle 2001, 244-259)

To enhance the response rate, the invitation of the questionnaire is short, and the introduction could tell the participants about the purpose of the survey. The time for filling the form was considered. The questionnaire is anonymous.

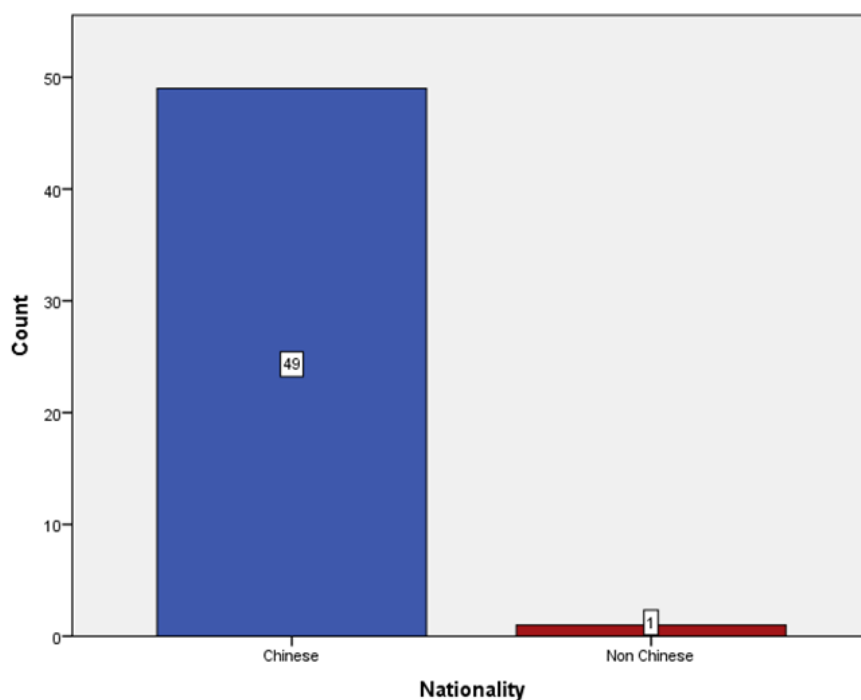
5.3 Analysis and findings

The survey has been done by distribution questionnaires to people who have outbound travel experience or people who show their interests in outbound travel, in order to get information about potential marketing information about organizing tours to visit less-visited destinations from China. The questionnaires were designed to invite people with all kinds of background to fill in. All the graphs and tables are made according to the result from 50 respondents which equals to 50 questionnaires that are chosen. The graphs are listed by questions order below in this chapter and reflect the situation of participants' options for each question, the description, explanation and discussion are enclosed right after each graph.



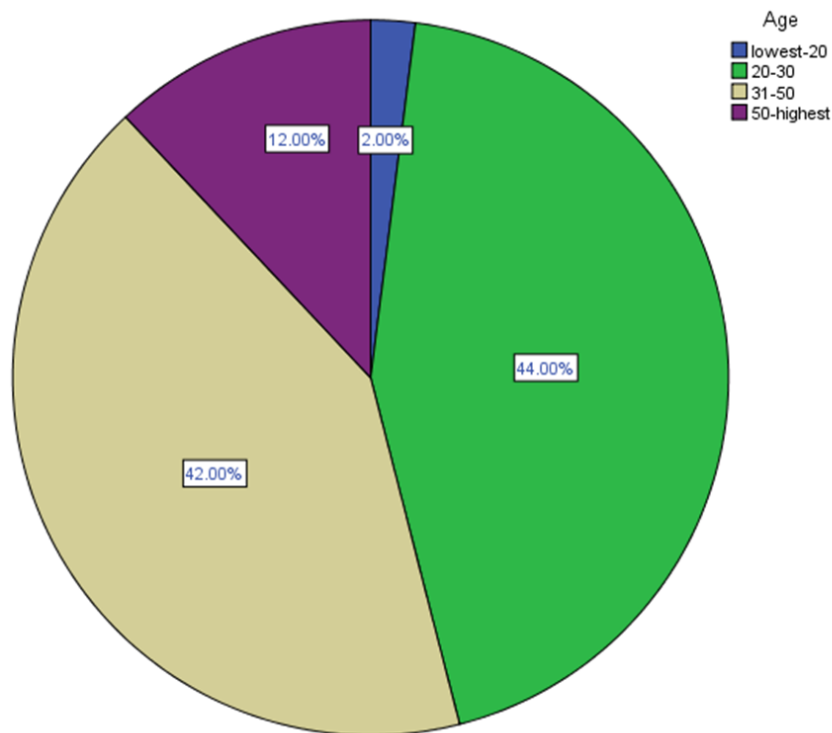
GRAPH 2. Gender of respondents

As graph 2 shows in total 50 participants, there are 29 males and 21 females, which means females occupied 42% and males occupied 58%. According to this chart, it shows that in China, male may show more interests on travelling than females especially participate this survey to share their opinions and ideas about the topic of visiting less-visited countries.



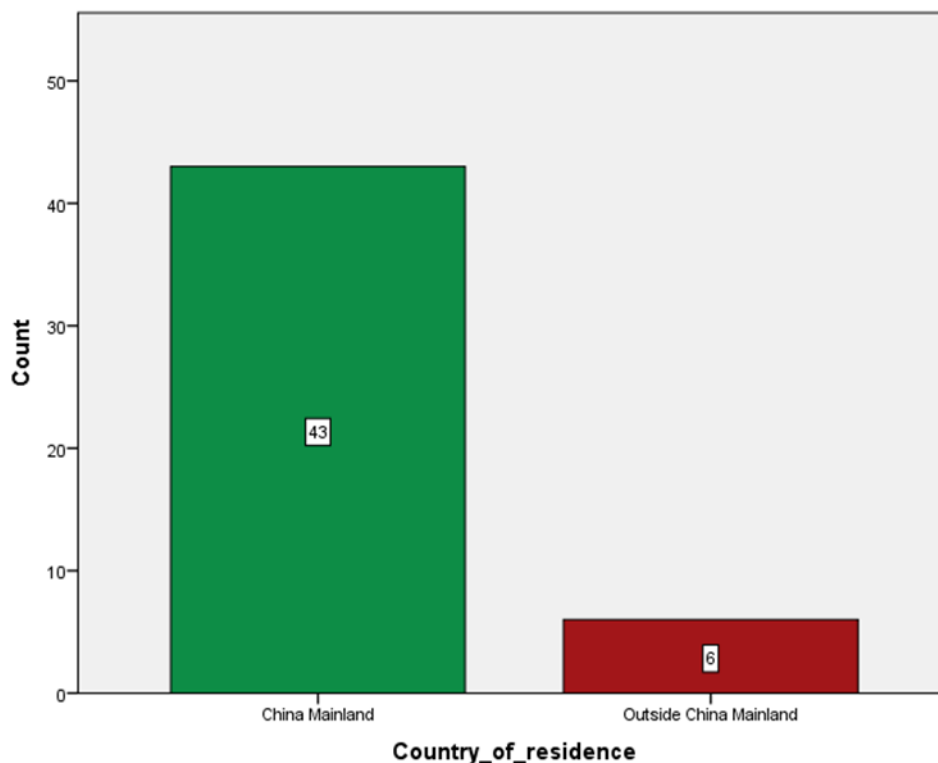
GRAPH 3. Nationality of participants

For nationality, 49 respondents are Chinese and 1 is Korean (Graph 3), the most long term foreign residents in China are South Koreans, most of them live in North Eastern China, Beijing and Shanghai. Due to the regional culture, customer and history, the perspective on travelling between Chinese and South Korean people are almost the same, as the author had internship experience in both China and South Korea, the author noticed that the operating of travel agencies in these two countries are also quite similar.



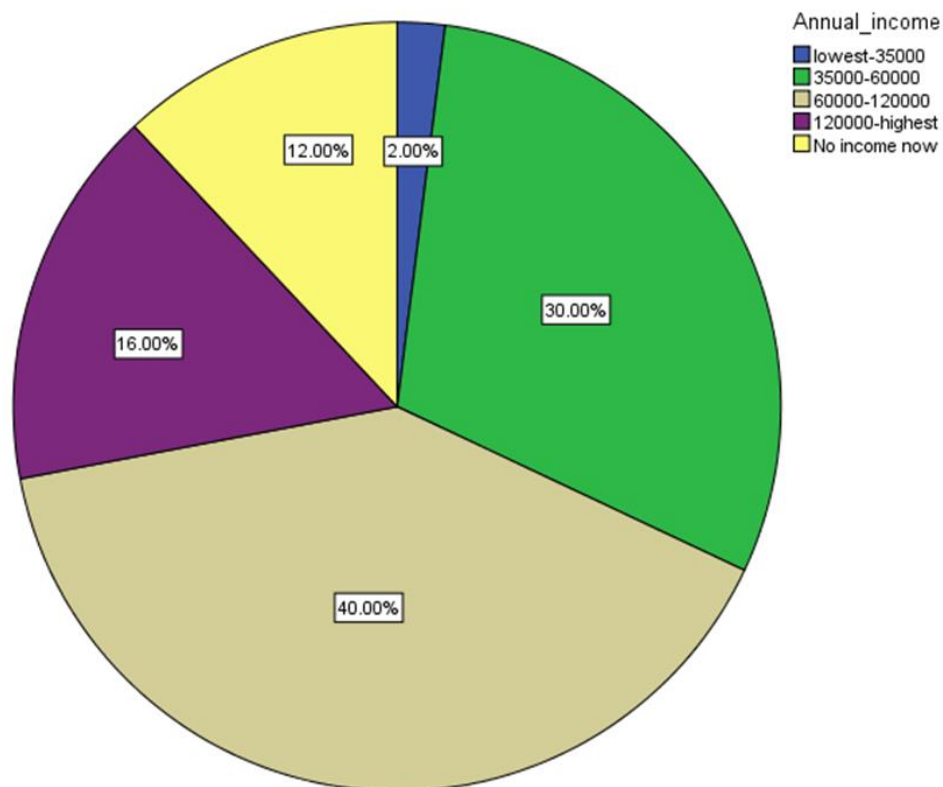
GRAPH 4. Percentage of age

In this pie chart (Graph 4), the green color stands for the age group between 20 and 30, it occupied the most portion of the pie as 44%; grey color stands for age group between 31 and 50, it occupied 42% of the pie, almost the same with age group between 20 and 30. This reveals the most people go to travel in China are young people and job holders, young people like to go travelling because they have more passions as they are young, middle age people like to travel because they have more income.



GRAPH 5. Rate of residence place

Graph 5 reveals there are 43 out of 50 respondents live in China mainland. 6 of 50 live outside China mainland, some of them live in Europe and some of them live in neighbouring countries like Japan and South Korea. People who live in Europe have visited more countries than people who live in Asia, because Chinese citizens need a visa to enter Schengen area, but those who has a Schengen visa, they can easily visit most European countries, and European Continent is smaller than other continents, it takes shorter travelling time. For people who live in Europe, almost all of them would like to visit Asian destination in question 13 which was listed in this chapter later part. Because people live in Europe want to try different taste of travelling thus South Eastern Asian countries would be very good choices, such as Palau and Thailand, more people chose Thailand than Palau, because geographically Thailand is a more comprehensive tourism destination than Palau as it has more different types of tourist attractions.



GRAPH 6. Annual income of respondents (in CNY)

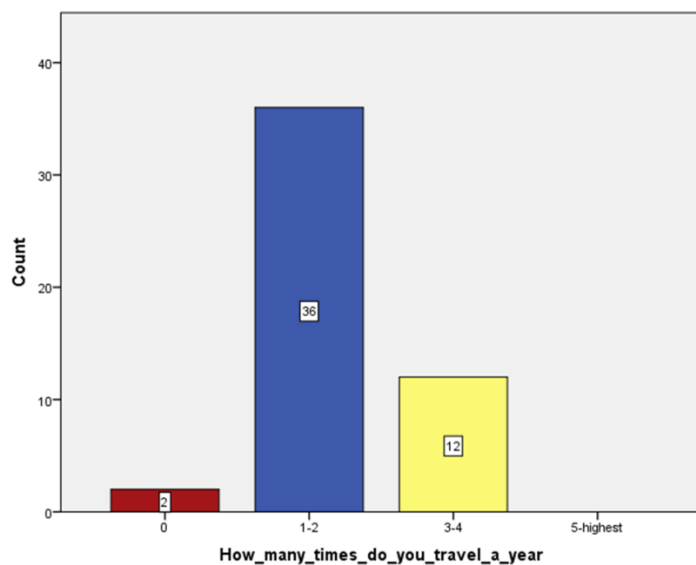
Graph 6 shows about personal income affects the choices of tourism destinations, even it is the most important factor when make a travelling plan, because the budget is basis of a trip. Most respondents' annual income is between 60000 and 120000 Yuan per year, which is about 9600 to 19200 US Dollars, it occupied 40%. The green color stands for annual income between 35000 to 60000, which equals to 5600 to 9600 US Dollars, it occupied 30%. People whose annual incomes between 9600 to 19200 US Dollars wish to travel to both Europe and Asia destinations, but people who have 5600 to 9600 US Dollars more like wish to travel in only Asia because it is almost half of the price for travelling to Europe. For purple color which occupied 16%, it stands for people who have more than 120000 Yuan income per year, which is about 20000 US Dollars, most of those people are interested in some less-visited countries and some special special landform like Sahara Desert, because most of them have travelled many popular destinations, they would like to see something different and

unique, they could be a good target group for organizing package tours to less-visited destinations.

Table 1. Favourite tourism theme frequencies

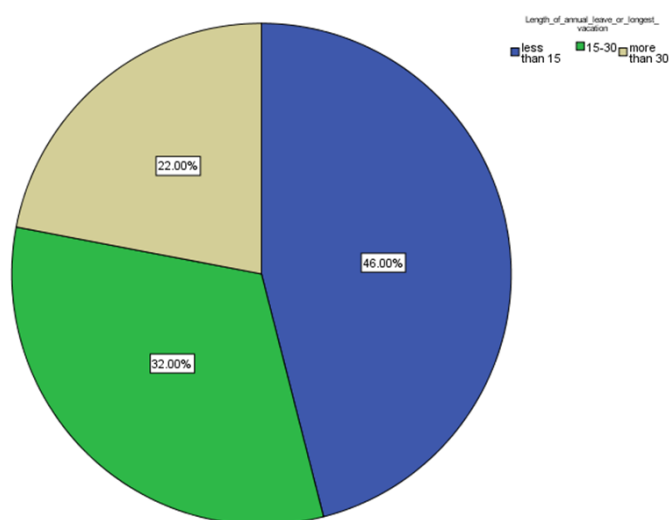
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Favourite theme	Culture	8	7.3%	16.0%
	Sport	7	6.4%	14.0%
	Relaxation	39	35.8%	78.0%
	Adventure	4	3.7%	8.0%
	Nature	34	31.2%	68.0%
	Shopping	16	14.7%	32.0%
	Others	1	0.9%	2.0%
Total		109	100.0%	218.0%

There were total 6 tourism themes provided for respondents to choose, there are culture, sport, relaxation, adventure, nature and shopping (Table 1). As we could see from the table, most people chose relaxation and nature, which is 35.8% and 31.2%. Relaxation and nature are followed by shopping, which is 14.7%, Chinese people adore shopping, almost all hub airports in Europe have Chinese-speaking shopping guide, in Seoul, South Korea, there are some duty-free shopping centers in the city center, there are Chinese-speaking clerks in each shop. People who are interested in sport and adventure are very few, just 6.4% and 3.7%.



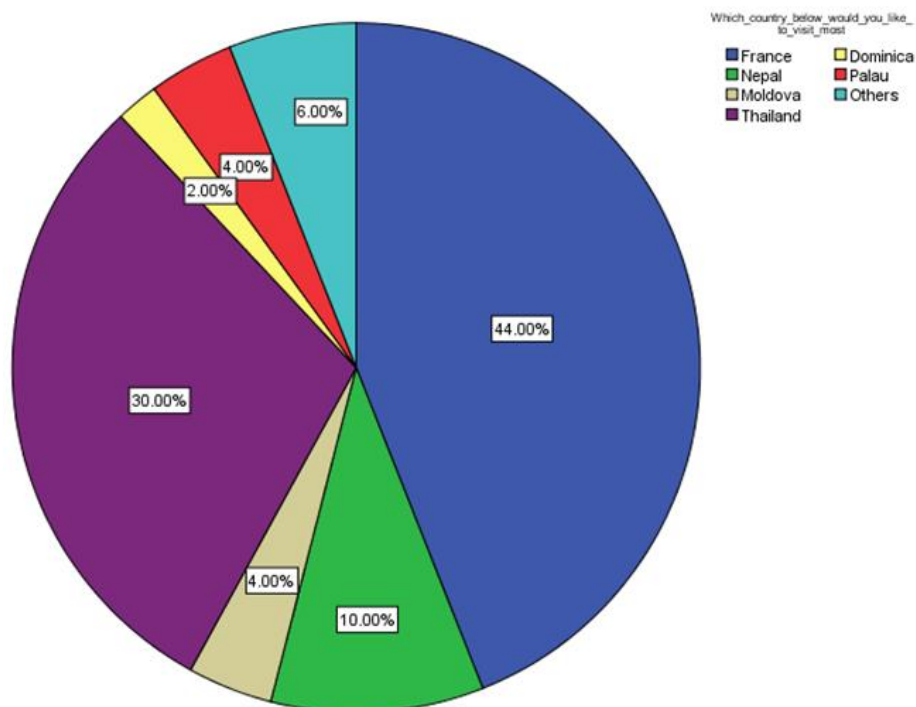
GRAPH 7. Rate of travel frequency

Graph 7 shows the travel frequency of respondents, green bar shows that 36 out of 50 people travel 1 to 2 times every year, pink bar shows 12 of them travel 3 to 4 times a year, 2 of them almost do not travel, none of them travels more than 5 times or more. The frequency of respondents is referred to the length of annual leave or vacation of respondents which we could see from the following pie chart (Graph 8).



GRAPH 8. Percentage of annual longest vacation people have

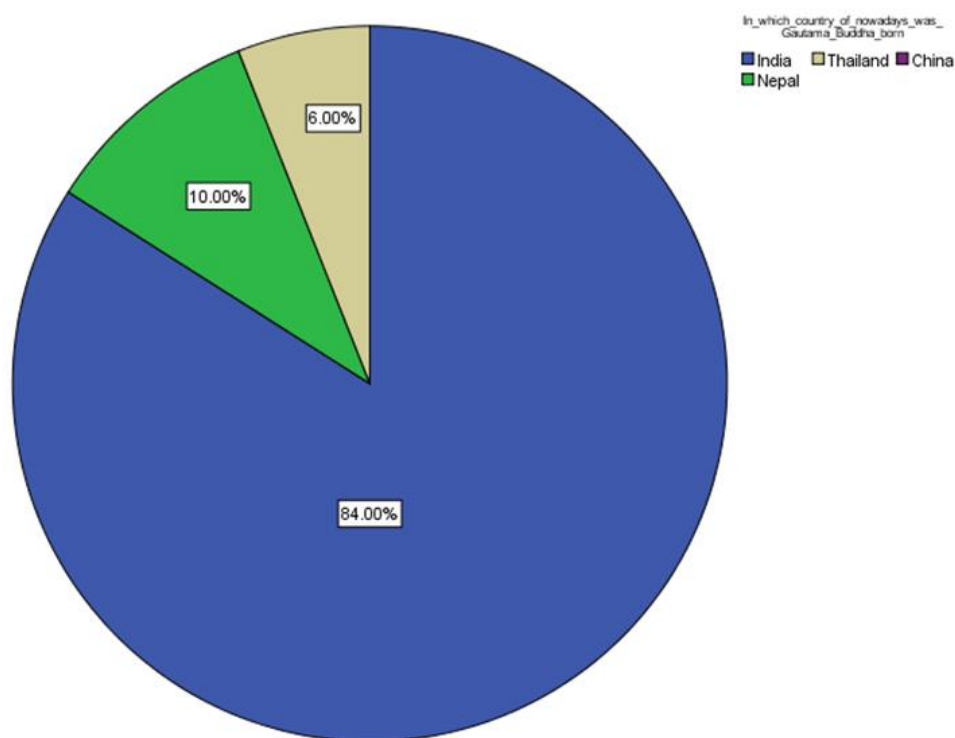
To have a look of Graph 7 and Graph 8 together, we could see the travel frequency of respondents is in direct proportion to the length of their annual leaves, 46% respondents have their longest holiday less than 15 days per year. So those people normally travel inside China which means domestic trips or travel to neighbouring Asian countries. Most people in North Eastern China choose South Korea as their first time outbound destination, because there is very frequent direct flight connection and it takes only 1.5 hours. People who have annual leave more than 30 days are mostly students, they have summer and winter vacations for about 2 months for each season, they have enough time to make a long range trip, but they may not have enough money.



GRAPH 9. Rate of favourite destinations

From this pie (Graph 9), we could see most people wish to visit France, Thailand was

ranking second, followed by Nepal. 44% people wish to visit France, 30% people wish to visit Thailand, these two destinations are quite famous worldwide, France is the most-visited European country and Thailand is one of the most popular destinations in Asia. For less-visited countries Palau, Moldova and Dominica, they occupied 10% in total. 6% people chose others which are like Russia, Italy and Germany etc. From this chart we could know the visitors that a destination received are in direct proportion to tourist's interest index on this destination.

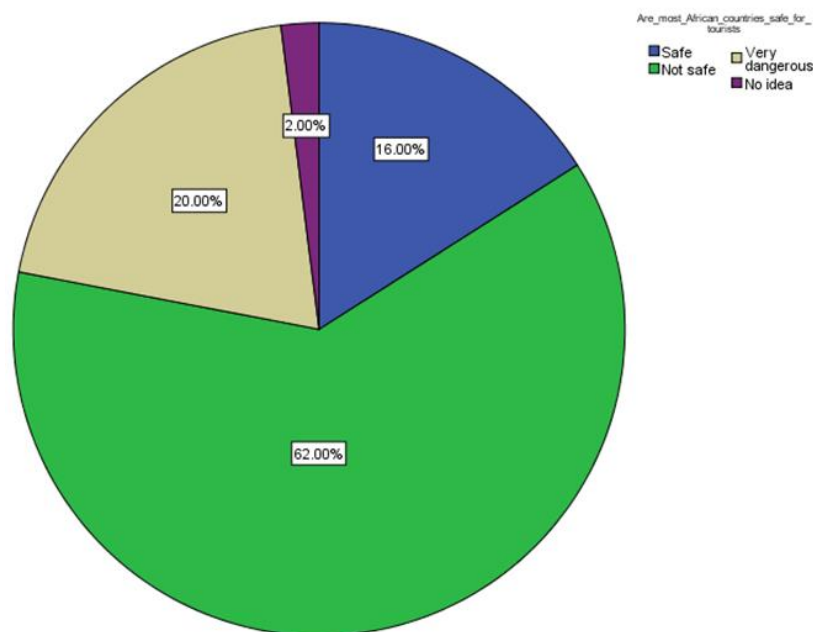


GRAPH 10. Idea about the birth place of Gautama Buddha

This pie chart (Graph 10) could explain an important reason why less-visited countries are less-visited, the author had times of chat with Nepali people about tourism in Nepal, the author was told the tourism industry in Nepal is not as good as expected, they could have more tourists. Many people think that Gautama Buddha was born in India of today, but actually Gautama Buddha was born in Lumbini, Nepal.

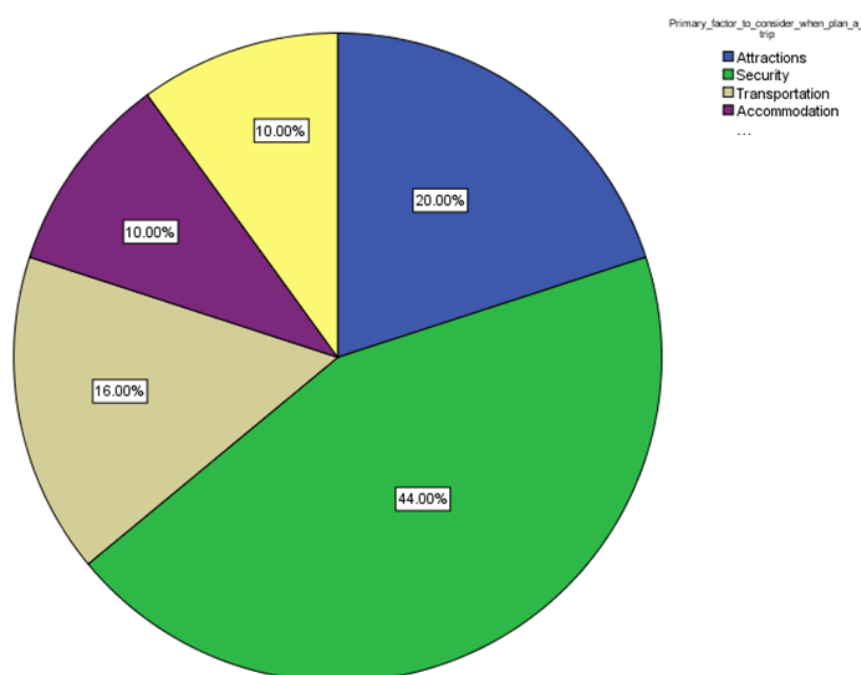
The author wanted to test it out, thus we have this pie here. 84% respondents think Gautama Buddha was born in India of nowadays and 6% respondents think it is Thailand of nowadays, which means about 90% respondents do not know the right place of where Gautama Buddha was born, only 10% respondents know about the fact. This means many people who wish to visit the birth place of Gautama Buddha may go to another wrong destination.

From this case we could know some less-visited countries do not have a good channel to distribute the tourism information about themselves, they could have a better way to express the information about the attractions in their countries which showing tourists a rich scope of tourism resources . That is also one reason why Thailand is popular, Thailand is relatively a big country with abundant tourism resources, which contains different tourism themes, like beach, forest and city surfing.



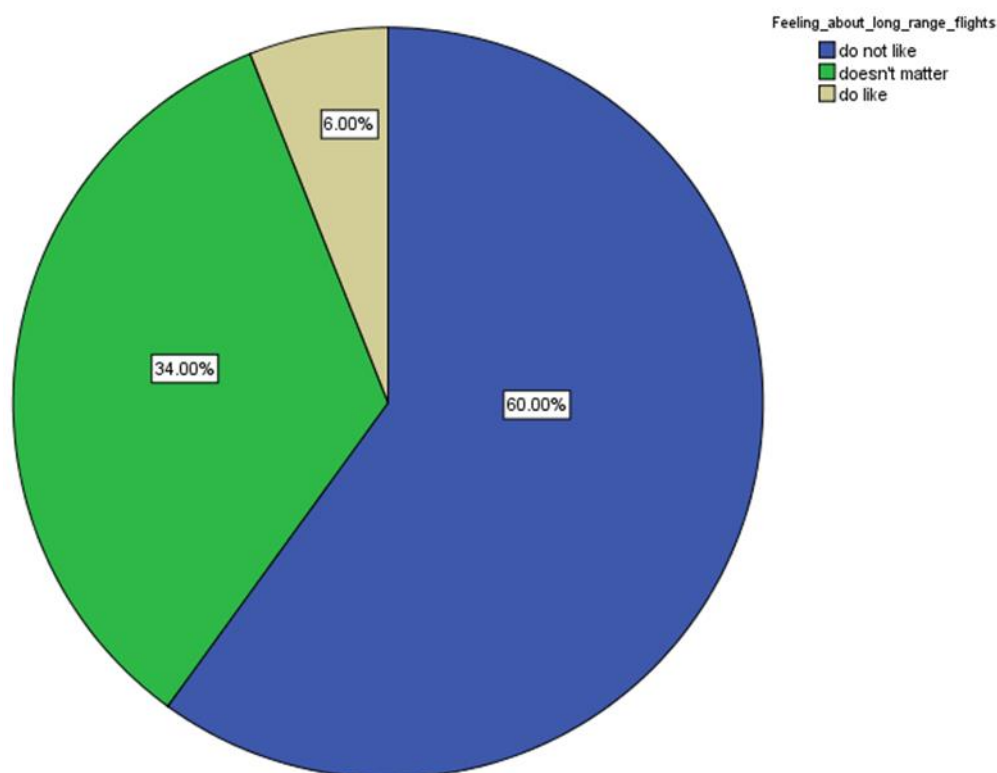
GRAPH 11. Are most African countries safe?

Graph 11 reveals that 62% of respondents think that Africa is not safe in general, 20% respondents think it is very dangerous, only 16% respondents think it is safe for travelling, 2% respondents did not have any idea about the question. Travelling should be a experience to relax and enjoy, most travellers do not want risk anything of them even for seeing incredible beautiful scenery. The following graph is about the primary factor that travellers consider when they plan a trip.



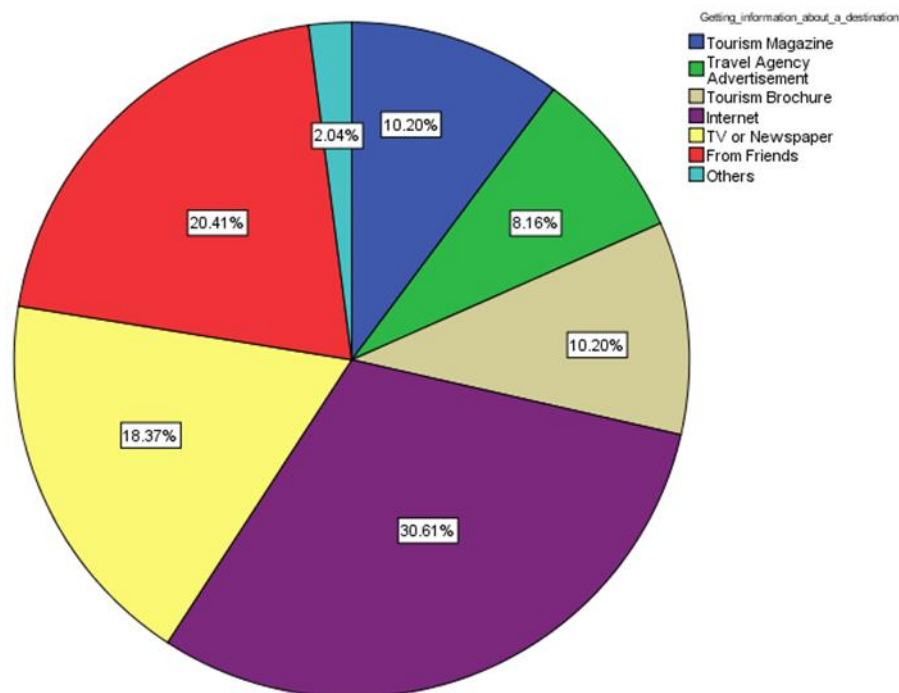
GRAPH 12. Rate of primary factor to be considered when planning trips

Graph 12 shows most respondents (44%) will take security to consideration first when they plan trips. This could be one challenge that some African countries that have potential tourism market are facing to. People have one-sided stereotype about Africa and this enables African countries losing tourists. But it is true most African countries are not steady if compare to Europe, but for seeing the amazing attractions and unique landscape, it is still possible for travel agencies to organize trips to Africa continent, and this may attract some tourists as potential customers.



GRAPH 13. Feeling about long range flights

From this pie we could see 60% respondents do not like long range flight, most of them have experience about long range flight; 34% respondents feel it does not matter; only 6% respondents like long range flight. To some destinations especially less-visited destinations, long range flights and transfer are needed, so the travel agency could provide one solution as charter flight which is cheaper and more comfortable. This could be strength of travel agencies, because travel agencies can play a role as an organizer to call all people who want to visit certain places to be together.



GRAPH 14. Proportion of way to get tourism information

From Graph 14 we could see most respondents get information about tourism through internet which is 30.61% followed by from friends which is 20.41%, third one is from TV or newspaper, this provides the information to tourism boards of less-visited countries could take media as a channel to expand their tourism market and promote their tourism industry, it could also indicate travel agencies how to popularize their product, for example, when they open up a new route, they could have some advertisement on internet more than on TV or newspaper.

The last column of the questionnaire was asking comments and suggestions from respondents, in order to get more idea about respondents and also provide a way for respondents to present their points of view. Most respondents left it blank, but there are 2 respondents wrote something, one wrote he hopes there could be more countries provide visa-free policy to Chinese citizens. This is a good comment, because visa is an important thing to be considered when plan an outbound trip, especially travel individually, as China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs is also working hard on getting

more visa-free benefits for Chinese citizens, in recent year, the number of countries that provide visa-free or visa-on-arrival policy to Chinese citizens is increasing. Especially for group tours, this is a good opportunity for Chinese travel agencies, they could arrange more package group tours as new products. The other respondent wrote that he really loves visiting less-visited countries and he also chose the right answer about where Gautama Buddha was born, he has not been Nepal yet but he showed his interest about visiting Nepal.

6 CONCLUSION

Through the research study the author found that the development of package tour to less-visited countries is influenced by many factors from both tourist source and travel destination, and there is a large room of development to promote the business of package tour to less-visited countries departs from China. For the entire research study, both theoretical and empirical study were applied, theoretical part was done by studying books, e-books and internet articles, imperical part was done by a questionnaire survey in Shenyang, China, which belongs to quantitative research method. As a part of empirical study, the questionnaire survey result shows some tourists have strong interests to visit such kind of destinations and from theoretical study, the auther found a lot of relating information to the development in less-visited destinatons. This chapter will conclude from both the source market side and the destination side based on both empirical and theoretical studies.

For less-visited tourism destinations, the main barriers are basically tourism related infrastructure, transportation and public security. Most less-visited countries do not have direct flight connections with China and the capacity of local airports is limited. When tourists make domestic trip in a less-visited country, the road condition is also not as good as tourists expected. Some less-visited countries do not have a steady public security due to less-developed local economy, this may leave a sterotype to tourists and shrink back at the sight of certain countries. Those kinds of destinations also have some other problems, like poor hygiene condition for dinning section, in some Sub-Sahara tropical countries, tourists have to receive certain vaccine injections before they go there to prevent themselves from infectious diseases, this increases the burden of tourists when planning trips. To improve the tourist industry in less-visited, local government may play the most important role, local government should first contribute a steady political environment and put more relating laws into force to enable the destinations to have good public security situation. Local authorities could

also attract foreign investments in order to develop both local tourism industry and local economy, they can also promote and broadcast their local attractions and travel products which are not famous through some Chinese medias as channels, in order to change the stereotype of tourists, because the world is changing everyday and every country is developing everyday also. Local travel guidance service could build cooperation with tour operators in China, this could become a key to open up a route to certain destinations by Chinese tour operators, for some countries local tour provider can help Chinese tour operator to get an invitation letter for applying visa.

For tour operators in China, the most important points of offering package tour products to less-visited countries are the price, stereotype of tourists and target customer groups. Because of the inconveniences of transportation to less-visited destinations from China, package tours to such kind of destinations are usually more expensive than to popular destinations, even tourists can use the same amount of money to travel more than one popular destinations as there are easy to access between some neighbouring popular tourism countries, tour operators could skip over this barrier by cooperating with airline companies in order to have direct chartered flights, airline companies would be joyful if they can meet a double-win situation through this way. In addition, some less-visited countries have unique features for tourists, from the survey, it reveals that people who have special hobbies like scuba diving or mountain climbing would more like wish to travel to some less-visited countries for those unique resorts. For getting more customers tour operators in China should set up specific customer groups by catching the features and potential strengths of tourism destinations, for instance, if a place has good resource for diving, they could then offer customized tours for scuba diving lovers, this kind of customer also have higher income and are able to afford the trip. Another advantage is local travelling cost inside less-visited countries always be lower than popular destinations although the transportation cost is high, Chinese tour operators could find out the balance between flight costs and local travelling costs, this can even help tour operators to have a higher profit than other normal routes. To eliminate the negative

stereotype of tourists about some destinations from old-time, Chinese tour operators should have more related guides, brochures, newsletters and distribute them in their chain agencies, this could make tourists understand more about the up to date tourism information on numerous destinations, and clear up misunderstandings. This may also be a weakness element in the operation of most tour operators in China.

To conclude, less-visited countries have huge potential strengths and opportunities to develop their tourism industry through multi-pronged approach. Tour operators in China also have more channels to launch new travel routes to less-visited countries by various ways. The author wish both developments in less-visited countries and Chinese tour operators a bright future and hope more people can discover and enjoy more amazing and untouched things in those less-visited countries.

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APPENDIX

The purpose of this survey is to collect the information and opinions of people about travelling to less-visited countries, and it will reflect the situation of tourists visiting less-visited countries. The questionnaire below will be a part of my thesis, all the answers will be concluded into charts and analyzed. It may take you around 10 minutes to fill in the questionnaire. Your participation will be greatly appreciated.

Tianhe Lu -- tianhe.lu@cou.fi

Degree Programme in Tourism

Centria University of Applied Sciences

1. Gender				
Female <input type="checkbox"/>		Male <input type="checkbox"/>		
2. Nationality				
3. Age				
Under 20 <input type="checkbox"/>	20 to 30 <input type="checkbox"/>	31 to 50 <input type="checkbox"/>	over 50 <input type="checkbox"/>	
4. Country of Residence				
5. Education Background				
High School <input type="checkbox"/>	Bachelor <input type="checkbox"/>	Master and above <input type="checkbox"/>		
6. Annual Income (in Chinese Yuan)				
Under 35000 <input type="checkbox"/>	35000 to 60000 <input type="checkbox"/>	60000 to 120000 <input type="checkbox"/>	Above 120000 <input type="checkbox"/>	
No Income Now <input type="checkbox"/>				
7. How much do you like to travel? (0 = not like, 5 = like very much)				
0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
8. How often do you travel? (times a year)				
0 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 to 2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 to 4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 and more <input type="checkbox"/>	
9. Which tourism theme do you prefer?				
Culture <input type="checkbox"/>	Sport <input type="checkbox"/>	Relaxation <input type="checkbox"/>	Adventure <input type="checkbox"/>	
Nature <input type="checkbox"/>	Shopping <input type="checkbox"/>	Others _____		
10. Have you ever travelled abroad? If not, go to question 13 please				
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>		No <input type="checkbox"/>		

<p>11. How many countries have you visited?</p> <p>Less than 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 to 15 <input type="checkbox"/> 16 to 30 <input type="checkbox"/> More than 30 <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>12. In which continent are most countries you have visited?</p> <p>Africa <input type="checkbox"/> Asia <input type="checkbox"/> Europe <input type="checkbox"/> Oceania <input type="checkbox"/> North America <input type="checkbox"/> South America <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>13. Which country below would you like to visit most?</p> <p>France <input type="checkbox"/> Nepal <input type="checkbox"/> Moldova <input type="checkbox"/> Thailand <input type="checkbox"/> Dominica <input type="checkbox"/> Palau <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Others _____</p>
<p>14. Have you visited Nepal?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>15. In which country of nowadays was Gautama Buddha born?</p> <p>India <input type="checkbox"/> Nepal <input type="checkbox"/> Thailand <input type="checkbox"/> China <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>16. Are you interested in visiting Sahara Desert?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>17. What is your favourite way of travelling?</p> <p>Individual Travel <input type="checkbox"/> Package Tour <input type="checkbox"/> Driving Tour <input type="checkbox"/> Others _____</p>
<p>18. How do you think about whether most African countries are safe for tourists?</p> <p>It is safe <input type="checkbox"/> It is not safe <input type="checkbox"/> It is very dangerous <input type="checkbox"/> I have no idea <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>19. Most of the time, I travel</p> <p>Alone <input type="checkbox"/> With friends <input type="checkbox"/> With family members <input type="checkbox"/> With colleagues <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>20. Do you have any hobbies such as safari, scuba diving, excursion or mountain-climbing?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>21. How do you feel about long-range flights, especially with transit?</p> <p>I do not like long flights <input type="checkbox"/> It doesn't matter <input type="checkbox"/> I like long flights <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>22. Normally, how much is your budget for an outbound package tour? (in Chinese Yuan)</p> <p>Less than 3000 <input type="checkbox"/> 3000 to 5000 <input type="checkbox"/> 5000 to 10000 <input type="checkbox"/> 10000 to 30000 <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>More than 30000 <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>23. Which primary factor do you consider when you plan a trip?</p> <p>Attractions <input type="checkbox"/> Security <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Accommodation <input type="checkbox"/> Price <input type="checkbox"/> Others _____</p>
<p>24. Normally, how do you get information about a destination</p> <p>Tourism Magazine <input type="checkbox"/> Travel Agency Advertisement <input type="checkbox"/> Tourism Brochure <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Internet <input type="checkbox"/> TV or Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> From Friends <input type="checkbox"/> Others _____</p>
<p>25. How long is your annual leave? Or longest vacation</p> <p>Less than 15 days <input type="checkbox"/> 15 to 30 days <input type="checkbox"/> More than 30 days <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Comments</p>