Su Duo

The Analysis of Global Tourism Boards' Chinese Websites

During the last decade, China's outbound tourism has increased rapidly, and China is now ranked as the biggest source market for international tourism in Asia. The number of Chinese tourists travelling abroad was less than 10 million in 1999 increasing convincingly to 46 million in 2009. Meanwhile, ITB Berlin 2010 indicated that social media is the most important tool in capturing new market shares. Internet is a great significant form of social media whilst China has the highest amount of Internet users, up by 28.9% compared to 2008. How efficiently did global tourism boards target Chinese travellers with the use of their Chinese websites, especially social media? The question brought the original intention for this study. The purpose of the study was to examine the current situation of tourism boards' official Chinese websites, identify typical mistakes and excellent examples from the analyzed samples, and extend the commission party's services as a future reference.

This study introduced the background of outbound tourism market, therefore China's outbound tourism development stages and consumer behaviour related literatures were researched. Based on Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Georg Arlt's criteria, eight groups of criteria were refined, specially adapted to current Chinese demand. Ranks of the surveyed websites were all primary data and were subject to quantitative and qualitative analysis.

This study discovered that outbound tourists from Mainland China held the fourth place in the world, taking into account international tourism expenditure. Still, many important tourism boards did not provide any Chinese-language in the official tourism websites. All together 115 official websites were visited, whose Chinese language content were graded including 38 NTOs and 29 DMOs. Half of top 20 on the ranking list were from Asian areas, and 70% of the analyzed websites did not reach 45% of the entire possible points. 38% of them did not have a social network while 45% made use of Facebook and Twitter that were unfortunately banned in Mainland China. Websites were differently graded mainly on account of the criteria namely "languages", "specific content", "topicality" and "interactivity".

PREFACE

This thesis is based upon studies conducted from February 2010 to January 2011 and is compiled in accordance with fulfilments of the requirements for the Bachelor's Degree in Tourism Management at Kajaani University of Applied Sciences, Finland. This thesis has been made solely by the author: Su Duo, with the help of valuable academic literatures that are listed as references at the end of this paper.

It is a pleasure for me to thank Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Georg Arlt, director of China Outbound Tourism Research Institute, for the proposal of the thesis topic and for his beneficial cooperation, contribution and inspiration.

I would like to express my gratitude to Liisa Mikkonen for her helpful support and advice in supervising my thesis.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADS	Approved Destination Status
COTRI	China Outbound Tourism Research Institute
CRO	Conversion Rate Optimization
CTW	Chinese Tourism Welcoming Award
DMO	Destination Management Organization
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
ITB	The International Tourism Bourse
MICE	Meeting, Incentive, Conference & Exhibition
NTO	National Tourism Organization
SEO	Search Engine Optimization
SNS	Social Networking Site
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNWTO	World Tourism Organization
USA	The United States of America
VFR	Visiting Friends and Relatives
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council

1 INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, China's outbound tourism has experienced increasing development and China is now ranked as the biggest source market for international tourism in Asia. The number of Mainland Chinese having ventured overseas has increased from less than 10 million in 1999 to 46 million in 2009. Although the global financial crisis and the H1N1 virus brought the global tourism industry down by 4-6% in international tourist arrivals in 2009, China is one of few source markets which continued to grow, up 4%, compared to the year before and spent some $42 billion abroad. It is estimated that by 2010, approximately 54 million Mainland Chinese will have travelled abroad, which indicates a huge market for global tourism destinations. (China Tourism Academy 2009, 8-13; China Tourism Academy 2010, 322) (Jing Daily 2010)

Across the world, hotels, shops, restaurants and travel agents, hospitality entrepreneurs and numerous tourism organizations, are salivating at the prospect. The fast growing market of China is receiving more and more attention. On 12 March, 2010, the world's largest tourism fair in Berlin (ITB) was held. One of the events regarding the China Outbound Tourism Marketing in Convention Destination was organized for tourism professionals, who indicated social media as the most important tool in capturing new market shares (Gudwin 2010). The Internet is a very important form of social media, especially since the number of Internet users in China increased rapidly to 384 million at the end of 2009, up 28.9% compared to one year before. Though the gaps in distribution among provinces are noticeable, the proportional Internet density has increased to 28.9% from 22.6%, affirming that it has grown steadily (Tencent 2010, 3). The number of citizens using the Internet as their main source to get tourist information accounted for 66.7% of China's total (Chinavestor 2010). Nevertheless, it is essential to recognize that Chinese language is widely applied not only to computers in China loaded with Chinese operating systems, but also to the majority of Chinese people, even seasoned travellers who can only or prefer using the Chinese language (China Business Network 2009, 9). Therefore, for the tourist destinations seeking to attract Chinese international travellers, it is crucial to have a Chinese website.

This research was commissioned by Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Georg Arlt, director of COTRI China Outbound Tourism Research Institute. The institute is located in Heide of northern Germany where the author received practical training and the thesis topic afterwards. The

purpose of this paper is diverse: firstly it is regarded as a platform to apply tourism and business theories to the current important market growth-China outbound tourism; secondly it is the first research to understand the efficiency of social media by global NTOs and some DMOs while China has highest amount of Internet users. Additionally it is a future reference to extend COTRI's services such as potential applications for CTW awards, in-depth Premium database, consulting, VIP clinic, and other services.

2 ANALYSIS OF OUTBOUND TOURISM MARKET

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) 2020 market survey (World Tourism Organization 2006, 5-9) predicts that China will be the leading destination as inbound market and the fourth largest in outbound destinations with 100 million tourists. This can be achieved earlier than estimated due to recent trends in the outbound figures of China. It has been said that China is one of those places that once one begins to understand it, he/she cannot get it out of the head (Gudwin 2010). However, without a background understanding of China's tourism market and their consumers, whose behaviour is completely different from that of Europeans, it is easy to get confused about how to make marketing activities in an effective manner (Travel Link Daily 2009). In this chapter, a brief introduction will outline China's outbound tourism market and how social media marketing works influentially to reach the Chinese market.

2.1 Impact of tourism in the world

Tourism is a major drive in the economy of the world and an activity of global significance; however it is also a sector which can have a negative influence on host environments and cultures (Cooper, Fletcher, Gilbert & Wanhill 2008, 3).

The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC 2006, 6) illustrated the enormous market share of the world's tourism sector: primarily the travel and tourism industry's percentage of world gross domestic product (GDP) was 10.3%; furthermore, the world travel and tourism industry had a turnover of US$ 6,477.2 billion, and additionally the world travel and tourism industry supported 234 million jobs (8.7% of total world employment).

Throughout the history of tourism, with three stages of continuity and change in the form, nature and extent of tourism activity, growing globalization and the global extent of tourism activity can be believed to be a result of wider social access to travel, enabled by a range of factors promoting travel like income and leisure time (Page 2003, 47).

The world is becoming more accessible due to the influence of incremental travelling activities, although most of the information acquired prior to embarking on a trip is received via media and Word of Mouth especially from cultural indicators, for instance, languages, lifestyle, religion, dressing and other aspects (Ooi 2002).

Tourism is a kind of social activity that is capable of generating economic benefits. In the process of tourism activities, there is interdependence and mutual coordination between two parties, that is to say, demand side (tourism consumers) and supply side (tourism products and service providers). This represents the demand side and suppliers who are supposed to have an exchange of relations and effective communications. Studies on the tourism market in terms of analysis of the market composition, characteristics and consumer behaviour, will help to explore the tourists' marketing initiatives (Fu 2004, 138-141).

2.2 Role of outbound tourism for the world and for China

The international tourism industry experienced an economic crisis in the 1980s and 1990s due to a sluggish economy and turbulent political situation. The rapid development of the tourism industry expanded. The number of international travellers is expected to increase (Fu 2004, 141) from 25.3 million in 1950 to 1.6 billion by the year 2020, estimated by UNWTO's Tourism 2020 Vision. The number of total tourists arrivals is already 27 times than the figures from the last half century (694/25.3=27). Europe received the majority of international arrivals, about 40%, followed by East Asia/Pacific (10%), Americas (7%), Middle East, Africa and South Asia (World Tourism Organization 2004).

Table 1 forecasts that by 2010 the top three destinations will be Europe (527 million tourists), East Asia and the Pacific (195 million) and the Americas (190 million), followed by Africa, the Middle East and South Asia.

On account of the increasing mobility and revenues, it is clear that outbound tourism (as well as inbound tourism to destination countries) has a serious impact on the economy, social culture and environment. From an economic perspective, positive impacts can be found everywhere. These include a growth in foreign exchange earnings, balance in international payments, stimulating the economy, contributing to GDP, and simultaneously

contributing to diverse industries, such as hotels, restaurants, attractions, transportation, entertainment, and other infrastructures. This can result in enhanced hardware that will be beneficial to attract foreign investment. (Fu 2004, 162-179)

Table 1. The total tourist arrivals by region (World Tourism Organization 2004)

	Base Year 1995	Forecasts		Market share (%)		Average annual growth rate (%)
		2010	2020	1995	2020	1995-2020
		(Million)				
World	565	1006	1561	100	100	4.1
Africa	20	47	77	3.6	5.0	5.5
Americas	110	190	282	19.3	18.1	3.8
East Asia and the Pacific	81	195	397	14.4	25.4	6.5
Europe	336	527	717	59.8	45.9	3.1
Middle East	14	36	69	2.2	4.4	6.7
South Asia	4	11	19	0.7	1.2	6.2

On the other hand, negative impacts are also possible, such as excessive development, which can do harm to the social structure, or possibly induce inflation. The beneficial impacts on social culture, say, improving cross-cultural communication and understanding, providing more with a chance for co-operation in the fields of business, sciences, and broadening one's horizons. Nevertheless, adverse effects cannot be ignored: such as pseudo-cultural activities, dilution of the indigenous culture and more. (Fu 2004, 162-179)

Tourism development is closely related to the environment, especially when long-term sustainability is taken into consideration. Well-organized tourism industries can help environmental conservation; though on the contrary, problems arise if it is not managed well, including environmental pollution, destruction or even conflict between the environment and the economy --- as can be seen from wild safaris in Africa. (Fu 2004, 162-179)

UNWTO estimates that by 2015, China could be the fourth largest source market in the world, and that the number of outbound travellers could reach 100 million per year (China Tourism Academy 2009, 2). In table 2 as follows, the increasing percentage change of

Chinese tourists spending abroad would make the improvements of the expenditure ranking happen even earlier.

Table 2. International tourism expenditure (World Tourism Organization 2010, 8)

	US $ (*2009 estimated)						Yearly data (% change)			
	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009* (billion)	Series	07/06	08/07	09/08
World	**475**	**679**	**744**	**859**	**942**	**852**				
1 Germany	53.0	74.4	73.9	83.1	91.0	80.8		2.9	2.0	-6.3
2 United Stated	64.7	69.0	72.1	76.4	79.7	73.1		5.9	4.4	-8.4
3 United Kingdom	38.4	59.6	63.1	71.4	68.5	48.5		4.1	4.4	-16.5
4 China	13.1	21.8	24.3	29.8	36.2	43.7		22.5	21.4	20.9
5 France	17.8	30.5	31.2	36.7	43.1	38.9		7.9	9.6	-4..9
6 Italy	15.7	22.4	23.1	27.3	30.8	27.8		8.4	4.9	-4.6
7 Japan	31.9	27.3	26.9	26.5	27.9	25.1		-0.2	-7.6	-18.4
8 Canada	12.4	18.0	20.6	24.7	26.9	24.3		13.3	8.4	-3.4
9 Russian Federation	8.8	17.3	18.1	21.2	23.8	20.8		17.1	12.1	-12.5
10 Netherlands	12.2	16.2	17.0	19.1	21.7	20.7		2.6	6.2	0.4

Table 2 shows the top 10 international tourism spenders in 2009, where China presented a remarkable change, moving up to fourth position from seventh in 2005. In particular, the total expenditure had a growth of 20.9%, while other travellers had spent much less compared to the previous year. Only the Netherlands rose slightly by 0.4% (World Tourism Organization 2010, 8). Apart from the contribution to the global tourism economy, China's outbound tourism can help enhance communications, especially cultural exchanges with other nations. There was an old Chinese saying that travelling is more eye-opening than reading. This explains one need to learn from others and to be open-minded for more experience. To open others' eyes is an indispensable part of one's growth or for one's country to flourish (SOHU 2010a). Furthermore, three other significant roles of the outbound tourism of China are stated in the annual report of China outbound tourism development 2009-2010: it provides an important channel to ease our international trade friction (with USA, with EU), to upgrade Chinese industry's soft power (outbound tourism

is becoming an important sector to support travel agencies' business) and to improve Chinese companies' international divisions, as well as its cooperation status (SOHU 2010b).

2.2.1 Overview of China's outbound tourism and recreation industry

The outbound tourism of Chinese nationals has experienced a market-oriented development process, starting from scratch, from "travelling to visit their relatives abroad," then to "private trips at their own expense" (Research Group 2003, 1). In the early period after the foundation of China (1949), tourism was separated from people's daily lives, but a different mission of welcoming overseas groups, such as national model workers, middle class people, and youths, was created. The main objectives were to present the achievements of socialist construction, Chinese history and culture, and sightseeing. After Deng Xiao Ping's "reform and open door policy" (1977), the masses became more and more familiar with tourism. With the implementation of the reform and an increase in income, the rapid rise of tourism consumption has been continuous and swift (Cai 2009).

Figure 1 points that China's outbound tourism has passed through the following stages in its history: trial stage (1983-1996), initial stage (1997-2001) and development stage (2002-present). (World Tourism Organization 2006, 5-9)
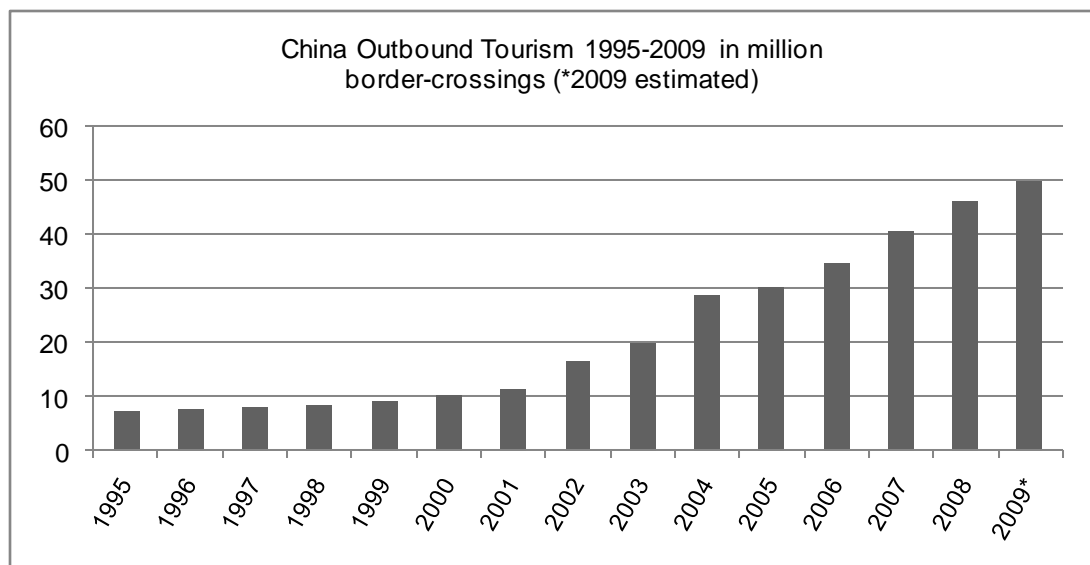

Figure 1. Number of Chinese outbound tourists (China Tourism Academy 2009, 10)

During the trial stage (1983-1996), "visiting relatives" and "touring the border areas" became available, which laid the foundation for outbound tourism. Visiting friends and relatives (VFR) trips began in the year 1983, where Chinese residents were allowed to go to Hong Kong and Macau for visiting their relatives. In addition, the scope of VFR was expanded gradually afterwards to Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and the Philippines. At that time, travellers were required to join tour groups organized by authorized travel agencies. By the end of the 1990s, 56 types of border tours to neighbouring countries were available. (World Tourism Organization 2006, 5-9)

In the initial stage (1997-2001), outbound tourism was officially opened, and the number of outbound destinations increased year by year. It was a period of rapid growth for outbound tourism. By the end of 2001, the number of ADS[1] increased to 18, which were from most of the Asian countries, Australia and New Zealand. From 5.3 million outbound travellers in 1997, the outbound market doubled to 12.13 million in 2001. Besides, during the last twenty years, some outstanding changes have happened as well: there was an increase in inland people making border trips; the border travel routes had also been extended to inner cities near the borders; and tourists in foreign countries could stay longer, from one to eight days, which made no distinction between a border trip and outbound travel. (World Tourism Organization 2006, 5-9)

Since 2002, fewer market restrictions have caused the outbound tourism industry to enter a continuously fast developing stage after more and more countries were added into the ADS list each year: 7 in 2002, 5 more in 2003, and a tremendous amount of 61 countries joined in 2004 (World Tourism Organization 2006, 5-9). By 2008, the number of (ADS) approved destinations to Chinese groups had risen to 137 and 96% of them were available, offering flight connections for global destinations (China Tourism Academy 2009, 14). Another important condition for the rapid growth of the market is that more Chinese travel agencies are authorized by the government (World Tourism Organization 2006, 5-9). However, there is an extremely uneven level within the regional distribution of the travel agencies in China that can operate outbound business. Figure 2 shows that most outbound travel agencies are located in the city of Beijing, Guangdong, Shanghai and the province of Shandong, Liaoning,

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[1] Approved Destination Status (ADS) policy: countries with an ADS agreement are allowed to receive tourism groups from China or to promote their destination in China for tourism. The ADS only concerns tourism groups handled by assigned Chinese local travel agencies.

Zhejiang and Jiangsu, which are developed in economic, trade, transportation, and other related sectors. (China Tourism Academy 2010, 84-85)
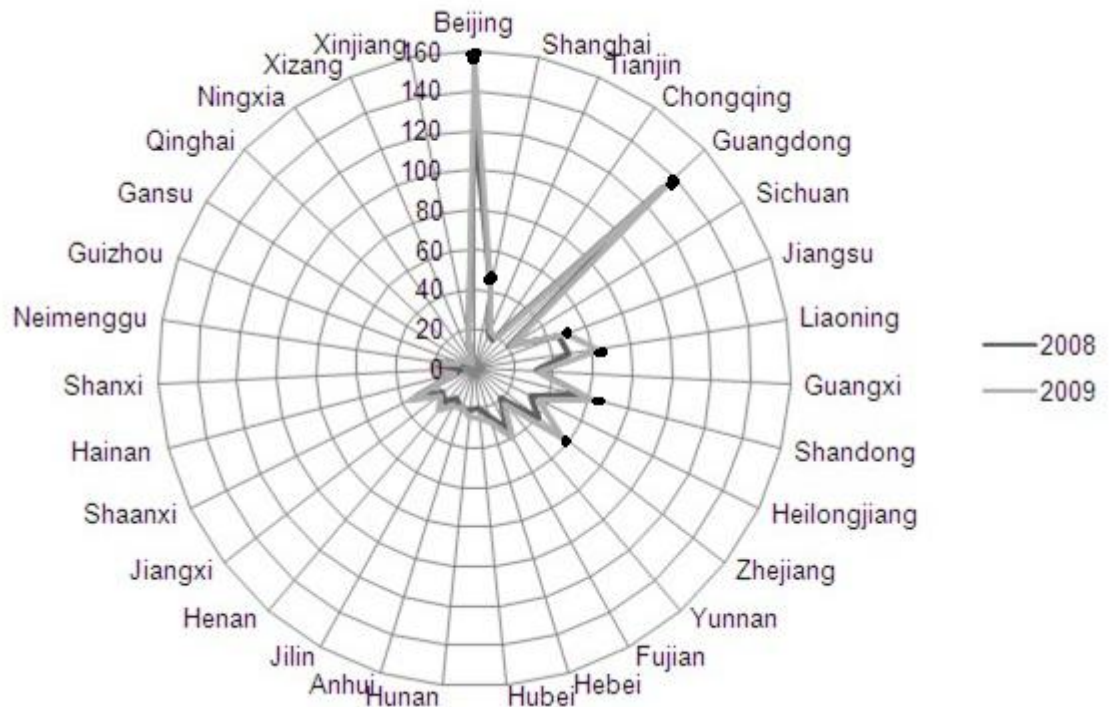
Figure 2. Regional distribution of travel agencies in China that operate the business of
Chinese Citizens travelling abroad and to Hong Kong and Macao
(China Tourism Academy 2010, 84)

2.2.2 Profile of Chinese outbound travellers

China's outbound tourism is a fast-growing market; therefore overseas destinations are needed to understand more about such huge markets, for instance general consumption habits, specific consumer behaviour and the demand from different regions (Nielsen 2008). As figure 2 confirms, the composition of outbound travellers is mainly those from economic metropolises. In 2004, the number of international tour groups organized by Beijing city, Guangdong province, Shanghai city, Zhejiang province and Jiangsu province contributed for 72.16% of the total market share (HC360 2007). Those regions do not only have an enormous outbound tourism source market, but they also have convenient accessibility to international airports and visa procedures, since many embassies are located there (China Tourism Academy 2009, 19).

The China Tourism Academy's survey of 2007 reveals that there is a significant gap between the female and male composition: females account for 55.9% while males make up 44.1%. This phenomenon has remained since 2004. The young and middle age groups are the main force, accounting for nearly 50% of the total interviewees, however compared to the previous year, a change has happened among elderly travellers, up to 12.0% from 3.1%. The background of the travellers' education and workplaces are similar to those in 2006, with three quarters holding a diploma or more, and around half of them having a business profession, especially as managers. The family component is also nearly the same as before, with families of three (parents + one child) being the largest group in 51.2% of the market share, followed by couples with 17.2%, two generations (couples + parents) with 13.1%, singles with 9.8% and three generations(child + couple + parents) with 8.9%. (China Tourism Academy 2009, 70-102)

Table 3. Number of Chinese outbound tourists in 2008 and top 12 destinations
(China Tourism Academy 2009, 10)

	2008(thousand)	Change (%)	Of total (%)
Number of outbound tourists	45,844.4	11.94	100
Hong Kong tour	17,557	8.8	38.29
Macao tour	15,521	21.55	33.85
Taiwan tour	278.9	21.34	0.60
First stop nations			
Japan	1,556.5	6.75	3.39
Vietnam	1,459	58.54	3.18
South Korea	1,374.3	4.7	2.99
Russia	789.9	7.16	1.72
U.S.A	775.5	8.54	1.69
Singapore	712.6	10.04	1.55
Thailand	622.6	-12.97	1.35
Malaysia	622.6	8.57	1.35
Australia	413.1	3.69	0.90

Even though being parts of China, the destinations of Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan still have requirements of visa and documents applied to Mainland Chinese if they intend to travel across the borders, therefore those regions are included for research analysis on China's outbound tourism. Based on table 3, it is easily noticeable that Chinese outbound travellers still tend to travel more to the neighbouring countries and regions, such as Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea and Southeast Asia due to the proximity, lan-

guage environment and other reasons (SOHU 2010b). Excluding Hong Kong and Macau, the number of outbound travellers was 12.76 million, almost 27% of the total number of Chinese outbound tourists. However, for first time outbound travellers, they prefer to choose more well-known attractions (Nielsen 2008).

The latest consumer characteristics were interpreted in an annual report of China's outbound tourism development for 2009-2010. Figure 3 indicates that private tourism represents one of the major driving forces, since a high proportion of 88.27% of outbound travellers (47.66 million) in 2009 had private trips. (China Tourism Academy 2010, 116-117)
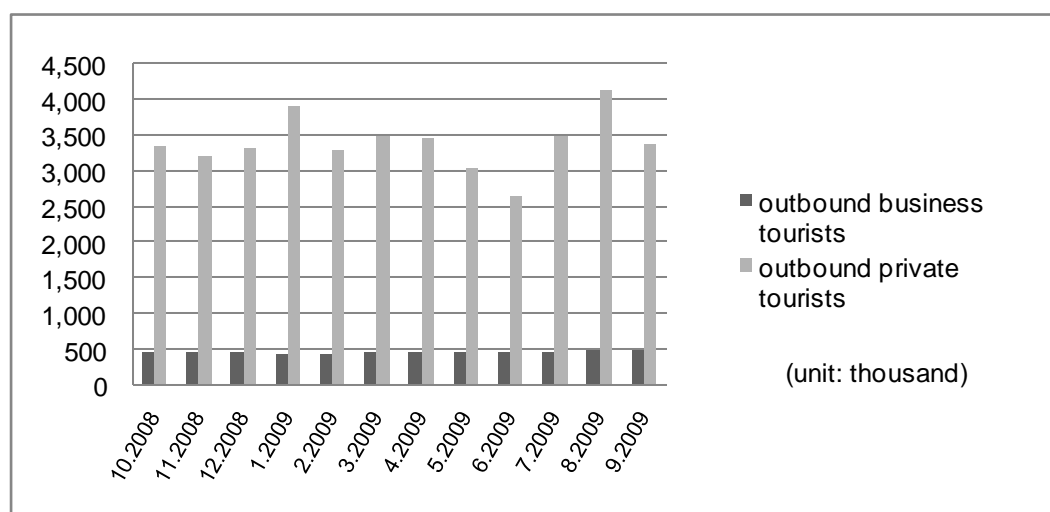
Figure 3. The total number of Mainland China outbound business tourists and private tourists, October 2008-September 2009 (China Tourism Academy 2010, 117)
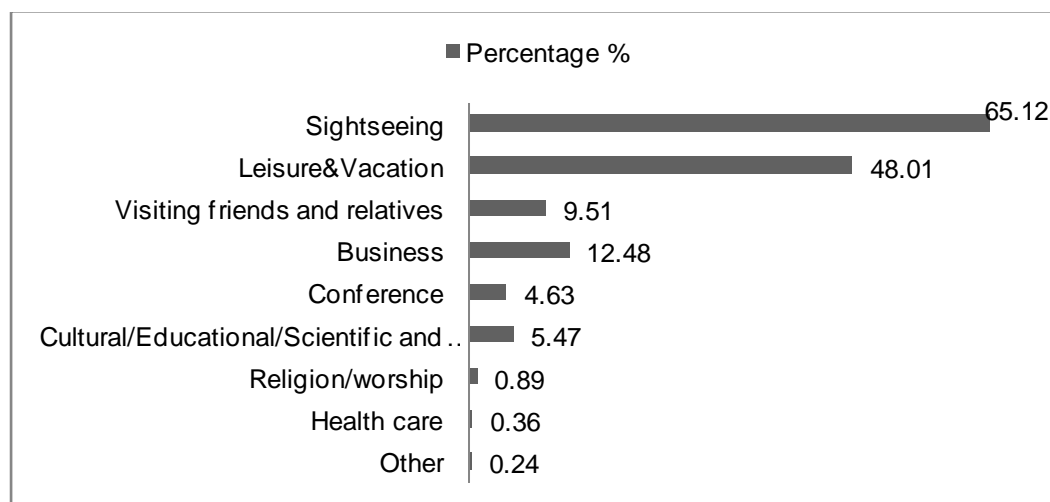
Figure 4. Frequency distribution of purposes for outbound tour (China Tourism Academy 2010, 135)

Generally travellers are affected by different factors before making a decision to travel abroad. One of the factors is purpose. From figure 4, it is visible that sightseeing is the main reason, followed by leisure and vacation. Certainly these options could be multi-ticked by respondents, yet still helps to understand the distribution of the purpose more efficiently as well as recommended itineraries and activities (China Tourism Academy 2010, 135).
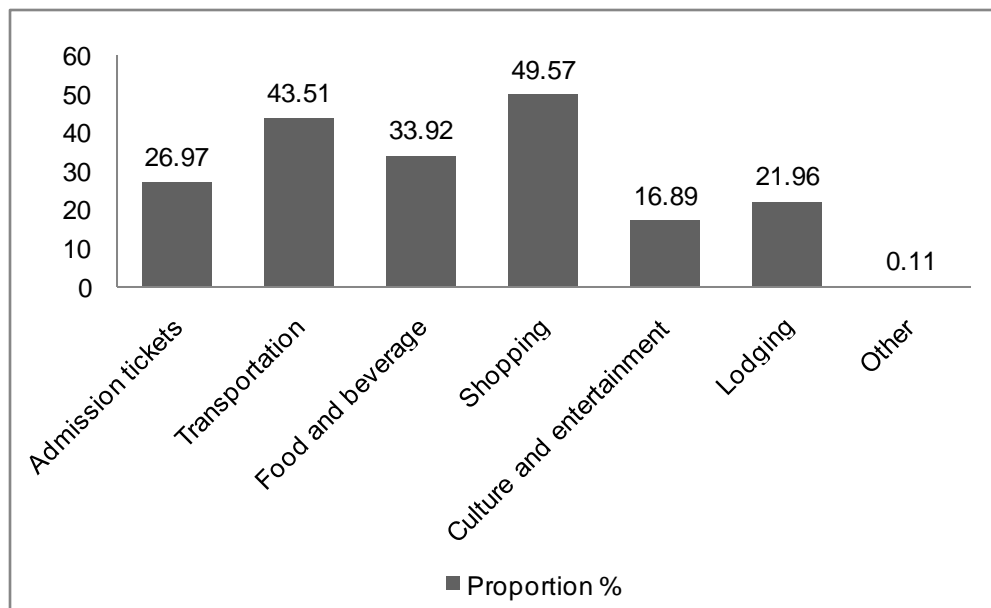
Figure 5. Frequency distribution of per capita spending by outbound tourists
(China Tourism Academy 2010, 144)

The total outbound tourism consumption abroad increased by 16%, which is faster than the growth of outbound tourists. China's outbound tourism consumption total is almost 880 billion U.S. dollars, of which shopping contributes the most as illustrated in figure 5. (China Tourism Academy 2010, 114-115)

Similar to the previous year, most interviewees (60%) were young and middle-aged from 25 to 44 years old. Majority was 25-34 age group (36.13%). Most of them had Associate's or Bachelor's degree accounting for 78%. It is clear that "2 high and 1 low" is found among the tourists, i.e. high income as in figure 6, high education and young age. (China Tourism Academy 2010, 133-134)
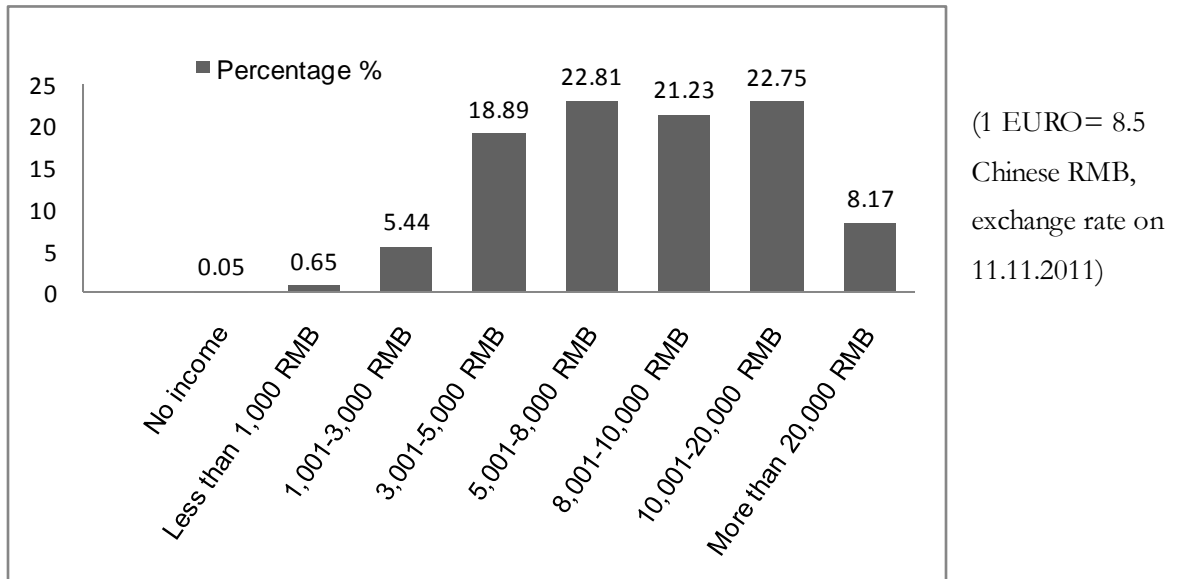
Figure 6. Individual monthly incomes (China Tourism Academy 2010, 134)

(1 EURO= 8.5 Chinese RMB, exchange rate on 11.11.2011)
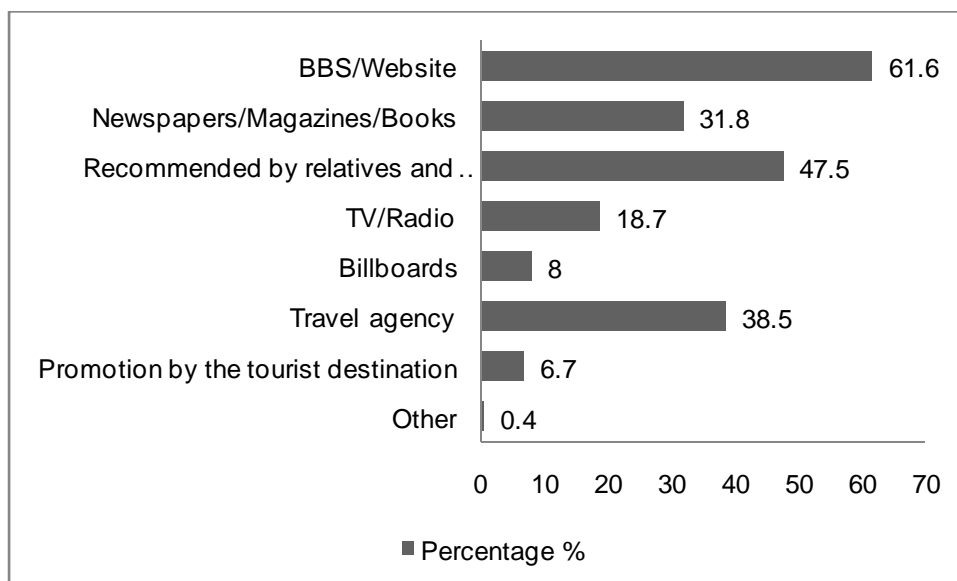
Figure 7. Sources of information (China Tourism Academy 2010, 136)

Both for tourism organizations and for entrepreneurs, it is important to identify the sources chosen by visitors while accessing tourism information. This will also help to carry out marketing activities and promotions more efficiently. As shown in figure 7, Internet is the main channel used by outbound tourists to collect tourism information (China Tourism Academy 2010, 136).

2.2.3 Factors affecting China's outbound tourism industry

Based on table 4, both opportunities and threats exist in the outbound tourism market, where eight influential factors include the political and diplomatic environment, economics, macro-regulation, marketing environment, airline transportation, the safety of the destination, social culture, advertising and promotions. All of them can be divided into two categories of "decisive factors" and "restraining factors." Owing to their significance, the decisive factors are economic, political and diplomatic relations, while the rest of the 6 are restraining factors. (China Tourism Academy 2009, 28-55)

Table 4. Factors that affect China outbound market (China Tourism Academy2009, 29)

As one of the decisive factors, economic factor consists of GNP (Gross National Product), disposable income and unemployment rate. The higher GNP value and disposable income raise translates into higher possibility of travelling. On the contrary, unemployment would change the consumer behaviour, being restricted to reduce expenses; long distance trips are replaced by nearby destinations or even cancelled. Another decisive factor is political and diplomatic environment. Due to the visa regulations for Chinese outbound travellers, any barrier-free policy or temporary pause of international cooperation will cause direct influence. However, other six restraining factors can also affect China's outbound tourism industry and consumer's decision making, motivationally or prohibitively. Improvement of infrastructures can bring tourism revenue, but unsustainable development may also generate wasted valuable resources (China Tourism Academy 2009, 28-55)

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Role of social media for tourism and for China's outbound tourism

Social media has created new means of production and distribution with the framework of people cooperating and collaborating to share ideas, thinking and commerce, debate and discourse. The on-line media obtained five characteristics that help Internet users access faster than ever before to find information, inspiration, like-minded people, communities and collaborators, which are participation, openness, conversation, community and connectedness (Mayfield 2008). Basically social media comprises seven kinds of services and tools: blogs (Wordpress, Blogger, Typepad), social networks (MySpace, Facebook), content sharing (YouTube, Flickr, Photobucket), professional networks (Linkedln, ecademy, xing), microblogging & presence (Plazes, Twitter, Jaiku), democratic content (Digg) and preference sharing (Last FM, Wakoopa) (Lips 2007).

Being built on people's interactions and contributions, social media is more than a new way to connect groups of people with similar interests without restrictions of time or location to participate. Social networking has been proven to be an excellent strategy to market tourism products. (Tourism Queensland 2009) Minister of Tourism in Jamaica also approved that social media has grown noticeably and as an integral part of their marketing strategy demonstrated to connect with the potential diverse ethnics. During the World Routes Development Forum 2010, representatives from Mexico, Canada and countries in Europe had a focused panel discussion on social media as the future of tourism marketing. (JIS News 2010)

By 2009, China had 384 million Internet-users and 45.8% of them joined social networks (Tencent 2010, 3; 36). According to Travelport's recent survey of 12 countries, it is clear that a considerable number of mainland Chinese use websites to plan trips, since they (followed by Indians and Hong Kongers) are the most inclined groups who use social networking sites to search business travel, and the third one for leisure travel (Economist 2010). Social Media is increasingly significant in particular for the younger, affluent and techno-savvy Chinese. To access this essential segment of the Chinese outbound market, two key elements require to be concerned: Word of Mouth and Word of Mouse (ChinaTravelTrends 2010a).

However, many up-to-date communication networks are banned in China including Twitter, Facebook, Flickr and YouTube (BBC News 2010). Tested by friends in China, the following websites cannot work under the Chinese network: Blogger, MySpace, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and others (January 2011). Instead, several local Chinese SNS (social networking site) have expanded within Chinese consumers by different targets. Targeting white collars, Ren-ren is one of China's leading social network sites; others include 51.com (appealing to the masses), Q-Zone (integrated offering), KDS (from online to offline), 360Quan targeting new generation who were born in the 1990s and Douban (a more educated SNS) (ChinaTravelTrends 2010b).

It is not sufficient to attract Chinese travellers providing that tourism services and products are only available in English websites (Gudwin 2010). Furthermore, Forrester Research shows the time spent on a local language website is twice than that spent on an English website (De Palma 1998).

3.2 Research aims and objectives

The official role of a National Tourist Organization, (or National Tourist Office, National Tourism Board, herein referred to be an NTO) is to promote its country as an international tourism destination, with the aim of increasing visitor arrivals. NTOs can have a wide range of responsibilities: from developing products and industry policies that affect tourism, to providing valuable input for the government (Cite 2003). Something similar, but on a lower level, a Destination Management Organization (or Tourist Office, Tourism Board, Tourist Information, Visitors Bureau, herein referred to be a DMO) has the function to promote a destination for better recognition. Concerning those tourist destinations, little or no revenue will be generated for their own use (Tierney 2000, 212-219). However, it is helpful to evaluate the effectiveness of their websites, so as to make clear and certain the relationship between cost and effect for future improvements, as well as their performance compared to the competitors and other industry peers (Morrison, Taylor & Douglas 2004, 233-252).

The content and quality of the official Chinese websites depend on how well the NTOs and the DMOs understand the Chinese international tourists and the Chinese outbound tourism

market. Therefore, the following relevant backgrounds and outcomes will be stated concisely in this paper:

- ➢ What are the market development stages and factors that affect Chinese outbound tourism?

- ➢ Can official Chinese websites of NTOs and DMOs address Chinese effectively?

- ➢ Are there any specific services or packages available based on Chinese consumer behaviour?

- ➢ What are the typical mistakes and excellent examples of the websites?

- ➢ What opportunities or threats concerning the Chinese websites can be predicted for global tourist offices?

In view of the significance of fast growing China outbound tourism market that firstly began in 1983, the theoretical frameworks are concentrated on the impact of tourism in the world, followed by the role of outbound tourism for China and the world, and the role of social media for tourism and China's outbound tourism, therefore why the website (social media) is concernful to attract potential tourists. Furthermore, the research will examine the current situation about Chinese websites of global NTOs and DMOs on the basis of Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Georg Arlt's (director of COTRI) eight criteria under the headings of "visibility", "languages", "technical quality", "design quality", "specific content", "target group specific content", "topicality", and "interactivity". The Criteria and sub-criteria with maximum achievable points are listed in the Appendix 1.

3.3 Research methods

Without commercial function, the official role of NTO and DMO is to enhance its image for higher recognition. On the basis of the research backgrounds in previous chapters, it is clear that a Chinese website can help the destinations get access to Chinese consumers more easily. As a result, the analysis research of global NTOs' and DMOs' Chinese websites is made in this paper to evaluate their effectiveness and make it clear about the relationship

between cost and effect that can be used as a reference to compare their performance with the competitors and other industry peers.

Studies concerning website evaluations have been conducted for more than a decade, yet still not a unified standard. Brymer, Forrest, Murphy & Wotring (1996) Forrest, Murphy, & Wotring (1996) and Kasavana, Knutson & Polonowski (1997) can be seen as the first among the websites researchers, focused on hotels and restaurants. The first evaluations on tourism websites were fulfilled by Hanna & Millar (1997) and Cano & Prentice (1998). In addition, a list of website studies was from Morrison, Taylor and Douglas (2004). All the research count on different forms of website contents, with diverse assessment characteristics analysed; mostly accomplished by just one expert. (Arlt 2006, 10)

There were also some exceptions, such as Donthu & Yoo (1998), Furrer, Liu & Sudharshan (2000), Tsikriktsis (2002) and Okazaki (2004) where research was only for special requirements in multilingual websites. Sakellaridis and Sigala (2004) have tried to adopt Hofstede's cultural dimensions[2] in qualifying culturally oriented web-design. Schegg et.al. (2002) raised five dimensions for tourism websites' analysis, which are value-added service namely Language, and other four in terms of Service Processes, Customer Relationships, Creating Trust and Cyber-marketing. Douglas and Mills (2004) mentioned to meet needs in a glocalizational way, providing the language of Internet users in the information of local products and services (Douglas & Millis 2004, 277). Cyber citizens are worldwide; accordingly research of online behaviours from people having various cultural backgrounds should be associated with web designs. Nevertheless, such considerations are seldom used in the criteria of website assessment. Despite of target audience, implicit cultural value is part of any evaluation (Douglas, Morrison & Taylor 2004, 250). (Arlt 2006, 10-11)

Furthermore, there are also some literatures concerning website analysis with different approaches done by Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Georg Arlt (Arlt 2006, 9). Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Georg Arlt is a Sinologue and Sociologist by training and holding a PhD in Political Sciences; one of his major research areas is cross-cultural marketing and management. In 2005, he conducted a study of German-language websites of non-European NTOs and DMOs. (Arlt

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[2] Prof. Geert Hofstede, an influential Dutch organizational sociologist, demonstrated that national and regional cultural groupings affect the behaviour of societies and organizations, and these are persistent across time. Five cultural dimensions are Power Distance Index, Individualism, Masculinity, Uncertainty Avoidance Index and Long-Term Orientation.

2006, 2) In the earlier research of cross-cultural Internet marketing in tourism, eight groups of criteria were developed and improved, taking into account different findings in the literatures (Arlt 2005, 325-336). All together 500 official tourism websites outside Europe were visited, after first round checking of minimum 2-page German contents, 50 samples were chosen for further analysis. Professor Arlt ranked the websites with 65 sub-criteria under eight groups of criteria namely "accessibility", "languages", "technical quality", "design quality", "international content", "target group specific content", "topicality" and "interactivity". (Arlt 2006, 13-14)

The author found that Professor Arlt's research criteria would be the most appropriate method for the purposes of this paper; consequently eight groups of criteria were refined, specially adapted to current Chinese demand. Points were given for 72 sub-criteria under eight categories that are "visibility", "languages", "technical quality", "design quality", "specific content", "target group specific content", "topicality" and "interactivity".

Visibility, technical quality, design quality and target group specific content were evaluated with a maximum of 100 points for each. The other four classifications, namely languages, specific content, topicality and interactivity, were awarded with 150 points each, as Professor Arlt examined that these elements are essential in the evaluation of Internet cross cultural communication. "According to the six to eleven sub-criteria of each heading, 80% of all possible points (80 and 120 points respectively) were awarded (Appendix 1). The other 20% of each criterion were awarded for special outstanding offers, making it possible to award single achievement not included in the sub-criteria" (Arlt 2006, 10). The exception is the criterion 4-9 from "languages" that is explained in detail next paragraph. For individual sub-criterion the full marks or fraction could be awarded.

Under the heading of "languages", websites were marked with just one criterion either from the number fourth, fifth or sixth. This is used to evaluate how an English language homepage links to the Chinese version, by Chinese flag (criterion 4th), 中文 (criterion 5th) or "choose languages" then links to Chinese (criterion 6th). It is as important to find the Chinese version conveniently as the way the Chinese version links to the English website. Similarly, the Chinese website was graded with only one criterion either from the number seventh, eighth or ninth, examining how sufficient of the Chinese translation; the options included full translation (criterion 7th), partial translation (criterion 8th) or just first page of an introduction (criterion 9th).

Using the methods described above, the research was initially conducted in February 2010, with a detailed analysis from May to June and November to December 2010. In sum 115 official tourism websites were visited, with 75 NTOs and 40 DMOs in the world. The selection was done in the following way: firstly it was performed using www.google.com of the keyword "tourist board 中文" (中文 means "Chinese language"); then, the official tourism websites listed on good results page 1 to page 20 (01-02 February 2010) were recorded. In addition, the foreign destinations and tourism organizations who did promotion briefings or marketing activities in China in 2008 (China Tourism Academy 2009, 53-55), were also chosen as the research objects. The third source used for the analysis was the list of global NTOs (China-EU E-Commerce Center. 2008). Only websites recognizable as official websites of the destination were considered, not the ones from private tour enterprises or tourism portals. Geographically all areas were covered, including 9 from Africa, 32 from Asia, 18 from America, 43 from Europe and 13 from Oceania like Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and Guam. Ultimately, excluding the websites without Chinese version, all together 38 NTOs and 29 DMOs were graded by the criteria and were subject to quantitative and qualitative research.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Main characters in the samples

The research revealed the overall quality of the Chinese version from official tourism boards around the world, nationally and regionally, in addition to a number of destinations that did promotion activities in China in recent years. On the whole, some major destinations do not have any Chinese language content on their websites, such as South America, Africa and a few countries in Europe. Out of the 67 websites in Chinese language analyzed, both standard and substandard samples were found. Hong Kong's Chinese website received the most favourable evaluation based on the highest number of points recorded. www.discoverhongkong.com/china/index.jsp and this is only 63% of maximal obtainable points. Only nine websites scored 50% of the entire possible points, another 11 scored over 45%. Ten out of top 20 on the ranking list are from Asian areas. Subsequently, 47 websites (out of 67, 70%) did not reach 45% of the total scores which might be less attractive to visitors and consequently lead to poor customer satisfaction. (Appendix 2)

The research was conducted on eight criteria, of which some features were commonly used on all websites, such as: visibility, technical quality, design quality and target group. On account of the other four criteria, the websites were able to be differentiated with distinct achieved points, details as follows:

Visibility
No obvious differences exist among the Chinese websites. However, not having the links to other pages or lack of Chinese language metatags may cause difficulty in recognizing it as an official site, such as France, Hawaii, Malta, Mexico and Pennsylvania. Most websites (56 out of 67) can show up in the first page of Google search but only a few like Denmark, Germany, Hong Kong, New Zealand, South Africa and Toronto have the options to bookmark the website, set as homepage or email to friends. (Appendix 3)

Languages
The websites were operated under the tourism board, tourism office in China or Chinese consulting companies and they were professionally translated. Nevertheless some used in-

terpretation software to create unintelligible offers (example will be discussed in chapter 4.2). 46% of the analyzed websites presented all information in Chinese, and 39% offered a partial translation and sometimes a Chinese option linked to the relevant English content. The rest (15%) had single home page translated in Chinese, or blended with Chinese and English. Furthermore, trendy phrases, Chinese proverbs and traditional poetry were rarely seen. (Appendix 3)

Technical quality

Technically content of most websites (over 80%) complied with a good standard, despite that some site map or search functions were noticeably missing. Static images or low speed flash were observed in several pages, such as India, Kenya, Northern Territory, Singapore, South Australia, Swiss and some destinations. Spain and some others played attractive videos in YouTube that unfortunately cannot be buffered in Mainland China. Instead, certain exceptional websites in Canada, Greece and the Netherlands used Chinese local video websites, for instance, 56.com, 6.cn, Ku6.com, Youku.com, Tudou.com, and other social networks. Limited websites like Finland, Hong Kong, Macau and Tokyo provided connections for mobile phones to log on. (Appendix 4)

Design quality

Almost all websites had a professional design. Only a few websites in Oceania and South Africa had diverse design adapted for different user groups like research, cooperate, media and children. For Chinese tastes, the website of Tasmania had too small font size together with pictures and that of France contained too crowded content. On the contrary, Tokyo and Seoul offered options to customize the font size, in particular the latter could also support to select font colour and background colour. No one offered special design like automatic language recognition, except using Google chrome browser or Google toolbar. (Appendix 4)

Specific content

Many points were lost under these criteria. Ordinary sites did not include any information about regional or world map, weather report, web camera or even travelling tips. There is not the same situation when a gulf separates foreign countries from Mainland China. Differences did stay in the ceremonials of religion, store opening hours, drinking water, climate, electric outlet, entry visa regulations or even the appearance of the mailbox and other essen-

tial aspects that just some websites in Asia, Canada and Oceania mentioned partly for incoming travellers. Those information is familiar to local residents indeed but of great help to Chinese visitors. Content about Chinese associations in the destination or twin cities in China were hardly seen, with the exception of Hamburg and the Netherlands. (Appendix 5)

Target group specific content

More than 85% of the websites offered advices for diverse target group about food, nature and other provincial attractions. 43 out of 67 displayed typical or well-known features, for example, honeymoon journey to Hawaii, animation tour in Japan or adventure tourism in Australia. However, for Chinese it is relatively unusual and uncommon to promote "homosexual tour", which would have been better if it was adapted to suit the Chinese culture. In Chinese culture, target groups are more inclined to business, family and couples. In addition, almost no information on careers or students looking for internship, however, there are some information for business travellers (MICE group), press releases and travel agencies. (Appendix 5)

Topicality

In general, the Chinese version lagged behind the English version. 44% of the websites only provided general facts, without any latest news or activities. Few had RSS (real time information feeds). Those may cause inconveniences for Internet users to understand more about the destination before planning the trip. Incomplete information of current events may lead to the potential customers' loss or push them to other tourism product providers. Some websites were not frequently updated, in which the news pages of India and Greece were last updated in 2007; France published the flight connections available in 2008. Upcoming events from 61% of the websites were in English, only several Asian countries, Austria and New Zealand had splendid performances. Hong Kong could be regarded as the best website to inform daily events with Google calendar where visitors are even able to add into own Gmail calendar and set reminder (example will be discussed in chapter 4.3). (Appendix 6)

Interactivity

The biggest difference between a website and a guidebook is interactivity. In terms of email/ phone contact, materials download, newsletter register and social network, it is more possible to interact with visitors, spread recent news and receive feedback. E-shop is able to offer an opportunity to be informed about cultural souvenirs, or send a gift to a friend as a sur-

prise; desktop wallpaper download and e-postcard can increase the destination's awareness and also enhance its image; newsletter may inform regular activities and promotions; e-brochure in pdf-format will be practicable to download or print. Social network is a free Internet marketing tool with easy maintenances and communications. Within 67 analyzed websites, 38% did not have a social network, 45% made use of Facebook and Twitter that are unfortunately banned in Mainland China and the remaining 17% had their own Internet forum or Chinese SNS. That is to say, in most of the cases there is no web based platform for visitors and potential customers to exchange travelling experience and stay up-date. Only a few websites had other information apart from email/ phone/ on-line form. Some creative examples are Japan that supports download the booklet of useful conversations to assist tourists in learning basic Japanese, Hong Kong that has Chinese local SNS and South Africa that set up forum to upload travelling notes and communicate freely. (Appendix 6)

4.2 Typical mistakes

Taking a panoramic view of all the websites analyzed, principal mistakes for the lost points can be concluded in the following aspects: (Appendix 7)

In process of the research, banned links were frequently noticed. Video clip could possibly show the destination alive and attractive, and social network would be an interactive platform to communicate with Internet users, however, their efficiency are impaired considerably if the visitors in Mainland China cannot connect the links at all. This happened due to the lack of the understanding about China's Internet market. 45% of the analyzed websites provided banned links, for example, Macau's introduction video was from You Tube, the Netherlands' promotion activities were ready to participate in Facebook, Czech Republic's fan page was in Facebook and in Singapore's website, its Facebook social network was even more conspicuous than the Chinese local SNS.

Improper translations were also observed, even though 46% of the websites were fully translated, still 39% of them partially did and 15% only had the Chinese home page. Those websites were combined by both Chinese and English, or even only one sentence in Chinese language together with further details linked to the English page, such as Melbourne, UK, and limited number of other countries. Moreover, translation software seemed to be used in some websites, which created unintelligible offers. Giving an example of Mexico, one water

sport named rafting was shown as "deliver you with rafts" rather than the clear definition in terminology from sports industry. On the website of Salzburg, the introduction of Hellbrunn palace and Water spray game would probably confuse visitors, and as a matter of fact, they aimed to promote Hellbrunn palace and Trick fountains. (see the sectional drawing from the website below)

Picture 1: Improper translation, Salzburg, Austria

Furthermore, another mistake was unbefitting design both in the content and in the web composition. The website content should be built on the destination's own tourism resources, features and understanding of Chinese culture. Uncommon to Chinese tourists, Northern Territory was the example offering packages for homosexual travellers, whilst such topic was not so open to the public in Chinese society. All together 115 websites were visited and 67 of them had Chinese websites that were further analyzed for the study; the list was collected in February 2010 and subsequently analyzed during May-June, November-December the same year. The results showed that Italy and Luxemburg still had simply e-brochure on the Chinese website, Dijon's link did not exist any longer, and Madrid and Turkey removed the Chinese version afterwards. What is more, to Chinese taste, the content was relatively crowded in France's website, option was rather small to subscribe a newsletter in Tasmania's, and the font size in Vietnam's was various in places.

4.3 Successful offers from remarkable websites

Some leading examples secured the majority of achieved points possible in single criteria and from them; the notable services are outlined as follows: (Appendix 8)

Impressive offers were found in certain destinations that provided visitor-oriented services. For instance, Sabah in Malaysia, a place well known for seascape, highlighted the scenery of seashore and island in an interactive map; except for the information of attractions, Switzerland also prepared yearly tourism theme as well as latest coupons for print; press tour and celebrity charm were applied well from the website of New Zealand, where on the homepage appeared Hong Huang, famous editor-in-chief and Lu Chuan, renowned film director.

Picture 2: Latest coupon print, Switzerland

Instead of banned links, functional links were used by the destinations that won high rank under the criteria namely interactivity. Vancouver and some Asian countries showed the video clip based on Youku, a Chinese video website. In addition, Chinese local SNS such as Sina and Kaixin were commonly used in Asian regions as well, like Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore.

Practical information is beneficial for travellers to plan the trip. Here are the outstanding examples: clear information was available concerning flights to Kyushu/ Japan from main cities in China, with flight duration, frequency and airline included; a list of comparison lexicon between Taiwan and Mainland China was very interesting and practical to Chinese tourists, since both of their official language is Mandarin, yet still a few differences exist relating

to words and expressions; Hamburg listed different restaurants by the group of cuisine, which could provide more detailed information for food lovers.

Unlike 61% of the analyzed websites who published latest news and upcoming events in English, top performers are capable of informing Chinese tourists very well about the local life, tourism industry development, new cooperation, festivals and activities. Sort by months, happenings in Singapore could be easily tracked, and in the website of Hong Kong, the events were daily update in a Google calendar that was the most advanced and up to the minute in comparison with all other websites.

5 DISCUSSIONS

5.1 Overall findings about criteria 7 & 8

For the websites, criteria 1 - 6 examine the tourism facts that can be done and maintained by IT personnel, whilst criteria 7 - 8 observe the tourism news that requires understanding of China's market and follow-up constantly. The most significant difference between a website and a guidebook is the possibility to interact with visitors and potential customers. Excellent websites can help enhance the destination's image and more page click ratio, or on the contrary annoy visitors. By means of cautious analysis under the headings of "topicality" and "interactivity", the table of the top ten and bottom ten will be hereinafter presented.

Table 5. List of top ten websites

Destinations	7. Topicality	Points achieved	Destinations	8. Interactivity	Points achieved
New Zealand	112	602	Hong Kong	95	632
Austria	95	445	New Zealand	94	602
South Africa	85	535	Thailand	82	570
Thailand	83	570	Seoul (South Korea)	82	534
Switzerland	82	497	Pennsylvania (USA)	79	368
Denmark	82	488	Sabah (Malaysia)	78	562
South Korea	81	581	Macau	78	543
Australia	81	380	Queensland (Australia)	74	499
Sabah (Malaysia)	79	562	South Korea	73	581
Hawaii (USA)	74	474	Jordan	70	442

In table 5, top performances were shared by the websites namely New Zealand, Thailand, South Korea and Sabah. The above listed websites have Chinese SNS or own forum where to upload travelling information and itinerary freely, some of which support plenty of material downloads. South Africa would have been an incomparably stronger case that its Chinese version is better than the English one; registered users are active to discuss and receive latest news about local life, World cup, and some more about the country.

Table 6. List of bottom ten websites

Destinations	7. Topicality	Points achieved	Destinations	8. Interactivity	Points achieved
Norway	21	388	Kenya	24	248
Philippine	21	271	Maldives	24	248
UK	17	322	Taiwan	12	463
Malta	16	241	Fuji	12	291
Mexico	15	209	Flanders (Brussels)	12	247
Nigeria	10	294	Cambodia	10	298
Vietnam	10	266	Tokyo (Japan)	0	405
Maldives	10	248	UK	0	322
Flanders (Brussels)	10	247	Malta	0	241
Kenya	0	248	Mexico	0	209

It is noticeable that the listed websites in table 6 have rather tenuous content without current news, upcoming events, promotions, guest book, or social network. Visitors would see these as difficult to gather practical and timely information.

5.2 Recommendations

For the purpose of a better operation, a comprehensive analysis of official Chinese websites is necessary in terms of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The strengths and opportunities affirm the reasons to have an official Chinese webpage, and weaknesses and threats are the aspects for tourism boards to overcome considerably.

Strengths

o Make website visitors feel receiving more respect and attention.
o Provide information in the language being more convenient for travellers to plan trips.
o Help to enhance the understanding of potential customers, which results in higher image recognition.
o Help to do business communication and collaborations with Chinese tour operator
o Very wide Internet coverage and comparatively low cost, because
    a good Chinese website will generate SEO (Search Engine Optimization) and CRO (Conversion Rate Optimization). The main Chinese search engines include Baidu, Google Hong Kong，MAN.COM, LYCOS, Yahoo China, Sina，Sohu，163, Yahoo Taiwan，Yam Taiwan，Yahoo Hong Kong，association of overseas Chinese websites, Chinese Worldwide Ranks.
o Increase the traffic; Chinese international travellers do have some understanding of English, but still prefer to search for relevant tourism information in their mother language.
o Having Chinese website shows the interest in international market, rather than only Westerners.

Weaknesses

o Requires regular update and maintenance with financial investment and appropriate staff.
o Uncompleted or outdated information will make a negative impression of the destination.
o Too general, lack of details for specific attraction or service.
o English version is very well-organized and attractive, which make the Chinese website looks much worse.

Opportunities

- o Market growth of Chinese outbound travellers will possibly improve the Internet traffic.
- o High-quality Chinese websites can help to catch the attention of Chinese tourists.
- o New technologies help the website rise in value, in terms of providing better service with online hotel/restaurant/ticket/train booking, and social network for personalized interaction and communications.

Threats

- o Competitions from other destinations (NTO/DMO, or local private tour companies)
- o Competitions from Chinese tourism portals (SOHU travel), on-line travel agency (Ctrip, elong, Travel world online) and domestic social networks where bloggers share tourism information. They are more sensitive to adapt to Chinese consumer behaviour and trend.
- o Burdens to use international social network site (SNS) in China; Chinese net censorship made European popular social networks banned in China including Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, MySpace. However, domestic social networks are only operated in Chinese.

- o SNS have risk to offer free communication platforms for tourists. Some feedback can be bias or rumourmongers

- o Risk in having on-line transactions, when the website provides on-line booking services.

Internet is the most convenient method for destination decision making. Different from tourists' handbook, website is capable of being updated without time restrictions; in particular the web based social network can have activities, promotions and constant up-date available for users who are subscribed to the related fan page. To avoid threats from other Chi-

nese tourism portals, the tourism boards need to build SNS specifically adapted to Chinese travellers, so as to acquire more network traffic and subscribers.

Secondly, information integration and update is of great significance. Greece even kept the news in 2007 as the latest. Taking Britain for another example, the official Chinese tourism site was even merged by both Chinese and English (see chapter 4.2), however, the content of Britain in Douban (a Chinese SNS) was surprisingly containing abundant data, ranged from latest promotions, wallpaper upload, travelling experiences shared to marketing research poll, which received more than 200 thousands visitors views. (See the sectional drawing from the homepage below)

Picture 3: Chinese SNS- Douban, UK

What is more, some websites have already recommended itinerary for diverse target groups based on their own resources and recognized features, like animation journey in Japan or ski tour in Switzerland. Due to the limitations of remoteness, economic position, vacation dura-

tion and some other factors, the expectations and consumer behaviours can vary among different Chinese outbound tourists. It is recommended to classify target groups according to personal experience; therefore the tourism boards can arrange interrelated and customized content as explained in table 7.

Table 7. Target groups by travelling experience

Tourists	Business tour	Leisure tour
Experienced	Senior	Frequent visit
New	Junior	First/second time visit

As a result of the differences between China and the destination not only in the daily life but also in the regulations, numerous reminders are demanded by new tourists who are the first or second time travelling abroad. Some useful guides can be regarding shop opening hours (e.g.: shorter working hours in Europe), drinking water (e.g.: it is available in parts of Europe), length of the daytime (e.g.: nightless summer in Nordic countries), the ceremonials of religion (e.g.: shoes off before entering a Mosque) and other differences. Nevertheless, from another point of view, that kind of information on the websites will be neglected by experienced tourists who have already frequently overseas visit. For the latter, special packages are probably more welcome, by different themes or required durations. Japan offered the tourism packages in that way, therefore customers can choose the itinerary by 3 hours, 24 hours, 3 days or more.

Last but not least, since the official websites are operated by tourism boards, the office in China or Chinese consulting companies, it is not complicated to constantly display the information specific to China's market. Similarly as the importance of criteria 7 (topicality) and 8 (interactivity), suggestions are for the purpose of making Chinese visitors feel welcome and being concerned, for instance, photographs about Chinese tourists in the attractions, press release after having Chinese celebrity visit, information about local Chinese associations and sister city in China.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The fast growth of China's outbound tourism market has been attractive to overseas hospitality enterprises and tourism organizations due to the increasing number of Chinese tourists travelling abroad and their expenditure. Meanwhile, Internet users in Mainland China are more active to explore information, in particular for business trip and leisure travel. ITB Berlin 2010 has revealed that web-based social media is the most singificant tool to capture a new tourism market. How efficiently did official tourism websites target Chinese travellers, especially with their social media, an on-line platform to interact with visitors at anytime anywhere? This question was posted by Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Georg Arlt when the author was doing practical training in his research institute in Germany. Later on, the discussions of more aims and objectives brought out the basis of this study.

As a matter of fact that the history of China's outbound tourism is not long, which firstly began in 1983 and developed after 2002, it has already been estimated by UNWTO that China could be the fourth largest source market in the world, and the number of its outbound travellers could reach 100 million per year by 2015. Moreover, the international tourism expenditure spent by Chinese outbound tourists has been ranked as the fourth position in 2009. Therefore it is necessary to understand the impact of tourism in the world, the role of outbound tourism for the world and for China, three development stages of China's outbound tourism market, consumer behaviour of Chinese outbound travellers, factors affecting China's outbound tourism industry and social media for tourism and for China's outbound tourism. Those theories contribute the background of the research.

For the evaluation of 67 Chinese websites, the ranking criteria with total of 8 groups and 72 sub-criteria are refined based on Professor Arlt's previous evaluation for the websites of German language content. This is the first paper to examine the overall quality of official Chinese website from all the national tourism boards and some destination management organzisations in the world. As a reference for further research, evalution for other language content reagarding websites nationally or regionally, about international hotel, resturants, cruise and other sectors can be carried out as well.

The studies of the author showed the overal quality of official Chinese websites from all the national tourism boards and several destination management organzisations throughout the

world including Africa, Asia, America, Europe and Oceania. The outcome was not satisfying since half of top twenty performers were from Asian areas and 70% of the surveyed websites scored less than 45% of the maximal points achieveable. What's more, due to the untimely maintenance and the lack of the knowledge about Chinese consumers and Chinese Internet market, typical mistakes and outstanding examples are found in accordance with each group of eight criteria. Based on the results, recommendations to improve the websites are generated accordingly.

The process of completing the thesis has taught the author a lot, ranging from collecting information, summarizing publications, conducting quantitative and qualitative research to writing the academic paper. The task has also provided a medium to explore deeper knowledge into a certain topic, despite being complicated and time consuming in reality. The average of 40 mintues are spent on each website. The final ranking is on the basis of the websites' content during May-June, and November-December 2010, thus latest updates may reduce the accuracy of the websites analysis. However, the research still reflects the tendency without loss of generality. The findings are reliable and can basically achieve the objectives.

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CRITERIA AND SUB-CRITERIA WITH MAXIMUM ACHIEVABLE POINTS

1. Visibility	100
URL intuitive	10
Links to other websites	10
Recognizable as official page	10
Google.com Rank 1-20 ("x 旅游")	10
In Google.com under URL-Name	10
.cn/com.cn address	10
Metatags in source code	10
Metatags in Chinese	10
Special Visibility (e.g. bookmarking, recommend to friends…)	20

2. Languages	150
Additional other language 1	10
Additional other language 2	10
Additional other language 3+	10
Chinese version linked by Chinese flag	10
Chinese version linked by 中文/中国	20
Chinese version linked by English "change language", but easy to find the option: 中文 or Chinese national flag	5
Chinese version full translation	20
Chinese version partial translation	15
Chinese version in front page	10
Quality of Chinese language used	30
Special language (e.g. proverbs)	10

3. Technical quality	100
Loading time short	20
Screen size optimized	10
Functioning sitemap	10
No special browser needed	10
Functioning search function	10
Functioning quickfind/shortcut	10
Functioning flash w/skip function	10
Special technical quality (e.g.downloads for software)	10
Mobile service	10

4. Design quality	100
Design quality according to Chinese taste and expectations	30
Navigation simple	15
Design adapted for different versions (e.g. children/tourist/commercial…)	15
Design meeting regional style image	10
Links easy recognizable	10
Special design quality (e.g. automatic language recognition changeable)	20

5 Specific content	**150**
Extent of information in China	15
Chinese language guiding offered	15
Map with location in the country/region	15
Map with location in the continent	15
Access information from China	15
Working webcam	15
Working weather report	15
Tips (useful to know)	15
Currency converter/ VISA issue	10
Special specific content (e.g. Chinese associations in the destination or twin cities in China)	20

6. Target group specific content	**100**
Information nature/culture	10
Information local/special food	10
Information seasonal activities	10
for Chinese tour operators	10
for journalists (press)	10
for internship/career	10
for business travellers	10
for self travellers (DIY-planner/recommended trips)	10
Special target group specific content (other than above)	20

7. Topicality	**150**
General information up-to-date	20
Current events	30
Information about last site actualization	10
Chinese and local language version at same level of topicality	20
Prices quoted in CNY	10
Special bargain offers	15
Specific current information(snow, festivals,etc)	15
Special topicality (e.g.real-time information feeds)	30

8. Interactivity	**150**
Functioning contact email	15
Functioning contact landline	15
Functioning on-line form	15
Functioning e-shop	15
Functioning e-postcard	15
Desktop image for download	15
Brochures (.pdf) for download	15
Brochure mailing possible	10
Subscription for newsletter	15
Social network (sharing, discussion…)	20

DESTINATIONS, WEBSITES AND TOTAL ACHIEVED POINTS

Destinations	Websites	Points achieved
Hong Kong	http://www.discoverhongkong.com/china/index.jsp	632
New Zealand	http://www.newzealand.com/travel/China/	602
South Korea	http://chinese.visitkorea.or.kr/	581
Thailand	http://www.tatbjs.org.cn/	570
Sabah (Malaysia)	http://www.sabahtourism.com/sc/	562
Macau	http://www.macautourism.gov.mo/	543
Japan	http://www.welcome2japan.cn/	536
South Africa	http://www.southafricantourism.cn/	535
Seoul (South Korea)	http://www.visitseoul.net/ck/	534
Queensland (Australia)	http://www.queensland.com.cn/	499
Switzerland	http://www.myswitzerland.com.cn/	497
Denmark	http://www.visitdenmark.com	488
Malaysia	http://www.tourismmalaysia.cn/	487
South Australia (Australia)	http://www.southaustralia.com/cn/	486
Hawaii (USA)	http://www.gohawaii.com/	474
Finland	http://www.visitfinland.com/zh_CN/web/guest/finland-guide/home	468
Columbia (Canada)	http://www.hellobc.com.cn/pub/default.aspx	467
Taiwan	http://www.taiwan.net.tw/	463
Vancouver (Canada)	http://china.tourismvancouver.com/	461
Kyushu (Japan)	http://www.welcomekyushu.cn/	455
Southeast England (UK)	http://www.visitsoutheastengland.cn/	450
Austria	http://www.aodili.info/	445
Guam	http://www.visitguam.org/	443
Jordan	http://ch.visitjordan.com/	442
Germany	http://www.germany-tourism.cn/	441
Spain	http://www.spain.info/?l=zh	436
the Netherlands	http://cn.holland.com/	432
Osaka (Japan)	http://www.japan-osaka.cn/ch/	428
Melbourne (Australia)	http://simplifiedchinese.visitmelbourne.com/	424
Toronto (Canada)	http://www.seetorontonow.com/zh.aspx	422
Northern Territory (Australia)	http://cn.travelnt.com	420

Czech Republic	http://www.visitczechia.cz/ger/de/docs/holiday-tips/news/index.html	416
Jamaica	http://www.visitjamaica.com.cn/	412
Western Australia (Australia)	http://www.westernaustralia.com/cn/	409
Nevada(USA)	http://www.nevada.com.cn/	407
Tokyo (Japan)	http://www.tourism.metro.tokyo.jp/chinese/index.html	405
Singapore	http://www.yoursingapore.com/content/traveller/zh/experience.html	397
Tasmania(Australia)	http://www.discovertasmania.net.cn/zhs	393
Norway	http://www.visitnorway.com/cn/	388
San Francisco (USA)	www.onlyinsanfrancisco.com.cn/	384
Cuba	http://www.cubatravel.cn/	383
Australia	http://www.australia.com/zhs/index.aspx	380
Pennsylvania (USA)	http://www.visitpa.com/travel-tools/visitors/china/index.aspx	368
Baden-Baden (Germany)	http://www.baden-baden.de/cn/index.html	360
France	http://cn.franceguide.com/	358
India	http://incredibleindia.org/chinese/index.asp	348
Brunei	http://www.visitbrunei.cn/	343
Salzburg (Austria)	http://www.salzburg.info/cn/	330
Hamburg (Germany)	http://www.visit-hamburg.asia/cn	322
UK	http://www.visitbritain.cn	322
Vienna (Austria)	www.weiyena.info	313
Cambodia	http://www.tourismcambodia.com/chinese/	298
Nigeria	http://www.lvyou168.cn/travel/Nigeriatourism/	294
Greece	http://www.gnto.gr/	294
Fuji	http://www.fijime.cn/	291
Philippine	http://www.visitphilippines.com.cn/cn/	271
Vietnam	http://www.vietnamtourism.com/	266
Kenya	http://www.magicalkenya.cn/	248
Maldives	http://www.visitmaldives.com/zh	248
Flanders (Brussels)	http://www.visitflanders.com/	247
Malta	http://www.visitmalta.com/main?l=1	241
Mexico	http://www.visitmexico.com/wb/Visitmexico/Visi_Home?show=regions	209
Italy	http://www.enit.it/ (84 page-pdf)	—
Luxemburg	http://www.ont.lu/home-en.html (22 page-e brochure)	—
Dijon (France)	http://www.dijon-tourism.com/cns/ (No more existing)	—
Madrid (Spain)	http://www.turismomadrid.es/index_CHIN.shtml (No more Chinese exiting)	—
Turkey	http://www.goturkey.com/ (No more Chinese exiting)	—

DESTINATIONS AND ACHIEVED POINTS UNDER CRITERIA 1, 2

Destinations	1. Visibility	Destinations	2. Languages
South Africa	88	Hong Kong	95
Columbia (Canada)	80	Thailand	95
Hong Kong	76	Sabah (Malaysia)	95
Thailand	76	Macau	95
Germany	76	Seoul (South Korea)	95
New Zealand	74	Malaysia	95
Vancouver (Canada)	74	Taiwan	95
South Korea	70	Kyushu (Japan)	95
Taiwan	69	Guam	95
Sabah (Malaysia)	68	South Korea	90
Macau	68	Hawaii (USA)	88
Japan	68	Tokyo (Japan)	86
Seoul (South Korea)	68	UK	86
Switzerland	68	Jordan	85
Malaysia	68	Spain	85
Osaka (Japan)	68	Toronto (Canada)	83
Queensland (Australia)	66	Finland	81
Kyushu (Japan)	66	Osaka (Japan)	81
Southeast England (UK)	66	Singapore	81
Brunei	66	Vietnam	81
Flanders (Brussels)	66	Japan	80
Denmark	64	Western Australia (Australia)	80
Jamaica	64	Vancouver (Canada)	78
Nevada(USA)	64	Czech Republic	77
Austria	63	New Zealand	75
Jordan	60	Queensland (Australia)	75
the Netherlands	60	Switzerland	75
Nigeria	60	South Australia (Australia)	75
Northern Territory (Australia)	58	Germany	75
Czech Republic	58	Hamburg (Germany)	75
Baden-Baden (Germany)	58	South Africa	74
Vienna (Austria)	58	Columbia (Canada)	73
Hawaii (USA)	56	Austria	73

Toronto (Canada)	56	Jamaica	73
Western Australia (Australia)	56	Brunei	72
Tasmania (Australia)	56	Philippine	72
San Francisco (USA)	56	Norway	71
Cuba	56	Baden-Baden(Germany)	71
Australia	56	Maldives	71
UK	56	Southeast England (UK)	70
Kenya	56	Northern Territory (Australia)	66
Melbourne (Australia)	55	Australia	66
France	54	India	66
South Australia (Australia)	53	Salzburg (Austria)	66
Cambodia	50	Malta	66
Tokyo (Japan)	48	Fuji	65
Fuji	48	Melbourne (Australia)	64
Philippine	48	Tasmania (Australia)	64
Malta	48	Cambodia	64
Finland	42	Pennsylvania (USA)	63
Spain	40	Vienna (Austria)	60
Norway	40	France	56
Salzburg (Austria)	40	Denmark	54
Greece	40	the Netherlands	54
Guam	37	San Francisco (USA)	52
Hamburg (Germany)	34	Nigeria	52
Singapore	32	Cuba	44
Maldives	32	Nevada(USA)	43
Mexico	32	Greece	43
India	29	Kenya	40
Vietnam	29	Flanders (Brussels)	39
Pennsylvania (USA)	26	Mexico	25
Italy	—	Italy	—
Luxemburg	—	Luxemburg	—
Dijon (France)	—	Dijon (France)	—
Madrid (Spain)	—	Madrid (Spain)	—
Turkey	—	Turkey	—

DESTINATIONS AND ACHIEVED POINTS UNDER CRITERIA 3, 4

Destinations	3. Technical quality	Destinations	4. Design
Seoul (South Korea)	69	Hong Kong	57
Vancouver(Canada)	66	New Zealand	72
Hong Kong	64	South Korea	68
South Korea	64	Thailand	49
Japan	64	Sabah (Malaysia)	59
Finland	64	Macau	55
Czech Republic	64	Japan	52
South Australia (Australia)	61	South Africa	76
South Africa	58	Seoul (South Korea)	62
the Netherlands	58	Queensland (Australia)	69
Greece	58	Switzerland	55
New Zealand	56	Denmark	52
Thailand	56	Malaysia	55
Northern Territory (Australia)	56	South Australia (Australia)	59
Western Australia (Australia)	56	Hawaii (USA)	52
Tasmania(Australia)	56	Finland	52
Australia	56	Columbia (Canada)	50
Pennsylvania (USA)	56	Taiwan	62
Switzerland	54	Vancouver (Canada)	48
Hamburg(Germany)	53	Kyushu (Japan)	52
Sabah (Malaysia)	50	Southeast England (UK)	52
Macau	50	Austria	55
Queensland(Australia)	50	Guam	52
Malaysia	50	Jordan	52
Denmark	48	Germany	52
Hawaii (USA)	48	Spain	50
Taiwan	48	the Netherlands	52
Germany	48	Osaka (Japan)	52
Melbourne (Australia)	48	Melbourne(Australia)	65
Nevada(USA)	48	Toronto (Canada)	49
San Francisco (USA)	48	Northern Territory (Australia)	52
Salzburg (Austria)	48	Czech Republic	52

Vienna (Austria)	48		Jamaica	52
Cambodia	48		Western Australia (Australia)	57
Norway	47		Nevada(USA)	38
Tokyo (Japan)	46		Tokyo (Japan)	55
UK	45		Singapore	50
Mexico	45		Tasmania(Australia)	59
Columbia (Canada)	44		Norway	62
Southeast England (UK)	44		San Francisco (USA)	52
Jordan	44		Cuba	48
Spain	44		Australia	65
Austria	43		Pennsylvania (USA)	44
Brunei	42		Baden-Baden (Germany)	52
Singapore	41		France	41
India	41		India	45
Osaka (Japan)	40		Brunei	52
Toronto (Canada)	40		Salzburg (Austria)	48
Jamaica	40		Hamburg (Germany)	52
Cuba	40		UK	50
Nigeria	40		Vienna (Austria)	47
Kenya	40		Cambodia	45
Flanders (Brussels)	40		Nigeria	52
France	37		Greece	49
Maldives	37		Fuji	52
Fuji	36		Philippine	50
Philippine	36		Vietnam	43
Malta	34		Kenya	36
Vietnam	33		Maldives	46
Kyushu (Japan)	32		Flanders (Brussels)	62
Baden-Baden (Germany)	32		Malta	37
Guam	26		Mexico	28
Italy	—		Italy	—
Luxemburg	—		Luxemburg	—
Dijon (France)	—		Dijon (France)	—
Madrid (Spain)	—		Madrid (Spain)	—
Turkey	—		Turkey	—

DESTINATIONS AND ACHIEVED POINTS UNDER CRITERIA 5, 6

Destinations	5. Specific content	Destinations	6. Target group
Guam	95	Hong Kong	72
Denmark	86	South Australia (Australia)	70
Japan	83	Sabah(Malaysia)	66
Norway	77	South Korea	65
South Korea	70	Hawaii (USA)	64
Hong Kong	69	Thailand	60
Thailand	69	Queensland(Australia)	60
Columbia (Canada)	68	Taiwan	60
New Zealand	67	Japan	58
Sabah (Malaysia)	67	Seoul (South Korea)	58
Finland	67	Finland	58
Kyushu (Japan)	66	Southeast England (UK)	58
Spain	63	India	58
Western Australia (Australia)	63	Columbia (Canada)	56
the Netherlands	62	Vancouver (Canada)	56
Switzerland	60	Jamaica	56
France	59	Nevada(USA)	56
Germany	58	Cuba	56
Queensland (Australia)	57	New Zealand	52
Jamaica	56	Switzerland	52
Melbourne(Australia)	52	Kyushu (Japan)	52
San Francisco (USA)	52	Western Australia (Australia)	52
Czech Republic	51	Baden-Baden (Germany)	52
Macau	50	Denmark	50
Malaysia	50	Jordan	50
Austria	50	Tokyo (Japan)	48
Taiwan	49	Macau	46
Vancouver (Canada)	48	Malaysia	46
Nigeria	48	France	46
Toronto (Canada)	47	Austria	42
South Africa	46	Spain	42
Seoul (South Korea)	44	Osaka (Japan)	42
Hawaii (USA)	44	Northern Territory (Australia)	42

Southeast England (UK)	44		Czech Republic	42
Osaka (Japan)	44		Singapore	42
Nevada(USA)	44		Salzburg (Austria)	42
Cuba	44		South Africa	40
South Australia (Australia)	34		Guam	40
Tokyo (Japan)	34		the Netherlands	40
UK	34		Kenya	40
Cambodia	34		Malta	40
Tasmania (Australia)	33		Mexico	40
India	32		Australia	39
Northern Territory (Australia)	27		Norway	34
Jordan	24		Brunei	34
Pennsylvania (USA)	24		UK	34
Mexico	24		Vietnam	34
Singapore	22		Vienna (Austria)	33
Australia	22		Germany	32
Hamburg (Germany)	22		Melbourne(Australia)	32
Brunei	20		San Francisco (USA)	32
Greece	20		Cambodia	32
Fuji	20		Fuji	32
Baden-Baden (Germany)	15		Hamburg (Germany)	26
Salzburg (Austria)	15		Greece	26
Vienna (Austria)	15		Toronto (Canada)	24
Philippine	12		Tasmania (Australia)	24
Vietnam	12		Pennsylvania (USA)	24
Kenya	12		Flanders (Brussels)	18
Maldives	12		Maldives	16
Flanders (Brussels)	0		Nigeria	8
Malta	0		Philippine	8
Italy	—		Italy	—
Luxemburg	—		Luxemburg	—
Dijon (France)	—		Dijon (France)	—
Madrid (Spain)	—		Madrid (Spain)	—
Turkey	—		Turkey	—

DESTINATIONS AND ACHIEVED POINTS UNDER CRITERIA 7, 8

Destinations	7. Topicality	Destinations	8. Interactivity
New Zealand	112	Hong Kong	95
Austria	95	New Zealand	94
South African	85	Thailand	82
Thailand	83	Seoul (South Korea)	82
Switzerland	82	Pennsylvania (USA)	79
Denmark	82	Sabah (Malaysia)	78
South Korea	81	Macau	78
Australia	81	Queensland(Australia)	74
Sabah (Malaysia)	79	South Korea	73
Hawaii (USA)	74	Jordan	70
Toronto(Canada)	74	South African	68
Singapore	74	Malaysia	62
Hong Kong	72	Southeast England (UK)	60
Melbourne(Australia)	69	India	60
Taiwan	68	Northern Territory (Australia)	58
Cuba	68	Spain	56
Tasmania (Australia)	66	Singapore	55
Nevada(USA)	62	the Netherlands	54
Malaysia	61	Baden-Baden (Germany)	54
Northern Territory (Australia)	61	Denmark	52
Macau	60	Nevada(USA)	52
Finland	60	Switzerland	51
Japan	58	Guam	50
India	58	Toronto (Canada)	49
Seoul(South Korea)	56	Hawaii (USA)	48
South Australia (Australia)	56	Germany	48
Columbia (Canada)	56	South Australia (Australia)	47
Southeast England (UK)	56	Czech Republic	46
Spain	56	Finland	44
San Francisco(USA)	56	Salzburg (Austria)	41

|			
Kyushu (Japan)	52	Columbia (Canada)	40
Germany	52	Vancouver (Canada)	40
the Netherlands	52	Japan	39
Pennsylvania (USA)	52	Melbourne(Australia)	39
Vancouver(Canada)	51	Hamburg (Germany)	37
Jordan	50	Kyushu (Japan)	36
Queensland(Australia)	48	Norway	36
Guam	48	San Francisco (USA)	36
Tokyo (Japan)	48	Brunei	36
Jamaica	44	Greece	36
Osaka (Japan)	42	Tasmania (Australia)	35
France	41	Osaka (Japan)	27
Brunei	34	Jamaica	27
Cambodia	32	Cuba	27
Salzburg (Austria)	30	Austria	24
Vienna (Austria)	28	Western Australia (Australia)	24
Czech Republic	26	Australia	24
Baden-Baden (Germany)	26	France	24
Fuji	26	Vienna (Austria)	24
Hamburg(Germany)	23	Nigeria	24
Greece	22	Philippine	24
Western Australia (Australia)	21	Vietnam	24
Norway	21	Kenya	24
Philippine	21	Maldives	24
UK	17	Taiwan	12
Malta	16	Fuji	12
Mexico	15	Flanders (Brussels)	12
Nigeria	10	Cambodia	10
Vietnam	10	Tokyo (Japan)	0
Maldives	10	UK	0
Flanders (Brussels)	10	Malta	0
Kenya	0	Mexico	0
Italy	—	Italy	—
Luxemburg	—	Luxemburg	—
Dijon (France)	—	Dijon (France)	—
Madrid (Spain)	—	Madrid (Spain)	—
Turkey	—	Turkey	—

IMAGES OF MISTAKES IN THE WEBSITES

Introduction video clip from YouTube

(Macau)

Promotion activities: attend in Facebook

(the Netherlands)

Join social network: Facebook is more conspicuous than Chinese local SNS Douban
(at the bottom)

(Singapore)
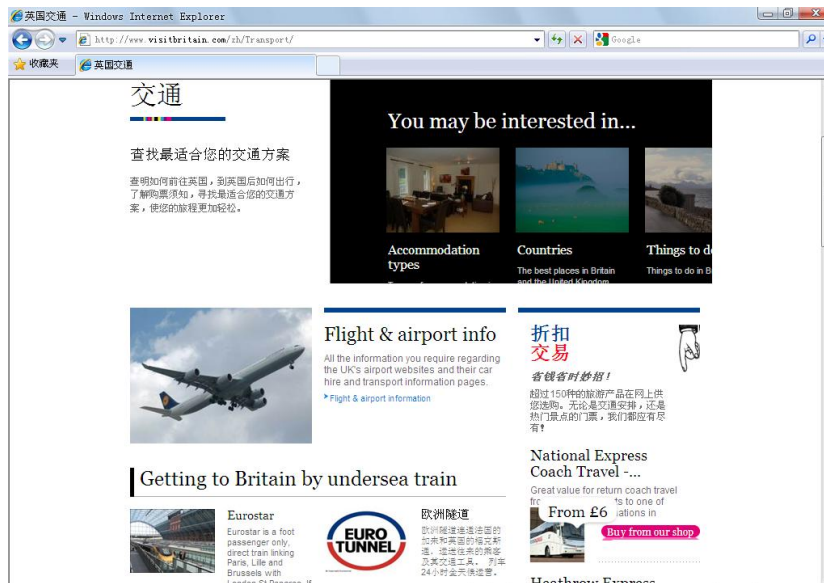
The information was blended with Chinese and English

(UK)

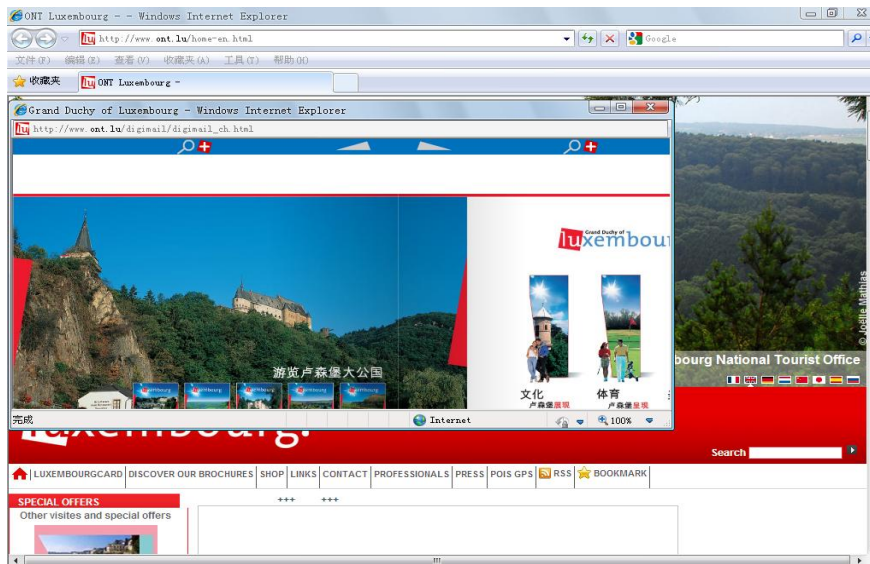Only one sentence introduction.
More details in English

(Melbourne, Australia)

Advice/for homosexual travellers

(Northern Territory, Australia)

In Chinese version, only pop out a 22 page - e brochure

(Luxemburg)

Information was too crowded

(France)
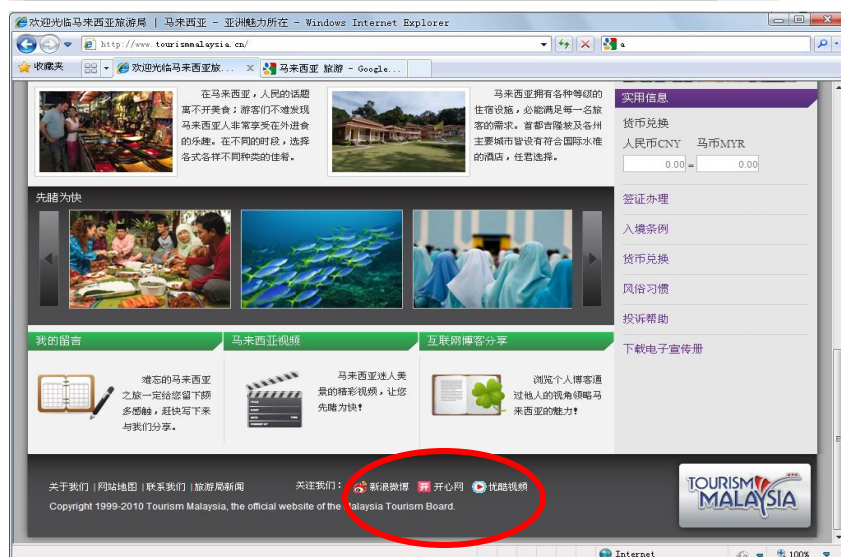

A variety of different font size

(Viet Nam)

IMAGES OF POSITIVE EMAMPLES IN THE WEBSITES

Interactive map

(Sabah, Malaysia)

Celebrity charm
Press tour

In the homepage appeared Hong Huang (famous editor-in-chief) and Lu Chuan (well-known film director)

(New Zealand)

Chinese local SNS, video website:
Sina, Kaixin, Youku

(Malaysia)

Chinese video website: Youku

(Vancouver, Canada)

Flights to Kyushu, from main cities in China, with duration, frequency and airline added.

(Kyushu, Japan)

Taiwan & Mainland China, comparison lexicon

(Taiwan)

Detailed list of restaurants by cuisine

(Hamburg, Germany)

Upcoming events, sort by months

(Singapore)

Current news, about local life, tourism industry, new cooperation, etc.

(Hong Kong)