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Paperless Office and Tablet Application in Travel Agencies

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China's tourism industry has maintained a sustained, steady, and rapid development in 2011. The total domestic tourism reception reached 2.6 billion people with overall revenue of approximately 1.9 trillion Chinese Yen in the whole year. Meanwhile, the inbound foreign tourists' population arrived at 135 423 500 with \$48 464 000 000 foreign exchange earnings. The World Tourism Organization even predicts that China will become the world's largest tourist destination in 2020.

The excellent development momentum provides favorable opportunities to the tourism agency, but also brings huge challenge to its operation and management. Up to the end of 2011, there are more than 22 784 travel agencies in China, an increase of 3.98% than last year. As a result, the competition among different travel agencies becomes more and more fierce. On the other hand, tourism has been accepted and popularized by more common people. The mass tourism requires travel agencies to provide more customized, characterized and qualified service. What's more, the establishment and popularization of tourism websites and tourism electronic business sink the traditional travel agencies into an awkward situation.

To fight against the fierce competitive environment, ever-changing tourism demand, as well as challenges from the emerging industries, providing diversified, characterized, and innovative products and services becomes the key factor to a tourism agency's good operation and management.

The thesis analyzed the existing problems on tourism agency's management and operation under the new situation based on an introduction of current China tourism environment and tourism agency development. The thesis also put forwards the idea

that travel agencies should promote electronization and virtualization of tourism management and further perfect their operation modes.

In the year of 2009, the State Council of the People's Republic of China issued Views on Accelerating the Development of Tourism Industry, and put forward that the tourism industry should transform into a strategic pillar industry of the national economy as well as a more satisfied modern service industry by the masses of the people. The national and local attention to the tourism industry provides favorable policy environment to the travel agencies. Meanwhile, the wide popularization of Internet and mobile technologies supplies technical supports to the innovation of travel agencies' management. The thesis believes that the adoption of Tablet PC can not only better meet the current social requirements on travel agencies' management and operation, but also can ensure the agencies to furnish more diversified and characterized tourism products and services to the customers with electronization and virtualization.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Since the reforms and opening policy was initiated, the role of tourism agencies as one of the three pillars of tourism industry has been enhanced. Currently, there are about 22 784 tourism agencies in mainland China, and this number is keeping growth all the time. Tourism agency connects with “food, accommodation, transportation, travelling, entertainment and shopping”, which have been recognised as the six key elements in tourism industry. In other words, tourism agency plays a very important role in connecting travelers with tourism destinations. In short, the development of tourism agency drives the development of whole tourism industry.

The service is the core element of tourism agency, which is the basis of economic benefits, customer satisfaction and competitiveness. Therefore, the improvement of service quality not only ensure that company is in an advantageous position, but also facilitate the sustainable development of whole tourism industry. Service has several characteristics, such as intangible, noninventoriable, diverseness, memorable, and inseparable etc. Service is the core factor for running a tourism agency successfully. Moreover, the attribute of tourism agency’s services belong to experiential. It means that the evaluation of service quality must be made afterwards by customers’ practice and experience. Therefore, the evaluation of the service quality offered by tourism agency not only should be considered by final results, but also should be gauged by service process.

Nevertheless, the tourism agencies are still at an initial stage in the growth and evolution so far. Currently, the products and services provided by most tourism agencies are not differentiated, which causes the cut-throat competition among tourism agencies. Therefore, innovation is an indispensable way in order to maintain the competitiveness, as well as to realize the sustainable development of China’s tourism industry.

1.1 China and Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region

Inner Mongolia is an autonomous region of China, located in Northern region of China. Inner Mongolia has 1 183 000 km² land area, it is the third largest province in China. The capital is Hohhot, and the largest city is Baotou (Website of the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China 2001).

Because of Inner Mongolia's inland location, the economic situation of Inner Mongolia is relatively lagging behind that of coastal area in east and south China. However, Inner Mongolia has great tourism resources, both culturally and naturally. Such as grassland, desert, forest, snow and ice, Genghis Khan, Qin Great Wall, and Mongolian traditional culture with distinct local characteristics etc. All of resources provide advantageous conditions to the development of tourism industry of Inner Mongolia.

1.2 Baotou Century International Travel Service

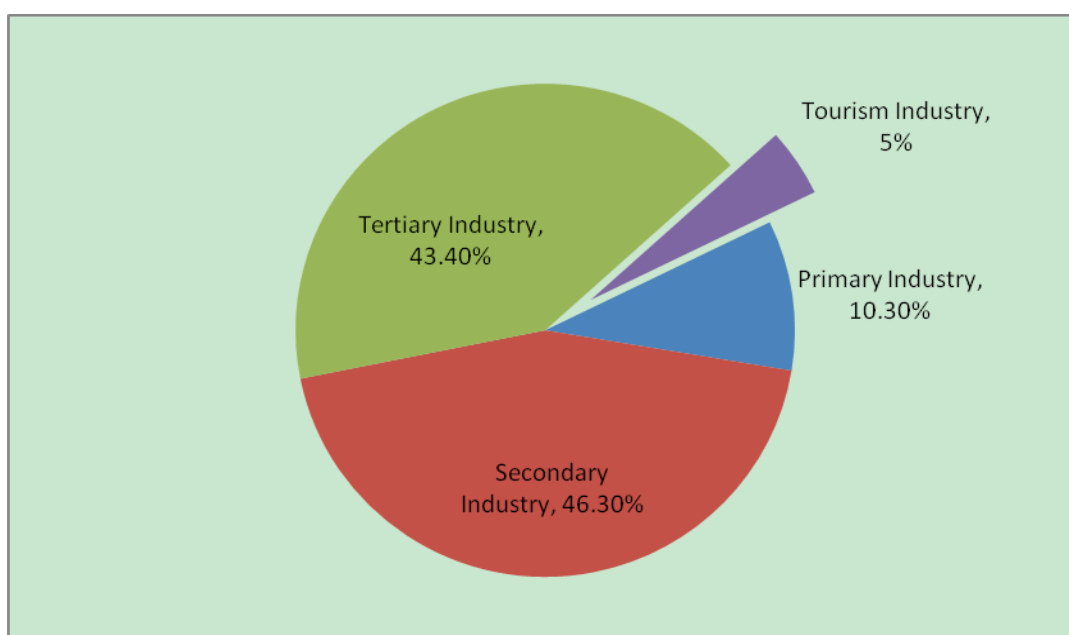
Baotou Century International Travel Service was founded in 1999, and it was the first stock enterprise of the industry touring service in Baotou. Since its establishment, the business of Baotou Century International Travel Service developed rapidly. There is more than 51 staff in service, among which 21 are professional tour guides (including four Japanese guides and three English tour guides). After the continuously growing, Baotou Century International Travel Service has been the top three tourism agency in Baotou for 5 consecutive years, and the top ten tourism agency in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. In addition, in 2004, it obtained the sincerely travel service by Baotou government. In 2005 and 2006, it was obtained excellent travel service for two times. In 2007, it was developed into the international travel service (Website of the Baotou Century International Travel Service 2009).

The founder and president of the board is Mrs. Ai Dan, which is the well-known person in Chinese tourism industry as well as the president of Baotou Tourism Association. She used to work at National Tourism Administration of The People's Republic of China.

2 THE PROBLEM EXISTING IN THE COURSE OF DEVELOPING OF TOURISM AGENCIES IN CHINA

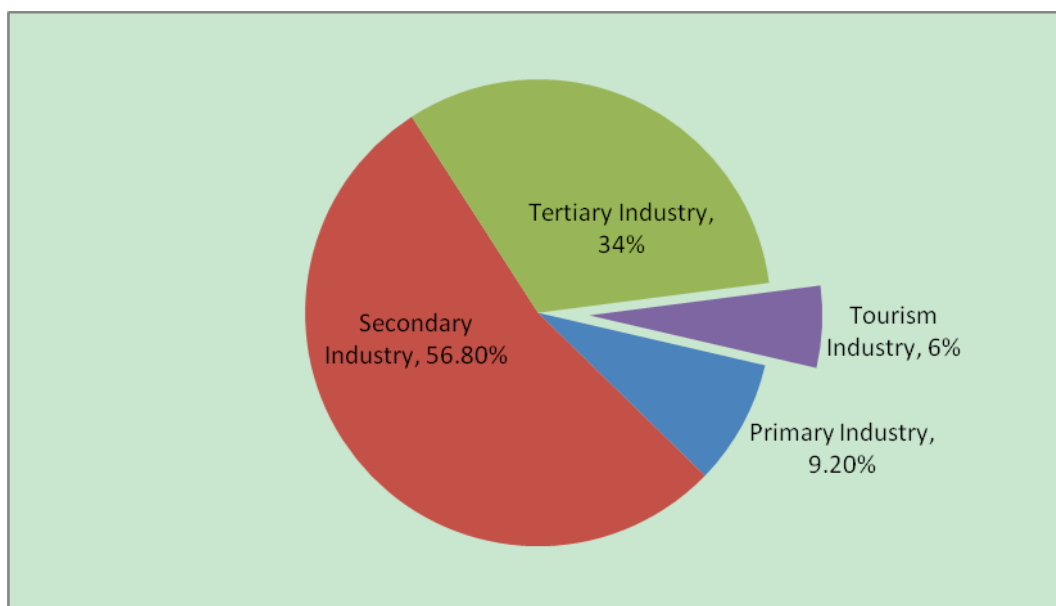
2.1 High-speed development of tourism industry

China implements the Reform and Opening – Up Policy already 35 years, the policy accelerates the development of China's tourism industry. According to the report on the work of government, 2012, China's GDP reached 47.2 trillion Chinese Yen. Amount which, 2.25 trillion Chinese Yen reached from tourism industry, and accounting for approximately 5 percent of nation's GDP. (Figure 1) (The Chinese Government's Official Web Portal: Report on the Work of Government 2012). Meanwhile, according to the annual statistical data from Inner Mongolia Tourism Administration, the tourism industry of whole autonomous region had received approximately 1.5 million visitors in 2011, and the international and domestic tourism revenue totaled 88.955 billion Chinese Yen, accounting for 6.24 percent of the region's GDP (Figure 2) (The Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region Bureau of Statistics: Basic Statistics on Tourism 2012).



The Nation's GDP, 2011 – 47.2 Trillion Chinese Yen
 Primary Industry 10.3%
 Secondary Industry 43.4%
 Tertiary Industry 43.4%
 Tourism Industry 4.77% - 2.25 Trillion Chinese Yen

Figure 1. The percentage of China PRC's GDP in 2011



The Autonomous Region's GDP – 1.425 Trillion Chinese Yen

Primary Industry – 9.2%

Secondary Industry – 56.8%

Tertiary Industry - 34%

Tourism Industry - 6% - 88.955 Billion Chinese Yen

Figure 2. The percentage of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region's GDP in 2011

However, the China's tourism industry is still imperfect compare with the developed nations, there are some problems exist during the development. The service is the basis of the existence and growth of tourism agency, in other words, the tourism agencies could not operate without service. Recently, the all of tourism agencies provide similar services. Moreover, under the price wars that the earnings shrank of tourism agencies increasingly, with the consumers' consuming is maturing, and requirement of consumers has gradually come to diversification and individuation, it causes the traditional tourism agency's service mode is not suitable and attract consumers anymore. Therefore, ensure to grasp the consumers' requirement accurately and on time, and provides innovative service is the key to raise agencies' profit, as well as maintain and promote the position in market.

Currently, the most of tourism agencies only pay attention to route innovation and guides innovation, however, ignores technology innovation in the information age.

Thus, I put forward the innovation service of “replace of traditional paper trip itinerary with iPad or same kind of high-tech solution in Baotou Century International Travel Service.”

2.2 The research plan and methods

In the thesis, the Baotou Century International Travel Service has been selected as research object, and discussed the feasibility of Tablet PC utilization instead of traditional tourist itinerary paper from three aspects: the advantages of Tablet PC utilization, the utilization feedback and discussion, and the detailed implementation of Tablet PC. As the core part, the utilization feedback and discussion was developed through a random sample investigation from customers and agency staff. Furthermore, the Likert 5-point scale is used on questionnaire. There are 3 parts and 15 questions are involved, which is customers' attributes, customers' behavioral characteristics and customers' feeling of innovation. In the last, the data is analyzed by IBM SPSS Statistics Version 20, and the Descriptives, the Frequencies, the One-way Analysis of Variance (One-way ANOVA) and the Independent sample T test and Cross analysis is applied as analyze method, in order to reflect customers' position and suggestion on the paperless office and Tablet PC utilization instead of paper itinerary.

2.3 The introduction of questionnaire and the status of data collection

There were 100 questionnaires distributed through a random sample investigation from customers and agency staff. After removing the invalid questionnaires, 97 questionnaires were actually analyzed finally, and the effective rate reached 97%. Moreover, 48 males and 49 females are involved (APPENDIX 1).

Besides, the table 1 is a cross-tabulation of age and education level, which introduces clearly that the relationship between age and education level of respondents. More specifically, 4 respondents are 18 years old or younger, in which 1 in Junior high school or below, 2 in High school and 1 in Undergraduate; 41 respondents are be-

tween 19 to 30 years old. And from Junior school or below to Postgraduate or above, respectively 1, 2, 7, 19, and 12 respondents; 26 respondents are 31-45 years old, which 1 in High school, 10 in Vocational college, 8 in Undergraduate and 7 in Postgraduate or above; 19 respondents are 46-55 years old, which respectively 1, 6, 3, 4, 5 from Junior School or below to Postgraduate or above; and the rest of 7 respondents are 56 years old or above, in which 3 in Junior school, 2 in High school, 1 in Vocational college, and 1 in Postgraduate or above.

Table 1. The cross-tabulation of age and education level

	Education Level					Total
	Junior School or Below	High School	Vocational College	Undergraduate	Postgraduate or Above	
Age						
18 Years or Younger	1	2	0	1	0	4
19-30 Years Old	1	2	7	19	12	41
31-45 Years Old	0	1	10	8	7	26
46-55 Years Old	1	6	3	4	5	19
56 Years or Above	3	2	1	0	1	7
Total	6	13	21	32	25	97

3 THE ADVANTAGES OF PAPERLESS OFFICE AND SHOWING ELETRONIC ITINERARY ON TABLET PC

3.1 Decrease operating costs, protecting the environment, and promoting sustainable development

The Baotou Century International Travel Service is the top 10 tourism agencies in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. In year 2011, the total cost was 18 144 140 Chinese Yen in 2011. According to the annual statistics of 2011, up to December 31st, Baotou Century International Travel Service, together with its four branches possess

eight medium size printers in total, among which four are of central agency—two HP-M1005, one Brother-DCP_7010, and one SANSUNG SCX-4521; one is of Mingzhu Building Branch—XEROX-32-MFP; and one is of Kundulun Branch, Qingshan Branch and Donghe Branch respectively—SAMSUNG-SCX4521F. The data shows that throughout the whole year of 2011, printer Brother replaced the cartridge once with 350 Chinese Yen a time, HP printer replaced twice with 500 Chinese Yen a time, XEROX three times with 550 Chinese Yen a time, and SAMSUNG twice with 600 Chinese Yen. In addition, the paper consumption is estimated 100 packages--a total of 50 000 pieces of paper with the cost of 2 800 Chinese Yen, among which 4 000 pieces were in business use, and the other 46,000 were printed as Travel Schedule. According to the annual accounts statistics, the total expenditure of Baotou Century International Travel Service in 2011 reached 18 144 140 Chinese Yen, and the total expenditure on office supplies was 42 150.7 Chinese Yen. The paper expenditure was 2 800 Chinese Yen, and the cartridge replacement expenditure was 9 150 Chinese Yen, accounting 28.35% of the total office supplies expenditure.

The board of directors decided that Baotou Century International Travel service begin to adopt electronic itinerary from 2012, using PC Tablet to exhibit and introduce travel schedule to the guests, then we can get the calculation as follows:

- a) For the sake of energy conservation, the tourism agency will at least save 18 400 pieces of paper (70g/ piece) - 40% of the total paper consumption of 2011 with approximately 3.23 tons of carbon dioxide emissions, as shown in Equation 1, Equation 2 and Equation 3 (Website of the Carbon Neutral 2012). The cartridge usage decreased by 30%, electricity consumption be reduced about 1 397.76 kWh, by 40% with approximately 1.118 tons of carbon dioxide emission (Website of the Carbon Footprint 2012) as shown in Equation 3 and 4.348 tons of carbon emission, a decrease of 40.02%. As of 2010, the total 22 784 travel agencies in China (Tourism Administration of the People's Republic of China (CNTA): Tourism-related Economic Operation Data for 2010) could reduce about 99 064.832 tons of carbon emission in a year.

$$1. \text{ Paper Saving} = (500 \text{ pieces/package} \times 100 \text{ packages} - 4000 \text{ pieces}) * 40\%$$

2. Weight of Paper = 18400 pieces \times 70g/ piece \div 1000000 = 1.288 tons

3. 1 tons paper = 2.5 tons CO₂

4. 1kWh electricity \approx 0.8 kg CO₂

b) For the sake of economic consideration, paper consumption will save 1 030.4 Chinese Yen (as shown in Equation 5); prints for 2 745 Chinese Yen (as shown in Equation 6); and electricity for 1048.32 Chinese Yen (Inner Mongolia Electricity Price Reform Amendment. 2012. Nei Document 1035/2012) as shown in Equation 7, and the total saving will be 4 823.72 Chinese Yen. In this way, if the idea is applied at 22 784 travel agencies countrywide (Tourism Administration of the People's Republic of China (CNTA): Tourism-related Economic Operation Data for 2010), the total saving will be about 110 million Chinese Yen (Equation 8) in average in a year.

**5. Saving fees of paper consumption = 0.056 Chinese Yen/piece *
46 000 pieces * 40%**

6. Saving fees of prints = 9 150 Chinese Yen * 30%

**7. Saving fees of electricity consumption = 0.75 Chinese Yen/kwh *
1 048.32 kWh**

8. 100 Chinese Yen = 12.57 EURO (Website of the Bank of China 2012)

The sales price of iPad mini (16G, WLAN) on the Apple official website is 2 086 Chinese Yen (Website of Apple Store HK. 2012). The saving fees can afford at least two iPad minis. As to other brands' PC Tablets, we can at least acquire 3-4 with 4 823.72 Chinese Yen.

As a result, it is of great significance and economic consideration for papers' replacement by PC Tablets. For one hand, the replacement can save 8 029.48 Chinese Yen of social consumption. Together with the promotion of electronic itinerary and the generalization of PC Tablets, companies will certainly reduce the expenditure on office supplies. Cost saving witnesses more competitiveness and is conducive to better service and more qualified products. On the other hand, apart from the pursuit of economic benefits, modern enterprises should also shoulder their social duties. The PC Tablet's replacement of paper reduces the usage of paper, drum and electricity, as

well as corresponding pollution and carbon emission, which obeys to the modern philosophy of green management, and realizes social duties. It is not only the current trend of modern travel agencies, but also the requirements the society put on them, and is in coordinate with energy saving trend the international community and the Chinese government advocates.

Furthermore, the table 2 describes the result on questionnaire 3.4 and 3.5.4, and analyzed by Likert Scale. On question 3.4, the minimum value is 1, the maximum value is 4, and the mean value of the result is 3.4536. According to Likert 5-point Scale, the respondents' opinion on question 3.4 is between "neutral" and "agree". Then on question 3.5.4, the minimum value is 3, the maximum value is 5, and the mean value is 4.5464, which means that the respondents' opinion on question 3.5.4 is in the middle of "agree" and "fully agree".

Table 2. The questionnaire analysis on question 3.4 and 3.5.4

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Paperless office is the development trend in the future (Q 3.4)	97	1.00	4.00	3.4536
Showing itineraries on Tablet could save paper and protect environment (Q 3.5.4)	97	3.00	5.00	4.5464
Valid N	97			

Value 1. Fully disagree

Value 2. Disagree

Value 3. Neutral

Value 4. Agree

Value 5. Fully agree

3.2 Enhance word of mouth effect

3.2.1 The definition of word of mouth communication

Word of Mouth came from Communication Studies. Traditional Word of Mouth Marketing refers that enterprises spread their brand or product information through mutual exchange or relatives and friends.

Dr. Philip Kotler is the tenured Professor of International Marketing at the Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University (Website of the Kotler Marketing Group, Inc. 2012). He is accepted as the founder of Modern Marketing Studies in the world, and known as “the father of Marketing”. He has confirmed that “about 60% of consumers accept that they have purchased products from new brands under families or friends influence”. There are a large number of studies agree with that “word of mouth communication has the most powerful control force on market, and word of mouth is regard as the cheapest tool on information communication as well as one of the most trusted marketing channel in the world today by the modern marketers (Stephen, Ronald & Bing 2008, 29)

3.2.2 The advantages of word of mouth communication on travel agencies' marketing

Word of mouth communication is one of the most important channel on firms' information communication, there are six advantages listed below compare with formal marketing channel:

3.2.2.1 Less input and lower cost

Generally speaking, there are two ways for the dissemination of tourism information: one is through the formal channels, taking advertisements and brochures, sales promotion techniques, as well as promotional activities as an example; the other is informal communication channels, which is to spread the tourism information to the surrounding people by travelers themselves. The informal channels are also called word of mouth marketing.

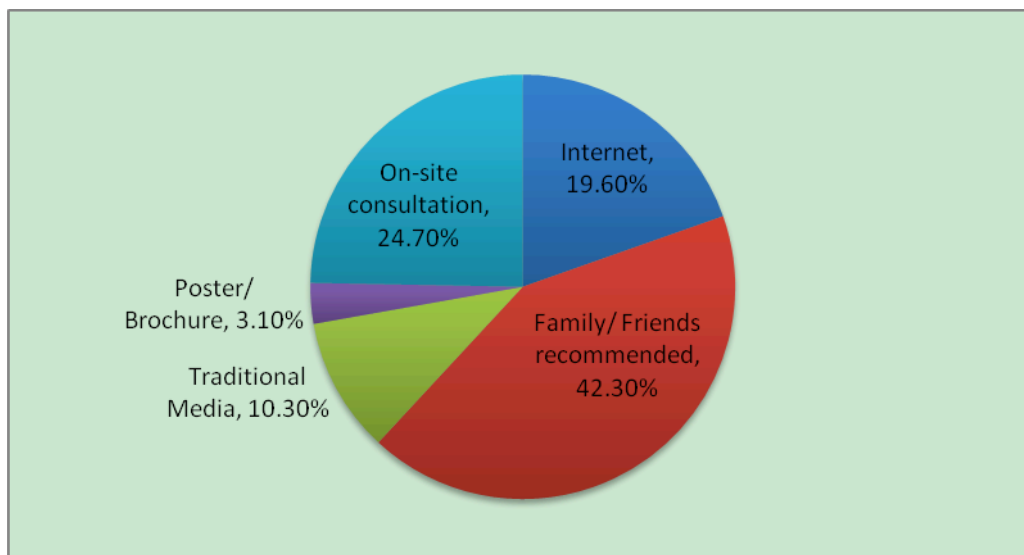
Word of mouth marketing differentiates itself from traditional ways of disseminating tourism information by lowering the costs. Dissemination of tourism information through traditional channels requires a certain amount of inputs. Production and dissemination of tourism advertising ask for the payment of rental fees for the use of mass media tools; printing tourism promotional materials requires paper and printing

consumption; promotional and public relations activities should be provided with labor expenditure. Word of mouth marketing, in comparison, is a spontaneous behavior of tourists, which needs no payment from tourism destination or tourism enterprises. As long as the products and services provided are satisfying, the tourists are always willing to share and recommend the tourism destination or tourism enterprises to their relatives and friends.

3.2.2.2 Higher reliability and easier recognition obtained by potential customers

Tourism has the characteristic that the tourism products are produced and consumed at the same time. Besides, as a kind of service-oriented commodity, tourism products are featured by intangibility and non-storability. As a result, the purchase risks are much higher than other commodity since it's hard to judge the quality of the tourism products before buying and consuming them. According to a "Domestic tourism sampling survey data", about 27.1% domestic tourists obtain travel information from the recommendation of their relatives or friends, which can be seen as a quite typical source of word of mouth marketing. It's also been confirmed by a lot of researches that tourists maintain a certain alert and wary to the information and advertisements sent out by tourism destinations or tourism enterprises, which are considered exaggerative and insincere to a certain extent. Thus, tourists are prone to the information sources recommended by their relatives and friends rather than the ones from tourism industry in order to reduce risks and uncertainty (Yu 2004, 50-51).

According to the result of questionnaire 1.7, the figure 3 illustrates that 42.3 percent of interviewees prefer collect agencies' information from family or friends; 24.7 percent of interviewees would like to receive information from travel agencies directly; 19.6 percent of interviewees prefer choose on Internet; and in both the choosing from "traditional media" and "poster/ brochure", which respectively account for 10.3 percent and 3.1 percent of total. Thus, the figure 3 proves that the most customers make decision under family or friends' effect, and the word of mouth is the most reliable channel of marketing.



Internet 19.6%
 Family/ Friends recommended 42.3%
 Traditional Media 10.3%
 Poster/ Brochure 3.1%
 On-site consultation 24.7%

Figure 3. The percentage of customers choose an agency from different channels

3.2.2.3 Larger information capacity and longer duration

Restricted by time, space as well as the limited budgets, the incomplete tourism information sent out by tourism destinations or tourism enterprises can't meet the needs of tourists in every aspect, thus affects the tourists purchase decision in a negative way. In comparison, the information sent out by word of mouth is much more integrate, comprehensive and practical, which can last longer (Song 2007, 58-60)

3.2.2.4 Obvious multiplier effects

The effects of word of mouth can be multiplier, which means that a tourist who gets bad impressions on the tourism destination or tourism enterprises will quite probably to deliver, such negative evaluation to at least 12 of their surrounding relatives and friends (Xu 2003, 15-40), which in turn exert negative effects on the image of the tourism destination or tourism enterprises. Thus, word of mouth influences the expectation and purchase behavior of potential tourists to a large extent. The positive

word of mouth can prompt the purchase behavior, while the negative one will hinder such purchase desire and behavior.

3.2.2.5 Corporate image enhancement

Brand is not only the core point of a travel service competition, but also it is an important mark of a country and district's tourism economy development. Especially after China acceded to the W.T.O., the travel services in the country will face new challenges and opportunities. At this critical moment, to create brand marketing is systems engineering to create a brand and make it a famous one and the key of marketing strategy is how to promote the marketing of tourism brand.

Word of mouth marketing is more than a kind of commercial activity, it's even more like an effective way to establish good image. It is quite different from traditional advertisements, which are merely commercial activities (Zhang & Lian 2007, 137-140). Word of mouth marketing shows the satisfactory experience of tourists, while exaggerated advertisements may encounter resistance from potential tourists. The tourism destination and tourism enterprises with a good image are more attractive to the tourists, thus can enhance its popularity and reputation. The establishment of a good image is such an important intangible asset that can not only helps to attract more and more potential customers, but also consolidates regular client.

According to the questions 3.5.6 on the survey, the minimum value is 2 and the maximum value is 5, and the mean value is 3.8866 (Table 3). The result indicated that the position of respondents is between "neutral" and "agree", and bias toward "agree".

Table 3. The questionnaire analysis on question 3.5.6

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Increase clients' attention and brand loyalty greatly (Q 3.5.6)	97	2.00	5.00	3.8866
Valid N	97			

Value 1. Fully disagree

Value 2. Disagree

Value 3. Neutral

Value 4. Agree
Value 5. Fully agree

3.2.2.6 Potential customers expansion

In word of mouth marketing, tourists are actively participating in the whole process rather than being regarded only as the object of marketing. Such mode of marketing can better exceed the tourists' expectations, meet the customized needs of tourists, and develop more potential customers.

However, we have to recognize that there are certain deficits in word of mouth marketing such as unstable and space limited. In summarize, word of mouth marketing has advantages in many respects, and is a supplement to traditional channels to disseminate tourism information. Tourism destinations and enterprises should make full use of it for the establishment of good reputation, as well as the increase of sales, and appropriately avoid its deficits.

Moreover, the table 4 describes the result on questionnaire 3.5.7 about does people would like to recommend Baotou Century International Travel Services to their family and friend if the agency shows electronic itinerary on tablet PC. After analyzed by Likert 5-point Scale, the minimum value is 2, the maximum value is 5, and the mean value is 3.8247. Which means the respondents' opinion is between "neutral" and "agree", and bias toward "agree".

Table 4. The questionnaire analysis on question 3.5.7

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Tablet applied at agency encourage me recommend to my family and friends (Q 3.5.7)	97	2.00	5.00	3.8247
Valid N	97			

Value 1. Fully disagree
Value 2. Disagree
Value 3. Neutral
Value 4. Agree
Value 5. Fully agree

Especially, table 5 shows the cross-tabulation analysis on the distribution of respondents on question 3.5.6 based on different ages. Among which 35 respondents under 45 years old choose "fully agree" or "agree", accounts for 36.08% of total. The agency should keep good relationship with them, because they are relatively young, their careers just started or on its upward slope, and pursue a high-quality life characteristics. Therefore, these clients could be called "Customer Equity" in Marketing Study (Kotler & Armstrong 2008, 47).

Table 5. The distribution of respondents on question 3.5.6 based on different ages

	Increases customers' attention and brand loyalty					Total
	Fully Dis-agree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Fully Agree	
18 Years or Younger	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 2.8%	1 2.4%	2 13.3%	4 4.1%
19-30 Years Old	1 100.0%	2 66.7%	23 63.9%	11 26.2%	4 26.7%	41 42.3%
31-45 Years Old	0 0.0%	1 33.3%	8 22.2%	13 31.0%	4 26.7%	26 26.8%
46-55 Years Old	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	3 8.3%	11 26.2%	5 33.3%	19 19.6%
56 Years or Above	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 2.8%	6 14.3%	0 0.0%	7 7.2%
Total	1 100.0%	3 100.0%	36 100.0%	42 100.0%	15 100.0%	97 100.0%

Customer equity is the total combined customer lifetime values of all of the company's current and potential customers. Clearly, the more loyal the firm's profitable customers, the higher the firm's customer equity. Customer equity may be a better measure of a firm's performance than current sales or market share. Whereas sales and market share reflect the past, customer equity suggests the future.

Thus, these clients will lead to more benefits for agency in the future, and they are super potential customers.

3.3 Enhance service efficiency, and enrich service concept

The content of traditional paper itinerary (APPENDIX 2) is excessively single which involves in basic information only, such as time, place, price, and accommodation. Moreover, if the customer wants to adjust information on travel itinerary, the staff has to print it out again after adjustment. It's not just waste customers' time, but also waste paper, and toner so that increase agency's costs, waste resource as well as increase carbon emissions.

Electronic travel itinerary has more data, abundant information and contents, quick and accurate positioning characteristics. In the other words, the pictures, the videos, the models of tour bus, the types of accommodation, and the tourist attractions etc. Furthermore, the agency could add more graphics and feedback from previous customers so that the customers could have more information around the trip, and maximum the level to eliminate the customers' worries before trip started, in order to do service and product transparency.

Besides, the staff of agency could apply any other apps, such as Google Map/ Earth, Train & Flight Schedule, Currency Exchange, Weather Forecast and etc. This will not only enable the agency's staff to introduce trips, but also let customers know more necessary information around the trip more efficient and convenient.

Additional, the cloud computing is one of the hottest technology in IT area today. The agency could apply cloud computing in order to provide customers with more convenient and efficient service. For example, the staffs could adjust itinerary based on customers' special requirement, then share new itinerary with customers in cloud, in order to meet customers' requirement in the shortest time.

The table 6 shows the mean value on questionnaire 3.3. The minimum value is 1, the maximum value is 4, and the mean value is 3.3711. The mean value is between "Yes" and "Does not matter", and bias toward "Does not matter".

Table 6. The questionnaire analysis on question 3.3

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Compare with the paper Itinerary, does Tablet PC more convenient for your consulting? (Q 3.3)	97	1.00	4.00	3.3711
Valid N	97			

Value 1. No

Value 2. It depends

Value 3. Does not matter

Value 4. Yes

Although 57 interviewees agree with Tablet PC is more convenient for consulting than the paper itinerary. On the other hand, the rest of 39 interviewees (account for 40.2% of total interviewees) selected “Does not matter” or “It depends” (Table 7). Therefore, the result represents that the Tablet PC and electronic travel itinerary is still a new technology for nearly half of respondents regardless of age. And the unfamiliarity with the usages and the functions of tablet PC and electronic travel itinerary, led to they made fuzzy selection on this question. Thus, the travel agencies can't give up the paper itinerary immediately.

Table 7. The cross analysis on ages and question 3.3

	Tablet PC is more convenient for consulting than the paper itinerary				Total	
	No	It depends	Does not matter	Yes		
18 Years or Younger	Count	0	0	1	3	4
	% within age	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	75.0%	100.0%
19-30 Years Old	Count	0	8	9	24	41
	% within age	0.0%	19.5%	22.0%	58.5%	100.0%
31-45 Years Old	Count	0	5	7	14	26
	% within age	0.0%	19.2%	26.9%	53.8%	100.0%
46-55 Years Old	Count	0	3	3	13	19
	% within age	0.0%	15.8%	15.8%	68.4%	100.0%
56 Years or Above	Count	1	3	0	3	7
	% within age	14.3%	42.9%	0.0%	42.9%	100.0%
Total	Count	1	19	20	57	97
	% within age	1.0%	19.6%	20.6%	58.8%	100.0%

In practice, two local governments have already started to adopt electronic itinerary. The one, Hainan Tourism Administration, plans to start trials of electronic travel itinerary and electronic contract at the top 18 biggest local agencies in August 2012. Meanwhile, the Xiamen Tourism Administration would like to trial electronic itinerary at all 117 tourism agencies later this year. In addition, both Tourism Administrations agree that the changing is not just from manual age to digital age, but also the transformation and upgrading of China's tourism industry. Furthermore, this transformed the business model of travel agencies operation to some extent. What's more, this is also a conspicuous improvement to the standardized management and operation.

4 SUMMARY

4.1 Tourism industry enjoys prosperity and has great potential for further development

With the development of our national economy and more disposable income of our people, there comes a strong desire for travel, which provides an unprecedented opportunity for the development of tourism industry, not to mention travel agencies. Besides, tourism industry is such a comprehensive industry that exerts prominent driving-effects on the others, whose performance has caught a lot of attention and has been recognized as one of the most important engines of economic development.

In the year of 2009, the State Council of the People's Republic of China issued Opinions of the State Council on Accelerating the Development of Tourism Industry (Opinions of the State Council on Accelerating the Development of Tourism Industry 41/2009, No. 41), and put forward that tourism industry should transform into a strategic pillar industry of the national economy as well as a more satisfied modern service industry by the masses of the people. High national and local attention to the tourism industry provides favorable policy environment to the development of travel agencies. Meanwhile, the wide application of internet and mobile technologies offers technical supports to the innovation of travel agencies' management.

In such a great development circumstances, more instructions and support should be given to tourism industry, taking more preferential policies and technical guidance as examples, to facilitate the development of the sunrise industry. With such financial as well as technical assists, tourism industry can enjoy an enabling development environment and enhance their competitive edges, thus further create more economic and social benefits for the society.

4.2 The application of information technology in tourism industry is an inevitable trend

Information technology has been applied to domestic travel agencies since 1980s, and exerted far-reaching effects on the development model as well as the management style of travel agencies. In comparison with the rapid development of tourism industry, the informationization of travel agencies is still lagging behind.

According to a research information offered by China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), there are 538 million Internet users in China. The number of people accessing to the Internet via mobile devices increased to a record high of 388 million by the end of June, 2012, which makes the informationization of travel agencies an imperative task (China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC): Abstract of the 30th Statistical Report on Internet Development in China. 2012).

4.3 Benefits brought by Information technology sharpen travel agencies' competitive edges

Informationization helps travel agencies reduce operating costs, improve management efficiencies, establish good corporate images, thus sharpen their competitive edges, help them to gain more market shares and enhance core competitiveness. Meanwhile, informationization puts forward higher requirements for travel agencies to be sensitive to demand changes as well as be capable of integrating internal resources, so as to take full advantages of such technology.

Furthermore, Dr. Dexter J. Choy, who is a professor from the University of Hawaii at Manoa said that: the key strategy to the sustainable development of travel agencies is that they should focus their attention on customers' demands as well as keep sensitive to changes of customers' demands, so as to provide diversified products and services with high added-values, which in turn help to establish and enhance their images and brands (Chuck & Dexter 1997, 87).

4.4 Extent of informatization will be further promoted, and mobile travel apps possess huge potential

2011-2012 is a year when mobile Internet and e-commerce developed rapidly. Mobile travel booking and travel social networking sites (SNS) are the two trends of online travel market. Meanwhile, openness and cooperation concept come into the entrepreneurs' mind. Various products are developed and launched in the market, quickly receiving the recognition of the users.

Internet access modes present a new pattern in China. In the first half of 2012, the number of Internet users using mobile phones to access the Internet reached 388 million while that of desktop users was 380 million (China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC): Abstract of the 30th Statistical Report on Internet Development in China. 2012). Mobile phone has become the Internet access terminal with the greatest number of Internet users in China.

On the other hand, the mobile travel apps became the standard configuration for online tourism enterprises. Huge potential can be seen for the mobile travel apps although now the related enterprises are merely expanding their business in the field. In addition, social marketing including micro-blog marketing caught the attention of the related enterprises.

Finally, the extent of informatization will be improved. The outburst of market demands will accelerate the development of online tourism enterprises.

4.5 Travel itinerary eletronization is a proper solution for informationization of travel agencies

Though facing with great pressures brought by the wide application of Internet, travel agencies have to adapt themselves to such changes so as to provide better services. Diversified and customized services with the application of high technology are what travelers need in the future, thus requires travel agencies to combine their traditional advantages with high technology to accelerate informationization.

Paperless office and travel itinerary eletronization applied in travel agencies transform the way of their business and management. But this is just a tip of the iceberg; informationization will be an inevitable trend for the overall tourism industry. Wide application of Tablet PC as well as cloud computing in travel agencies is not only an effective way to reduce operating costs and carbon emissions, but also help to attract more and more customers who are interested in accepting new things. In the near further, all of the participants of the tourism activities, such as travel agencies, hotels, transportation, tourist attractions and tourism administration, to name a few, will be covered by informationization. Finally, the tourism industry must realize informationization in a full range.

The thesis believes that the adoption of Tablet PC can not only meet the current social requirements on travel agencies' management and operation in a more efficient way, but also can ensure travel agencies to furnish more diversified and characterized tourism products and services to the customers with electronization and virtualization.

5 PERSONAL FEELING AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

5.1 Personal feeling

This is my first time to finish graduate thesis individually. Looking back over the past 5 months, it was a tough, but unforgettable period in my life. Just like initial intention of the program, creativity was also applied to the graduation thesis.

1. The topic of your thesis is about innovative service, and then the idea should be applied in a truly-existing enterprise;
2. The thesis, like the other traditional programs does not only should be completed, but also should edit a video relating to your thesis topic, because the video editing is one of the core parts in Innovative Business Services.

The whole thesis process should include: Topic finding, Target Company finding, Idea evaluation and supervisor distribution, Thesis plan and structuring your thesis, Data collection and writing your thesis, and video editing. After you have completed all of processes above, then the students could book a seminar date.

In the process of doing my thesis, I ought to admit, it's much more difficult than I have concern it should be. Specially, there were two difficulties, which are the questionnaire designing, and the data collecting and analysis. I spend one more month than I have planned. For questionnaire designing, clear survey objective is the first step of questionnaire designing. The designer should always ask himself "why I need to do this survey", and "which kind of data I want to collect". In my questionnaire, the Likert 5-point Scale was applied. On the other hand, data analysis is a reproduction and recreation of useful information. We can abstract what we need by inspecting, classifying, summarizing the data. This was a surprise part for me. When I confused on "how can I analyze the data scientifically," my friend introduced me one professional statistic processing software – IBM Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). IBM SPSS, as the most popular statistic software which easy interface, powerful function, and rich statistic methods, has been widely used in universities, scientific institutions as well as professional statistics enterprises. In my thesis, the Descriptives, the Frequencies, the One-way Analysis of Variance (One-way ANOVA) and the Independent sample T test and Cross analysis is applied as analyze method.

In addition, video is a part of graduation thesis. The length of clips is about 9 minutes, and three topics are involved, which is background introduction, thesis writing process and the scene of questionnaire survey. Besides, 90% of video source is shot by me and final edited by Finalcut Pro 7 and Motion.

5.2 Acknowledgement

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The last but no least, my thanks would also go to all people have helped and taught me immensely during the three years of my study in Satakunta University of Applied Sciences, Pori. And I would also like to thank all the classmates and friends who have given me generous support and helpful advice during the past years. They have provided me great help and comprehensive supervision through the three years. I have benefited a great deal from their advice and suggestions.

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Comparison between The Electronic Travel Itinerary Display On Tablet PC with The Traditional Paper Itinerary

Dear Sir / Madam:

We are conducting a survey of "Comparison between The Itinerary Display On Tablet PC with The Traditional Paper Itinerary". The results of the survey are only for academic research purposes only. Thank you for your help!

1. BASIC INFORMATIONS

- 1.1. Gender: Male, Female
- 1.2. Age:
 - A. Below 18 years, B. 19-30, C. 31-45, D. 46-55, E. 56 years and above
- 1.3. Level of Education:
 - A. Junior high school, B. High school, C. Vocational College, D. Undergraduate, E. Postgraduate or above
- 1.4. The type of job:
 - A. Official, B. Enterprise Management, C. The professional/ Educational Department personnel, D. Business/Service Personnel, E. Workers, F. Farmers, G. Soldiers, H. Retired, I. Students, J. Others
- 1.5. The average monthly income (RMB):
 - A. Below 1000, B. 1001-2000, C. 2001-3000, D. 3001-4000, E. 4001 or above
- 1.6. The average travel times in a year:
 - A. Once, B. 2-3 times, C. 3-5 times, D. 6 times or more

-
- 1.7. Which channel do you usually obtain information of travel agency:
 A. Online, B. Family/ friends recommended, C. Traditional media,
 D. Poster/ brochure on the street, E. On-site consultation
- 1.8. How many times did you participate in our tour:
 A. Never, B. Once, C. Twice, D. 3 times or more
- 1.9. Your usual travel purpose:
 A. Sightseeing, B. Leisure vacation, C. Visiting friends and relatives,
 D. Business travel, E. Religious pilgrimage, F. Others

2. **When you are consulting the itinerary in our travel agency, how do you think the importance of those factors? Please put "√" in the best choice to meet your views.**

Factors	Very important	Important	Not to matter	Unimportant	Very unimportant
Richness of contents					
Convenience of the Query					
Visual aesthetics					
Novelty of the design					
Hold ability					
Portability					
Is it can be circulated?					

3. **Investigation of the tourists' awareness level of the Tablet PC**

- 3.1. Have you use Tablet PC or smart mobile phone in your life?
 A. Frequently used, B. Occasionally,
 C. Someone in my family got one, but I've never used, D. Do not familiar
- 3.2. If our travel agent using a Tablet PC to display itinerary, would you like to try it?
 A. Yes, B. Does not matter, C. It depends, D. No
- 3.3. Compare with the paper Itinerary, does Tablet PC more convenient for your consulting?
 A. Yes, B. Does not matter, C. It depends, D. No
- 3.4. Do you think the "paperless office" is the future trends?
 A. Yes, B. Does not matter, C. It depends, D. No

3.5. If the travel agency tries to start "paperless office" this year and use tablet PC to show you the travel arrangements, please put "√" in the best choice to tell us your views.

The function of the Tablet	Fully agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Fully disagree
Convenient for search					
Visual display					
Fashion					
Save paper, and environmental friendly					
Enhance the brand awareness of the travel agency					
Increase clients' attention and brand loyalty greatly					
Improve the possibility of me on recommending the agency to friends and relatives					
Communications between tablet and other modern devices such as smart phones					



内蒙古包头世纪国际旅行社

Bao Tou Shi Ji International Travel Service



许可证号: L-NMG-GJ00012

内蒙古十强旅行社

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— . Itinerary			
Golden Route of China-11 days & 10 nights Beijing - Xi'an - Guilin - Shanghai 2012 Small Group			
Date	Activities	Meals	Accommodation
Day 01	Arrive in Beijing. You will meet your local guide at airport and transfer to hotel. After we help you check in at your hotel for a three-night stay, you will have free time for the rest of the day. Our local guide can help you plan your evening activities (optional). You can enjoy Peking Opera shows, or feast a roast duck dinner at famed Quanjude Restaurant, or enjoy nightlife at pubs and bars at Houhai or Gongti area.	/	Qianmen Jianguo Hotel ****, Beijing
Day 02	Today, ride to the legendary Great Wall of China and stand on its famous ramparts. A local lunch is included, along with a visit to a jade or cloisonné enamel workshop. Then tour the Chang Tomb, which was the first and largest of the Ming Tombs. In late afternoon or evening enjoy shopping or just walk and see the Wangfujing shopping street which is the main shopping area in Beijing.(optional)	B, L	Qianmen Jianguo Hotel ****, Beijing
Day 03	After breakfast visit the massive Tian'anmen Square, then see the Forbidden City with its elegant palaces, pavilions and landscaped gardens, once open only to nobility. In the afternoon tour the Temple of Heaven where the oriental emperors worship the heaven. Then visit the famous Hongqiao Pearl Market. After dinner, you will enjoy an exciting Chinese Kung Fu Show at Red Theater.	B, L, D	Qianmen Jianguo Hotel ****, Beijing
Day 04	Take a short excursion by rickshaw around Hutongs (narrow alleyways) where you can see traditional courtyard residences of the city. In the afternoon tour the 700-acre Summer Palace and view the scenery of its lake. Drop off at Beijing Olympic Green on the way back to hotel. If time permits can buy entrance tickets on spot to go inside the stadiums of Bird's Nest and	B, L	Xi'an Grand New World Hotel ****, Xi'an

	Water Cube. In the evening fly to Xi'an, China's legendary home of the Tang Dynasty from 618 to 907 A.D.		
Day 05	After breakfast tour Xian's archaeological wonder: 8,000 life-sized Terracotta Warriors buried with Emperor Qin Shi Huang, each soldier and horse molded in incredible detail. This afternoon, tour the Big Wild Goose Pagoda which was built under the emperor's conduct to collect scriptures, Buddha statues and Buddhist relics taken from India about 1,300 years ago. Then we will visit the Muslim Quarters and you could walk around Muslim Quarters. After that, drive back to hotel. Today's tour includes visit to a souvenir shop or factory. At night you can enjoy the Tang Dynasty Music and Dance Show (optional)	B, L	Xi'an Grand New World Hotel_****, Xi'an
Day 06	Fly to Guilin, a small city with beautiful landscape in Southern China. After arrival visit Reed Flute Cave Elephant Trunk Hill, and a Tea Plantation.	B, L	Guilin Plaza Hotel_****, Guilin
Day 07	Take one-day trip to Longsheng Terrace Rice Fields and Minority village. Then transfer back to Guilin.	B, L	Guilin Plaza Hotel_****, Guilin
Day 08	Enjoy Li River Cruising for about 4.5 hours and arrive at Yangshuo, a small lovely town where we will stay overnight. Looking around the narrow but interesting Yangshuo West Street. An evening option is to enjoy the stunning Impression Liusanjie Show.	B, L	Yangshuo New Century_****, Yangshuo
Day 09	Transfer from Yangshuo town to Guilin airport and then fly to Shanghai, China's most modern metropolis. Optional program is cruising on the Huangpu River to see the enchanting night view of Shanghai.	B, L	Howard Johnson Business Club Hotel *****, Shanghai
Day 10	View the Shanghai Museum, Continue to Yuyuan Garden, a 16th century Ming period private garden/residence in the heart of Shanghai's old Chinese quarter. Along is the local bazaar and Shanghai Old Street. Visit Former French Concession District.. Stroll along the Bund and Nanjing Road to experience the thrills of old and modern Shanghai A visit to silk store is included today. Tonight you can take an optional acrobatics show or enjoy night life at Xintiandi.	B, L	Howard Johnson Business Club Hotel *****, Shanghai
Day 11	Free time and then airport transfer.	B	/
二 . Price per Adult: US\$1782			
三 . Price Includes			
	Hotel accommodation in twin shared room with daily breakfast. Meals as specified in the itinerary (B=Breakfast L=Lunch D=Dinner). Domestic flights, trains or buses as specified in the itinerary		

	<p>Airport tax and fuel fee.</p> <p>Join in car/coach for transfers service and sightseeing program as indicated in the itinerary.</p> <p>Local English-speaking tour guide for transfers and sightseeing program as indicated in each city.</p> <p>Entrance fees to scenic spots as indicated in the itinerary.</p> <p>Service charge and government Taxes.</p>
四 . Cancellation and refund policy for Tours reservation	
<p>If you want to cancel your booking or part of it, you must advise us in writing to chinatours@btlyw.com by e-mail or 0086-472-5192731 by fax. The letter must be signed by the lead name on the booking and once we receive it you should expect to receive a cancellation letter within 24 hours. If you do not then please contact us to ensure your letter has been received.</p> <p>To cover the cost of processing your cancellation and to compensate us for the risk that we may not be able to resell your travel arrangements, we make a cancellation charge on the scale shown below. The person who made the booking is responsible for paying this charge. The size of the charge depends on when we receive your cancellation notice or letter or how you would like us to deal with your payment providing that we have received your full payment for the tours.</p> <p>No Cancellation Fees if written cancellation notice is received more than 30 days prior to tour departure!</p>	

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