



Package Tour for Chinese Tourists in Kathmandu

Suraj K.C.

Bachelor's thesis
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Degree Programme in Tourism

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ABSTRACT

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Chinese outbound tourism is currently the single second largest source of tourism in the world and is well on the road to becoming the largest in a few years. Despite being a destination in a neighboring country, Kathmandu, a destination voted one of the top 25 destinations of 2014 by trip advisor is however yet to capitalize on this. The aim of this thesis was to develop a package tour for Chinese tourists by doing a thorough research on their consumer behavior and consumer trend.

The research in this thesis was implemented using secondary data from wide scale researches from multiple sources. This data was first analyzed using a theoretical framework and then eventually the outcomes were utilized in the product development.

The results from the research showed the general expectation from Chinese holiday makers, booking process, their choice of activities while in destination and most importantly some growing trends in the Chinese outbound tourism sector. Moreover, this outcome of the research further proved that there are some trends and similarities among Chinese tourist and thus this can be applied in product development for a more desirable and satisfying product. Hence, based on this results two package tour options were developed.

Key words: Chinese Tourists, Package Tour, Consumer Behavior

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1 INTRODUCTION

Chinese Outbound Tourism has become the second largest source of tourism in the entire world and is on the road to becoming the largest. The vast number of tourists understandably travel more to closer destination and hence has created a wonderful opportunity to its neighbouring countries. However Kathmandu region, the capital of Nepal in one of the neighbouring countries has yet to see the desirable growth in the visitor number from China. The reason arguably is the lack of targeted product for Chinese visitors in the West centred tourism sector of the City. Thus, targeted products and strategies are needed in order to achieve this potential and therefore the author has decided to explore this subject of product development for Chinese tourists in Kathmandu.

The aim of this thesis was to develop a more desirable product for the Chinese outbound tourism market by studying the consumer behaviour and consumer trend of the Chinese tourists across the globe and in Kathmandu. To achieve this aim, a research on the Consumer Behaviour and Consumer Trend was conducted. As it is a huge market, in order to get a more representative result, the research collected secondary data from wide scale researches from multiple sources. Furthermore, to better understand the result a Consumer-Decision making framework was used to analyse the data.

The research result outlined the general expectation of Chinese holiday makers from a destination, the booking process, their choice of activities and the growing trends in the Chinese outbound tourism market. These findings were then analysed with the theoretical framework of the thesis to give clearer ideas. With the help of these information and an existing and wildly successful Chinese tourism development strategy of Australian tourism board, two package tour options were developed. These two holiday options are designed with the strong consideration towards the Chinese consumer behaviour and also their growing trends.

2 RESEARCH PLAN

2.1 Research aim and objective

The aim of this thesis is to develop a package tour for Chinese visitors in Kathmandu with regards to the Chinese tourists' trends as a tourist and their consumer behaviour. The field of tourism literature has made relatively little contribution to the area of product development in assisting existing and new tourism businesses (Ateljevic & Page 2009, 16). Thus, the author will conduct an in-depth study and analysis of Chinese consumer behaviour and trends both across the world and in Kathmandu to help develop a competitive, attractive and desirable product.

The objective of the thesis is to study and analyse the recent trends of Chinese outbound tourism across the globe and Kathmandu, meanwhile relating the world trend with Kathmandu as a destination. Also, the thesis will identify the general Chinese consumer behaviour as a tourist and the factors that affect when they choose travel destinations or purchase holiday packages. Moreover, the thesis will precisely study the factors that affect Chinese tourists when purchasing holiday packages. It will look at the behavioural patterns and motivation of Chinese tourists in choosing destination and holiday packages. A very wide sector of consumer behaviour and trend of Chinese visitors in recent year is to be studied in order to come to an understanding of their behaviour and patterns as a tourist. According to Swarbrooke and Horner (2007, 3), the topic of consumer behaviour is vital in identifying all the marketing activity that is conducted to develop, promote and sell tourism product. Finally, these findings are to be then used to develop an attractive and effective package tour options for Chinese tourists in Kathmandu.

2.2 Research Questions

In order to achieve the aim and objectives of the research, devising the right questions for the research is very important. It is a very crucial to understand and learn what part of the Chinese outbound tourism market is crucial to not only capitalise the market but to understand and predict the market. Hence, the research questions need to be a question that

seeks answers in wider perspective in order to help learn and understand this huge market. As above said, to get the right answers that can aid the research aim of developing a package trip for Chinese visitors in Kathmandu, it is crucial to ask the right questions. Therefore, to solve and provide sufficient facts and information to achieve the aim of the thesis, the author has proposed two questions which will be discussed in details in the following paragraphs.

2.2.1 What is the consumer behaviour of Chinese tourists?

The study of consumer behaviour is simply the study of why people buy the product as they do and what factors affect their decision to do so (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 6). Although, it is a vague question which can never be answered definitely. The research will make all attempt to understand the consumer behaviour of Chinese customers when choosing a tourism destination and purchasing package holiday trips with a strong focus on factors that affect their decisions. Also, it will study the consumer behaviour of Chinese tourists while in a destination focusing on their choice of activities, locations and tourism purpose. So, basically, it is a question devised to study the reason and motives of choosing a travel destination and package holiday tours along with the choice of their activities at the destination to better understand Chinese tourists. In addition, it is important for tourism entrepreneurs to understand the consumer behaviour of tourists as in the way in which tourism consumers make their decisions (Cooper, Fletcher, Fyall, Gilbert & Wanhill 2005, 52). Hence, as the author wants to develop a package tour for Chinese tourists, it is a must to find out what really motivates their decision of choosing holiday packages in a destination and incorporate these findings to the best for a desirable and attractive product.

2.2.2 What is the trend in Chinese outbound tourism?

A trend is not a prediction but changes that can be traced to how people react (Aramberri & Butler 2005, 3). Therefore, before developing a package tour for Chinese tourists in Kathmandu, it is crucial to understand and know the trend and direction of the fastest growing outbound market in the world. As there are millions who embark on outbound tourism for the first time from China, it is very helpful to know what trend of tourism is currently at rise and where exactly it might go in the coming years. Also, the trend of travelling in tourism are ever changing and what may be a place or a holiday package of

an interest at the moment may not be the same in few years. It is simple human nature that people like to follow trends on what is happening at the moment and then maybe shift towards trend that may be growing in near future. Therefore, learning about the trends in Chinese outbound tourism will help provide a strong guide and support in creating a package tour for Chinese tourists and also give a better understanding of the needs and demands of Chinese tourists. The authors' aim of developing package tour for Chinese tourists in Kathmandu will have to include the trends of the target group in order to realize what is it that is really trending in the Chinese outbound tourism market to better understand what is it that the Chinese tourists really want in their holiday.

2.3 Concept and Theories

The author wants to understand the consumer behaviour and Chinese visitor trends to develop a package tour and this can only be achieved best by using theories and product development strategies from the related tourism sector. The author's aim of studying consumer behaviour and trend and then using the results in developing a product can only be successful when the data and results are translated with the help of theories and concepts. As Finn, Elliot-White and Walton (2000) suggest, theory is something that can be used to assist as a guiding framework in analysing and interpreting the data. In this chapter, we will look at two very different concept that will be used as a guiding framework to interpret that data, analyse the results and develop a product. This conceptual frameworks will help to identify and present in a very logical manner, the important factors related to our topic under study (Brotherton 2008, 78). For an in-depth and up to date interpretation and guide, we will use a consumer behaviour framework (Gilbert 1991, according to Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 47) and the concept of 'The China 2020 Strategy' introduced by Tourism Australia (Tourism. Australia 2012).

2.3.1 Consumer behaviour

According to Swarbrooke and Horner (2007, 8), it is important to understand the consumer behaviour and know what benefits they are looking for so that these can be reflected in the development process of a product. Moreover, it is crucial to know how and what will affect a consumer's decision in buying a product. According to Gilbert (1991),

a simple framework can be used to explain a consumer decision making process (figure 1). The first influence is a psychological one such as perception and learning whereas the second level of influence is more societal and developed during the process of socialization and includes reference groups and family influences (Gilbert 1991, according to Swarbrooke & Horner 2007,47). As Swabrooke and Horner (2007,40) define the purpose of a consumer behaviour models as a way to give simplified version of the relationship of various factors that affect the behaviour of a consumer, this simple model or framework can give a general view of the most likely factors to affect a Consumers' buying process. However, to better understand the importance of these different factors and how they affect Chinese customers' decision making, the framework will be used as a theory in this research to analyse the data and results.

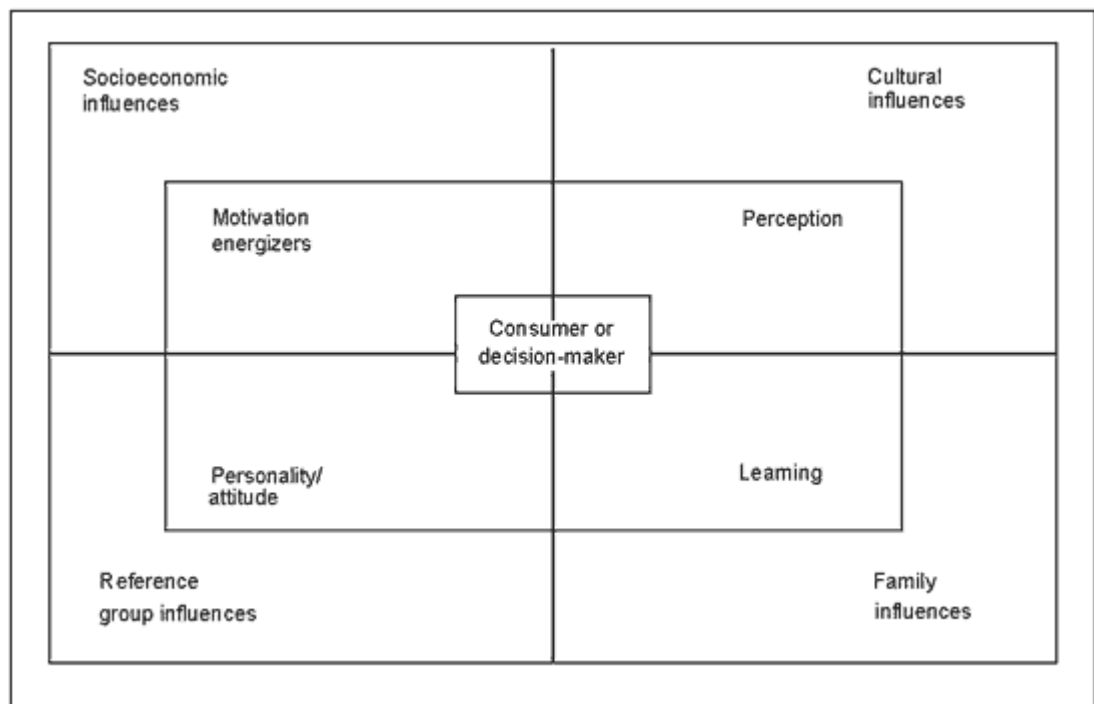


FIGURE 1: Consumer-decision making framework (Gilbert 1991, according to Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 47)

2.3.2 The China 2020 Strategy

Although it is merely just a tourism strategy adopted by Tourism Australia, the author chooses to use the concept of 'the China 2020 Strategy' in this thesis as it serves as an

example of a plan of actions that is working and hence could aid in development of the desired product. In order to achieve the aim of thesis, it is important to be able to reflect the results of the research with a working concept and improvise from there on to develop an up to date and attractive package tour for the Chinese tourists.

In addition, to better understand and learn about a fast growing outbound tourism market, it is highly important to learn from an industry which is doing well at attracting that tourism market. No other country has succeeded like Australia in attracting Chinese outbound tourism both in visitor numbers and revenue from the fast growing Chinese outbound tourism market. In the early 2000, Australia started recognizing the market growth of Chinese visitors. By 2010, the number of visitors from China was at 454,000 and 24% higher than the year before (Tourism Australia 2012). To take maximum advantage from this highly potential market, Tourism Australia was quick to come up with a China Strategy. The China 2020 strategic plan (Tourism Australia 2012) is a five point strategy with the aim of capitalizing this huge outbound Chinese market and is as follows:

- Know the customer
- Geographic strategy
- Quality Australian Experience
- Aviation Development
- Partnerships

With the five point strategy in action, by the end of the year 2013, Australia achieved a remarkable growth of 56% from 2010 (Tourism Australia.com 2014). Hence, the proven and highly up to date strategy targeted towards Chinese visitors is an excellent concept that can be used in interpreting the results and developing a package tour.

2.4 Research Methods and Data

“Research is about enquiry, about discovery, about revealing something that was previously unknown or testing the validity of existing knowledge” (Finn et al. 2000). To better understand the Chinese visitors and their trend in the outbound tourism market and to form a valid and working product for a sophisticated target group is not a simple task. Especially, the fact that number of outbound Chinese market is over 100,000,000 itself

proves that studying their consumer behaviour and trend can be difficult, time-consuming and expensive.

Hence, in order to achieve the research objectives, the author has chosen to use secondary data analysis as the research method. According to (Finn et al 2000,41), in a given research objectives, secondary data analysis may well be the most desirable method or in some cases it may even be the only possible research method. A secondary data analysis method will help look at a very wide amount of data and come to a more accurate, efficient and productive result that will represent such a huge group of people in a much greater extent. According to Hakim(1982,16), a secondary analysis forces the researcher to focus and think more about the theoretical aims and other substantive issues of study rather than practical and methodological problem of collecting new data (Finn et al 2000, 41).

As the research method is secondary data analysis, the author will be studying available secondary data that supports and helps answer the research question and achieve the research objective. In order to understand trends and consumer behaviour from Chinese visitors across the world and Kathmandu, merge them and relate them, the research will primarily retrieve data and information from Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation Nepal, Tourism Australia, Chinavia (Review of China's Outbound Travel Market 2013), Hotels.com (Chinese International travel Monitor 2014), World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

The amount of information available out there which if only we knew where it all was and had the money and time to access is scarily vast (Finn et al 2000, 41). With the similar standpoint the author believes that with effective searching and time spending, a growing topic of world concern like Chinese consumer behaviour and trend can be researched and studied to get a more realistic and representative results. Hence, it is possible to use these data and information from different studies and by merging and relating them with each other, it is entirely possible to produce favourable outcome for a research like this. In fact, such a result is also highly representative of this huge Chinese outbound tourism market.

3 KATHMANDU AND CHINESE OUTBOUND TOURISM

3.1 Kathmandu as a destination

Kathmandu is the capital and the largest city of Nepal. However, there is a distinction between Kathmandu city and Kathmandu Valley, as the latter comprises of two other cities Lalitpur and Bhaktapur which are adjoining to Kathmandu city, the word ‘Kathmandu’ in Tourism perspective in Nepal usually means the agglomerate of these three or simply the Kathmandu Valley. Hence, in this thesis Kathmandu means the whole region of Kathmandu valley. With all the three cities, the agglomerate has a total population of 2,517,023 (Central Bureau of Statistics Nepal 2012).

Kathmandu valley has seen a considerable urban growth and development in the last few decades and is by far the country’s most modern, vibrant and developed region. Moreover, it is the heart and epicenter of the country where all the different religion, culture and ethnicity meet and live in harmony. Likewise, it is the tourism gateway of Nepal holding the only international airport in the country. Therefore, essentially everyone coming by air to Nepal has to arrive in Kathmandu!

Kathmandu is not only an economical and financial capital of Nepal but also a historical and cultural capital. Historically, the valley itself has been considered “Nepal” throughout the ancient time while the territories and boundaries changed. It has also been a seat of government throughout the history and holds a very important significance to Nepalese history, culture and identity. It is home to many cultural heritage and monuments for all religions that existed in the country, primarily Hinduism and Buddhism. Hence, Due to its rich history, diverse culture and ancient architectural brilliance, it is a very attractive tourist destination. In addition, the region proudly holds 7 UNESCO World heritage sites and observes more festivals than the days in the year. In short, the valley is bustling with culture and diversity with the brilliance of centuries of architecture all over the region. Likewise, it is also a modern city offering the taste of modern Culture in Nepal and has plenty of shopping malls, restaurants, bars, nightclubs and casinos providing the option of modernity within a medieval region. Hence, it has something for every tourist visiting the place. As argued by Verlag (2006, 62), tourism highly depends on the attractions in

and around a destination and Kathmandu has plenty of those to offer. The following paragraphs will give very brief information on what exactly one can find after arriving in Kathmandu.

3.1.1 Tourist Attractions

Kathmandu Durbar Square: “Durbar Square” literally translates to a square with a palace and is indeed an old royal palace surrounded by multiple shrines and temples. This cluster of temples, palaces, streets and courtyards in a huge square date back to as old as the 12th century and the newest ones from the 18th century (SAARC Tourism Nepal 2009). As seen in PICTURE 1, it is a rare and valuable collection of brilliant architecture, craftsmanship and culture.



PICTURE 1: Kathmandu Durbar Square (Naus.com.np 2014)

Patan and Bhaktapur Durbar Square: they are two other similar durbar square (royal palaces with squares), as 4 centuries ago the region was three different kingdoms ruled by three different kings. Although, they have some similarity in the way they are built, the shrines and temples around are totally unique and original. While walking around one can see the unique wood and stone carvings and charming and astonishing artworks in both

of these squares. These squares also have their palace with temples and shrines along with plenty of market squares.

Swayambhunath: Swayambhunath is the old religious site believed to date back as old as 2500 years and is a Buddhist stupa which is worshipped by both Hindus and Buddhists (PICTURE 2). The stupa is on top of a small hill in the west side of the valley and has a huge significance both culturally and religiously. It stands as the holiest site for Buddhists from Kathmandu and second for Tibetan Buddhists in Nepal. It also has shrines, temples and monasteries around the stupa and quite a few monkeys in the hill. Likewise it also stands as a sign of religious harmony and respect among different believers.



PICTURE 2: SWAYAMBHUNATH (Pathtravel.com 2014)

Pashupatinath Temple: This holiest Hindu temple in the country and one of the holiest in Hinduism, it is without doubt a site with religious importance for pilgrimage and cultural showcase for others. Moreover, it is an excellent introduction of Hindu culture and life as it also serves as a cremation place which can be observed by visitors!

Likewise, there are many more sites of attraction within the valley as one can casually stroll by and come across a temple or a stupa or a shrine every 10 minutes. Also, there are open markets and remains of old towns which is an extraordinary place to experience culture and Kathmandu as a whole.

3.1.2 Other Attractions

Furthermore, Kathmandu is not just a place of traditional historical and cultural value but also a showcase of a fusion between western and south Asian traditions. As the country is very open to new cultures and way of life, the city has transformed itself to a unique modern hub and a bridge between Western and South Asian culture in Nepal. One can quickly realize this with hundreds of bars and restaurant serving both local and international cuisine and drinks. Likewise, there are plenty of western style night clubs and to add on to the entertainment, there are a handful numbers of Casinos which provide other entertainments along with gambling. Also, the number of bars and pubs and the pub culture as a whole is drastically growing around the region.

To sum it up, Kathmandu provides a visitor with the complete experience! One can stay entertained throughout their stay with extraordinary architecture throughout the city, amazing culture and history, vibrant, modern and open life-style so different than anywhere else while enjoying the bustling and entertaining night life. Moreover, as visitor are considered 'god-like' in Nepalese beliefs, one can immediately feel the hospitality and openness towards visitors in Kathmandu.

3.2 Chinese Outbound Tourism

Over the last decade China has stunned the entire world with its' massive economic development and growth. Since the reforms in 1978 to shift towards market based economy, China has averaged a GDP (Gross Domestic Product) growth of 10 percent a year and has established itself as the second biggest economy in the world (World Bank 2015). According to World Bank (2015), although with a population of 1.3 billion, china has still managed to raise living standards of the people over the past decades of massive economic growth and now has only 98.99 million people below the national poverty line. This has resulted in the change of a huge population's status from lower class to middle class and the middle class are rising in numbers every year.

As the economy is growing so is the expenditure and likewise the expenditure in travel and tourism is also growing and most importantly it is growing at an astonishing rate.

With a huge population of middle class able to afford a holiday, the Chinese outbound tourism is dominating the global tourism and is on the road to becoming the biggest source market for the global tourism. As shown in Figure 2 over the last decade the Chinese outbound tourism is growing at a massive rate bringing it from a very minor source of tourism in 2001 at 12 million to a staggering 98 million in 2013. Moreover, this growth has attracted global attention and fierce competition in order to capitalise a portion of this massive market. Likewise, it has resulted in a global consensus that in order to attract Chinese tourists it is important understand their consumer behaviour and predict their consumer trend.

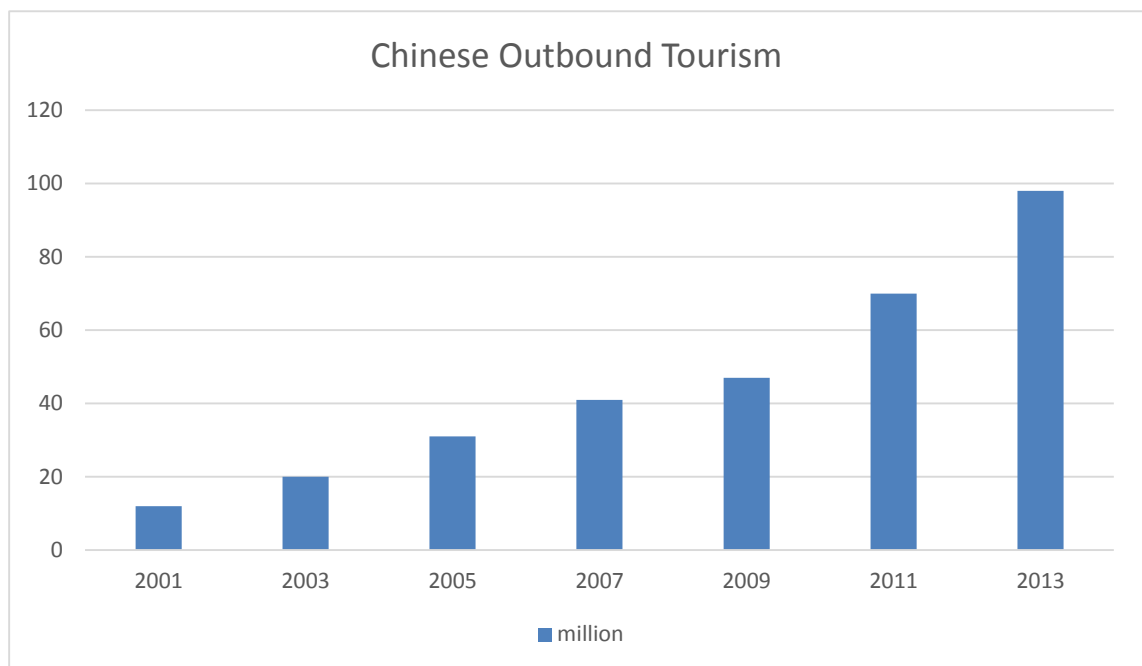


FIGURE 2: Chinese Outbound tourism (Chinese Outbound Tourism Research Institute 2014)

4 CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR AND CONSUMER TREND

4.1 Chinese consumer behaviour

Understanding and realizing the behaviour of a consumer is vital before moving further in product development. When one looks closely at a consumer behaviour of its target, it helps him/her to better understand the consumer but most importantly it provides clues as to what it is that they are looking for or that really matters to them. Moreover, it gives a guide as to what may attract and please a customer and what may not. In a product development process, having adequate knowledge of the consumer behaviour gives a clearer view of the benefits the consumers are looking for and hence allows a developer to reflect these in the product (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 8).

With such vast land area, 1.3 billion population and over 50 different ethnic groups, it seems very difficult and complicated to get even somewhat decent understanding of the Chinese Consumer behaviour. However, unlike United States of America where 90% population boast themselves as middle class, in the case of China the figure is not more than 10% (Doctoroff 2005, 14). Although, the number have gone much higher since then as the Chinese middle class is growing every year with the continuous economic growth, the idea is that it is not essential to look at the whole country's population for our case . As the rural dwellers still live on a very limited income, the middle class is the only one that holds the purchasing power of most goods and especially something like a holiday package in China. Also, most of these middle class live in the primary cities like Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. However, it is important to note that the population of secondary cities like Chengdu, Hangzhou, Nanjing, Tianjin etc. are also getting more richer and prosperous (Doctoroff 2005, 14). With that said, the middle class consumers of these big and small cities essentially represent China's middle class and understanding them is the key to understanding Chinese Consumer Behaviour.

The subject of consumer behaviour is essential to develop, promote and sell a product to a particular target in a particular time (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 3). So, to come to basic conclusion about Chinese tourists and their consumer behaviour for developing our package tour, it is crucial to know the facts in what do they want from their holiday, how

do they book their holiday and how do they travel, how they spend their money. These will be thoroughly discussed and presented in the following chapter.

4.1.1 Chinese consumer and their holiday expectation

The sole reason behind travelling is because the traveller has some expectations from his/her trip and the core of success for any travel maker is to meet these needs for the customer. Although there are individual differences in expectation from a holiday, in different culture, groups of people or society but there tends to be some common reason and motives from a holiday. Especially in the case of China, where most people have recently been able to afford a vacation and are not allowed to travel to some destinations (As destination need Approved Destination Status or simply ADS from the Chinese government before Chinese visitors can travel there!), there seems to be a common behavioural patterns and expectations in what they expect from their holiday. As illustrated in Figure 3 and according to Tourism Australia (2012), Chinese consumers in general have a very strong priority in Safety Affordability, Attraction Sites, Natural Experience, Comfort, Family friendliness and Welcoming attitude in destination. Almost the majority consider all of them a 'Must' and safety is considered even a bigger 'Must' when it comes to a destination. It shows that almost all of them have these expectation from a destination and a very few may not worry about them. However, it is important to note that they do not necessarily want all the features in the same destination necessarily but when asked the level of importance of these feature, these are the response from the potential travellers in a research conducted by GFK Blue Moon in 2011 for Tourism Australia.

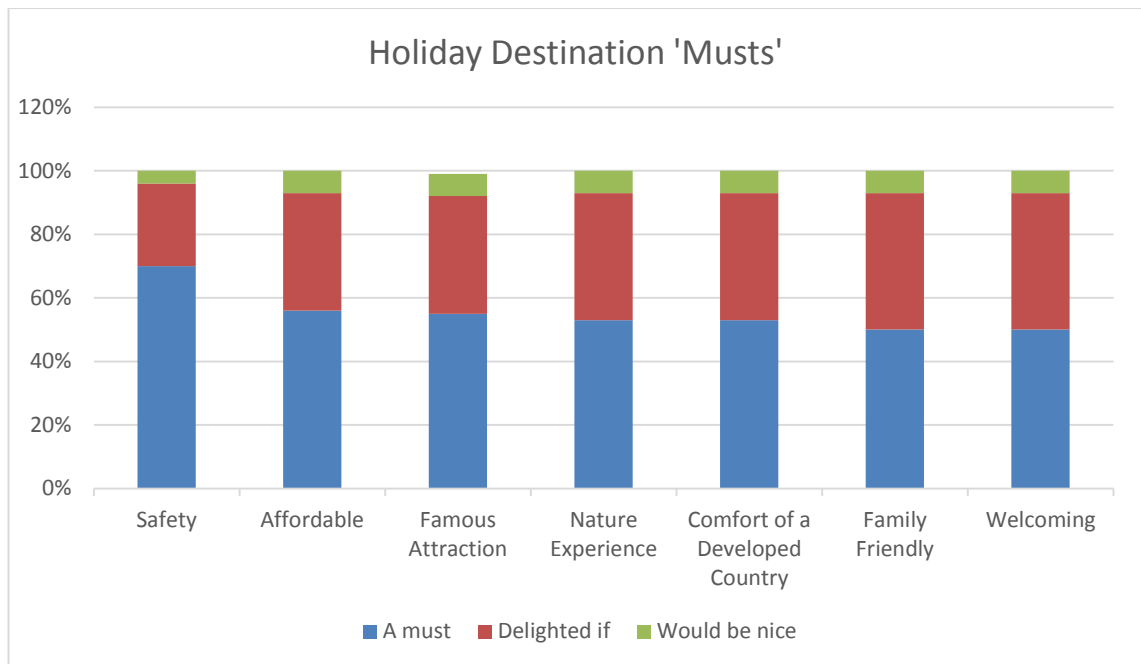


FIGURE 3: Holiday Destination 'Musts' for Chinese Tourists (Tourism Australia 2012)

4.1.2 The booking process

While targeting the Chinese outbound tourism, it also becomes utterly crucial to figure out the booking process of this target group as this is where a seller could make an impact and push his product to the customer. As different regions have different societal and cultural ways, the booking process and things that have an effect while booking a holiday makes a huge difference. Certain culture or society are used to acting out on their own and more individualistic where as in certain groups and societies act or make decision through group and collectivism. According to the report Chinese International Travel Monitor (Hotels.com 2014), travelling with a partner and children is as high as 54% and travelling with a companion is 46%. This goes on to show that Chinese tourists tend to travel in a group rather than travelling alone and hence while making a booking for a holiday, they have to consider this in mind.

Likewise, the factors that affect the actual booking of a holiday or destination is even more crucial. In a very up to date figure, China now has 618 million internet users and this has changed their sources of information and reliability when choosing a destination (Hotels.com 2014). This is almost half the population of the whole country and the percentage among people who live in cities and can afford to travel is even higher. Hence, Chinese tourists are shifting more towards to the internet when looking for information

and booking trips compared to the past years when almost all of the exclusively used travel agents and other sources for information and booking holidays.

As shown in Figure 4 (Hotels.com 2014), the rise in the number of internet users clearly show how Chinese tourists are relying more and more on Internet based sources. As the five major sources which Chinese tourists have used the most for gathering information are outlined here with the percentage of people that also rely on the same source for decision making. Among the five major sources, it is clear that number of people using internet sources for information is higher than other sources. Also, the reliability on internet sources are on the same level with travel agents and friends which is a sign that the consumers have a level of confidence on internet sources which could mean that they are going to grow in near future. However, it is important to note that most users most likely use a wide number of sources as they tend to not rely on a single source. Hence, it is very important findings as it suggests that although the number of people majorly use a few sources of information but they do not necessarily rely on them completely in decision making. This could be explained with a simple theory that Chinese travellers tend to use a number of sources and then finally form a decision with all the information combines with their own perception. In more simple words, it is the self-perception and learning combined with reference groups and family members that influence the final decision making (Gilbert 1991, according to Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 47).

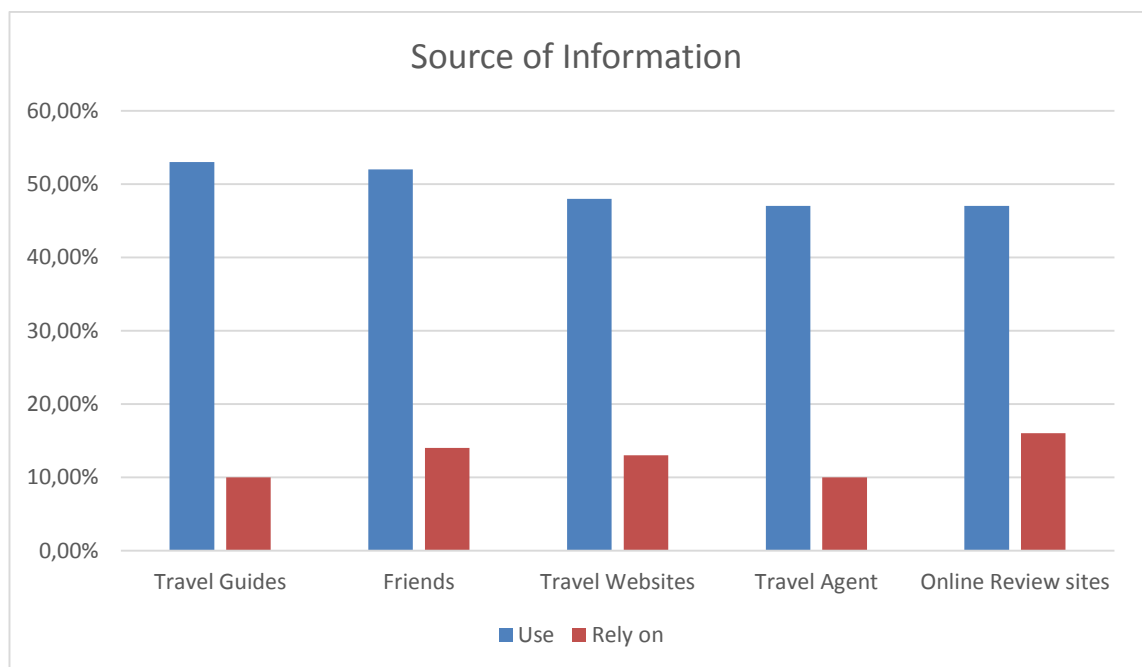


FIGURE 4: Sources of information that Chinese use and rely on when researching travel plans (Hotels.com 2014)

Likewise, Chinese people are not a big planner of their trips meaning they do not take much time when deciding their holidays. As shown in figure 5 (ETOA.org 2010), more than 50% booked their package trip in less than a month prior to the trip and almost all the rest also booked their package trip in less than 3 months prior to their trip. This trend in booking package holiday so late means that trip preparation time shouldn't be that long. Hence, all the visa requirements should be simple and quick to make it to the trip. Therefore, visa easiness and simplicity could be a major factor in choosing destination.

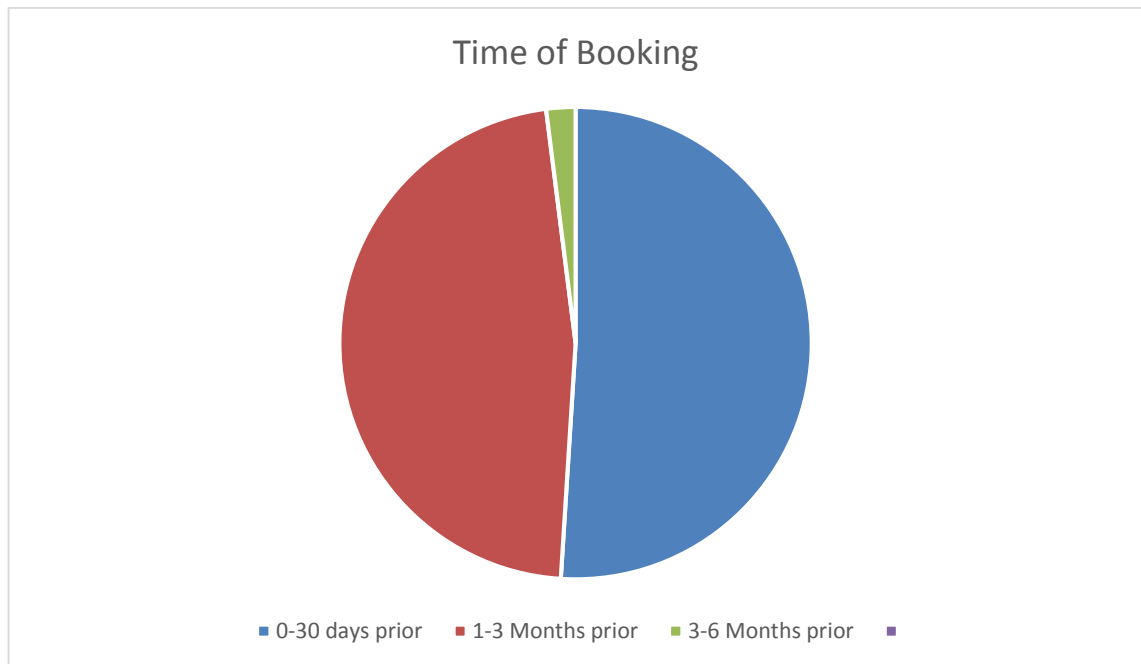


FIGURE 5: Time of booking for Chinese travellers (ETOA.org 2010)

4.1.3 The In-Trip Behaviour

Chinese tourists while in a destination are a very active tourists and commit themselves to a lot of activities. From a research in multiple countries across the world, the findings illustrates that Sightseeing, Dining and Shopping are their most popular activities (figure 6). Likewise visiting the beach, museum & galleries and visiting the countryside and rural areas are also relatively popular part of their trip. This can also be seen as what Chinese tourists may expect the most from their holiday and would like to do during a trip.

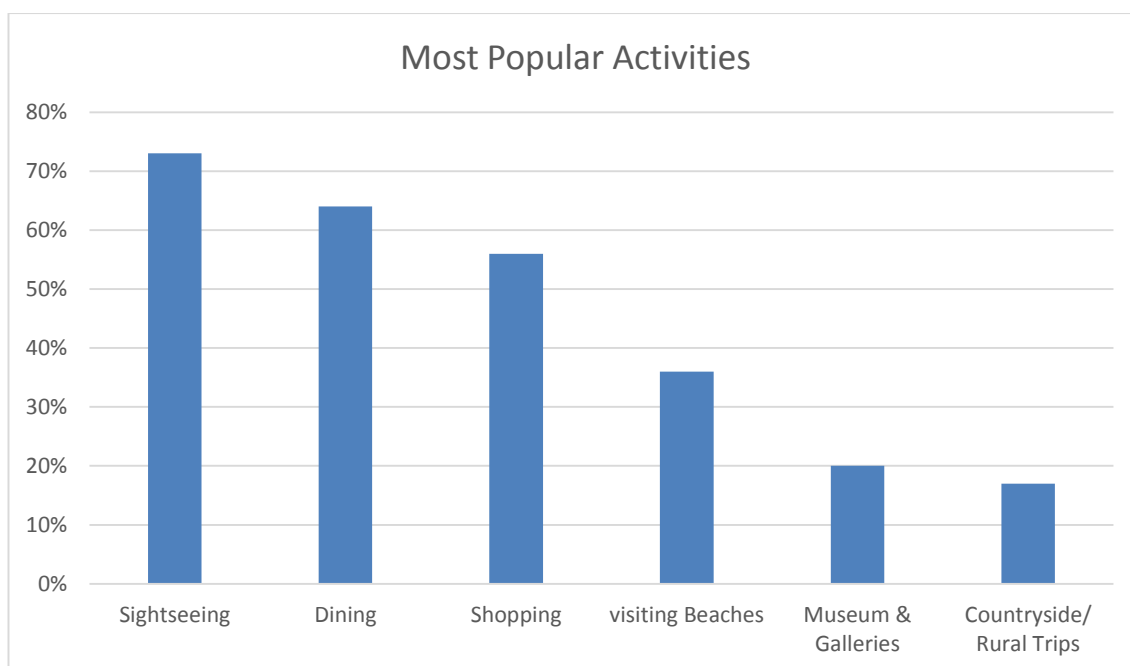


FIGURE 6: Most popular activities for Chinese tourists (Hotels.com 2014)

4.2 Chinese Consumer Trend

To be competitive and efficient, it is also crucial to identify existing trends and forecast or predict future trends so that your product is not outdated and left out in the market. It is evident that Tourism businesses are increasingly faced with extremely unexpected and radical changes that are of a big concern to tourism businesses and this just goes on to further prove that it is crucial to have a disciplined approach to the identification of future trends (Cooper et al. 2005, 739). Like any other tourist groups, Chinese outbound tourism is also changing in terms of holiday expectation, demands and destination. In fact, it is even more volatile as most Chinese tourists are only recently starting to travel and once they are more frequent and experienced travellers, their choice of destination will change and so will the expectations and requirements from a holiday. Understanding these changes is thus crucial in becoming effective in the Chinese Outbound Tourism market where competition is in global scale to grab even a small fraction of the market

Kathmandu is becoming more and more popular as a destination to Chinese visitors over the year and hence the destination has also seen some growth over the recent year in visitor numbers. According to the statistics from Ministry of Tourism Nepal (2014), the number of visitors from China has been growing at a delightful rate over the years and the year 2013 saw an incredible growth compared to the years before (figure 7). Although

the statistics is for the whole country, the statistics implies most of them if not all were in Kathmandu as it is the only city with an international airport and the major city for people arriving by land. Hence, it is safe to use the statistics to study consumer trends in Kathmandu. Likewise, it can be concluded that Chinese visitors are an important source of tourism standing as the second biggest source of tourism for the whole country.

Year	Chinese Visitors	% of Total Visitors	Total Visitor
2007	28,618	5.4	526,705
2008	35,168	7.0	500,277
2009	32,272	6.3	509,956
2010	46,360	7.7	602,867
2011	61,917	8.4	736,215
2012	71,861	8.9	803092
2013	113,173	12.4	797616

FIGURE 7: Chinese Visitors in Nepal (Ministry of Tourism Nepal 2014)

The growth in Chinese visitors is evident and it goes on to prove that there is a wonderful potential towards the whole country and specially Kathmandu as a destination. Furthermore, understanding Chinese visitors and their trend can provide invaluable support for a desirable and interesting product. As illustrated in Figure 8, the statistics of year 2013 show that Chinese visitors are mostly interested in plain and simple pleasure and holiday. This may not be an interesting result for most destination but for a country where most visitors come with a sole purpose of mountaineering, trekking and pilgrimage, it is a sign for new areas of tourism potential from a growing tourism source. Moreover, this trend is a huge potential for Kathmandu as a destination as the days in the past where all tourists used Kathmandu as a place of transit to the Himalayas may be gone. In addition, this is a trend for the city to opt to provide more to these holiday seekers within valley and grow as a form of tourism and destination itself!

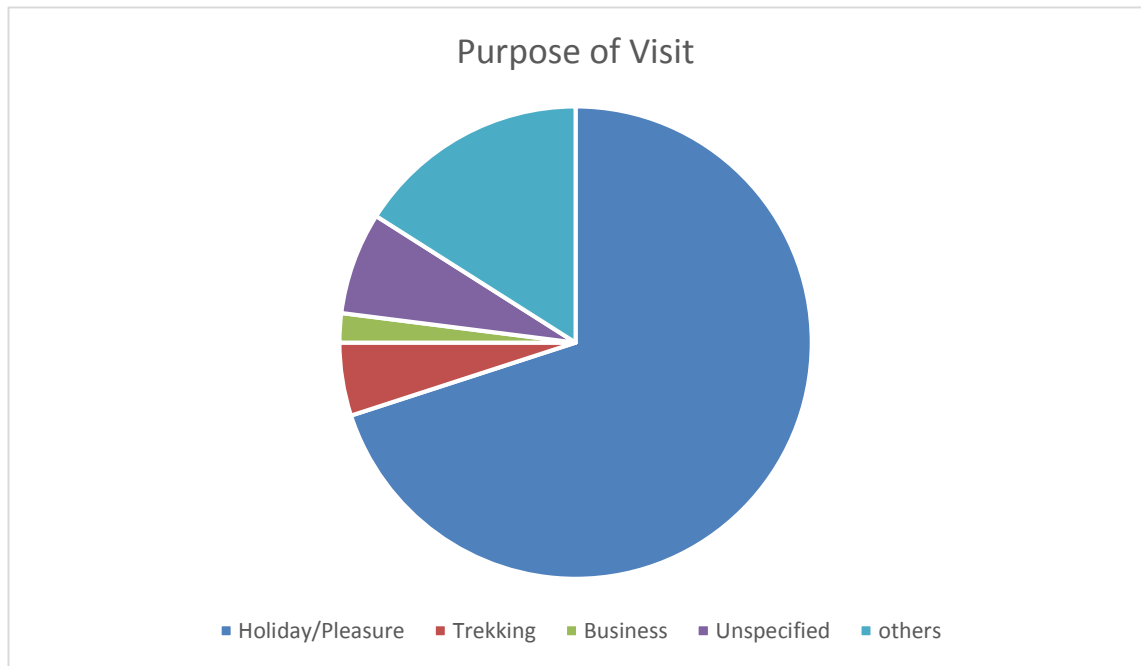


FIGURE 8: Chinese tourists and their purpose of visit 2013 (Ministry of Tourism Nepal 2014)

Moreover, there are researches in global scale that are breaking the myths about Chinese tourists and bringing out facts and figure. In a very recent research it was revealed that now 67% respondents want to make their own international travel arrangements. Likewise, 81% respondents under 35 years of age showed interest in travelling alone compared to 52% for those over 35 years of age (Hotels.com 2014). Although, travelling in group is still the most common and easiest way of travelling for Chinese tourists, these facts show that in coming years the world can expect more and more individual Chinese travellers and it is necessary that a destination is prepared for that and the products are not only targeted to big groups.

Likewise, another growing trend is the internet and its' importance in travel and tourism in modern China. This has revolutionized the way of communication and interaction in China. Despite the fact that quite a lot of sites are banned in China, China substitutes it with their own version and it is important to understand this in order to penetrate to this online market of China. Internet has reached every middle class in China and they now engage in the internet more than any other country in the world and boasts the second largest population of online shoppers at 150 million shoppers. According to e-marketer (2012), Chinese online travel sales is at \$32.5 billion at the moment and by 2016 it will

reach \$47.99 billion which would be more than the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) countries combined (Hotels.com 2014). Therefore, the importance of internet in selling to the Chinese customers is certainly the future if not yet.

4.3 Putting things into perspective

As we have discussed a wide range of data and research outcomes and now analysing them with a theory could put things more in the perspective and give a clearer view. As introduced in the early chapter of this thesis, the “Consumer decision- making framework” by Gilbert (1991) tries to simplify the consumer’s decision making process and the factors that are involved (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 47). A consumer –behaviour model such as this can help clear our views on tourists decision making process but most importantly help us realize the interrelationship of different variables (Cooper et al. 2005, 74).

According to this framework, a consumer is firstly influenced by his own perception and learnings and then secondly from family, culture and other reference groups. In our results, we have closely discussed the things that the Chinese customers want from their holiday, their reliability and use of sources when making a holiday decision and the activities they involve themselves while in a destination. The results show how all different factors are important when it comes to decision making for a holiday as they seem to use a number of sources for information and reliability before confirming their holiday. Both their own perception and family and societal reference are found to be closely important. Likewise, the highlight of the results is the fact how their whole travel plan, destinations and travel activities is centred on their family. Their expectation from a holiday simply show their motive of travelling in a group or family and then activities that they indulge themselves while in a destination like sightseeing, shopping, dining etc. go on to express their family-centred holiday plans. As culture is a strong influence in a decision making process and even in one’s own perception, the consumer buying process in Chinese society is highly influenced by their cultural values of family first. While uncovering the important motivators of Chinese travellers, it is important to note that Chinese have a dominant cultural impact in their decisions (Doctoroff 2005, 38). In short, Cultural values and family seems to be a strong influence in any decision making process when considering travels outside China. Hence, it can be concluded that the consumer decision making

framework when it comes to Chinese consumers and their travel plans are highly influenced by their cultural values and family and hence incorporating this fact in a product development process is absolutely crucial.

Likewise, through the research we have been able to understand the Chinese consumer behaviour and trend much better. While answering the research questions, the main findings of this research show their expectation from a holiday, their booking process and their choice of activities while in the destination. Moreover, the findings have also presented some major trend from the Chinese outbound tourism market. The rise in interest for individual travelling plans and use of internet in travel related matters are a few major findings in terms of consumer trend. Also, the study of the growing trend of Chinese tourist and their choice of activities in Kathmandu has provided a crucial information for understanding and comparing the dynamics of Chinese tourists elsewhere and in Kathmandu. Hence, to serve the aim of the thesis these findings will now be used as a guiding tool in our package tour development.

5 PACKAGE TOUR

A package tour is simply a pre-arranged and pre-organized tour that is sold to a tourist or a group of tourist by a tour operator and comprises mainly of transportation, accommodation and activities. In simpler words, it is a trip at a fixed price in which accommodation, travel and sometimes meal is arranged by the tour operator (Dictionary Cambridge 2015). However, the nature of a package tour is flexible and may include more or less options. Therefore, it is a concept of product bundling and by comprising a number of products into one, it can be sold to the consumer as a single, attractive and efficient product that meets all their needs and demands.

In order to achieve the aim of this thesis and develop a package tour for Chinese tourists in Kathmandu, the first step is to take some important tips from the successful “The China 2020 Strategy” (Tourism Australia 2012) is important in the product development. This Australian strategy has proved that knowing the customer, providing quality and authentic experience, improving aviation and having partners in related fields in the Chinese market is a strong aid in business success. As Doctoroff (2005, 4) suggests that without an awareness of Chinese behaviour and preferences, it is a lost cause to sell to Chinese customers and thus to build a strong base in our product, these concepts and research results are expressed in the product development. To be more precise, knowing the customer is what makes a product successful with the customers and therefore through the research and its findings, the best attempt to express and appeal the fact that the product is made for Chinese consumer is done. As a result, the package tour consist of a Chinese speaking guide throughout the trip, provision of a Chinese-speaking assistance in the hotel and most importantly information books, pamphlets, brochures etc. in Chinese language. Moreover, to make sure that the product is accessible to the Chinese consumers and affordable, the product development process is focused in partnering with aviation and other important partners in mainland china. As the whole concept of the package trip is to be mass marketed with in China, this will also help in bring down the price for aviation travel and organizational costs through strong and active partnership. Moreover, one of the most important trend in world tourism over the recent years have been the rise in short trips and especially to easily accessible cities (Ateljevic & Page 2009, 13). This recent trend has also been considered in making a short and memorable package. Finally, the package trip is designed with the concept of giving an authentic experience of Kathmandu and making sure that the Chinese consumers see and experiences things the way they are.

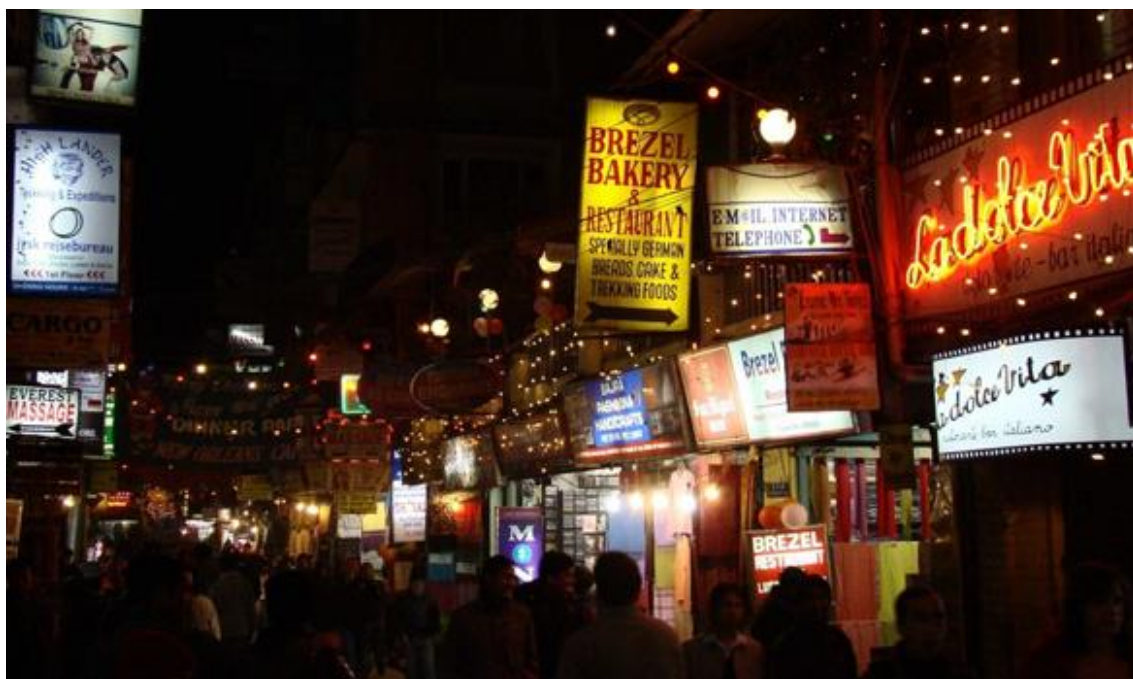
Likewise, the major findings from our research show the expectations of Chinese holiday makers, their booking process, their choice of expectations, and their trend in Kathmandu and worldwide. These finding is properly in our travel itinerary and activities in our package trips to make sure that Chinese customers do not only find the product attractive before the trip but also get a desired experience from the trip. Likewise, the author has his personal knowledge of the Kathmandu valley from living their most of his life and this knowledge is put to make sure that the customers gets an authentic, pleasant and refreshing experience from the package trip.

Hence, with the help of the findings from the research, helps from relevant literature, learning from the Australian tourism strategy targeted at Chinese tourists and the personal experience of the author having lived most of his life in Kathmandu, two different package tour options have been designed. These package tours are affordable so that it is accessible to middle class Chinese households as Doctoroff (2005, 32) recommends that given their limited income, a product for them should not be light years from their income reality. Moreover, these package tours have been designed with best possible intent to meet the current expectation, needs and demand of current Chinese tourists and furthermore also meet the expectations of changing trends of Chinese outbound tourism.

5.1 The Culture Package

The Culture package tour is a three day package tour designed to provide a quick but interesting and memorable experience of the culture, cultural heritage, architecture and bustling lifestyle of the Kathmandu valley. As Richards and Wilson (2007, 1) claim that the successes in culture oriented product development strategies is apparent and has encouraged more and more cities to use combination of culture and tourism. It goes on to show the importance of combining culture in a tour package for any tourist group. Moreover, this package is intended for the Chinese consumer with a limited amount of time, short-holiday makers and families or groups. It is also a wonderful option for Chinese people to have short holidays throughout the year with a limited budget and thus it could very well be the next trend setting trip or destination among Chinese outbound tourism.

This package will include all the travel costs from and to their original destination, accommodation cost and breakfast, and guided tours while in destination. All the guests will be accommodated in a three star hotel in the heart of the city in an area known as 'Thamel'. Thamel is a lively and outgoing part of the city which is also the main tourist area and serves tourists with all their needs with uncountable restaurants, bars, shops etc. (Picture 3). In the hotel which will be chosen according to availability and group sizes, a breakfast and information brochures and help desk in Chinese language will also be arranged. As for the rest of the trip, the itinerary will be as follows.



PICTURE 3: Thamel (Caleidoscope.in 2015)

5.1.1 Day 1

We will start the first day of the trip by setting up an orientation meeting at the hotel lobby in the morning. This meeting will be focused on establishing a relationship between the Chinese speaking guide and the visitors and as well a short introduction session of what is going to happen throughout the trip. Likewise, everyone would be handed out a copy of the tour plans and itinerary.

After the guests are comfortable and introduced to the guide, we will move on to the sightseeing trip. Firstly, the guests will be taken to Kathmandu Durbar Square. This wonderful architectural masterpiece will give an image of medieval Kathmandu, its history and culture. The guide will thoroughly orientate the Chinese guests about the historical and cultural significance of the area while visiting the old palace and temples in the premise. This tour should take roughly two hours and at around noon the guests will be given a half an hour free time in the market square in the premise where they can buy or go through some of handicrafts and art works from Kathmandu. Moving on the exhausted guests will now be provided a lunch option at the 'Festive Fare' roof top restaurant which is right in front of the square. This restaurant gives an excellent view of the city and the Whole Square and temples.

After the lunch, the second destination of the day will be the famous Swayambhunath or else also known as the monkey temple among the tourists. This Buddhist stupa on top of a hill facing the city of Kathmandu not only gives a splendid and refreshing view of the city but is also a significant monument for Buddhists. The stupa is a significance of religious harmony of the city where all religions come to visit. The guide will describe the historical and cultural facts while strolling through the stupas and monastery. This trip is intended to last for roughly two hours with plenty of time for the guests to take pictures and gaze at the monkeys running around the stupa.

At around 4 when the day starts to get slower, we will move to the oldest market of the city also known as 'Ason'. This market which is still lively and equally important for the city residents holds the culture and lifestyle of the life in the valley. Moreover, the market offers a wide variety of tea, spices, handicrafts, traditional clothes and household products (Picture 4). This would be a good way to drive in some adrenaline among the otherwise tired Chinese visitors as they love shopping more than anything. Moreover, you can bargain while buying anything here and this should really get the Chinese people in their feet.



PICTURE 4: A cluster of vendors and local consumers in Ason (Demotix.com 2011)

In the evening, once all the tour group are finally ready to take it easy, we will head back to the hotel and then recommend a few traditional Nepalese restaurant, Chinese restaurants and other restaurants in the area while arranging a meeting for the next morning.

5.1.2 Day 2

The guide will meet with the guests in the hotel lobby at 9.30 and will first indulge in short conversation with everyone. This will be done to not only show an extra care for the valued guests but to also answer any questions or queries from their first day in Kathmandu. Also, the guests' wishes or any recommendations will be considered and discussed.

After making sure everyone is comfortable and ready to move, the sightseeing tour will begin from Pashupatinath, the holiest Hindu temple in the whole country. In a region with majority of Hindus, the culture and lifestyle is widely affected and influenced by the religion and this temple offers an insight to both Hindu religion and culture. Moreover, the temple is also a cremation spot for the Hindus of the valley and the whole cremation ceremony can be observed from a safe distance while in the destination (Picture 5). Although, watching a cremation may not be pleasant for everyone but to most it is quite an

interesting, awakening experience of Hindu Culture and lifestyle. The temple also houses many saints or aka 'Holy man' who have given up their relationships, both personal and professional and decided to spend their rest of the life on their own. The tour will last until around 1pm.



PICTURE 5: Cremation on the river banks and the holy temple in Pashupatinath (Lash-worldtour.com 2013)

As we head towards lunch hour, to make sure we bring people back to a joyous and refreshing feeling, we will head to Boudhanath Stupa. As it is seen in Picture 6, it is the largest Buddhist stupa in the country and a very holy site among all Buddhists and especially Tibetan Buddhists who have refuge in this area for decades now. Moreover, the area gives a very serene and calm vibe with prayer flags, monasteries and prayer wheels everywhere. A small tour of the area and its peaceful and calm vibe makes one really go through a lot of thoughts on life and its meaning. This area really brings the whole Buddhist concept of simplicity and compassion to life for visitors to see and feel. The group will adjourn for the lunch upon arriving here in one of the roof top restaurants with a view of the stupa. After the lunch, the guide will give a tour of the monasteries and the stupa itself.



PICTURE 6: The majestic Boudhanath stupa (Flickr.com 2012)

At around 4 with the completion of the tour in the stupa, the group will return to the city centre where the guide will provide a short introduction of the tourist shopping centre with some helpful tips to get by. The group will then be left on their own to spend some private time on their own or with others while shopping and strolling through the wonderful restaurants and bars in the area.

5.1.3 Day 3

On this final day of the trip, the tour guide will as per the itinerary meet with the group in the hotel lobby at 11 am. Then after the routine task of answering questions and hearing any wishes or requests, the group will continue to Bhatktapur Durbar Square.

The Bhaktapur Durbar Square although much like Kathmandu Durbar square is significantly popular for its originality, calm surrounding, eye-catching artwork and architecture with a very refreshing and authentic market square (Picture 7). The first part of trip would be focused on providing historical and cultural information of the area. At around 2, the group will be taken for lunch in one of the cosy and delightful restaurant in the square overseeing all the temples and palaces in the area.



PICTURE 7: A local festival in Bhaktapur Durbar Square (Piegontravels.com 2014)

After the lunch, the group will be offered a handsome amount of time to go through the massive market across the alleys and squares in the area. Once, the shopping is complete and with everyone's approval the group will head back to the hotel. The tour guide will give everyone a short break with an agreement meet back at 7 for dinner and other fun programmes for the last night.

As agreed the group will be picked up at 7 and we will all proceed to the restaurant 'Kathmandu Kitchen' which is very close to the city. The restaurant provides one of the finest Nepalese cuisine in the whole city with a traditional and cultural dance performances. It is indeed a big motivation for a tourist to have a first-hand experience of the actual culture and it's manifestation in terms of music, dance, handicrafts and art (Mason 2008, 60). This place should really give one of the best dining and an overall cultural experiences of Kathmandu. After the dinner, we will proceed for a pub crawl and at this stage people that wish to go back to the hotel will be bid farewell from the restaurant. As the nightlife experience continues, the group will be taken through a number of highly rated bars and then eventually at around mid-night offered options like Casino or a night club for the long night party animals. It is essential to acknowledge that in most cities tourism is not a separate activity but on the contrary the part of the city itself (Franklin & Crang 2001, according to Richards & Wilson 2007, 75). Thus, this package attempts to do exactly the same and let the visitors experience the city itself. After all these exciting and adventurous

activities during the trip, everyone is bid farewell while giving the best experience the city has to offer for anyone.

5.2 The Culture and Nature Package

This package tour is the complete experience package of every aspect of Kathmandu and the surrounding areas providing both the cultural and natural aspect of the region. Moreover, this 5 day tour option is the perfect package for any individual, family or a group to have the complete Kathmandu experience. As Mason (2008, 70) argues that the tourism is ultimately dependent on the environment itself and the environment is a major tourist attraction or the context in which the tourist activities take place. Moreover, it is also a package developed with a close consideration to Chinese consumer behaviour with an attempt to include all their desired activities in a destination while appealing the growing trend of nature travel and individual travel among the Chinese Outbound tourism.

Like the Cultural Package tour, it will also include travel expenses, accommodation and breakfast in a 5 star hotel and activities during the trip. Hence, it is supposed to attract the holiday makers who want a relaxed and refreshing holiday experience in a short trip. The itinerary for this package will be as follows.

5.2.1 Day 1 & 2

The first and second day of the package will be exactly the same as the Cultural Package and for details see chapter 5.1.1 and 5.1.2. Therefore, the first day of the trip will include an orientation and short introduction programme with the sight-seeing tour of Kathmandu Durbar Square, Swayambhunath and the old market. Likewise, the second day of this tour will also be a visit to Pashupatinath temple and Boudhanath Temple.

5.2.2 Day 3 & 4

As the research have shown that most Chinese outbound travellers enjoy a relaxed holiday and nature experiences, the second part of this package will include the Nature experience. This peaceful and refreshing experience is designed to appeal to both the family holiday makers and individuals.

In this nature and adventure experience, the group will be taken to the nearby Nagarkot hill station which is 30 K.M from the city. The hill station at 2000 meters above the sea level offers a magnificent view of the Himalaya and a true nature experience of the country surrounded by a calm, peaceful and refreshing environment (Picture 8).



PICTURE 8: A view of the Himalayas from the hills of Nagarkot (Acethehimalaya.com 2013)

The group will be accommodated in the highly rated Club Himalaya resort. This resort build on a lush-green hill offers a magnificent view and complete nature experience (Picture 9). The group upon arrival here would be taken for a short hike to the hill during the evening to see the incredible view of sunset from the hills and then will be returned to the hotel for a relaxed night inside the resort. The resort offers a plenty of Spa options, cosy restaurants, bars etc. for a relaxed and pleasant family time or own time.



PICTURE 9: Club Himalaya resort (Ghumgham.com 2012)

On the second day and last day of the Nature experience, during the mid-day the guide will take the group for a short hiking trip to the villages around the hills (Picture 10). This should give the visitors a unique experience to meet and interact with the local people and also experience the lifestyle aside from the bustling city. During the evening, the viewers will be invited for a bon-fire in one of the scenic location while gazing at the sunset and the Himalayas in the evening and admiring the stars at night. Everybody is open to spend as much time as they want with the group as it is designed to be a relaxed and flexible trip for everyone. This also means that participants of this trip are free to spend their two days in the resort as they wish while having an option to also be part of the group event organized by us. At the end of this day 4 of the trip, everyone will be informed about the departure time next day and meeting time will be arranged.



PICTURE 10: A typical walk around the hills (Himalayantrekkers.com 2014)

5.2.3 Day 5

On this final day of the trip, the group will depart from their refreshing and awakening experience on the mountains back down to the city during mid-day. While on their way back there will be a stopover at the Bhaktapur Durbar Square where the tour guide will give a tour of this historically and culturally significant heritage site. After lunch in the square and a shopping break for the group, the next stop will be at the hotel in the city for the last night.

By this time, it will be around 4 to 5 in the afternoon as per the schedule and thus the group will be given a short break before dinner at 7. Like in the culture tour, the farewell dinner will take place at the 'Kathmandu Kitchen' for the final touch of charm from the trip. The wonderful traditional food and cultural performances will also see people share their experience while in the trip and saying goodbye to each other.

After the dinner, any interested member would be offered an invitation for the tour of Pubs and Casino for the bustling nightlife experience. The final farewell to the participating members will happen with consideration to the way the night progresses. Hence, the package is designed to make sure everyone gets everything they wanted from the trip ensuring a memorable and exciting experience. As people always wonder if they should spend the next few days off in the mountains or in the city, what culture do they still need to explore, what cuisines they should try and what will make up for a memorable experience, this package is designed to combine all these aspects and make up for that memorable and refreshing experience (Richards & Wilson 2007, 125).

6 DISCUSSION

This thesis and research was conducted with the aim of developing an attractive and exciting holiday package for Chinese holiday makers in Kathmandu region. The plan of this thesis was to conduct a research on Chinese outbound tourism and analyse the results with relevant theory and concept and implement the outcomes and learnings in developing the product. The research questions were focused in identifying Consumer Behaviour and Consumer Trend of the Chinese visitors which could then be used to aid in developing a targeted tourism package for Chinese Visitors in Kathmandu.

In order to achieve this aim of the thesis, the author conducted a secondary research collecting secondary data from multiple sources around the globe. The main reason behind attempting this form of research was to come up with an outcome that is more likely to be representative of such a vast number of people. The research results were then analysed using a Consumer- decision making framework. With the help of the outcomes of the research, literature sources and using an existing tourism development strategy from a different destination, the author developed a desirable, satisfying and exciting package trip for the Chinese Outbound Tourism.

During the research process, the author not only familiarised himself with the general consumer behaviour of the Chinese tourists but also discovered some growing trends for future possibilities. The major findings of the research showed the general holiday expectation of Chinese holiday makers are very simple and they were not necessarily interested in any sophisticated activities or tour plan. The results showed that a Chinese holiday maker wants a safe, affordable, family-friendly and welcoming holiday destination where they could just do some sight-seeing, shopping and enjoy their time. Also, the results showed that most Chinese holiday makers in Kathmandu are interested only in a pleasure holiday. Among the growing trends, the interest on travelling independently is rising rapidly among the Chinese travellers and their holiday booking is also slowly shifting from travel agents to online with the rising e-market in China.

These results were then analysed with the Consumer-Decision making framework to bring in some perspective to the results. Eventually, with the help of this analysis, litera-

ture and strongly considering the very successful “China 2020 Strategy” from the Australian tourism board, two package trips were developed. The first among the two “The culture Package” is targeted at short holiday makers in an affordable price range. As the travellers among the Chinese middle class is growing and becoming more and more frequent, a short trip in a neighbouring country has a potential to become hugely popular. Moreover, it offers an amazing, unique and authentic culture experience that the most Chinese are yet to experience. Likewise, the second package, “The Culture and Nature Package” is intended for a relaxed holiday makers which is suitable for both families and individuals. This package integrates the cultural aspect of the first package and combines it with a more refreshing and relaxing Nature experience.

In conclusion, tourism is one of the most important business sector in Kathmandu region providing jobs and a source of income to thousands of people. The west centred tourism sector has slowly started to realize the importance of tourism from neighbouring countries and especially from China which is on the road to becoming the biggest tourism source in the world. Although, the tourism market in the region has seen a very positive growth in tourist numbers from China over the last decades, we are nowhere near what can be achieved. Thus, with product developments and business strategy targeted towards the Chinese customers can go a long way in achieving that huge potential. This Package tour option from the author is merely just an attempt to pave the way for such a development!

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