

# Helsinki as a Tourist Destination for Chinese Travellers

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<b>Degree programme</b> Master Degree Programme in Tourism	
<b>Thesis title</b> Helsinki as a Tourist Destination for Chinese Travellers	<b>Number of pages and appendix pages</b> 41 + 13
<p>The Chinese travel market has become one of the most important markets for Finland due to its rapid growth, high expenditure volume of Chinese travellers and significant growth potential in the last several years. Many Finnish regions demonstrate a high interest in Chinese travellers and search for the right ways of their promotion in order to attract more Chinese tourists.</p> <p>The study provides an analysis of the current tourism products and services of the Helsinki region offered by Chinese tourism companies, the motives and values of Chinese travellers visiting the Helsinki region and their possible interest in the Helsinki region as a tourist destination in the near 3-5 years.</p> <p>The commissioner of the study is Helsinki Marketing, which promotes Helsinki as a tourist destination worldwide. The results of the study will be beneficial for developing the Helsinki region as a tourist destination for Chinese travellers.</p> <p>The aim of the study is to provide Helsinki Marketing with recommendations of how to improve the experience offered to Chinese travellers in the next 3-5 years. To reach this aim the following research questions have been investigated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Image of Helsinki in Chinese minds</li> <li>- Motives of Chinese travellers visiting Helsinki</li> <li>- The most interesting tourism products and services for Chinese travellers in the Helsinki region currently and in the years ahead</li> </ul> <p>In order to achieve the aim of the study, a qualitative approach with a case study as a research method has been applied. The data collection method of the study includes primary and secondary data collection. Primary data was collected from eight semi-structured interviews with the representatives of Chinese tourism companies offering trips to Finland and considering collaboration with Helsinki Marketing an important feature. Secondary data was gathered from previous researches regarding consumer behaviour of Chinese tourists, reports, statistics and websites. Theoretical part provides concepts and information with regards to consumer behaviour in tourism, travel experience, motivation and values of travellers.</p> <p>The results of the study are presented in the form of recommendations to Helsinki Marketing. They include developing tourism products with a unique tourism experience, digitalising tourism services and enhancing possibility for mobile payment method, promoting the Helsinki region in social media and in WeChat in close cooperation with the Chinese companies interviewed.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b> Chinese outbound tourism, Chinese travellers, Helsinki, trends, travel experience	

## Table of contents

1	Introduction .....	1
2.	Helsinki as a tourist destination .....	3
2.1	Helsinki in a short.....	3
2.2	Helsinki Marketing.....	5
2.3	Helsinki and Chinese travellers .....	5
3	Consumer behaviour in Tourism .....	7
3.1	Key concepts .....	7
3.2	Motivation .....	9
3.3	Values.....	10
3.4	Tourism experience .....	11
4.	Consumer behaviour of Chinese tourists according to previous research.....	13
4.1.	History of Chinese travelling.....	13
4.2.	Motives .....	16
4.3.	Values.....	18
4.4.	Future of Chinese travelling .....	18
4.4.1.	Demographical growth .....	19
4.4.2.	A change in consumption patterns .....	19
4.4.3.	Middle and upper-middle class growth .....	20
4.4.4.	Support of outbound travelling by Chinese government .....	20
5.	Conducting the research .....	22
5.1.	Research methods.....	22
5.2.	Data collection and analysis.....	23
5.3.	Validity and reliability.....	26
6.	Findings .....	28
6.1.	Overview of the companies participated in interviews .....	28
6.2.	Image of Helsinki .....	30
6.3.	Motives of Chinese travellers to visit the Helsinki region .....	30
6.4.	Popular tourism products and activities in the Helsinki region .....	32
6.5.	Trends and tendencies in Chinese travelling.....	32
6.5.1.	Growing of FIT .....	32
6.5.2.	Unique experiences .....	33
6.5.3.	Longer stay in one country .....	33
6.5.4.	Mobile payment method.....	34
6.6.	Marketing to China.....	34
6.7.	Recommendations .....	35
7.	Conclusions .....	38

7.1. Recommendations to Helsinki Marketing on how to improve the experience of Chinese travellers .....	38
7.2. Evaluation of the thesis process.....	40
References .....	42
Appendices.....	46
Appendix 1. Interview guide .....	46
Appendix 2. Presentation for Helsinki Marketing .....	48

# 1 Introduction

In the previous five years the tourism industry has developed much faster in comparison with the world trade. Particularly, Chinese outbound tourism has demonstrated a steady and considerable growth in the past 15 years becoming the growth driver of the international tourism market. In 2017 China became the biggest spender in travel abroad and their expenditure rocketed to US\$ 258 billion. For these reasons China is considered to be an important market for many countries all over the world. (World Tourism Organisation UNWTO 2018).

The current thesis focuses on Chinese outbound tourism and the Helsinki region as a tourist destination for Chinese travellers. The study demonstrates the results of eight interviews conducted with the representatives of large Chinese tourism companies that offer trips to Finland.

The study provides an analysis of the current tourism products and services of the Helsinki region offered by Chinese tourism companies as well as motives and values of outbound Chinese travellers visiting the Helsinki region and their possible interest in the Helsinki region as a tourist destination in the near 3-5 years.

The aim of the study is to provide Helsinki Marketing with recommendations of how to improve the experience offered to Chinese travellers in the next 3-5 years. In order to reach the aim the following research questions are to be answered.

Research questions:

- Image of Helsinki in Chinese minds
- Motives of Chinese travellers visiting Helsinki
- The most interesting tourism products and services for Chinese travellers in the Helsinki region currently and in the years ahead

The commissioner of the study is Helsinki Marketing, a marketing company owned by the City of Helsinki promoting Helsinki as a tourist destination worldwide. The company is interested in successful promotion of the Helsinki region in the Chinese market since it has recently become one of the most rapidly growing and important tourism markets in the world. The results of the study will be beneficial for developing the Helsinki region as a tourist destination for Chinese travellers.

The report starts with the description of Helsinki as a tourist destination. Then, some theoretical speculations regarding consumer behaviour in tourism are presented. The background of Chinese outbound tourism, motives and values of Chinese tourists to travel as well as the future of Chinese outbound tourism are also investigated in the thesis.

Findings of the thesis analyse the results of eight interviews that have been conducted within the framework of this study. Conclusions chapter answers the research questions and provides some recommendations that could help to attract more Chinese travellers to the Helsinki region in the future.

## **2. Helsinki as a tourist destination**

According to the World Happiness Report of the United Nations, Finland is recognised as the happiest country in 2018. Accordingly, Helsinki represents the capital of the happiest country in the world but what does Helsinki have to offer as a tourist destination for travellers from other countries? (Finnfacts 2018.)

### **2.1 Helsinki in a short**

Helsinki is a modern European city surrounded by an untouched nature offering plenty of possibilities for different kinds of travel experience both for foreign and local tourists. Founded in 1550, the city became the capital of Finland in 1812 and nowadays, being the centre of Finland's administrative, educational and cultural life, Helsinki also represents the financial and business centre of Finland with 1.4 million of residents. A wide range of tourist attractions and different types of accommodation makes the city an attractive and affordable tourist destination for all kind of travellers visiting Helsinki for different purposes and with different budgets. (Helsinki Convention Bureau 2017.)

There is a number of tourist attractions that remain the most popular from year to year, such as the Helsinki Cathedral, the Suomenlinna sea fortress, the Senate Square, the Market Square, the Old Market Hall, the Temppeliaukio church, Helsinki Zoo, the Seurasaari island, the Sibelius Monument, Linnanmäki Amusement Park, Löyly public sauna and restaurant complex and Allas Sea Pool, etc. One of them, the fortress of Suomenlinna, is included in UNESCO's list of world heritage monuments and offers visiting a museum, a park and an arts venue all year around. (Helsinki Marketing 2018a.)

In order to maintain a high interest in tourism in Helsinki, new tourist attractions are constantly opening in the city and are immediately becoming extremely popular among foreign and Finnish tourists. As a result, a lot of people around the world learn about Helsinki due to photos in social media taken by their friends. Some examples of this are pictures taken in Allas Sea Pool in the heart of Helsinki or in Löyly public sauna and restaurant complex at the sea shore with their charming sea view and delicious local dishes. All these new tourist attractions are becoming more and more appealing for new travellers to the city. (Helsinki Marketing 2018a.)

Hotel capacity of the Helsinki area comprises 15,000 rooms in 90 hotels and apartment hotels. In addition to independent hotels and Finnish hotel chains, most of the major international hotel chains, including Best Western, Crowne Plaza, Hilton, Holiday Inn, Luxury Collection, Radisson Blu, Nordic Choice Hotels, Scandic and Small Luxury Hotels, are

represented in Helsinki. Apart from a wide choice of hotels, tourists can stay at hostels, campsites, cottages and farms situated in the Helsinki region. Thus, every traveller can find accommodation that meets his or her wishes, requirements and budget. (Helsinki Marketing 2018b.)

Excellent transportation connections have also boosted Helsinki as an international tourist destination. Flights to and from Asia offered by the national airline Finnair give Helsinki a big advantage over many other European cities. On top of this, in 2017 the Port of Helsinki served an impressive 12.3 million passengers becoming the busiest passenger port in Europe. (City of Helsinki 2018a.)

What is important for Helsinki as a tourist destination is that half of all visits made by foreign travellers to Finland in 2017 was made to the Helsinki region, or 4.3 million and 8.3 million visits respectively. As it can be seen from Figure 1, the number of visits made by foreigners to other Finland regions accounted at 2.9 million to the Finnish Lakeland, 1.9 million to the coast, and 0.6 million to Lapland at the same period. (Visit Finland 2018, 25.)

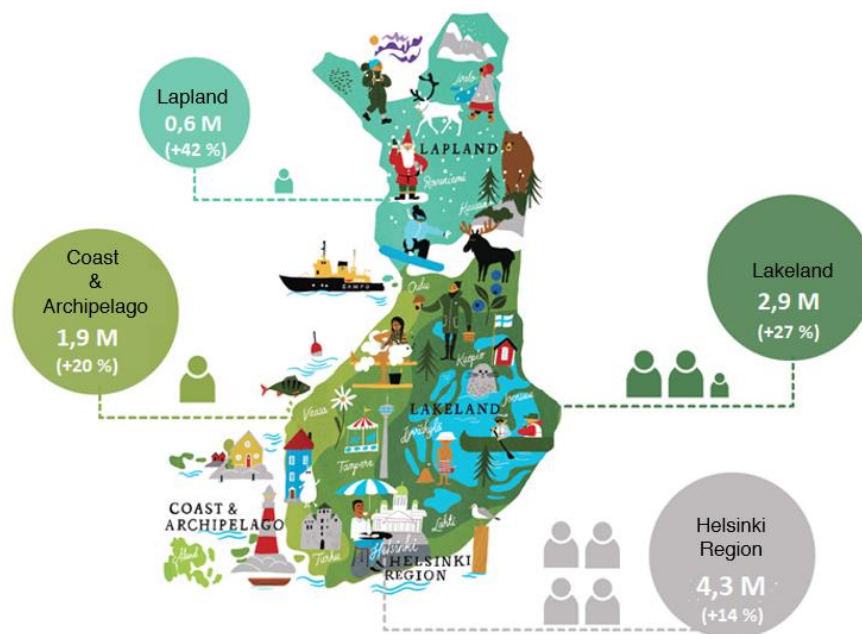


Figure 1. Travel destinations in Finland. (Visit Finland 2018, 25.)

According to Laura Aalto, CEO of Helsinki Marketing, “Tourism in Helsinki is doing really well right now. Most of our visitors last year came from Russia, Germany, Great Britain, the USA, Sweden and Japan. The biggest relative increases in the number of visitors came from Russia, by 37 percent, and China, by 31 percent, and we also saw growth in



many other markets. The positive economic situation in many of our key markets has benefitted the global tourism industry and enabled both Helsinki and Finland to post record tourism figures”. (City of Helsinki 2018.)

## **2.2 Helsinki Marketing**

As a tourist destination for foreign tourists, Helsinki is promoted by Helsinki Marketing, a marketing company run by the City of Helsinki. They are in charge of Helsinki’s operative city marketing as well as business partnerships. Helsinki Marketing’s scope of operations covers marketing activities related to tourism, congresses and events holdings, business promotion, dealing with application procedures for major events and congresses. They also implement some of the city’s event productions and provide tourist information services. Their target audiences include not only local residents but international tourists, decision-makers and experts as well. (Helsinki Marketing 2018c.)

In order for Helsinki to be attractive as a tourist destination, a lot of efforts should be continuously applied. As Laura Aalto, CEO of Helsinki Marketing points out: “To ensure sustainable growth, it is important that tourism reinforces the vitality of the entire city. We must see that Helsinki’s accommodation capacity continues to grow, that we continue to improve our visitor services, and that we make sure these services meet the needs of visitors, also digitally. Tourism has moved very rapidly into the digital age, which is creating new demands for tourist destinations”. (City of Helsinki 2018a.)

To compete on the market, new forms of services are to be introduced. Among the most appealing is a digital tourism service with their new website MyHelsinki.fi. It was launched last summer 2017 with the entire contents based on recommendations from local residents. The website has instantly become of extensive popularity serving visitors in six languages. (City of Helsinki 2018a.)

## **2.3 Helsinki and Chinese travellers**

Recently Helsinki has become increasingly popular among Chinese tourists. In the previous five years the number of registered overnight stays by Chinese travellers in Helsinki has increased more than twice and amounted up to 90,000 in 2016. In 2017 this figure reached 135,000 growing by 29,3 percent compared to the previous year. (City of Helsinki 2018a.)

Helsinki has an excellent transport accessibility, which attracts Chinese tourists. Finnair provides nearly 40 direct flights a week from Helsinki to seven big Chinese cities such as

Beijing, Chongqing, Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Nanjing and Xi'an. (Finavia 2018.)

China is one the biggest outbound tourism markets and for that reason in 2017 Helsinki Marketing, Tencent and World Tourism Cities Federation (WTFC) signed a cooperation agreement, which allows Helsinki to serve as an intelligent tourism model for Chinese tourism market. (City of Helsinki 2018b.)

As Zhan Shu, General Manager of the Tencent Governmental Affairs and Tourism Center stated: "This is Tencent's first overseas pilot cooperation project in the field of smart city tourism. The project provides comprehensive and practical information about overseas destinations for Chinese tourists and a more convenient platform for overseas destinations to showcase their urban charm." (City of Helsinki 2018b.)

Thanks to the initial version of the WeChat Helsinki mini program users will get an access to the content about Helsinki's sights, services, events and transportation. What is important for Chinese travelling abroad, a translation service and emergency help are also included in this mini program. As WeChat is an analogue of Facebook in China, such a mini program is one of the significant steps in developing tourism to Helsinki in the Chinese travel market. (City of Helsinki 2018b.)

### **3 Consumer behaviour in Tourism**

This chapter presents the key concepts in Tourism consumer behaviour, investigates the tourists' motivation and values, and examines the tourism experience.

Consumer behaviour is a wide term. Certain decisions, activities, ideas or experiences that meet consumer needs and wants comprise consumer behaviour. It is 'concerned with all activities directly involved in obtaining, consuming and disposing of products and services, including the decision processes that precede and follow these actions'. (Cohen 2013, 872.)

#### **3.1 Key concepts**

There are nine key concepts that have been designed to describe consumer behaviour in tourism: decision-making, values, motivations, self-concept and personality, expectations, attitudes, perceptions, satisfaction and trust and loyalty. In order to have a better understanding of consumer behaviour, the main points of all the key concepts will be outlined in this subchapter. (Cohen 2013, 875).

- **Decision-making**

The decision-making concept is crucial for marketing strategy. The knowledge of how decisions are made supports consumer behaviour in tourism. The processes of decision-making are quite complicated. For this reason models rather than definitions are used to understand them. Many authors assume that tourists usually plan their travel decisions carefully. (Cohen 2013, 875.)

- **Values**

A value is 'an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode'. Values appear to play an important role in marketing due to their impact on consumer behaviour regarding the choice of product categories, brands and product attributes. The majority of authors mainly describe two types of values: instrumental and terminal or external and internal correspondingly. Instrumental values are object-oriented whereas terminal values are based on classes of objects. (Cohen 2013, 880-881.)

- **Motivation**

Motivation can be described as 'psychological/biological needs and wants, including integral forces that arouse, direct and integrate a person's behaviour and activity'. Among other theories or models analysing motivation, the push – pull approach is mostly utilised to explain motivations as it seems to be simple and intuitive. This approach is based on the idea that emotional needs push people to travel while destination features pull them. (Cohen 2013, 881-882.)

- **Self-concept and personality**

Consumer's self-concept influences consumer behaviour in the marketing field. The self-concept applies to his or her cognitive beliefs about her/himself. To express various selves consumers buy products and services. Personality, being part of a person's self-concept, is represented by certain qualities in human behaviour that cause agreeable responses to different incentives around the individual. (Cohen 2013, 883.)

- **Expectations**

Different post-purchase behaviours including satisfaction, loyalty etc. are determined by consumer expectations. Previous studies have identified the following expectations (Cohen 2013, 883-884):

- efficacy and outcome
- predictive and ideal
- desired and experience-based

- **Attitudes**

Attitudes are mostly seen as a 'person's degree of favourableness or unfavourableness with respect to a psychological object'. Previous works in attitude theories view attitudes as central to consumer decision-making because they predict consumer behaviour. (Cohen 2013, p. 884.)

- **Perceptions**

Consumer perceptions are considered one of the most important concepts in the marketing field as they are founded on consumers' previous experience, familiarity, values and motivations. Perception can be described as 'the process by which an individual selects, organises and interprets stimuli in a meaningful and coherent way'. (Cohen 2013, 885.)

- **Satisfaction**

Consumer satisfaction has a major impact on the future company performance with regards to its profits, market image and market share. Thus, satisfaction accounts for a key consumer behaviour factor. (Cohen 2013, 886.)

- **Trust and loyalty**

Trust is an important tool that companies could use in order to build relationships with their customers. Trust refers to a 'willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence'. Trust is mandatory for consumer loyalty. Customers' loyalty and their future behaviour depends on the customers' trust. (Cohen 2013, 887.)

### 3.2 Motivation

Tourism motivation can be described as "a meaningful state of mind which adequately disposes an actor or group of actors to travel, and which is subsequently interpretable by others as a valid explanation for such a decision" (Komppula & Gartner 2013, 169).

There is plenty of motivators or factors that motivate tourists to buy tourism product or service. There are two main groups of motivators in the tourism area. The first group represents motivating factors that motivate a person to take a holiday and the second group consists of motivators that motivate a person to take a particular holiday to a specific destination at a certain time. What is important, many prospective motivating factors can relate to either or both of these motivators. (Horner & Swarbrooke 2016, 75.) Figure 2 illustrates some of the main motivators in tourism.

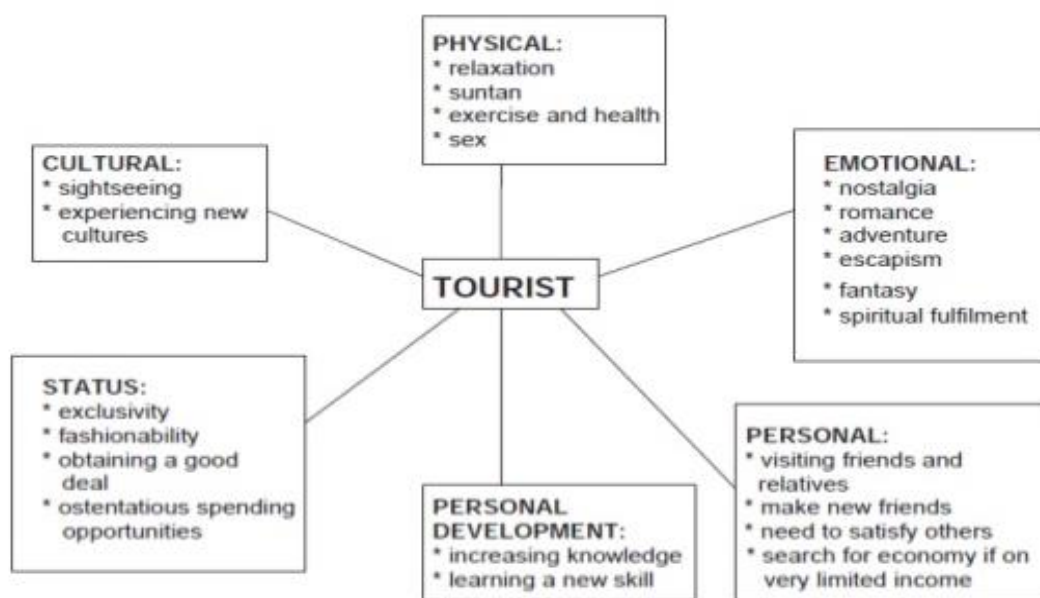


Figure 2. A typology of motivators in tourism. (Horner & Swarbrooke 2016, 76.)

It is crucial that every tourist has his or her own motivators. Individual's personality, lifestyle, previous tourist experience, past life, perceptions of his or her strengths and weaknesses and how he or she wishes to be viewed by other people determines individual tourist' motivations. A person is usually influenced by several motivating factors at any one time and for this reason holidays are usually compromise between their multiple motivating factors. (Horner & Swarbrooke 2016, 77.)

It is important to notice that motivating factors vary not only for each individual tourist, but they also differ in various market segments dependent on demographic criteria. For example, it is assumed that young people want to experience enjoyment while elderly people prefer sedate activities. Another example could be parents who want to make their children happy by taking care of them on the one hand, and want to have some rest from the parental responsibilities and spend some time with each other, on the other hand. In addition, there are national and cultural differences in relation to motivators. (Horner & Swarbrooke 2016, 80-81.)

### **3.3 Values**

Consumer values in tourism are closely related to motivations, choice of tourist destinations and the experiential value of a holiday. It is supposed that emotions, attitudes, behaviour and judgments are directed by consumer values. Thus, "customer value is the basic foundation for everything in marketing". (Cohen 2013, 881; Komppula & Gartner 2013, 169.)

Woodruff (in Komppula & Gartner 2013) defines customer value as "a customer's perceived preference for and evaluation of those product attributes, attribute performances, and consequences arising from use that facilitate (or block) achieving the customer's goals and purposes in use situation". According to the author, this definition involves two types of values: first, the desired value which is related to the value that customers desire to obtain from products or services and their providers, secondly, the received value, which is related to the value customers gained through the interaction between product and customer. (Komppula & Gartner 2013, 170.)

Komppula describes three stages of value: expected, perceived and experienced value. The expected value refers to the desired customer value reflecting the needs, goals and purposes of the customer and what individuals expect from the products and services. The perceived value refers to the customer perceptions before actual receiving of the service as well as customer perceptions that an individual obtains while the service is being

provided. The experienced value reflects the experiences gained during the process of service as well as experiences encountered after the service has been provided. It shows customer satisfaction with the respect to the achieved customer goals and purposes. (Komppula & Gartner 2013, 170.)

### **3.4 Tourism experience**

Walls et al. (in Komppula & Gartner 2013) defines an experience in the following way: “a consumer experience is the multidimensional takeaway impression or outcome, based on the consumer’s willingness and capacity to be affected and influenced by physical and/or human interaction dimensions and formed by people’s encounters with products, services, and businesses influencing consumption values (emotive and cognitive), satisfaction and repeat patronage.” (Komppula & Gartner 2013, 170.)

Pine and Gilmore state that experiences arise when a company purposefully uses services as a stage, and goods - as a decoration in order to entice the client. In this case experiences are memorable. The authors point out that service providers have a clear advantage because they can change at their own discretion the environment in which customers buy or receive services if it is needed. (Pine & Gilmore 2011, 17, 21.)

According to Pine and Gilmore there is a number of dimensions that could engage customers. Figure 1 demonstrates four different dimensions of experience. The first dimension represents the level of customer participation. As it can be seen from the figure, experience can be passive when people act as observers or listeners, for example, during their visit to the theatre, and active when people actively participate in creating their own experience during skiing, for example. (Pine & Gilmore 2011, 45-46.)

Experience varies also according to the kind of connection, or environmental relationship that exists between customers and the event or performance. It means that experience could be absorbed or immersed depending on how a person’s attention is occupied. For example, watching TV brings the absorbed experience into the mind of the client from a distance while playing a virtual game provides a client with immersed experience when he or she physically (or virtually) becomes part of such an experience. (Pine & Gilmore 2011, 46.)

As it can be seen from Figure 3 there are four realms of an experience including entertainment, educational, escapist, and aesthetic. These realms do not exclude each other and often mix in a unique personal experience. (Pine & Gilmore 2011, 47.)

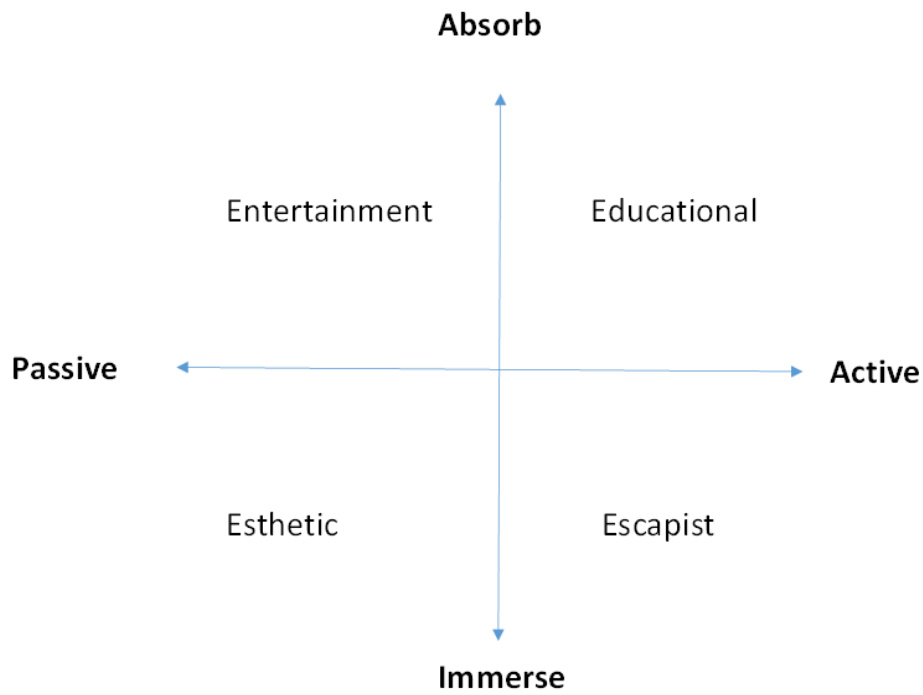


Figure 3. Experience realms. (Pine & Gilmore 2011, 47.)

It is important to notice that expectancy theory states that “a travel experience that meets or exceeds tourists’ expectations will be remembered positively”. People sense, what they see, hear, feel and taste generate memorable experiences. Some authors suppose that tourist destinations or organisations that provides unique experiences to their customers have a competitive advantage. (Cohen 2013, 884; Tung & Ritchie 2011, 1367.)



## **4. Consumer behaviour of Chinese tourists according to previous research**

The significant development of Chinese outbound tourism in the recent years has demonstrated a growing demand for travelling to foreign holiday destinations. Why has Chinese outbound tourism been developing so rapidly in the last several years and what are the values and motives of Chinese travellers which inspire them for travelling abroad? This chapter attempts to answer these questions and describe the future perspectives of the Chinese outbound tourism. First, we will begin with the history of Chinese travelling.

### **4.1. History of Chinese travelling**

While inbound travel has a long history in China, travelling abroad is a comparatively new experience for Chinese tourists. Back in Maoist China (1943-1976), travel abroad was rather disapproved. Only in the end of the twentieth century after the special administrative regions Hong Kong and later Macau were annexed, travelling abroad became easier for Chinese people. (Z\_punkt 2012.)

In 1983 the Chinese Government allowed Chinese people to make organised journeys to Hong Kong to visit friends and relatives (VFR Visiting Friends and Relatives). The seventh five-year plan of the Chinese Government in 1985 outlined tourism as economical activity. Later the National Tourism Plan for 1986 to 2000 identified further goals for the development of outbound tourism. In 1991 the Chinese Travel Service (CTS) was allowed to organise journeys for Chinese citizens to Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. In 1997 the Chinese Government permitted foreign travels for personal pleasure, which promoted the further development of outbound tourism. (Tourism in China 2018)

The breakthrough in Chinese outbound tourism occurred in 2009, when the Chinese government defined the development of tourism as a national economic goal and changed the approved destination status (ADS) of many countries, which facilitated visa applications for almost all countries. This was a dramatic change in further development of outbound tourism (Z\_punkt 2012.)

In order to simplify visa regulations with foreign countries, China signed visa exemption agreements with 127 countries. This measure made travel arrangements for Chinese outbound tourists much more convenient. Some countries showed a great interest in tourism development with China and took further measures to facilitate travel by cutting visa fees and opening more visa application centres in China. Other countries, such as Australia,

Canada, Singapore, South Korea and the United States currently issue ten-year visas. (Kairos Future 2017a, 15.)

Chinese travellers to the European Schengen area apply for a Schengen visa, which is a common visa for short-term visits to any of the 26 involved countries. Such a single visa facilitates the arrangements for Chinese visitors to European countries. (Kairos Future 2017a, 15.)

The ADS agreement assisted in further consecutive increase in tourism exchanges between China and Europe. According to Ctrip's airline ticket sales data, Europe is the second most popular destination for Chinese outbound travellers after Asia. In 2017, the number of trips by Chinese travellers to Europe surpassed 6 million for the first time. 46% of trips were made from Eastern China with Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou and Shenzhen being top departure cities. (Ctrip 2018).

Overall, in 2017, the World Tourism Organisation reported 130 million outbound trips of Chinese tourists with a total expenditure of \$258 billion on overseas travel. Around 50% of Chinese tourists visit foreign countries once every year. However, most of these visits are short-haul. The most popular long-haul destination is Europe, followed by North and South America, Africa and Oceania. (The World Tourism Organisation 2018; Kairos Future 2017a, 15.)

Finland is also a popular destination for Chinese travellers. In 2017 the number of Chinese visits increased by an impressive 63% reaching up to 432,000 visits to Finland. As Figure 4 demonstrates, Chinese tourists spent 335 million euros in Finland in total, which showed an increase by 39% in 2017. This puts Chinese tourists in the second place after Russian tourists who spent 653 million euros. However, a Russian visitor spent on average 240 euros per visit in Finland, while Chinese spending per visit exceeded 1,200 euros on average, which makes Chinese tourists a target group of great significance for the Finnish tourism industry. (Visit Finland 2018, 22.)

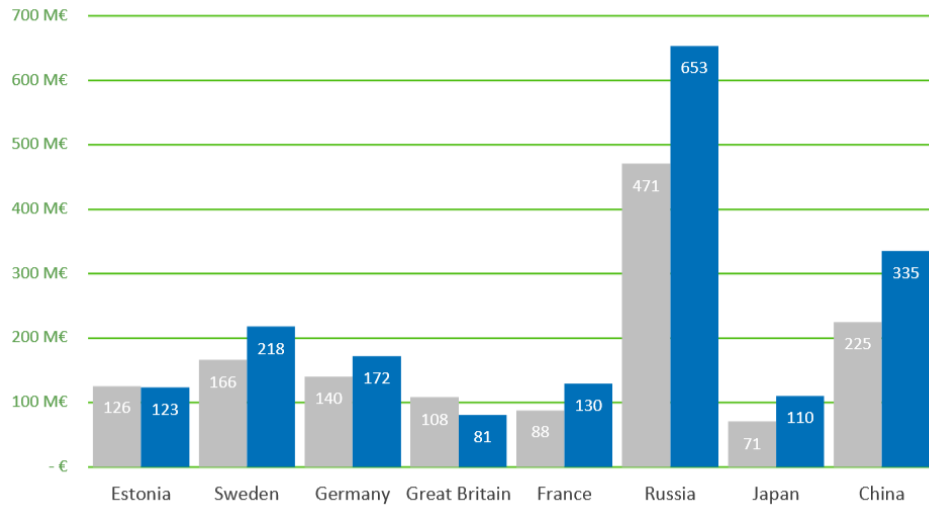


Figure 4. Expenditures in Finland, 2017. (Visit Finland 2018, 22.)

As can be seen in Figure 5, the most popular travel destinations in Finland among Chinese travellers in 2017 were the Helsinki region and Lapland with the share of overnight stays reaching 65% and 24% correspondingly (Visit Finland, China 2018, 16).

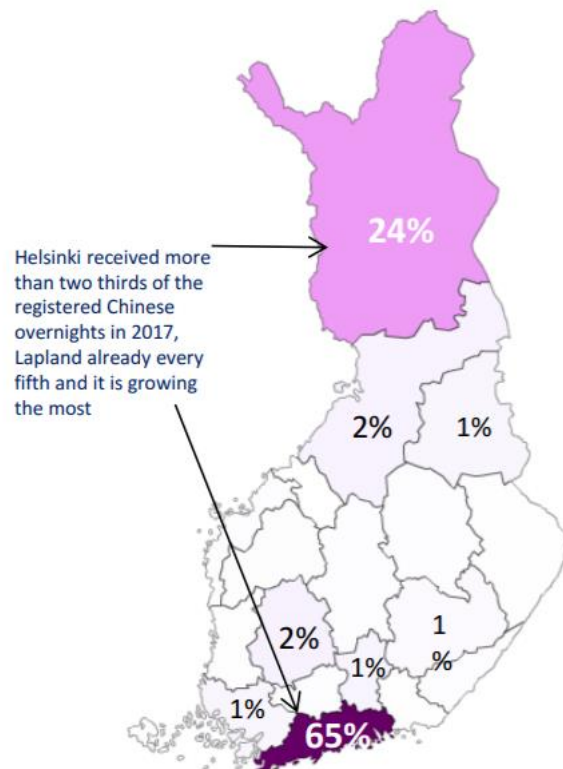


Figure 5. Chinese overnight stays in Finland (Visit Finland, China 2018, 16).

The next subchapter will examine the motives of Chinese travelling to Europe and particularly to Finland.

## 4.2. Motives

When Chinese travellers choose destinations and tourist attractions, they are influenced by the following motivating factors: beauty and uniqueness of tourist attractions, safety, ease of visa procedures, friendliness of locals to tourists and affordability. Figure 6 below shows the priority of these motivating factors. (Nielsen Holdings 2017, 11.)

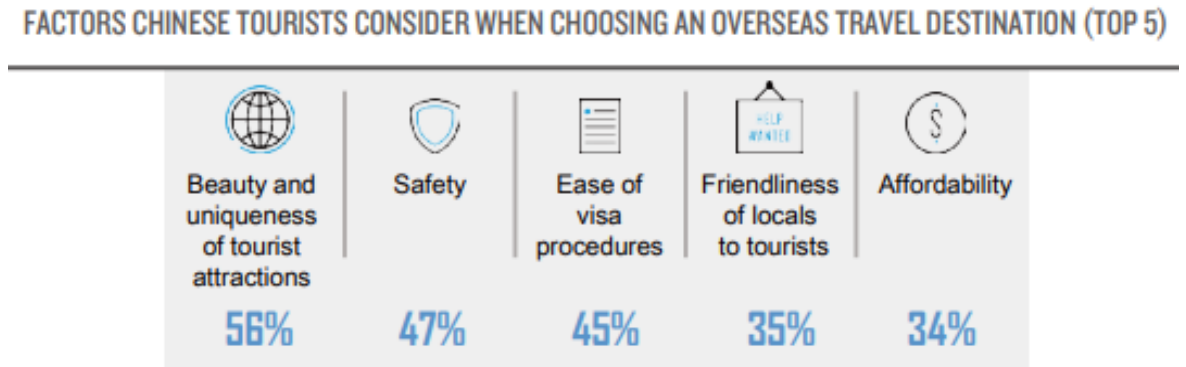


Figure 6. Factors Chinese tourists consider when choosing an overseas travel destination. (Nielsen Holdings 2017, 11.)

Figure 7 demonstrates the factors considered by different generations of Chinese tourists when choosing overseas travel destinations. As shown in the figure, the post-90s generation appears to be the most adventurous group, with 16% choosing adventure as the motif of their travel. The post-80s respondents want to explore culinary traditions (58%) or focus on shopping (49%). And the post-70s generation gives priority to a relaxing travel experience (82%). (Nielsen Holdings 2017, 12.)

FACTORS DIFFERENT GENERATIONS OF CHINESE TOURISTS CONSIDER  
WHEN CHOOSING AN OVERSEAS TRAVEL DESTINATION (%)

Rank	Factors	Post-90s	Post-80s	Post-70s
1	Beauty and uniqueness of tourist attractions	53	55	61
2	Safety	39	49	51
3	Ease of visa procedures	47	45	44
4	Friendliness of locals to tourists	33	37	33
5	Affordability	35	34	34
6	Fit with my schedule	33	35	31
7	Vacation time constraints	29	33	28
8	Recommendations from friends and relatives	25	24	25
9	Popularity of the country or region	25	21	25
10	Alignment with my objectives for travel	20	20	18
11	Distance to destination	19	20	17
12	The willingness of travel companion(s)	19	13	16
13	Introduction or recommendations from travel agency/platforms	15	14	14

Figure 7. Factors different generations of Chinese tourists consider when choosing an overseas travel destination. (Nielsen Holdings 2017, 12.)

Nowadays Chinese travellers are trying to become actively involved in the travel experience rather than just observe famous attractions or do shopping. Genuine local experiences and total immersion with local culture and environments are things that matter to Chinese tourists. A new generation of travellers are seeking for artistic and cultural experiences, which undoubtedly creates strong emotional connections with tourists. Thus, travel products providing authentic local activities, especially those involving interaction with local people and local environments, look more appealing to a large and growing audience. Supplying information about local cultural spots or guided tours of street art and performances would be quite beneficial for travellers, as well as offering cooking classes or ‘inside the kitchen’ visits to restaurants and promoting local music festivals through WeChat. (Kairos Future 2017b, 85.)

Chinese travellers are attracted to the image of Europe, well-known for its historical and cultural heritage. The travellers are captivated by beautiful nature of European countries, picturesque views, snowy landscapes and Northern lights in Finland, glaciers and geysers in Iceland, and fairy tale towns across Europe. This is largely reflected in the Chinese social media and reviews. (Kairos Future 2017b, 8).

Europe has to offer many destinations and travel products that are perceived by Chinese travellers as exotic. Finland and Iceland are particularly strongly associated with this image, followed by Sweden and Norway. (Kairos Future 2017b, 61.)

### **4.3. Values**

Understanding the values of the Chinese travellers seems rather important in order to meet their wants and needs.

A research done by Virtual Tourism Observatory for the European Commission indicates that the safe environment, clean air and blue sky are of great value for Chinese tourists travelling to Europe. One more fact which attracts Chinese tourists is a chance to meet anything Chinese during their trip abroad. (Croce 2016, 5.)

According to the reports, Chinese travel behaviours and preferences are changing over time. As Chinese travellers are becoming more experienced, they seem to be more interested in independent travelling rather than being part of large tour groups. Independently organised trips attract a growing number of tourists. (Visit Finland, China 2018, 9; Kairos Future 2016a; 21.)

Last but not least is mobile payment systems. The majority of Chinese tourists use mobile payments for shopping or tourist attractions during their overseas travels. According to a recent report, 93% of Chinese tourists would consider using mobile payments when travelling overseas if more foreign merchants accepted mobile payments in the future, while 91% would be more inclined to spend and shop if overseas merchants accepted Chinese mobile payment brands. (Nielsen Holdings 2017, 7.)

Payment systems such as UnionPay and Alipay are capable to make the Chinese travellers feel safer when travelling abroad. (Kairos Future 2017a, 28).

### **4.4. Future of Chinese travelling**

The results of current reports show that the world tourism tends to grow steadily. The number of international tourist arrivals increased by a remarkable 7% in 2017 reaching a total of 1,322 million, based on the report by the UNWTO World Tourism Barometer. The UNWTO Panel of Experts estimates the number of international tourist arrivals worldwide to rise by 4%-5% in 2018. According to the UNWTO Tourism Towards 2030 long-term forecast, this accounts for 3.8% average increase expected for the period 2010-2020.

Europe and the Americas are both projected to increase by 3.5%-4.5%, Asia and the Pacific by 5%-6%, Africa by 5%-7% and the Middle East by 4%-6%. (World Tourism Organisation UNWTO 2018.)

Based on economic prospects, Goldman Sachs estimates the number of Chinese outbound trips to increase to 220 million by 2025, which accounts for an annual increase of 6.5% by 2025. To Europe it predicts an 8.4% annual growth between 2015 and 2025, which means Europe is supposed to take shares from other regions during this period. As for expenditure, Chinese tourists are expected to spend overseas up to US\$ 450 billion in 2025, according to Goldman Sachs. (Kairos Future 2017b, 29.)

The growth in Chinese travel to Europe will also lead to a change in the composition of European inbound travel. The World Tourism Organisation expects one-fourth of all Asian travellers to Europe to come from China by 2020. Improved visa regulations will play an important role in boosting the development of Chinese outbound tourism to European destinations. (Kairos Future 2017b. 30.)

In addition to improved visa regulations, there are some other reasons leading to the growth of Chinese outbound tourism in the near future.

#### **4.4.1. Demographical growth**

China has the largest population in the world being the third largest country. The population continues to grow concentrating in large cities due to a rapid urbanisation. The number of holders of regular Chinese passports amounted to 129 million in 2016, which accounts for 9.3% of the total population. This demonstrates that there is still a considerable potential for growth. (Kairos Future 2017a, 14.)

#### **4.4.2. A change in consumption patterns**

In the last few years there has been a tendency of decelerating in the growth of the industry and agriculture sectors, while the service sector including tourism has shown a steady growth. In addition to this, the Chinese economy is progressively becoming more consumption-oriented. A change in consumption patterns has led to the fact that Chinese people started spending a larger part of income at their discretion, including expenses on travelling. It consequently results in the growth of the outbound travel market. (Kairos Future 2017a, 9).

#### **4.4.3. Middle and upper-middle class growth**

What is important for the outbound tourism market, the share of the Chinese middle class and upper middle class urban population is expanding dramatically. A World Economic Forum research shows that, by 2020, the number of upper middle class and affluent households will extend to 100 million, which accounts for 30% of all urban households, in comparison with 17% in 2015 and only 7% in 2010. Moreover, the research anticipates upper-middle class and affluent households to reach 55% of Chinese urban consumption and 81% of its incremental growth by 2020. This will result in an annual consumption growth by 17%, compared with 5% growth among emerging-middle-class and middle-class consumers. (Kairos Future 2017b, 23.)

Even if Chinese economy growth diminishes more than expected, growth in “tourism imports” will still increase, since travel has become a strong habit of Chinese middle and upper-middle class (Croce 2016, 11).

#### **4.4.4. Support of outbound travelling by Chinese government**

The Chinese government supports and promotes the development of outbound tourism. According to the five-year plan, the outbound tourism market is supposed to reach 150 million trips by 2020. The tourism-related goals of this plan for stimulating outbound travel involve strengthening tourism cooperation with the countries along the Belt and Road corridors, which include more than 60 countries along six land bound and one sea bound routes. In order to achieve these goals, it has been planned to promote joint tourism products and simplify visa procedures between the countries. (Kairos Future 2017a, 15.)

As the most common means of transportation for Chinese travellers is air transport, another five-year plan's goal is to construct 260 new airports and clusters of world-quality international airports in areas including Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei, the Yangtze River Delta (around Shanghai), and the Pearl River Delta (around Guangzhou). The plan also promotes the construction of international aviation hubs in Chengdu, Chongqing, Harbin, Kunming, Shenzhen, Xi'an, and Urumqi. (Kairos Future 2017a, 14.)

Moreover, many new visa application centers in second-tier cities have been opened since 2016, which has simplified application process for many outbound travellers. This measure is supposed to boost the growth of the market of Chinese travel to Europe, as the convenience of visa application process is significant for travellers when they choose their destinations. (Kairos Future 2017a.)



Thus, demographical and economical reasons along with the support of Chinese government will encourage the progress of Chinese outbound tourism in the future.

Furthermore, a series of recent reports has indicated a number of trends and tendencies that could also influence the development of Chinese travel outbound market in the future. The Chinese outbound travel market is not only enlarging in size but becoming more mature and diverse. Chinese travellers show a growing interest in less explored destinations rather than most famous ones. Different researches demonstrate a shift from packaged tours to independent travel, a growing demand in tailor-made packages and in-depth travel with longer stay in one country as well as willingness to have unique experiences and explore local people's life, local design and food culture. Chinese travellers also begin to be interested in niche products, such as sport, medical and educational trips. Moreover, digitalisation of tourism products, a use of mobile payment methods and a growing number of trips bought via mobile devices show a great importance of modern technologies used by Chinese tourists. (Visit Finland, China 2018, 9; Kairos Future 2017a, 21).

## 5. Conducting the research

This chapter describes a research method of the study, its validity and reliability, the process of gathering information, and its analysis.

### 5.1. Research methods

In order to achieve the aim of the study, a qualitative approach with a case study was chosen as a research method. The qualitative research is considered to be the right choice for maintaining validity of this study because it is used effectively for situations which will increase understanding, expand knowledge, clarify the real issues, generate hypotheses, identify a range of behaviours, explain and explore consumer motivations, attitudes and behaviour, identify distinct behavioural groups and provide an input to a future stage of research. (Webb 2002, 112.)

Qualitative research “uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings, such as real world setting (where) the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest. Qualitative research, broadly defined, means any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification and instead, the kind of research that produces findings arrived from real-world settings where the phenomenon of interest unfold naturally”. (Patton 2002, 39.)

It is a case study that makes a qualitative approach its integral part. To conduct a case study, one case or a small number of cases in their real life contexts are selected by researchers. Then, the obtained results are thoroughly analysed in compliance with the qualitative approach. In general, case studies are the preferred methods when (a) “how” or “why” questions are being stated, (b) the researcher has little control over events, and (c) the focus is on a current phenomenon within a real-life context. This situation makes a case study research unique compared to other types of social science research. (Yin 2009, 2.)

Qualitative researchers prefer to be provided with detailed descriptions of individuals and events in their natural settings. This leads to general understanding of interviewing as a key data collection strategy in research design. In a broad sense an interview displays a conversation with a purpose to gather descriptions of the interviewee. Of course, it is performed with respect to interpretation of the meanings of the phenomena being described. In a similar way, some researchers say that an interview is an extendable and elastic conversation between partners targeted at receiving an in-depth information about a certain

topic or subject. Through received in-depth data a phenomenon could be interpreted in terms of the fair meanings interviewees put into it. (Alshenqeeti 2014, 39.)

Considering the fact that some interviews might have a semi-structured approach a predetermined set of questions is employed. It does not allow the interviewer to make up questions of their own. Respondents treat the exchange as being quite flexible (they are able to answer questions in their own words). However, the questions may have pre-coded answers. (Webb 2002, 112.)

It is also possible to collect qualitative data from the informant who is sent questions to be answered. In English "an email interview" is used for this matter. It becomes clear that under an email survey an interview takes longer compared to a synchronous interview. The case is that informant's responses and writings give rise to new email questions after the informant has answered the original questions. (Kananen 2015, 108.)

## **5.2. Data collection and analysis**

Data collection method of the study includes primary and secondary data collection. In this study primary data is collected from eight semi-structured interviews. Secondary data is gathered from previous researches regarding consumer behaviour of Chinese tourists, reports, statistics and websites. English as language for the interviews has been chosen as it is a common language for the interviewer and interviewee. An interview guide was approved by the representative of Helsinki Marketing. (See Appendix 1.)

Performing the first stage in order to get primary data, there have been conducted eight semi-structured interviews with the representatives of Chinese tourism companies offering trips to Finland and being the most important for collaboration for Helsinki Marketing. A list of prospective Chinese companies has been provided by Helsinki Marketing. It includes their recommendations for interviewing some particular companies which are considered the most important companies for cooperation with Helsinki Marketing.

According to a report of Virtual Tourism Observatory, most outbound travel from China to Europe is generated in the major urban centres of Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen (Croce 2016, 5). That is why it seemed important to interview representatives of Chinese companies working mostly in these regions. For that reason, in the frame of the study, the interviews were conducted with respondents representing the following regions of China: four interviewees worked in Beijing and the others in Shanghai, Hangzhou, Guangzhou and Jiangsu.

Eight interviews were conducted with the representatives of seven Chinese companies (where two respondents represented the branches of the same company in different cities) offering trips to Finland for Chinese travellers. Three face-to-face interviews were done with Marketing Manager of Alitrip, Deputy General Manager EMEA of GZL International Travel service LTD and Product Manager of Beijing Leadtime Int'l Travel Service Co., Ltd.

Five email interviews were conducted with Senior Product Supervisor of AoYou, Product Manager of HH travel, Tourism Product Specialist of Tuniu, Marketing Director Long-range Tourism Product Center of China Bamboo Garden International Travel Service CO., LTD Beijing and Europe Product Manager of China Bamboo Garden International Travel service CO., LTD Shanghai branch. Table 1 demonstrates the companies which participated in the interviews.

Three out of eight interviews were conducted face-to-face and five interviews were done by email. Three face-to-face interviews were done with the respondents in Helsinki during two FAM trips of Chinese tourism companies to Finland in March 2017 being recorded by mobile phone. All information from face-to-face interviews was transcribed. Due to a busy schedule of FAM trips participants in Helsinki, it was agreed with five respondents to conduct other interviews by e-mail. These respondents received an interview guide by email when they were back to China after their trips and their responses were emailed in March-April 2017.

In our study all five email interviews were conducted asynchronously. An asynchronous method is easier and faster for the researcher as the respondent answers at their own pace by writing a text. The respondent is free to think and contemplate what and how to answer. The responses here are most probably more in-depth since the respondent has time to go into details of the contexts and respond. (Kananen 2015, 110). In this case the validity of the study increases as the respondent provides more trustworthy information.

Table 1. List of companies participated in interviews

No	Company name	Location	Title of respondent	Type of the interview and its date
1.	Alitrip, Alibaba Group	Hangzhou	Marketing Manager	F2F 21.3.2017
2.	AoYou	Beijing	Senior Product Supervisor Product Dept./ Europe & America Dept.	E-mail 9.04.2017
3.	Beijing Leadtime Int'l Travel Service Co., Ltd	Beijing	Product Manager	F2F 25.3.2017
4.	China Bamboo Garden International Travel Service CO., LTD Bei- jing	Beijing	Marketing Director Long- range Tourism Product Center	Email 5.04.2017
5.	China Bamboo Garden International Travel service CO., LTD Shanghai branch	Shanghai	Europe Product Manager	Email 7.04.2017
6.	GZL International Travel service LTD	Guangzhou	Deputy General Manager EMEA	F2F 25.3.2017
7.	HH travel	Beijing	Product Manager, Product Center Europe Div.	Email 1.4.2017
8.	Tuniu	Jiangsu	Tourism Product Specialist	Email 29.03.2017

Having gathered the relevant material, the researcher's task is to get acquainted with the entire material and find answers to the research questions. All the material is to be unified into a single format as it is not successful to analyse extensive materials in different formats. (Kananen 2015, 110). For that reason, all the information transcribed from the face-

to-face interviews and received in a text format from email interviews was summarised into four tables in full compliance with the common theme.

Bearing in mind that the data may be arranged in different ways, which depends on the purpose and proposed outcome of the study (Carson, Gilmore, Perry & Gronhaug 2001, 176), the information was analysed in the form of a Power Point Presentation. The full presentation was forwarded to Helsinki Marketing by email in December 2017. (See Appendix 2.)

At the final stage, the information from all the interviews was compiled and comparatively analysed with the information received from secondary data. The results of the study are presented in Conclusions chapter.

### **5.3. Validity and reliability**

Among all factors any qualitative researcher should be concerned about are the two factors of the main concern: validity and reliability. One can not do without them when designing a study, analysing results and judging the quality of the study. Reliability is defined differently by most researches. Some describe reliability as a consistency or stability of a measure and a consideration of whether it is possible to obtain the same result in case of the measure repeated. Other researches go further and state that there is a sophisticated distinction between validity and reliability. Their speculations are based on the idea that validity reflects an internal consistency of the research while reliability reflects generalisability of the findings. (Koshy, 2005, 106.)

What is crucial to ensure reliability in the qualitative research is an examination of fairness and trustworthiness. It is absolutely important while carrying out deep quality studies via reliability and validity in the qualitative research, Golafshani states that the “trustworthiness of a research report lies at the heart of issues conventionally discussed as validity and reliability”. (Golafshani 2003, 601.)

Reliability and validity can only be treated side by side but never separately. Accuracy of the measurement is defined through validity. Validity, in fact, is an assessment of the exactness of the measurement in relation to what does actually exist. Thus, the only thing that is trustful is a valid measure. (Burns & Bush 2010, 319.)

As Koshy says, “we need to consider the accuracy of what is collected and used as evidence. We should also be aware that the conclusions are based on the quality of what we

gather as data. Interpretations of the same event or evidence can vary between different people. This can affect the validity of the data presented". (Koshy, 2005, 105.)

During the whole process of conducting the study all things regarding reliability and validity have been taken into thorough consideration. For validity purpose it has been decided to organise interviews with the representatives working in Chinese regions which generate most outbound travel from China to Europe. As a result, seven out of eight respondents represented these regions providing valid information for the study.

For validity reason it had also been planned to do at least eight interviews in order to obtain sufficient information for the study. To achieve that aim eleven prospective representatives of Chinese companies participating in two FAM trips during their visit in Helsinki in March 2017 were contacted. Two of them rejected the idea of being interviewed but nine people agreed to be interviewed. One of them postponed her answers by email several times and eventually did not send them. However, as it can be seen from the results of the interviews, this number of interviews provided enough information to reach 'saturation point' where the data was repeated from one interview to another and no new insights were given by further interviews.

As questions for the interview guide had been carefully designed, it allowed to acquire reliable information during the interviews and the fact that eight interviews were conducted in a short period of March-April 2017 also increased reliability. Thus, the eight conducted interviews provided valid and reliable information for making relevant conclusions and recommendations.

## 6. Findings

The study is aimed at providing Helsinki Marketing with recommendations of how to improve the experience offered to Chinese travellers in the next 3-5 years. For this purpose, the study investigates the following: the current tourism products and services of the Helsinki region offered by Chinese tourism companies, a profile of Chinese travellers along with their motives of visiting the Helsinki region, as well as their values and preferences during their trips. Trends and tendencies that could affect the potential future behaviour of Chinese travellers as well as their possible interest to the Helsinki region as a tourist destination in the near 3-5 years have also been analysed.

Within the frame of the study, eight interviews with the representatives of Chinese tourism companies offering trips to Finland and being considered important for the future cooperation with Helsinki Marketing have been conducted and analysed. This chapter provides the results of the interviews followed by recommendations.

### 6.1. Overview of the companies participated in interviews

Detailed information about Chinese companies, their tours to Finland and customer types is presented in Table 2. As it can be seen from the table, the participants of the interviews represent most famous and large Chinese companies: Alitrip, one of the major Chinese OTAs which is part of the well-known Alibaba group; China GZL International Travel service LTD - the biggest travel agency in Southern China; Tuniu - famous OTA with 6.7 million trips in 2016, HH travel - the high-end brand of Ctrip, the largest OTA in China; Beijing and Shanghai branches of China Bamboo Garden International Travel Service CO., European product wholesaler Beijing Leadtime Int'l Travel Service Co. Ltd and AoYou company with 100,000 outbound tourists per year.

Table 2 illustrates that these Chinese companies offer trips to Finland to customers of different ages. The table shows what kind of tours are offered by Chinese tourism companies for tourists of all age groups: young people (Alitrip and Tuniu), middle-aged tourists (Shanghai branch of China Bamboo Garden International Travel Service and HH Travel) and different age groups (other companies).



Table 2. Chinese companies overview

No	Company name	Company description, 2016	Number of tourists to Finland in 2016	Tours to Finland in 2016	Customers who travel to Helsinki
1.	Alitrip, Alibaba Group	One of the major OTAs in China	5,000 pax from the whole platform to Finland, 2,000 - from Alitrip own project	Alitrip tour: 4 nights in Rovaniemi and 1 night in Helsinki	Mostly young people (born after 1985-1990)
2.	AoYou	About 100,000 outbound tourists per year	About 1,000 people to Helsinki	FIT and group tours	FIT: 20-35 y.o, groups: 35-60 y.o
3.	Beijing Leadtime Int'l Travel Service Co., Ltd	European product wholesaler: about 10,000 tourists per year	About 550 tourists to Finland	Helsinki, Rovaniemi and Kemi; 4 countries for 9 days	Around 35-60 years, mostly women
4.	China Bamboo Garden International Travel Service CO., LTD Beijing	About 80,000 people to Europe per year	5,000-6,000 tourists to Helsinki	Group tours	Middle-aged 45 y.o. Elderly people over 55 y.o.
5.	China Bamboo Garden International Travel service CO., LTD Shanghai	30,000 tourists to European countries per year by Shanghai branch alone	3,000 tourists to Helsinki	4 Nordic countries, Finland in winter	Mid-aged people, mostly with certain accumulation
6.	GZL International Travel service LTD	The biggest travel agency in Southern China. It sent 50000 people to Europe in 2016	10,000-12,500 to Finland, Best sales during winter time	Scandinavian countries incl. Helsinki, 90% group tours, 10% FITs	35-50 y.o. to Northern Europe, men 50 -70 y.o. in group tours to Russia
7.	HH travel	The company is the high-end brand of Ctrip, the largest OTA in China	About 80 pax to Helsinki (FIT)	Scandinavian and Santa Claus products	Mostly CEO or private owners of 36-40 y.o. with families. FITs
8.	Tuniu	Famous OTA, 6.7 million trips, high market share in European destination	120 FITs to Finland per year, more than 50% increase in 2016	Group tours and FIT	Couples of 25-35 years old (FIT)

## 6.2. Image of Helsinki

Figure 8 summarises the associations (images) of Helsinki as a tourist destination for Chinese travellers.



Figure 8. Image of Helsinki

An image of the place which people choose as their travel destination is of great importance. The study shows that most Chinese travellers associate Helsinki with the capital of Finland followed by sauna and design. Helsinki is also associated with clean air, sea, islands, beautiful lakes, a big city with markets and, of course, shopping.

At the same time according to Marketing Manager of Alitrip:

“The image of Finland in summertime is still unknown for Chinese people”  
(The representative of Alitrip).

As the representative of GZL International Travel service LTD notices:

“Helsinki is no so typical idea for tourists, sometimes they know only about White church, Rock church and sauna” (The representative of GZL International Travel service).

So, what motivates travellers from China to visit the Helsinki region?

## 6.3. Motives of Chinese travellers to visit the Helsinki region

The study demonstrates that Chinese travellers have different motives when visiting the Helsinki Region, but mostly they come to Helsinki in the frame of their program of visiting

Nordic countries, North of Finland, Europe or Russia. The length of Chinese travellers' stay in Helsinki varies from 3-4 hours up to 3 days.

As the representative of Beijing Leadtime Int'l Travel Service informs:

"People go to Helsinki because it is a capital, it is the most famous city for our clients. It is a must destination for our product. They stay in Helsinki 1-2 nights. This is a group tour. They come to 4 countries together: Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Norway for 9 or 10 days." (The representative of Beijing Leadtime Int'l Travel Service.)

The representative of GZL International Travel service points out that:

"Helsinki is a very popular destination because we must go to Helsinki and spend at least a half of a day in Helsinki. Usually tourists stay in Helsinki only for one night, after that they go to the North part or to the Scandinavian countries, the company always combines Helsinki with other Scandinavian countries. They do it because it is a part of the program where they go to the North or other Scandinavian countries. Because when we organise tours to Scandinavia or Northern Europe countries we use Finnair, so they must stop in Helsinki." (The representative of GZL International Travel service.)

Marketing Manager of Alitrip says that:

"It is a tour for 4 nights in Lapland and 1 night in Helsinki. Now it is a package, so people must be in Helsinki." (The representative of Alitrip.)

Specialist of Tuniu notices that:

"Our guests usually spend 1-3 days in Helsinki. Their most purpose of Helsinki is to get to Rovaniemi, Ivalo, or other Nordic cities." (The representative of Tuniu.)

Europe Product Manager of Bamboo Garden International Travel Service in Shanghai even states that for some travellers Helsinki is:

"a transfer point or a harbour city" (The representative of China Bamboo Garden International Travel Service, Shanghai).

#### **6.4. Popular tourism products and activities in the Helsinki region**

The study shows that currently City tour is the most popular tourism product for Chinese travellers in the Helsinki region followed by shopping and sauna. However, it is not the only thing Chinese travellers do. Touring White and Rock churches, Suomenlinna, Sibelius Park, visiting local markets and purchasing Nordic design items were also called popular by some respondents.

Still, it was highlighted by the respondents that there is a lack of luxury shops. According to Marketing Manager of Alitrip:

“Chinese tourists are very interested in famous international luxury brands such as Prada, etc... Now it is not so variable “. (The representative of Alitrip.)

The representative of Tuniu informed that:

“Chinese guests are willing to City tour and shopping in Helsinki. There are not too many luxury shops in Helsinki, especially those brand who are familiar by Chinese such as Chanel, Prada by now.” (The representative of Tuniu.)

#### **6.5. Trends and tendencies in Chinese travelling**

Considering all mentioned above, it is necessary to look into trends and tendencies of outbound travelling from China. The study reveals several trends and tendencies in Chinese travelling that could affect the travel behaviour of Chinese tourists and their demand for tourism products and services in the Helsinki region in the near 3-5 years. They are presented as follows:

##### **6.5.1. Growing of FIT**

Six out of eight respondents informed that FIT (Free Independent Travel) is becoming an increasing trend. That is why more and more Chinese travellers will choose FIT rather than group tourism in the future:

“More and more people choose individual tourism, not travelling with group.” (The representative of China Bamboo Garden International Travel Service Beijing.)

“In 3-5 years there will be more and more FITs.” (The representative of Beijing Leadtime Int’l Travel Service.)

“Now the trend is that we have more and more FIT travellers in China. That is why from FIT point of view they need to be more free in travelling: they can decide where they want to go and what they want to do.” (The representative of Alitrip.)

Thus, a growing number of individual tourists cannot be ignored and should be deeply considered while developing new tourism products and services in the Helsinki region.

### **6.5.2. Unique experiences**

In addition to the above, more and more Chinese tourists seek unique experiences when travelling. They would prefer to get a deeper experience, not just a simple City tour in Helsinki. For this reason, theme activities could become more popular, for example, experience of living the local people life on a farm near Helsinki, a tour for learning design, a gourmet tour about Nordic cuisine or learning cooking local and Nordic dishes, sauna tour, etc. This was mentioned by several respondents:

“More and more Chinese want to have unique experience during the travelling. Not only a passing glanced at the sightseeing.” (The representative of HH travel.)

“They buy tickets, book hotels, make itinerary by themselves... They may want to get a deeper experience, not just a simple city tour.” (The representative of China Bamboo Garden International Travel Service, Beijing.)

“expect to have deep experience in tourism” (The representative of AoYou).

### **6.5.3. Longer stay in one country**

The analysis of the trends and tendencies in Chinese travelling reveals that the length of stay in a foreign country is changing. In the future, Chinese travellers will choose a destination more and more carefully and they will stay in one country for several days. More and more travellers realise that they should pay more attention to the details and enjoy more activities during their trips. It means that tourists could spend more time in Finland doing a great variety of activities. As one respondent noticed:

“More and more tourists want to have in-depth tour now. They can stay only one country for several days.” (The representative of HH travel.)

#### **6.5.4. Mobile payment method**

The way of payment while travelling also seems to be essential for tourists. In this respect, Marketing Manager of Alitrip says:

“Another important thing is a payment method. Mobile payment is growing a lot, especially in China.” (The representative of Alitrip.)

It means that Chinese travellers would prefer to have a possibility to use a mobile payment method during their trips abroad, including Helsinki.

#### **6.6. Marketing to China**

Undoubtedly, in the era of vast information technologies there is plenty of possibilities to sell and promote tourism products and services. How is it done with Chinese travellers? The study demonstrates that customers of the interviewed Chinese companies usually search for information in two ways:

- online (on tour operators websites, travel information websites, social media including WeChat);
- offline (in travel agencies or through network).

Moreover, young people, who are the main customers of Alitrip, make most of the purchases from mobile applications rather than website. The clients of HH Travel also buy trips from their website as well as from mobile applications.

Many respondents recommend the promotion of the Helsinki region in social media and WeChat particularly, because it is of great popularity in China. Nowadays, more and more people are receiving information and ideas about travelling and places to go from online posts. For example, if Chinese people like the photos of their friends taken during their trips abroad, they could choose the same country or place as their next destination.

Additionally, the respondents recommend some other ways of promoting the Helsinki region: through Sina Weibo (equivalent of Twitter in China), promotional videos, advertise-

ments, influencer marketing. The representative of AoYou recommends to promote Helsinki as a portal to the rest of Europe with other cities, especially in Northern Finland. The representative of Alitrip suggests promoting Finnish design brands in the TIBO platform.

### **6.7. Recommendations**

All things considered, the following recommendations can be submitted:

• **Developing tourism products and offering deeper and unique tourism experience**, such as life as local people on the farm, gourmet tour about Nordic cuisine or learning cooking local or Nordic dishes, sauna tour, tour for learning design, more activities on the islands while visiting restaurants there, etc. One respondent states the following:

“City sightseeing is a must, but something new should be added” (The representative of China Bamboo Garden International Travel Service, Shanghai).

Another respondent says that:

” In addition to the city tour, I think it may be travelling by car or maybe a gourmet tour about the Nordic cuisine or maybe sailing and fishing to the sea.” (The representative of China Bamboo Garden International Travel Service, Beijing.)

Another interesting tourism product for Chinese travellers might be an experience of living on a farm near Helsinki like a Finn. The representative of GZL International Travel service suggested that:

“Around Helsinki, in 15-20 min. from Helsinki to do a night in a farm house. Chinese people can have a lunch, feed the animals, just a night as a local people. Just to see how Finns live and have an experience with local people. It’s a good idea.” (The representative of GZL International Travel service.)

She also supposes that:

“Sometimes we could send people to the restaurants in small islands near Helsinki and if they could do more activities in the island it would be better” (The representative of GZL International Travel service).

The representative of China Bamboo Garden International Travel Service Beijing points out that:

“We hope to have some deeper experience items or more newfangled items packaged into our products. For example, learning to cook Finnish cuisine, sailing and fishing and so on.” (The representative of China Bamboo Garden International Travel Service, Beijing.)

Thus, there is plenty of opportunities for creating new travel experiences that could become unique selling points for the Helsinki region on the Chinese tourism market.

- **Digitalisation of tourism services and possibility for mobile method payment.**

As more and more Chinese people will prefer individual tourism in the nearest years, all services must be digitalised so that FIT Chinese travellers could book and buy tickets online by themselves, to Sky Wheel as an example. That was especially stressed by the representative of Alitrip:

”Also digitalisation of all services is very important. Nowadays there is a lack of such kind of digitalisation. For example, is it possible to buy a ticket to Sky Wheel online? It is a question mark... Digitalisation of all services, including tickets for train or bus from airport should be improved.” (The representative of Alitrip.)

- **Improving awareness of the Helsinki region in the Chinese market**

The study reveals that the Helsinki region is still not well-known among Chinese travellers and that is why it could be promoted in Chinese tourism market in different ways, including promotion in social media, Sina Weibo, using promotional video, advertisements, celebrity effect and promoting the city in cooperation with other cities, especially with Northern Finland.

- **Promoting the Helsinki region in social media and WeChat**

In order to increase awareness of the Helsinki region in the Chinese tourism market and attract more Chinese travellers, it is highly recommended to promote the Helsinki region in social media and in WeChat particularly. This recommendation was highlighted in the following way:



“WeChat is very popular in China. So Chinese tourists post photos there. More and more people get more information and ideas in WeChat. So WeChat will put more idea and information around the people so they can see: that’s great! Because sometimes Chinese people have no idea where to go, or they do not know where to go in Europe.” (The representative of GZL International Travel service.)

- **Cooperation with interviewed companies**

Due to a high popularity of interviewed companies on the Chinese tourism market and a big number of tourists motivated by them to travel to Europe, it is strongly recommended to ensure a successful cooperation with these companies and stay in close contact with them in the years ahead.

## **7. Conclusions**

This chapter provides recommendations to Helsinki Marketing how to improve travel experience of Chinese travellers in the Helsinki Region in the next 3-5 years, based on the analysis of previous research and eight interviews conducted in the frame of that thesis. The thesis process is also described at the end of the chapter.

### **7.1. Recommendations to Helsinki Marketing of how to improve the experience of Chinese travellers**

As it can be seen from the previous researches Chinese outbound tourism has rapidly been developed during previous 15 years. Being the biggest spenders during their trips abroad in 2017, Chinese travellers have become one of the most essential customers in the tourism industry. Moreover, many forecasts predict further growth of Chinese outbound market in the years ahead, which means that the number of Chinese travellers will continue to grow forcing many countries and regions all over the world to investigate their motives and values, their travel behaviour and interest in the tourism products and services in order to attract them to their tourist destinations.

As it was mentioned in Chapter 3, motivations and values are two of nine main concepts of consumer behaviour. For that reason motives and values of Chinese travellers have been deeply examined in previous researches about Chinese travellers and eight interviews conducted with Chinese tourism companies. Developing travel experience of Chinese travellers has also been investigated in the frame of that thesis. Thus, recommendations to Helsinki Marketing are based on the analysis of information received from different sources and present valuable and reliable information that increases reliability of study results.

The results of interviews conducted in the frame of the study demonstrate that currently Chinese travellers know Helsinki mainly as the capital of Finland and they mostly visit Helsinki for 0.5-3 days in the frame of their visiting program to the North of Finland or other Scandinavian countries, Europe and Russia.

City tour, shopping and sauna are of the most interest for Chinese travellers in the Helsinki region. The study shows that the program of Chinese travellers to Helsinki currently satisfies their interests, but in the future there will be a growing demand for new tourism products or services in the Helsinki region according to the trends and tendencies in Chinese travel market.

These results correlate very well to other researches performed earlier and described in Chapter 4. Having analysed information from previous researches and eight conducted interviews, it could be recommended to Helsinki Marketing to support private tourism companies to develop tourism products with a unique tourism experience taking into consideration such trends in Chinese travelling as growing FIT, willingness of Chinese travellers to spend more time in one country and have deeper and unique tourism experience during their trips abroad.

According to Snapshot on the Chinese Travel Market 2017 Research, there are several opportunities to meet a growing demand for personalised and specialised travel experience, especially in the high-end market. This involves tailor-made travel packages as well as themed travel products, for example, attending sport events, medical and educational trips. Due to the large scale of this market, there is a considerable demand for niche products too. (Kairos Future 2018, 24.)

These niche products could be offered in the Helsinki region in addition to the products that had been suggested by Chinese companies that participated in the interviews. They include rural lifestyle as local people on the farm, gourmet tour about Nordic cuisine or learning cooking local and Nordic dishes, sauna tour, tour for learning design, more activities into the islands while visiting restaurants there, etc.

Thus, previous researches and current study provide some examples of a deep and unique tourism experience which could be interesting for Chinese travellers in the years ahead:

- educational trips
- attending sport events
- medical treatment
- rural lifestyle as local people on the farm
- sauna tour
- learning design
- gourmet tour about Nordic cuisine
- learning cooking local and Nordic dishes
- activities into the islands near Helsinki

In addition to developing tourism products with unique experience it is recommended to digitalise tourism services and develop possibility for mobile payment method; promote the Helsinki region in social media and especially in the most popular Chinese channel WeChat to improve awareness about the Helsinki region and its tourist opportunities among Chinese travellers; keep close cooperation and collaboration with the Chinese

tourism companies interviewed for this study, as they bring a big number of tourists to Europe.

Thus, the study has responded to the research questions with the aim of the thesis to provide recommendations to Helsinki Marketing on how to improve experience of Chinese travellers in the Helsinki region in the next 3-5 years. (See the presentation for Helsinki Marketing in Appendix 2.)

## **7.2. Evaluation of the thesis process**

The process of writing the thesis is quite unique because the practical part was done as the first phase of the project. The reason is the fact that there were two FAM trips to Finland organised for Chinese tourism companies at the end of March 2016. As Helsinki Marketing developed a program of their stay in Helsinki, it was a good opportunity to hold face-to-face interviews with some representatives of these Chinese companies and agree on further email interviews with other participants of the trips. That is why the project started with searching and analysing other researches about Chinese travellers in order to understand their behaviour and prepare for the interviews.

For the purpose of better understanding of Chinese tourism market and the behaviour of Chinese travellers, the author of the project completed "The Booming Market Asia" course at Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. It was accompanied by extensive discussions with one of their teachers about organising interviews with the representatives of Chinese tourism companies. While discussing the matter, the cultural features of Chinese business and the rules of negotiating with the representatives of Chinese companies were thoroughly considered. As a result, it was planned to hold eight interviews in order to provide sufficient valuable information for the study.

Another essential feature of the thesis is the fact that the results of the interviews had been analysed and forwarded to the commissioner in December 2016 prior to fulfilment of the thesis. This was motivated by the commissioner's high interest in the interviews with the representatives of Chinese companies and the demand to have more information regarding current tourism products and services offered in the Helsinki region by Chinese tourism companies. Additionally, possible interest of Chinese travellers in the region in the future seemed to be of great importance.

Recruiting respondents who could willingly participate in the interviews was a matter of great concern at the initial stages of the study. As the interviewer permanently lives in Fin-

land and does not speak the Chinese language and considering that in most cases Chinese people do not have a good command of English, it seemed to be challenging enough to find representatives of Chinese companies who could provide reliable material for the study. Recruiting respondents in China distantly for the interviewer residing in Finland did not seem to help resolve the difficulty. A positive outcome was found when Chinese tourism companies came to Finland on FAM trips. Eventually, when the author had a chance to meet the representatives of Chinese companies during their trips it became possible to offer them to participate in the interviews. Those selected for the interviews had a decent level of English and were capable to provide valuable and reliable information for the study.

Moreover, a wide variety of studies were examined and analysed in order to receive sufficient information on Chinese outbound tourism. A great number of researches founded within the framework of the thesis demonstrated a deep interest in Chinese outbound travel worldwide. The reports, which were made for the United Nations, UNWTO, Visit Finland, etc., provided a huge amount of valuable information for the study. Thus, gathering primary data as well as recruiting respondents and conducting interviews went successfully due to support of Helsinki Marketing and willingness of the respondents to share their information with the aim to develop tourism in Helsinki in general and cooperate with Helsinki Marketing in particular.

While writing the thesis, the author has acquired a deep knowledge of the Chinese outbound tourism, as well as the behaviour of Chinese travellers and the culture of Chinese business. The author has demonstrated a high interest in Chinese outbound tourism market and a willingness to understand behavior of Chinese travelers better due to the boosting number of Chinese travelers all over the world during previous several years. Thus, ability to understand motives and values of Chinese travelers has been important for the author in order to get knowledge about behavior of Chinese travelers and develop the author's professional competence in tourism industry.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Interview guide

1. Tell about your company: what are the main outbound destinations of the company?
2. What is the approximate number of the company tourists per year?
3. What is the approximate number of the company tourists to Helsinki per year?
4. Do you use European (Scandinavian/Finnish) DMC (domestic management companies) for the land arrangements in Finland, and which one?
5. What kind of tours to Finland does your company offer?
6. What kind of tours to the Helsinki region does your company sell?
7. What kind of tourism products and services in the Helsinki region does your company offer for Chinese tourists? What is included to the program in Helsinki?
8. How would you describe your customers who travel to Helsinki? (Their age, gender, income, whom are they travelling with?)
9. Where do Chinese travellers search for information about the destination and from where they buy their trips?
10. What are the motives of travelling of Chinese tourists to the Helsinki region? Why do they choose to travel exactly to Helsinki?
11. How many days do the company tourists stay in Helsinki?
12. Describe Helsinki as a tourism destination for Chinese tourists. What image of Helsinki do Chinese tourists have?
13. What tourism products and activities in the Helsinki region are the most popular among Chinese tourists?
14. Is there a demand among Chinese tourists for any kind of tourism products or activities that are not represented in the Helsinki region currently?
15. Could you describe trends or tendencies in Chinese travelling?
16. How these trends could influence Chinese travelling to Helsinki. Will they lead to any changes in demand for tourism products in the Helsinki region? What changes?

17. What tourism products and services in Helsinki might become more interesting and popular for Chinese travellers in the future (in 3-5 years)?
18. What tourism products and services in the Helsinki region should be developed (in 3-5 years)? How?
19. What is the best way of promoting the Helsinki region for Chinese travellers (in 3-5 years)?

**Thank you!**

# Helsinki as a tourist destination for Chinese travellers

Eliza Karvonen

## CONTENTS

• Introduction	3
• Chinese companies	4
• Tourism products and services offered by Chinese tourism companies in Helsinki region	6
• Trends in Chinese Travelling and Development Possibilities for Helsinki Region	12
• Promoting Helsinki region in China	17
• Results of the study	21
• Recommendations	22

## Introduction

- The aim of the study is to find out tourism products and services of Helsinki region currently offered by Chinese tourism companies and possible interest of Chinese travellers to Helsinki region as a tourist destination in the near 3-5 years.
- For this purpose 8 interviews were conducted with the representatives of Chinese tour operators offering trips to Finland and considering as important companies for cooperation by Visit Helsinki.
- Respondents represent different regions of China: 4 work in Beijing and others in Hangzhou, Jiangsu, Guangzhou and Shanghai. 3 interviews were done face-to-face with the respondents in Helsinki during their FAM trips to Finland in March 2017 and 5 interviews were conducted by e-mail in March-April 2017 in the English language.
- The study was done for Visit Helsinki. The results of the survey will be helpful for promoting Helsinki region as a tourist destination for Chinese travellers.

**Table 1. Chinese Companies**

No	Company name	Location	Short description of the company	Number of tourists to Finland and Helsinki in 2016	Tours to Finland	DMC
1.	Altrip, Alibaba Group	Hangzhou	One of the major OTAs in China, a part of Alibaba group	To Finland: from the whole platform is 5000 pax, from Altrip own project - 2000 pax.	Altrip own tours to Finland include 4 nights in Rovaniemi and 1 night in Helsinki	
2.	AtYou	Beijing	About 100000 outbound tourists per year	About 1000 people to Helsinki	FIT and group tourism	Nordic Info Service
3.	Beijing Leadtime Int'l Travel Service Co., Ltd	Beijing	European product wholesaler: about 10000 tourists per year. European countries are the main destinations.	About 550 tourists to Finland: June-October - 500 people. Winter season: 25-50 people in January	Mainly sightseeing: Helsinki, Rovaniemi and Kemi. Group tours of high quality, with 4 star hotels, 4 countries for 9 days (7 nights)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Miki travel,</li> <li>• Turilane,</li> <li>• Unisour</li> </ul> Mainly Turilane
4.	China Bamboo Garden International Travel Service CO., LTD, Beijing branch	Beijing	The total number of tourists is hundreds of thousands of people, for Europe about 80000 people per year	5000-6000 tourists to Helsinki	Group tours	Turilane

## Table 1. Chinese Companies

No	Company name	Location	Short description of the company	Number of tourists to Finland and Helsinki in 2016	Tours to Finland	DMC
5.	China Bamboo Garden International Travel service CO., LTD, Shanghai branch	Shanghai	30000 tourists to European countries per year by Shanghai branch alone	3000 tourists to Helsinki	High-end product which only involves Finland in winter; Four Nordic Countries products, sometimes with Iceland	The company usually uses Chinese local agency but it can use Finnish DMC if they have special offers.
6.	GZL International Travelservice LTD	Guangzhou	The biggest travel agency in Southern China. The company sent 50000 people to Europe in 2016	10000-12500 to Finland, Best sells is during winter time	Scandinavian countries incl. Helsinki, sometimes direct flight to Rovaniemi, sometimes to Ivalo or Kemi, 90% group tours, 10% FITs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tunlure</li> <li>• GFA</li> <li>• Miki travel</li> </ul>
7.	Hill travel	Beijing	The company is the high-end brand of Ctrip, which is the largest OTA in China	About 80 pax to Helsinki (FIT)	In summer: Scandinavian products incl. Helsinki; in winter: Santa Claus product during the Christmas and northern lights products	Arctic China if guests only stay at Finland and NTA if guests go to other Scandinavian countries incl. Finland.
8.	Tunlu	Jiangsu	6.7 million trips in 2016. One of the most famous OTAs in China with a high market share in Europe destination	FIT European department was founded just 3 years ago. 120 FIT guests to Finland per year; more than 50% increase in 2016	Group tours and FIT	The company uses many DMC such as Nordic information. Some of them are Finnish companies.

## Tourism products and services offered by Chinese tourism companies in Helsinki region

- The study demonstrates the tourism products and services offered by Chinese tourism companies in Helsinki region.
- It describes companies customers considering their age, gender and income, shows their motives of travelling to Helsinki and image of Helsinki they have in their minds.
- The study also illustrates what tourism products and services of Helsinki region are popular currently among Chinese travellers.

## Table 2. Tourism products and services offered by Chinese tourism companies in Helsinki region

No	Company name	Image of Helsinki that Chinese tourists have	Motives of travelling of Chinese tourists to Helsinki region	Customers who travel to Helsinki	Tourism products and services offered in Helsinki and length of stay in Helsinki	The most popular tourism products and activities
1.	Altrip, Alibaba Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The capital of Finland</li> <li>The image of Finland in summertime is still unknown for Chinese people</li> </ul>	It's a package (4 nights in Lapland and 1 night in Helsinki), so people must stop here before the flight.	Most of the target audience are young people (born after 1985-1990), with more money or willingness to spend them on travelling	Program in Helsinki includes accommodation in hotel, City tour and time for shopping. 1 night in Helsinki	Shopping of famous international luxury brands
2.	AdYou	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The capital of Finland</li> <li>city convenient for travelling to the rest of Europe</li> <li>famous for design</li> </ul>	<p>70% tourists for sightseeing.</p> <p>30% tourists just for transit</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FIT: 20-35 years old, couples and friends, 60% male and 40% female, annual income 100000-300000RMB,</li> <li>GROUP: 35-60 years old, family and friends, 40% male and 60% female, income 200000-400000RMB per year</li> </ul>	Mainly City tour products and transportation service. 1-3 days in Helsinki	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City tour</li> <li>sauna</li> <li>shopping</li> </ul>
3.	Beijing Leadtime Int'l Travel Service Co., Ltd	The capital of Finland	It is a must destination for group tourists who come to 4 countries: Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Norway for 9-10 days.	Around 35-60 years, mostly women	Sightseeing tour in Helsinki. City tour, Cathedral, White church, Sibelius park, and Silja cruise to Stockholm. 1-2 nights in Helsinki.	City tour

## Table 2. Tourism products and services offered by Chinese tourism companies in Helsinki region

No	Company name	Image of Helsinki that Chinese tourists have	Motives of travelling of Chinese tourists to Helsinki region	Customers who travel to Helsinki	Tourism products and services offered in Helsinki and length of stay in Helsinki	The most popular tourism products and activities
4.	China Bamboo Garden International Travelservice CO., LTD, Beijing branch	The capital of Finland	As it is the capital of Finland, many people regard it as one of the Nordic tourism destinations. In addition, because of the reasons for Finnair and cruise port (Silja, Viking), many people and tour groups go to Helsinki for transit, may be in Helsinki for city tours.	<p>Elderly people over 55 years old they travel to Nordic countries with better savings, in couples (about 45% men and 55% women).</p> <p>Middle-aged about 45 years old, the majority of men with annual income of about 500,000RMB or more, they travel with their families (parents, lovers, children).</p>	<p>Group tours, packaged products including coach, accommodation, driver and guide service.</p> <p>1, 5-3 days in Helsinki</p> <p>Usually the company just has a city tour in Helsinki.</p>	City tour
5.	China Bamboo Garden International Travelservice CO., LTD, Shanghai branch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sea</li> <li>design</li> <li>islands</li> <li>markets</li> </ul>	A transfer point or as a harbour city	Mid-aged people, mostly with certain accumulation; they travel with friends or spouse	City sightseeing and shopping. 1-2 days in Helsinki	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seaside time,</li> <li>local markets,</li> <li>purchasing some Nordic design items</li> </ul>

**Table 2. Tourism products and services offered by Chinese tourism companies in Helsinki region**

No.	Company name	Image of Helsinki that Chinese tourists have	Motives of travelling of Chinese tourists to Helsinki region	Customers who travel to Helsinki	Tourism products and services offered in Helsinki and length of stay in Helsinki	The most popular tourism products and activities
6.	GZL International Travelservice LTD	Helsinki is not so typical idea for tourists, sometimes they know only about the white church and the rock church and sauna.	Helsinki is a part of the program where tourists go to the North or other Scandinavian countries and use Finland so they must stop in Helsinki and spend at least a half of a day there	Middle age tourists of 35-50 years old. Northern Europe plus Russia group tours are for men of 50 -70 years old. 90% of group tours and 10% of FITs. Sometimes business trips for big companies bases.	Hotel booking, City tour, Suomenlinna. Tourists stay in Helsinki for 3-6 hours or for one night, after that they go to the North part or to the Scandinavian countries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>White church and Rock church;</li> <li>City tour;</li> <li>Suomenlinna</li> </ul>
7.	HHI travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The capital of Finland</li> <li>clean air and beautiful lakes</li> <li>sauna</li> <li>good place for shopping</li> </ul>	Usually tourists choose Italy or France when they want to Europe first time, then they choose Scandinavia. They go to Helsinki and other countries because they want to visit more countries.	FITs Most of our guests are CEO or private owners of 36-40 years old who travel with their family. The couple or family tours.	City tour and Naakko national park tour 1,5-3 days in Helsinki	City tour and sauna
8.	Tuniu	The capital of Finland, a big city	Their main purpose of visiting Helsinki is to get to Rovaniemi, Ivalo or other Nordic cities	Couples or lovers with average age of 25-35 years old (FIT). Their income is not very high but it is growing and becoming stable.	City tour 1-3 nights in Helsinki	City tour and shopping

### Summary of tourism products and services offered by Chinese tourism companies in Helsinki region

- The study shows that mostly Chinese travellers have image of Helsinki as the capital of Finland.
- For most of the Chinese travellers Helsinki is a part of their program of visiting Nordic countries, North of Finland or Russia. The length of their stay in Helsinki varies from 3-4 hours up to 3 days.
- City tour is the most popular tourism product for Chinese travellers in Helsinki region, followed by sauna and shopping. White and Rock churches, Suomenlinna, local markets and Sibelius park were also called popular by some respondents.
- Interviewed companies have customers of different ages: young people (Alitrip and Tuniu), middle-aged tourists (Shanghai branch of China Bamboo Garden International Travel Service and HH Travel) and different age groups (other companies). Thus, the study shows what kind of tours are offered by Chinese tour operators for tourists of all age groups.



## Trends in Chinese Travelling and Development Possibilities for Helsinki Region

- In the frame of the project we investigated main trends and tendencies in Chinese travelling and their possible influence on interest of Chinese travellers in tourism products and services in Helsinki region.
- The study demonstrates which tourism products might become more interesting for Chinese tourists in the near 3-5 years and what is to be developed in Helsinki region in order to attract more Chinese travellers in the future.

**Table 3. Trends in Chinese Travelling and Development Possibilities for Helsinki Region**

Nr	Company name	Trends or tendencies in Chinese travelling	How these trends could influence Chinese travelling to Helsinki	Tourism products and services in Helsinki that might become more interesting for Chinese travellers (in 3-5 years)	Tourism products and services and other issues in Helsinki region that should be developed (in 3-5 years)
1.	Altrip, Alibaba Group	1. FIT is a big trend 1. Mobile payment method is growing a lot in China	FITs need to be more free in travelling and be able to buy tourism products and services by themselves. Alibaba is quite a good example of mobile payment. It implemented it in Finland – apass	Shopping will be in an interest in the future (3-5 years) too	Digitalization of all services (and selling of entrance tickets) for tour operators and FITs, mobile payment method. Unique tourism products with quality services. Better choice of the shops (luxury brands). Improving Finnish capacities in the summer
2.	Adyou	1. FIT as a trend. 2. Learning travel information from network 3. Tourists will expect to have deep experience in tourism	1-3 days tourism package will become more popular FITs need more clear information about transportation	Some theme activities will be more popular, such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tour for learning design or</li> <li>• tour for sauna or</li> <li>• tour for learning cooking</li> </ul>	Theme activities, some package products, such as Helsinki and Tallinn. Information about how to go to other cities from Helsinki should be more clear to attract more people to stay in Helsinki
3.	Beijing Leadtime Int'l Travel Service Co., Ltd	1. FIT. More and more FITs. 2. More clients realize that they should pay more attention to details, enjoy more activities	Tourists could spend more time in Finland. Two countries together will be more popular: Finland and Sweden or just Finland for 8 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience of the local people life.</li> <li>• Creative design shops could be more interesting</li> </ul>	The convenience of transportation to some shops and supermarkets in order to rich them easier

### Table 3. Trends in Chinese Travelling and Development Possibilities for Helsinki Region

No	Company name	Trends or tendencies in Chinese travelling	How these trends could influence Chinese travelling to Helsinki	Tourism products and services in Helsinki that might become more interesting for Chinese travellers (in 3-5 years)	Tourism products and services and other issues in Helsinki region that should be developed (in 3-5 years)
4.	China Bamboo Garden International Travel service CO., LTD, Beijing branch	FIT More and more FITs. They buy tickets and book hotels by themselves	Tourists may want to get a deeper experience, not just a simple city tour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>travelling by car or</li> <li>a gourmet tour about the Nordic cuisine or</li> <li>sailing and fishing in the sea</li> </ul>	Some deeper experience items or more newfangled items packaged into the tourism products, such as learning how to cook Finnish cuisine, sailing and fishing etc. for group tours of the company
5.	China Bamboo Garden International Travel service CO., LTD, Shanghai branch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arts</li> <li>shopping</li> <li>gourmet</li> <li>nature and interactive activities</li> </ul>	City sightseeing is a must, but something new should be added	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capital of Gourmet</li> <li>friendly shopping environment</li> <li>various market culture</li> <li>excursion about art and design or nature</li> <li>a vivid choice of island safaris</li> </ul>	There should be offered new products or services (in addition to city sightseeing)

### Table 3. Trends in Chinese travelling and Development Possibilities for Helsinki Region

No	Company name	Trends or tendencies in Chinese travelling	How these trends could influence Chinese travelling to Helsinki	Tourism products and services in Helsinki that might become more interesting for Chinese travellers (in 3-5 years)	Tourism products and services and other issues in Helsinki region that should be developed (in 3-5 years)
6.	GZL International Travelservice LTD	FIT More and more young people ask the company to book the hotels  Activities in Northern Europe are becoming more popular as these countries are clear and healthy	More and more Chinese people go to the country side to have more time with their families. Finland is very good for families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New company programs might be: one night in Helsinki and travelling to Lake region</li> <li>a night in a farm house near Helsinki as a local people: to feed animals, see how Finns live, have an experience with local people</li> </ul>	Doing more activities during visiting restaurants at small islands near Helsinki
7.	HIT Travel	More and more tourists want to have in-depth tour. They can stay only at one country for several days	Chinese will choose the destination more and more meticulously. If Helsinki can provide the unique resources it will influence Chinese travelling to Helsinki	More and more Chinese want to have an unique experience during the travelling.	Hope to have more unique resources or have a unique experience in Helsinki
8.	Tunlu	There is a clear trend of growth Europe FIT in the company	If Helsinki can provide more distinctive city tour (Chinese service is very important) and lead-in more luxury brands, Helsinki will become more attractive for Chinese tourists	Luxury brands shopping in Helsinki	More luxury shops in Helsinki, especially brands that are familiar for Chinese: Chanel, Prada etc. More routes between China and Helsinki can attract more tourists

## Summary of Trends in Chinese travelling and Development Possibilities for Helsinki

The survey shows that there are several trends and tendencies in Chinese travelling that could affect the demand of Chinese tourists for tourism products and services in Helsinki region in the nearest 3-5 years:

- 1. FIT.** 6 from 8 respondents informed that FIT is becoming a big trend and that is why more and more Chinese travellers will choose FIT instead of group tourism in the future. That is why all services must be digitalized that FIT Chinese travellers could buy tickets, for example, for Sky Wheel, on-line by themselves.
- 2. Unique experience.** More and more Chinese tourists seek unique experience while travelling. They would like to get deeper experience, not just a simple City tour in Helsinki. That is why some theme activities could become more popular, for example experience of the local people life in a farm near Helsinki, a tour for learning design, a gourmet tour about Nordic cuisine or learning cooking, sauna tour, etc.

## Summary of Trends in Chinese travelling and Development Possibilities for Helsinki

**3. Longer stay in one country.** In the future Chinese travellers will choose the destination more and more meticulously and they can stay at only one country for several days. More and more travellers realize that they should pay more attention to details and enjoy more activities during their trips. It means that tourists could spend more time in Finland and do more different activities while their trips abroad.

**4. Mobile payment method.** According to the Marketing Manager of Alitrip, another important thing is a payment method because it is growing a lot, especially in China. It means that Chinese travellers would like to have a possibility to use this mobile payment method during their trips abroad, including Helsinki.

## Promoting Helsinki Region in China

- The study revealed how and where customers of Chinese tour operators search information and get ideas about travelling abroad.
- In addition, the representatives of Chinese companies made some suggestions regarding possible ways of promoting Helsinki region in China.

**Table 4. Promoting Helsinki region in China**

No	Company name	Where people search information	Ways to promote Helsinki	Demand for any new products
1.	Altrip, Alibaba Group	Most of the purchasing are made from mobile app, not from website	Good way of promotion is TIGG platform. It would be useful for Finnish brands to cooperate with Ali platform in order to promote its products and services for Chinese travellers and become familiar for them.	-
2.	AdYou	ITE: mainly from network Group: mainly from travel agency	By network. Promote Helsinki as a portal to the rest of Europe to attract more people to stay here. Promote Helsinki together with other cities especially with northern Finland.	No
3.	Beijing Leadtime Int'l Travel Service Co., Ltd	Tourists search for some information in Internet and Wechat (SoMe) and for some package products they ask travel agencies. Mainly they buy tours in travel agencies.	-	No
4.	China Bamboo Garden International Travel Service CO., LTD, Beijing branch	Travel service, online travel agent and travel information website.	Sina Weibo (like twitter but more than it) and WeChat. Internet and mobile internet are definitely a very useful way.	The respondent is not sure

### Table 4. Promoting Helsinki region in China

No	Company name	Where people search information	Ways to promote Helsinki	Demand for any new products
5.	China Bamboo Garden International Travelservice CO., LTD, Shanghai branch	Both ways online and offline	Celebrity effect, promotional video etc.	The company is considering the Naakso National Park nearby
6.	GZL International Travelservice LTD	More and more people get more information and ideas in Wechat	WeChat. It gives more idea and information for people, so they can see that's great! Sometimes Chinese people have no idea where to go but they can see some photos and get idea about place to go.	-
7.	HH travel	The company customers buy their trips from the company website or application.	Helsinki region could be promoted through advertisement or have a topic products of Helsinki, it can make the strengthen the impression for Chinese.	There is no extra demand until now.
8.	Tunku, Jangsu	There are many ways to search information and book tourism product. However, the most popular way is Internet.	-	-

## Summary of Promoting Helsinki Region in China

- Customers of the interviewed Chinese tour operators usually search information in both ways: on-line in Internet, tour operators websites, travel information websites, WeChat, and offline in travel agencies or through network. Moreover, young people, who are main customers of Alitrip, make most of the purchases from mobile application, not from website. Clients of HH Travel also buy the trips from its website as well as from mobile application.
- Many respondents recommended promotion of Helsinki region in Social Media and WeChat particularly because it is very popular in China and more and more people get information and ideas about travelling and places to go from posts here. For example, if Chinese people like photos of their friends made during the trips abroad, they could choose the same country or place to visit for their next trip.
- In addition, the respondents recommended the following ways of promoting Helsinki region: Sina Weibo, promotional video, advertisements, celebrity effect. The representative of AoYou offered to promote Helsinki as a portal to the rest of Europe to attract more people to stay here and promote Helsinki together with other cities especially with northern Finland. The representative of Alitrip suggested promoting Finnish design brands in TIBO platform.

## Results of the Study

- The study demonstrates that currently Chinese travellers know Helsinki mainly as a capital of Finland and they visit Helsinki for 0.5-3 days in the frame of their program to the North of Finland or other Scandinavian countries and Russia.
- At the moment City tour, shopping and sauna are of the most interest for Chinese travellers in Helsinki region and there is no demand for new tourism products or services in Helsinki region currently.
- In order to attract more Chinese travellers in the future Helsinki region should take into consideration the trends and tendencies in Chinese travelling that could influence demand of tourism products and services in Helsinki region, such as FIT, willingness of Chinese travellers to spend more time in one country and have deeper and unique tourism experience, mobile payment method, and develop its tourism products and services to satisfy these needs successfully.

## Recommendations

All things considered there might be offered the following recommendations:

- Developing tourism products and offering deeper and unique tourism experience, such as life as local people on the farm, gourmet tour about Nordic cuisine, more activities on the islands while visiting restaurants there, etc.
- Digitalization of tourism services and possibility for mobile method payment
- Cooperation with interviewed companies due to their big amount of tourists to Europe
- Promoting Helsinki region in Social Media and in WeChat particularly