Destination Attractiveness and Travel Intention: The Case of Chinese and Indian Students in Queensland, Australia

Abstract

Destination attractiveness is an important stream of literature. Australia has been recognized as one of the world's most attractive destinations. This study looked into international students' perceptions of Australia as an attractive international tourism destination as well as their travel intention. A sample of 252 Chinese and Indian international students participated in the study. Students' perceived destination attractiveness and how it influenced their travel intention, pleasure of travel and place attachment were investigated. The study also looked into perception differences between Chinese and Indian students using t-test and hierarchical regressions.

Keywords: Destination Attractiveness, International Students, Moderating Effects, Australia

1. Introduction

Australia has been regarded as one of the world's best holiday destinations (Browning, 2015). Its beautiful beaches, unique and lovely animals, leisure and entertainment attractions, friendly people and relaxing lifestyle made it one of the top 10 most tourists-friendly countries (World Economic Forum, 2017). Australian cities, such as Sydney and Perth are often named best places to travel (Touropia, 2017). According to the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report (Crotti & Misrahi, 2017), Australia ranked the 7th most competitive travel and tourism destination in the world in 2017. It was reported that the number of international visitors to Australia at the end of August in 2015 was 7.18 million, by increasing 6.5% compared with the previous year (Tourism Australia, 2015a). China has been ranked as the second largest

inbound tourism market for Australia, and the top for total visitor spending as well as visitor nights (Tourism Australia, 2015b). India is also a key source market for Australia and one of the fastest developing outbound tourist markets in the world (Tourism Australia, 2015c).

Australia has high quality tertiary education institutions. As a leading exporter of higher education services, Australia has attracted a growing number of international students during the last several years, particularly from China and India (Australian Trade Commission, 2015). As reported by the Department of Education and Training (2015), there were 615,061 international students enrolled in Australia in October, 2015. The impressive size of the education market, as well as its elasticity and prosperity, represents a remarkable underlying opportunities and challenges for the tourism industry in Australia. Researchers have recognized students as a significant component of the tourist market because of their flexibility in time and increased disposable income (Bai, Hu et al. 2004). International students from China and India in particular represent a vast source of present and future markets for the Australia's tourist industry. Therefore, it is critically important to look at international students' image of Australia as a tourism destination. Although Australia has been recognized as an attractive destination to travel, there are relatively few studies looking into Australia's attractiveness as a destination, and how it could impact international tourists' perceptions, attitude and behaviors. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to explore international students' (from China and India) perception of Australia as an attractive tourist destination and how that influences their travel attitude and intention.

1.1 International Students Growth in Australia

Australia is one of the top study abroad destinations for international students, with highly rated institutions, multicultural communities, political stability and relaxing lifestyles. By the end of

2015, enrollment of international students in Australia has grown by 10% since 2014, with 645,185 international students studying on a student visa (Australian Government, Department of Education and Training, 2015a). Figure 1 presents the top 10 nationalities of international students for December 2015. The major source of international students studying in Australia in 2015 was Asia, which accounted for 60.2% of all international students. The top places of origin were China and India. Chinese students (170,212) comprised 26% of all international students in Australia, followed by Indian students (72,504) with 11%.

The internationalization of Australia's education system has evolved remarkably over the past 60 years. In the early 1950s, overseas students set foot in Australia with the support of Colombo Plan, which intended to promote social and economic development of member countries in the Asia and the Pacific. Since 1986, Australian universities have been allowed to accept self-funded international students, leading to significant growth in the number of international students (Moodie, 2011).

Figure 2 summarizes international student enrollment in Australia from 2002 to 2015. As indicated in Table 2, from 2002 to 2009 the number of international students went up from 274,463 to 631,394, showing a strong growth trend. Nevertheless, the number of international students started to decline in 2010, partially due to the strong Australian dollar. This decrease also coincides with the notorious violent attacks against Indian students in Melbourne and Sydney in 2009. In 2012, the international education market started to recover. International student enrollment began to go up and the highest number yet (645,185) was recorded in 2015. Table 2 demonstrates the fluctuating numbers of Chinese and Indian students (Project Atlas, 2015). The trend of the Indian students followed a similar pattern with the change of international students, while the number of Chinese students increased steadily from 2002 and reached the highest point at 170,212 in 2015. The growth trend of international student

enrollment is expected to continue. As stated in the Deloitte Access Economics report, Australia's onshore enrollment will grow by 45% at the end of 2025, presenting significant opportunities in various areas (Deloitte Access Economics report, 2015).

Please Insert Figure 2 Here

1.2 International Students Travel Market

The prosperous international education market made a significant contribution to Australia's economic vitality and long-term growth. Being the third largest export sector, the sector generates an income of over \$19.5 billion and supports more than 130,000 jobs (Minister for Tourism and International Education, Minister Assisting the Minister for Trade and Investment, 2016). The economic benefit generated by international students is not only limited to the education sector, but also constitutes a considerable portion of income in the travel industry. Since students have the opportunity to travel during school recesses, it is hoped they will be significant contributors to the Australian tourism market. The overall tourism income generated by international students reached \$300 million each year, boosting the tourism industry by 13% in 2015 (Koprowski, 2016).

As mentioned above, a large amount of the international students come from Asian countries, particularly from China and India (Australian Trade Commission, 2015). As of 2015, GDP in China and India reached 11064.66 and 2088.80 USD Billion respectively (GDP by country, 2015). In addition, China has been the largest outbound tourism market in the world for four successive years, and total expenditures by Chinese travelers abroad amounted to \$109.8 billion in 2016 (World Travel Online, 2017). Meanwhile, with a large young population, Indian outbound tourism has showed significant growth in the last five years, with 18 million outbound tourists in 2014, and is likely to become the second biggest spender in the

world (Bangalore, 2015). The breakneck economic growth in China and India has led to huge purchasing power and the desire to see the world, especially for the younger generation.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Chinese and Indian International Students' Travel Preferences

International students in general have a great tendency to travel while studying abroad in order to better understand the local culture and people. Payne (2010) found that the reasons that international students travel fall into one of the five categories: (1) Need for relaxation and to escape from daily life; (2) Celebrating end of exams and taking a break from study; (3) Travelling with and visiting friends and family; (4) Gaining more knowledge and (5) Looking for new career and study opportunities. Relevant literature highlights that Chinese and Indian students have become important participants in the Australian tourism industry (Wang & Davidson, 2008; King & Gardiner, 2013; Gardiner et al., 2013). There are some differences as well as similarities between Chinese and Indian students. Both Chinese and Indian students are constrained by travel mechanisms (e.g., lack of travel packages and discounts) (Xu et al. 2009; Gardiner et al., 2013), and prefer to travel with their friends on day excursions or short breaks of one to three nights (Shi et al., 2010; King & Gardiner 2013; Gardiner et al., 2013). It is also noteworthy that students are highly budget conscious. Compared with young Western travelers, both Chinese and Indian students from emerging markets preferred hotels or apartments, rather than cheaper backpacker hostels (Gardiner et al., 2013).

However, due to different cultures and backgrounds, Chinese and Indian travelers have different travel behaviors. Cities with long histories, cultural and architectural characteristics are most attractive to Chinese travelers who mainly favored package tours for the convenience, budget and safety (World Tourism Cities Federation, 2014). However, the

individual and customized tours, which provide a high quality tourism product, are growing fast and will be an irresistible trend in near future (World Travel Online, 2017). Loras (2012) also found that Chinese tourists were very interested in commercial tourist attraction (e.g., Sydney Opera House) and they also greatly like to involve in shopping. This may be due to the significant differences of the culture, history tradition and tax policy between China and Australia (Wang, 2011). It was reported that Chinese outbound tourists are quite liberal, spending about 3000 US dollars per capita overall in 2014, while the average amount spent per trip per Indian ranges between 800 to 1000 US dollars. (World Tourism Cities Federation, 2014). Ryan and Mo (2001) also demonstrates that quality of the tourist destinations and the satisfaction of the experience can also influence Chinese tourist's travel motivation.

On the other hand, Gautam (2012) revealed that security and value for money were the top two important attributes for Indian consumer to consider the tourism product. Similarly, economic effects were found as significant factors influencing Indian tourists travelling behaviors. These economic related attributes include the affordability of travel and stay, time and money resources available and direct accessibility. It seems clear that travel-related aspects were more important factors than destination related aspects for Indian tourists. That is, the effect of leisure value of the destination on the perceptions of Indian tourists is substantial and it also causes their tourist behavioral changes (Madhavan & Rastogi, 2013). In addition, Indian travelers are eager to engage with the world, and motivated to travel to broaden knowledge. First-time Indian outbound travelers prefer package tours, while repeat travelers are likely to take independently organized trips and demand a high quality travel experience (Bangalore, 2015).

In line with the idea of travel behaviors differing between Chinese and Indian, the study

tourists' travel patterns are similar to other Chinese and Indian travelers and relatively limited geographically (Keating & Godfre, 2013). In terms of transport, for instance, Indian students favored cars as their preferred transport, while Chinese students chose to travel by plane or trains (Gardiner et al., 2013). Coming from a collective culture, and mainly funded by their families, Chinese students gave great importance to visiting famous sights and gaining cultural education during travelling (Xu et al. 2009). King and Gardiner (2013) found Chinese students also exhibit mainstream travel patterns by travelling with their friends and preferring sightseeing, natural attractions and shopping. Hughes et al. (2015) noted that cost, distances and lack of time have significant influence on Chinese students' purchase intention, and internet or word-of-mouth advertising is important for them to form a perception of destination. Chinese students were found to have a negative perception of the personal safety, transportation convenience and shopping opportunities in Australia (Son & Pearce, 2005). By contrast to Chinese students' perception that Australia is "uninspiring," Indian students are more interested in travelling within Australia (Gardiner et al., 2013). According to a survey in a university in the U.S., however, Indian students had the lowest participation rate for traveling over the breaks compared with students from Australia and New Zealand (Field. 1999). In addition, Indian students were found to enjoy shopping and water-based activities in New Zealand, and prefer to stay with family and friends (Payne, 2010).

Given the economic impact of the international education market, it is absolutely imperative to investigate the relationship of perceived destination attractiveness and purchase intention of Chinese and Indian international students in Australia.

2.2 Destination Attractiveness and Impact on Travelers' Perceptions and Decisions

Destination attractiveness has become an important stream of tourism literature (e.g. Ahmed,

1991; Pearce, 1997) and attracts much attention from both tourism researchers and destination policy makers. Destination attractiveness is important because it is the “pull factors” that lead to tourists’ selection of one destination over another (Lee et al., 2009). In today’s world travel industry, tourists are living in an era of overflow of information. How to position and promote a destination that attracts potential tourists’ attention and motivate them to visit determines the success and market share of a destination in the world’ travel map. According to Hu and Richie (1993), destination attractiveness is a perception of the combined relative importance of benefits to individuals and the destination’s ability to delivering these benefits. The definition implies that the more a destination can satisfy a tourist’s needs, the more attractive that the destination will be. The definition of destination attractiveness indicates it is a multi-dimensional construct while its dimensions varies across studies performed in different contexts (e.g. Gearing et al., 1974; Hu and Ritchie, 1993; Lee et al., 2009). One of the most widely accepted dimension structural was proposed by Gearing et al. (1974), which had five dimensions of destination attractiveness, including: historical factors, social factors, natural factors, shopping and recreation facilities, and food, shelter and infrastructure (Kozak & Rimmington, 1999; Khuong & Ha, 2014). Although all dimensions need to have certain degrees of presence, the importance of each dimension differs from one destination to another. Hu and Ritchie (1993) made an attempt to evaluate the importance of destination attractiveness attributes using a number of top international destinations world widely and concluded that scenery, climate, availability, quality of accommodation, local people’s unique way of life, historical attractions and local people’s attitudes toward tourists were most important in affecting people’s perceived destination attractiveness.

Based on information from various sources, travelers generally form a perception about the destination before actually visiting. The media image of the destination, along with

the highly exaggerated promotions, influences the perception of the individuals (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999) and influences their perceived attractiveness of the destination. Previous experiences with the destination also influences travelers' perception of destination image and attractiveness (Jennings & Nickerson, 2006). Inkson and Minnaert (2012) suggested that during travelling, individuals would compare pre-trip perceptions and during-trip perceptions to form an overall positive or negative perception of the destination (Oliver, 1997).

Researchers also suggested that cultural background may also influence the perceived destination attractiveness of travelers. For example, Chinese students seemed to be more attracted by the natural and cultural environment of a destination than compared to other groups of travelers (Xu et al., 2009).

As today's tourists are more experienced in travel, their perceived destination attractiveness will play an important role in their perceived place attachment, purchase decision and post-purchase behaviors (Kozak&Rimmington, 1999). Kaltenborn and Williams (2002) suggested that tourists can develop affective bonds with places from the meaning and value they developed with the destination, and develop a sense of place attachment. Place attachment plays an important role in tourists' destination loyalty development. We propose it is more likely for international students to develop a sense of place attachment as compared to international tourists, because students stay longer and interact with the local community more often and more in depth. According to a report of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016), the average length of stay for international tourists in Australia is around 14.5 days. In contrast, the duration of international students study in Australia ranges from a few months to a few years, which is much longer than international tourists. This makes it easier for international students to develop a sense of place attachment (Trauer and Ryan, 2005) because of the experiences and interactions with the people and places in Australia.

In a recent study, Codignola and Mariani (2017) found that an appealing tourist destination can enforce the visitor's overall satisfaction, and that the visitor's demographic background, such as education level and age may influence the relationship. Kruger, Saayman and Ellis (2013) found that the attractiveness of events at a destination can help enhance visitors' satisfaction with life and happiness. Hsiao, Ma and Gao (2016) found that destinations' competitive advantage and convenience significantly influence student visitors' interest to purchase. In a study on Chinese event attendees, Zhang, Qu and Ma (2010) found that destinations' accommodations, food, attractions and facilities can significantly influence event attendees' overall expenditure. Above reviews show that destination attractiveness plays an important part in tourists' satisfaction and loyalty, and understanding tourists' perception of the attractiveness of a destination has important implications to the long-term development of the tourism industry.

3. Research Method

3.1 Instrument and Data Collection

The study used a quantitative research design. A questionnaire was developed based on previously established measurement scales to collect data, which contains two parts. Part one measures participants' perception of the attractiveness of Australia as a whole travel destination, using 22 statements adapted from Kozak and Rimmington (1999). Part two measures participants' attitude toward the destination in terms of interest, pleasure in travel and place attachment, as well as the demographic information of participants.

Since the study also aim to compare if perception differences exist between Chinese and Indian international students, we also included Culture as a variable, which was measured by the nationality of participating students. Using nationality/country of origin as a

measure has been well documented in national culture studies (e.g. Hofstede, 1991; Ma et al., 2011). Given this, a purposive non-probability sampling method was used for the study. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed to Master level Chinese and Indian international students at four major universities in Queensland, Australia. 252 completed questionnaires were returned and used for data analysis, representing a valid response rate of 63%.

3.2 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS 22. In order to have a better understanding of the profile of respondents, descriptive statistics, such as frequency, means, standard deviation and independent sample t-test were performed. In order to identify the underlying dimensions of destination attractiveness, principal component analysis was performed on the data. A number of multiple regressions were performed to assess destination attractiveness factors' impact on international students' attitude toward Australia as a destination and travel intention.

In order to assess if culture (Chinese and Indian) moderates the proposed relationships. Hierarchical regressions were performed using a four-step procedure described by Ma et al. (2011). In step 1, centered scores of five dependent variables (destination attractiveness factors) and a dummy variable (culture, with Chinese=0, Indian=1) were created. Step 2 the cross-products using each of the centered five factors and the dummy variable, Culture, were created. Step 3 three hierarchical regressions were performed. The first hierarchical regression used Interest to Purchase as the dependent variable, the five destination attractiveness factors, culture and cross-products as dependent variables. Independent variables were entered in sequence. Specifically, centered factor scores and culture were entered in the first block; the cross-product of centered factor scores and Culture

were entered in the second block. The 2nd hierarchical regression used Pleasure to Purchase as the dependent variable and the their hierarchical regression used Place Attachment as the dependent variable, all intendent variables and the sequence of enter stayed the same for three hierarchical regressions. Details of these analyses and explanations are summarized in the result part.

4. Results

4.1 Demographic Profile

Table 1 shows that almost equivalent numbers of Chinese and Indian students participated in the study, with 128 (50.8%) students from China and 124 (49.2%) students from India. 138 (54.8%) participants are female and 114 (45.2%) participants are male. In terms of age group, 108 (42.9%) of the participants were between 18-25 years old. 91 (36.1%) of the participants were between 26-30 years old. Only 53 (21%) students were above 30. 107 (42.5%) students indicated that they have an annual income of less than 20,000 Australian dollars, which is understandable considering their students' status.

In terms of travel behaviors and preferences, 73 % of the participants travel between 1-3 times per year and 27% of participants traveled more than 3 times a year. The percentage of Chinese international students traveled more than 3 times (30.5) was higher than that of Indian students (22.6%). In terms of hotel night stay, overall 60.3% of the respondents stayed between 1-5 nights in hotel last year (57% for Chinese group; 63.7% for Indian group); 14.7% stayed between 6-10 hotel nights (13.3 % for Chinese group and 16.1% for Indian group). It is worth nothing that 29.7% of Chinese students stayed more than 10 hotel nights and the percentage for Indian students group was 20.2%. In terms of preferred activities during travel, enjoying natural scenery was the most popular activity among

Chinese students, while historical/cultural related activities are most popular among Indian students.

Please Insert Table 1 Here

4.2 Perceived Destination Attractiveness

Table 2 summarizes the means and standard deviations of the perceived destination attractiveness variables for all students, Chinese and Indian. The top six most-attractive aspects of Australia as perceived by all students are “Smooth travel to and from the destination (Mean=4.44)”, “Alliance with intermediates in the tourism sector (Mean=4.37)”, “High quality tourism infrastructure (Mean=4.37)”, “Commitment to preserve environment (Mean=4.37)”, “Hospitality of the local people (Mean=4.35)”, and “High quality service (Mean=4.35)”. For the Chinese students group, the top six highly rated attributes for destination attractiveness are “Commitment to preserve environment”, “High quality service”, “Smooth travel to and from the destination”, “A good variety of activities offered for tourists at the destination”, “Hospitality of the local people” and “Overall favourable image”. For the Indian students group, the top six highly rated destination attractiveness attributes are “Smooth travel to and from the destination”, “High quality of services”, “High quality tourism infrastructure”, “Commitment to preserve environment”, “Hospitality of the local people”, and “High quality of service”.

Overall, Chinese students rated higher (Average Mean=4.34) than Indian students (Average Mean=4.26) on destination attractiveness attributes. Independent sample t-tests results suggested that significant differences were found on nine out of twenty-two destination attractiveness attributes between Chinese and Indian students. These attributes include: “Commitment to preserve environment”, “A good variety of activities offered for

tourists at the destination”, “Hospitality of the local people”, “High quality of services”, “Competitive price of the destination”, “Commitment for safe environment”, “Good value for money”, “Commitment for continued improvement” and “Overall favorable image”.

Please Insert Table 2 Here

4.3 Factor Analysis

Principal components analysis was performed on destination attractiveness attributes. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sample Adequacy was 0.812 and Bartlett’s Test was significant (Sig.=000). The analysis generated five factors from twenty-two attributes, explaining 72.32% of total variance. The five factors were named F1-Quality of Tourism Products; F2-Destination Image; F3-Government Support; F4-Competitive Advantage and F5-Convenience, respectively. Detailed results are summarized in Table 3.

Please Insert Table 3 Here

4.4 Destination Attractiveness and Intention to Purchase with Moderation

In order to assess how perceived destination attractiveness influences students’ travel decisions, a number of multiple regressions were performed. We first analysed how destination attractiveness factors impact Chinese and Indian students’ Intention to Purchase a holiday experience in Australia. The multiple regression results suggested that Competitive Advantage (Beta=.244; Sig. =.000) and Convenience (Beta=.383; Sig. =.000) were two significant predictors for Interest to Purchase. Details are summarized in Table 4. The regression equation on destination attractiveness and interest to purchase is,

$$\text{Interest to Purchase}'=4.025+.043*\text{F1}-.20*\text{F2}+.086*\text{F3}+.255*\text{F4}+.401*\text{F5}$$

Please Insert Table 4 Here

Hierarchical regressions were also performed in order to assess if culture moderates relationships between destination attractiveness factors and Chinese and Indian students' Interest to purchase, using Culture as a Dummy variable. The Chinese students group was coded as "0" and the Indian students group was coded as "1". Table 5 shows that Model 1 and Model 4's cross products were significant, suggesting culture's significant moderating effects on the relationship between CF1 (Centered Quality of Tourism Products) and Interest to Purchase, and on the relationship between CF4 (Centered Competitive Advantage) and Interest to Purchase.

For the relationship between quality of product and interest to purchase, the regression equation is:

$$\text{Interest to Purchase}' = 4.001 + .13\text{CF1} + .073\text{Culture} - .239\text{CF1} \times \text{Culture}$$

The Chinese group was coded "0" and the regression equation is:

$$\text{Interest to Purchase}' = 4.001 + .13\text{CF1}$$

The Indian group was coded "1" and the regression equation is:

$$\text{Interest to Purchase}' = 3.271 - .109\text{CF1}$$

Interestingly, quality of product has a mild positive influence on Chinese students' interest to purchase, but a mild negative influence on Indian students' interest to purchase. In light of the more generous spending behaviour of Chinese travelers compared with Indian

For the relationship between Competitive Advantage and Interest to Purchase, the regression equation is:

$$\text{Interest to Purchase}' = 3.887 - .127\text{CF4} + .239\text{Culture} + .519\text{CF4} \times \text{Culture}$$

The Chinese group was coded "0" and the regression equation is:

$$\text{Interest to Purchase}' = 3.887 - .127\text{CF4}$$

The Indian group was coded “1” and the regression equation is:

$$\text{Interest to Purchase}' = 4.126 + .392CF_4$$

In line with the above result, budget constraints as one component of Competitive Advantage (competitive price of destination) exert deeper influence on the purchase intention of Indian students than Chinese students.

Please Insert Table 5 Here

4.5 Destination Attractiveness and Pleasure to Travel with Moderation

We then analyzed how destination attractiveness factors impact Chinese and Indian students' Pleasure in Travel in Australia. The multiple regression results suggested that Quality of Tourism Product (Beta=.323; Sig. =.000), Destination Image (Beta=.313; Sig. =.000) and Convenience (Beta=.258; Sig. =.000) were significant predictors for Pleasure to Travel. Details are summarized in Table 6. The regression equation on Destination Attractiveness and Pleasure in Travel is,

$$\text{Pleasure in Travel}' = 4 + .274 * F_1 + .265 * F_2 - .013 * F_3 + .041 * F_4 + .218 * F_5$$

Please Insert Table 6 Here

Hierarchical regressions (Table 7) show that Model 1's cross products was significant, suggesting culture's significant moderating effects on the relationship between CF1 (Centered Quality of Tourism Products) and Pleasure in Travel. For the relationship between quality of product and interest to purchase, the regression equation is:

$$\text{Pleasure in Travel}' = 4.041 + .379CF_1 - .099\text{Culture} - .220CF_1 \times \text{Culture}$$

The Chinese group was coded “0” and the regression equation is:

$$\text{Pleasure in Travel}' = 4.041 + .279CF_1$$

The Indian group was coded “1” and the regression equation is:

$$\text{Pleasure in Travel}' = 3.051 + .159\text{CF1}$$

Please Insert Table 7 Here

4.6 Destination Attractiveness and Place Attachment with Moderation

We performed a third multiple regression and assessed how destination attractiveness factors impact Chinese and Indian students' Place Attachment. The multiple regression results suggested that Destination Image (Beta=.203; Sig. =.001) and Competitive Advantage (Beta=.241; Sig. =.000) were two significant predictors for Chinese and Indian students' Place Attachment with Australia. Details are summarized in Table 8. The regression equation on Destination Attractiveness and Place Attachment is,

$$\text{Place Attachment}' = 3.972 + .094\text{F1} + .245\text{F2} - .035\text{F3} + .316\text{F4} + .113\text{F5}$$

Please Insert Table 8 Here

Hierarchical regressions (Table 9) show that Model 2, Model 3 and Model 5's cross products were significant, suggesting culture's significant moderating effects on the relationship between CF2 (Centered Destination Image), CF3 (Centered Government Support), CF5 (Centered Convenience) and Place Attachment.

For the relationship between Destination Image and Place Attachment, the regression equation is:

$$\text{Place Attachment}' = 3.826 + .441\text{CF2} + .325\text{Culture} - .355\text{CF2} \times \text{Culture}$$

The Chinese group was coded “0” and the regression equation is:

$$\text{Place Attachment}' = 3.826 + .441\text{CF2}$$

The Indian group was coded “1” and the regression equation is:

$$\text{Place Attachment}' = 4.151 + .086CF2$$

The finding suggests that Destination Image has a much stronger impact on Place Attachment among Chinese students than Indian students.

For the relationship between Government Support and Place Attachment, the regression equation is:

$$\text{Place Attachment}' = 3.895 + .205CF3 + .320\text{Culture} - .505CF3 \times \text{Culture}$$

The Chinese group was coded “0” and the regression equation is:

$$\text{Place Attachment}' = 3.895 + .205CF3$$

The Indian group was coded “1” and the regression equation is:

$$\text{Place Attachment}' = 4.215 - .3CF3$$

The finding suggests that Government Support has a mild positive impact on Place Attachment among Chinese students while it has a mild negative impact among Indian students.

For the relationship between Convenience and Place Attachment, the regression equation is:

$$\text{Convenience}' = 3.854 + .029CF5 + .251\text{Culture} + .398CF5 \times \text{Culture}$$

The Chinese group was coded “0” and the regression equation is:

$$\text{Place Attachment}' = 3.854 + .029CF5$$

The Indian group was coded “1” and the regression equation is:

$$\text{Place Attachment}' = 4.105 + .427CF5$$

Please Insert Table 9 Here

5. Discussion

The study looked into Chinese and Indian international students' perception on the

attractiveness of Australia as a whole destination. It is worth noting that Chinese students rated destination attractiveness attributes significantly higher than Indian students. This may be due to the influence of Chinese Confucius culture, which makes Chinese consumers express more positively in terms of service quality and service experience (Lee, 1990; Ma et al., 2011).

In terms of destination attractiveness' impact on travel intention and behavior, quality of product had a mild positive influence on Chinese students' interest to purchase, but a mild negative influence on Indian students. Interestingly, competitive advantages had a mild negative impact on Chinese students' interest purchase but a positive moderate impact Indian students. The difference in family income of Chinese and Indian students (Table 1) may explain why these differences occurred. About 45% of Chinese students had a family annual income of \$40,000 or more, while only about 34% of Indian students had a family annual income of \$40,000 or more. Therefore, Indian students are more attracted by the competitiveness (price) of travel products while Chinese students concerns more about product of quality. It also explains why quality of product had a mild negative influence on Indian students' purchase behavior, because higher product quality often links to high costs. This finding is supported by earlier researches that that economic factors such as value for money and affordability of travel are important for Indian tourists' purchase intention (Madhavan & Rastogi, 2013; Gautam, 2012).

Quality of product has a positive impact on pleasure in travel for both Chinese and Indian students, with a slightly stronger impacts on Chinese students. This result can be aligned with Ryan and Mo (2001) earlier study that quality of the tourist destinations has positive impacts on Chinese tourist's satisfaction of the travel experience. Convenience has a much stronger and positive impact on Place Attachment among Indian students than Chinese

students. This result is in line with Indians' travel behavior in that they usually have a more flexible approach to holidays and often change their minds for travel arrangements (Pacific Asia Travel Association, 2015). So if travelling to the destination was convenient, their place attachment would be higher compared with Chinese students. Similarly, convenience has a positive and much stronger impact on place attachment among Indian students than Chinese students.

6. Theoretical and Practical Implications

This study contributes to the literature by extended destination attractiveness literature to international students' market. Although the importance of international students market has been recognized by researchers, there are relatively few studies looking into this market. The study examined this market and also did a comparison between Chinese and Indian international students. It reveals some interesting findings on how cultures and social economic status would impact on Chinese and Indian students' perceived destination attractiveness and how that perception would impact on their behavior intentions in travel. Although this study was performed in Australia, international students share some common perception and behavior characteristics. Also China and Indian have become two of the leading student exporting countries. Therefore, the findings of the study also have important implications for researchers from other parts of the world who are interested in knowing more about international student travelers.

The study introduced place attachment as a unique variable for international student travel market. This makes great sense as international students stay at destination longer and would have greater level of place attachment. This is one of the unique feature that differentiate international students markets from other tourists. The study also revealed how

destination attractiveness influenced international students' place attachment and what matters most for Chinese and Indian students' place attachment formation.

This study also has important practical implications. The study suggests that destination attractiveness and reputation are a few of the key factors that must be taken into consideration by marketers while promoting a destination. Knowing the unique attractiveness aspects of a destination can help differentiate the destination from competitors, and help implement proper marketing and strategies. By investigating international students' perception of destination attractiveness of Australia, the findings of the study can help policy makers and destination marketing organizations achieve a better understanding of this important market segment.

This study also helps tourism departments and destination marketing organizations in Australia to have a better understanding of particular the perception, needs and wants of Chinese and Indian international students, two market segments that play important roles in Australia's tourism industry, yet receive little research attention.

Another valuable finding of the study is that Chinese and Indian students are attracted by quite different aspects of Australia. For example, government support has a much stronger impact on Chinese students in forming place attachment with Australia, while convenience has a much stronger impact on Indian students in forming place attachment with Australia. This implies that promotion strategies and materials should be tailor-made to be more effective for the two market segments. Specifically, authorities need to establish more favorable policies and regulations to attract Chinese travelers, and local government needs to enhance the convenience of travel (e.g., easy access to the transportation) to draw Indian travelers.

Also, quality of tourism products has a much stronger impact on purchase intention

among Chinese students than Indian students. This has implications for travel agencies who can design different packages of tours for different market segments to maximize sales and customer satisfaction. The Australian tourism industry should maximize commercial dynamic by realizing Chinese students are more likely to prefer high quality tourism products. This study recommends that the stakeholders of the tourism industry in Australia continue to tailor their travel packages, products and services with high quality and high standards to cater to Chinese students. **The service providers in the tourism destinations need to work collaboratively with destination marketing organizations to promote the quality of the tourism as this will affect Chinese tourists' travel intention.**

However, Australia should also be advertised as ideal for people who have just enough money to spend on basic needs, especially for Indian students with the minimum travel budget. The Australian tourism industry should introduce budget tours or increase special offers to Indian students, as these cost effective strategies would appeal to more Indian students, especially those who avoid touring Australia because of the cost. **This finding may encourage destination managers and marketers to enrich the range of tourism products to accommodate demands from different group of people.**

This study also found out that Australia's image is favourable among Chinese students, as most of the responses were positive towards the destination image of Australia. **The scales in this study can be used by tourist destinations to measure the performance of their marketing strategies as well as to be used as an indicator of the satisfactory or failure of the experience provided.**

7. Limitation and Future Research

It must be acknowledged that the study was performed **based on international student sample**

selected from Queensland, which may limit the generalizability of the study. However, this also leaves avenues for future research. Future research may explore relevant issues other cultural settings. Further, this study examined perceptions of tourism attractiveness from national background status perspective, other moderating variables such as income and age categories were not examined. Future research may consider extend the study from these perspectives. Also international students market are different from general tourists in their place attachment with the destination. Future studies could explore in details how place attachment impacts on international students' travel behaviors. Possible directions could be treating place attachment as a mediator between destination extractives and loyalty intentions and behavior; or treating place attachment as a moderator for the proposed relationship. We believe this will generate interesting findings and enrich literature on international students travel behaviors.

This study was based on international students at four major universities in Brisbane and findings may not be applicability for other types of education institute (e.g., TAFE, English School and etc.). Future research could include other types of educational institutes in other states or other major cities in Australia. Additionally, it should be noted that a purposive sampling method was used in this study in order to obtain a sample that included both Chinese and Indian students. Therefore, the study is not free of selection bias while efforts have been made to minimize selection bias.

8. Conclusion

As one of the first studies using a comparative approach between Chinese and Indian students, the findings suggest that the two market segments are quite different in terms of preferences and values, and that different aspects of destination attractiveness influence the

two market segments differently. Australian destination marketing departments and industry players should note these difference, and design/modify products to suits for different market needs. It also calls for a more in-depth understanding of the cultures of the source markets of Australia.

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