

# Which Overseas Destinations do Chinese Travelers Like to Visit?

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## Abstract

While outbound tourism and Internet applications in Mainland China (hereafter known as China) have developed rapidly, understanding the preferred destinations of Chinese travelers is thus crucial. This research investigates the travel preferences of Chinese online travelers by collecting data from Ctrip.com, one of the largest travel websites in China. Research findings show that Australia and Nepal are the most favorable overseas destinations as revealed by Chinese Internet travelers. This research is expected to arouse the influence and impact of electronic Word-of-mouth (eWOM) in Chinese online population.

**Keywords:** China outbound tourism, Chinese online users, eWOM, travel preferences

## 1 Introduction

In 1978, the national reform and the open-door policy were introduced in China, during then the Chinese government started to recognize tourism as a generator for economic development and modernization needs (Keating & Kriz, 2008; Lim & Wang, 2008). Along with the increase in disposal income and improvement in living standard among most Chinese citizens, there is a dramatic growth in the Chinese outbound travel as more people are able to pay for the luxury of travel experience. As estimated by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), China will be the fourth largest international tourism market in the world by 2020, corresponding to 6.4% of market share worldwide, and nearly 100 million outbound travelers will be represented by Chinese residents (UNWTO, 2000). This reflected that China has become an important international tourist source-generating market. At the same time, the size of the Chinese Internet users' market is blooming. There were almost 298 million Internet users in 2008 in China, exceeding the United States and Japan (227 million and 94 million Internet users, respectively) (Internet World Stats, 2009). According to China Internet Network Information Centre (CNNIC, 2009), Chinese online consumers often use the Internet to read news (78.5%), to communicate (75.3%) and to search for information including travel-related information (68%). These statistics implied that the Internet is being an information source for Chinese travelers as they would like to use the Net to seek for destination information.

With the rapid development of Internet application, the Internet is becoming a new medium for Chinese travelers to seek and share travel information. Ctrip.com, a leading travel website in China, is one of the top popular websites which China needs (Ye, Law & Gu, 2009). It is a free travel community that gathers travel information, allows members to post travel opinions and engage in interactive travel forums. The website is an example of consumer generated media that provides all travel-related information. Although there is an enormous potential of outbound tourism in China, tourism researchers have argued that relatively little research has been conducted into the travel preferences and attitudes of Chinese travelers (Heung, 2000; Kim, Guo & Agrusa, 2005; Mok & DeFranco, 1999; Qu & Li, 1997; Zhang & Chow, 2004). Using the data collected from Ctrip.com, this study makes an initial attempt to investigate the travel preference of Chinese online travelers. Findings are expected to make a meaningful contribution to know where the favorite destinations of Chinese travelers are. Travel agents, government tourism offices and destination management offices would then use the information to attract travelers from this potentially huge market by providing suitable travel-related products and services.

## 2 Literature Review

In 1983, the Chinese government has managed and regulated some restrictions on the outbound tourism market by introducing Approved Destination Status (ADS) system needs (National Tourism Administration of the People's Republic of China (CNTA), 2009). ADS is based on a bilateral government agreement between China and overseas destinations by the means of which the Chinese residents are permitted to travel to selected countries or regions by joining tour packages from assigned Chinese local travel agencies (ChinaContact, 2009). The ADS agreement is aimed to control the travel balance account and organize local travel agencies and international tour operators in order to secure the standard of travel services to Chinese travelers (ChinaContact, 2009).

Additionally, another breakthrough in outbound tourism appeared in 1997 when the Chinese government had granted the ADS system to Australia and New Zealand, which was carried out in 1999 (CNTA, 2009). Since then, Chinese residents could travel outside Asia for personal and leisure purposes. The number of ADS countries/regions is continually increasing. By the end of September 2008, 96 countries/regions signed the ADS agreements with China, including the United States and Taiwan (ChinaContact, 2009). Since the passport restriction policy is reduced and the number of destination choices increased, Chinese outbound tourism has boosted since 1998 (as illustrated in Table 1). This phenomenon has thus drawn worldwide attention. Countries are now paying a lot of attention to this rapidly emerging market with almost one fifth of the world's population.

Apart from the rapid growth in the number of Chinese outbound tourists, the number of Chinese Internet users has skyrocketed as well. Now, Chinese online population has become the main force in the world with the highest number of Internet users (Internet World Stats, 2009). With the advancements of Internet technologies,

increasing numbers of Chinese travelers are using the Internet to seek destination information and to purchase travel products online. According to CNNIC (2009), around 68% of Chinese users have used the Internet for information seeking on destinations, prices or schedules. More importantly, 46% of them have performed online transactions and 5% have made travel reservations online. The Internet has encountered revolutionary changes as it has now become a new communication platform that allows consumers and providers for information sharing, including from business-to-consumer, and from consumer-to-consumer (Litvin, Goldsmith & Pan, 2008). Within these contexts, the concept of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) is examined.

**Table 1.** Number of Chinese Outbound Tourists (1993-2008)

Year	Number of Outbound Tourists	Growth Rate (%)
1993	3,740,000	27.70
1994	3,733,600	-0.17
1995	4,520,500	21.08
1996	5,060,700	11.95
1997	5,323,900	5.20
1998	8,425,600	58.26
1999	9,231,600	9.57
2000	10,468,600	13.40
2001	12,133,100	15.90
2002	16,602,300	39.83
2003	20,220,000	21.80
2004	28,852,900	42.90
2005	31,000,000	7.50
2006	34,520,000	11.35
2007	40,954,000	18.64
2008	45,844,400	11.94

Source: CNTA (2009)

Different from traditional word-of-mouth (WOM), WOM on the Internet is defined as eWOM (Godes & Mayzlin, 2004). Westbrook (1987) stated that the definition of eWOM can be regarded as all information communication channels using Internet-based technologies which provide information about the usage or characteristics of particular products, services, or their sellers. Email, instant messaging, websites, chatrooms, blogs, virtual communities and newsgroups are the examples of eWOM channels (Litvin et al., 2008). Since the characteristics of eWOM are low cost, broad scope, and increasing anonymity, it seems that more consumers would like to seek and be exposed to the advices from these eWOM channels (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh & Gremler, 2004). Also, eWOM can be accessed, linked, and searched easily without time and geographic limitations. Since travelers are paying more attention to search engines for information search, eWOM would change the content of travel information, ease of access in travel information and travelers' knowledge, and perception of travel related products (Litvin et al., 2008). In hospitality and tourism industries, the products are intangible and cannot be evaluated before consumptions. This has raised the importance of eWOM since it creates the virtual relationships and

communities between consumers and providers, thereby influencing readers' decisions (Litvin et al., 2008). Also, online travel reviews are the main source of information to travelers (Pan, MacLaurin & Crotts, 2007) as they are recognized as more updated and reliable information than content posted by traditional service providers (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008).

Prior studies stated that Chinese online users are more engaged in eWOM and more likely to search for and respond to eWOM because they encourage information sharing and rely on personal sources of information (Fong & Burton, 2008). Therefore, the influence of eWOM in China should be critical. As previously discussed, China outbound tourism has the tremendous potential in the world, and Chinese travelers devote in higher level of information seeking and higher reliance on eWOM channels. Therefore, it is crucial to analyze the data collected from eWOM channels and evaluate the travel preferences of Chinese travelers.

### **3 Methodology**

This study collected data from Ctrip.com, which is one of the largest travel websites in China. Ctrip.com provides a platform for users to rate and post comments for their visited destinations. Data collection was conducted from February 2009 to April 2009. Based on their preferences, visitors could rate each country/region in terms of scenery, accommodation, food, entertainment, shopping and transportation by using 5-point Likert scale (1=lowest mark; 5=highest mark). Subsequently, an integrated overall score is generated. Based on Ctrip.com, 55 countries/ regions were found including Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and Neimenggu (Inner Mongolia). Among these countries/regions, 25 were excluded since some of them have not granted ADS agreements while some of them did not provide any ratings. Therefore, in this study, 30 countries/regions with ADS agreements were selected. According to the overall score, selected countries/regions were prioritized from descending scores as illustrated in Table 2.

### **4 Findings and Discussions**

As indicated in Table 2, 30 countries/regions were divided into three groups based on their integrated overall scores. The first group with the overall score of more than 4.5 included Australia (4.791) and Nepal (4.553). The second group, which includes 25 destinations, scored between 3.5 and 4.5. The third group scored lower than 3.5 includes India (2.406), Vietnam (3.273), and Egypt (3.4). According to the findings, Australia and Nepal received the highest integrated overall scores which reflect these two destinations were the most favorite destinations for Chinese Internet travelers. On the other hand, India, Vietnam, and Egypt received the lowest integrated overall scores. The remaining parts of this research analyze the reasons for Chinese online travelers to rate Australia and Nepal over India, Vietnam, and Egypt as their favorite destinations.

**Table 2.** Overall Score of the Selected Countries/ Regions

Country/Region	Overall Score	Number of Reviewers	Std.
Australia	4.791	1,440	0.1971
Nepal	4.553	115	0.1095
Special Administrative Region (Hong Kong and Macau)	4.430	5,140	0.1927
Spain	4.375	166	0.1668
Austria	4.356	131	0.1811
Russia	4.208	62	0.3148
New Zealand	4.167	45	0.2384
France	4.156	311	0.4430
Germany	4.097	148	0.0690
Malaysia	4.081	445	0.3110
Thailand	4.048	842	0.1995
Indonesia	4.004	302	0.7352
Singapore	3.981	258	0.0967
Italy	3.980	298	0.1821
United Kingdom	3.928	143	0.1844
United States	3.886	467	0.2514
Philippine	3.885	75	0.5273
Japan	3.878	521	0.3520
South Africa	3.870	54	0.4119
Greece	3.835	40	0.0770
Taiwan	3.821	311	0.3959
Holland	3.750	80	0.4025
Switzerland	3.686	140	0.7657
Cambodia	3.613	135	0.2760
Kenya	3.580	15	0.1521
Korea	3.552	705	0.2695
Neimenggu (Inner Mongolia)	3.524	506	0.2787
Egypt	3.400	107	0.2092
Vietnam	3.273	134	0.6288
India	2.406	128	0.9477

#### 4.1 Australia as the most favored outbound destination

Kim *et al.* (2005) indicated that Chinese travelers prefer to visit democratic cities which have a different cultural background from China together with a long historical background. Also, other important attributes for Chinese travelers choosing a destination are safety and security, as well as beautiful scenery. Their results thus concluded that Australia is perceived as the most attractive destination for Chinese outbound travelers because of its beautiful environment along with a 10-year good relationship with China. In Chinese travelers' minds, Australia has no identical substitute (Kim *et al.*, 2005). Moreover, Australia is the first Western country granted ADS agreement by the Chinese government. It is allowed to promote itself as a leisure destination in China for 10 years, thereby broadening its market base in China. Apart from these factors, Sparks and Pan's (2009) study pointed out that Australia is

the desirable destination for Chinese travelers due to its culture and position. The conclusions of prior studies were the same as the result of this study in which Australia had received the highest marks. It is generally known that there are a lot of attractive attractions in Australia such as Great Barrier Reef and Gold Coast. This perfectly matches with one of the most important destination attributes (beautiful scenery) of Chinese travelers. At the same time, cities in Australia, such as Sydney and Melbourne, always dominated surveys about the world's most liveable cities. For example, Sydney ranked top 10 in the Mercer's Quality of Living Survey 2009 in terms of safety, education, hygiene, recreation, political-economic stability, and public transportation (Mercer, 2009). This shows that Australia is perceived as a safe destination for Chinese travelers. Moreover, selected comments of Australia (URL: <http://destguides.ctrip.com/oceania/australia/region48/>) were collected from the site in order to know more why Australia is the most favored destination of Chinese travelers (Fig. 1).

<p>颖颖真乖 2008-8-4</p> <p>阳光,海滩,高山,草原...风景优美,气氛和谐,适合渡假.</p> <p>Janeliu 2004-6-21</p> <p>澳洲的每一块土地都很漂亮,都有自己的特色,就像在 Gold Coast 里的三个主题公园,以及 VERSACE HOTEL 和一些原始森林等,真的很值得去看看,它的美丽不用说了,世界各地的名人在此花耗资够宅度假就该知道它的魅力了,不过有个小建议给大家,个人认为 movie world 和 Dream World 只选择去一个就够了,我是都去了,都不错,但是总觉得大家以后去只要选择 movie world 和 Sea world 就可以了,祝大家玩得愉快:) 对了到 movie world 后别忘了给自己或家人挑一个正版的长毛绒玩具,虽然当时会觉得贵了些,但是买回来肯定不会后悔的,否则你会留下遗憾的:) 而著名的悉尼的城市是个完全没有工业的城市繁荣而安静,好像在天堂一样,很美也很舒心。其实澳洲还有一个很漂亮的地方就是 Cairns (凯恩斯) 那里有非常漂亮的大堡礁,出船游海,到外海去感受一下蓝天碧海的感觉,靠在建造于海洋之中的平台上或登上潜水艇或自己背上氧气瓶潜入海底,这一份美丽和驰骋是无法用语言来形容的,再看看喂鱼的情景你会爱上这一切的:) ~~~~~ 还有很多地方值得去玩玩,我就不一一列举了,总之澳洲真的很值得去玩玩:)</p> <p>Joannazuo 2006-2-22</p> <p>澳洲真是一个好地方 那里的阳光 空气都散发着一一种让人舒服的感觉,虽然紫外线异常厉害,但并不妨碍游玩的心情,悉尼当然是一座风景优美的城市,很多地方值得走走,乘坐 乘着船看歌剧院和海港大桥是必不可少的,还有一个值得推荐的地方是凯恩斯大堡礁,说它是澳洲最美丽的地方,一点也不错,如果身体状况允许,一定要去深潜,那海里的美景难以言语,跟三亚的海底比,简直不能相提并论,摸摸海里的活珊瑚,它还能动,非常有趣,其它的景色就不用再说了,很多网友都有写过,别具光芒的澳大利亚,赶快行动吧.</p>
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**Fig. 1.** Selected Comments from Ctrip.com about Australia

*Translation of Fig. 1:*

*Reviewer A "Sunshine, beach, mountains, grasslands! Beautiful scenery! Australia is suitable for vacation."*

*Reviewer B "Australia is so pretty. Each city has its own character. Sydney is a prosperous and peaceful city, just like a heaven. Great Barrier Reef in Cairns is wonderful. You can experience it when boating. You will definitely love everything in Australia."*

*Reviewer C “Australia is great as it is a relaxing country. Sydney is a beautiful city and it is worth to visit, especially Sydney Opera House and Sydney Harbour BridgeClimb. Great Barrier Reef in Cairns is the most beautiful place. The environment is absolutely gorgeous.”*

In short, the reason why Australia is considered as the most favorable destination for Chinese tourists is largely due to its beautiful scenery and secure environment.

#### 4.2 Nepal as the second most favored outbound destination

It is reasonable that Nepal is the second most favorable overseas destination for Chinese travelers. Based on the selected comments from Ctrip.com, Chinese travelers think that Nepal is a glamorous country which is full of religious atmosphere with a majority of the people being Hindus as illustrated in Fig. 2 (URL: <http://destguides.ctrip.com/asia/nepal/region79/>).

<p>沙沙公主殿下 2008-8-26</p> <p>尼泊尔，真是一个让人沉迷又心醉的国度。几年前看了朋友拍的照片，尼泊尔一个 festival 大家盛装出席，翠绿、湖蓝、玫红，什么颜色鲜艳穿什么，还有涂满红色、黄色染料的各种神像，我想我是被那些色彩迷住了，于是认定这是个有意思的地方。事实上，排名世界倒数的经济发展程度，没有让尼泊尔人少一点笑容。尼泊尔堪称一生中值得一去的国度，2000余万人口和 2000余万座寺庙相映成趣，加上境内 8 座 8000 米以上的山峰，旅游资源算是丰厚。怎么形容尼泊尔人的热情大方，淳朴开朗呢？用相机对准他们，在窗口乘凉的老爷爷会颌首保持 POSE 直到你拍好为止，几个心急的父母，看到镜头甚至急切地告诉孩子要微笑，更不用提那些几乎是冲上前来的小孩子们兴奋地叫着“给我们拍一张，我们是好兄弟！”那嘎阔 hotel view piont，一向以慢著称的当地人问我：why are u so late？那一刻我真是张口结舌。博卡拉，我在看 SOHO 小报集结出版的《圈子》，一酒店服务生走过来“我能和你聊天么？”加德满都机场出境处，工作人员笑眯眯地问“觉得尼泊尔怎么样？你为什么还不结婚？”还是在博卡拉，一个小姑娘被我拍了以后硬是抢过相机为我拍照。</p>
<p>一路行摄 2008-1-4</p> <p>尼泊尔一定是你值得去的地方，不论你是哪种类型的人。</p>
<p>I_cookie 2007-11-21</p> <p>在加德满都随处可见的古老文明印记带给我们震撼的同时，更深深体会了我们眼中的新奇不过就是尼泊尔日常的点滴生活，和我们对柴米油盐的需求一样，平凡而普通。</p>

**Fig. 2.** Selected Comments from Ctrip.com about Nepal

#### *Translation of Fig. 2:*

*Reviewer D “Nepal was an attractive and charming country together with the religious atmosphere. It is a valuable visit. People were nice and they showed their hospitality to travelers all the time.”*

*Reviewer E “No matter who you are, Nepal is definitely worth a visit.”*

Reviewer F *"I was shocked by Nepal's ancient civilization."*

With the above mentioned reasons, Chinese travelers are dazzled by this religious country for its cultural difference from China. According to Kim et al. (2005), Chinese tourists prefer to visit places whose culture is different from China. Moreover, Nepal has an incredible diversity in natural environment, including mountains, mid hills, valleys, lakes, and plains. The highest mountain in the world, Mount Everest, is another famous attraction in Nepal. Since the landscape in Nepal is very attractive, there is no doubt Chinese travelers enjoy traveling there so much. As Kim et al. (2005) stated beautiful scenery is one of the most important destination attributes of Chinese tourists.

### 4.3 India, Vietnam and Egypt as the unfavorable destinations

According to the results, India (URL:<http://destguides.ctrip.com/asia/india/region80/>), Vietnam (URL: <http://destguides.ctrip.com/asia/vietnam/region46/>) and Egypt (URL: <http://destguides.ctrip.com/africa/egypt/region30/>) were the most unfavorable overseas destinations of Chinese travelers. In order to prevent any misgivings, three destinations are named as Destination A, Destination B, and Destination C randomly. Selected comments were collected from Ctrip.com in order to evaluate why Chinese travelers dislike these destinations.

Regarding Destination A, Chinese travelers are not satisfied with the standard of infrastructure, environment, transportation system, and terrorism (Fig. 3).

70205732 2008-2-20
这次春节去了9天,总的来说景观一流,设施末流,泰姬陵纯洁、琥珀色的雄伟、恒河岸边的虔诚、红堡的壮观、克拉久霍性爱神庙的开放和精美的雕刻都令人叹为观止,能够深刻感受到印度历史的悠久、独特的文化特色。过去的辉煌,不过同时也能看到印度的落后一面,自称是世界一流的新德里机场只能与中国西部一些不太发达身份的机场一比,与北京首都机场至少要两个档次,印度基础设施很差,酒店小、设施明显比国内星级低一个档次,任何餐都是咖喱味且基本上是素食(适合于减肥),没有高速公路,他们称之为高速公路是不封闭的双向四车道的(有时是两车道)且因人车混行速度很难达到60迈,铁路秩序乱、晚点是很正常的。车厘老鼠“小强”横行,总之没有一定忍耐能力的朋友去印度旅游最好还是三思而后行,不过印度人感觉良好,本着友谊第一的精神就别摧残他们的自尊心好了。印度是个感觉复杂无法替代的国家。
And007 2007-12-6
新旧城区差别太大...机场规模太小....
Inveness 2008-10-14
就和这个国家一样,新老德里的反差也是巨大的,新德里的豪华酒店、林荫道和老德里的狭窄极度肮脏的街道房屋形成鲜明的对比。不过和其他地方一样,景点还是保护的很好,像 Red Fort, the Mosque, Humayun Tomb 都很大气,让人眼前一亮。如果要买东西,还是尽量选择去商场,有安检,避免 local market 和拥挤的地方,因为这些地方往往才是恐怖袭击的目标。

Fig. 3. Selected comments from Ctrip.com about Destination A



Translation of Fig. 3:

Reviewer G *“The hardware in Destination A were poor, especially the airport. The transportation system was very messy with poor hygiene.”*

Reviewer H *“The size of the airport was too small.”*

Reviewer I *“If you want to go shopping, I suggest choosing shopping malls with security inspection. Otherwise, I am afraid that terrorism will happen in local markets.”*

On the other hand, Destination B was scored as one of the lowest mark’s destinations because of its swindles in transportation, poor hygiene, and unsafe environment (Fig. 3).

颖颖真乖 2008-8-4
出门在外就怕遇到黑出租，上车要谨慎，要么谈好价格再上车；当地的水果很多，你能想得到的几乎都有了，可以尽情地吃，街边的咖啡也不错；感觉上城市还是有些落后，不是很繁华，不过去那里也只是想感受一下异域风情，其他的能凑合就凑合。
Loveamy 2008-7-30
在 HCMC，要注意有些黑出租，经常停在大商店或者闹市去，殷勤地拉你上车的。他们的表都是有问题的，好像每 3 秒钟能跳 2200VND，就是 1 块钱。最好选择那种表被塑料盒封起来的出租车，或者事先谈好价格。
Amywoo 2008-5-8
建议大家带点零食，越南的饮食卫生状况不佳，而且超市极少。我住在他们所谓的法国区，应该市最好的地区了，几天只看到一家超市，还在一类似国内 90 年代初的百货商店的四楼，纯属偶然碰上。街上连像样的便利店也看不到，只在湖边一景点买到过一次可乐，要价 6 元人民币。基本上买可乐不是件容易的事~~~~~
33075955 2002-12-31
海防的治安好像有点问题，那次我们几个 MM 想在晚上逛街，结果出酒店没几步发现路旁的男人都盯着我们，我们怕得只能赶快拦 TAXI，街上却不见一辆，满街都是自行车，只能赶快逃回酒店。问导游才知道，可以借路边的小店电话请店主帮忙拨号找 TAXI，但导游劝我们不要外出，因为曾经有游客被抢，海防人比较野蛮。

Fig. 4. Selected Comments from Ctrip.com about Destination B

Translation of Fig. 4:

Reviewer J *“I am afraid of swindles. It is better for you to deal a price before getting on a taxi.”*

Reviewer K *“Cheated meters are installed in a lot of taxis.”*

Reviewer L *“I suggest bringing some snacks as the hygiene was poor. Also, it was hard to find a supermarket.”*

Reviewer M *“The public security was unsafe. People were looking attentively at me while I was walking down the street. This made me felt uncomfortable and went back to the hotel as soon as possible.*

Apart from these, disorderly transportation systems, swindles and undeveloped infrastructures were the factors why Chinese travelers disfavor Destination C.

Qqkk0017 2008-11-14
埃及与土耳其 8 天.埃及及其差,开罗脏乱差,像 30 年前的中国.汽车破,房屋旧(其实已经不能用“旧”来形容了),所有人都在想骗游客的钱,影响糟糕.飞机一到土耳其,发现到了另一格天地.比起埃及真是天堂阿!
Scott 2008-10-12
开罗的脏乱差,真是不能用几个字能阐述的。开罗分为旧区和新区。旧区基本是旧的没有修整过的,人还过的去。新区好多了。不过,埃及人很喜欢问你是不是中国人,如果是,就拼命向你耍清凉油或是笔。开罗到处都是为了避税,而没有外立面的楼房。感觉这个城市没有好好规划好,也没有整治。基本在旧区或是郊外,没有红绿灯,人们也没有意识要遵守交通法规。
maomaolu2000 2009-6-19
总觉得亚历山大把地中海给浪费了,那么长的海岸线,却尽是没有饰面的楼房,太可惜了! 很喜欢海岸边谈恋爱的情侣!

**Fig. 5.** Selected Comments from Ctrip.com about Destination C

*Translation of Fig. 5:*

Reviewer N *“There was chaos in Destination C due to traffic jam. I was cheated when visiting an attraction.”*

Reviewer O *“It seemed undeveloped in this destination. No matter in city or countryside, there were no traffic lights. People, of course, have no sense of safety.”*

Reviewer P *“Undecorated buildings developed along the beautiful long coast. What a waste!”*

In terms of the above comments, it is understandable why Chinese travelers rated these three destinations the lowest. Prior research had stated that safety and security as well as beautiful scenery are the most important destination attributes for Chinese travelers (Kim et al., 2005). Also, ACNielsen (2006) performed a survey and found out that Chinese tourists are highly concerned with safety issues in that they are unwilling to take risks in travelling to places which seem to be dangerous. Furthermore, 60% of the Chinese respondents considered that security at the destination is important. By evaluating the comments from these three destinations, it is obvious that Chinese travelers consider these destinations as unsafe and dangerous. Also, swindles took advantages of the visitors during their visits, which is another factor that makes Chinese tourists feel uncomfortable when visiting. Besides,

comments pointed out that the development of these destinations were unplanned with poor hygienic problem. This completely deteriorated the travel motivations of Chinese tourists. In short, since Chinese travelers felt that these destinations were unsafe along with poor environment, this simply violated two critical destination criteria in their minds.

## 5 Conclusion and Implications

This research has investigated the travel preferences in terms of overseas destinations for Chinese travelers on Ctrip.com. As discussed, China outbound tourism is blooming after the introduction of the national reform and open-door policy since Chinese citizens could afford for the luxury travel of experience. At the same time, the number of Chinese online users is growing. Many Chinese travelers like to use the Internet for information search, including destination information, prices and schedules. Also, Chinese online users highly believe in the eWOM while they trust personal sources of information strongly (Fong & Burton, 2008). Therefore, the influence and impact of travel websites cannot be neglected. Using the data collected from a major travel website, findings of this study revealed that Australia and Nepal are the most attractive destinations to Chinese travelers. On the other hand, India, Vietnam, and Egypt showed weakness when attracting Chinese tourists.

Accordingly, hospitality and tourism marketers should understand the travel preferences of Chinese outbound tourists, thereby targeting one of the most important international tourist source-generating markets. At the same time, it is vital to understand that Chinese tourists are going online in increasing numbers and they are more likely influenced by travel websites or online travel forums. Tourism marketers should therefore take the first step in understanding and utilizing the information from travel websites in order to know what their potential customers like and dislike. The website used in this study offers numerous first-hand information and ratings posted by travelers. These reviews can surely provide a strong sense of the destination, and then affect travelers' overall image of a particular destination. As such, it seems that eWOM source is playing an important role in hospitality and tourism industries, in China or in other overseas destinations.

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