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### Factors Affecting Outbound Tourists' Destination Choice: The Case of Hong Kong

Basak Denizci Guillet<sup>a</sup>, Andy Lee<sup>a</sup>, Rob Law<sup>a</sup> & Rosanna Leung<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> School of Hotel and Tourism Management, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University in Hung Hom, Kowloon, Hong Kong

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## FACTORS AFFECTING OUTBOUND TOURISTS' DESTINATION CHOICE: THE CASE OF HONG KONG

Basak Denizci Guillet  
Andy Lee  
Rob Law  
Rosanna Leung

**ABSTRACT.** Trip expenditure, length of stay during the trip, size of the travel party, monthly household income, discovering new places and/or things, and getting away from daily routine, role, obligation, stress and troubles have significant influence on Hong Kong residents' destination choice. Hong Kong residents' destination choice is highly associated with trip characteristic in comparison to socio-demographics and travel motivation factors. Destinations close to Hong Kong can focus on packaging their products with shorter trip lengths and making the packages attractive to travel companions in addition to the travelers. Destinations that are relatively far away from Hong Kong should focus on packaging their products to attract the Hong Kong outbound travelers with longer trip lengths and plan activities that cater to individual needs.

**KEYWORDS.** Destination choice, Hong Kong, residents, travel

### *INTRODUCTION*

Hong Kong is a well-established tourist generating market in Asia Pacific. In this region, Hong Kong is ranked fourth place after Japan, Taiwan, and Australia (Zhang, Qu, & Tang, 2004). This rank, to a large extent, is attributed to the rapid growth of the small yet open economy in Hong Kong, along with a continuous increase in the living standard and disposable income. In spite of the significant scale of the

recent global as well as regional financial crises, Hong Kong still enjoyed a high level of per capita gross domestic product of US\$29,820 in 2009 (Hong Kong Government, 2010). In addition, Hong Kong is a hub of airline traffic carried by all major international and regional airlines which make it convenient for Hong Kong residents to travel. As an evidence, resident departure statistics prepared by Hong Kong Tourism Board (2009) showed that 6,223,732 Hong Kong residents traveled abroad by air in

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Basak Denizci Guillet, PhD (E-mail: hmbasakd@polyu.edu.hk), and Andy Lee, PhD (E-mail: hmandyle@polyu.edu.hk), are Assistant Professors in the School of Hotel and Tourism Management at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University in Hung Hom, Kowloon, Hong Kong.

Rob Law, PhD, is Professor in the School of Hotel and Tourism Management at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University in Hung Hom, Kowloon, Hong Kong (E-mail: hmroblaw@polyu.edu.hk).

Rosanna Leung is a PhD Candidate in the School of Hotel and Tourism Management at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University in Hung Hom, Kowloon, Hong Kong (E-mail: rosanna.leung@polyu.edu.hk).

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Address correspondence to: Basak Denizci Guillet, PhD, at the above address.

2008, which is a considerable increase from 5,341,402 in 2004. These numbers are very high considering that the Hong Kong population was estimated to be around 7 million in 2009 (Census and Statistics Department, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, 2011).

Understanding the factors that affect Hong Kong travelers' destination choice is of significant interest to the countries/regions that strive to increase their market share. A broad review of the related literature shows that travel motivations and destination choice are highly correlated. However, from a destination management organizations' perspective, considering only travel motivations may not be satisfactory to explain why Hong Kong travelers choose different destinations as there are other preliminary factors such as socio-demographics and travel characteristics that might affect travelers' destination choice. In this respect, the objective of this research is to identify the most influential factors on the destination choice among sociodemographics, travel characteristics, and travel motivation factors, taking Hong Kong residents' traveling patterns as a sample.

The findings of this study contribute to the existing literature by providing new empirical evidence through a regional specific sample for a period of 6 years to the conceptual relationship of travelers' sociodemographics, travel characteristics, and travel motivation with their destination choice. The findings should be of interest to the destination marketing organizations (DMOs) in developing more tailored and focused marketing strategies to attract the Hong Kong outbound market in terms of market segmentation, profiling the travelers, developing a marketing spending strategy with advertising and promotion, and packaging of their products and services.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Literature review is presented in three subsections—namely travelers' behavior and travel motivation, different approaches to model destination choice, and Hong Kong outbound tourism. Travelers' behavior and

travel motivation are discussed as providing some insight into travel-related behavior and attributes that travelers, in general and particularly from Hong Kong, consider important when they travel to a destination. The subsection on different approaches to model destination choice includes a discussion on outbound tourist destination choice studies with respect to different approaches and methodologies used to measure destination choice. The last subsection on Hong Kong outbound tourism intends to provide readers with a better understanding of Hong Kong travelers' traveling patterns to different destinations.

#### ***Travelers' Preference and Travel Motivation***

The understanding of tourist behavior is an important first step to facilitate destination choice discussion. According to Pearce (1982), travel-related behavior of tourists typically involves taking pictures, buying souvenirs, visiting popular places, and staying for a short period of time. Although Pearce (1982) gave an overall view of tourist behavior, there is evidence in the literature (Reimer, 1990; Richardson & Crompton, 1988; Wong & Lau, 2001) that there are differences in destination choice in relation to the cultural background of the tourists. For instance, in a Hong Kong context, Wong and Lau (2001) found that Hong Kong leisure travelers considered traveling in groups, being safe during their travel, and joining self-paid activities as the most important aspects of their travel experience. In an earlier study, Plog (1974) characterized Hong Kong leisure travelers as near psychocentrics, which refers to travelers seeking comfort, preferring a familiar atmosphere, and undertaking a low level of activity. Wong and Lau (2001) attributed Hong Kong leisure travelers' preference of traveling in groups to this characteristic. Kaynak and Kucukemiroglu (1993) investigated Hong Kong residents' outbound travel destinations along with the type of activities Hong Kong residents pursued using a sample size of 206 respondents. Their study was the first study conducted on Hong Kong residents' outbound travel

patterns. They found that there are sociodemographic and behavioral differences between first timers and multiple visitors to overseas destinations. Mok and Armstrong (1995) conducted a survey with 316 Hong Kong residents and concluded that safety is the most important attribute when Hong Kong residents choose a destination followed by scenic beauty, trip price, hotel and restaurant services, friendliness of local people, and shopping facilities and services, respectively. In a more recent study, Zhang et al. (2004) investigated 292 Hong Kong residents' preferences on destination choice through in-depth interviews and found that safety is still the top destination selection attribute for Hong Kong residents. Law, Cheung, and Lo (2004) also examined Hong Kong residents' perceived importance of travel activities and identified sampling local food as the most important travel activity, followed by city sightseeing, visiting scenic landmarks, and shopping.

Pull and push factors have been commonly used in travel motivation studies (Crompton, 1979; Klenosky, 2002). The underlying principle of this theory is that people are motivated by internal motives, namely push factors; and external factors, namely pull factors. Push factors typically include social-psychological motives while pull factors refer to the destination attributes that attract people when they make travel decisions. Jang and Cai (2002) also used pull and push factors to analyze travel motivations and destination choice of British travelers. They identified knowledge seeking and cleanliness and safety as the most important push and pull factors, respectively.

Nozawa (1992) analyzed the growth and characteristics of Japanese travelers and found that Japanese travelers are high spenders that enjoy shopping and demand high service quality. Their concerns in destination choice include safety and communication in foreign languages. Another study on Japanese seniors' travel motivations to Thailand was conducted by Sangpikul (2008). He identified novelty and knowledge seeking along with cultural and historical attractions as the most important push and pull factors, respectively. Lang, O'Leary, and Morrison (1997) examined sociodemographics, travel

characteristics of Taiwanese pleasure travelers, and benefits pursued depending on their destination choice. They differentiated destination choices as within Asia and out of Asia. Using discriminant analysis, Lang et al. (1997) documented that there are differences in sociodemographics, travel characteristics, and benefits pursued between those traveling within Asia and out of Asia. Apart from these studies, there are many others that focused on tourist behavior in different cultural contexts including American, British, Canadian, Japanese, French, German, Israeli, Korean, and Saudi Arabian travelers (Pizam & Jeong, 1996; Pizam & Reichel, 1996; Pizam & Sussman, 1995; Richardson & Crompton, 1988; Ziff-Levine, 1990). Findings of these studies provide evidence that tourist behavior indeed differs which is an indication of the influence of culture.

### *Different Approaches to Model Destination Choice*

There is an extensive amount of prior research in the hospitality and tourism literature on outbound tourism and destination choice (Jang & Cai, 2002; Lang et al., 1997; Keating & Kriz, 2008; Law et al., 2004; Nozawa, 1992; Sangpikul, 2008; Zhang et al., 2004). Different approaches were taken to provide insight into destination choice. These approaches include (Lang et al., 1997) "a traveler's sociodemographic background (age, income, life cycle, etc.), psychographic profiles (benefit pursued, preference, attitude, etc.), marketing variables (product design, pricing, advertising, etc.), and destination-related attributes (attractions, situational variables, etc.) and awareness" (p. 22).

Studies related to travelers' sociodemographic background were conducted by Woodside and Lysonski (1989); Um and Crompton, (1990); and Moscardo, Morrison, Pearce, Lang, and O'Leary, (1996). The research in the field of psychographic attributes of the travelers was pioneered by Plog (1974, 1987, 1991), who developed a model to classify travelers according to psychographic types. Approaches related to the use of marketing variables and destination-related attributes are a part of pull motivations. The studies that examined

pull motivations include Uysal and Jurovski (1994) and You, O'Leary, Morrison, and Hong (2000). Pull factors that emerged from these studies include beaches, recreation facilities, natural and cultural attractions of a destination, as well as travelers' expectations regarding novelty and marketing image. Although these studies provided important insight into the discussion of destination choice, there are very few studies that made an attempt to link travelers' decision-making process to destination choice.

Previous studies utilized different methodological approaches to study travelers' destination choice. For instance, Lang et al. (1997) used discriminant analysis to investigate the differences on sociodemographics, trip characteristics, and benefit factors between Taiwanese tourists that traveled within Asia and out of Asia. Although discriminant analysis was instrumental in determining the important attributes for Taiwanese tourists, categorizing destination choice as within Asia and out of Asia did not allow further breakdown of the destinations to give more insight into the destination choice discussion. Zhang et al. (2004) utilized analysis of variance and factor analysis to analyze Hong Kong residents' outbound travel choices. Through six destination dimensions created using factor analysis, Zhang et al. (2004) found statistical differences between Hong Kong residents' demographic variables and their destination dimensions. Their study has limited contributions to the literature as the study utilizes the destination dimensions instead of destinations themselves. As such, the study's implications are of limited use. In addition, it does not provide insight into the travelers' decision-making process. Jang and Cai (2002) compared pull and push factors of seven travel destinations by British travelers through seven separate logistic regressions. Using logistic regression, the binary dependent variable in their model was the choice of a specific destination versus choice of other destinations. Although this study is one of the most important studies in the area of destination choice, it suffers from several weaknesses. For instance, five destinations out of seven were defined by regions instead of countries, rendering the general applicability of empirical findings to

travelers in a country. A more important limitation is related to the model selection. By using logistic regression, the authors ended up conducting seven separate regressions and they were not able to analyze destination choice for seven destinations simultaneously.

While the destination choice studies are not limited to Jang and Cai (2002), Lang et al. (1997), and Zhang et al. (2004), the methods used to analyze destination choice in all other studies are similar to the methodological approaches delineated in this section.

### *Hong Kong Outbound Tourism*

Hong Kong has been viewed as a major destination for tourists all around the world for the past two decades (United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2007) and received attention from the researchers mainly in terms of the important attributes that inbound visitors consider when they travel to Hong Kong. While outbound tourism received much less attention from the researchers, "overseas travel has become a way of life for many Hong Kong residents" (Mok & Armstrong, 1995, p. 99) owing to the increase in disposable income in a booming economy.

The most recent statistics on Hong Kong residents' departures by destination can be traced to 2005. After 2005, The Hong Kong Tourism Board stopped providing this information by the destination. During 2006–2010, the only statistics available on outbound tourism is related to Hong Kong residents' departures by mode of transport. Table 1 shows Hong Kong resident outbound departures for the period of 2001–2005. A more detailed analysis of the purpose of the outbound travel is, unfortunately, not provided by the Hong Kong Tourism Board.

Although the 2001–2005 period had been an unstable economic period in Hong Kong due to the September 11 attacks in the United States in 2001 and the SARS outbreak in Hong Kong in 2003, the number of outbound travelers had been relatively stable over this 5-year period. Excluding those who traveled to the Mainland China and Macau, the number of outbound travelers increased from 4.7 million in 2001 to 4.9 million in 2005. Considering that



TABLE 1. Hong Kong Resident Outbound Departures 2001–2005

Destination	Growth		Growth		Growth		Growth		Growth	
	2001	(%)	2002	(%)	2003	(%)	2004	(%)	2005	(%)
The Americas	376,635	-5.7	346,285	-8.1	280,074	-19.1	334,642	19.5	348,384	4.1
Europe and the Middle East	347,612	*	369,928	6.4	344,933	-6.8	403,518	17.0	416,908	3.3
Australia and N.Z.	237,493	2.6	223,201	-6.0	207,070	-7.2	222,482	7.4	254,229	14.3
North Asia	761,616	3.1	774,466	1.7	699,832	-9.6	806,420	15.2	811,968	0.7
South and Southeast Asia	1,578,136	-2.7	1,536,000	-2.7	1,555,944	1.3	1,681,347	8.1	1,608,039	-4.4
Taiwan	525,526	12.1	538,232	2.4	414,545	-23.0	536,071	29.3	555,307	3.6
All Others	38,493	8.5	35,427	-8.0	34,341	-3.1	38,504	12.1	57,801	50.1
Highseas**	926,485	20.7	885,750	-4.4	891,048	0.6	979,750	10.0	904,257	-7.7
Grand total <sup>a</sup>	4,791,996	3.9	4,709,289	-1.7	4,427,787	-6.0	5,002,734	13.0	4,956,893	-0.9

Source: Hong Kong Tourism Board (2009).

\*Figures less than 0.1%.

\*\* Refers to a cruise sailing into open water and returning to the original port.

<sup>a</sup>Excluding departures to mainland China and Macau.

the Hong Kong population is around 7 million, Hong Kong residents traveling abroad represent around 70% of the total population. Zhang et al. (2004) reported similar statistics for 1997–2001, indicating that the Hong Kong residents' outbound travel had been relatively stable over the 1997–2005 period. Given that 2.2 million Hong Kong residents traveled overseas in 1992 (Hong Kong Tourist Association [HKTA], 1993), the number of outbound travelers increased around 123% between 1992 and 2005. Clearly, 4.9 million overseas travelers in 2005 include leisure travelers as well as business travelers. As the purpose of the outbound travel is not provided as a part of these statistics, it is not feasible to accurately state what percentage of these outbound travelers are for leisure purposes.

### Research Gap

Although some prior studies investigated the destination selection attributes and important travel activities of outbound tourists of various nationalities, none of these studies have examined the relationship between travelers' destination choice and their sociodemographics, travel characteristics, and travel motivations. In addition, while the studies reviewed in the literature shed some light into destination choice and have important contributions to the existing literature, methods used in these studies were relatively

less sophisticated. This study intends to address some of the aforementioned limitations previous studies suffer from. The contribution of this study is its distinct outlook to outbound tourists' destination choice. Different from other studies, this study used distance traveled from the origin to the main destination city in kilometers as the destination choice while travelers' sociodemographics, travel characteristics, and travel motivation variables were used as the factors that might affect destination choice. Using this methodology, this study can simultaneously examine the different factors that affect the destination choice as well as the relative impact of these factors over a period of 6 years.

### METHODOLOGY

The data used for this study were collected from Hong Kong residents through large scale annual phone surveys over a period of 6 years between 2005 and 2010. The target population of the survey was Hong Kong residents at least 18 years old. Similar to studies previously conducted by Law and Wong (2003) and Law et al. (2004), a modified random digit-dialing sampling approach was utilized. Using this sampling approach, 9,175 Hong Kong residents were surveyed. Out of 9,175 residents interviewed in Cantonese, 2,469 of them specified

overseas destinations, which is approximately 27% of the respondents. The survey was prepared in English and was translated into traditional Chinese using back-to-back translation to ensure face and content validity.

Each survey contains three sections. Section 1 asks the destination of participants' most recent international visits along with trip-related questions, while section 2 includes questions on sociodemographic characteristics of them. It is important to note that the participants were asked to identify the main destination city of their most recent international visit in the past 12 months. If they had visited more than one main destination city within a country, they were asked to state the first main destination city that they visited. Section 3 of the survey includes travel motivation questions that are measured through a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *very important*; 7 = *very unimportant*). Respondents were asked to indicate the level of importance for five travel motivation factors in relation to their most recent international pleasure trip. Respondents also had the option to choose "not applicable" if such a motivation was not applicable to their trips.

### ***Variables of Interest***

Variables in this study were identified in compliance with the measures established in the hospitality management and tourism literature. The independent variables used in this study can be categorized into three components—namely trip characteristics, socio-demographics, and travel motivation factors. Trip characteristics include expenditure during the trip, mode of travel, length of stay, and size of travel party. Sociodemographics refer to respondent's age, education level, gender, household size, and household income. Travel motivation factors included in the study are as follows: to spend time with family and friends; to meet different people; to rest and relax; to get away from daily routine, role obligations, stress, troubles; and to discover new places and/or things. There are three categorical variables in this study—namely, age, education, and household income. Between indicator and effect coding methods, this study utilized indicator coding to handle

the categorical variables. The reference group for each variable was determined to represent the majority of the respondents. Thus, the reference group is for respondents who are 36–45 years old; respondents who attended some college or university for education; and respondents whose household income is between HK\$20,000 and \$39,999 (US\$1 = HK\$7.8) for household income.

The dependent variable used in the study is the distance traveled from Hong Kong to the main destination city measured in kilometers. Free Map Tools (2010) was used to compute the distances from Hong Kong to the main destination cities.

Independent variables are defined and measured as follows:

$EXP_{i,t}$  = total trip expenditure during the trip for respondent  $i$  in year  $t$ , measured in Hong Kong dollars.

$LOS_{i,t}$  = length of stay on this trip for respondent  $i$  in year  $t$ , measured in number of nights. The respondents were asked to consider the day they set off toward the date when they return home.

$STA_{i,t}$  = size of the travel party for respondent  $i$  in year  $t$ , measured as the number of people traveling on this particular trip in respondents' group. This variable includes travel companions only and excludes other people in the same packaged tour.

$MOD_{i,t}$  = mode of travel for respondent  $i$ , in year  $t$ , measured as a dummy variable, 1 = independent travel, 0 = join tour/buy package.

$AGE1_{i,t}, \dots, AGE5_{i,t}$  = age group of the respondent  $i$  in year  $t$ , measured in six categories: (a) below 25; (b) 26–35; (c) 36–45; (d) 46–55; (e) 56–65; (f) 66 or above. As it is a categorical variable, we created five variables to reflect the six levels of AGE, taking age group 3 as the basis of comparison since it stands for the average age group in this study.

$EDU1_{i,t}, \dots, EDU4_{i,t}$  = highest level of education attained by the respondent  $i$  in year  $t$ , measured in five categories: (a) less than secondary/high school; (b) completed secondary/high

school; (c) attended some college or university; (d) completed college/university degree/diploma; (e) completed postgraduate degree. Similar to the Age variable, we created four variables to reflect the five levels of EDU taking education group 3 as the basis of comparison since it stands for the average education group in this study.

$GEN_i$  = gender of the respondent  $i$ , measured as a dummy variable, 1 = male, 0 = otherwise.

$HOI1_{i,t}, \dots, HOI7_{i,t}$  = average monthly household income for the respondent  $i$  in year  $t$ , measured in eight categories: (a) under HK\$9,999; (b) 10,000–\$19,999; (c) 20,000–\$29,999; (d) 30,000–\$39,999; (e) 40,000–\$49,999; (f) 50,000–\$59,999; (g) 60,000–\$69,999; (h) \$70,000 or above. Similarly, we created seven variables to reflect the eight levels of HOI taking household income group 4 as the basis of comparison since it stands for the average household income group in this study.

$HOS_{i,t}$  = household size for respondent  $i$  in year  $t$ , defined as the number of people living in respondent's home.

$DNP_{i,t}$  = how important discovering new places and/or things is in motivating the respondent  $i$  to visit a destination in year  $t$ , measured through a 7-point Likert scale with 1 = *very important* and 7 = *very unimportant*.

$GAW_{i,t}$  = how important getting away from daily routine/role/obligation/stress/troubles is in motivating the respondent  $i$  to visit a destination in year  $t$ , measured through a 7-point Likert scale with 1 = *very important* and 7 = *very unimportant*.

$MDF_{i,t}$  = how important meeting different people is in motivating the respondent  $i$  to visit a destination in year  $t$ , measured through a 7-point Likert scale with 1 = *very important* and 7 = *very unimportant*.

$TFF_{i,t}$  = how important spending time with family and friends is in motivating the respondent  $i$  to visit a destination in year  $t$ , measured through a 7-point Likert scale with 1 = *very important* and 7 = *very unimportant*.

$RAR_{i,t}$  = how important rest and relax factor is in motivating the respondent  $i$  to visit a destination in year  $t$ , measured through a 7-point Likert scale with 1 = *very important* and 7 = *very unimportant*.

Please note that DNP, GAW, MDF, TFF and RAR were re-coded by swapping the ends of the scale around.

The dependent variable is defined and measured as follows:

$DIS_{i,t}$  = distance traveled from Hong Kong to the main destination city by respondent  $i$  in year  $t$ , measured in kilometers.

The proposed model for this study is:

$$\begin{aligned} DIS_{i,t} = & A0 + B1EXP_{i,t} + B2LOS_{i,t} \\ & + B3STA_{i,t} + B4MOD_{i,t} + B5_1AGE1_{i,t} \\ & + B5_2AGE2_{i,t} + B5_3AGE3_{i,t} \\ & + B5_4AGE4_{i,t} + B5_5AGE5_{i,t} \\ & + B6_1EDU1_{i,t} + B6_2EDU2_{i,t} \\ & + B6_3EDU3_{i,t} + B6_4EDU4_{i,t} \\ & + B7GEN_i + B8_1HOI1_{i,t} + B8_2HOI2_{i,t} \\ & + B8_3HOI3_{i,t} + B8_4HOI4_{i,t} + B8_5HOI5_{i,t} \\ & + B8_6HOI6_{i,t} + B8_7HOI7_{i,t} + B9HOS_{i,t} \\ & + B10DNP_{i,t} + B11GAW_{i,t} + B12MDF_{i,t} \\ & + B13TFF_{i,t} + B14RAR_{i,t} + e_{i,t}; \end{aligned}$$

$e_{i,t}$  = error term.

## FINDINGS

Average distance traveled from Hong Kong by the respondents was 3,722 km while the mean trip expenditure was HK\$12,414. Respondents stayed an average of 7 nights on their trip with three travel companions. Mode of travel was almost an even split between independent travel and package tour. Among the



travel motivation variables, rest and relax was rated as the most important variable with a mean value of 4.16 while meeting different people was rated as the least important one with an average rating of 2.65. Average age group of the respondents corresponded into the 36–45 category with a mean household income level of 30,000–\$39,999. Mean level of education of the respondents was close to the some college or university level. Average household size was reported as three people.

The data analysis used a standard pooled multiple regression procedure for the 2005–2010 period. The data analysis for this period was in the form of cross-sectional regression. Outliers were detected based on Mahalanobis distance. After deleting 824 cases, a total of 1,646 cases were used for further data analyses. Results of pre-analysis assessment indicated that there are no issues related to skewness, normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity of residuals (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). The regression analysis findings are presented in Table 2. Variance inflation factors (VIF) were computed to assess the impact of collinearity among the variables. The VIF values shown in Table 2 are all below 1.7 which is considered to be acceptable. Adjusted *R*-squared values, which explain how much of the variability observed in the data is accounted for by the model, range between .227 and .303. The overall goodness of fits of all periods examined, which was represented in *F* statistics, was significant at a .05 level.

Length of stay on the trip and total trip expenditure were the only variables that are statistically significant throughout the data collection period. The coefficients of both variables are positive. Depending on the year of the data analysis, either length of stay or total trip expenditure has the highest level of influence among all trip characteristic variables on distance traveled from home. The standardized coefficients allow such comparison among different independent variables. The negative relationship between size of the travel party and distance traveled from home for the 2005–2010 period indicates that distance traveled from Hong Kong decreases as the number of travel companions increases. Among trip characteristics, mode of

travel was the only variable that is not significant in the analysis.

Interestingly, sociodemographic variables except age were statistically significant only in a few instances. Age was significant in all periods except 2008. The significant age variables were AGE4 and AGE5 which imply that Hong Kong leisure travelers between 46–55 and 56–65 years old tend to travel further distances in comparison to their counterparts that are in the 36–45 age category. Education level of the respondent had a significant positive relationship with distance traveled from Hong Kong in 2008 only. The data analysis in 2008 indicates that Hong Kong residents with postgraduate degrees travel to farther distances in comparison to their counterparts that have attended some college or university. Household income was significant only in 2006. The significant household income variables were HOI5 and HOI8, which imply that Hong Kong leisure travelers with a household income of 50,000–HK\$59,999 and HK\$70,000 or above tend to travel farther distances in comparison to their counterparts who are in the 30,000–HK\$39,999 household income category. Perhaps the most interesting finding of this study is that after considering trip characteristics and sociodemographic characteristics, none of the travel motivation factors had a statistically significant relationship with the distance traveled from Hong Kong to the main destination.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Several important findings emerged from this study. First, taking the 2005–2010 period into consideration, trip expenditure, length of stay during the trip, size of the travel party, and respondents' age have significant influence on Hong Kong residents' destination choice. The most influential variable is length of stay, followed by trip expenditure, two age groups, and size of the travel party. These findings are similar to Lang et al.'s (1997) findings. They found that the Taiwanese travelers who chose to travel

TABLE 2. Standard Multiple Regressions of Trip Characteristics, Respondents' Sociodemographics and Travel Motivation Factors on Distance Traveled from Home

Variables	Time period													
	2005-2010		2005		2006		2007		2008		2009		2010	
	Coef	VIF	Coef	VIF	Coef	VIF	Coef	VIF	Coef	VIF	Coef	VIF	Coef	VIF
EXP	0.287***	1.224	0.218*	1.700	0.316***	1.242	0.254***	1.301	0.255***	1.332	0.318***	1.383	0.289***	1.229
LOS	0.306***	1.274	0.303*	1.699	0.259***	1.284	0.379***	1.396	0.266***	1.422	0.291***	1.526	0.323***	1.376
STA	-0.064**	1.063												
MOD														
AGE1														
AGE2														
AGE4	0.072**	1.398					0.130*	1.431					0.139*	1.657
AGE5	0.101***	1.330	0.263*	1.687	0.138*	1.355					0.209	1.487		
AGE6														
EDU1														
EDU2														
EDU4														
EDU5									0.125	1.217				
GEN														
HOI1														
HOI2														
HOI3														
HOI5					0.154*	1.635								
HOI6														
HOI7														
HOI8					0.152*	1.605								
HOS														
DNP														
GAW														
MDF														
RAR														
TFF														
F	25.387***		2.390**		4.100***		5.698***		4.270***		6.097***		6.641***	
R <sup>2</sup>	.298		.443		.373		.355		.296		.362		.325	
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.286		.258		.282		.293		.227		.303		.276	

Note. VIF = variance inflation factor; EXP = total trip expenditure; LOS = length of the stay; STA = size of the travel party; MOD = mode of travel; AGE1, AGE2, AGE4, AGE5, AGE6 = respondent's age group; EDU1, EDU2, EDU4, EDU5 = highest education level of the respondent; GEN = gender; HOI1, HOI2, HOI3, HOI5, HOI6, HOI7, HOI8 = average monthly household income; HOS = household size; DNP = importance of discovering new places and/or things; GAW = importance of getting away from daily routine/stress/troubles; MDF = importance of meeting different people; RAR = importance of resting and relaxing; and TFF = importance of spending time with family and friends.

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ ; numbers reported here are standardized regression coefficients.

farther have longer trip lengths, smaller party sizes, and spent more during their trips.

Second, Hong Kong residents' destination choice is highly associated with trip characteristics in comparison to sociodemographics and travel motivation factors. This is an interesting finding in that many previous studies (i.e., Moscardo et al., 1996; Um & Crompton, 1990) argued that sociodemographics have significant influence on destination choice. Other studies (i.e., Jang & Cai, 2002; Moscardo et al., 1996; Zhang et al., 2004) emphasized the importance of travel motivation factors on destination choice. One plausible explanation to this finding can be related to the methodology used in this study. None of the previous studies used distance traveled from the origin city as a proxy for destination choice. This operationalization allows regression analysis which shows the relative impact of sociodemographics, trip characteristics, and travel motivation factors on destination choice. After accounting for trip characteristics, very few sociodemographic variables and none of the travel motivation factors were able to explain Hong Kong residents' destination choice. Another plausible explanation can be associated with the relationship between distance traveled from Hong Kong and travel motivation factors. In general, people can travel short or long distances with similar motivations. Also, one can argue that motivations emerge from the travelers themselves instead of being attached to the distance traveled from home.

Third, a year by year analysis in addition to the 2005–2010 period analysis allowed us to track the trends in the data over time. For instance, a clear trend is that expenditure during trip and length of stay are significant throughout the observation period. A second trend is related to the age of the respondents. The clear trend emerging from the analysis is that relatively older Hong Kong residents are more likely to travel to farther distances compared to their counterparts between 36–45 years old.

These findings should be of interest to the tourism professionals who are interested in the Hong Kong outbound tourism. These parties include, but are not limited to, tour operators, destination management organizations,

and travel agents that target Hong Kong international travelers. For instance, destinations that are close to Hong Kong can focus on packaging their products with shorter trip lengths and making their packages attractive to travel companions in addition to the travelers. Furthermore, destinations that are relatively far away from Hong Kong should focus on packaging their products to attract the Hong Kong outbound travelers with longer trip lengths and plan activities that cater to individual needs by providing something new that Hong Kong residents cannot experience during their daily routine.

By using Hong Kong residents as the sample, the present results could be limited to Hong Kong outbound market. Another limitation of the study is related to the use of a main destination city that the respondents visited during their overseas trips. It is likely that the respondents had visited more than one destination during their trips which might have introduced some bias into the findings of this study. As this was one of the very few studies that examined the relative impact of trip characteristics, sociodemographics, and travel motivation factors, future studies can shed more light into this topic by replicating this study in different outbound markets.

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