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ANALYSIS OF CHINESE AND RUSSIAN TOURISTS: BEHAVIOURS AND CHARACTERISTICS

Supervisor: *Ing. Alessandro Perego*

Assistant Supervisors: *Ing. Filippo Renga*

Dott.ssa Eleonora Lorenzini

Master Graduation Thesis by:

Lucas David Alcover 859249

Octavio Musa Pensalfine 859251

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Abstract

The next document aims to describe the most important characteristics and behaviours of the Chinese and Russian outbound flow of tourists, which are comprised by those travellers visiting abroad countries. These two emerging countries have been gaining massive importance during the last years, therefore largely contributing to the world's economy and development. The Tourism Industry is no exception to this, reason why unveiling their tourists' essence and comportments is of great relevance. As being responsible for most of the world's travel expenditure, and accounting for a significant share of total outbound travellers, it is evident the attractiveness they represent for the worldwide destinations, willing to draw their attention and boost their local economies. Consequently, it is crucial to understand their most relevant attributes and analyse how to cope with them in the best way.

After an extensive literature review by which it was possible to arrive to a rich and complex data base (quantitative and qualitative) describing the current situation of these two markets, the Tourist Journey model was used to illustrate and describe their behaviours and characteristics in all the phases of the Tourist Journey (Pre, During and Post trip), as it is one of the clearest approaches to organize all the information.

Having recognized the fundamental comportments, the results provide some support for those willing to develop an effective plan and strategy to better attract this kind of tourists. It is possible to assure that they are likely to be one of the key players driving the future, and the sector will probably be in their hands, hence the importance of this analysis cannot be underestimated.

Sommario

Il prossimo documento mira a descrivere le caratteristiche e i comportamenti più importanti dei flussi di turisti cinesi e russi in uscita dal suo paese, cioè quei viaggiatori che visitano paesi esteri. Questi due paesi emergenti stanno acquisendo una grande importanza negli ultimi anni, contribuendo in gran parte all'economia e allo sviluppo del mondo. Nello stesso modo, l'industria del turismo non fa eccezione a questo, motivo per cui svelare l'essenza e i comportamenti dei turisti è di grande importanza. Visto che questi due paesi sono responsabili della maggior parte delle spese di viaggio in tutto il mondo e che rappresentano una quota significativa dei viaggiatori uscendo dal proprio paese, è evidente l'attrattiva che rappresentano per le destinazioni in tutto il mondo, disposte a attirare la loro attenzione e stimolare le loro economie locali. Di conseguenza, è fondamentale capire i loro attributi più rilevanti e analizzare come affrontarli nel modo migliore.

Dopo un'ampia revisione della letteratura con la quale è stato possibile arrivare ad una base di dati ricca e complessa (quantitativa e qualitativa) che descrive la situazione attuale di questi due mercati, il modello di viaggio turistico è stato utilizzato per illustrare e descrivere i loro comportamenti e caratteristiche in tutte le fasi del “Tourist Journey” (Pre, Durante e Post viaggio), poiché è uno degli approcci più chiari per organizzare tutta la informazione.

Dopo aver riconosciuto i comportamenti fondamentali, i risultati forniscono un sostegno a coloro che desiderano sviluppare un piano e una strategia efficace per attirare meglio questo tipo di turisti. È possibile assicurare che sono probabilmente uno dei fattori chiave che guidano il futuro e che il settore sarà probabilmente nelle loro mani, per cui l'importanza di questa analisi non può essere sottovalutata.

Executive Summary

The tourism industry is one of the most important sectors driving the world's economy in terms of direct or indirect contribution to the GDP, as well as one of the most relevant jobs' creator. Over the last decades, it has had a steep growth, allowed mainly by the emergence of new technologies, and by the globalization phenomenon, which has facilitated the movement and flow of people to every place in the world.

There are three diverse nominations to the flow of tourists in concordance with their destination:

- Outbound travellers: They are those considered as citizens of a country travelling to a foreign one.
- Inbound travellers: It is the flow of tourists going to a specific country which is not their state of provenience, regardless the latter.
- Domestic travellers: In this case, the residents of a country travel to other places inside the limits of the nation.

Generally, these flows of tourists have diverse characteristics which should be analysed in different ways. Domestic travellers usually make trips to know their own country, which involves a lot of amenities: same language, no VISA requirements, more or less the same customs and equal money transactions. However, when talking about outbound/inbound tourism, the things become more difficult. There are many issues and factors to consider when organizing an outbound trip, reason why planning times are higher, and attending to professionals or experimented peers for information gathering is sometimes unavoidable.

To continue, despite the difficulty of preparing a trip abroad, nowadays the increasing emergence of digital tools, the so-called ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies), have led tourists to undertake an easier planning process than before. The Internet has allowed a big number of users to have access to all the information needed in faster and more precise way, allowing them to make their own schedule without the obligation to attend to a professional intermediary. What is more, some platforms present in the internet, such as reviews' websites or the so diffused social media sites, allow the interaction among tourists or users of a specific service. By means of this digital communication (by posting videos, pictures or reviews), tourists can have access to real descriptions of the target place. In addition, some online travel companies have started to break through the market in the last years, enabling tourists to directly acquire some services of the journey, as for example hotels and flights. The so called Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) are changing the schemes when tourists decide to make a journey, making the purchase process faster and easier.

Moving on, to better understand the characteristics of the tourists in the world, each of them should be analysed independently from the others. The current document aims at describing specifically the characteristics and behaviours of the Chinese and Russian flow of tourists making outbound travels. These two markets are so particular that they need special attention to recognize which are the features that best define them.

As the tourism industry is an important part of the world's economy, and Russian and Chinese travellers are so relevant to the Travel and Tourism Sector, therefore it arises the necessity to study their most interesting issues, in order to understand their contribution to the development of the industry, and discover which are the best to make the sector grow.

First, the project starts with an introduction of the industry's history and development, including some interesting numbers and trends about the world's tourism sector. Moreover, an analysis is made in terms of the different factors enhancing the relevance of the tourism industry, such as travellers' general behaviours, global tendencies and the diffusion of digital technologies.

Secondly, there is a description of the digital tourist. As the offer of digital devices and online platforms increases, there are more and more tourists taking advantage of them to facilitate and enjoy the trip in the best way. Therefore, an analysis is necessary to understand how there tools are intruding into the tourists' lives, and how they are reacting to them. Furthermore, the phases of the Digital Tourist Journey model are briefly described, as it is going to be used downstream in the study. Since the first sense of inspiration until the moment of sharing experiences with friends and relatives after the mere realization of the journey, the tourists are becoming heavy users of digital appliances.

Next in order comes the characterization of the actors involved. Firstly, the main players belonging to the offer side, and the most important digital tools available in the market were introduced. Despite these topics are not the objective of the work, it results useful to concisely describe them, as the upcoming analysis will rely on how do the Chinese and Russian tourists make use of them.

In second place, the principal aim of this work is carried out, which is analysing the demand side of the market. The demand side in this case comprises the outbound flow of travellers coming from Russia and China. By organizing and scanning all the data gathered from the literature review during the whole period of research, there were found some characteristics that describe them in general, such as the total number of travellers, favourite destinations, interactions with offline and online channels, and their commitment to engage with different digital appliances. It was almost essential to recreate all their characteristics by following the Digital Tourist Journey model, in order to better explain their preferences. The structure of the model comprises three main phases:

- Pre-Trip phase. Subsequently divided into Inspiration, Information Research and Booking.
- During-Trip phase
- Port-Trip phase

It was identified the fact that they exhibit really different behaviours. Nevertheless, they seem to have some similarities, such as the importance that the youngest sector of the market (millennials) represents, the increase in the amount of independent travellers, and the barriers they have when they have to travel abroad (for example, language and VISA issues). The model evidences that they can be considered as unique tourists, hence they cannot be analysed as a single segment.

Finally, a conclusion is made, presenting a summary of the most important attributes that Chinese and Russians have, which make them account for a very potential and promising group to be taken under consideration. The future of the industry seems to be in the hands of digital technologies, but, more importantly, in the relationship that these tourists have with them in the travelling experience.

Introduction

The scope of this thesis will be at specifically analysing the two critical and promising markets: China and Russia. In particular, focus will be given to examine the digital behaviours, the on-going trends and the numerous characteristics coming from these two countries' outbound flow of tourists.

Nowadays, the tourism industry is facing a drastic and constant evolution towards the digital world. As Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are increasingly intruding every sector of the economy, is particularly the Tourism business one of the most disrupted ones. On one hand, this means that people is becoming savvier when it comes to the use and interaction with digital tools when travelling, by relying deeply on them through every step of the journey. On the other hand, it also implies that the offer side of the Industry is also bearing some changes and adopting new strategies in order to keep pace to this new challenge.

To start with, the Travel and Tourism Industry represents one of the most important and promising sectors worldwide. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2016), over the decades, tourism has experienced continued growth and deepening diversification to become one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world. These dynamics have turned tourism into a key driver for socio-economic progress.

The Industry is characterized and mostly dominated by developed countries and regions, where almost the greatest percentage of the overall number International Tourist Flows (1,235 million, according to *UNWTO, 2017*) is generated between them. However, developing countries and regions are starting to play an important role in the Tourism Business (Minghetti et Al., 2010).

From 15 to 20 the years, the sector has undergone with numerous profound changes and challenges, which caused a deep transformation of the business (UNWTO, 2011). The most important ones, which have caused a greater effect, are the following:

- **Globalization:** has led to an increase in the possibilities and easiness of travelling anywhere. Moreover, this process has introduced opportunities for cheaper and faster trips.

- **Developing countries and regions' relevance:** as emerging countries are bearing sustainable economic growth, then a great number of people are willing to travel around the world (Tretheway et. Al, 2006). A clear example of this is the BRICS population (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa).
- **Meaning of travelling:** unlike the old reason for travelling, which was mainly going on vacations just for resting and visiting any city in the world, nowadays tourists are seeking for new meaningful experiences, which create value for them. This refers to the fact that people are now pursuing customized and personal trips, with the objective of enriching themselves spiritually and culturally. Furthermore, this new meaning of travelling also entails a shift in the duration and timing of vacations, fluctuating from traditional long trips, to more brief and concise ones (Jennings & Polovitz, 2006; McCain et. Al., 2003).
- **Peer-to-peer trust:** formerly, tourist gave a great deal of importance to the marketing conducted by the different travel businesses, mostly basing all the decisions upon how convincing they were. In spite of that, tourists have started to give a lot more of importance to what their peers say or judge about any vacation aspect. They trust more the opinions and references of peers than in the marketing campaigns of Travel Businesses, so guiding their choices basing upon reviews read online. It is really important to highlight the relevance and value of Social Media. As a matter of fact, this very reason has been one of the main drivers for this transformation in the Tourism Industry (Kim et. Al, 2016; Dickinson et. Al, 2016).
- **Information and Communication Technologies:** the introduction of ICT in the Tourist Industry has provoked profound changes and remodelling of the whole structure. The Internet and the convergence among informatics, communication, and multi- media have provided both tourists and destinations new channels through which to empower their communication process while reducing search and distribution costs (Buhalis & Law, 2008). In addition, ICTs are changing the way travellers enjoy all the phases and steps of a trip, shifting from old technologies to more modern ones, since they are easier and more versatile to use (MacKay et. Al, 2016).

It is well-known that the Travel and Tourism Industry plays a central and fundamental role in the World's economy. Throughout the years, it has scaled up in terms of tourists travelling around the world, as well as its total impact to the worldwide GDP and jobs creation. For instance, the international flow of Tourists has increased from 950 million in 2010, to 1,235 in 2016. Moreover, its Total contribution to GDP has incremented from 9% in 2010 to 10.2% in 2016 (World Travel & Tourism Council[1], 2017), while Travel and Tourism is responsible for creating 1 in 10 jobs on the planet. For six years now, the industry growth outperforms that of the global economy, showcasing the industry's resilience in the face of global geopolitical uncertainty and economic volatility (World Economic Forum, 2017).

Going deeper into the analysis, Tourism also symbolizes one of the most important industries of the European region. Considering the total international flow of tourists, Europe holds a 52,5% share of the global tourist arrivals in 2016 (European Parliament[2], 2015). According to the World Tourism Organization, Europe is and will remain the world's most important tourist destination and tourism-generating region. What is more, Tourism is the third largest socio-economic activity in the European Union (with a contribution of a 9.9% of European's GDP (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2017)), and makes an important contribution the EU's gross national product and to employment (European Parliament, 2015).

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[1] Methodology: they gather and study data together with the Oxford Economics organization inside the Oxford University business college. They create reports for 200 countries, 100 industrial sectors and over 3,000 cities. (See Appendix (A))

[2] Methodology: the author of this article made a literature review in the most important reports containing data and statistics of the European market (Eurostat, UNWTO, United Nations, European Commission, OECD, among others)

Digital Tourism

As it was mentioned previously, there is a huge potential when it comes to the Tourism Industry. The huge incremental growth, both economically and culturally, that this sector is bearing, can be properly explained by a determinant factor that is intruding every industry: digitalization. This very aspect has been gaining importance throughout almost every Industry in the world, to such extent that it is nowadays very difficult, nearly impossible, to be competitive without a Digital Strategy.

As information technology (IT) equipment is increasingly mobile, multi-functional, and user-friendly, access to and use of the Internet is becoming ubiquitous (MacKay et Al., 2011). IT is now transforming our understandings of time and space, and life domains including home, work, and vacations, regardless of distance between them (Green, 2002).

A digital tourist can be in interpreted by that one who interacts with a digital tool in one or more of the diverse phases of the travel, with the objective of enriching his knowledge in an easier and faster way, compared with the previous traditional tourist.

Even though there are a vast number of technologies and digital tools involved in the Digitalization process of Tourism, the one to be specially considered and recognized is the use of Internet.

Internet has deeply affected the structure of the Tourism Industry, by changing the sources of competitive advantage, as it increasingly determines firms' cost and ability to differentiate (Buhalis, 1998). To start with, it has lowered entry barriers, by facilitating the linking between direct consumers and Computer Reservation Systems (CRSs) and Global Distribution Systems (GDSs). Another relevant fact is the appearance of the first Online Travel Agencies (OTAs)[3], who began to provide direct access to the travel market. Since its introduction, travellers have greatly relied on the Internet for having direct interaction with their travel planning, bypassing in some way

[3] Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) are travel websites that provide online booking facilities for hotels, airlines, cars and other travel related services to users. OTAs are based on B2B2C systems (Quora).

the traditional travel agencies and operators (Xiang et Al., 2015). In consequence, almost every Tourism Agency and organization has developed specific websites in order to be an important communication channel with customers, supporting reservation, searches, and virtual tours; thus, becoming the primary source of contact with potential visitors (Zachs et Al., 2010).

To continue, people around the world are becoming more and more digital throughout the years. According to Marco Napoli[4] (2016), it is worth remarking that the Tourism sector is dealing with Tourists that have the following characteristics:

- **Demanding:** The advanced use of ICT's generates that customers can ask for more customized packages or even to ask for individualized trips as they know that already exists something which fits best with their preferences.
- **Omni-Channel:** Travellers have the possibility to access to an infinite number of websites and applications in internet that give all the pertinent information needed, before available only in some books, magazines or offline travel agencies. Also, they can have access to this everywhere thanks to mobile networks and mobile devices, which makes the situation even better.
- **Multi-Device:** It is very important nowadays to understand how the current tourists use their devices, and in this way, offer the best product. However, the fact is that they don't use just one, but they are prone to use a few of them depending on the phase of the trip or they level of comfort in that specific situation.
- **More Deeply Involved:** People travelling nowadays want new experiences, because of their personal interest. They feel they have a distinct way to interact with the environment and culture while travelling; therefore, this profound involvement is translated into more personalized trips.
- **Open to comments:** The new digital tourist relies deeply upon peer-to-peer comments and judgements about any aspect of a trip. The internet has provided

[4] Methodology: he made a literature review in the first part of his dissertation in which the segmentation of digital tourists was made following the researches that other authors did with respect to each of the characteristics.

them with the possibility to get to know direct information about places to be visited, attractions to attend, hotels reviews, and any other important fact. This means that positive and negative comments obtained online by traveller-peers can change or define a Digital Tourist trip planning. Social media, blogs, and Word of Mouth are some of the enablers of this substantial trend.

- **Independent:** ICT allows Digital Travellers to plan their trip mainly by themselves, sidestepping in a certain way the role of traditional Travel Agencies and Operators. OTAs have had a great influence in this aspect, granting the tourist the possibility of directly contacting any service needed during the vacation, therefore becoming self-planners. In addition, tourists have lost interest in touristic packages for large groups, since now they tend to seek for their own preferences.
- **Always Connected:** The introduction and development of the Internet and Mobile Devices, such as smartphones and tablets, have created in the Digital Tourist the urge to share his experiences while travelling, either by social media, or any other means available. Moreover, it also implies that tourists can access any important information at any time they feel in need, such as searching for hotels in the planning phase, as well as looking for local restaurants while visiting a city.
- **Seeker of economic and personalized trips:** Search engines and comparators gives the Digital Tourist the possibility to filter the different offers according to the different factors influencing the trip, such as preferences, budget, dates, or personal reasons. In consequence, individuals feel freer and sometimes even more comfortable while planning and purchasing a vacation. What is more, a relevant and increasingly growing factor coming into play is the rising of sharing economies[5]. This popular trend enables travellers to share experiences with different people around the world, while spending less money.

[5] According Investopedia, a sharing economy is an economic model in which individuals are able to borrow or rent assets owned by someone else. It allows individuals and groups to make money from underused assets. In this way, physical assets are shared as services.

All these trends and characteristics are the result of a strong presence and evolution of new digital products and technologies. Hence, it is feasible to argue that there is a great portion of individuals that are shifting their activities from offline channels, into online and digital ones. This incremental tendency goes hand in hand with the Digital Tourists characteristics described previously.

Traditionally, when people thought about going on vacations, the process of organizing it was quite troublesome and demanding. To start with, a constant back-and-forth communication between tourists and Travel Agencies and Operators was necessary, as well as trusting Travel Business direct advertising and marketing. These mechanisms require a lot of time and effort for tourists. Notwithstanding, ICT and digitalization have facilitated this process, both in terms of easiness in planning, and speeding up the procedure. What is more, it also allowed Digital Tourists to perform more customized and personal trips, as now they have pretty much the whole control over the whole vacation. It is worth mentioning that OTAs have outperformed their traditional counterparts, as their competitive advantage relies on the offering of a great variety of travelling options, price comparators, and the comfort of being able to carry through this process from anywhere the tourist wants.

The digitalization of the Tourism Industry has been so strong and significant, that it is possible to clearly divide the entire Tourist's vacation into different Digital Phases, which altogether comprise the Digital Tourist Journey.

The different Digital Phases in which the Digital Tourist Journey can be divided, will depend on the author, since every scholar has a personal way for describing it[6]. For the purpose of this thesis, the methodology that is going to be used to explain the different stages of the Chinese and Russian Tourist Journeys will follow the scheme

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[6] For example, Bassaler (2015) argues that the phases comprising the Digital Tourist Journey are divided into Planning, Commuting, Enjoying and Sharing.

Chalmers & Brown (2003), separated it into three major phases: pre-trip, during-trip and post-trip.

The Digital Innovation in Tourism Observatory from Politecnico di Milano relied on this last categorization, but ultimately subdivided the pre-trip phase into Inspiration, Information and Booking.

proposed by the Digital Innovation for Tourism Observatory from Politecnico di Milano. To continue, it will be useful to introduce a briefly description regarding each phase of the journey:

- **Pre-Trip Phase**

  It consists of all the activities carried on by the tourist before the mere realization of the Journey. Travellers usually look for destination possibilities and prepare their stay in all the aspects, such as searching for accommodation, transportation and activities (Chalmers & Brown, 2003). Internet is considered to be the most penetrating digital tool in this stage. When it comes to the devices utilized to perform the different activities, it results that smartphones and mobile devices are the most used gadgets for this step of the process (Renga & Lorenzini, 2016). This phase is subdivided into:

  - **Inspiration:** during this stage, tourists come to know about their desire to travel. In broadly consists of their inspirations and motivations, and the dream about where to go, and how to reach that destination.
  - **Information Research:** next in order, tourists start to search for information about their possible future trip. Among the different types of data, they mainly look up for information about accommodation, in-site activities, transportation, and other relevant services that they might be wanting for that specific trip.
  - **Booking:** lastly, after everything has been searched and analysed, the tourist continues to realize the booking of the different services needed for the trip (this is lodging, transportation, leisure activities, etc.).

- **During-Trip Phase**

It embraces all the activities performed during the stay. In this stage, differences concerning generational aspects are relevant. For instance, as Millennials[7] tend to undertake a more sharing and social trip, such as sharing information (videos, photos, comments) on social media or to their peers, older generations are inclined to plan trip's itineraries involving cultural activities such as museums, walks in natural environments or simply attending to events to entertain the family (Jerome Bassaler, 2015). From a technological point of view, there is a wide influence of it associated with this phase, although there is also a lot of room to increase the quantity and performance of the technologies used. The ICTs have tremendous potential to shape and transform tourist behaviour (Iis Tussyadiah, 2017).

- **Post-Trip Phase**

It is defined by all those memories and comments tourists have after the development of the trip. They normally share and remember with friends and family the moments they liked and enjoyed during the vacation (Chalmers & Brown, 2003). The proliferation and advancements of online channels, such as social media or blogs, have enabled Digital Tourists to post and share comments and reviews about their experiences in specific Tourism Businesses (for instance accommodation, restaurants, etc.). Bloggers, Word of Mouth, and community users keep growing and influencing people's choices. Tourist select their destinations based on bloggers' comments. Millennials often go through consumer-to-consumer channels to consume tourism products or services (Jerome Bassaler, 2015). To represent it with numbers, 85% and 78% of Asian and European consumers trust peers'

[7] Millennials (also known as Generation Y) are the demographic cohort following Generation X. There are no precise dates for when this cohort starts or ends; demographers and researchers typically use the early 1980s as starting birth years and the mid-1990s to early 2000s as ending birth years (www.wikipedia.org).

recommendations, but only 48% and 27% of them respectively, trust in online advertisements (The Nielsen Company[8], 2015).

Before the Internet, the travel industry was linearly organized with three major components: suppliers, intermediaries and end-consumers (Buhalis et. Al., 2007). However, its introduction has caused a blending of every actor, as well as a new customer-path when planning and booking a vacation, due to the mixture and openness of the communication system and the reduction of transactional costs. It is clear that the Digital World has huge potential when applied to the Tourism Industry. Nevertheless, ICT is a really dynamic and progressive field, so these changes must be understood and embraced in order to take the most advantage of it. Besides, Chinese and Russian tourists seem to have their own behaviour towards these new tools, as differences can be found about their utilization across all the phases of the journey. Therefore, it is important to unveil their attitudes and characteristics while travelling, to understand their engagement and the relevance they give to online and offline channels.

[8] Methodology: The Nielsen Global Trust in Advertising Survey polled 30,000 online respondents in 60 countries to gauge consumer sentiment about 19 paid, earned and owned advertising mediums. (See Appendix (A))

Actors Involved

Having introduced and examined the Digital World and its importance and function in the Tourism Industry, the current chapter will be dedicated to developing an analysis about the positions, roles and activities of the different players acting in the Digital Tourism Sector.

The principal objective of this work is to analyse the demand side of the market. As previously defined, the focus will be set in understanding the comportment of the flow of tourists from both the Chinese and Russian markets. However, as it is impossible to explain one side of the market without relating it to the other, actors regarding the offer side will be briefly introduced and described, highlighting their main utility to the digital tourist. In this way, by comprehending the role of the offer and the present digital tools, it will be easier to interpret how these tourists engage and communicate with the different channels/sources throughout the journey.

By having stated the commitment to explore the demand side of the Chinese and Russian Travel & Tourism Industries, the analysis will be based in the main characteristics of the flow of digital tourists, unveiling how they behave, the different reasons for travelling, how they interact with the offline and online channels, the use of novel technologies available along the tourist journey, their level of satisfaction, and the current and possible future trends that are going to be present in these markets.

Offer Side and Digital Tools

To start with, an explanation of the offer side might be helpful to understand the main players present in the Tourism Industry, in terms of their evolution and importance over the last years. In addition, the various digital tools existent in the market are going to be introduced, highlighting their relevance to the digital tourist, and the increasing usage they have been giving to them throughout the years.

Before all else, offer can be defined as the cluster of production units in different industries that provide consumption goods and services demanded by visitors

(UNWTO, 2014). When referring to the Tourism Industry, the offer side can be widely divided into two main parts:

- Traditional Companies
- Innovative Players

Despite the huge number of different actors actively involved in the offer side of the Sector, traditional companies can be broadly understood as those operating in the areas of lodging, restaurants, transportation, Travel Operators and Travel Agencies. On the other hand, the Innovative Players taken into account are those who employ the Internet and ICTs as their main asset (internet companies), hence relying their entire business model on the digital field.

As having existed in the Tourism Industry since always, they have huge interaction with tourists, and account for a high share of use across almost every service. Nevertheless, the introduction of ICT in the sector started to change the scenario. Even though they are still an important part of the tourist life, an incremental loss of relevance has aroused during the last years. Nowadays, the tourist has embedded this digital culture for the whole travelling experience, making use of different digital tools and platforms for different purposes. In consequence, these traditional players have not been able to fully introduce the new digital world into their businesses, thus failing in delivering what this “new tourist” is searching when travelling.

On the contrary, the Innovative Players of the industry have managed to take advantage of this growing tendency, so capturing a great share of tourists’ attention. Major attention must be given to online travel agencies, analysing how their digital business is penetrating and taking leadership in the sector, becoming either a threat or an opportunity for the traditional players. Because of their digital nature, they are capable of offering a more easier and, sometimes, cheaper experience to the tourist, therefore turning digital travellers to book through them.

Moreover, equally important momentum are gaining the new sharing-economy platforms. As OTAs, they exploit the potential of ICTs to offer an innovative service to the tourist, who mainly chooses it because of its price convenience.

Furthermore, the spread of ICT into the sector has also made possible the proliferation of numerous digital tools which tourists have been increasingly using over the years.

Their utilization is basically aimed at facilitating the tourist experience during all the phases of the trip.

Among the large amount of them, one which deserves great consideration is Social Media. Basically, they have widely enabled people to communicate in an easier way, thus allowing a fast and simple information sharing, which they extensively use across the entire tourist journey. Similarly, Review Sites as well as online Travel Blogs and Portals are used for basically the same reason: getting tips and advices from fellow travellers, that might help them for planning or booking decisions.

Lastly, the high diffusion of mobile devices has also influenced the whole travel experience. Their usefulness relies in the fact that they can be carried wherever the person goes, hence being able to undertake basically any activity wherever the tourist is, whether searching for information, booking or even using travel related apps in-site.

Demand Side

As previously mentioned, our work will focus at analysing specifically two broad, promising and potential markets in the Tourism Industry, which are the Chinese and the Russian ones.

The numerous changes and challenges that the Travel and Tourism sector has undertook in the last few years, which were deeply described during the first sections of this work, have led to an enormous growth and development of these countries' tourism markets. Due to the fact of being among the top ten most populated countries (where China leads the ranking), there is an obvious great urgency to understand these types of tourists in order to attract them, as they will represent a quite significant majority of the overall world's outbound travels.

The following sections will aim at fully analysing and describing the Chinese and Russian Travellers. In pursuance of better identifying and illustrating their most important characteristics, trends and behaviours, it will be useful to apply the Digital Tourist Journey model (this is, the division of the whole experience into the three main phases), leading to an enhanced and clearer understanding of their attitudes and comportments throughout the entire travel experience. Moreover, special attention will be given to their relationships with the different channels available, either online or offline ones.

The Chinese Tourist

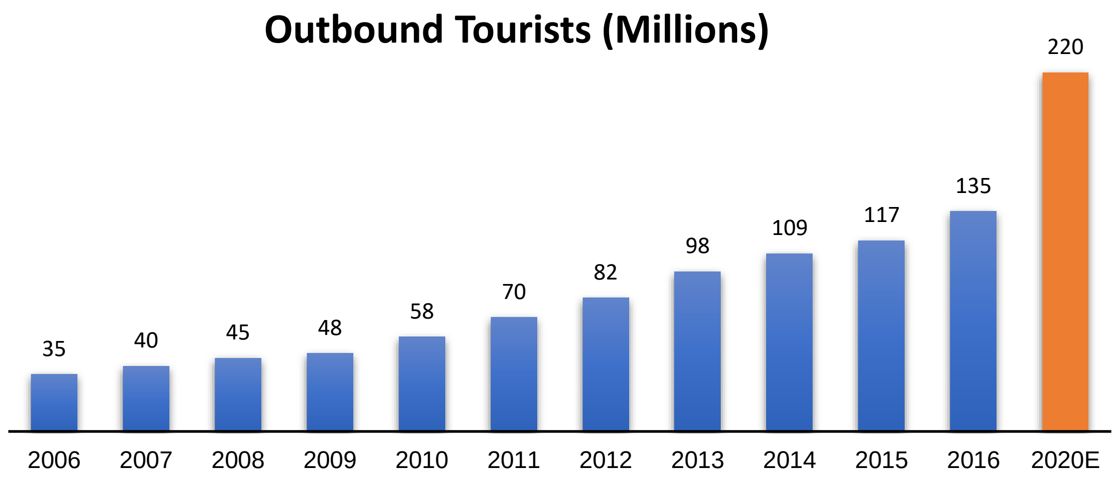
To start with, in order to understand nowadays the behaviour of the Chinese traveller, it is necessary to look in retrospect and analyse the development and evolution of the Tourism Industry within the Asian country.

Firstly, it is worth mentioning that travelling had always been almost an impossible activity for the Chinese population. Nevertheless, it was not until 1983, when the panorama began to change, due to the fact that citizens were given the allowance to travel overseas, mainly for business or study reasons, since leisure travel was still not widely approved. Throughout the years, Chinese people started to become more interested in this new travelling activity, but it was specifically in the beginning of the 1990s when awareness of overseas travel opportunities grounded its roots (Tretheway & Mak, 2006). Notwithstanding the increasing consciousness of the Chinese population towards this new type of lifestyle, the Chinese government have always had an extensive control over the outbound tourism development. As a matter of fact, there are still some policies regarding this issue, which the most important one to be considered is the Approved Destination Status (ADS) policy, which states vigorous regulation over where the Chinese tourist can travel to (International Journal of Contemporary Management, 2016).

In defiance to all the difficulties and regulations that the Chinese travellers have faced throughout the years, it is remarkable to point out that China has become one of the fastest major growing source market regarding the number of outbound tourists. Coupled with this trend, the number of outbound tourists have steeply increased, from 117 Million in 2015, to 135 Million in 2016, representing a 15.38% increase and becoming the largest outbound travel market (World Travel Online, 2017; UNWTO[9],

[9] The United Nations World Tourism Organization collect data by contacting city councils. Then they analyse and show the data following the format of the Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) and the International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics (IRTS 2008). (See Appendix (A))

2017). In addition, according to a study carried out by Goldman Sachs (The Chinese Tourist Boom[10], 2015), this number is expected to almost double, up to 220 Million in 2020. Although large, it is utterly important to highlight that these numbers represent less than 10% of the entire Chinese population, which can be considered as a really small percentage.



Source: *UNWTO, 2017; Goldman Sachs 2015*

Figure 1 - Chinese Outbound Tourism Evolution

On the other hand, it is also interesting to consider the inbound tourism to China, as well as the domestic travels within the Republic. Regarding the former issue, the number of inbound travellers to China in 2015 was of 25.985 Million Tourists, while in 2016 it relished of an increase of 8.3%, so reaching to 28.142 Million travellers (this is without considering visitors coming from Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan) (Travel China Guide[11], 2017; China Internet Watch, 2017). If compared to the number of outbound tourists in the same years, it is evident that the Industry recorded a trade deficit. To continue, when it comes to domestic travels, they can be considered as the

[10] Goldman Sachs made calculates their data creating a scoring system focused on three main areas (shopping, flight time and visa restrictions, and tourist attractions) based in the views of their consumer goods analysts in the respective regions. (See Appendix (A))

[11] This website uses the information of the China National Tourism Administration in order to analyse all the data they provide. (See Appendix (B))

Chinese-most-chosen type of trip, representing an 84% of the overall number of travels (World Travel Online, 2017).

Another essential point to understand is the fact that Chinese people face a great hindrance in travelling due to visa issues. As identified by World Travel Online[12] (2017), nowadays there are just 61 countries which have visa exemption and visa-on arrival agreements with China, while many European countries are currently launching visa free policies for Chinese tourists. Likewise, relevant is to mention that only a vast minority of Chinese citizens owns a passport (just 10% as of today). Within this small group of people, it is estimated that passport ownership corresponds to 28% of the "urban middle class", versus 3% of the "urban mass" (Goldman Sachs, 2015).

Considering all these factors, it is possible to assert that significant differences among the numerous Chinese citizens can be found, in terms of their economical and geographic situation. As stated before, there is currently a trade deficit in the Chinese tourism industry, since outbound tourism is leading the dispute. Among all the determinants giving rise to this situation, the main ones to be considered are the growing gulf between rich and poor, the large amount of public funds being used for oversea travel, and leakages from domestic demand. Moreover, there is a disparity in tourist generation, chiefly provoked by regional differences in economic development, notably between the east and west of China: The East side is more developed and richer than its western and central counterparts, thus being the main outbound tourism generating area (Dai et Al., 2016).

With regard to their spending behaviour, the Chinese tourist is the top global spender in terms of outbound tourism expenditure (UNWTO, 2017). Conforming to China Internet Watch[13] (2017), the total amount of oversea expenditure in 2016 was of 229 Billion Euros, symbolizing an average of 1700 Euros per person. What is more, the

[12] Methodology: the Chinese website uses within this article information showed in the China Tourism Academy, which is the official tourism researcher of the China National Tourism Administration. The latter uses government data and gather the rest of the information by their own within their laboratories. (See Appendix (B))

[13] Methodology: China Internet Watch is a website that within this written article, they used information of another data company called StatCounter. By looking their last numbers, they make possible to see how the Chinese market behave in their research phase. (See Appendix (B))

Chinese International Travel Monitor[14] (Hotels.com, 2016) reports that 92% of Chinese travellers plan to increase or maintain their spending, whereas 33% plan to spend more on travel in the upcoming year. As they consider travelling as a fundamental aspect of their lives, they are keen to spend almost 25% of their income on travel (COTTM, 2016). Last but not least, it is of paramount importance to highlight the boost of these trends due to the traditional Chinese Holidays. Chinese tourists are likely to expand their budgets for trips during these seasons, where the average spending of Chinese outbound travellers for Spring Festival is expected to exceed the median expenditure of Chinese travels in the next years (China Tourism Academy: Welcome Chinese Standard Certification, 2016)

Moving on, it is worth describing and understanding their overall characteristics and behaviours. In the first place, regarding the age factor, those Chinese citizens born during the 1980s and 1990s play an important role in outbound tourism. According to the study developed by Goldman Sachs (The Chinese Tourist Boom, 2015), nearly 62% of all the surveyed travellers were Millennials (Figure 2).

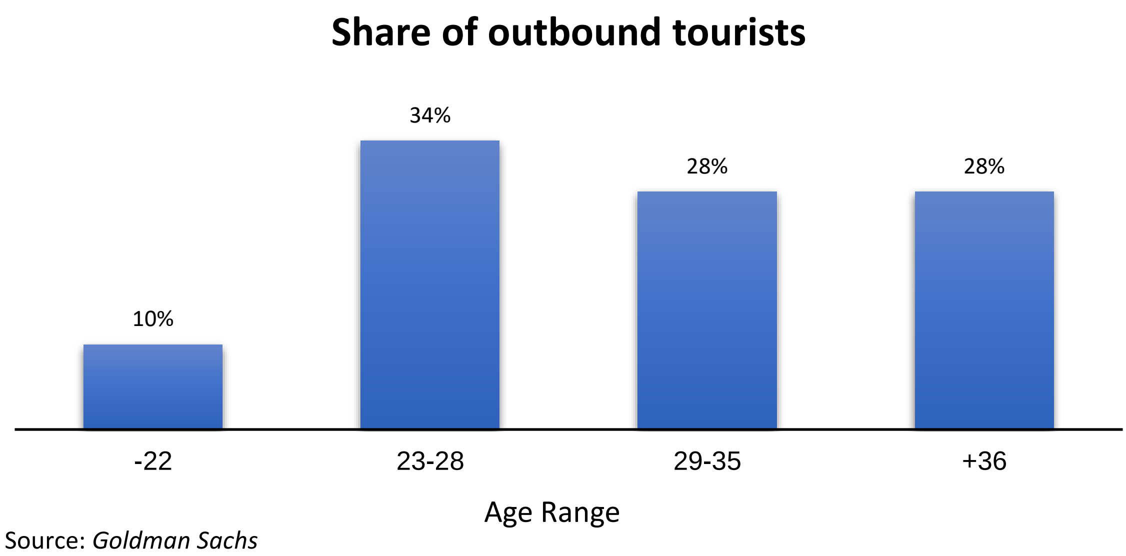
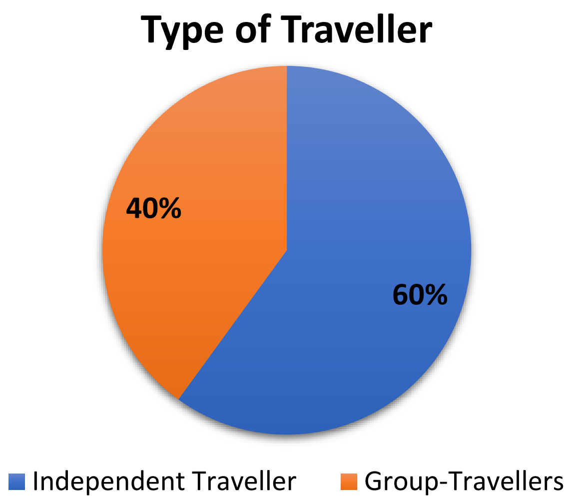


Figure 2 - Outbound Tourists Categorized by Age

[14] Methodology: it involves surveys made to travellers and hotels. In the case of travellers, they asked 3,000 Chinese residents among 18-54 years old who had travelled overseas in the past 12 months. In the hotels side, 5,800 of them from 37 countries were asked to fulfil the questionnaire. (See Appendix (A))

When it comes to gender disposition, there is a greater female willingness to travel. During 2016, 56% of all outbound tourists were women, while the rest were men (World Travel Online, 2017). Furthermore, a profound change in terms of tourists' lifestyle is being witnessed: they are younger (60% between 25-45 years old), richer, more educated and more independent than before. Almost 77% have an undergraduate degree or higher, and 44% earns a monthly income of €2,820 or more (Marco Napoli, 2016; China Tourism Academy: Welcome Chinese Standard Certification, 2016). The traditional and well-known group-travels among Chinese is starting to lose importance within the Chinese tourism community: from the entire number of outbound travellers, the ones travelling in group accounted for 40%, while individual travelling was 60%, where this number has been increasing over the last few years. Nevertheless, these group-travel packages are likely to survive, since they are mostly chosen by those tourists who are visiting a place for the first time, thus lack of experience, and the language barrier contributes to this choice. Therefore, tours offered by agencies are greatly appealing to them, as they help apply for visas, make travel plans, and save them time (World Travel Online, 2017; GMA[15], 2017; Travel China Guide, 2016).

[15] It is a digital agency based in Shanghai. They provided information about Chinese independent travellers and how to attract them with data of the China Outbound Tourism Research Institute. (See Appendix (B))



Source: *World Travel Online (CTA), 2017*

Figure 3 - Chinese Type of Traveller

Notwithstanding the presence of independent and group travellers, the travellers from China can be categorized according to their profiles (Hotels.com, 2016). There were five groups of travellers with similar comportments and the same travel objectives:

- Detailed Explorers: It is people who were born in the 60s-70s. They are seeking for unforgettable experiences that make them feel better while learning and exploring new landscapes. Shopping and sightseeing are their favourite activities, while they prefer make research through online travel and review sites, as well as travel magazines.
- Cautious Connectors: Integrity and family are the two words that best describe this category. They were also born between the 60s-70s and they are the highest spenders. They would rather spend time with very close friends or relatives because this is the way they feel that holidays are spent in the best way. Dining and shopping are their most popular activities, and they search for information through a combination of online review sites, social media, travel magazines and newspapers.
- Experience Seekers: Into this group is possible to find the so called millennials (born after the 80s). They are seeking for something completely different, in fact they prefer to travel alone to achieve their goals. They travel to escape from the

reality, so they make activities like backpacking, local tours, events on theatres or concerts and finally get involved with locals.

- Indulgers: Into this category it can be found people from the 80s. They seek for power, influence and recognition, so they mainly decide for luxury islands or flashy places. Their main activities are local tours and taking part in sports. Friends and colleagues, travel guides and family are their main sources of travel information.
- Basic Pleasure Seekers: This segment is for the female travellers born after the 90s. Freedom is the main aspect they seek on their holidays, as well as joy with friends. They try to leave their routines to enjoy comfortable places and to take home unique moments shared with their peers.

The Chinese tourist usually embeds some particular motives for travelling, since they have a strong philosophy of learning new things in new and distant places, in order to try to improve afterwards their own culture, practices and traditions (GMA, 2017). Following the line of thought, there is nowadays an eager tendency, mostly among young Chinese travellers, where they have deep admiration and trust towards Occidental products, consequently they are more enthusiastic to shop and acquire products in Western countries (Law et Al.[16], 2016).

Considering all the different reasons why the Chinese tourist might travel, they have diverse opinions after the trip has ended, mainly about their satisfaction with it: surprisingly, 21.9% declared neither particularly enjoyed nor disliked travel, while 75.6% enjoyed it, and 2.5% did not (Luo & Zhong[17], 2014). Over 33% of Chinese travellers accounted travel as important as love and marriage, family wealth, career development, learning and education, health care, and child growth, and considered

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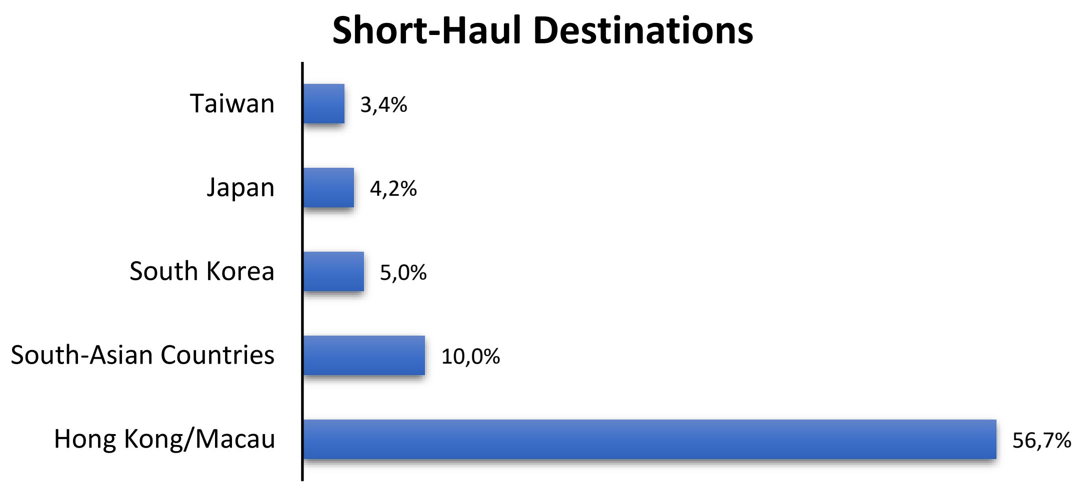
[16] Methodology: Law et Al. made a literature review of 107 articles. 53 of them gave numerical results, 28 qualitative results and 26 a mix of both of them. (See Appendix (C))

[17] Methodology: this research was made through offline surveys to a sample of 61 people (26 male and 35 female) in which the highest number of respondents were 19-30 years old, students and heavy users of social media. (See Appendix (C))

as quite significant in improving the life-quality and well-being (IPSOS Comcon[18], 2015).

Among the different visited countries, the Chinese tourist has some favourite selections, either concerning short-distance travels, or long-distance ones. In the former case, almost 80% of the Chinese outbound tourist flow is to short-haul destinations, where the most popular ones are Hong Kong/Macau (56.7%) and South-Asian countries (Figure 4) (IPSOS Comcon, 2015; Goldman Sachs, 2015). Many reasons led them to this preference, where the most relevant ones are:

- these types of trips are relatively short and cheap journeys;
- they account for shorter times and does not require long holidays;
- the recent frequent terrorist attacks happened in Europe made Chinese tourists to steer destinations towards safer Asian countries.



Source: *Goldman Sachs, 2015*

Figure 4 - Chinese Favourite Short-Haul Destinations

On the other hand, in the latter case they prefer travelling to Europe, the United States, and Australia (IPSOS Comcon, 2015). Particularly considering Europe, the European

[18] Methodology: IPSOS created a survey merged with other companies that helped in their creation and distribution. It was made for six consequently months. (See Appendix (A))

Travel Commission (Long-Haul Travel Barometer[19], 2016) revealed that regarding the overall number of Chinese tourists travelling to Europe, 70% of them are first-time visitors, while the remaining part are repeaters. Being China a quite big country, it is a fact that most of their travels are carried out by flights country, reaching an 80% of tourists declaring flights as their favourite means of transport. Once in destination, Chinese travellers are likely to choose hotel-type accommodations, where the great majority of them are prone to stay in high-end, luxury hotels (ITB – Berlin[20], 2016).

Subsequently, it is important to address to the digital side of the Chinese tourist, as it is one of the central issues of this work. As it was mentioned before, ICT has deeply affected the entire Tourism Industry, and the Chinese traveller is not the exception of it. The different digital tools and channels have led to change the way in which the tourist behave during the entire Tourist Journey.

Firstly, the internet penetration in the country has reached more than 730 Millions of users (more than half of China's population), meaning a penetration of 53% (World Bank[21], 2017). Because of being the most populated country of the world, this huge amount of digital users place China as the country with more digital users. In addition, China possess one the highest smartphone penetration rates in the world, with 58% of the population owning a smartphone (WorldAtlas, 2017). As a consequence, it is evident that internet is a crucial tool for the Chinese traveller. Taking into account that they are digital natives, it is possible to assure that they spend most of their time on social networks, such as Weibo and WeChat, to such extent that nearly 95% of the internet population has an active social account (Marco Napoli, 2016; GMA, 2016). What is more, a research carried out by Travelzoo (2016) revealed that these types of

[19] Methodology: the ETC based its results on 1,000 interviews conducted in each market every four months. The stratified sample is representative of the travel population of each market. (See Appendix (A))

[20] Methodology: Together with IPK International and the World Travel Monitor report, they can give their results about the Chinese market. They acquire data from ministries and tourism boards, as well as private companies. (See Appendix (A))

[21] Methodology: data gathered from country's governments, officially from their national statistics centres.

platforms are becoming more influential to Chinese people than emails, where WeChat has total of 697 Million active users in China.

Linked to all the evidence and factors exposing the digital propensity of Chinese people, it is also important pointing out that Chinese consumers are highly tech savvy. It is critical that those in the travel industry ensure they have a well-functioning and properly-designed app for Chinese consumers, since 70% of them plan to use a travel app to prepare for a holiday in the future (China Tourism Academy: Welcome Chinese Standard Certification, 2016). According to McKinsey & Company[22] (2016), 84% of Chinese people use mobile devices to research products, read reviews and make in-store recommendations. In addition, online purchasing is also a very popular activity, with more than 60% of them buying thins from online platforms. This fact leads to the increasing importance of online payments, field in which the Chinese Traveller is making more and more use of. Actually, there are over 83% of WeChat users have WeChat Pay wallets, and this number is likely to increase in the future.

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[22] McKinsey & Company made 10,000 in-person interviews with people, aged 18 to 65, in 44 cities representing China's major regions and tiers, it means 75% of China's GDP and one half of the population. (See Appendix (A))

Pre-Trip

Inspiration

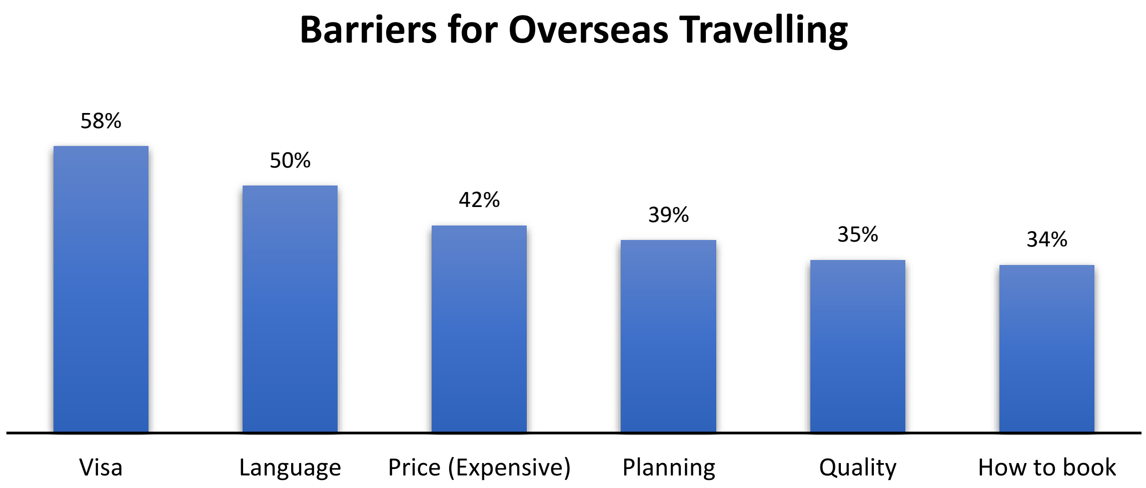
It is the process in which the future travellers recognize their willing to travel, as well making the decision to which destination they would like to visit. When it comes to describe the Chinese tourists' behaviour and motivations within this phase, it is found that there are some unique and distinctive tendencies that describe them.

To begin with, among the numerous motivations they take into account, a really important one is the popularity and reputation that a specific destination has within China. Indeed, it is reflected in the Chinese traveller's behaviour, in which they tend to follow the same patterns of the population within the country in most of the normal activities.

Furthermore, besides this strong inspiration, there are some other motivations for the Chinese tourists that make them decide among the different destinations in the world where they can travel. According to Law et. Al. (2016), the most relevant factors which inspire the Chinese tourist to make the decision of travelling, and to decide the destination, can be categorized into the following list:

- Distance and security
- Entertainment and novelty seeking
- Leisure activities to escape from pressure
- To visit popular places
- Socialization and shopping activities
- Culinary aspect of the target place

In conjunction with the different motivations of the Chinese tourist, there are several key points that greatly influence their decisions and determination about travelling. Huge importance is given to the main activities in-site that the destination in consideration can offer. In addition, the economic situation of the tourist is an obvious meaningful factor as well, since trips require a substantial amount of money. Lastly major attention must be given to the visa-granting and passport-owning issues, since travel permissions are one of the most influential and decisive elements in this phase. Essentially, the granting of the visa is a very important factor that defines their final stop, since its considered as a serious barrier to travelling. (GMA, 2017). As a matter of fact, Goldman Sachs (The Chinese Tourist Boom, 2015), evidenced that around 60% of Chinese travellers regard visa applications as the greatest impediment to travelling overseas. To continue, it is worth referring to the passport matter. As it was stated earlier, passport ownership is not so popular among the Chinese population (less than a 10% owns a passport in 2016). However, the expanding number of passport holders, from 4% in 2014 to 10% in 2016, the rapid growth of the middle-class groups in urban areas of China which are increasingly willing to spend more on fun, and the boost from Millennials' travels, are tendencies that are seeming to enhance Chinese tourists to travel. To such extent is the Millennial relevance, that nearly two thirds of current outbound travelers currently belong to this segment (15-35 years old), and it is expected that 74 Million college students graduating over the next decade to further boost passport ownership Finally, alongside with the visa and passport troubles, there are some other barriers that discourage the Chinese Tourist from overseas travel (Figure 5) (Kim et Al.[23], 2017; Goldman Sachs, 2015).

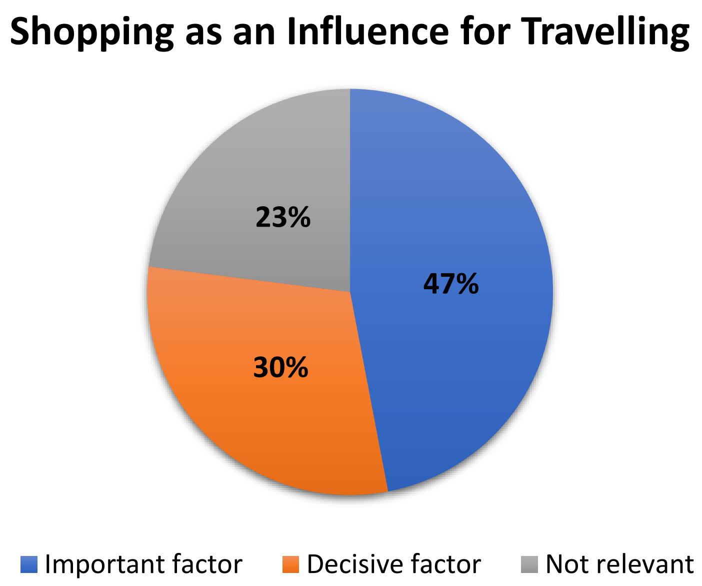


Source: *Goldman Sachs, 2015*

Figure 5 - Barriers/Impediments for Chinese from Travelling Abroad

[23] Methodology: survey instrument targeting Chinese Seina Weibo users. 212 answers collected, being 79% women and 93% of the total respondents among 20 and 30 years old.60% were employed, while 33% were students. (See Appendix (C))

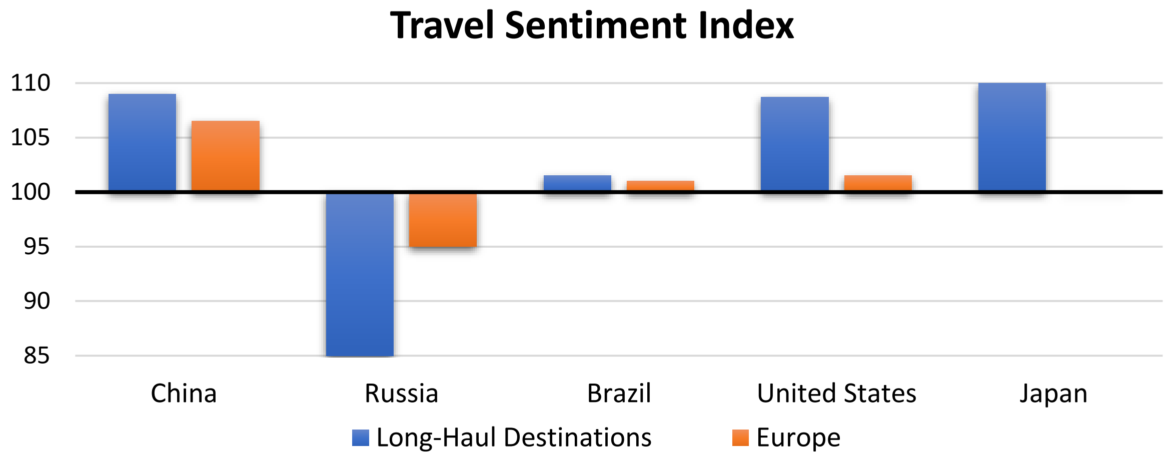
Moreover, the shopping activity is another determinant pushing the Chinese tourist to make travels abroad. About a 47% of tourists have recognized that shopping makes an important part of their holidays, but 30% of them said that it was a relevant factor when deciding for a place to visit. While this 30% of Chinese tourists still choose their destination based on shopping opportunities, there is evidence suggesting that this is rapidly changing (McKinsey & Company, 2016). The days of fast, broad-based growth are ending, as consumers become more selective about what they spend their money on. Chinese consumers are increasingly focusing their spending on trading up for premium products instead of mass products. As a matter of fact, travellers are expecting good shopping options in many travel spots, but it is not influencing the final choice of the destination, since there are other factors that play a more important role in the final selection (China Tourism Academy, 2016).



Source: *McKinsey & Company, 2016*

Figure 6 - Shopping Consideration for Travelling

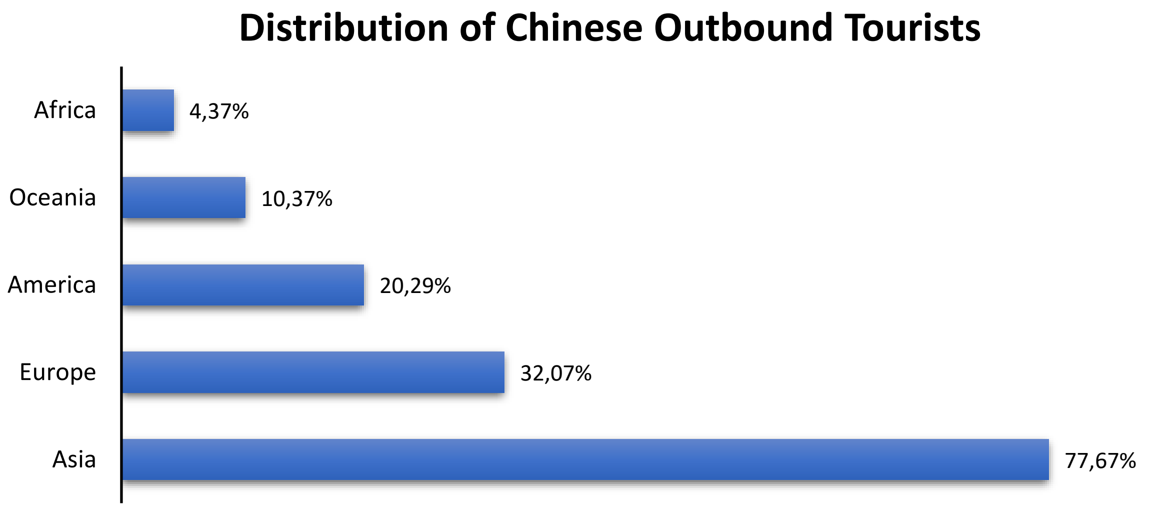
When it comes to long-haul travelling, the Chinese tourists have a particular inclination (sentiment) towards carrying out this type of travel, as well as the main destinations they choose. The study realized by the European Travel Commission (2016) exhibited that Chinese travellers are more prone towards undertaking long-haul trips, specially to Europe, compared to other markets belonging to this category (Brazil, Russia, United States and Japan, who slightly outperforms China in this aspect) (Figure 7).



Source: *ETC, 2016*

Figure 7 - Travel Sentiment Index for Long-Haul/Europe Travels. An Index lower <100 means negative sentiment towards travelling to Europe, and vice-versa.

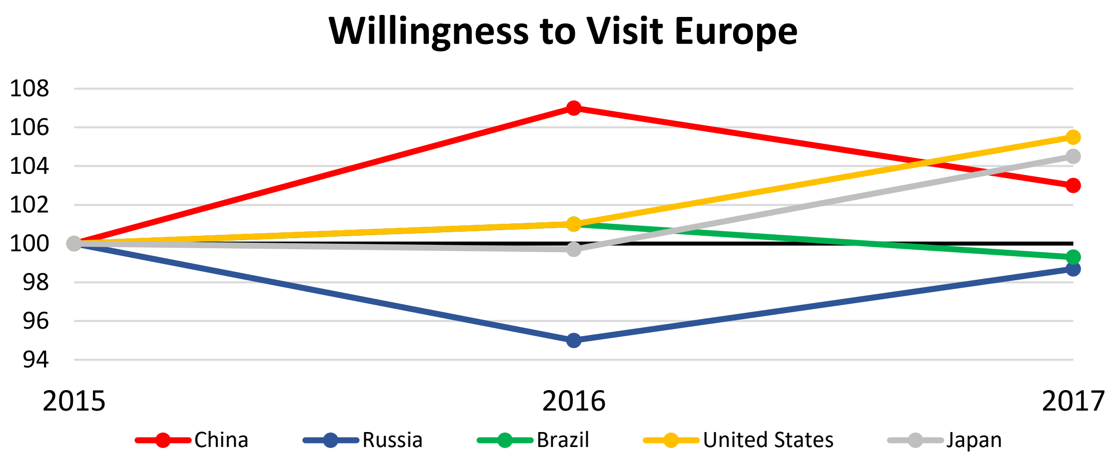
What is more, Chinese outbound tourists are more likely to visit those cities which have direct flights connections from their hometown. As the middle-class in China is expanding, and there has been a steady growth in income, the destination of Chinese tourists gradually expanded from Asia to the world. In particular, European cities are increasingly gaining more attractiveness. Nonetheless, Asian cities are still the most popular ones (IPSOS Comcon, 2015).



Source: *IPSOS Comcon, 2015*

Figure 8 - Chinese Tourists' Destinations

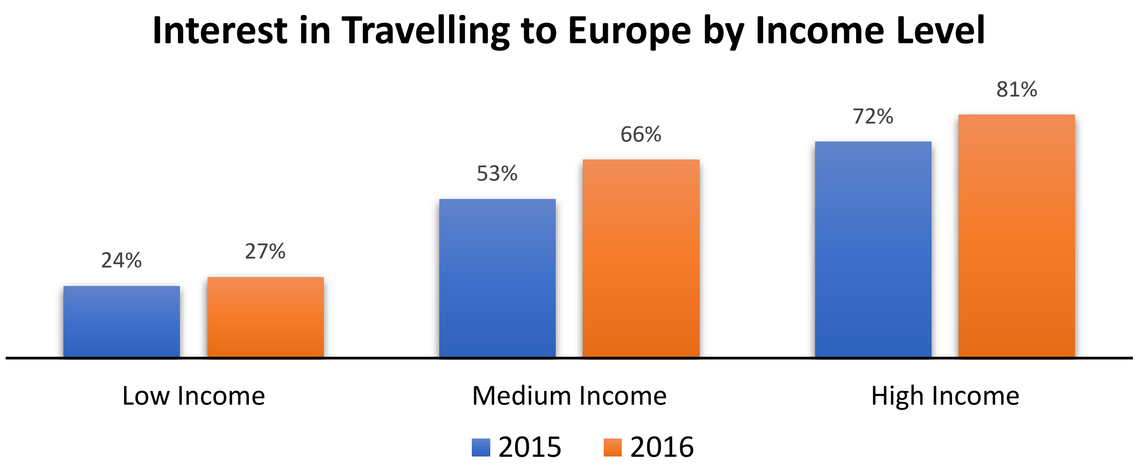
As illustrated before, there is a growing appeal towards Europe from Chinese tourists, therefore a proper analysis should be undertaken. To begin with, the European Travel Commission (2016) study revealed that Chinese tourists' willingness to travel to Europe has suffered some variations throughout the years. Even though there still is a positive sentiment towards travelling to Europe, this tendency has somewhat declined (Figure 9). Indeed, 68% of Chinese tourists willing to undertake a long-haul trip, plan to visit a European destination.



Source: *ETC, 2016*

Figure 9 - Chinese Tourists' Willingness to Travel to Europe

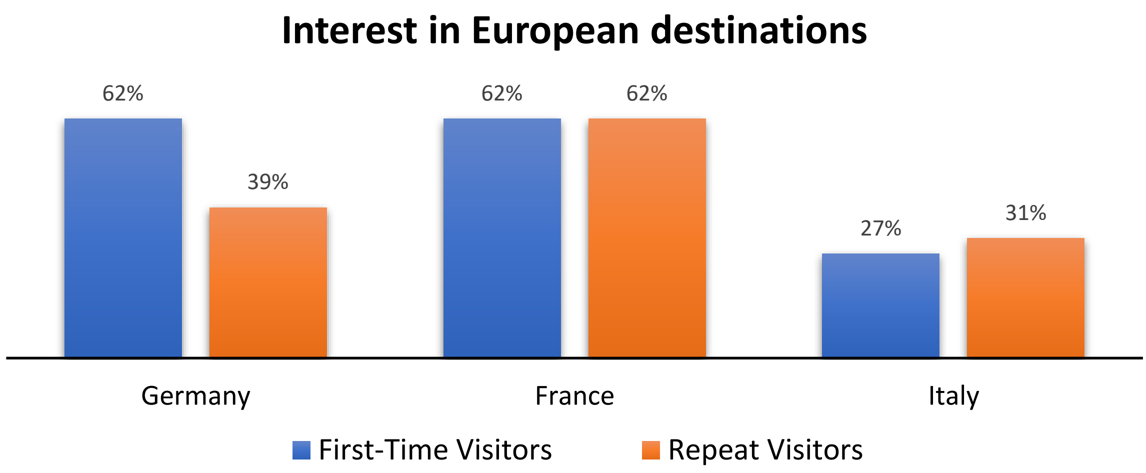
Regarding to the social status of Chinese citizens, available disposable income plays a significant role in having the opportunity to invest in long-haul travel. Evidence shows that, indeed, there is a higher propensity among high-income tourists to be more interested in visiting Europe, followed by middle-income ones, and lastly low-income travellers (Figure 10). Furthermore, this travel sentiment is highest among respondents from metropoles (Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou).



Source: *ETC, 2016*

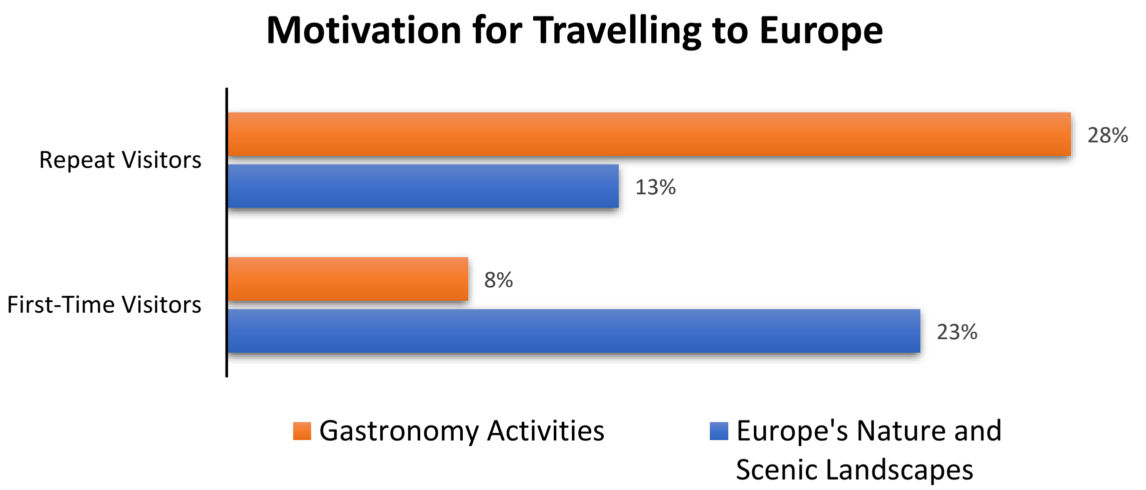
Figure 10 - Income Level Incidence on Chinese Travellers' Interest Towards Europe

To continue, well-known European destinations shape visitation patterns of first-time and repeat visitors (Figure 11). As the figure manifests, the top destinations taking into account by the Chinese tourists are France and Germany, where France manages to be of greater attractiveness for repeat-visitors. On the other hand, Italy is considered as the third option for both types of visitors. In the same way, substantial differences can be found in the motivations that drive visitors to visit Europe between first-time visitors and repeaters, where the latter seek more in-depth experiences than the former. Essentially, first-time travellers feel more motivated towards Europe's nature and landscapes. On the other hand, repeat visitors consider gastronomy as their main motivation, as they are interested in learning and enjoying the diversity of cuisines across the countries (Figure 12).



Source: *ETC, 2016*

Figure 11 - European Destinations Interest According to Type of Traveller

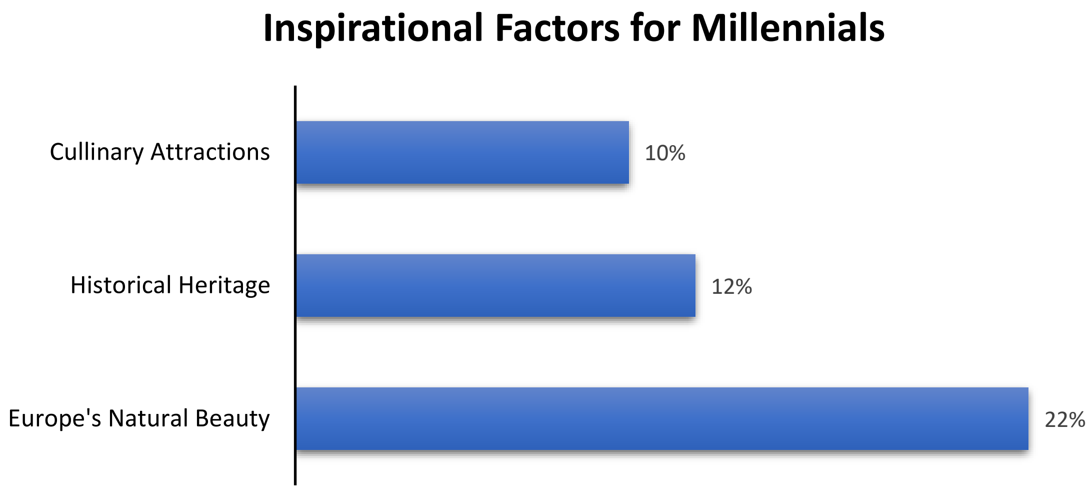


Source: *ETC, 2016*

Figure 12 - Chinese Motivations Towards Europe

Moving on to the segment of Millennials, it is significant to point out that they also have their own specific motivations to make travels to Europe. This group of people chooses their destination mostly basing on cultural affiliation, geographical proximity or unexplored opportunities. Young Chinese are above average attracted by European opportunities to acquire new skills and practice outdoor activities. The majority (64%) have France, for instance, as a top dream destination. Other increasing factors calling their attention are Europe's natural beauty (22%) and the rich historical heritage (12%).

Even though Millennials are widely characterized by performing independent and solo trips, the study revealed that only 6% of Chinese tourists have intentions to do solo travel in Europe.



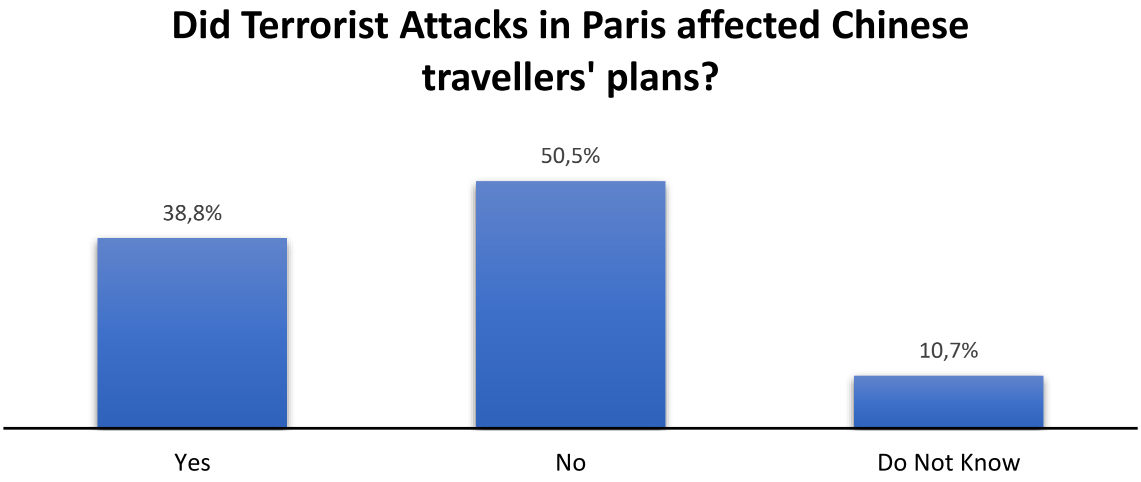
Source: *ETC, 2016*

Figure 13 - Chinese Millennials Inspirational Factors Towards Europe

Last but not least, considering Europe as a destination, there are several motives why Chinese travellers do not even consider travelling to European cities. The main reasons can be summarized into:

1- The trip is too expensive;
2- There is no free time or no vacation;
3- It is too far away.

What is more, during the past years the risk of terrorist attacks due to the current tension and disputes among Occidental countries and the Islamic State has increased, which has forced Chinese tourists to consider it twice before travelling to Europe. The study disclosed that despite the terrorist attacks in Paris, the majority of Chinese tourists did not consider modifying their plans to making a trip to Europe (Figure 14).



Source: *ETC, 2016*

Figure 14 - Effect of Terrorism in Chinese Tourists Planning

Finally, a wide categorization can be made between the different channels by which Chinese tourists come to know about their destination: online vs offline channels.

To start with, online services have an 86% of penetration in this phase (Phocuswright[24], 2016). eWOM[25] is a significant tool to consider when they create a perception about the destination they are willing to visit (Luo & Zhong, 2016). Among all the channels from which they access to eWOM, special focus must be given to websites and social media. According to GMA (2017) social media is a strong channel by which a lot of Chinese destinations discover their future destination. As a matter of fact, 55% of the Chinese tourists are influenced by websites like QQ.com, Qunar.com or Ctrip.com, as well as social media networks like Weibo, Qzone or RenRen (Marco Napoli, 2016). Within the social media platforms, the Asians follow various travel accounts which provide updates regarding interesting destinations, and travelling

[24] Methodology: PhocusWright adopted an online survey submitted to an adult population of leisure travelers with internet access, and registered about 1000 respondents for each of the 8 countries examined. (See Appendix (A))

[25] e-WOM focuses on person to person contact that happens in the internet. The communicators are non-commercially motivated so communication is perceived as unbiased, genuine and honest. It can reach a multitude of people at the same time so it has a greater potential of becoming viral (http://www.buzztalkmonitor.com/blog/electronic-word-of-mouth-presents-a-window-of-opportunity-for-businesses/)

journals. This is because they may find important offers they are going to take advantage of in the future, and to read content, comments and reviews that are decisive and influence the Chinese traveller's choices (Michopoulou & Moisa[26], 2016). Ukpabi & Karjaluoto[27] (2016) describe in their work that destination image can be created through the opinion of travellers in social media. Significant relevance is given travel blog participants' perception of destination image, which is a strong predictor of travel intention. Building affective images, cognitive images and facilitating interactions, significantly influenced bloggers perception of destination images.

Finally, in the case of the offline WOM (Word of Mouth), the Chinese decide to consult with friends and family about their past experiences or their ideas about the destination they actually have in mind (Marco Napoli, 2016). It is something crucial when they get inspired to choose among different options to know the truth of the target place, the hotel or the most attractive activities that can be performed during the trip. As their sense of belonging to a community is very important because of their customs and traditions, they really like to receive comments and information about others who have already visited the destination or someone who has the best piece of information. In this case, there is no better option than attending to the closest people.

Information Research

To continue with the breakdown of the Digital Tourist Journey, the Information and Research phase must be analysed. The process of information search represents one of the very first steps of the travel decision making, and it includes the travellers' awareness of choice and selection regarding the destination visited, as well as on-site activities, accommodations, or tours. (Michopoulou & Moisa, 2016). This next section will be dedicated to analysing how the Chinese Tourists behave during this phase, describing their characteristics and preferences.

[26] Methodology: the survey was made face to face. The sample consisted of 20 native British travellers located in the United Kingdom, and 20 native Chinese travellers located in their home country Interviews collected over a period of 3 weeks, starting from the 1st to the 22nd of March 2015. (See Appendix (C))

[27] Methodology: extensive and precise literature review about the topics under consideration.

To start with, Chinese travellers tend to search for information about numerous aspects of their future trip. A study of IPSOS Comcon (2015) revealed the how much is the share of the different aspects that they research before the departure (Figure 15).

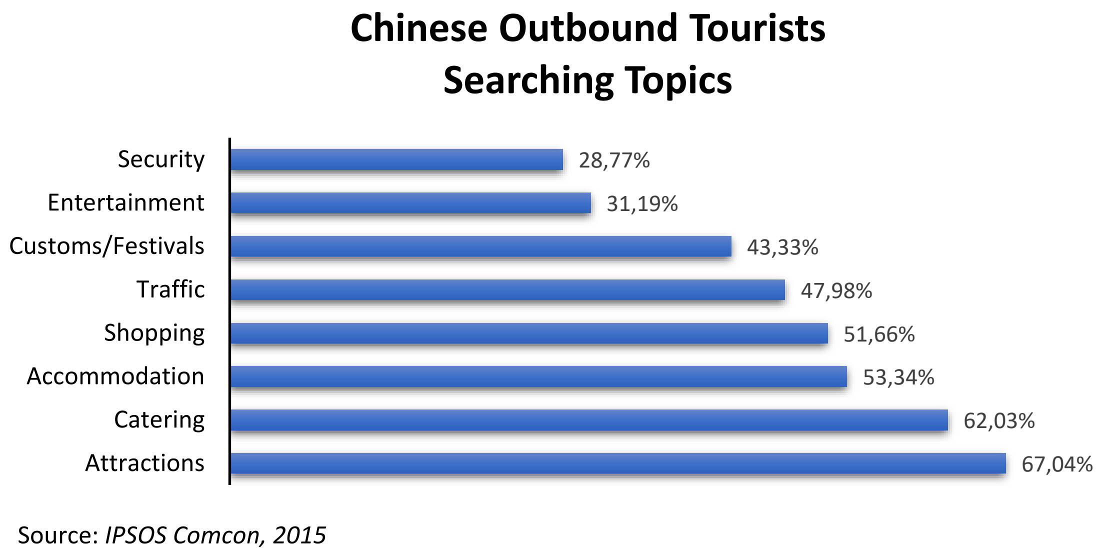


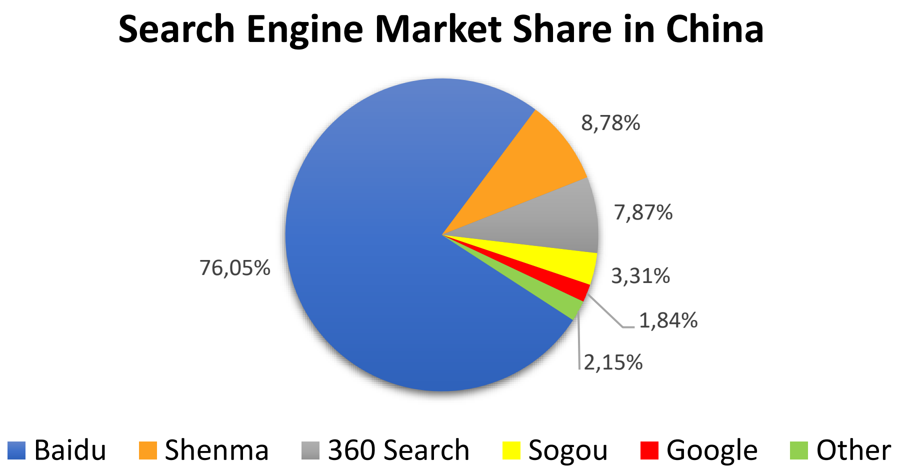
Figure 15 - Most Searched Topics by Chinese Tourists

With reference to the timeliness, the Chinese Traveller spends around 11 days performing online research. They are keen to organize and plan their vacations in advance, well ahead before the departure. In consonance with Marco Napoli (2016), 10% plans less than a month ahead, 38% two to three months ahead, and 19% more than three months ahead.

To continue, this stage can be conveniently divided into two main parts, one regarding the online information search, and the other to the offline one. Even though the Chinese Tourist can be considered as one of the most digital ones, they give major important to the interaction with offline channels when it comes to information research.

Considering the online channels and the different digital tools used during this phase, the Chinese Traveller shows some interesting attitudes and behaviours towards their appliance. Firstly, the online and digital penetration in this stage is around 82% (Phocuswright, 2016), with numbers promising a constant rise in the future. Among the reasons why appealing to the use of online channels to carry out the information search, the fact that it is easy to use and that is cheap are quite the most important ones. Broadly speaking, they tend to look online for tourist sites, restaurants, shopping activities as well as car rental services. Moreover, many of them look for tourist guides and rental care services on the internet and hire them for their stay. A study on Chinese students highlighted the actual gender differences when using the web for online information seeking, males being more engaged in search activities rather than females (Michopoulou & Moisa, 2016). The way in which the information is presented is crucial to the process, since it has the potential to change the tourist's opinions. Specifically, the factors considered as the most important about the exhibition of the information are: value-added, relevancy, timeliness, completeness, interestingness, website design and amount of information; being the first 5 characteristics related to content cues, while the other 2 are non-content cues. (Kim et Al., 2017)

They generally start their research through the use of search engines. It is necessary to highlight that unlike the Western World, the Chinese Tourist mostly use Baidu instead of Google, where the market shares represent the 76% and 1.84% respectively (China Internet Watch, 2017) (Figure 16).



Source: *China Internet Watch (StatCounter), 2017*

Figure 16 - Search Engine Use by Chinese People

From this point, they continue their search by visiting social media, vertical search engines, portal travel channels, and OTAs (Michopoulou & Moisa, 2016). Furthermore, they are prone to access official websites of tourism bureaus, websites of travel agencies, and third-party websites as they are considered the most trustworthy websites. (Luo & Zhong, 2014). Internet homepages of travel agencies (56.2%), online accommodation websites (44%), online reviews websites (43%) and social media (40.9%) are the main internet sources of information (Figure 17) (Kim et Al., 2017; Hotels.com, 2016).

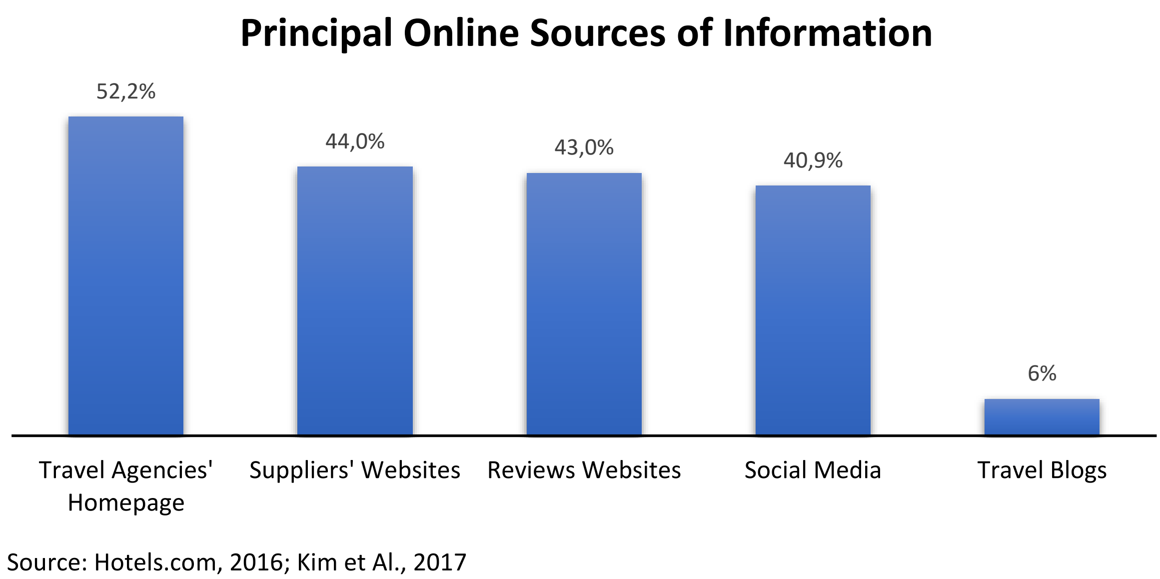


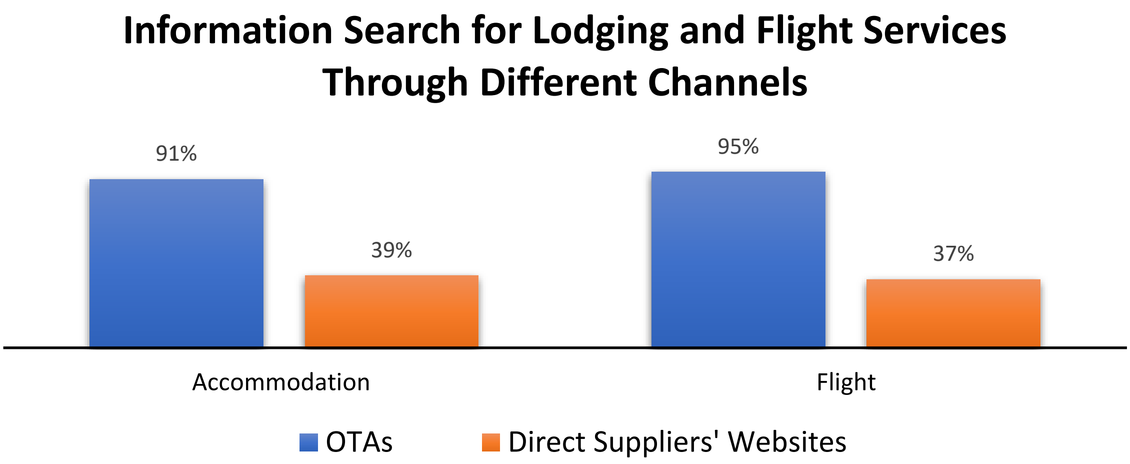
Figure 17 - Chinese Favourite Online Sources for Information Research

When it comes to searching information about outbound tourism, the study performed by IPSOS Comcon (2015) highlighted that Chinese tourists likely chose domestic tourism websites. Chinese netizens tend to avoid surfing non-Chinese websites because they perform consistently worse than their domestic equivalents. Chinese consumers expect a website to load within 4.8 seconds, but 85% of European websites fail to meet that target (European Travel Commission Bulletin, 2017).

As in the Inspiration phase, electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) has paramount effect on tourist behaviour, where contacts with strong social ties are prone to influence others and build trust, and therefore influence the decision-making process. On the other hand, weak social ties are useful to transfer knowledge and information dissemination (Luo & Zhong, 2014). With respect to social media, the Chinese traveller gives enormous attention and importance to what they found on them. According to Kim at. Al. (2017), 81% of them have travel experience using social media, which demonstrates the level of influence it has towards their decisions. Comments in social media are very integrated in people's lives and peer reviews are highly trusted (Michopoulou & Moisa, 2016). Special attention is given to the social platforms, such as WeChat and QQ, and online forums, where mainly younger segments share pictures, contents and experiences. Therefore, Chinese tourists largely use it as an information source: before travelling abroad, 75% of them would join relevant WeChat, QQ groups or forums for tourism information (IPSOS Comcon, 2015). Before taking the final decision, they boldly read reviews, view travellers' pictures, check out on forums about the reputation of travel agencies and its services to then ask its virtual network about it (GMA, 2016).

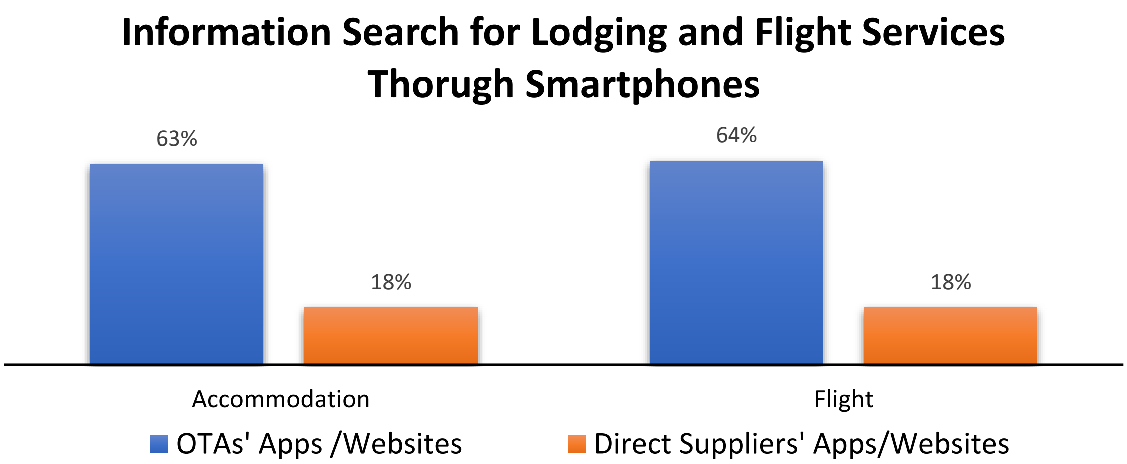
To continue, the OTAs presence in this phase of the process is certainly relevant, specifically when referring to searching information about accommodation and air transport services. As reported by Phocuswright (2016), China is the country who bears the highest numbers regarding information research about these topics, with 91% for the accommodation service and 95% for the air transport one, where tourists argue that price convenience is what drives their behaviour towards the use of OTAs. On the other hand, they seem to give little importance to searching information on direct suppliers' websites. In the case of searching for flight information, just 37% of them did it on airlines' websites. Considering lodging services, the percentage barely increases to 39%, evidencing that OTAs clearly lead this phase. Nevertheless, when it comes to the higher tourist segment (those looking for 5-star hotels), Qi, Law & Buhalis (2013) exhibited that Chinese Tourists are starting to give more importance to the specific Hotels' websites, where they considered that reservation information was the most important attribute, and Transportation Information and User-Friendly websites hit the bottom of their preferences.

There is a great share of travellers who own mobile devices in China and use them to search for information about flights and hotels on OTAs' apps or mobile websites (64% for air transport, and 63% for accommodation). Contrarily, just an 18% does it on direct supplier apps or mobile websites.



Source: *Phocuswright, 2016*

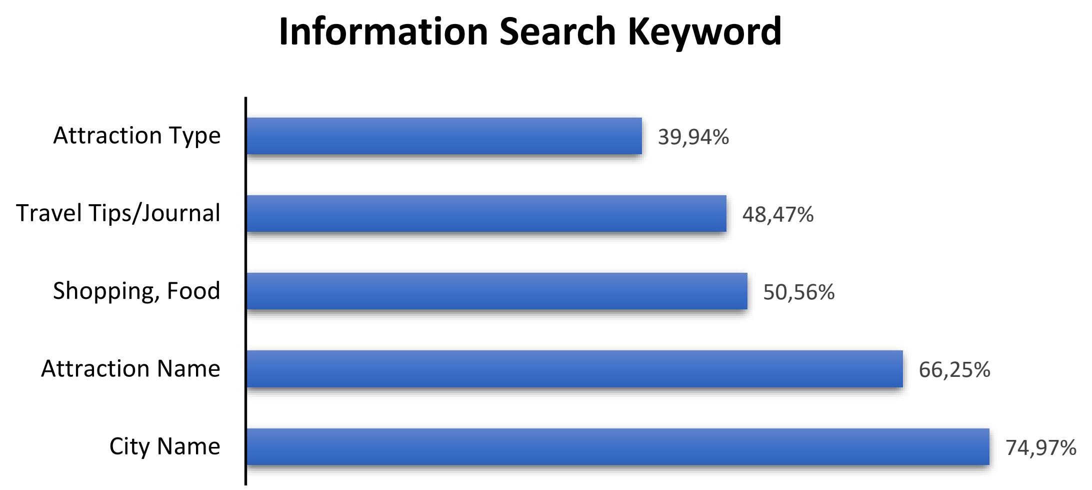
Figure 18 - Information Research Favourite Channels



Source: *Phocuswright, 2016*

Figure 19 - Information Research Favourite Channels by Smartphone

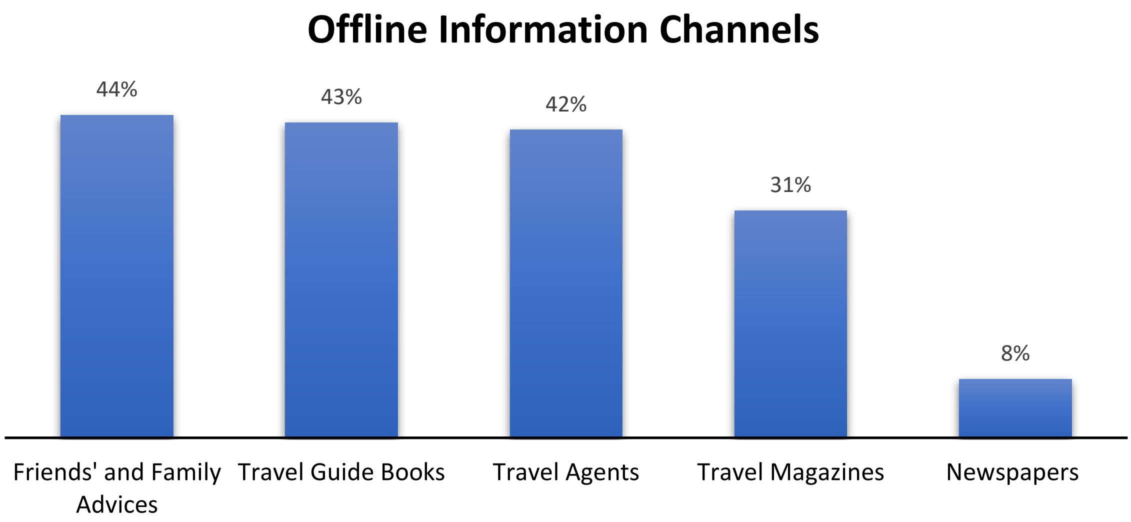
Nevertheless, it is not always easy to search the required information through internet or a mobile app for the Chinese, since there are some language barriers making this activity difficult when they want to visit foreign websites, either from travel agencies or search engines. As the Chinese language is not considered in the majority of these websites as an option, every time these people are willing to find information for their planning activity, they might consider to use some tags, keywords or interactive maps to quickly surf and find the data they are looking for (Figure 20) (Michopoulou & Moisa, 2016; European Travel Commission, 2017). By the way, it is understandable that if the information was in Mandarin, the quality of the research would be better and also their satisfaction during this phase. They expect this for the future in order to increase the visibility of the available services and to better find out which are the best activities or attractions present in the target place (China Tourism Academy, 2016).



Source: *IPSOS Comcon, 2015*

Figure 20 - Information Research by Keywords/Tags

In consideration with the offline world, it is worth mentioning that there is a strong and vast importance of offline channels for the Chinese Tourist. The very reason for this tendency is that Outbound Tourism in China is utterly a young phenomenon, where the government still has considerable control over it (Law et Al., 2016). Therefore, Chinese travellers considered themselves as low-experienced ones, who rather lean on the knowledge and experience of Travel Agencies and other offline Travel Businesses than throwing themselves into the Digital World. They take greatly into consideration Interpersonal influence and Word of Mouth (WOM), as they are primarily sources of information for purchase decisions (Luo & Zhong, 2014). Among the different offline channels used, friends' and family advices (44%), travel-guide books (43%) and travel agents (42%), are the most important ones (Hotels.com, 2016; IPSOS Comcon, 2015).



Source: *Hotels.com, 2016*

Figure 21 - Chinese Tourists Top Offline Channels for Information Research

Booking

Once the tourists have searched and found the information pertinent to the trip, it is moment to book the diverse activities following their preferences. In this step, the travellers make reservations for accommodation, flights, entertainment activities and restaurants among others, in order to enjoy the trip and feel free in the moment they are visiting around the target place.

To continue, there is a time pattern that Chinese tourists follow in average to plan their destination, buy their tickets and get their reservations done. It is mainly due to their culture and customs which make them behave most of the times in the same way. Indeed, in average they book at least two months before the mere realization of the journey (GMA, 2017).

The Chinese travellers' behaviour towards booking holidays aspects either through Travel Agencies or Operators, or booking everything by their own, can be interesting to analyse. Conforming to the European Travel Commission (2016), Chinese tourists are keen to attend to Travel Agencies for booking services for at least one aspect of the trip, while holidays fully organized by the traveller are far less common.

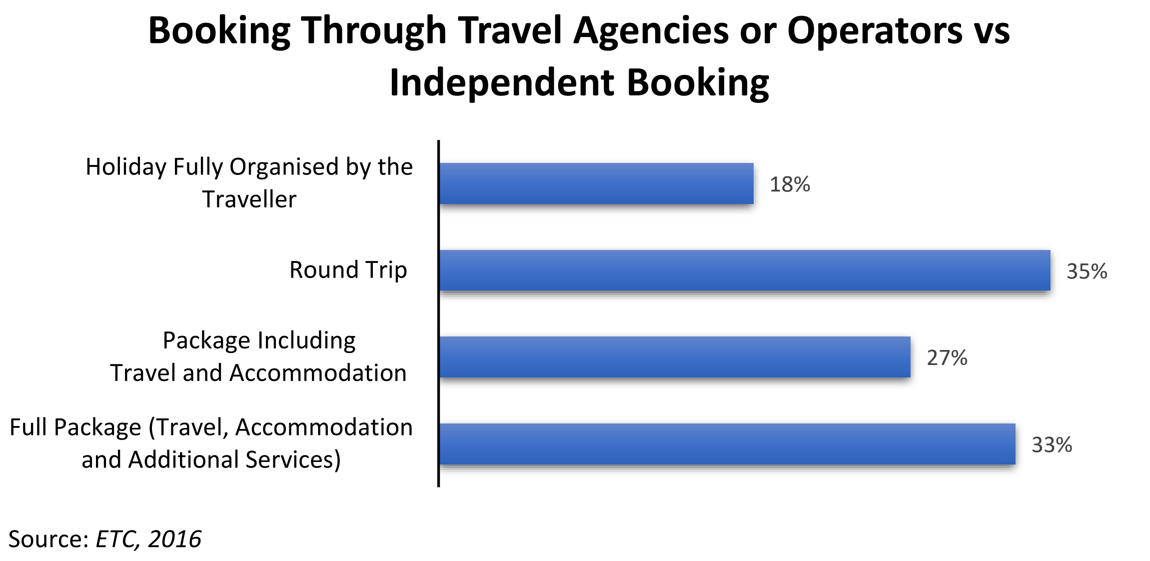
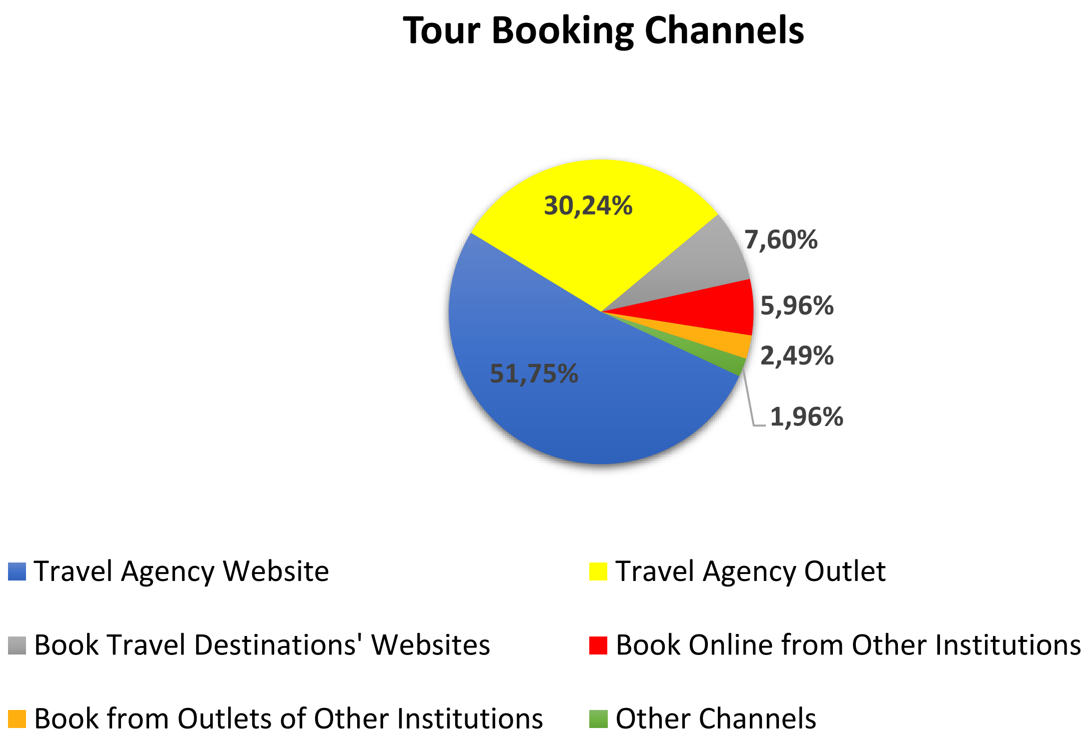


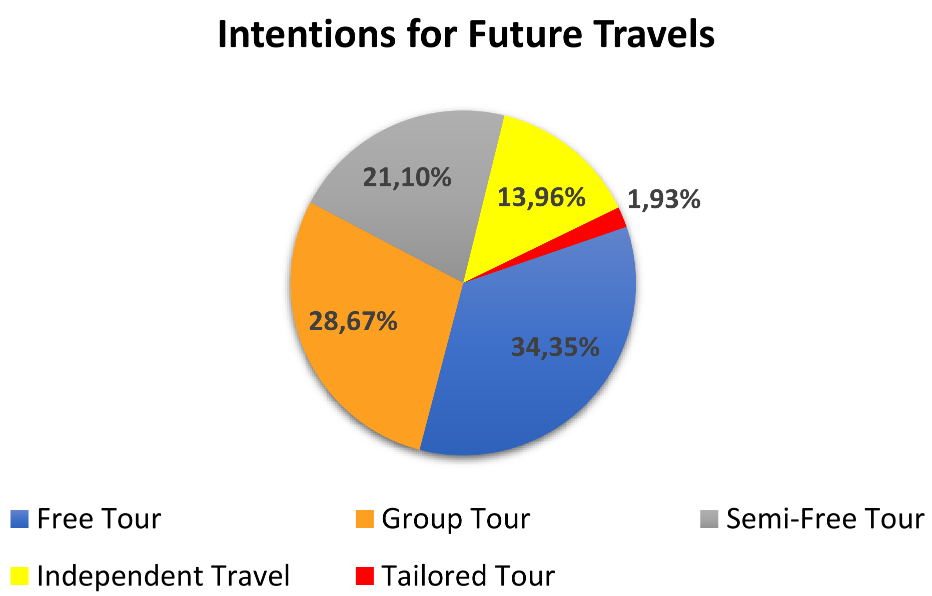
Figure 22 - Participation of Travel Agencies/Operators in the Booking Phase

As formerly detailed, the Chinese outbound tourism can be broadly categorized into two main groups, which are Group-travels or independent travellers. However, according to the study carried out by IPSOS Comcon (2015), both groups seem likely to choose tours provided by Travel Agencies for outbound travelling, with a share of 86.1% of them doing so. Among the different channels, travel agencies' websites were the most used one, followed by the outlets of travel agencies (Figure 23). Regarding travellers' intentions for the future, more than 85% of them would still choose various kinds of tourism products provided by Travel Agencies, from which free-tours and group-tours ranked top in the list (Figure 24). On the other hand, credibility and quality of local guides, travel schedules and tour programs of the Travel Agency were the factors that concerned the most to Chinese tourists.



Source: *IPSOS Comcon, 2015*

Figure 23 - Shares of Tour Booking Channels



Source: *IPSOS Comcon, 2015*

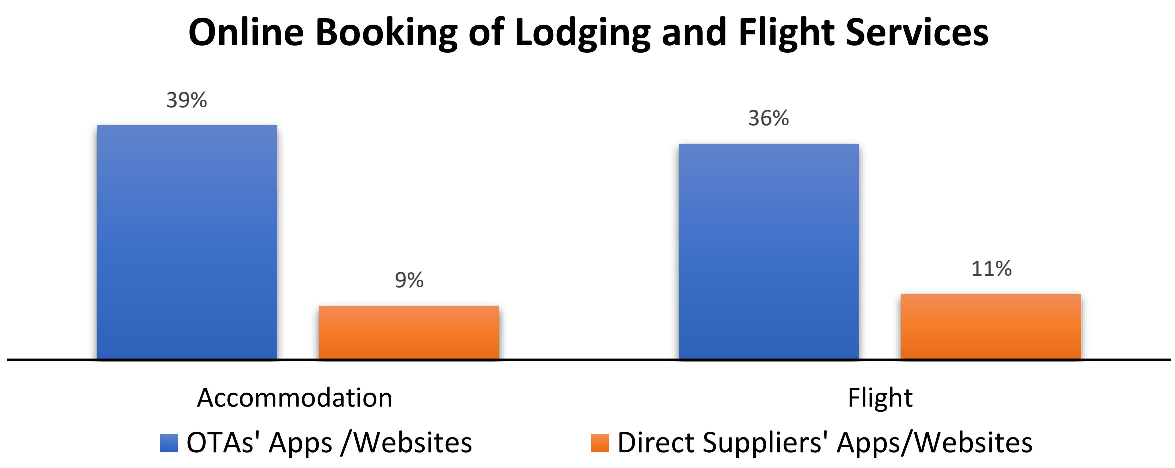
Figure 24 - Chinese Tourists' Intentions for Future Travels

There are different motivations that drive Asiatic customers to decide between attending Travel Agency or choosing online channels, in order to make a reservation or purchase travel-packages:

- **Travel Agencies:** the tourists decide to attend to this channels because they feel they have something that makes them feel in a different way. They go there because they can have a customized service, a more detailed itinerary planning, and because travel agencies are more competent in doing this kind of business. However, sometimes the Chinese feel that these agencies are weak when they have to find the best offer for a flight or to make a reservation in a restaurant in the place they want to visit. (Marco Napoli, 2016). Therefore, this is mostly why they frequently decide to go online.
- **Online services:** the information search, product related factors and channel related factors positively influence the purchase intention of the Chinese when interacting with web-based services. Besides, website quality also enhances the customer satisfaction and in turn influences purchase intentions. (Ukpabi & Karjaluoto, 2016). Their main key driver to book online is to find low prices. As a matter of fact, 63% of them perceive that online travel agencies offer the best prices in the market (Phocuswright, 2016). Yet, interestingly, consumer's spending on travel actually increases once they get online. Tempted by special offers, packages and exciting destinations, 77% of consumers end up spending more (McKinsey & Company, 2016)

Moving on to the online and digital channels , the online booking activities have a 76% of penetration in the Chinese market (Phocuswright, 2016). When it comes to the use of Online Travel Agencies, Chinese seem to have quite embedded them into their digital culture. OTAs have facilitated the path to purchase a tourism service by using an online platform, either with a mobile device or a desktop computer (Phocuswright, 2017). What is more, the Chinese tourist have a preference when using these online services. They are more likely to adopt online travel agencies to book travels online thanks to the website´s performance and design, in fact, the share of direct bookings from major Chinese carriers has decreased driven by factors like mobile app's or website's poor design, limited functionality and frequent outages or errors (McKinsey, 2016).

Regarding the book of services such as lodging or air transportation, there is a wide difference between those booking directly from the suppliers' specific websites and apps, and those who book from OTAs. Referring to the former case, Chinese travellers are not quite used to book through these online channels, since the penetration is just 9%. On the other hand, this percentage increases up to 39% in the case of booking through an OTA (Phocuswright, 2016). What is more, when considering the high bargaining power sector inside of China, they seem to be dissatisfied with the Chinese-based online travel agencies, hence they are starting to use hotel websites as their booking channel (Shanshan Qi, Rob Law & Dimitrios Buhalis, 2013). Furthermore, with respect to transportation services, they bear almost the same behaviour as with accommodation ones. As described before, Chinese tourists have a strong preference towards flight transportation (80% of them consider it as their favourite means of transport). Therefore, it is useful and convenient to only examine flight services. As a matter of fact, the booking of flight services situation in China is largely interesting to highlight, since the Chinese consumers' behaviour in this aspect differ from other people from around the world. In this case, they are more likely to book air tickets through OTAs rather than through direct websites of flight companies (36% vs 11%) (Phocuswright, 2016).

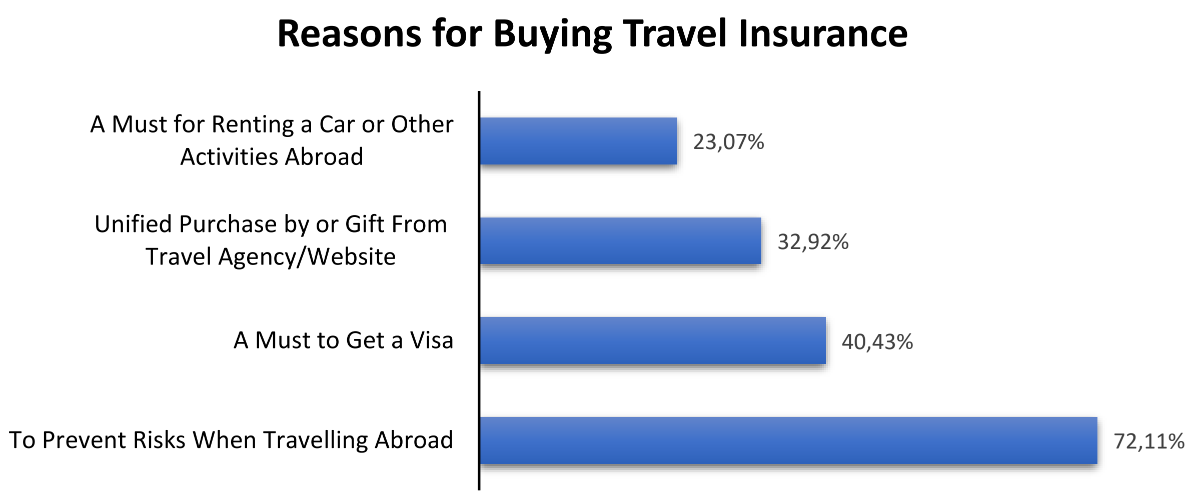


Source: *Phocuswright, 2016*

Figure 25 - Favourite Channels for Booking

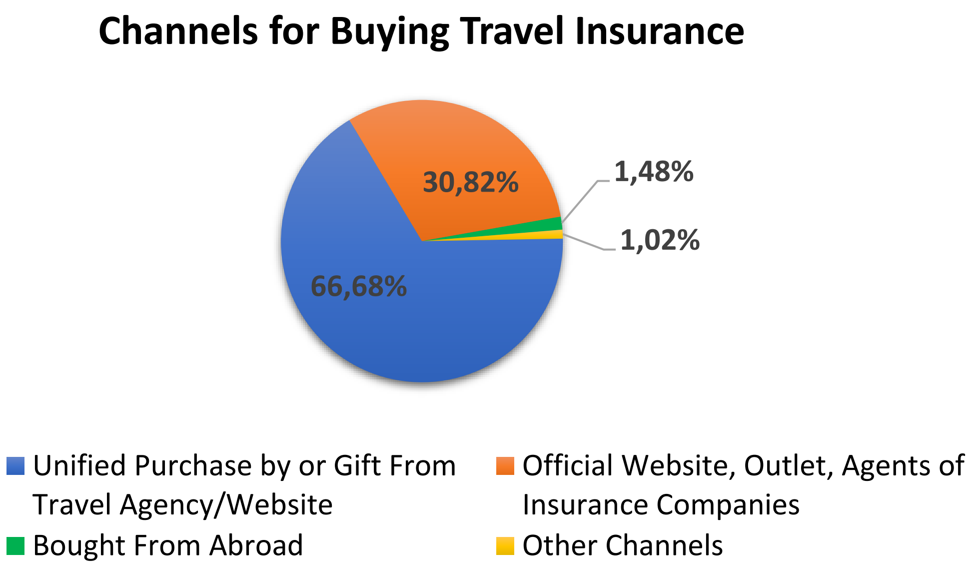
Equally important, it is impossible to forget about an increasing trend that is currently happening in all the sectors of the market. For instance, data reveals that in the moment of booking, Chinese do it through their mobile devices in the 60% of the cases (Marco Napoli, 2016) and it has increased a 50% since the last year (Gentlemen in China, 2016). This is a huge increase and it is expected to continue growing in the near future. Secondly, with reference to the use of mobile devices in this phase, the Chinese tourists still prefer to book their hotels and flights through OTAs, rather than going to the website of the firm (GMA, 2017). What is more, the Asians usually decide to use their mobile navigator and surf on the internet visiting the websites where they think they will find the information and will be able to book better their activities. They seldom download an app in Google Play or the App Store to book what they want (Marco Napoli, 2016). Actually, this happens because security and information quality and completeness were the most important considerations for booking an activity through a website (Ukpabi & Karjaluoto, 2016).

Last but not least, healthcare and property safety are two issues that Chinese take into consideration as parallel activities when booking a trip. Nearly a third (32%) of Chinese outbound tourists worried about their personal and property safety when travelling abroad, followed by medical assistance (19%) when they got ill. In terms of the reasons they consider to get an insurance service, the most important one is the prevention of various risks that may occur during the travel (72%). Generally, the service is purchased as a gift of travel agencies or websites where they acquire the trip (67%) or in insurance companies (31%). Within the latter, the Chinese choose among local or foreign companies in the 73% and 21% of the cases respectively (Figures 26, 27) (IPSOS Comcon, 2015).



Source: *IPSOS Comcon, 2015*

Figure 26 – Reasons for Buying Travel Insurance



Source: *IPSOS Comcon, 2015*

Figure 27 – Channels for Buying Travel Insurance

During-Trip

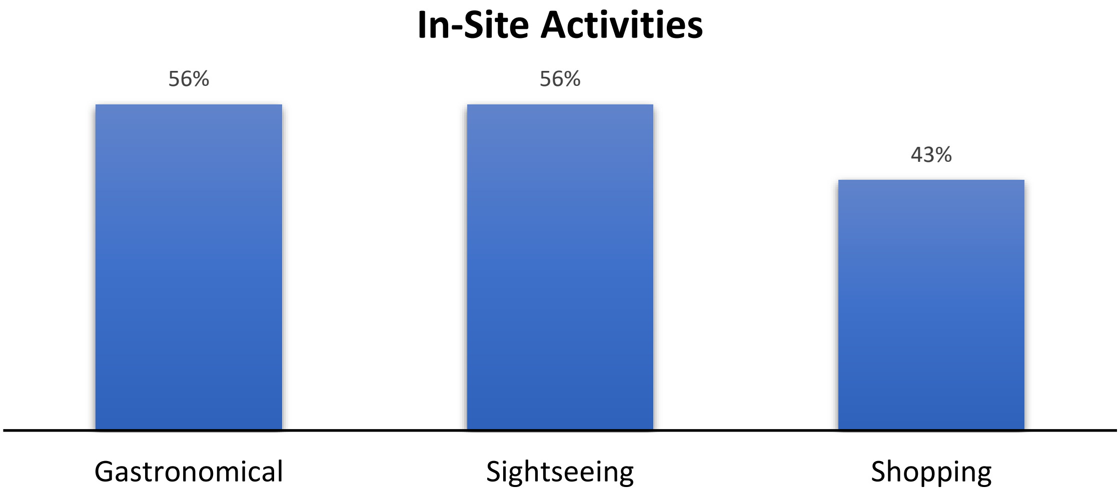
As explained previously, this stage starts in the time the tourist leaves home, and finishes when it returns. It is the phase which embraces all the activities that the traveller performs in the destination.

The following paragraphs will be dedicated to analyse the attitudes, behaviours and trends of the Chinese Tourist at this stage of the Tourist Journey, as it can be considered as really unique and important traveller.

When travelling, Chinese tourists' main objective is to live meaningful and unique experiences. There has been a shift in the purpose of their journeys: from seeking cultural and traditional activities, to experience memorable and valuable moments (JingDaily, 2017). These "new" travellers are also more demanding in terms of services and treatment, expecting to be greeted as "special" guests who have paid a considerable amount for their trip. Their interest towards experiences other than shopping, off the most beaten tourist paths, is also bound to grow steadily (CTA, 2016). Consequently, their uppermost interest is to get value from the money they spend, mostly by visiting places completely different from their home environments (Michopoulou & Moisa, 2016). They are prone to pursue good quality tours such as living better, eating better, seeking more fun and spending more time in exploring attraction sites; they were more willing to experience the daily life of the locals and know more about local customs and cultures (Travel China Guide, 2016).

To continue, the popular trend of Chinese tourists travelling in large groups, is starting to be undertaken by more independent and self-determining tourist. Nevertheless, this does not mean that attractive destinations will stop seeing the presence of big groups of Chinese travellers, since they consider it as a traditional activity, where they enjoy a sense of community, and share their experiences with their fellow citizens (JingDaily, 2017). What is more, this new segment of independent travellers is also inclined to carry out backpacking trips, where the activities undertaken are quite similar to their Western counterpart (Chen et. Al., 2013).

Regarding the in-site activities, the most popular and considered as essential to them are the gastronomical ones (56%), sightseeing (56%) and shopping (43%) (Figure 28). In addition, visiting culture and heritage places is also a popular activity. However, it must be noticed that the Chinese outbound Market should not be treated as a single homogeneous entity. (Hotels.com, 2016; Law et Al., 2016). During their holidays, the Chinese are open to change plans and make some unplanned reservations as any circumstance presents before them, following their actual convictions. (Michopoulou & Moisa, 2016). What is more, the language inconvenience also plays its central role in Chinese travellers' behaviour while travelling. Among the different activities available to do in-site, they feel hugely limited, since most countries do not have services offered in Mandarin (such as city-bikes services, information and ticket offices). They have a strong limitation concerning gastronomical activities, since the great majority of restaurants do not offer menus written in Mandarin (JingDaily, 2017).



Source: *Hotels.com, 2016*

Figure 28 - Chinese Tourists' Favourite In-Site Activities

Special consideration must be given to the shopping activity, since it is becoming one of the most important activities in the during-trip phase. According to Jin & Sparks[28] (2016), Chinese travellers are likely to spend the most of their money in shopping (while travelling), to such an extent that it represents for nearly one-third to one-half of their total expenditures overseas. With an average outlay of €1,288, shopping

[28] Methodology: survey made to a reduced group of people (20) face to face to make things clearer. There were 10 women and 10 men, 12 were less than 35 years old and 8 more than 35 years old. (See Appendix (C))

accounted for the lion's share of Chinese travellers' international travel budget, regardless of destination. They are the biggest shoppers during trips to the US and Canada, with an average shopping outlay of €3,305 (China Tourism Academy, 2016). On the other hand, the amount of money spent on entertainment or acquiring tickets to attractions barely reaches the 20% in total. When speaking about how many Chinese Tourists are keen to dedicate most of their expenditures on shopping, Dai et Al. (2016) identified that 32.2% of them are precisely doing it, while just 10.8% and 10% respectively stated that expenditure on entertainment and tickets to attractions are their highest spend items. Shopping is integral to the Chinese consumer's travel experience where 80% have made overseas purchases and, more specifically 79% Went shopping during holidays (McKinsey & Company, 2016). Moreover, in some destinations, such as Milano, shopping accounts for quite high percentages of outbound tours; hence, it is possible to assure that the Chinese Tourists' behaviour is aimed towards shopping rather than enjoying the cultural activities of their destination.

Forasmuch as accommodation in hotels, they rather stay in hotels with a good standard, where this standard means lodging services able to offer typical and classic types of rooms, food and services. Besides, average duration of stay in each destination was 2.3 days, 0.4 days more than in 2015. (GMA, 2017). Nevertheless, considering travelling to Europe, the length of stay of Chinese tourists in the different countries tend to vary. The segment from 6-7 nights is occupied by more traditional destinations such as Italy, France, Germany, Switzerland, UK and Portugal, who tops them all, positioning itself at an average of 6.9 nights spent per Chinese visitor. Important destinations in Eastern Europe rank just below, while marking a slow and constant growth, essentially Poland (6.6 nights), Hungary (6.0) and Czech Republic (4.8). In Northern Europe, Finland seems to be leading the region, registering 6.7 nights per Chinese visitor on average. Spain held the first place in terms of nights spent, counting 7.5 nights per Chinese visitor on average, with Greece just a fraction below (China Tourism Academy, 2017).

Specifically, with respect to Chinese Tourists in Italy, Law et Al. (2016) manifest that they are prone to spend a great amount of time in attractions and entertainment, but are critical of local interaction and site features. Chinese tourists, on average, prefer to visit only 1 location when visiting Italy, the most important ones being Milano, Venice, Florence and Rome (60% share). On the other hand, other smaller cities, such as Bologna and Verona, are expected to double to affluence of Chineses visitors in the future (Beinat et Al., 2014; China Tourism Academy: Welcome Chinese Standard Certification[29], 2016).

When it comes to the use of digital tools while travelling, the Chinese Traveller can be considered as a genuinely digital tourist. Roughly every Chinese tourist brings digital gadgets to their trips, where smartphones dominate the trend (95% bring their smartphone to the trip), and tablets are also considered as an important tool (50% brings at least one tablet). Among the different reasons for bringing them and uses they give to them, the ones that stand out the most are to keep in contact with family and friends, to share experiences, and search for information. Digital cameras are suffering from a decline in their use, since Chinese Travellers are not bringing them anymore, since they have replaced them with the camera on their smartphones (Marco Napoli, 2016).

Mobile payment is another aspect that has to be taken into high consideration. As reported by Phocuswright (2016), 60% of the touristic transactions are made through mobile devices. China's mobile payment businesses have managed to allow Chinese Tourists who travel abroad to pay with their preferred channels (WeChat Pay, TenPay, AliPay, and so on), so facilitating their during-trip activities (JingDaily, 2017).

The use of social media is also of paramount importance to understand the Chinese Tourist's behaviour during the trip. Social media platforms are of extreme importance for them, but not only in the previous phases of the Tourist Journey as explained in the previous sections. 81% of Chinese Travellers use Social Media during their trips (Kim et Al., 2017). As social creatures, they tend to comment and publish information about destinations and tourism experiences while travelling. When trying to profile this type of Tourist, a study exhibited that they are mostly young and well-educated, with significant incomes, rich travel experiences, and a willingness to involve themselves in the destination. Furthermore, among the various motives for sharing travel-related information while travelling, the most important ones are to disseminate information to

[29] Methodology: The result comes from research commissioned by Welcome Chinese from the marketing intelligence service Global Data, which digs up tourism-related facts and figures. (See Appendix (B))

their peers, documenting personal experiences, and –most importantly- to obtain travel information (Luo & Zhong, 2014).

Post-Trip

It is the last step of the Digital Tourist Journey. It includes all the activities that the tourists make after the trip. Generally, they are not obliged to perform any activity in this phase, but the reasons of taking part of them can differ from tourist to tourist. Some may use this stage to help fellow travellers in their respective Inspiration and Information Research phases, by sharing real facts and information about the trip, while others prefer to share experiences with their friends, relatives, or social-media peers.

There are several activities that can be listed in this phase, and as it was said before, they can be divided into all those that are for personal interest, and those that tourists carry out because they want to leave something to their peers.

Being the Chinese culture largely traditional, where most of them follow the same patterns when they choose to make something different, Chinese tourists really appreciate when other fellow travellers decide to share information and the experiences of their trips on the Internet. In addition, they are very confident about the information they find in the internet, hence they calmly use this data as a source for their future travel (Michopoulou & Moisa, 2016).

It is almost mandatory for those commenting and giving reviews to make it as real as possible, as in this way the sources are going to be reliable over time. For instance, trip arrangement could significantly affect the relationship between destination image and tourist satisfaction or revisit intention. (Law et. Al., 2016). So, leaving real comments may lead to a better understanding of the actual situation and this could finally create the best journey for others.

Communication, collaboration and engagement has become a norm behaviour of Chinese outbound tourists after travelling abroad. It is possible to identify numerous channels through which the Chinese tourists interacts in this phase, either online or offline ones. Besides, they have well-set tendencies in using the diverse channels for different purposes, such as disseminating travel information, posting travel notes on online blogs or just giving verbal recommendations about any trip, in which the tourist has participated (IPSOS Comcon, 2015).

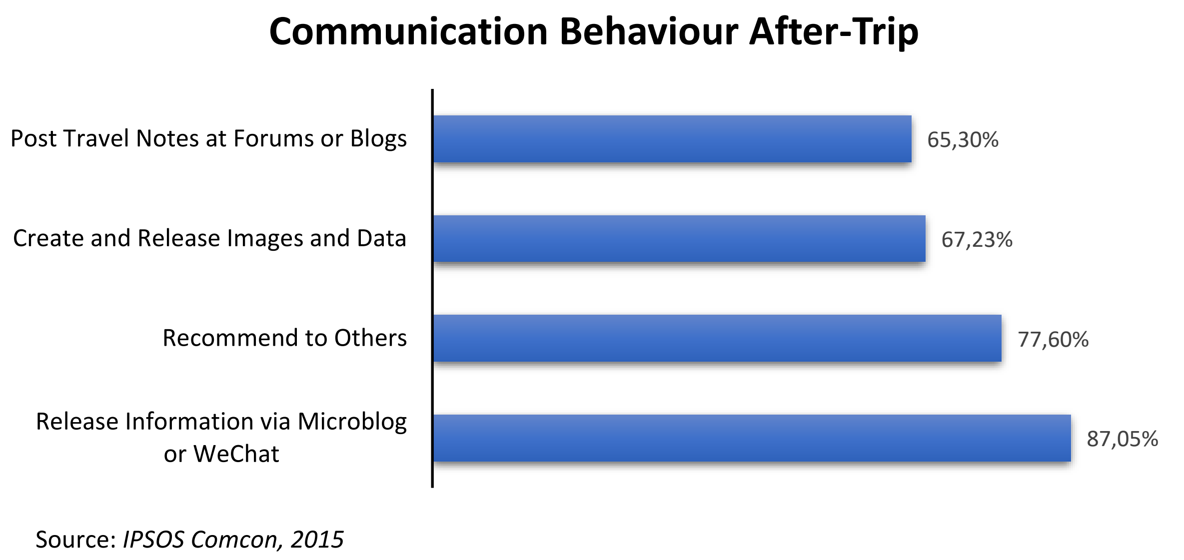
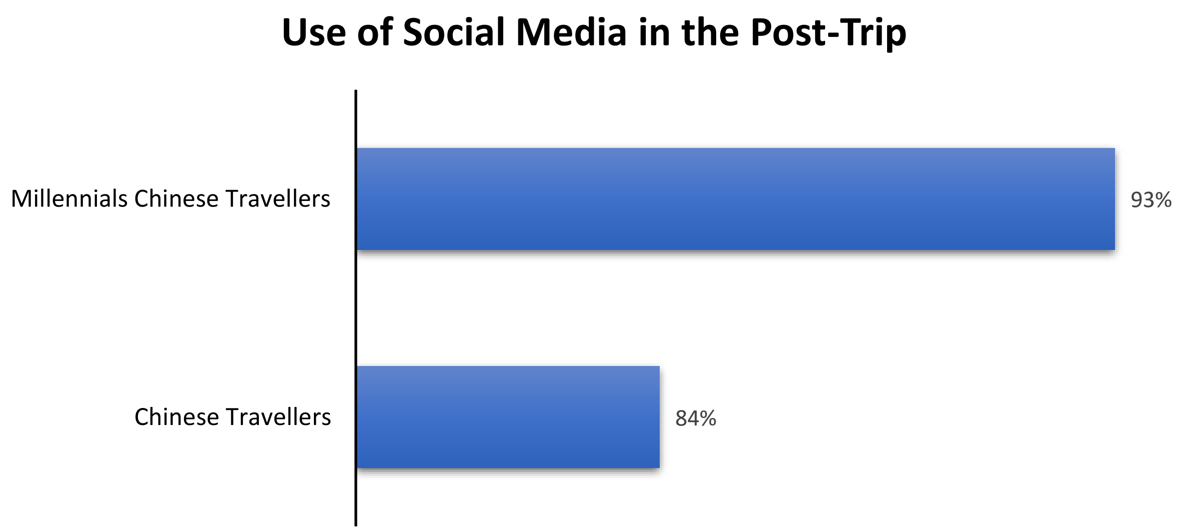


Figure 29 - Channels and Type of Information Shared in the Post-Trip

The Chinese are very important regarding this Post Trip section, since they are heavy users of the digital tools used to share what they have done during the trip. For instance, in the study conveyed by Phocuswright (2016), it is possible to see that the online penetration of the Chinese in the sharing activities reach the 70% of the total number of users, which is almost the double if compared with other Occidental countries like France or Germany. Once again, major attention must be given to social media, where the data reveals that an 84% of the Chinese travellers share pictures in social network websites after travelling (Hotels.com, 2016). Among all the different ones available, Weibo is the most popular among them. The posts they upload to it represents the most direct way for Chinese travellers to share with friends what they saw, heard and bought on their latest trip. The five most popular travel posts are pictures, reflections, location check-ins, comments and recommendations. In addition, another relevant platform where travellers post reviews in a very particular way is Qyer.com, whose Chinese name means “budget travel”. The pertinence of this tool relies in providing users with up-to-date travel tips and guides worldwide. In most cases, experienced independent travellers recommend specific travel itineraries, hotels, restaurants and other travel activities in their personal online journals, thus creating a sort of “digital public agenda”. In addition, this new wave of Chinese outbound tourists who travel independently, has proved that there is less interest in commenting on generic booking websites, and an increase in incorporating reviews into online travel updates or journals. (Attract China, 2014).

What is more, special attention should be given to the younger sector of the Chinese market, since they are the most intensive users of social media when they want to share what they did during the travel. As a matter of fact, the penetration of social media for posting reviews for this segment increases up to 93% if they are less than 35 years old (hence, Millennials) (Hotels.com, 2016). Chinese Millennials have distinctive and special characteristics that make them unique among all the types of travellers. As mentioned before, they are heavier users of social media than other groups of people to share pictures and to write reviews of their own experience (31% of the situations). It is also relevant the fact that all those travellers which are 35 years old or more, rarely use digital tools to share information, data, pictures or experiences with others, but they prefer to send phone messages or to show pictures of the trip in a meeting with their friends and relatives in the 31% and 17% of the cases respectively.



Source: *Hotels.com, 2016*

Figure 30 - Chinese Tourists' Use of Social Media in the Post-Trip

As equal as the Chinese millennials, there is also another group of people with some behaviours and characteristics in common, which can be segmented as those tourists who love to travel and share their experiences afterwards. Individuals from China who love to travel, are more active in giving answers and proposal for all those who have the same sense of community and a broad background of travels; they also follow travel-related content in social networks and sometimes make visible contact with the other individuals who are interacting and receiving information from them (Luo & Zhong, 2014).

The Russian Tourist

Russia is considered as an emerging country, where the tourism sector has been increasingly growing during the last years. It is an industry which is trying to recover the situation they had previous to the economic and political crisis they are surpassing nowadays.

Everything started in the 1990's, when the prohibition to travel in hands of the Russian government was lifted. It was given to all those people who wanted to travel the possibility to choose also among foreign countries to make a leisure trip. Currently, 15% of Russians have travelled abroad, hence, the actual demand is really high with a big potential (Yury Kulikov, 2015). Moreover, by 2014, the tourism levels had increased a 48%, but then the pace was slowed down due to the aforementioned crisis, where 34.39 million Travellers who were travelling abroad in 2015 decreased down to 31.7 million Travellers in 2016 (Tourism-Review[30], 2017; ITE Travel & Tourism[31], 2016). Discordantly, domestic travels seem to be their front-runner alternative, where almost 50 million Russian tourists undertook a domestic trip in 2015.

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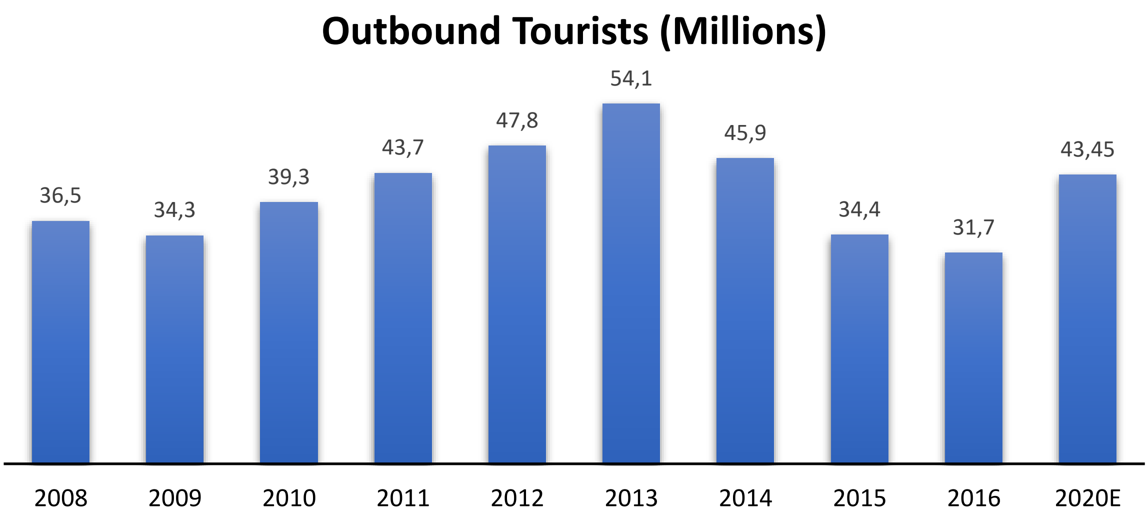
[30] Methodology: they used data of the Russian State Statistics (ROSSTAT) to acquire real information about the Russian tourism market. The ROSSTAT acquires information from the government or making their own research in the most important sectors of the country. (See Appendix (B))

[31] Methodology: ITE is a company making events in relation with the tourism industry, but for their press releases they acquire data from reports made by IPSOS, which is their main source of data. (See Appendix (A))

Inbound travels, on the other hand, accounted for 34.02 million tourists visiting Russia in 2016, increasing in a 5% from the previous year (The Moscow Times[32], 2016; OECD, 2017; RT, 2016). In terms of the means of transport utilized to undertake either domestic or outbound travels, their preference seems to fluctuate between railway options and air transportation. While trains were preferred in the past especially thanks to lower prices of tickets, in recent years the prices of airplane tickets became comparable. Air transportation accounts for about 10% of all trips on inter-city routes but 90% in international transportation (Tourism-Review, 2013).



Source: *Tourism-Review (ROSSTAT), 2017*

Figure 31 - Russian Outbound Tourism Evolution

However, there are some countries that are taking advantage of the Russian situation, and are anyway attracting more or less the same number of Russian travellers as they did before. (Tourism Review, 2017). Countries like Turkey or Egypt are constantly offering discounts and packages to the Russian tourists, in order to attract them to visit their beaches destinations.

[32] Methodology: official data from the Russian Deputy Prime Minister. (See Appendix (B))

Considering Europe as a destination, the study European Travel Commission[33] (2016) evidences that the Russian traveller is very attracted to visit the old continent, where 74% of them have already visited it at least one time, and 26% are first-time visitors to Europe. Moreover, in the first quarter of 2017, the demand for outbound travels increased 58% compared to the same period in the previous year. The demand for cities like Minsk, Prague, Milan, and Bangkok has expanded (Russia beyond the headlines, 2017), and this might be thanks to the relaxation of the Visa requirements or the stabilization of the Russian Rouble, making the travel activity affordable for more people (ITE Travel & Tourism, 2016).

Furthermore, the expenditures that Russian travellers make abroad have been shrinking across the years, reaching a total of 21 Billion Euros in 2016 (UNWTO, 2017). However, it has risen in a 40% during the first quarter of 2017. In fact, they are spending more in spite of the decrease in number of outbound tourists (Figure 32) (IPSOS Comcon[34], 2017). The average expense abroad is 1,000 euros, compared with 600 euros in 2016 and 1,700 euros before the economic crisis (Russia beyond the headlines[35], 2017). Despite they are very price sensitive they like shopping activities. On the other hand, they are very careful when spending money in shopping, but once they decide to make it, they try to find the best product; it is like a symbol of status they receive when they acquire expensive or unique products (Evita Lehtinen, 2014).

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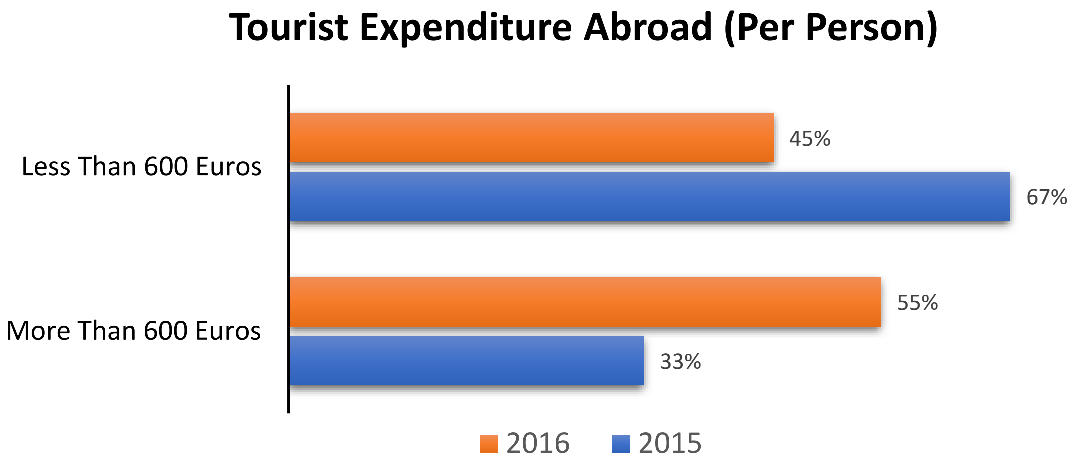
[33] Methodology: complete survey made in January 2016. It had 30,105 respondents from different social and demographic groups and were interviewed via telephone in their mother tongue. (See Appendix (A))

[34] Methodology: IPSOS is a research company analysing the tourism market. In this case they used the RosIndex – quarterly survey. It researches 400 categories, 3,000 brands and 300 lifestyle related statements. The target are population among 10-75 years old, in 50 Russian cities to about 25,700 respondents through an offline survey. (See Appendix (A))

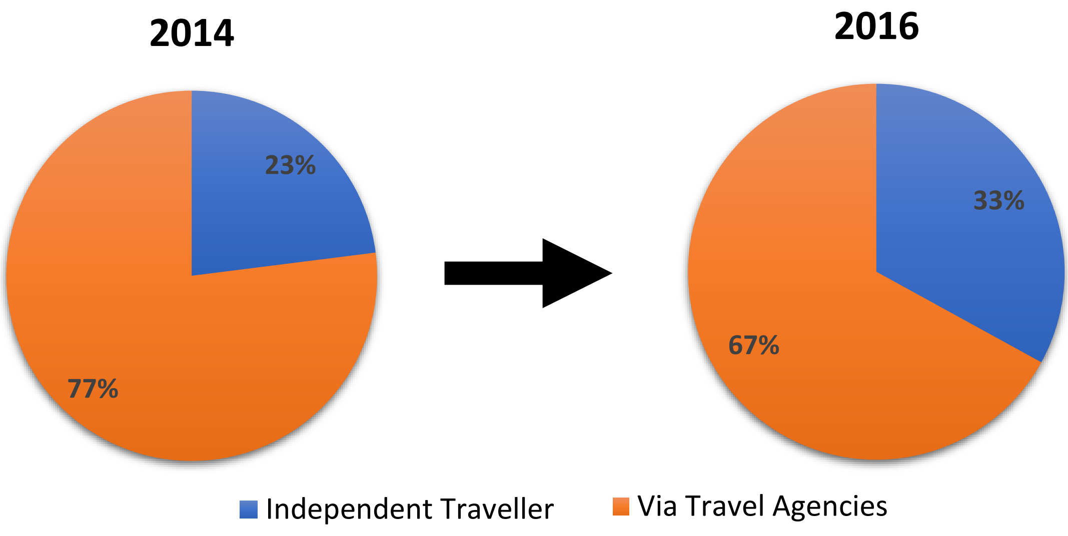
[35] Methodology: it works according to a research based on data provided by the VAT refund firm Global Blue, which in the same time is a company operating with shopping activities, receiving numbers all the time about expenditures. (See Appendix (B))



Source: *IPSOS Comcon, 2017*

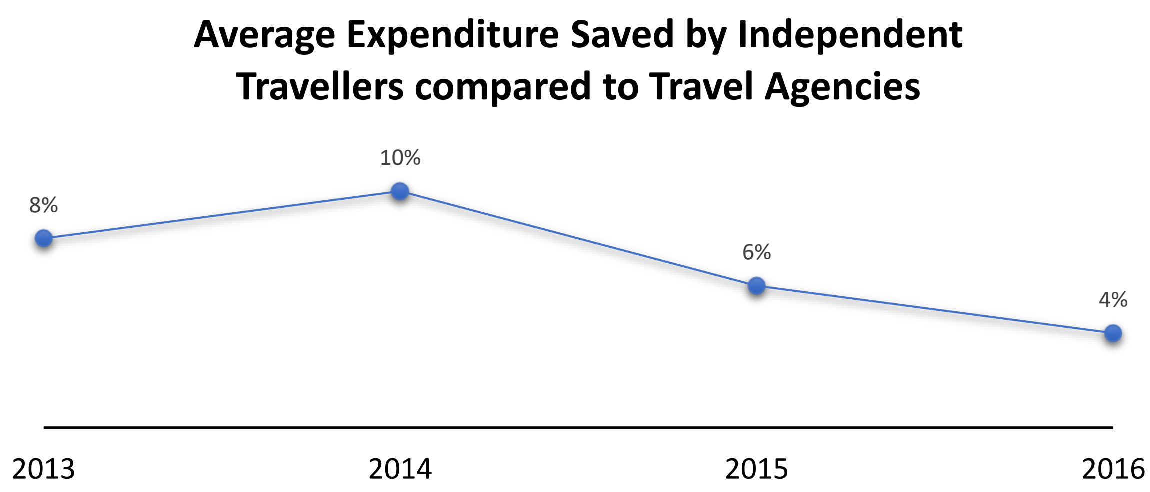
Figure 32 - Russian Average Expenditure Overseas

Additionally, in the same study they found that it is in growth the amount of independent travellers going abroad, rising from 23% in 2014 to 33% in 2016. On the other hand, those travellers using travel agencies as their channel to prepare a trip shrank from 77% in 2014 to 67% in 2016 (Figure 33). It is clear that those who decided not to attend to a travel agency, planned their trip independently with all the available resources they have to do it. Independent travellers tend to spend a bit less than those tourists relying on travel agencies. Nonetheless, the difference in terms of expenditure has been decreasing from 2014 until now (Figure 34). As it is illustrated, the amount saved is not so important, taking into account that independent travellers have to go through the entire work of organizing the whole trip. Besides, they do not seek to save money, but to get more value from what they spend on (IPSOS Comcon, 2017).



Source: *IPSOS Comcon, 2015*

Figure 33 - Evolution of Independent Travelling



Source: *IPSOS Comcon, 2017*

Figure 34 - Average Money Saving of Independent Travels Compared to Those Travelling Through Travel Agencies

Besides independent travellers (those ready to lose comfort to get as more experience and freedom as possible) and the users of travel agencies (traditional tourists who seek the highest value for their money), there is a categorization of Russian tourists according to their most remarkable behaviours (Nikitina & Vorontsova, 2015). They can be segmented into:

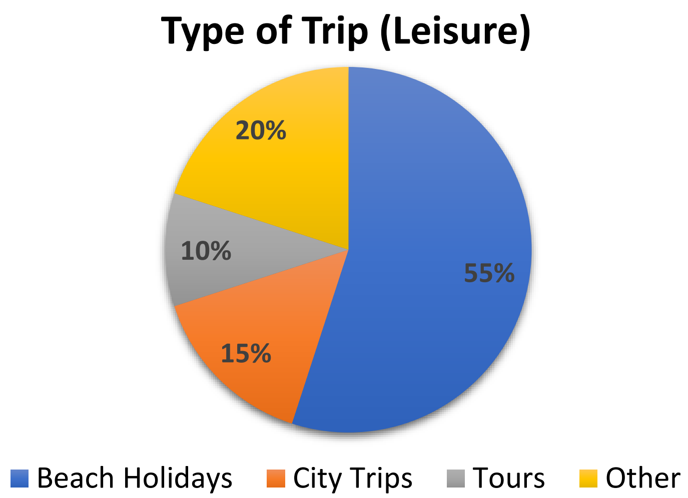
- Sunseekers: those Russians looking for the sun and the beach. Traditionally, they have chosen Turkey and Egypt, but now they are changing to other places like North Africa, Middle East or Greece, but also Thailand.
- Friends and relative's visitors: some of them are attracted to travel to foreign countries due to the presence of someone who is always open to receive them.
- Ultra-wealthy: they are a few but they stomp. They often decide to go to the Caribbean or the Mediterranean.
- Young professionals: Russia's growing middle class travels more than ever. They choose Europe cities or unforgettable adventures to make a break.
- Thrill-seekers: their only concern is to find a place where they can have the best experience of their life, they seek something different. Asia and South America are the most chosen places.

Another pertinent group of travellers going abroad are the senior tourists. They prefer to have easy access to all the activities, and the trips planned and coordinated in the most comfortable way. The introduction of healthcare into their trips is almost mandatory. In this way, they are able to feel safe and can take advantage of the travel without any concern (Nikitina & Vorontsova, 2015).

Furthermore, among the most preferred destinations of the Russian tourists, the great majority of them have to do with beach and summer places, different than those they can find in their own country (Giulia Bologna, 2012). As a matter of fact, considering leisure trips, 55% of travellers head for beach destinations, while city trips (15%), tours (10%) and other types of holidays are less important (ITB Berlin[36], 2016) (Figure 35). In order to make these trips possible, they save money almost for a year to obtain the best service they can afford (Kazakov & Predvoditeleva, 2015). In addition to their budget plans, the higher the incomes they have, the longer the time of their holidays

[36] Methodology: The report covers the main topics discussed in an organized forum in 2016, including worldwide trends in outbound and inbound travel, and several current topics, like sharing economies and millennials. (See Appendix (A))

with an increased number of additional services used. In Russia people who come from the high social class expect good quality services and tend to enjoy all-inclusive vacation packages.



Source: *IPSOS Comcon, 2017*

Figure 35 - Preferred Types of Leisure Travels for Russians

Lately, the world society is becoming more and more digital as it has been described along the whole report, and the Russians are no exception to it. They are getting more involved in the use of digital platforms to make their routine activities. In 2015 there was a 73.4% of penetration regarding internet access across the population, and it is increasing in average (World Bank, 2017). Within this percentage, there are a lot of them using social networks (96%), being those among 18-24 years old the most intense users, and 87% of them live in big cities like Moscow or St. Petersburg (Yury Kulikov[37], 2015). In addition, smartphone penetration in Russia is less than in China, accounting for a 45% of the population who owns a smartphone (Pew Research Center[38], 2016)

[37] Methodology: Kulikov and his team made an offline survey. They gathered 232 answers. It was fulfilled by more females than males, all of them from a vast range of ages. (See Appendix (C))

[38] Methodology: it consisted in a survey made mainly by telephone (CAPI/PAPI) to an average of 1,000 respondents per country. All countries in the world were interviewed, and it was made for all +18 people. (See Appendix (A))

Nonetheless, with all this said, there are still some obstacles to overcome in the Russian online travel market. For instance, people are still quite used to offline payment methods, where the principal reason for this is that they are completely sure that safety is a very important parameter when they have to acquire something, and their convictions say that paying through internet is not the safest way to do it (Tnooz, 2013).

Finally, Italy is considered as one of the main destinations Russians decide to visit. Among the many reasons why they are likely to choose Italy, the most popular ones are the human atmosphere and hospitality of Italians (Yury Kulikov, 2015). The number of Russian tourists coming to Italy has been increasing over the last years, with a boost of 49% with respect to the previous year. The most chosen destination is Venice, where they acquire mostly fashion and luxury products. This partly evidences what was previously stated: Russians behaviour towards high expenditures represent a big part of their shopping decisions (Venezia Today, 2017). There are two main periods in which they decide to travel to Italy with the highest frequency. The first one is the Christmas season, especially during the last days of December and first days of January. To continue, they frequently come to Italy in May, because of the civil Russian celebrations within that month. On the other side, half of the Russians outbound tourists going to Italy, prefer to do it between June and September, taking advantage of the Italian summer, with the highest number of arrivals during August and July (Tonini[39], 2015).

Pre-Trip

Inspiration

As aforementioned with the Chinese Tourist Journey, the inspiration phase is the very first step that the Russian tourist has to deal with when planning and deciding a vacation. This following section will be destined to analyse and understand the

[39] Methodology: data acquired from ISTAT, the statistics research centre of Italy. He considered all these information to make an extensive study about the Russian market headed up to Italy

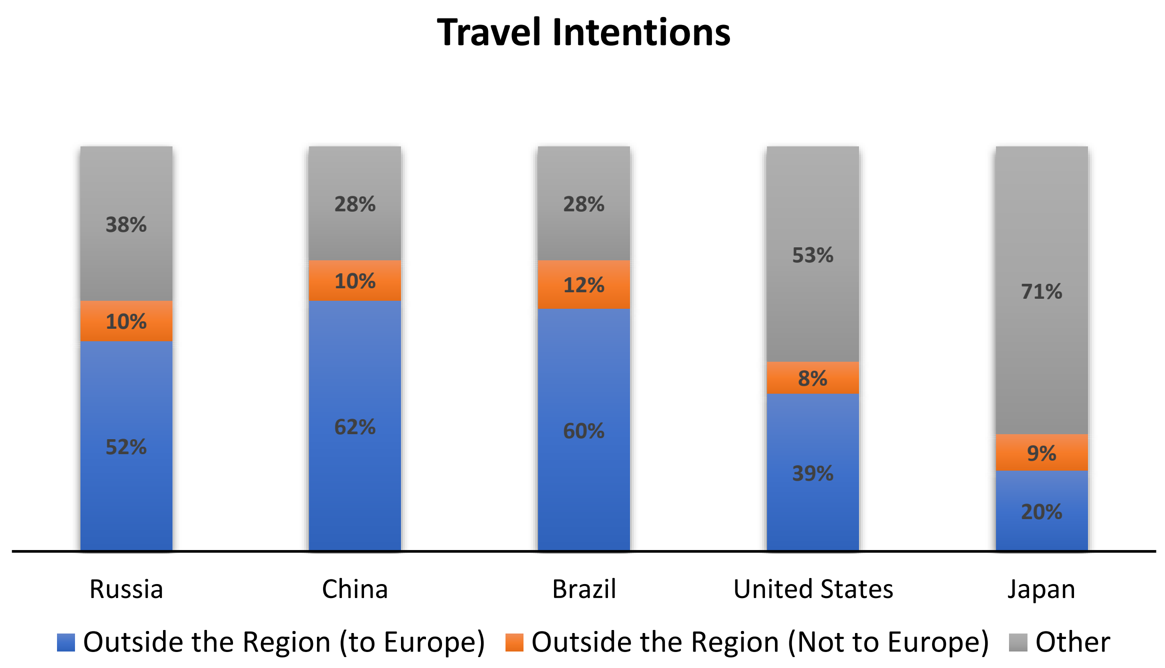
behaviours, motivations and characteristics of Russian Tourists during this stage of the Tourist Journey.

To start with, according to a survey by Fotis et Al.[40], (2013), less than half of all the Russian Tourists (45%) search for ideas and advice on where to go for holidays, before starting the trip. Nevertheless, within this percentage, Russian people tend to search for destinations which can offer multiple activities and experiences, when planning a vacation. What is more, as it was described before, this tourist is very price sensitive. Therefore, they highly likely to scheme how much money they are going to spend during the trip. On the other hand, unquestionably is the enormous spending power of the high Russian social class. Under these conditions, they feel inspired by places where they can obtain top-quality services, and by all-inclusive vacation packages. Luxury products are used as status symbols and it is important to associate oneself in the upper class, thereupon this type of Russian tourist feels attracted to undertake vacations that can satisfy these needs (Lehtinen, 2014).

Even though Russia is ranked number 9th in terms of World population, only a 20% of them undertake travels abroad of the country, which 73% of them do it for leisure motives (ITB, 2016; Tnooz, 2013). Indeed, the bulk of Russians choose domestic tourism. This is due to the foreign policy environment around Russia, the crisis in the world economy and the fall of the rouble relative to the euro exchange rate (Shelenina, 2016). In consonance with the European Travel Commission (2016), the Russian traveller has been feeling less enthusiastic about undertaking long-haul trips throughout the years, to such extent that is the country with the lowest long-haul travel sentiment among the most important long-haul markets (USA, China, Brazil and Japan). Moreover, there are also signs of low appeal for European trips, were the travel sentiment is still considered negative (See Figure 7).

Considering their real intentions of travelling, ETC (2015) analysed the Russian tourist intention to travel outside their region of residence, and compared it with the other aforementioned markets (Figure 36).

[40] Methodology: survey to 368 people from Russia and Ex-Soviet countries during 2010. 66% were females and 34% males. 97% of them declared to have visited at least one social media during the last 12 months. (See Appendix (C))



Source: *ETC, 2015*

Figure 36 - Travel Intentions of the Different Markets

To continue, there are several reasons that motivate these tourists when tripping to other countries. Among the many of them, the most important ones are affordable price, favourable weather in the selected season, lack of political crisis in the country, level of service in the country, good reviews from friends and family, friendly locals and learning about the country's culture. Therefore, they feel inclined and inspired with places where they are more likely to engage with different activities like sightseeing, interacting with the locals, enjoying nightlife and shopping (Stylos et Al.[41], 2016). Continuing with the line of thought, according to ITE Travel & Tourism (2016), these motivations can be addressed to some specific destinations. When it comes to Russians' willingness to visit places with pleasurable weather, they are prone to frequent some European countries such as Spain, Italy, Greece and Montenegro, and also other non-European places such as Israel, the Middle-East, the Caribbean and Thailand. Moreover, the Russian tourist gives a great deal of importance to places in where they can communicate in Russian tongue. Hence, countries such as Egypt and Turkey (where waiters and tour operators speak Russian), Hungary, Czech Republic,

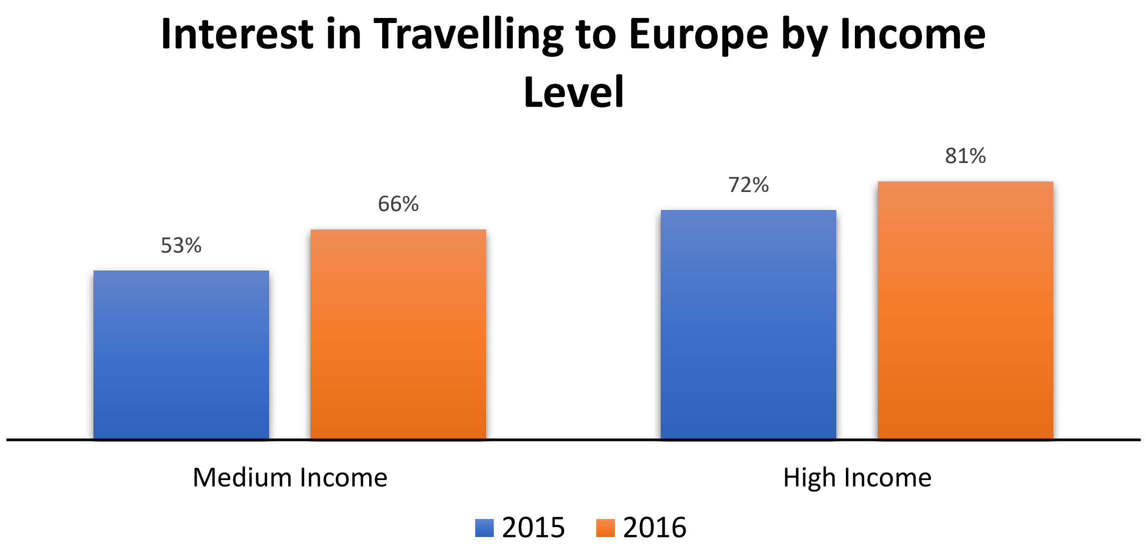
[41] Methodology: 1164 Russian respondents answered to a survey conveyed in the main airport of Thessaloniki, Greece after arriving from their homes. It was in Russian. (See Appendix (C))

Poland, Slovakia and the ex-URSS countries are a source of inspiration for them. In fact, 74% of Russian Tourists prefer to travel within the ex-URSS territory (Eastern Europe), since these countries are Russian-speakers, they are really near to Russia, and are easier to obtain tourist-visas from them (Bologna, 2012). Shopping, natural landscapes and religious trips (Mostly Greece and Israel), safety (due to recent political and geographic disputes with Turkey and Egypt) can also be considered as factors of paramount importance for their motivation. Lastly, one of their main sources of inspiration to travel is the possibility to visit friends and relatives living abroad[42], where mainly the visited countries are Germany, Poland, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, and the Baltics.

Above all, Europe can be considered as a crucial destination for the Russian tourism industry. Throughout the years, there have been some ups and downs regarding Russian willingness and appetite to travel to European countries. A study carried out by the European Travel Commission (2016), reveals that ore specifically, in 2015 there was a significant shrinkage in Russians' sentiment for European destinations (See Figure 8). However, the tendency shows signs of recovery, where Europe remains high on Russians' travel wish-list despite economic turbulence. Respondents from the Russian Federation, remain optimistic that they may afford travel later in the year, despite a deepening economic crisis and weakening currency (ETC, 2015). In fact, 2 in 1 respondents who are considering traveling overseas in 2017 have a European destination in mind.

Similarly to the Chinese, the Russian travellers are highly influenced by their level of income, where the of upper-social classes tend to undertake more trips. This is no exception to the case of Europe, where evidence illustrates that mainly people bearing medium to high levels or income, are those most inclined to travel to Europe (Figure 37). Nevertheless, a deepening recession continues to supress travel sentiment among Russian respondents, predominantly among low and medium income earners.

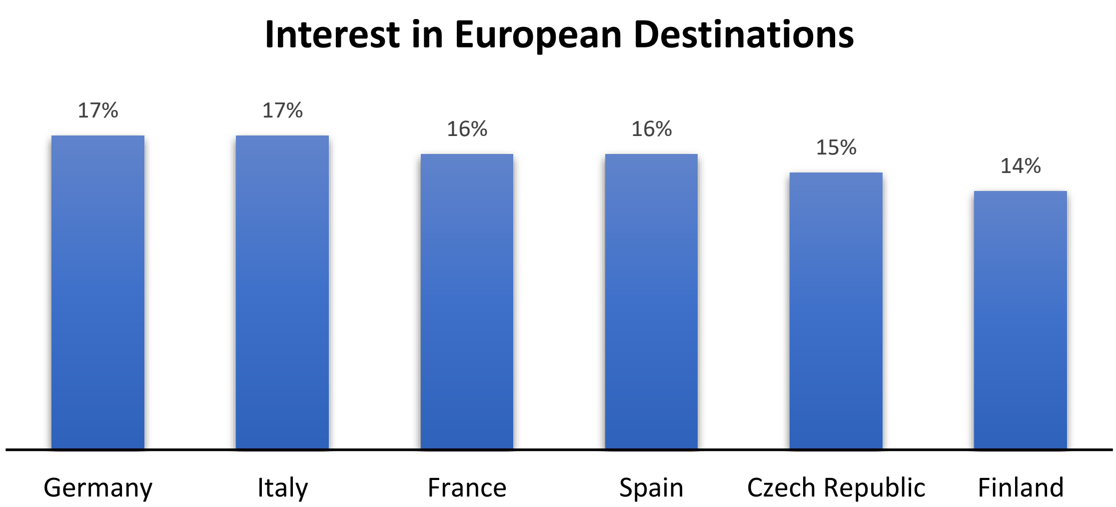
[42] Due to the Second World War and the disintegration of the USSR, there were a lot of families and close relationships that ended up living in different regions and even countries.



Source: *ETC, 2016*

Figure 37 - Income Level Influence on Russians Interest Towards Europe

With regard to all European destinations, the Russian traveller seems to have some favourite preferences. On the other hand, there are slightly differences respecting their inspiration towards visiting the different countries, depending if they are first-time visitors or repeat visitors (Figures 38,39). As the data displays, Germany is their most popular chosen country, whereas Italy is likely to be re-visited, but is not considered between their choices for their first trip to Europe.



Source: *ETC, 2016*

Figure 38 - Interest in European Destinations According to First-Time Visitors

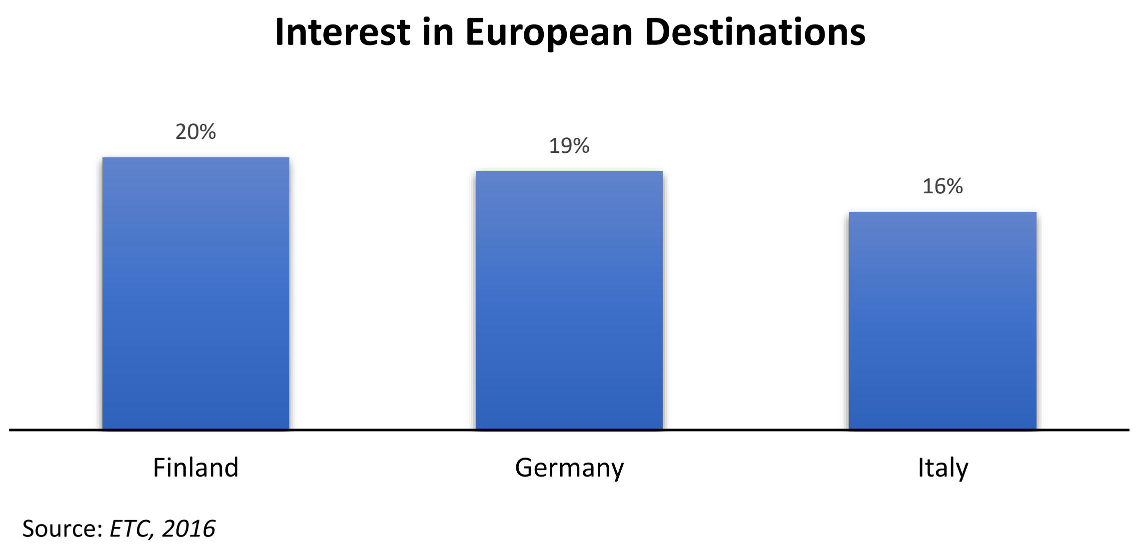
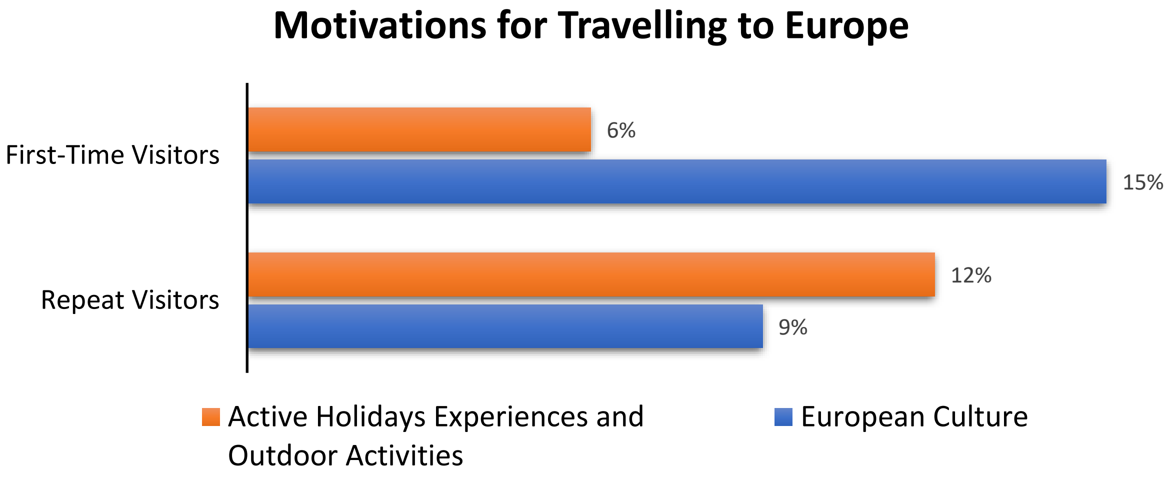


Figure 39 - Interest in European Destinations According to Repeat Visitors

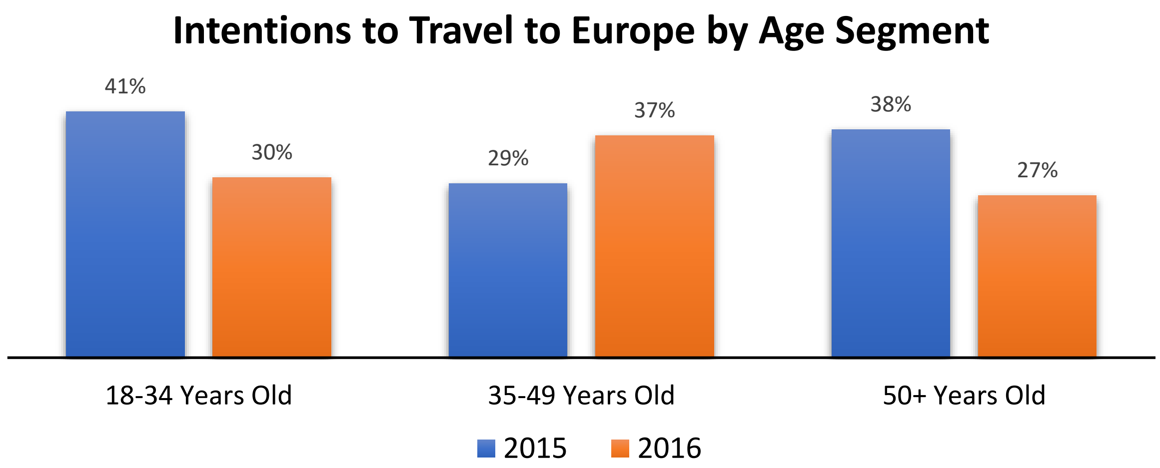
In general, Russians tourists visiting Europe are most intrigued by the idea of seeing the maximum amount of things in a single trip (18%), and are highly interested in participating in outdoor activities (18%). What is more, there are different motivations driving Russian tourists to Europe, which depend on whether they are first-time visitors or repeaters. Considering the former, 15% believe that European culture is a key motivation, as they are really interested in learning about it. On the contrary, the latter are keen to seek more in-depth experiences. In fact, 12% think that active holiday experiences and participation in outdoor activities are more appealing.



Source: *ETC, 2016*

Figure 40 - Russians Motivations to Travel to Europe

Despite signs of its diminishing significance, age remains a predicator of travel preferences. In the case of Millennial travellers, data reveals that, compared to last year, fewer young respondents intend to travel to Europe, potentially due to continued volatility of the economic environment (Figure 41). As the figure exhibits, the Millennial segment has diminished its intention to travel to Europe by an 11%, from 2015 to 2016, while those tourists aged between 35 to 49 years old seem to be more interested in travelling to Europe, with an increment of 8% during the same period.

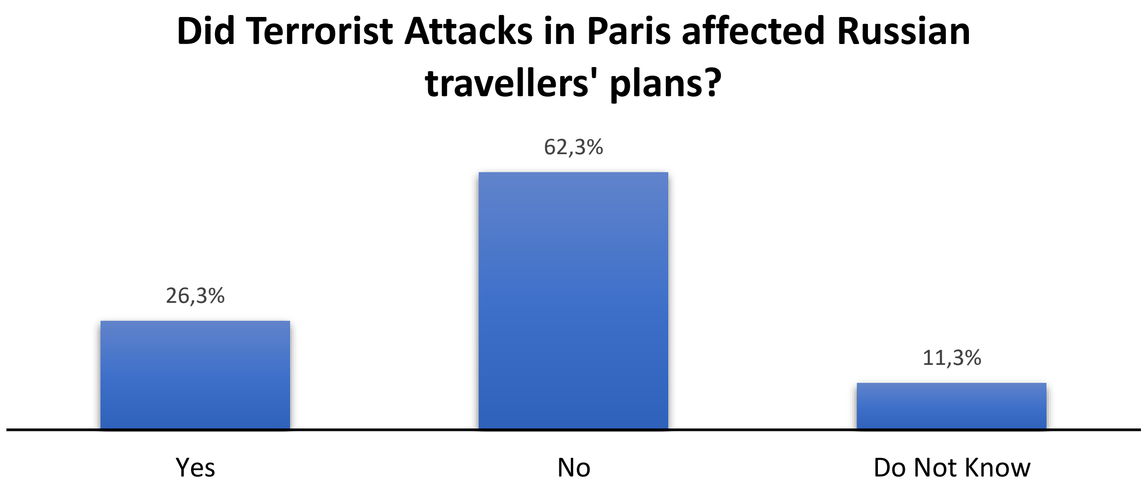


Source: *ETC, 2016*

Figure 41 - Age Influence Towards Travelling to Europe

Before all else, Millennials' destination choice is mostly driven by cultural affiliation, geographical proximity and unexplored opportunities. Indeed, 18% of the Russian millennials mention Finland as a preferred destination for their next European adventure. Lastly, only 13% of them have intention to do solo travel in Europe.

When it comes to the recent troubles regarding terrorism attacks in Europe, Russian tourists are slightly less reluctant than Chinese travellers in making changes in their original plans. The data reveals that in just 26.3% of them, the Paris Attacks of 2015 had an impact on their travel plans.



Source: *ETC, 2016*

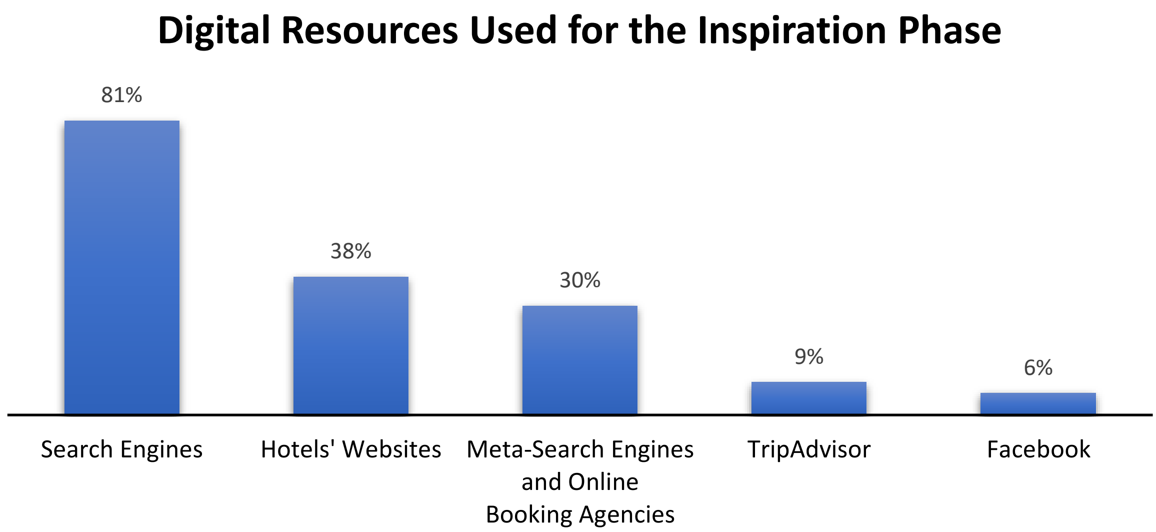
Figure 42 - Terrorism Influence in Russian Travellers to Europe

Referring particularly to Italy as a destination, Mariani et Al. (2014) have studied the perception that Russian tourism businesses have of the country. The results showed that Italy played as an inspiration source for Russians in terms of its huge variety of offer, from history, culture and enogastronomic assets, to lifestyle and the hospitality of its people. In addition, the Russian Tourism is characterized as a summer holiday tourism, oriented mostly to sea destinations (mainly to Emilia-Romagna) and to visit the main Italian "Art" cities, such as Rome, Venice and Florence. Milano is also a top destination for business, fashion and shopping.

Regarding the ways in which Russian Tourists obtain the ideas, advices and inspiration to start planning their trip, a broad distinction can be made between online and offline channels. Firstly, considering the Online side, the spread of information and communication technologies (ICTs) should be named among the factors currently providing the momentum for the Russian Digital Tourism industry growth (Kazakov & Predvoditeleva, 2015). Although they are less digital than the Chinese tourist throughout this phase, the Russian tourist can still be considered as a digital person within the Inspiration stage, with an online penetration of 78% (Phocuswright, 2016). With reference to the use of different channels and resources utilized to gather and collect ideas for their travel, the Russian tourist has a slight different behaviour compared to the Chinese one. (Figure 43). It is evident that the Russian Tourist feels more attracted towards independent searching through different search engines, being Google.com and Yandex.ru the most used ones. What is more, the role of electronic Word of Mouth is likewise relevant for the Russian Federation in this phase, where especially social media is considered as the most valuable, since it has a great influence on the traveller's choice. While navigating through them, they interact with various images, comments or different types of content coming from their friends or peer-travellers, that lead the Russian tourist to feel inspired and engaged about the feeling of travelling or about a specific destination. There is a particular slant on female tourists when utilizing social media when getting their first interest in or need for information on a destination they plan to visit. When it comes to age segmentation, among all the online users, the great majority of them are those whose ages are comprised between 25-45 years old, where women tend to be a little bit more digital-consumers than men (Digital Tourism Think Tank[43], 2014). Lastly, regarding the type of trip made by the tourist, Kazakov & Predvoditeleva[44] (2015) revealed that leisure travellers are quite more active digital users than business ones.

[43] Methodology: as every think tank, it is recognized for coming with new ideas after analysing a big data base. This data is collected through private companies or values in important reports. (See Appendix (A))

[44] Methodology: online survey through the Russian marketing agency OMI. Respondents were limited to a range of 20-49 years old, permanent residence in a place bigger than 1 million of inhabitants, with at least a college level and a monthly income between 560-2,000 euros. The total number of respondents was 536. (See Appendix (C))



Source: *Kazakov & Predvoditeleva, 2015*

Figure 43 - Online Channels Used in the Inspiration Phase

On the other hand, offline channels are also deeply taken into consideration, although in a greater less extent. There is still an important portion of Russian tourists that plan and prepare their trip with travel agencies, and even a minority of them organize it by their own means (Kulikov, 2015). Other channels such as word-of-mouth, and other people's experiences are likewise important in the Russian culture.

Lastly, it is worth considering a small but important segment of the Russian tourist population: the senior (+65) travellers. As most of them are retired, they are able to travel all year round, even though they rather travel during off-seasons, when prices are low and there are fewer tourists. Their inspiration and motivation for travelling comes from the feeling it brings to them: it improves emotional mood, and increases vitality and interest in life. Nonetheless, just a 35% of them are willing to travel for long distances. Besides, their inspiration also is based upon some difficulties they consider as barriers: ignorance of where to go (60%), physical and health restrictions (60%), transportation difficulties (40%), financial difficulties (25%) (Nikitina & Vorontsova, 2015).

Information Research

At the time the Russians have to search for information after having planned their trip, they are used to make it in a different way compared to other travellers, since they behave differently in terms of digital usage and trust-building relations.

Once again, and as stated before, language represents one the main barriers and obstacles they have within this stage of the Tourist Journey. As a consequence, they try to interact and reach for any channel offered in Russian language, since the great majority of them do not speak any other than their mother tongue. What is more, they usually feel uninspired and unmotivated when they are not able to surpass this barrier. Furthermore, there is something to highlight in terms of the Russians' behaviour. After they have explored and searched across numerous online channels about all the diverse possibilities and activities they are willing to enjoy in destination, they evaluate this information and then go to an offline travel agency in order to conclude the research, or to get advices from them (Egger et Al.[45], 2014).

Like trust is considered as a very important issue for the Soviets, their first source of information are friends and relatives. Next in order, they highly valuate information coming from the internet, mainly peer-travellers' data (eWOM). Lastly, other offline channels are relevant, though with much less influence, which are acquaintances, travel agencies, and magazines, guidebooks and brochures (Fotis et Al., 2013; Lehtinen, 2014).

The online engagement of people within this phase is high, and still increasing over time. Firstly, almost 99.3% of Russians use the computer and internet at least once in an every day routine. As stated in Digital Tourism Think Tank (2014) just 43% of the people in Russia are daily users of online services related to tourism. However, it was found that 79% of the Russian people (Phocuswright, 2016) search information of the trip via online before booking and after making a provisory plan. Considering the digital resources, Russians mostly use notebook computers (42,7%), tablet computers (29%) and desktop computers (21%) (Figure 44). Mobile devices including tablet computers

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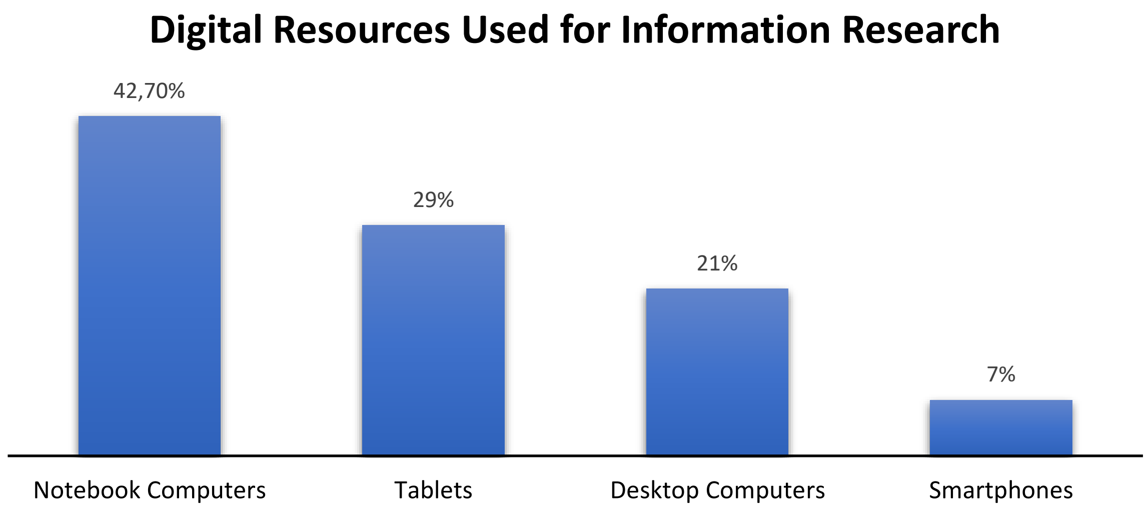
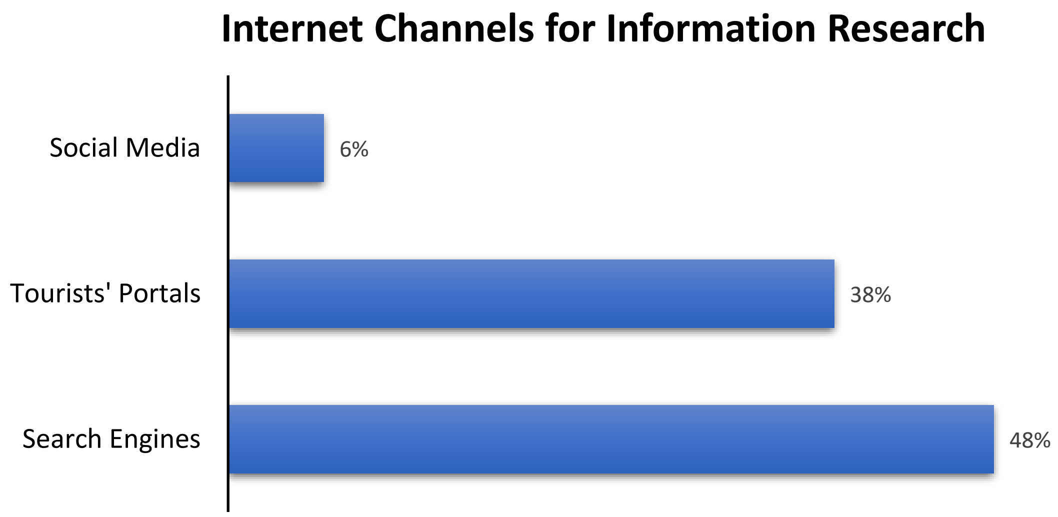
[45] Methodology: online survey delivered by mail for Russian residents. It has normal demographic questions and gross questions about the model in a 5-point Likert scale. It was made in 2012 and 121 people gave answers to the questionnaire. (See Appendix (C))

and smartphones together account 36% share in devices used by consumers for hotel information search (Kazakov, 2014). With reference to the use of the internet channel to search for information, 48% use search engines, 38% tourist portals and 6% social media according to Yury Kulikov (2015).



Source: *Kazakov, 2014*

Figure 44 - Resources Used for Information Research



Source: *Kulikov, 2015*

Figure 45 - Internet Channels

Discriminating the preference of online channels usage by gender, data states that men are likely to prefer using social media, while female opt for review sites (Table 1). This numbers are constantly increasing as they are becoming heavier users of internet tools and digital devices, not only to search information but also in their daily routine. However, a special element that could give rise to a boost of these percentages, is once more related to the language. There are international websites that do not translate their content into Russian despite it is a big market with a huge potential. Because of this, Russians tend to use their own national sites, for example Yandex.ru, which is the most popular search engine in the whole country (Digital Tourism Think Tank, 2014). According to Lehtinen (2014), there are also other Russian-origin websites dedicated to travel and reviews such as Travel.ru, Otdih.ru, and Otziv.ru, summed to the already acknowledged Trip Advisor, Booking and Virtual Tourist.

	Utilization Preference According to Gender	
Internet Resources and Social Media Sites	*Male*	*Female*
General Search Engines	✓	✓
Meta-Search Engines and Online Travel Agencies	✓	✖
Hotel Brand Websites	✖	✓
Facebook	✓	✖
Twitter	✓	✖
Blogs	✖	✓
YouTube	✓	✖
TripAdvisor	✖	✓

Source: *Kazakov & Predvoditeleva, 2015*

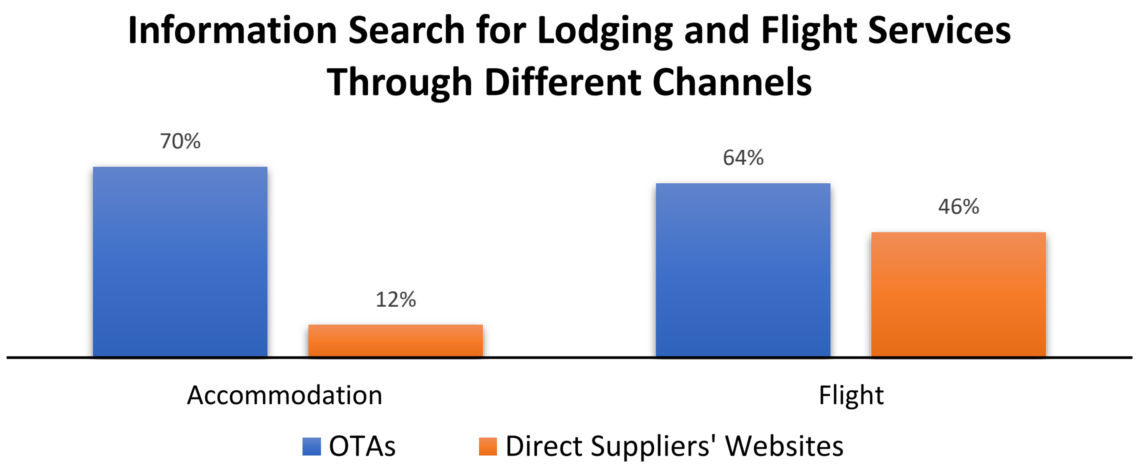
Table 1 - Gender Preference Towards Internet Resources and Social Media Sites

Moreover, the social network sites play an important role in the research phase of the Russian tourists. Russians spend a bit more than 10 hours a day surfing on internet, and half of that time is used to navigate in social media platforms (DTTT, 2014). When talking about tourism-related purposes, they widely use these platforms as channels and sources of information of hotels and destinations, by interacting with pictures, videos or comments (eWOM) available on them (Kazakov & Predvoditeleva, 2015). In addition, the most used social network is the Russian website Vkontakte.ru (VK). Facebook, in this case, is not their first choice, mainly because of the barriers presented by the language, in which local platforms are ready to offer. Fotis et Al. (2013) analysed in their study how do the Russians interact with social media when they are planning a trip. By surveying a group of Russians travellers, the following results were drawn:

- Social media influences in first place the choice of the final destination and, secondly in the choice of the accommodation.
- 50% are keen to make changes to their original plan because of other traveller's opinions, reviews, photos and videos found in SNS's.
- 15% make significant changes to their first idea, either because they were wrong or because the place was not accomplishing with their preferences.

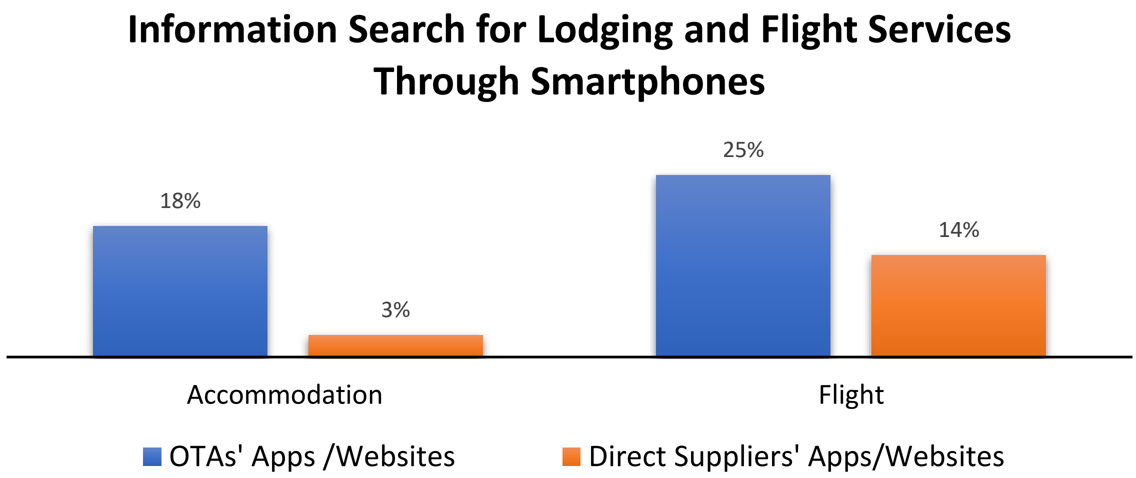
Moving on, in Russia and other countries under development, OTAs are especially useful, as they offer travellers a single interface through which they can explore, compare and contrast a wide range of distinct options (Phocuswright, 2016). With respect to the use of OTAs in Russia, 70% of the tourists use them to get information about the hotels, while just 12% rely on the use the hotels' direct websites. In the case of flights information, this difference shrinks, as 64% attend to the online travel agencies and 46% to the airlines' direct websites.

Phocuswright (2016) also reported that the Russians are following the global increase in usage of mobile devices to search information for the trip. In fact, considering just the use of their smartphones, researching for hotels and flights information through OTAS corresponded to 18% and 25% respectively. On the other hand, the share of tourists searching for information through the suppliers' direct websites/apps is much less, where just 3% of them did it for Accommodation data, and 14% for flight information.



Source: *Phocuswright, 2016*

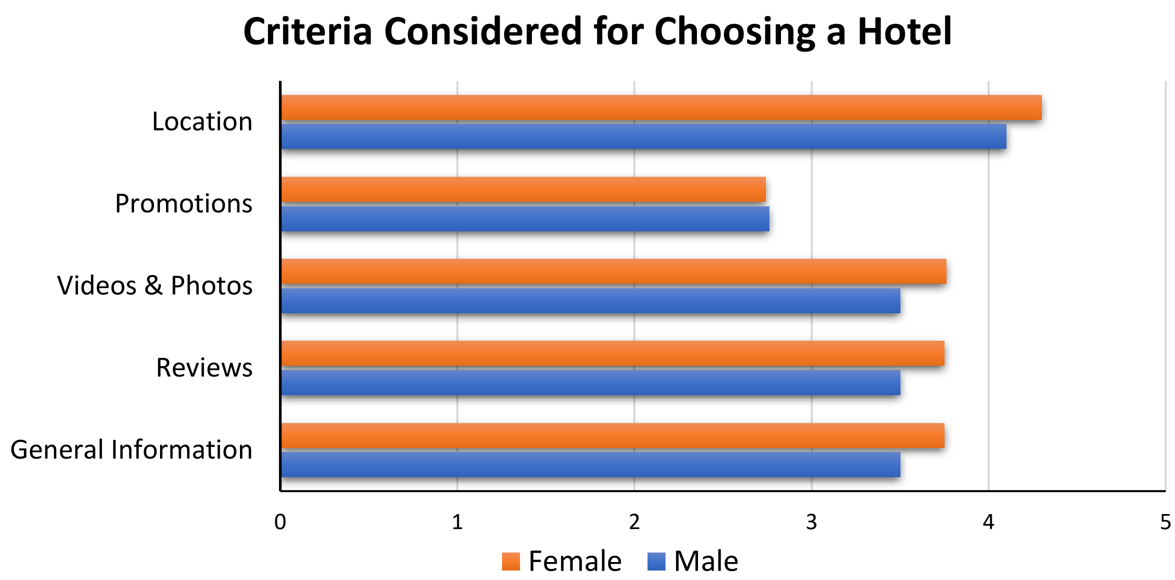
Figure 46 - OTAs Usage for Information Research



Source: *Phocuswright, 2016*

Figure 47 - OTAs Usage for Information Research Through Smartphone

In the case of leisure trips, 42% of the travellers tend to search information about excursions and other leisure activities (museums, amusement parks, zoo, etc.) before the trip (Fotis et Al., 2013). What is more, their behaviours are slightly different considering gender disposition. There are some differences among them when it comes to the relevance they give to the different factors taken into consideration when choosing an accommodation in the target place (Kazakov & Predvoditeleva, 2015).

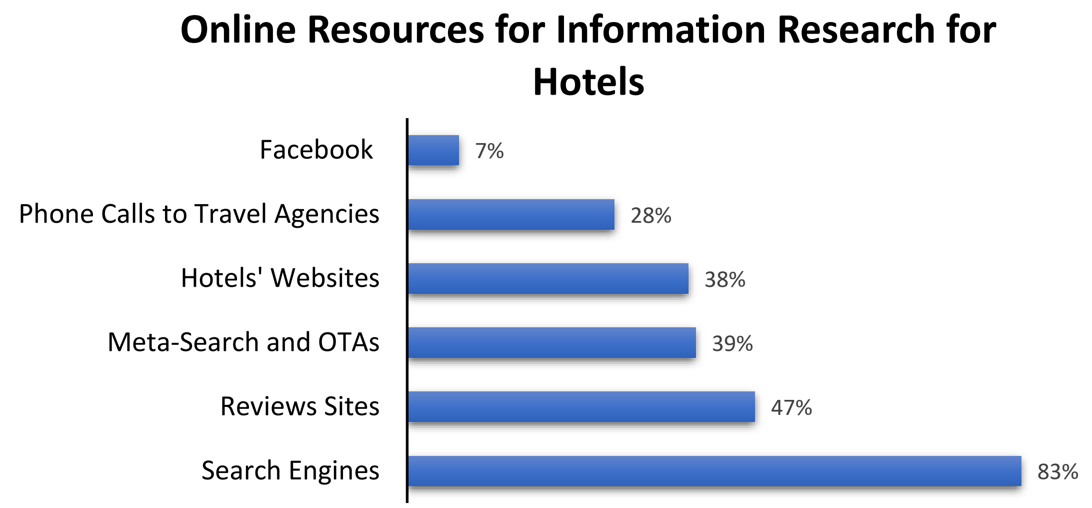


Source: *Kazakov & Predvoditeleva, 2015*

Figure 48 - Weight Given to the Factors Considered for Choosing a Hotel, by Gender

As it is seen in Figure 48, generally women give more importance to almost all the factors considered (except promotion). The greatest difference is in the significance they allocate in gathering information coming from videos and photos of the hotel, where women seem to be more interested in this aspect. On the other hand, both agree in the location criteria, which is considered the most important factor when they search a hotel.

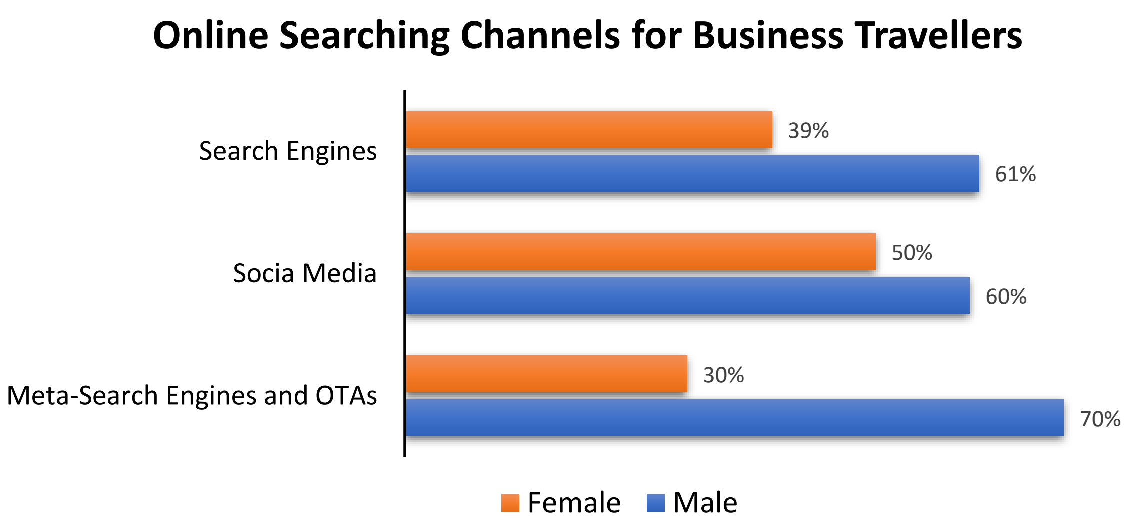
Nevertheless, there are no differences in terms of the percentage of men and women who search for information about hotels via online sources. Specifically, they mostly attend to explore search engines, hotels' websites and online travel agencies. (Kazakov & Predvoditeleva, 2015).



Source: *Kazakov & Predvoditeleva, 2015*

Figure 49 - Information Research for Hotels' Channels

On the other hand, business travellers also have their particular behaviours, which are worth analysing. Firstly, they strongly search for hotels with a nice location and with the best characteristics that accomplish with their requirements. Russian business travellers tend to use web search engines and the Internet as a whole to conduct their initial information search. Male travellers within this segment are likely to use more meta-search engines and online booking agencies more frequently than their female counterpart (Figure 50) (Kazakov & Predvoditeleva, 2015).



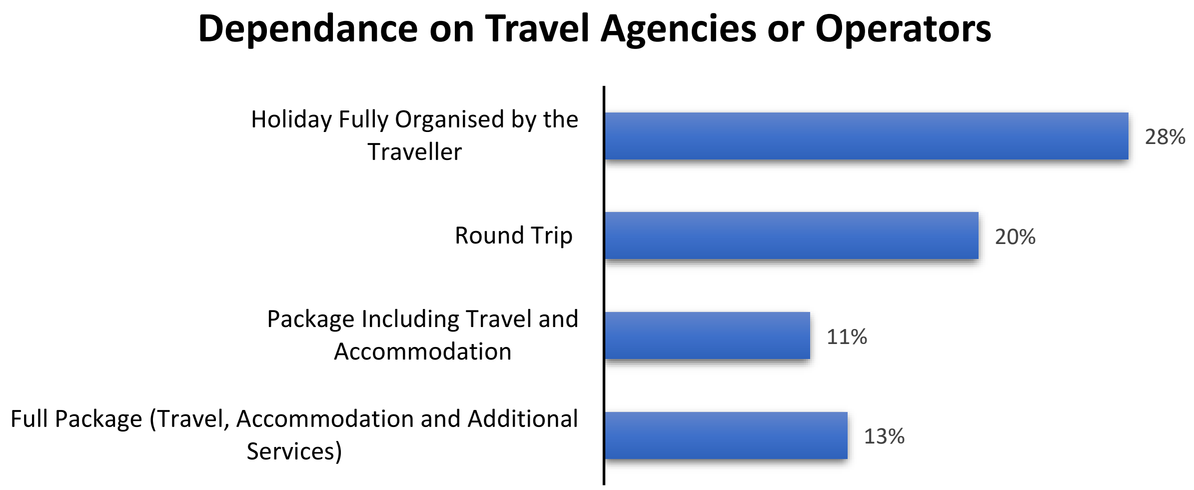
Source: *Kazakov & Predvoditeleva, 2015*

Figure 50 - Business Travellers' Online Channels for Information Research

Finally, there is a last segment of Russian tourists interesting enough to be described, which are the senior travellers, hence people who are more than 65 years old. They are considered as the most traditional tourist, since they do not interact so much with new digital appliances, despite they usually spend more money. (Nikitina & Vorontsova, 2015). Considering the channels from where they want to receive information, they all belong to the offline side, the main sources being television (69%), newspapers (54%), and radio (15%), because these are the sources they have always utilized to get information.

Booking

Within the Booking phase, there has been some fluctuations with respect to the behaviour of Russian travellers towards the use of digital and online channels, and their reasons about opting for the offline world. To start with, there are some differences in the number of tourists who choose to make use of traditional travel agencies or tour operators for booking some – or all – of the travel services of a trip (Figure 51). It is clear that these offline channels are mostly used for booking just transportation services. On the other hand, independent travelling is becoming increasingly popular among the Russian tourists, where a 28% are leaning towards organizing the holiday all by themselves (European Travel Commission, 2017).



Source: *ETC, 2017*

Figure 51 - Level of Travel Agency Penetration for the Booking Phase

Moreover, considering the timeliness of the booking activity, 80% of Russian travellers tend to book the different services of the trip just few weeks before it starts, for what they are prone to make late bookings (DTTT, 2014).

Russians rely mainly on the Internet to find information related to their trip, compare prices of flights, accommodation and other travel services. However, they prefer to book and pay through an offline travel agency, with 40% of Russian Travellers doing it (ITB, 2016; Digital tourism think tank, 2014; Kazakov & Predvoditeleva, 2015). The reason for this fact is that there is a strong sense of insecurity and mistrust in many activities regarding internet services, especially when it means paying for a service or book an important tourist service through it. As they are relatively new within the digital market, they are not experts in how they should interact with these tools. What is more Egger et Al. (2014) illustrates that the Russian tourist does not trust on online travel websites concerning credit card issues, confidentiality and security of personal data.

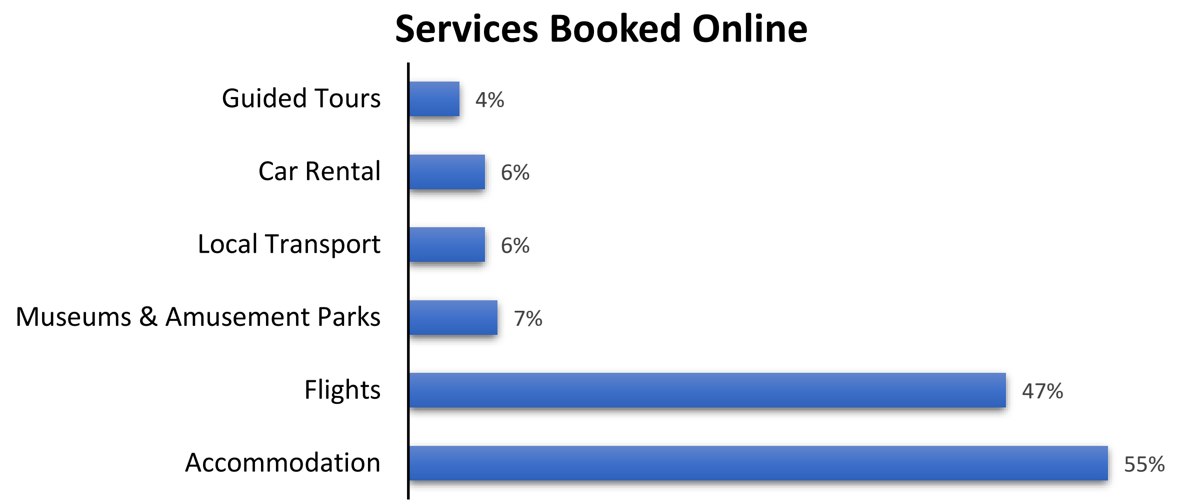
However, this tendency is starting to take a turn, since it is increasing the number of people who use digital platforms to book their trips. Growing internet penetration, increasing consumer awareness, huge interest in new technologies and the increasing interest in various new consumer electronics devices are the factors that have helped online travels and tourism sales to grow. In addition, online travel agencies and various online payment systems have expanded in the past years also contributing to the tourism sales in the country (Euromonitor International, 2016). As the country is trespassing a big development, and they are coming out of an economic crisis, they are prone to travel abroad and make payments and reservations in an easier and faster way than before, mostly by using the world-wide web. Furthermore, they are increasingly convinced that using online safe-platforms to book hotels or transportation services is useful and effective (Tnooz, 2015). As a matter of fact, there has been a growth in Internet visits regarding tourism issues: for hotels reservations systems +65%, online-booking flights +45% and OTAs' websites +5% (Yury Kulikov, 2015). This growth tendency has evolved to such extent that the online penetration of the booking phase is 61% as of 2016, whereas it increases up to 70% if regarding those Russian tourists travelling to Italy (Phocuswright, 2016; Tourism Review, 2016).

This internet penetration expansion is driving increased interest of independent travellers to plan and book their own trips. The diminishment in acquiring package tours is followed by an increase in the purchase of e-tickets and hotel bookings online

(Yury Kulikov, 2015). What is more, independent tourists are currently being the centre of attention of several countries in the European Union, since there has been an increase in bookings of 65% of this type of travellers towards accommodation services (Russia Beyond the Headlines, 2017).

There are some online travel agencies in addition to Trip Advisor and Booking like ozon.ru, amargo.ru, hotels.ru and ostrovok.ru, among others, which are facilitating the process to book a trip via online (DTTT, 2014; Kazakov & Predvoditeleva, 2015). Specifically for lodging bookings, the Russians prefer to make their final hotel buying decisions using general web search engines, hotel brand websites and, surprisingly, TripAdvisor.com, which is not a normal channel that tourists choose for booking purposes. (Lehtinen, 2014). In addition, search engines are hardly ever used as booking platforms. They are likely used as a frequent transit point for information assimilation. However, Yandex have introduced yandex.travel.ru in Russia, allowing its travellers to perform booking actions through this platform. Lastly, peer-to-peer platforms are becoming increasingly in-demand in Russia, with the most popular of such services being Airbnb and Sutochno.ru for private accommodation rentals. (Euromonitor International, 2016). This trend is gaining popularity being driven mainly by two factors: these options are cheaper and they enable consumers to save time.

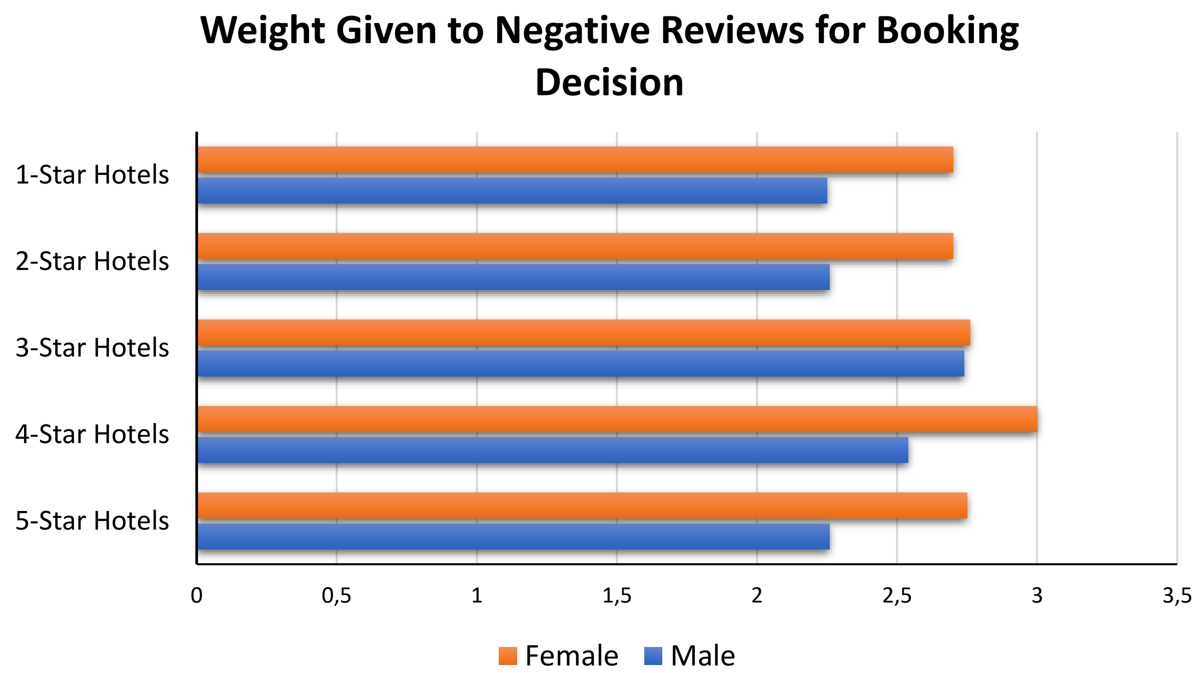
When it comes to the activities and services, the Russian tourist turns to online booking for different purposes, the most relevant being accommodation reservations, followed by flights and other activities (Figure 52) (Phocuswright, 2016; Yury Kulikov, 2015).



Source: Phocuswright, 2016; *Kulikov, 2015*

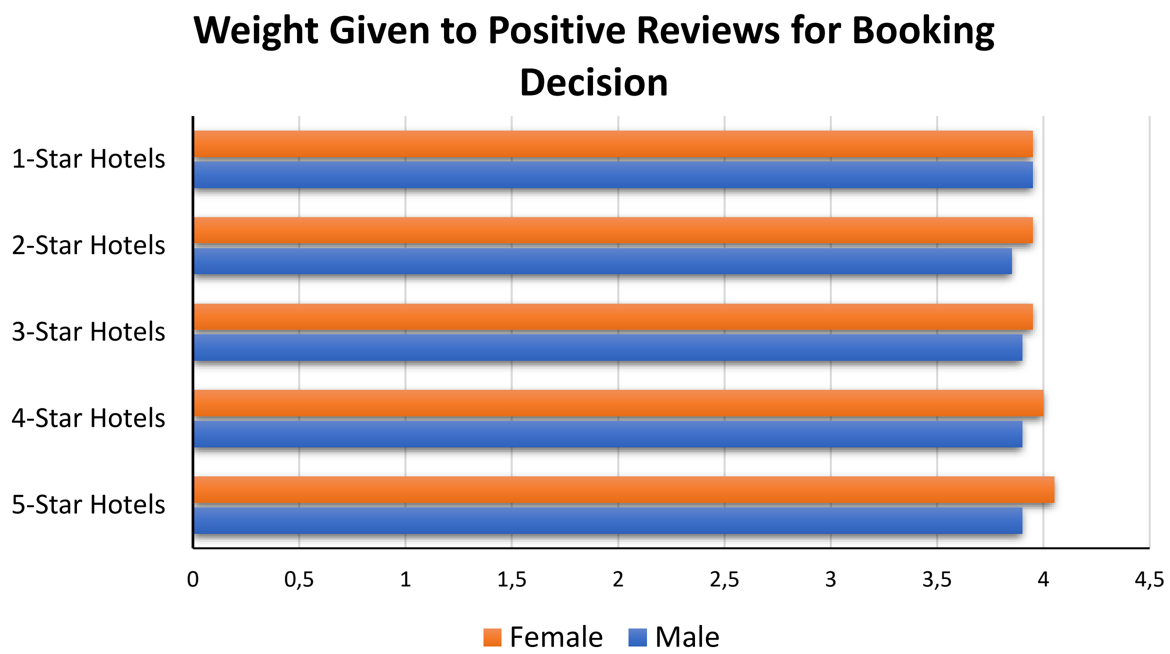
Figure 52 - Most Online Booked Services

Within the accommodation activity, Russian tourists consider to a great extent fellow-travellers' opinions and reviews before booking the accommodation service. However, the level of consideration they give to them depends on the type of lodging service (in terms of luxury), as well as if the reviews are positive or negative. Slight disparities are present among men and women (Kazakov & Predvoditeleva, 2015).



Source: *Kazakov & Predvoditeleva, 2015*

Figure 53 - Influence of Negative Reviews in the Booking Decision



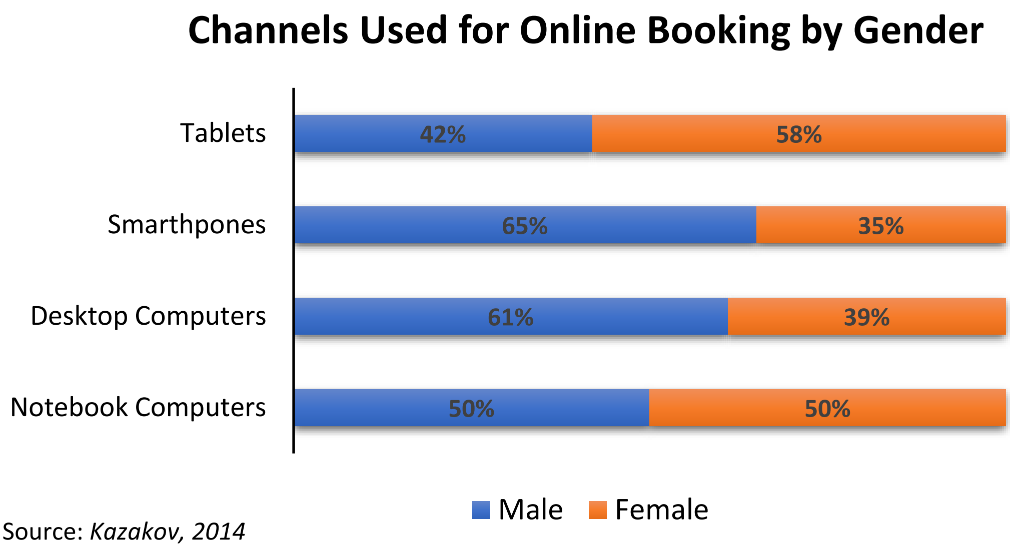
Source: *Kazakov & Predvoditeleva, 2015*

Figure 54 - Influence of Positive Reviews in the Booking Decision

The data reveals that women give much more importance to the online reviews, either positive or negative ones. Nonetheless, in the case of positive reviews this gap shrinks, as men tourists seem to take them as much into account as female ones.

It is possible to assure the dominance of men in a usage of the majority of on-line resources to book a hotel, whilst women would rather go to a local travel agency office and make their purchase there, and also hotel review sites with a booking capabilities like tripadvisor.com are more appealing for females than for males at their final buying stop. Overall, when it comes to the usage of online resources for the hotel booking, 53% of those who make online transaction were men and 47% were women. Men also use smartphones more often for on-line booking (65%) as well as desktop computers (61%) and women showed more preference towards tablet computer devices (58%). Computer notebooks are equally used by both genders for the same matter (Figure 55) (Kazakov[46], 2014).

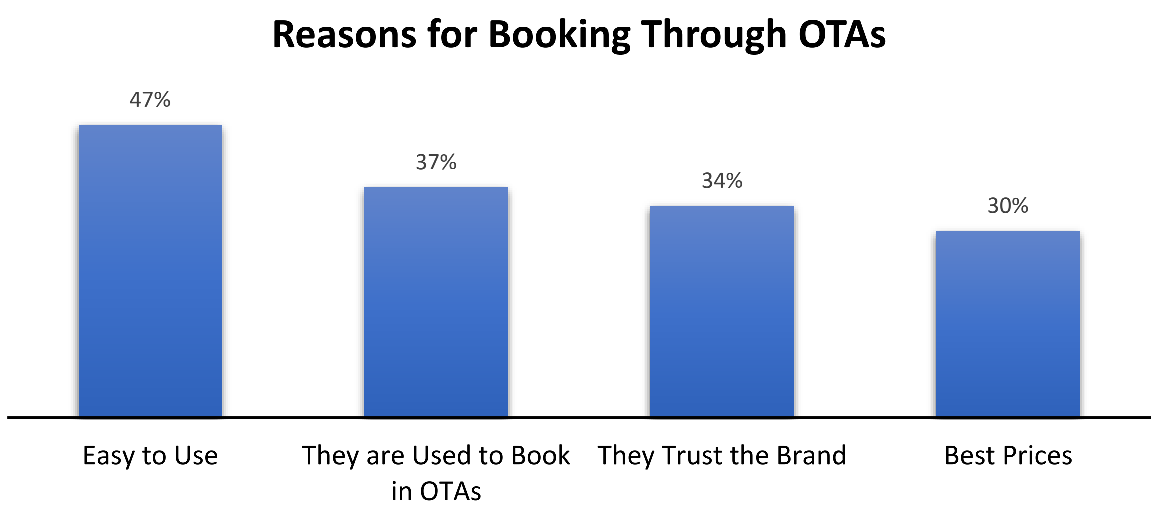
[46] Methodology: 536 respondents to an online survey distributed along 15 Russian cities. (More info: See Appendix (C))



Source: *Kazakov, 2014*

Figure 55 - Gender Preference of Online Booking Channels

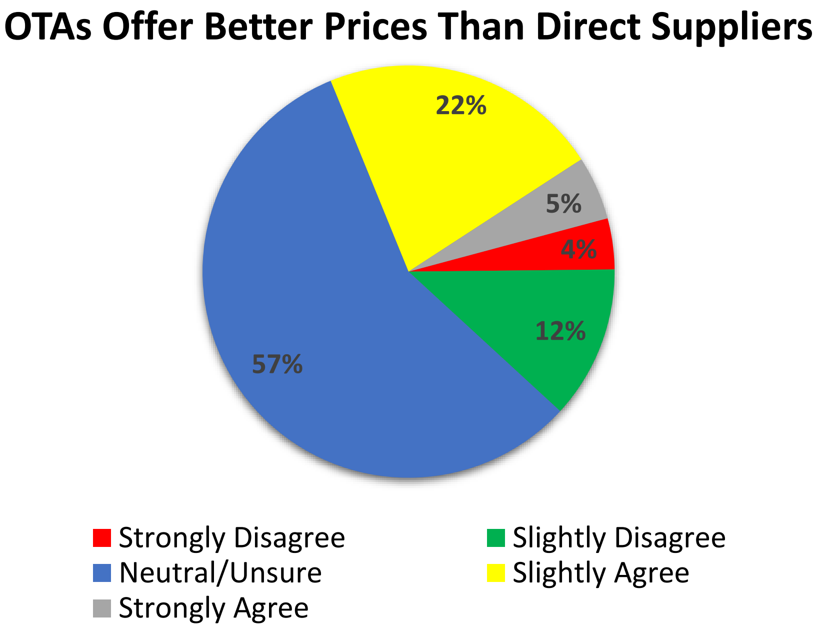
As stated during the Chinese Tourist Journey, OTAs are winning space in the booking services, and Russia is not the exception. Even though it is not the most used platform to book travel services, they are convincing the Russian travellers that they have the best market opportunities to plan and book a trip. Among the different reasons why they are starting to book travel services through these platforms, the most relevant one is that they are easier to use compared to other websites, being able to offer almost all the travel services within one platform, and facilitating the purchasing process (Figure 56) (Phocuswright, 2016).



Source: *Phocuswright, 2016*

Figure 56 - Preference for OTAs

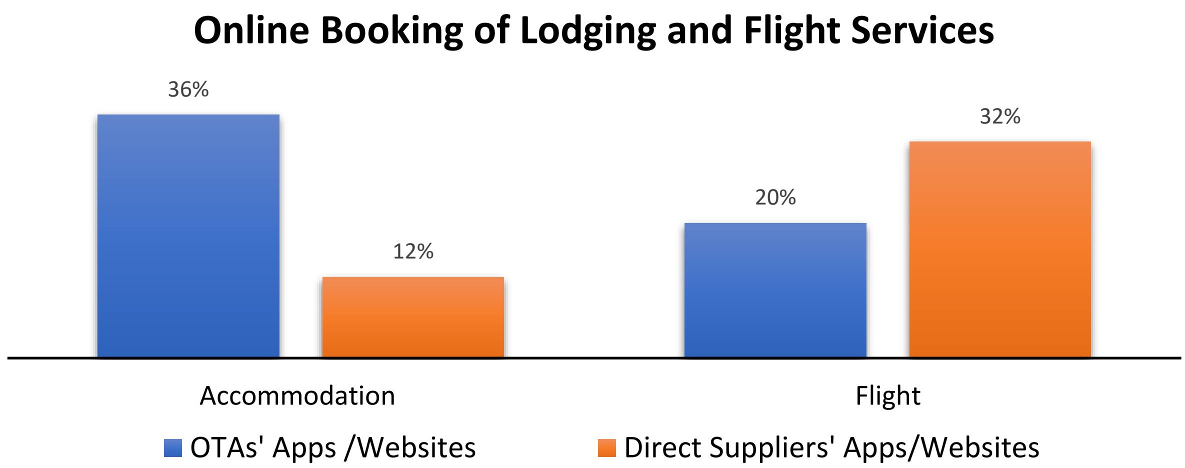
One of the main issues they consider when they want to buy something related to the travel, is the price. Most of their information searching process is aimed to find the best offer. However, in the case of OTAs, Russian tourists dissent from Chinese ones in the fact that they are indifferent to choose booking through this channel because of better prices (Figure 57) (Phocuswright, 2016).



Source: *Kazakov & Predvoditeleva, 2015*

Figure 57 - Russian Travellers Opinion Towards OTAs Pricing

Finally, there is a little disparity in the usage of OTAs to book flights and accommodation services. In particular, Russians travellers are more likely to use them to book hotels or other lodging services, but when it comes to book air transportation services, they are keen to book through the airlines' direct websites (Phocuswright, 2016).



Source: *Phocuswright, 2016*

Figure 58 - OTAs' Usage for Booking Services

During-Trip

What concerns the activities performed by the traveller during its stay in the destination, the Russian tourist presents some particular behaviours that differentiates it from the rest of the travellers around the world. As it is going to be noticed in the following analysis, it is possible to point out that the Russian traveller is quite conservative and traditional while vacationing, deeply contrasting in this way from its Chinese counterpart.

To begin with, the various services acquired and different activities carried out by the Russian tourist while being in the destination are going to be analysed. As exposed before, their level of expenditure overseas has been increasing over the last years. In fact, the bargaining power of the Russian traveller has incremented as well in a 33-46%, as a result of the stabilization of the Russian Rouble. Nonetheless, on the grounds of the deep effect that the economic crisis had in the Russian tourist behaviour, the average traveller is currently largely cautious and judicious while travelling, as they tend to keep a close eye on restaurants' bills, they buy a minimum of souvenirs, and they make sure to get their VAT refunds before leaving the country they are visiting. (Russia Beyond the Headlines, 2017).

When it comes to the type of service they choose in terms of accommodation, there is a dominant leadership driven by Hotels. In fact, 90% of Russian tourists visiting Italy stays in a Hotel structure, while about 50% of this percentage rather vacationing in high-end hotels (4-5 Star). However, this favouritism is starting to decrease, since the growing tendency of extra-hotel accommodations are starting to gain power and momentum (Tonini, 2015). In particular, sharing-economies platforms play a central role in this field, since they offer the Russian tourist a cheaper, easier and more convenient option in terms of accommodation (Tnooz, 2015). In fact, independent travellers evidence this trend by opting for other accommodation services, such as hostels and shared-rooms.

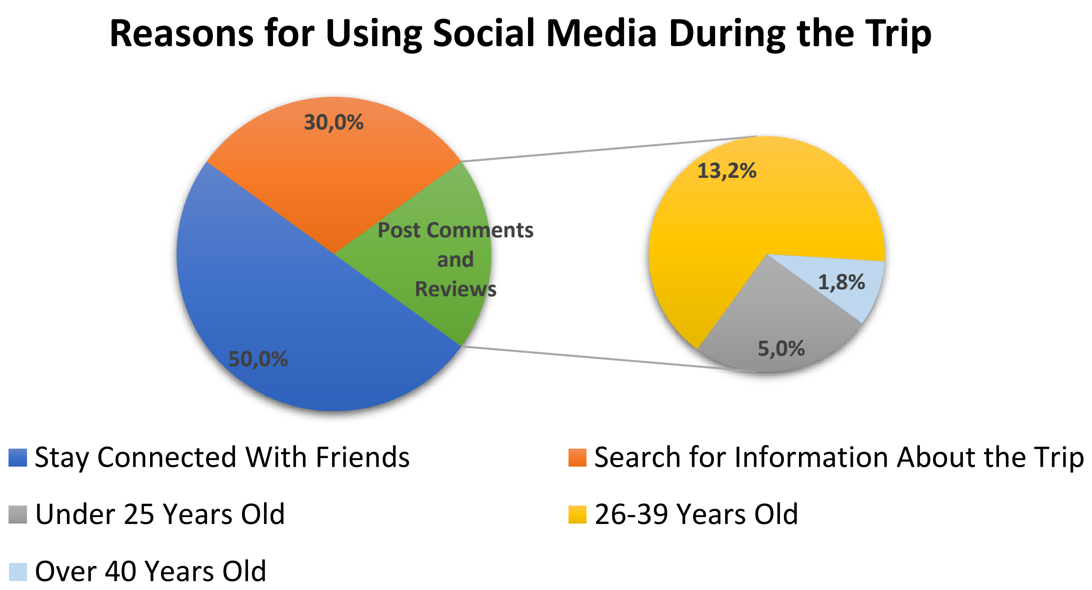
Nowadays, a common behaviour among Russian Tourists is to buy and acquire additional leisure-services once they are in the destination. Actually, 64% of travellers do not but any additional service from Travel Agencies supplementary to the standard travel-package or for the self-organized trips, other than flight tickets and hotel bookings. In spite of that, for example, 75% of Russian Tourists purchase additional services while being in Rimini (their most visited beach location in Italy) (Kulikov, 2015). Furthermore, they are quite demanding and thorough with regards to their expectations about their trips, in such manner that they consider that the trip has not succeeded if the services and activities in the travel destination were not as good as expected (Evita Lehtinen, 2014).

Regarding the activities they tend to do in-site, a study carried out by the European Travel Commission (2017) reveals that Russian travellers demonstrate the highest interest in visiting as much as possible in a short time whilst in Europe (18%). This means that they like to be quite active during the trip, trying to visit a large number of places, regardless the time spent in each one of them. In addition, 9% spend their trip to Europe to realize outdoor activities. While visiting other countries, they also like to use travel Russian apps, as they facilitate them the stay in the destination by helping them with information they can find in their own language (Evita Lehtinen[47], 2014).

Moving on, it was found that Russian Tourists are greatly Digital Travellers, as they make extensive use of digital gadgets and platforms while being in their destination. Correspondingly, when considering the entire Digital Tourist Journey, the data shows

[47] Methodology: it is about an extensive literature review and a survey to Russians travelling to Finland. It was made personally for about 45 minutes. (See Appendix (C))

that, comparing to the other phases, social media's use in the During-Trip ranks second, while the Post-Trip phase leads the ranking. Among the reasons of using it, around 50% of travellers use social media to stay connected with friends, and 30% use it to find out more information about the holidays. On the other hand, posting comments and reviewing about destinations being visited acquaints just for the 20% of the tourists. Considering age segmentations, evidence shows that 25% of under-25 years old posted comments, while only a 9% of over-40 did it (Fotis et Al., 2013).



Source: *Fotis et Al., 2013*

Figure 59 - Social Media in the During-Trip Phase

Having considered the way in which Russian Travellers make use of social media and digital platforms, it is now also reasonable to analyse how they manage to access these channels. According to the Digital Tourism Think Tank (2014), Russian Tourists are increasingly making use of and engaging with mobile devices. Mobile consumption is steeply growing, mainly due to their provision of faster services and the constant lowering in the prices at which they are sold. As a matter of fact, Russian travellers are ranked 3rd among European users of mobile devices, behind UK and Ireland. With computers being left aside, mobile devices are primarily responsible for the more than 5-hours-a-day consumption of online content. Moreover, it is important to note that nearly half of this consumption time is dedicated towards surfing on social networking sites, so evidencing what was described previously. Subsequently, the amount of mobile internet consumption on Smartphones, in terms of the places in which it is accessed, varies significantly: 90% while in the car or public transport, 82% on the move, and 79% at home. Specifically speaking about Internet accessibility, it is possible to affirm that is mostly accessed through table devices at home (87%), and in the car or public transport (67%).

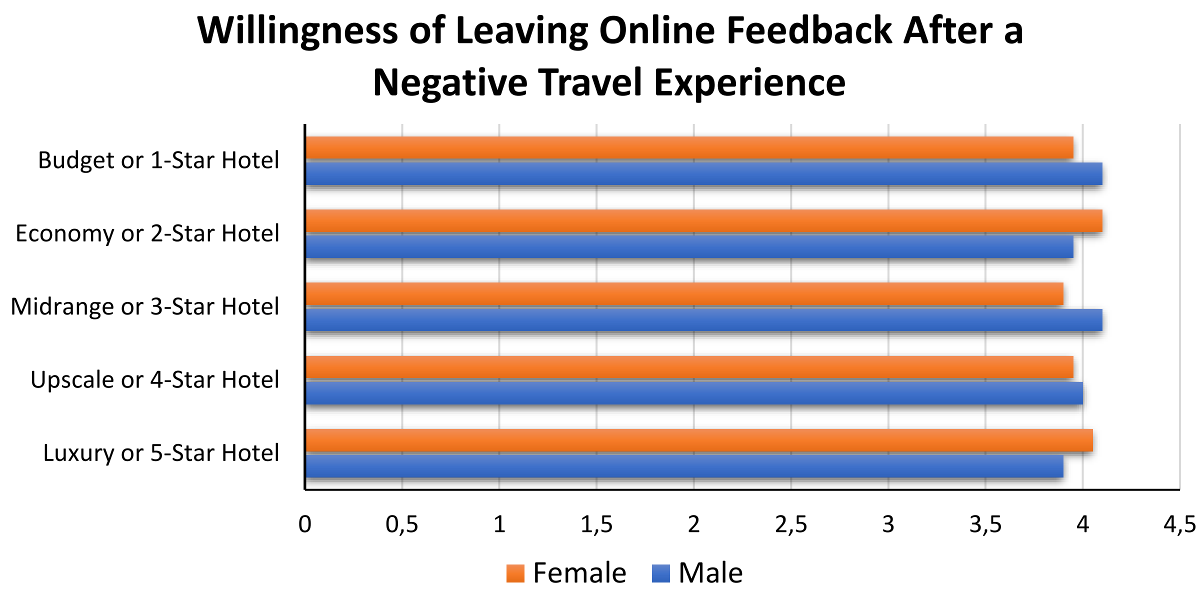
Finally, as previously mentioned, there is a huge importance of the Russian high-social-class tourist, whose spending power is an important element when acquiring different products and services in the during trip phase. Russians are keen to purchase luxury goods and top-quality service, no matter the high price, as they are symbols of a high status among the Russian population. Moreover, a higher income corresponds with longer vacations, as well as an increased number of additional services used in-site. As the middle class is starting to increase, it is specially the young tourists of this segment the ones who are showing raising signs of individualization and positive feeling towards a European lifestyle, with high technology and luxury products as popular elements. (Lehtinen, 2014). As formerly described in the Inspiration Phase, Russian tourists are likely to visit Italy due to holiday motives, above all choosing beach places (being Rimini the most demanded site), but also visiting one or more "Art Cities" such as Venice, Florence and Rome, along with shopping sites (mainly Milano) (Tonini, 2015).

Post-Trip

As it was done with the Chinese, this last section will be committed to describe the Russian Tourists behaviours and characteristics in the final phase of the Digital Tourist Journey, and in particular how they interact with the different digital tools and platforms.

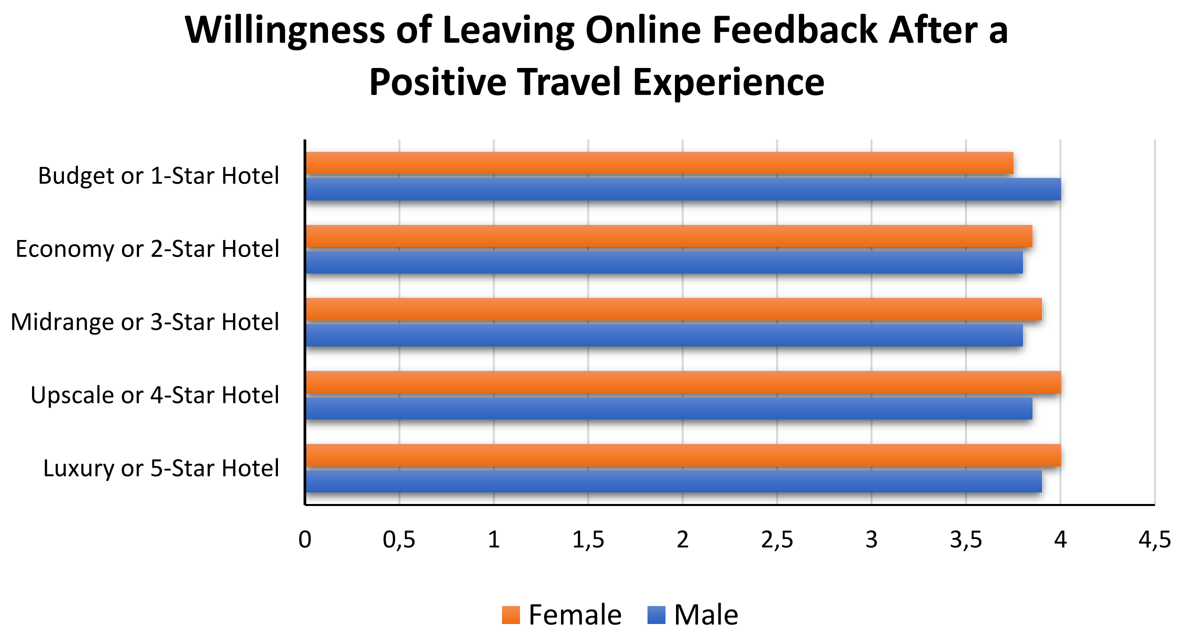
The main objective of the Post-Trip stage is to share information, photos, videos, and any other experiences related to the travel that the tourist has just had. As reported by Phocuswright (2016), the online penetration of this phase among Russian tourists is of 56%. This low value is due that Russian tourists are less experienced in utilizing different criteria sets for assessing their experiences compared to more traditional tourists (e.g. the British) (Stylos et Al., 2016). This number evidences that this type of traveller is far less digital than the Chinese one, and that they have more traditional behaviours. Nevertheless, as anticipated in the During-Trip analysis, social media platforms are the number one instrument chosen by Russian Tourists in order to carry out the activities related to this stage. By posting videos, photos and reviews, Russian and citizens of the former USSR use social media to share their trip experiences (Kazakov & Predvoditeleva, 2015). Fotis et Al. (2013) realized a specific study about how and to what extent the Russian traveller makes use of social media. Findings revealed that 78% of them uses these platforms to perform different kind of activities. As aforementioned, the most dominant ones are sharing experiences and photos with friends or other fellow travellers. However, 27% engaged in providing reviews and evaluations, hence helping other tourists in their respective Information and Information Research phases. Regarding age segmentation, 36% of them are comprised between 25 and 39 years old, while the over 55s account for the 12%. The high percentage of the number of Russian tourists using social media in the Post-Trip stage can be explained by the very nature of the Russian culture, which is considered as a low individualist or high collectivist civilization and lifestyle. Lehtinen (2014) states that although it is important for all Russian consumers to share experiences, in the high class this feature seems to affiliate with the need to feel appreciation and increase the personal status.

To continue, Russian Tourists have different eagerness specifically when It comes to evaluating post-trip the different accommodation services they used during their vacation. Kazakov & Predvoditeleva (2015) studied the hotel customers' willingness to leave online feedback about either positive or negative travel experiences, where Russian Travellers used a scoring system from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates "definitely will not share my feedback online" and 5 indicates "certainly will write a review or comment on my most recent travel and hotel experience" (Figures 60, 61). By discriminating between male and female travellers, the Figures illustrate that both types of tourists have different predisposition to leave online reviews about their accommodation experiences. For instance, female ones are much more prone to leave online feedback for a 5-Star Hotel either the experience was positive or negative. However, is quite the opposite considering budget or 1-Star hotels.



Source: *Kazakov & Predvoditeleva, 2015*

Figure 60 - Leaving Online Feedbacks After Negative Experiences



Source: *Kazakov & Predvoditeleva, 2015*

Figure 61 - Leaving Online Feedback After Positive Experiences

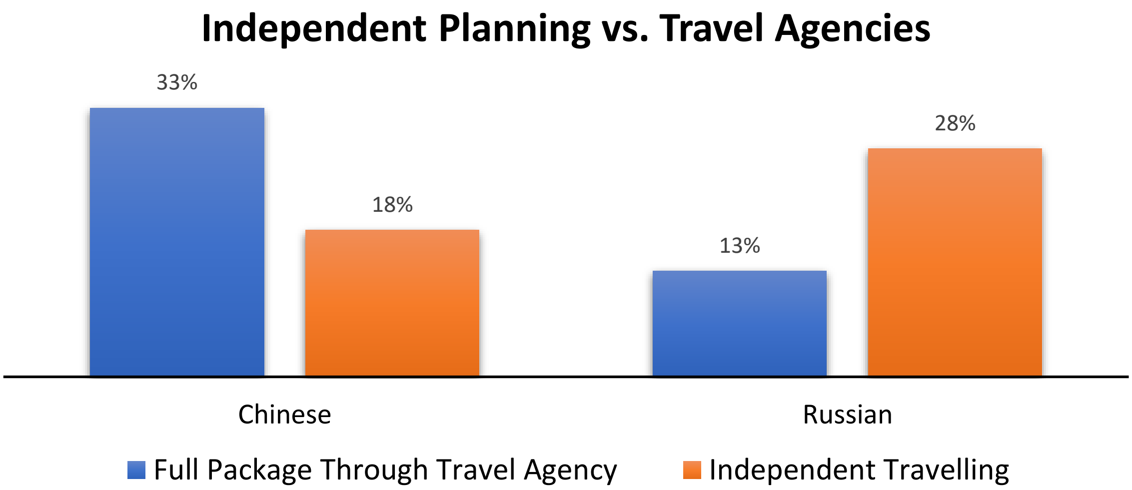
Conclusion

This work intended to reveal and understand the travelling behaviours and characteristics of the Chinese and Russian traveller, as well as to highlight their importance and the potential relevance to the entire Tourism Industry.

As described throughout the study, they can be considered as “young” tourists with little experience in the matter, since their appearance into the Travel and Tourism Sector is quite recent, because of the already exposed respective reasons. Still and all, they have rapidly adapted to the trend, to such extent that nowadays they both represent a big share of the total worldwide outbound travels. However, it is important to point out that domestic travels still represent the largest share of both countries travellers’ destinations.

This enormous quantity of outbound tourists from both countries is also traduced as a relevant amount of overseas expenditure. As formerly exposed, these tourists have a massive spending power, being one of the top-spenders in terms of outbound travellers. Subsequently, shopping is a major factor of consideration for their vacations. The Chinese traveller, on the one hand, tends to plan the whole trip around the shopping activity, and therefore are the one who spend the most in the Tourism Industry. On the other hand, the Russian traveller is starting to regain its bargaining power since the economic crisis of 2014, steeply climbing in the ranking. Moreover, those belonging to the high-social class are the major contributors to the overseas-expenditure matter.

Independent travellers have demonstrated to be the most promising and important tourists for both countries’ tourism industries. As the current work has described, Chinese and Russian tourists are more demanding in terms of service quality and treatment received in destinations. It is necessary to stress the fact that the introduction and development of ICT into the sector is one of the main causes of this new trend. It has enabled tourists to act as travel agencies for their own, by accessing easier and more rapidly to any useful information, and being able to analyse and compare different options and prices. In China, it has deeply affected the so popular group-travels, as they seem to have lost attractiveness for the Chinese tourist. Contrariwise, they are starting to search, plan and book by their own means, and detached from the custom of travelling together with many people, as now they are choosing to be independent travellers. Russian tourists, diversely from the Chinese, are prone to organize and book the trip by themselves. The utility of traditional travel agencies or travel operators is starting to lose relevance for them, as the Internet and digital tools are partly replacing their function. Considering the Chinese, it is still larger the percentage of people attending to Travel Agencies to book a particular service of the trip those doing it individually.



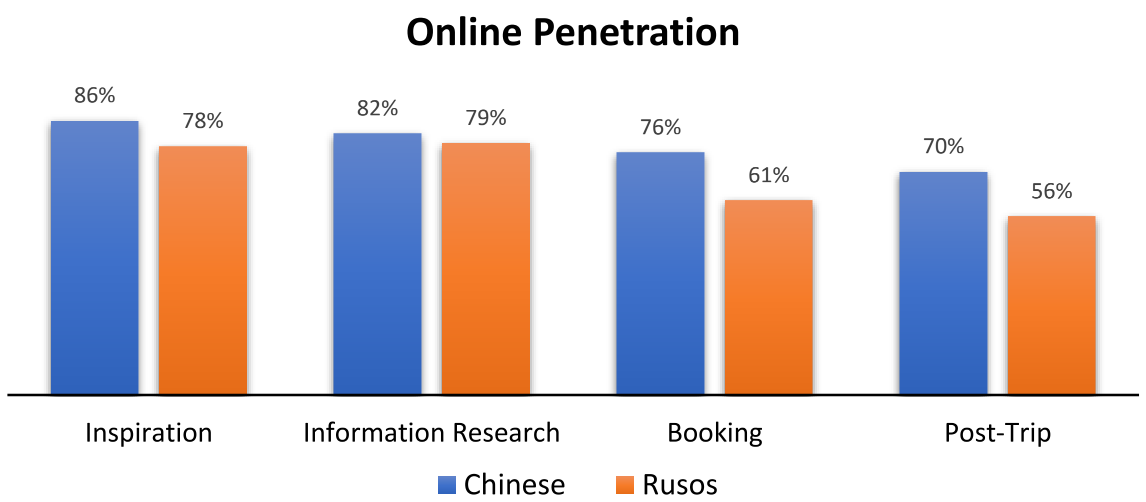
Source: *ETC, 2016*

Figure 62 - Preferences Towards Planning/Booking a Trip Independently or Through Travel Agencies

What is more, language has proven to be one of the main barriers and nuisances that Chinese and Russian tourists have to undertake across the entire travel experience. This difficulty sometimes translates into demotivation for outbound tourism, thus opting for more comfortable domestic trips, as previously mentioned. The main obstacle to be tackled is the lack of foreign information websites offering Russian or Chinese language, for what they turn to use national platforms, which they consider easier and faster to use.

In addition, they differ on their opinion about long-haul travels, where Chinese have manifested to be more prone than Russians to realize trips to distant places. Europe as a destination is one of their most attractive targets, even though the reasons why they are willing to visit it vary. While Chinese tourists are more engaged to sightseeing and gastronomical activities, Russians are more likely to visit the old continent for outdoor activities and natural landscapes, as well as a getaway from their cold and ruthless weather.

Regarding internet and digital penetration throughout the entire tourist journey, the Chinese has demonstrated to be more used to and technological inclined to their utilization. Moreover, social media is an essential element for the Russian and Chinese tourist's life, since they are heavily used for different aspects of the travel experience. From the very first phase of Inspiration up to the post-trip stage, social media use acts accordingly to the Chinese and Russian sense of community, as they actively utilize them to interact with their loved ones and to help fellow-travellers by leaving useful online feedback. In this case, both countries stand similarly on the percentage of people having a social media account: 95% for the Asians, 96% for the Soviets.



Source: *Phocuswright, 2016*

Figure 63 - Online Penetration in the Different Stages of the Tourist Journey

On the other hand, offline channels continue to bear a great deal of attention by Chinese and Russian tourists. Being tourism an immature phenomenon for them, they both still deeply rely on traditional travel agencies, or simple word of mouth (mainly from friends and relatives) for planning and booking services of their trips, since they do not feel completely confident with their digital skills. Besides, they mistrust novel digital payment methods, reason why they usually attend to offline channels for fulfilling this activity.

Finally, Millennial travellers account for a large amount of the overall outbound trips for both countries. As analysed in the study, they have particular motivations and behaviours, such as involving with the destination's culture and local life, and seeking of meaningful experiences. As a matter of fact, they represent the trend of independent travelling, and Chinese and Russian Millennial tourists almost share the same reasons for travelling, since these are more correlated to an aging factor, more than geographic one.

To conclude, it is necessary to call attention to the urgency of understanding the behaviours of the Chinese and Russian tourists. This work has introduced and described their most important characteristics, as well as the ongoing and possible future trends. The tourism industry should be ready and capable of offering and meeting their numerous needs and necessities, as they represent a massive source of tourists, and will likely be the driving force that will guide the future of the Travel and Tourism sector.

Appendix

The analysis of the information that was inserted within the previous document, was made following the lecture of three different types of sources.

Either in one step or another, all these sources gather information by making surveys or resorting to others' surveys, which all of them in the meanwhile have different methodologies, choosing among different demographic characteristics of the respondents, or the format of the questionnaire.

A. Professional documents and reports:

This kind of documents are made following the instructions of company's chief data officers or the teams' heads, who assign a group of researchers with the objective of finding relevant data useful for their customers. It means that it is being talked about research companies working for government's or other company's necessities.

However, there is another segment inside this classification, conformed by all those firms already operating in the tourism industry, making research for their own benefit.

Nevertheless, this two types of organizations don't share their data easily with third parties and, most of the times, all those who want to read their information are obliged to pay. As a consequence, to make possible the analysis inside this document, sometimes it wasn´t possible to have full access, but the reading of press releases was very useful to do it. On the other hand, there are some companies that share what they have found and the research becomes more accessible.

In the next space, it is going to be explained how the companies belonging to this segment collected the data to make their studies:

Digital Tourism Think Tank: It is a research company aimed mainly to innovate in the tourism sector by providing novel insights about the behaviours and characteristics of tourists and how to deal better with them. In this case they gathered a lot of data about the digital behaviours of Russian tourists by resorting to official data from the government or other private reports from their partners.

ITB-Berlin: This is an event organizer for tourism related products. Big part of the information they use comes from the research company IPK International, which makes surveys and gather information from people they consider important for their analysis. In this case, IPK following ITB requirements for their exposition, collected data and gave results about some Russian behaviours. There are no clues about their respondent's demographic profile.

European Travel Commission: in their report Preferences of the European Towards Tourism, they made a survey requested by the European Commission.

The survey was designed to explore a range of aspects regarding holidays in 2015 and 2016, in particular:

- respondents' reasons for going on holiday in 2015
- information sources and tools used to book holidays
- respondents' travel profiles, preferred destinations and holiday types
- satisfaction with various aspects of holidays in 2015
- plans for holidays in 2016, including the potential impact of the current economic situation on these plans

Where possible, results are compared with the previous waves of the survey and a longitudinal analysis has been carried out for questions which have been asked several times since the initial 2009 wave.

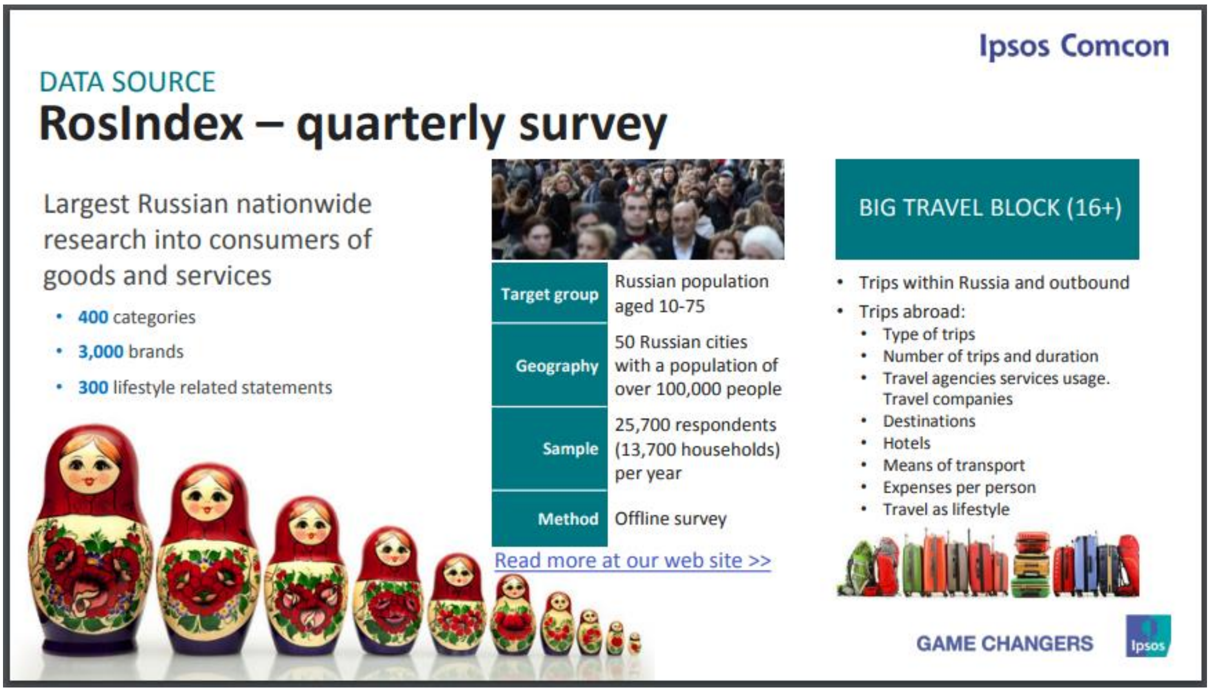
Some 30,105 respondents from different social and demographic groups were interviewed via telephone (mobile and fixed line) in their mother tongue on behalf of the Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs. The methodology used is that of Eurobarometer surveys as carried out by the Directorate-General for Communication ("Strategy, Corporate Communication Actions and Eurobarometer" Unit)[1]. A technical note on the manner in which interviews were conducted by the Institutes within the TNS Political & Social network is annexed to this report. Also included are the interview methods and confidence intervals[2].

An additional analysis - carried out by cross-tabulating different questions - as well as Country Fact Sheets, will be included in a subsequent phase.

However, in the Long-Haul Barometer, another study made by the ETC:

The Long-Haul Travel Sentiment Survey captures people's intention to travel abroad, their motivations and barriers to travel, as well as key characteristics of their trip. Results are based on 1,000 interviews conducted in each market every four months. The stratified sample is representative of the travel population of each market. The survey monitors respondents' intention to travel outside the region of residence (e.g. North America for the USA). The only exception is the Russian Federation, where intention to travel outside the Commonwealth of Independent states is measured. The survey is not meant to quantify prospect demand levels. The project is realised by TCI Research.

IPSOS Comcon:



ITE Travel & Tourism:

About ITE

We are one of the world's leading organisers of international trade exhibitions and conferences and specialise in organising events in growing and developing markets.

We organise over 230 exhibitions and conferences each year worldwide. We have many market leading events and well-known brands in key industry sectors. Our product range of annual events includes everything from niche specialist conferences through to globally significant trade fairs with mass appeal and influence.

ITE was established in 1991 when its founders launched a series of trade exhibitions in Russia and the CIS with the primary objective of promoting trade opportunities these new market economies. Today, these markets remain an area of considerable strength for the group and ITE has a comprehensive office network and event portfolio in countries such as Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Uzbekistan.

This report was produced by ITE Travel & Tourism, organisers of the MITT exhibition in Moscow.

Held annually in March, MITT is the leading and longest running event in Russia for the international travel industry. In 2017, the event will now take place over three days, as requested by our participants, with only business-to-business visitors in attendance. MITT is Russia's central meeting place for you to negotiate, network, sign new deals and showcase your destination as the new tourist hotspot.

To learn more about taking part
in MITT, talk to us today.

Phocuswrigth: It is a research company working steadily with the tourism sector. It makes full reports with different objectives. In this case they made a comparison between 8 countries: China, USA, Brazil, UK, Russia, Germany, France and Australia. To gather all the data they made a survey for the residents of each country who have used at least one tourism-related digital platform in the moment they plan their trip (in fact in all the phases of the tourist journey). They received more than 1000 answers from each group of people (from each country) enough for their model to compare the digital behaviours of the respondents. All the surveys were distributed online, hence all the answers should have been done online.

McKinsey & Company:

Introduction

The eyes of the world are on the Chinese consumer. Cooling economic growth, a depreciating currency, and a gyrating stock market are making political and business leaders concerned that China's economic dream may have finally ended, and tough times lie ahead.

Despite the gloomy news about the state of the economy, consumer confidence has remained surprisingly resilient over the past few years, as salaries have continued to rise and unemployment has stayed low. Chinese consumers remain upbeat about their futures.

However, beneath this statement lurks significant change. The days of broad based market growth are coming to an end as consumers become more selective about where they spend their money. Spend is shifting from products to services, and from mass to premium segments. Consumers are seeking a more balanced life, where health, family, and experiences take priority. In short, our research suggests that winning in the China market will become more challenging for consumer goods companies. For those that get it right, however, the reward will be substantial.

These are among the main findings of McKinsey's survey of Chinese consumers, the latest in a series that began in 2005. For our 2016 Consumer Report, we conducted 10,000 in-person interviews with people, aged 18 to 65, in 44 cities representing China's major regions and tiers.

The survey results also highlighted the astounding popularity of international travel among Chinese consumers and their exceptionally rapid adoption of trends such as mobile payments. In addition, the study confirmed the great variation in consumer behavior among China's 22 city-clusters. Cluster differences have even increased in recent years, despite the increased flow of information between clusters online and growth in domestic travel.

Overall, what we are seeing is the modernization of the Chinese consumer. In this report, we will look more closely at that phenomenon through four lenses: consumers' willingness to spend; what they are spending on; how they are spending; and where they are spending.

Hotels.com:

Introduction

This is the fifth edition of the Hotels.com™ Chinese International Travel Monitor (CITM), which takes a comprehensive look at the impact on global travel by mainland Chinese travelers.

It is based on research involving both Chinese international travelers and hoteliers around the world, combined with Hotels.com's own proprietary data and other research.

For the travelers' survey, Hotels.com used Ipsos, a world leader in market research, which in May 2016 conducted interviews with 3,000 Chinese residents, aged 18–54 years, who had traveled overseas in the past 12 months. A Computer-assisted Web Interviewing technology was used. The representative sample consisted of men and women from a number of different-tiered cities.

The travelers were asked about travel behaviour, booking methods, accommodation choices and many other aspects of their travel.

To complement this with the opinion of hoteliers, Hotels.com carried out a global survey of more than 5,800 Hotels.com accommodation partners, also during May 2016. The 37 participating countries were Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, the UK, the USA and Vietnam.

Figures on spending, including prices paid for hotel rooms, are quoted in Chinese Renminbi (RMB) and their US dollar equivalent wherever possible. Unless otherwise indicated, the RMB–US$ exchange rate used in this survey is US$1= RMB6.5386, the rate on May 18 2016, the mid-point of the field research.

Goldman Sachs: The Chinese Tourist Boom

Scoring details for tourist volumes

To help us calculate our regional tourist volume forecasts, we created a scoring system focused on the three areas below based on the views of our consumer goods analysts in the respective regions. We have tried to exclude subjective elements to the greatest extent possible, but note that the scoring inevitably includes some qualitative/subjective aspects.

- Shopping: We assume larger price differentials translate into greater traveling incentives. A score of 10 indicates a price differential of 20% or more, a 5 means essentially no differential, and a 0 means a differential of -20% or more. In countries that share the same culture—like Taiwan, China, and Hong Kong—relatively lower product appeal makes for a lower score. Price differentials are based on the survey in Exhibit 45.

- Distance: We factor in physical distance (e.g., flight time) and visa restrictions. A score of 10 indicates a flight time of 2 hours or less, a 1 means a flight time of 10 hours or more. The need for a visa lowers the score by 1-2 points, and 1-2 points are added for countries where a visa is not required. Visas are required in most cases for Chinese tourists.

- Tourist attractions: We qualitatively assess each country/region's tourist attractions: physical attractions such as world heritage sites, and cultural attractions such as local cuisine and casinos. In countries that share the same culture—like Taiwan, China, and Hong Kong—relatively lower cultural appeal makes for a lower score. 10 is the highest possible score.

UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organization):

Tourism Statistics and Tourism Satellite Account (TSA)

Over the last decades, tourism has experienced continued growth and increased diversification, becoming one of the **fastest growing economic sectors in the world. Tourism planning and development** requires good, reliable and comparable data that can guide appropriate policies and management. Yet the measurement of the tourism sector is relatively recent when compared to other economic sectors, such as agriculture or manufacturing.

The United Nations recognizes the World Tourism Organization as the appropriate organization to collect, to analyse, to publish, to standardize and to improve the statistics of tourism, and to promote the integration of these statistics within the sphere of the United Nations system.

Methodological Frameworks

Traditionally, tourism measurement was mostly based on approximations from related areas of measurement such as migration data or National Balance of Payments. In 2008, the United Nations Statistical Commission approved the **International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008 (IRTS 2008),** which provide the main concepts, definitions and classifications for the measurement of tourism and enables the collection of consistent basic statistics and indicators on tourism activities.

In the same year, the UN also approved the **Tourism Satellite Account: Recommended Methodological Framework 2008 (TSA: RMF 2008),** an updated conceptual framework for the development of a Tourism Satellite Account (TSA). The TSA allows for the harmonization and reconciliation of tourism statistics from an economic perspective. This enables the generation of tourism economic data such as GDP and employment attributable to tourism.

World Travel & Tourism Council:

The World Travel & Tourism Council is the global authority on the economic and social contribution of Travel & Tourism.

WTTC promotes sustainable growth for the Travel & Tourism sector, working with governments and international institutions to create jobs, to drive exports and to generate prosperity. Council Members are the Chairs, Presidents and Chief Executives of the world's leading private sector Travel & Tourism businesses.

Together with Oxford Economics, WTTC produces annual research that shows Travel & Tourism to be one of the world's largest sectors, supporting over 292 million jobs and generating 10.2% of global GDP in 2016. Comprehensive reports quantify, compare and forecast the economic impact of Travel & Tourism on 185 economies around the world. In addition to the individual country reports, WTTC produces a world report highlighting the global economic impact and issues, and 24 further reports that focus on regions, sub-regions and economic and geographic groups.

Founded in 1981 as a commercial venture with Oxford University's business college, Oxford Economics is one of the world's foremost independent global advisory firms, providing reports, forecasts and analytical tools on 200 countries, 100 industrial sectors and over 3,000 cities. Their best-of-class global economic and industry models and analytical tools give an unparalleled ability to forecast external market trends and assess their economic, social and business impact. Headquartered in Oxford, England, with regional centres in London, New York and Singapore, Oxford Economics has offices across the globe in Belfast, Chicago, Dubai, Miami, Milan, Paris, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Washington DC. The company employs over 250 full-time people, including 150 professional economists, industry experts and business editors – one of the largest teams of macroeconomists and thought leadership specialists – underpinning the in-house expertise is a contributor network of over 500 economists, analysts and journalists around the world.

The Nielsen Company:

The Nielsen Global Trust in Advertising Survey polled 30,000 online respondents in 60 countries to gauge consumer sentiment about 19 paid, earned and owned advertising mediums. The results identify the ad formats resonating most strongly with consumers and those that have room to grow. Importantly, consumers around the world weigh in on the platforms most effective in driving action. Consumers also tell us the types of messages they most enjoy—and not surprisingly, they differ by generation.

ABOUT THE GLOBAL SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The findings in this survey are based on online respondents in 60 countries. While an online survey methodology allows for tremendous scale and global reach, it provides a perspective only on the habits of existing Internet users, not total populations. In developing markets where online penetration is still growing, audiences may be younger and more affluent than the general population of that country. In addition, survey responses are based on claimed behavior rather than actual metered data.

B. Internet journals and news

The other type of source requested has to do with all those articles found in the internet. They are websites talking about the tourism industry and its main aspects. In general, they were found using search engines (Google) or recommendations in other very popular websites.

The only thing this information providers make is to use the information others have gathered and show it in a clearer way or making emphasis in the most important things considering their consumers. By saying this, it is clear that they do not make their own surveys, instead, they have a team reading and searching information on important sources in order to show it to the people.

Inside this segment, some cases are relevant to mention due to the importance of their data:

- Gentlemen Marketing Agency
- China Tourism Academy: Welcome Chinese Standard Certification
- World Travel Online
- China Internet Watch
- Travel China Guide
- Russia Beyond the headlines
- The Moscow Times
- Tourism-Review
- Tnooz
- TTG

C. Academic bibliography and papers

This segment is referred to all the sources giving precise results about specific behaviours of tourists when they experience travels abroad. It was possible to find that there are some researchers writing papers more important than others, as they were repeated in some of them, making clear their relevance in the sector.

All the documents belonging to this category follow the same methodology, just changing their focus depending on their research topic. As a matter of fact, they start with an extensive literature review, by which they take advantage of the information found and provide initial considerations they will use after during the development of the investigation. Then, they provide insights about their target sample, which usually is in concordance with the kind of people they want to concentrate in. To continue, they interview these people, collect the data, and make an analysis to compare with their previous insights. Finally, they provide a final conclusion and propose discussion topics in relation to the weaker parts of their study.

In the next figures, it will be possible to see how these authors prepare their surveys and what they took into consideration:

- Jin & Sparks, 2016:

Methodology:

An interview guide was developed prior to conducting the interviews. The purpose of the interview guide was to ensure that the discussions covered important areas. To ascertain tour operators' personal views on developing SIT products for the Chinese outbound market, the researchers explored the tour operators' own SIT experiences and attitudes, as their personal experiences and attitudes may influence their attitude toward developing related tour products. Thus the topical areas of discussions included (1) operators' own SIT experiences and attitude; (2) current tour itineraries and activities; (3) appropriateness of some SIT activities for their customers; and (4) contributing factors, concerns, and barriers to developing SIT activities. Questions were developed on the basis of generic literature relevant to the topic area and were designed to probe the perceptions and insights of informants.

Participants were recruited using a referral system based on the researcher's personal contacts and tour operators' recommendations. In the recruiting process, consideration was given to obtaining participants who were from tour companies of a diversified scale, ownership structure, and geographical coverage and were in charge of a major outbound market (preferably the Australia market). As a result, data come from four individual interviews (Informants 1–4) and two group interviews (Informants 5–20), with informants working for 11 tour companies of varying ownership structures (e.g., state-owned, private, and joint partnership with overseas partners). These 11 tour companies were located in three main source cities for Chinese outbound travel – Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and Beijing (CTA, 2014). These companies were leading tour operators, with six of them among the top 10 Chinese tour companies in terms of business volume. Most of these companies offered both wholesale and retail tour products. Before

the start of the interviews, informants filled in a participant's demographics form, which requested information on name, gender, age group, position in the tour company, markets served, times of overseas travel, countries visited in the past two years, previous visits to Australia, and destinations visited and activities participated in while in Australia. Respondents were 10 female and 10 male informants. Twelve informants were below the age of 35, and eight were above 36. Younger informants mainly worked in lower positions marketing and selling tours to Southeast Asia. Ten informants were the director of the Oceania market (i.e., Australia and New Zealand). Nine of them had visited Australia multiple times. The representativeness of the informants for the operator population is ensured. Table 1 details the respondents' profiles.

All interviews were conducted in the meeting rooms of the tour companies' offices. Group interviews lasted about 90 min each, and individual interviews lasted about 1 h. All sessions were audio-taped and then transcribed verbatim. One researcher conducted all the interviews so as to ensure familiarity with the topics covered. All content was spoken, recorded, and transcribed in Chinese.

The empirical materials derived from the interviews were interpreted using content analysis, and the computer software NVivo 10.0 was used to manage the transcripts and analyse the materials. Data analyses followed the process recommended by Berg (2001). First, the raw materials were read and re-read for the purpose of increasing familiarity, reflection, and preparation for coding. Second, a coding frame was generated, based on categories identified in relevant literature and on an open coding process developed from the data without reference to pre-conceived ideas (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As coding is an iterative process, new codes were generated and added to the coding frame during the

the theoretical framework. Analyses were conducted using the original Chinese dialogue, with the primary analysis being conducted by the lead researcher. A bilingual PhD candidate was also employed to independently content-analyse the transcripts using NVivo 10.0 with the coding frame provided but without knowledge of the analysis completed by the lead researcher. The outcomes of the two separate analyses reflected about 80% agreement on categorization of the themes and quotations, which was deemed acceptable (Perreault & Leigh, 1989). The authors resolved the inter-researcher differences through discussion and by reviewing the transcripts. In reporting the results the researchers gave each interviewee an ID number with his or her key characteristics, and quotations were translated into English for reporting purposes.

- Michopoulou & Moisa, 2016:

3 Methodology

This study examines the online travel information search behaviour of individuals from China and the United Kingdom, and the objectives of this study are to:

1. Examine how cultural background influences Chinese and British tourists, with regards to their online information search behavior
2. Identify cultural themes that should be included in promotional strategies aiming at the Chinese and the British tourist market

With a focus of understanding tourists behaviour and identifying possible explanations in terms of national likeliness and unlikeliness regarding the online information search, this study lays emphasis on the holistic 'what, why, and how' of human behaviour and therefore it adopts a qualitative methodology. The qualitative research helps in understanding the phenomenon more deeply by analysing the reasons behind it, it is pragmatic, interpretive and grounded in the lived experiences of people. The inductive approach of the study gives the researches a chance to explain the phenomenon studied, opening up new lines of enquiry without having any previous theories on the subject of interest. In order to understand the meaning people give to their use of the Internet in the process of travel information search, within their social setting, interviews were conducted to gain deep insights about people's experiences, feelings and interpretation of the social world (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005).

China and the United Kingdom were selected as representations for the Asian and the Western cultures for comparison for two reasons. First, the vast difference between the scores on Hofstede's (2001) depicted cultural maps provides a clear view of contrasting countries. According to these maps, while the United Kingdom rates relatively low in power distance, uncertainty avoidance dimensions, and long-term orientation, it rates high in masculinity and individualism dimensions. On the other hand, China rates high in power distance and long term orientation, and relatively low in individualism. Therefore, the study analyzes the manifestation of the specific cultural characteristics of English and Chinese culture in relation to their online information search behaviour. Secondly, Chinese students are required to learn English in primary schools (Wei and Su, 2012), ensuring that both interviewed groups were proficient in the English language. Bolton and Graddol (2012) quoted a China Daily article and stated that approximately a third of the mainland Chinese population is currently learning English, excluding Hong Kong and Macau, where English is an official language.

All the participating interviewees were asked for approval to be involved in the study, and certain rights including their anonymity was guaranteed. Considering the fact that the Generation Y, also known as the Millennials (ages between 18 and 30), are the technologically savvy, heavy Internet users (Nielsen, 2014), the two cultural representative groups were purposefully stratified according to their age, in order to obtain qualitative and meaningful answers from proficient Internet users. The convenience self-selected sample consisted of 20 native British travellers located in the United Kingdom, and 20 native Chinese travellers located in their home country Interviews collected over a period of 3 weeks, starting from the 1st to the 22nd of March 2015. Due to the geographical area covered by the research, the interviews were conducted face to face, or through the medium of the mobile phone and computer, by using Skype. The open-ended questions used during the interview process were based on the recommendations from the existing literature, and the researcher's previous experience and knowledge developed while living in China, and in the United Kingdom. Moreover, as the respondents expressed their views, the researcher was able to ask further questions deviating from the interview protocol, revealing new factors relevant to the research.

- Kazakov & Predvoditeleva, 2015:

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was carried out in three stages. In the first stage, an original questionnaire, courtesy of Prof. Rohit Verma, Laura McCarthy and Debra Stock of the Center for Hospitality Research (CHR) at Cornell University, was localized for the purpose of Russian social media user survey. Verma, Stock and McCarthy (2012) studied the purchase decision-making process involving an Internet search of 2,830 US travelers. The authors intended to determine differences in purchase decisions according to the purpose of travel, e.g., business trip or leisure tourism.

These authors compiled their questionnaire based on in-depth interviews with scholars and H&T industry insiders in the United States. Verma, Stock and McCarthy (2012) distinguished the entire hotel accommodation purchase process into three stages from the online consumer behavior perspective and that involves travel information search (1), travel planning (2) and buying process stage (3), which is dedicated to actual booking and payment for lodging services (Verma et al., 2012). These authors also examined the consumer willingness to post a negative or positive hotel online review upon the return from the trip. Their research methodology and tools aimed to identify and study the links between consumers' demographics and online behavioral patterns, to compare the behavior of the tourists according to the purpose of the travel, e.g., business or leisure, and, finally, to measure the level of new ICT acceptance and usage by the consumers in the H&T industry, especially mobile gadgets and applications (Verma et al., 2012).

We attempted to do everything possible to preserve the original idea and logic of the CHR research to obtain unbiased results from the comparative study. The Russian questionnaire required some revisions, however, due to a number of specific differences between the two studied countries, their cultures and their H&T markets. For instance, many web resources and some social media sites widely available and heavily used by US tourists may not be known in the Russian Federation and vice versa. Two more tangible local social media brands, Vkontakte and Odnoklassniki, were added to the questionnaire, and Facebook, Twitter, blogs and YouTube were retained from the original questionnaire. The final list of social media used in our research is as follows:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Blogs
- Youtube
- Tripadvisor
- Odnoklassniki

Hence, the local questionnaire was revised to suit the study target, and same was done to the variables list, which was converted consequently.

In the second phase of the study, the online survey was conducted. To do this, we used an online panel of the Russian marketing agency OMI, which distributed our questionnaire to the respondents. Respondents were limited to individuals who traveled outside their city of permanent residence at least once within the last two years; are 20-49 years old; are permanent residents in a community with a population of at least one million; have a college or up to PhD education level; are members of a 1-6-person household with $560-$2000 monthly wage per capita. The total number of sample participants was 536.

In the third phase, we analyzed the survey results and ran a comparative analysis with the original CHR research. We were able to analyze the results of the HSE research project solely for variables and their respective values that survived in the Russian research version and, thus, were used in both the US and local project versions.

- Kazakov, 2014:

Methodology of the research

Based on the relevancy of the research area which is dedicated to the impact of social media and other internet resources on customer decisions for booking a hotel or travel package purchase that are likely for Russian tourists and best describe their on-line consumer behavior, we formulate the key research objective as 'to reveal the specifics of internet resources and Social Media utilization in hotel choice and booking decisions that are distinctive to Russian consumers'. Such objective provided a basis to elaborate the following set of hypothesis:

H1: Social Media and other internet resources have an impact on consumer behavior and influence the choice for a purchase of services provided by businesses in hospitality and tourism;

H2: Customers make their hotel-choice decisions based on recommendations by their friends colleagues and by availability of negative or/and positive feedback reviews left by previous guests of the same hotel;

H3: There are vivid differences in the decision making process between business travelers and leisure tourists;

H4: Russian consumers actively and vastly use the Internet resources for their travel planning;

H5: There are no tangible gender differences in a consumer behavior and in a way where men and women utilize Social Media and Internet resources for planning the trip.

We used an updated and localized questionnaire of the similar study that was conducted in 2010 by the Center of Hospitality Research at Cornell University and kindly contributed to our research project by our colleagues from this institution (McCarthy, Stock, Verma, 2010).

In order to test the above list of assumptions we have arranged for the online survey using the OMI panel in 15 cities of Russian Federation that account one million residents or more. OMI, or Online Marketing Intelligence is a company originated in the USA and facilitates on-line consumer panels in many countries where Russian Federation is not an exception. Customer experience in hospitality tourism services purchased and consumed over the last year served as a key selection criterion for the sample recruitment. As a result, n=536 surveyed in April of 2014. The analysis of modes demonstrated the most frequent descriptives for Russian tourists that include Muscovites, 29 years old males, who have bachelor education in live in a family of 3 people and their household income is considered as Russian average or approximately €1 200 per month. We used a Crombach alpha to test the data reliability and α=0.892 which shows a good fit of the collected data.

- Evita Lehtinen, 2014:

5 Research methodology

In this research our aim is to gather more specific information on how the different features discussed in the theory affect the final purchase decision of Russian tourists in real life. This information will help tourism and hospitality related businesses define their services to meet the expectations of Russian customers. Our other aim in this research is to also find out if there are relevant services missing in the area of Lappeenranta, which would increase the number of tourists staying overnight. The cultural differences between Russian and Finnish clients raise up the question if the accommodation services offered in the area of Lappeenranta meet the expectations of the Russian clientele, or if there are some notable absences in the service providings of the area.

The target group of this research was those Russian consumers who are travelling to the area of Lappeenranta and who have already made the decision to stay overnight. The target group was using local hospitality services for at least one night and consisted of leisure related tourism. In this study we examined and categorized people travelling with families, couples and people travelling with a few friends, as we were interested in how the number of travelers and the presence of children affect the accommodation choices and length of the holiday. To get a comprehensive picture of all the different focus groups, the received information was used to make profiles of the different traveler types and to find out what expectations they were likely to have on their holiday. Also the background of these Russian tourists was taken into consideration and it was also examined how social status and the level of income affected their behavior and choices.

Qualitative research was chosen as the method to gather data in this research. Qualitative research enables to get a wider picture of the individual experiences that Russian tourists face. As the aim of the research was to study Russian consumers using local hospitality services, the information sources that were used had to be able to provide reliable knowledge of the characteristics of these consumers. Therefore, it was decided to arrange face-to-face interviews with personnel providing local hospitality services, and experts on Russian marketing and culture who all interact with Russian tourist and customers on a daily basis. The interviews were decided to be arranged with different experts in the field of tourism and Russian culture because of the efficiency of getting a wide range of information in a short period of time available. These different specialists can provide information on differing situations and scenarios and have knowledge how people from different social and cultural backgrounds are likely to act. By interviewing also a professional working in a hospitality related business the viewpoint of hotels could be brought to the study. When working on a tourism research, interview is a commonly used method for gathering information. In a qualitative interview, questions concerning our different topics are asked and the answers are carefully listed and recorded. The interviews were arranged with three professionals working in different fields of businesses and the interviews lasted from 30 minutes to an hour.

- Egger et Al., 2014:

Respondents should be Russian residents. Therefore, the online questionnaire was distributed via e-mail to students of a university in the city of Tscheljabinsk within the time frame of November 27 to December 5, 2012. Additionally, the link to the survey was published on the Russian social network ВКонтакте. During that period, 121 people responded to the questionnaire.

One hundred and twency-one people responded to the online survey in general. Out of those, 71% were female and 29% were male. Asked about their highest level of education, 54.5% responded that they had already attained a graduate degree followed by 27.3% having an undergraduate education. Nonetheless, 9.1% were Ph.D. holders or existing candidates. One question dealt with the self-evaluation of experience with online travel shopping: 41.3% considered themselves as experienced compared to 58.7% of respondents that evaluated their experience as poor. The authors executed a correlation matrix concerning the following variables. Between the age and the experience variable, it was not possible to find any significant correlation, which indicates that within the sample, age has nothing to do with how experienced a person is in online shopping. Additionally, the correlation between experience and trust was summed up as the following: that although people considered themselves as experienced with the Internet and online travel shopping, they still would hesitate to use the Internet e.g. transactions as insecure and risky. This might be due to the fact that Russians do not trust an online travel website concerning credit card issues, confidentiality, and security of personal data.

- Stylos et Al., 2016:

The survey took place at the “Macedonia” International Airport of Thessaloniki, Greece (SKG) during July 1e15, 2014. As it is a study in which British and Russians are compared, the survey was made both to people from UK and people from Russia. Immediately after passing through hand luggage and passport controls tourists were asked to provide their opinions by completing the questionnaire, while sitting in the transit waiting area of the airport. Respondents were assured that the survey was anonymous, confidential and voluntary. Those who consented were given a copy of the questionnaire on a clipboard and a pen to provide their responses. Questionnaires typically took approximately 12 min to complete. During this 15-day-research period, a total of 1612 British tourists were approached, and 1387 agreed to participate in the field research study, yielding an 86.04% response rate. In all, 1362 usable questionnaires were collected resulting in a final response rate of 84.49%. Moreover, to facilitate Russian tourists' responses the questionnaire was translated into Russian. To ensure the quality of translations involved, the questionnaire was translated from English to Russian via the double-back translation procedure with the assistance of two qualified translators. The Russian tourist market was selected due to its rapid growth over the last 5 years, as well as its strong potential. Russia figures in the top five tourist markets for Greece, representing 5.7% of the total market, despite an annual decrease of 7.5% in 2014/2013 (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2015), mainly due to the collapse of Russian ruble in mid-2014. Data collection took place during August 17e31, 2014. During the 15 days of research, 1432 Russian tourists were approached after hand luggage and passport control by the same trained team of field researchers and following the same systematic sampling scheme as in the first study.1212 tourists agreed to fill out the questionnaire. This procedure produced 1164 usable questionnaires yielding an overall response rate of 81.28%.

- Fotis et Al., 2013:

3 Methodology

3.1 Data Collection

An online questionnaire survey was conducted in October 2010 in a random subset of a commercial online research panel whose members are residing in 12 Former Soviet Union Republics (F.S.U.) including Russia. An e-mail invitation was sent to 900 panellists containing a link to the online questionnaire. Without any reminder 368 panel members completed the questionnaire achieving a response rate of 41%. Respondents had the option to complete part of the questionnaire, and as a result 22 questionnaires were incomplete, thus 346 questionnaires were used for further analysis. Through a screening question it was assured that all respondents have taken at least one holiday trip during the last 12 months. As a result the sample of the study consists of 346 internet users residing in 12 F.S.U. Republics who have taken at least one holiday trip within 12 months prior to the study. The questionnaire included an introductory statement explaining types of websites considered as social media within six broad categories: Blogs, photo & video sharing websites, microblogs, wikis, social networking websites and travel review websites. This taxonomy was created by the authors after a review of existing literature (Constantinides, 2009; Fischer & Reuber, 2011; Kim, Jeong, & Lee, 2010; Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Xiang & Gretzel 2010). For each of the above types a number of examples were given in order to increase the reliability of the instrument. Examples included websites not only among those dominating the western world but also websites operating exclusively within F.S.U. Republics such as Vkontakte.ru and Odnoklassniki.ru in terms of social networking websites.

4 Results

4.1 Profile of Sample

The sample had the following characteristics: As per the gender, 65.6% were females and 34.4% males. The over representation of female respondents has been also observed in other studies (Cox et al., 2009; Gretzel et al., 2007), and may to an extent be related to gender differences in holiday-related roles (Decrop, 2006; Mottiar & Quinn, 2004). As per the age 18.2% were less than 25 years, 38.4% from 25 to 39, 30.9% from 40 to 54, and 12.5% 55 or older. As per the education, 30.3% have completed secondary school, and 69.7% were university graduates. Moreover, 64.2% were residing in Russia, and 35.8% in the other FSU Republics, a proportion that approximates the distribution of actual internet users between the two regions (InternetWorldStats, 2010).

4.2 Use of social media

The vast majority of respondents (97%) have visited at least one social media website during the last 12 months. Almost half (49%) of respondents visited social media websites several times a day, 36% almost every day, 9% only sometimes per week, and 3% very rarely. Level of use was found to be differentiated by age, $\chi^2(15, N = 346) = 34.99$, $p = .01$, and level of education, $\chi^2(5, N = 346) = 11.92$, $p = .04$. The vast majority (94%) of respondents "below 25" visit social media websites "several times a day" or "almost every day", whereas among those "55 and over" the same usage level decreases to 72%. In terms of level of education, 88% of university graduates visit social media websites "several times a day" or "almost every day", whereas among those who completed secondary school the same usage level decreases to 79%.

- Yury Kulikov, 2015:

As the empirical part is based on conducting survey over some representative number of the Russian tourists in Rimini then the study uses quantitative research methods.

At the first stage the study collects the existed data (secondary data):

- existed statistics for the visits of foreign tourists (including the Russian ones) in the Rimini province, the region of Emilia-Romagna and the whole Italy;
- the research and review materials about the foreign and Russian tourists having their holidays in the Rimini province;
- the research and review materials about the Russian tourists for the whole Italy and other regions;
- the opinions and knowledge of the local tourism professionals - Tourism Office, owners of tourism businesses (like proprietors of hotels), representatives of public and public-private organizations etc.
- information about available tourist products (companies, services, activities) in the area as well as for region and the whole Italy;
- the opinions and feedbacks of the Russian users in the general social networks about their Italian experience and/or wishes and plans regarding Italy;
- the opinions and feedbacks of the Russian users of the specialized (on tourism) social networks like Tripadvisor, tourism portals etc.
- the Russian travel agencies opinions about the preferable entertainment activities for the Russian tourists.

At the second stage the study collects the Russian tourists' responses about their trips in Italy, Rimini through the conducted interviews (based on questionnaire) as the primary data. The following sources have been used for the research:

- statistics from the Italian organizations;
- Russian tourism Internet-forums and portals.
- Internet sites of the Russian and Italian travel agencies (that work with Russian tourists);
- Italian tourism magazines;

- articles in the Italian media;
- Russian tourism magazines;
- books regarding tourism destinations management and marketing, e-commerce application for tourism, Web management for tourism, analysis of tourist behavior and preferences, research methods in tourism;
- Russian tourists in the Rimini area.

Getting the statistical and the structural information about Russian tourists in the area was done through interaction with the Department of Statistics and the Tourism Office of the province as well as from other relevant parties from the Public Private Partnership for tourism. Getting the information from the travel agencies has been performed through interviews and the actual information (offers) available at their sites. However for the travel agencies two notices are valid. First, they consider information that they have as commercial so its disclosing isn’t desirable. This is more applicable to the local travel agencies in the Rimini area that are involved into providing the services for tourists. For the travel agencies in Russia the collaboration is easier as they are interested in developing the activities (searching local providers etc.) that they do not have to the moment for obtaining a competitive advantage. Second, the opinion of the travel agencies more represent the activities that they would like to sell to the tourists than the ones that the tourists really would like to buy/have. Getting the generic information about the Russian tourists’ preferences has been performed through discussions with the stakeholders of the tourism business in Rimini and through analysis of discussions at the specialized forums, i.e. through netnography research. Getting the information from the Russian tourists arriving in Rimini has been performed through conducting survey in the form of interviews at the places of their availability (e.g. at the arrival / departure, i.e. in the Fellini international airport, in hotels, on the streets etc.).

The study was made in:

1. Rimini downtown (historical center) as it is a typical place for tourists' walking and sightseeing as well as for shopping (the majority of boutique and outlets is concentrated there).
2. The Amerigo Vespucci street (Viale Amerigo Vespucci) as the main hotels where the Russian tourists stay located to this street (next to seafront in the central resort/beach area of Rimini – Marina Centro).
3. The beaches during the bathing season (in June and September).

The survey has been conducted in a few parts for two seasons:

- 2 weeks in June (middle season / bathing season);
- 2 weeks in September (middle season / bathing season);
- 2 weeks in October (low season);
- 1 week in November (low season).

All together 232 people have been interviewed:

- during the middle season (MS): 148
  - June – 68
  - September – 80
- during the low season (LS): 84
  - October – 61
  - November – 23

- Kim et Al., 2017:

4. Research method

4.1. Data collection

To validate our research model empirically, we developed a survey instrument, targeting for Chinese Sina Weibo users who are following the official page of Gyeonggi Tourism Organization (GTO), which is one of the South Korean DMOs funded by Gyeonggi province, the most populous province in South Korea, surrounding the capital city, Seoul. An online survey was designed to collect data effectively in China using SurveyMonkey's cloud-based service. Approximately 1.8 million fans are following GTO page in Sina Weibo (see Fig. 3). The word "Weibo" is a compound of the word "博客" meaning "blog" and "微" meaning "small." Weibo is one of many microblogs and is similar to Twitter. Indeed, the Chinese government prohibited the use of social media such as Facebook (since 2008), Twitter (since 2009), and Instagram (since 2014) in mainland China, excluding Macau and Hong Kong. Therefore, Weibo could be a Chinese-style social medium, which most Chinese people are using. Sina Weibo is the first microblog in China made and operated by "SINA.com," which is one of the biggest portal Internet sites in China. Sina Weibo has the highest proportion in Weibo market in China, and the number of users is more than 0.5 billion.

There are several reasons why this survey targeted Chinese Sina Weibo users. First, China is the largest market in the world tourism industry. The amount of Chinese travel expenditure, for example, was over $128 billion in 2014, and it was ranked first in terms of volume [5]. In addition, the proportion of Chinese tourists who visited South Korea accounted for more than 50% out of the total number of 12 million foreign tourists who visited South Korea [91]. Second, the ratio of tourists who visited South Korea using a full package tour was 24.9%, whereas the ratio of independent tourists was 68.9% in 2014. Among international tourists to South Korea in 2014, 99.2% of American, 72.6% of Japanese, and 57.8% of Chinese visitors were also independent travelers [91]. Finally, according to Korea Tourism Organization [92], the main sources of travel information in China are the Internet homepages of travel agencies (56.2%) and social media (40.9%). This means that social media is being used as one of the major tourism information sources among Chinese tourists.

We collected 212 usable survey responses. Seventy-nine percent (n = 167) of the survey participants were female and 93% (n = 198) of survey participants were aged in their 20s and 30s. In addition, 60% of respondents were employed and 33% of respondents were students. After evaluating the gender composition statistics of Chinese tourists who visit South Korea in recent years [93], we found that somewhere between 65% and 70% of Chinese tourists visiting South Korea were female, which aligns with the ratio of our survey respondents (over 75% of female in current research). Additional demographic characteristics of the sample are summarized in Table 1.

- Law et Al., 2016:

3. Methodology

To understand the progress of China's outbound tourism better, a systematic literature review method was used to identify articles that are related to China's outbound tourism and appeared in referred journals. Systematic literature review as a method of synthesis has been extensively adopted in the hospitality and tourism industries (Ip *et al.*, 2011). It was used to classify and evaluate the literature along salient conceptual and research methodological dimensions. After that, we can profile China's outbound tourism research succinctly and chart an agenda for future research.

As the database of previous studies is limited (e.g. three leading tourism journals), the present study retrieved information in terms of China's outbound tourism research from a wide range of tourism journals and incorporated a number of components (e.g. topics and theories) essential in determining the trend. Three large databases, namely, ScienceDirect, EBSCOhost and Google Scholar, were selected to search for relevant published articles on China's outbound tourism. The reason for selecting ScienceDirect was based on its easy accessibility of reliable electronic information sources and the provision of an overview of articles published in a specific field (e.g. China's outbound tourism). The principal advantage of selecting EBSCOhost is its full-text availability. The Google Scholar database was also selected because it offered the latest information on a selected topic and presented the most relevant information at the top of the results list. Thus, the use of these three databases in the present study ensures the reliability, validity and timeliness of the articles retrieved.

Data used for this study were collected from February 2015 to November 2015. Keywords, such as "China's outbound tourism", "Chinese outbound tourism" and "Chinese outbound travel market", were used to search for relevant articles from their first appearance (i.e. 1996) to the present (i.e. 2015) in hospitality and tourism journals. These articles were then carefully selected based on three criteria. First, only full-length empirical and review/policy articles published in hospitality and tourism journals were included in this study. Second, other articles, such as conference papers and book chapters, were excluded. Third, only empirical studies were included in this study. Thereafter, the authors carefully read each selected article based on the aforementioned criteria and determined whether such article should be included in the analysis. The direct relevance of the topic was also considered. Despite the personal bias existing during the article selection process, the consensus of multiple experienced researchers may minimize such bias. The final data set includes 122 articles, of which 107 are empirical articles, and the remaining 15 are review/policy articles. Among these 122 articles, 16 were retrieved from ScienceDirect, 46 from Google Scholar and 60 from EBSCOhost. Findings include two parts, one is the discussion of empirical research, and the other is the findings and discussion of review/policy research.

- Luo & Zhong, 2015:

In this study, data were collected by questionnaire. A nomination method was used to identify five users who had made travel-related eWOM communication with respondents during a period of six months (October 2011–April 2012). After the ego network was constructed, a nomination interpretation method was used to describe and measure each communication relationship. The questionnaire design was based on the standard ego-network questionnaire exhibiting high reliability used in general social surveys in the U.S. formulated by Burt (1984), which uses three constructs to interpret questionnaire data: contact duration, contact frequency, and intimacy (Granovetter, 1973). The questionnaire used in this study was revised based on local research conducted by Luo and Xie (2008), added a construct (i.e., "relationship between close circles of friends"), and adjusted the range of years of each item for the construct of contact duration, as well as the measures and contents of the items in the construct of intimacy. Additionally, we added travel-related questions to explore respondents' tourism preferences, common travel experiences, and reciprocal behaviors in travel-related eWOM. Five undergraduate students from different universities were recruited to take the pilot test, after which the questionnaire was adjusted accordingly.

The questionnaire was distributed from April 1–8, 2012 to high-frequency users of SNSs in Guangdong, China. Users were mostly office workers and college students—some foreign exchange students—selected based on three considerations. First, the sample originated from the primary group of SNS users in China, which is representative of China. Second, the questionnaire design was new and informative and thus required respondents with adept comprehension skills and patience. Third, active SNS users (i.e., those who log in more than two or three times per week) may have various travel-related eWOM communication behaviors. To ensure a high reliability of questionnaire results, we distributed the questionnaires to each participant one at a time.

In this study, an ego network consisted of each respondent and up to five of his or her nominated contacts of travel-related eWOM. Each network was a sample set, in which the respondent served as the core, while each communication relationship directly connected to the respondent formed an independent sample. In total, 64 questionnaires were collected; those of participants whose SNS use frequency was less than two or three times per week or who could not provide a complete dataset of at least one nominated contact were excluded. Altogether, 61 questionnaires (95.3%) were deemed valid. A total of 303 (97.7%) independent samples was obtained, of which 289 were deemed valid; 14 samples with missing values were excluded.

The profile of respondents is shown in Table 1. The sample sets generally represented the typical SNS user.

3.2. *Whole-network analysis*

Whole-network analysis examines the network structure of eWOM communication. For this study, a representative microblog was selected as a sample. This study only focused on the network characteristics of travel-related eWOM in a single circle of micro-blogging relationships instead of multiple circles. With whole-network analysis, the study aimed to develop a directional adjacency matrix to analyze travel-related eWOM communication. The whole network refers to all relationships among all group members

Table 1
Profile of respondents ($n = 61$).

Demographic characteristic	n	Percent
Gender		
Male	26	42.6
Female	35	57.4
Age		
<18 years	0	0.0
19–30 years	59	96.7
31–40 years	2	3.3
41–50 years	0	0.0
>50 years	0	0.0
Highest level of education achieved		
Junior high school	0	0.0
High school or technical secondary school	4	6.6
University or college	55	90.2
Postgraduate	2	3.3
Travel frequency within a year		
More than twice	47	77.0
Once	12	19.7
None	2	3.3
Occupation		
Governmental agencies or institutions	4	6.6
Corporations or enterprises in the service industry	6	9.8
Individual industrialists and businessman	0	0.0
Researchers and teachers	0	0.0
Retired	0	0.0
Housewives	0	0.0
Students	51	83.6
Other	0	0.0
SNS use frequency		
Everyday	53	86.9
Two or three times weekly	8	13.1
Weekly	0	0.0
Monthly	0	0.0
Rarely	0	0.0

(Liu, 2009). Network density, graph centralization, centrality, and subgroup analysis were four important measurements used to explore the network cohesion, integration, role and position, and composition and structure of the travel-related eWOM communication network.

The sample microblog originated on Sina Microblog, the most popular microblogging platform in China. Users on Sina Microblog can be classified into two types: authenticated and ordinary users. An authenticated user must be a well-known figure in a particular field with an authentication icon highlighted. Since there are no identity constraints on ordinary users, they form the major group and account for a larger percentage of users. To understand the communication structure of ordinary users was therefore more remarkable for destination marketing regarding SNSs. In this study ordinary bloggers were used as subjects for whole-network analysis; the microblog account of user Gaoli_Ivy provided data. Factors such as the quantity of travel-related microblogs and the degree of interaction were considered during the sample selection to ensure a sufficient amount of data. The selected blogger loved traveling and on average traveled three–five times per year, including one or two long-distance journeys. After registering as a user in September 2010, from September to December 2011 she posted a total of 92 travel-related messages, each of which addressed topics such as travel experiences, air travel, accommodation deals, and recommendations for travel destinations. The blogger followed a total of 120 blogging friends and was followed by 227 users (March 26th, 2012).

Data from September to December 2011 were collected, which consisted of all travel-related microblogging contacts followed by the blogger and her followers. The research dates included two public holidays in China—namely, the Mid-Autumn Festival and National Day—to ensure data adequacy. The blogger was asked to review her use history in order to organize her travel microblogs and microblog accounts she had commented on from September to December 2011. During the same period, we read travel-related microblogs in order to construct a travel-related eWOM communication pathway for other users.

A case-by-case adjacency matrix was constructed for whole-network analysis, for which each node represented an independent microblog user. The communication relationships between the nodes indicating travel-related eWOM communication behaviors, which included forwarding or commenting on travel-related microblogs, were represented by directional links. The data were screened, and inactive users with fewer than 50 followers were excluded. A 155 × 155 adjacency matrix was eventually constructed for data analysis.

D. Table comparison between sources

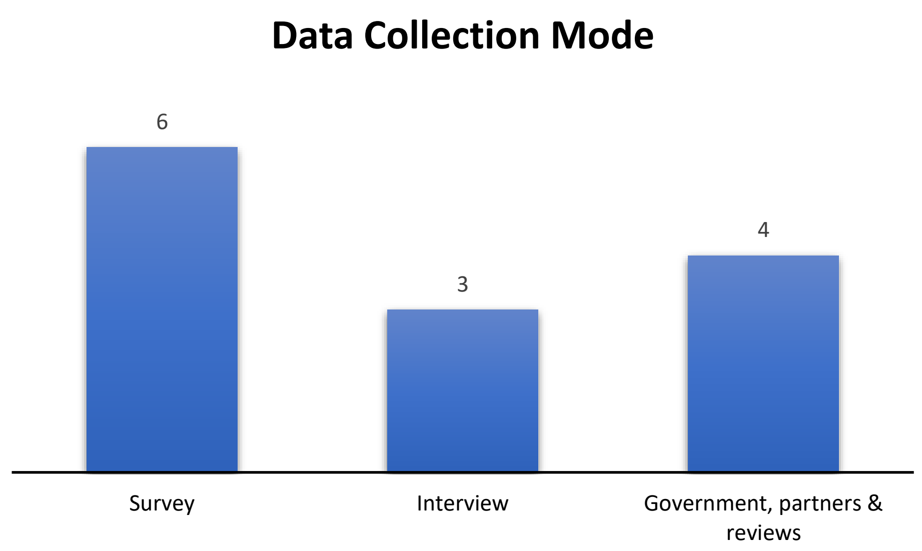
In the previous sections of the appendix, it was shown all the sources of information used to write the report. In any case, as they were listed only giving a detailed description of the methodologies they used to collect the information, in the next section it is going to be presented a table that compares all of them in their most general aspects. By doing this, the understanding of these sources is going to be easier, or at least more comfortable for the reader to know how the authors worked and how useful their data is.

The sources included in the section B are not considered into this comparison because they are not doing their own surveys or their own investigation. Indeed, they use other's information to show some data and communicate to the population about it.

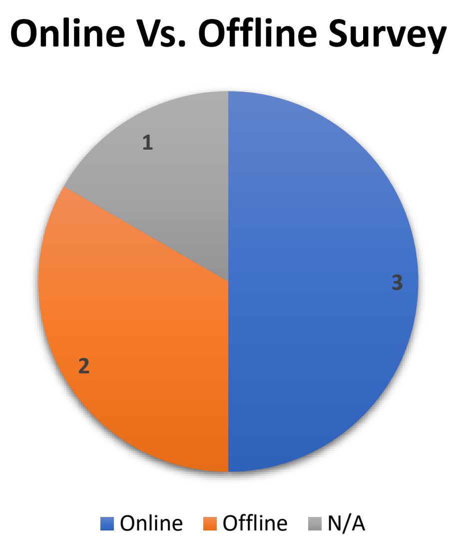
First, it is going to be showed the analysis of the sources talking about the Chinese tourists, as they were the first analysed in the report. The initial topic is related to the methods used to collect the data in hands of the authors, either companies or individual researchers.

Source	Data Collection	Type of interaction
ITB - Berlin	Results of a tourism forum in Pisa, Italy. November 2016	N/A
European Travel Commission: Lonh-haul travel barometer	Interview	By telephone, in their mother tongue
IPSOS	Survey during 6 months	N/A
Phocuswright	Survey	Online
McKinsey & Company	Survey	Offline, in person
Hotels.com	Survey	Online
Goldman Sachs	Company research and Official data	N/A
UNWTO	Official data (governments and private companies)	N/A
Jin & Sparks	Interview	Offline, in person
Michopoulou & Moisa	Interview	Online (skype), offline (face to face)
Kim et Al.	Survey	Online
Law et Al.	Extensive literature review	Online
Luo & Zhong	Survey	Offline

In concordance with the results obtained in the previous table, it is interesting to denote that there is a variety of methods considered to understand the different topics showed in the aforementioned articles. In fact, the next figure shows how much of them were used.



In addition, within the surveys made by the researchers, there are some of them which were made online and others who prioritized the face to face interaction. This allowed to make the respondents understand better how to make the compilation of the survey.



Last but not least, in the next table are displayed the profiles of the respondents who made possible the analysis of the authors, as well as the main topics, or even better the objectives of the study made. All the documents presented differences at least in one aspect, it is due to the focus given to the research following the requirements of the project.

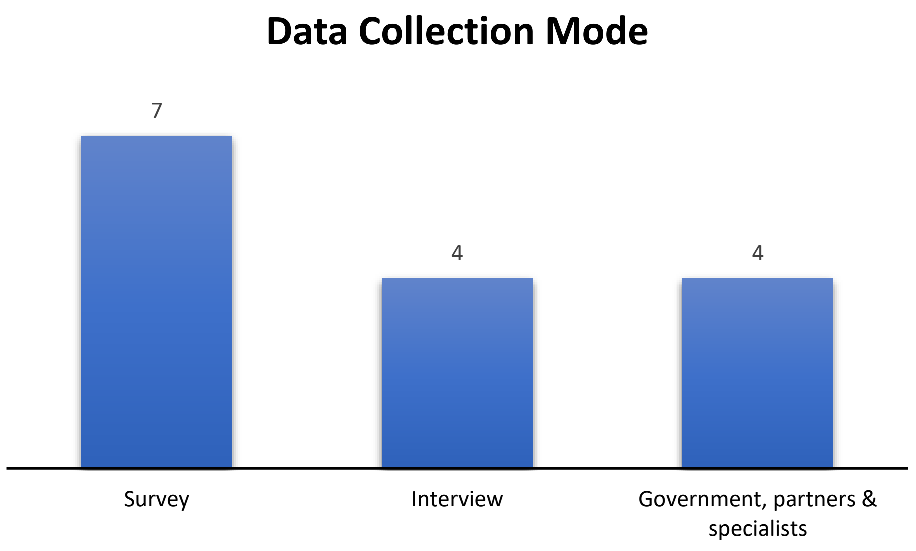
Source	Profile & Quantity of respondents	Main topics of analysis
ITB - Berlin	N/A	General considerations about the tourism growth and perspectives
European Travel Commission: Lonh-haul travel barometer	1,000 interviews on each country for those who have in mind travelling abroad	Travel sentiment of people and its analysis for upcoming trips
IPSOS	N/A	Characteristics of the Chinese outbound tourists
Phocuswright	1,000 or more respondents from 8 countries. They made at least one digital activity in their last "tourist journey"	Digital behaviours of the countries analysed along all the phases of the "tourist journey"

McKinsey & Company	10,000 interviews for people between 18-65 years old, in 44 Chinese cities representing one half of the population	Chinese traveller's behaviours and digital perspectives
Hotels.com	Chinese people (residents): 3,000 respondents, 18-54 years old, at least one travel overseas in the past year. Hoteliers: 5,800 respondents from 37 countries	Travel behaviours, booking methods, accommodation choices and general aspects of the travels (expenditures, preferences, etc.)
Goldman Sachs	Data from residents of the country analysed	Chinese potential in the tourism industry
UNWTO	N/A	Number of travellers and their expenditures abroad
Jin & Sparks	10 male and 10 female. 12 more than 35 and 8 less than 36. Chinese residents of Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Beijing. People travelling to Australia as an example for travels abroad.	Importance of shopping for the Chinese. Analysis of Chinese tourists travelling abroad
Michopoulou & Moisa	20 British residents, 20 Chinese residents.	Examine behaviours of Chinese and British tourists to compare them and elucidate the relevance of differences in cultural aspects
Kim et Al.	212 usable answers, 167 women and the rest men, 198 were aged 20-30 years old. 60% were eployed and 33% students.	Influence of social media in destination image formation. Chinese characteristics and preferences of websites features
Law et Al.	There are not respondents. There are 122 articles mainly from ScienceDirect, Google Shcolar and EBSCOhost	Understanding China's outbound tourism
Luo & Zhong	Travellers had used eWOM in the last 6 months. They were mostly office workers and college students. There was a total of 61 respondents, 26 male, 59 between 19-30 years old, university graduates majority, and heavy users of SNSs	Analyse the eWOM in a travel situation. A few considerations about Chinese characteristics

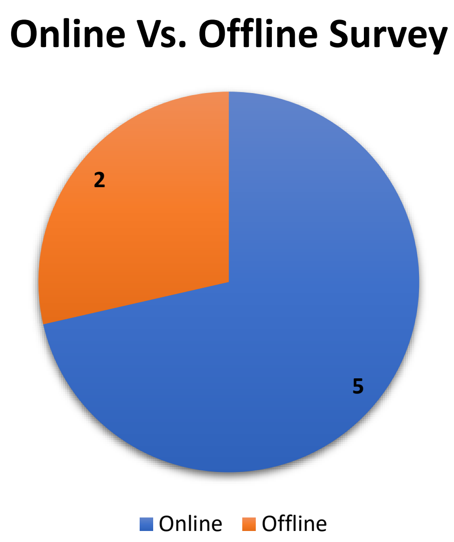
In the same way, the analysis is made for the Russian tourists:

Source	Data Collection	Type of interaction
Digital Tourism Think tank	Data from government and partners (companies)	N/A
ITB - Berlin	Results of a tourism forum in Pisa, Italy. November 2016	N/A
European Travel Commission: Lonh-haul travel barometer	Interview	By telephone, in their mother tongue
European Travel Commission: Preferences of the European Towards Tourism	Interview	By telephone, in their mother tongue
IPSOS	Survey	Offline
ITE - Travel & Tourism (IPSOS)	Data from tourism specialists	N/A
Phocuswright	Survey	Online
UNWTO	Official data (governments and private companies)	N/A
Kazakov & Predvoditeleva	Survey	Online
Kazakov	Survey	Online
Evita Lehtinen	Interview	Offline
Egger et Al.	Survey	Online
Stylos et Al.	Survey	Offline
Fotis et Al.	Survey	Online
Yury Kulikov	Secondary research and primary research (interviews)	Face to face

With respect to the methods used by the different sources, there are:



In the same way than before, with respect to online or offline surveys:



Finally, the demographic profile and the main objectives of the studies made:

Source	Profile & Quantity of respondents	Main topics of analysis
Digital Tourism Think tank	+18 years old, Russian residents	Digital behaviours of the Russians
ITB - Berlin	N/A	General considerations about the tourism growth and perspectives
European Travel Commission: Lonh-haul travel barometer	1,000 interviews on each country for those who have in mind travelling abroad	Travel sentiment of people and its analysis for upcoming trips
European Travel Commission: Preferences of the European Towards Tourism	30,105 respondents from different social and demographic groups. European residents	Reasons for going on holidays, tools used to book, respondent's profiles and satisfaction levels
IPSOS	Russian people, aged 10-75. In 50 Russian cities, 25,700 respondents.	Characteristics and preferences of the Russian outbound tourists
ITE - Travel & Tourism (IPSOS)	N/A	Information about the Russians arriving to some specific countries/regions
Phocuswright	1,000 or more respondents from 8 countries. They made at least one digital activity in their last "tourist journey"	Digital behaviours of the countries analysed along all the phases of the "tourist journey"
UNWTO	N/A	Number of travellers and their expenditures abroad
Kazakov & Predvoditeleva	536 Travellers who had travelled outside their city once in the last 2 years, between 20-49 years old, at least a college title and mothly income between $560-$2,000.	Digital behaviour of Russian tourists. How they use social media as a tool for their travels. Also, some general behaviours of these tourists
Kazakov	536 respondents from 15 Russian cities. The average respondent was 29 years old, male, bachelor education, and $1,200 as monthly income.	Russian's digital behaviours. Comparisons among men and women.
Evita Lehtinen	People travelling to Finland, in groups with familiy or friends. Social status and level of income were considered.	Analyse the factors that influence the Russian's purchase decisions in terms of tourism services

Egger et Al.	121 respondents from Russia. Majority of women, bachelor studies, inexperienced in purchasing online travel services, and no age correlation with the topic under study	Russian intentions and behaviours when purchasing travels online.
Stylos et Al.	1164 Russian respondents in an airport of Greece.	Comparison of the behaviours of Russian and British tourists to elucidate their revisit intentions. Russian characteristics and preferences
Fotis et Al.	346 questionnaires used for the analysis, from 12 Russian cities. People had travelled at least once in the previous year. Heavy users of social media, majority of females, majority of 25 to 39 years old, university graduates.	Use of social media in all the phases of the tourist journey
Yury Kulikov	232 people interviewed. People from Russia taking holidays in Rimini. The majority of respondents were from Moscow and were female	Analysis of the Russian preferences when travelling abroad

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