The diffusion study on Chinese outbound tourism
—Based on “diffusion of innovations” theory

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Abstract

From 1983 in which year Chinese people started being allowed to travel to the first outbound destination to nowadays that more than 150 countries have signed the ADS (approved destination status) with Chinese government, Chinese outbound tourism had a great progress in 32 years. During these years, more and more Chinese tourists could be seen in different places in the world. In 2014, the number of Chinese outbound tourists firstly achieve to over 100 million. The numbers are predicted to continue by 2020. It is meaningful to put Chinese outbound tourism as an object and discover its future development. Therefore, the aim of this study is set as to analyse the future diffusion of Chinese outbound tourism.

The available theoretical foundation is diffusion theory (Rogers, 2003). Its mature and practical theoretical system guides the research framework of this study. This theory is reliable for analysing and discussing the diffusion of Chinese outbound tourism from some aspects such as S-shaped curve, communication channels, adopter classification, etc.

A questionnaire survey and some hypothetical indicators are designed in this study to fulfil the aim and research questions. Results are described from several aspects. The analysis of results prove that Chinese outbound tourism could be reckoned as an innovation.

Finally, conclusions show that Chinese outbound tourism is currently going through the developing process between ‘innovators’ and ‘early adopters’. If the influencing factors which derived based on diffusion theory could be developed or solved positively, it is possible for Chinese outbound tourism to develop continually following the S-shaped curve in the future. The influencing factors has been studied out. They are the communication channels, the conscious gap between people who live in cities and people who live in towns and villages, the wealth gap between rich people and poor people. Not many related implementations are given out in this study, which needs future researches to explore.

**Keywords**: Chinese outbound tourism, diffusion theory, diffusion of innovations
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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

China outbound tourism has been paid a dramatic attention by the whole world nowadays and has already been one of the most influential tourism markets in spite of its late start (Andreu, Claver and Quer, 2014). Go back to three decades ago, Chinese people had never thought about applying passports. However, with the developing of China’s society, economy, and importantly open policy towards outbound tourism, Chinese people’s realisation on travelling had been raised. At the same time, their discretionary income made travelling both in China and aboard possible (Yun & Jopppe, 2011). The more and more expenditure on tourism by Chinese tourists reflected their stronger and stronger travelling desire. One of the reasons of travelling aboard for Chinese tourists is that they want to experience the different cultures which include local history and lifestyle (Andreu, Claver and Quer, 2014). Furthermore, to experience the cultural differences is the first consideration for Chinese tourists, which exceeds their consideration of tourism expenditure (Du and Dai, 2008). For Chinese travellers, outside world is full of attractiveness. Therefore, the number of Chinese tourists who choose to travel aboard during these years shows an increasing trend. Today, we can see Chinese people almost everywhere—from the Rocky Mountain in Canada to the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa, from Alaska in America to Gold Coast in Australia—in all of the world. Nowadays, both Asian outbound destinations like Hongkong, Macao, Korea, Thailand, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore and Western countries such as America, Russia, Australia, Canada are popular for Chinese travellers. Many other areas are still paying potentially attracting attention to Chinese tourists.

Chinese outbound tourism has accounted for a big market occupancy in the tourism field of the whole world. More and more countries have experienced the increasing economic benefits and international arrivals from China (Andreu, Claver and Quer, 2014). Which could be seen by the statistics of Chinese tourists numbers in several countries in 2010 such as 567,294 in France, 510,000 in Germany and 286,420 in Switzerland. (China Tourism Academy [CTA], 2011). The fast growth rate of Chinese outbound tourists could been seen as a realisable opportunity for other countries promoting their economy, culture reputation and tourism. Different countries try to attract Chinese tourists by their own unique tourism attractions and also by discovering Chinese tourists’ tastes towards outbound tourism and meeting their demands to the greatest extent. China has been targeted as the main inbound tourism countries by many countries. Australia has set the goal of China 2020 Strategy with bringing in excess of A$7 billion and A$9 billion each year (Tourism Australia,
2012), which shows that China outbound tourism has gained a high attention as a beneficial entity by other countries. UNWTO (World Tourism Organisation) predicted in the UNWTO Tourism 2020 Vision that China would be the fourth largest outbound tourism market by 2020 with the international arrivals of 100 million, which could be fulfilled before 2020 by related statistics of recent years (UNWTO, 2008).

Internally, push promotions are gradually becoming apparent — economic growth, motivational factors, increasing discretionary income, open policy, etc. Externally, pull stimulates including flexible visa policies, customer satisfaction surveys made by different destinations are playing an effective role. Both internal push promotions and external pull stimulates could offer a positive atmosphere for the development of Chinese outbound tourism.

1.2 Aim and research questions

The aim of this study is to analyse the Chinese outbound tourism based on Rogers (2003)’ “diffusion of innovations” theory. S-shaped curve is an important consequence in the diffusion theory, which could be used in this research to explore the development condition of Chinese tourists traveling aboard. If the results of this study is positive-which means that the tendency of Chinese outbound tourism shows a suitable route and match with the S-shaped curve, the related formatting reasons and future prediction could be given out based on diffusion theory. If it will show an adverse consequence-which implies that S-shaped curve could not be used to describe this situation or it shows a different tendency which is different with that of S-shaped curve, related solutions might be stated based on diffusion theory. For better launching this study to achieve the aim, research questions are concluded as follows:

1. Could Chinese outbound tourism be defined as an innovation based on the “diffusion of innovations” theory?

2. Based on the S-shaped curve, which phase is Chinese outbound tourism experiencing?

3. According the current situation of Chinese outbound tourism, what suggestions could be given out in terms of its future development based on diffusion theory?

1.3 Structure of this study

Firstly, the part of theoretical study will introduce the diffusion theory which interprets its basic principles, theoretical achievements and practical meanings. It is foundational for the later study of this thesis. Secondly, the methodology part will
present the methods that are used in this study. Some points of the methodology study are deduced from the conclusions of theoretical study. Which shows the consistency of this study. A questionnaire survey and three hypothetical indicators will be designed in this part to help achieve the study aim. Thirdly, results part will describe the situation of Chinese outbound tourism in some aspects. In this part, the results of questionnaire survey will be presented. Fourthly, the part of analysis will analyse that whether Chinese outbound tourism is an innovation and also analyse the consequences of results based on S-shaped curve. Fifthly, the discussion part will connect to the aim and try to answer the listed research questions formerly by discussion based on the theoretical study, methodology and results of this study. Finally, conclusions will be given out to show the research acquisitions and clues for future researches.
2. Theoretical background

2.1 Introduction and previous studies

“Diffusion is the process in which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the member of a social system.” Rogers (2002, p5) concluded.

The theory of “diffusion of innovations” originally appeared and designed in the field of rural sociology in the USA around 1930s, which was applied to study the independence of farmers to adopt hybrid seed corn (Valente and Rogers, 1995). Ryan and Gross (1943) concluded the results of this study of application of hybrid seed corn, which was a trigger of later numerous researches in many different fields based on the diffusion theory. Many researches use this “diffusion of innovations” theory as their theoretical foundation or scientific evidence, which involves medical sociology, communication studies, marketing, development studies, health promotion, evidence-based medicine, structural organisational studies, cultural organisational studies, organisational network studies knowledge utilisation, narrative studies, complexity studies (Greenhalgh, 2005).

2.2 Description of four main elements

The first element in the diffusion process is innovation. Taking Chinese outbound tourism into account as an innovation, it should match the perceived attributes of the innovation. There are five basic attributes of innovations according to Rogers’ diffusion theory (2003). Firstly, innovations bring relative advantages. The degree of relative advantage could mainly be reflected by economic terms and also related tightly to social prestige factors, convenience and satisfaction (Rogers, 2003, p15). Rogers (2003, p15) presented that the more advantages related to an innovation, the faster the speed of adoption display. Secondly, compatibility is taken into account by Rogers (2003, p15) to show that the innovation should keep pace with the contexts which including existing values, previous experiences and demands of potential adopters. Innovations could not be developed in a incompatible environment as quickly as in a compatible atmosphere. And it is showed a slower development when an incompatible innovation adopts in a new value system. (Rogers, 2003) Thirdly, complexity is defined by Rogers (2003) as one of the attributes of innovations to describe that the innovation could be difficult to understand and use. Fourthly, trialability described that innovations could be experimented for a period in their earlier developing stages. Which generates that innovations those are divisible could be adopted more quickly.
by firstly being experimented on particular segments than those are indivisible (Rogers, 2003, p16). Fifthly, observability was applied to describe the visibility of the innovations’ results, which could lead a positive tendency of being adopted by others. The more visible of the consequences of innovations, the more rapid that they are adopted by others (Rogers, 2003, p16).

The second element of the theory of diffusion of innovations is communication channel. The innovations are reckoned as messages that are exchanged through the diffusion that is defined as one type of communication (Rogers, 2003, p18). The ways of conveying communication from one participant to another could be described as communication channels. The process of communication is implemented by four elements which are (1) an innovation, (2) units who have knowledge or experiences that related to the innovation, (3) other participants who do not have knowledge or experiences that related to the innovation, (4) a communication channel that connects these two units (Rogers, 2003, p18). Some communication channels are recognised by Rogers (2003) including mass media channels by radio, television, newspapers, interpersonal channels by communication between individuals, and interactive communication channels by Internet.

Time is the third element of diffusion of innovations, which could be elaborated from three aspects. Firstly, the innovation-decision process explains that the process of how a particular individual perform with the innovation. Which could be described by five stages along the timeline including knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation and confirmation (Rogers, 2003, p20). Secondly, five adopter categories which are innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority and laggards are classified by the innovativeness to show the development process of innovation. Innovativeness is a degree to distinguish an individual who could accept new ideas earlier than other members in a system, which is an important dependent variable in diffusion research to show the behavioural change rather than cognitive or attitudinal change during the innovation process (Rogers, 2003, p268). The process of the innovation’s development is also based on relative time (Rogers, 2003, p20). Lastly, the rate of adoption which based on time evolution shows that a social system that is composed by a cluster of individuals or units adopts the innovation in a form of relative speed. S-shaped curve is utilised to show the result.

A social system which is reckoned by Rogers (2003) as the fourth element of diffusion of innovations is a cluster of interrelated units that under the same condition of an innovation. Individuals, informal groups, organisations, and/or subsystems could be included in a social system. Diffusion performs its function within a social system (Rogers, 2003, p24). The diffusion of innovations is probably influenced by the so-
cial structure of the system, the norms inside the system, opinion leaders and change agents in a social system. Three categories of innovation-decisions those can interact each other and influence the whole diffusion process by the results of adoption or rejection exist in a social system. (1) Optional innovation-decisions are made by individuals or other members inside the social system. (2) Collective innovation-decisions are made by members who keeping a consistent agreement towards innovations in the social system. (3) Authority innovation-decisions are made by some individuals who own power, status, or technical expertise (Rogers, 2003, p31).

2.3 S-shaped curve and adopter categories

S-shaped curve

S-shaped curve (Figure 1, Yellow curve) targets on the whole members in a particular system and only describes the successful diffusion of innovations (Rogers, 2003, p275). Along the expanding of the timeline of an innovation, the accumulational number of adopters in the innovation produce an S-shaped curve to show the variation of adoption (Rogers, 2003, p272). Meanwhile, the bell-shaped curve (Figure 1, Blue curve) which shows the rate of increase of the adoption process is also used in the diffusion research. S-shaped curve which presents the cumulative number of adopters and bell-shaped curve which shows the number of new adopters are two different patterns that express the same situation. In the S-shaped curve, the quantity of adopters goes up slowly at the beginning. Then the curve shows a rising tendency until half of the individuals in the innovation system accept the adoption. After that, the S-shaped curve shows a relatively gentle incline which means fewer and fewer remaining individuals in the innovation system have adopted (Rogers, 2003, p272). The S-shaped curve happens when the diffusion of communication between individuals in the system have been implemented. According to the findings found by Rogers (2003, p274), the most important part in the diffusion process is the period between 10 percent adoption and 20 percent adoption in the innovation system, which could decide whether the diffusion continues. Usually, the future diffusion could not be stopped after going though the period, even if some intentional obstacles get involved (Rogers, 2003, p274).
Figure 1. Diffusion of Innovations (Rogers, 2003). Yellow curve: S-shaped curve. Blue curve: Bell-shaped curve.

**Adopter classification**

There are five types of adopters according Rogers (2003) diffusion theory, which are innovators, early adopters, early majority, later majority and laggards. The principle of distinguishing these adopters is innovativeness which classifies these adopters for helping people to get a better understanding of human behaviour, although sometimes it seems too simple for defining these categories to get the total information of them (Rogers, 2005, p280). Explaining these five characteristics by the adopted numbers in a system, it could be shown with percentages—innovators (2.5%), early adopters (13.5%), early majority (34%), late majority (34%), laggards (16%)(Figure 1). The characteristics of these five categories are now being described. The first category innovators have strong desire to experience the new ideas of an innovation. Some prerequisites should be possessed by the innovators, which including enough financial support to make them capable to accept the risk of failure of innovation, the capacity of understanding and utilising complicated technical knowledge and information, and the ability to deal with the uncertainty during the process of innovation. Innovators are very important in the diffusion process because they are responsible for bringing in the new ideas from outside of the system (Rogers, 2003, p283). The second category early adopters could constitute a more integral group than innovators in the system. They always act as the leaders in terms of sharing their opinions in most systems, which could be reflected by other potential adopters who
search for suggestions about the innovation (Rogers, 2003, p283). Early adopters who openly inherit the new ideas from innovators are easily connected with the average individuals, which makes an positive effect for the future development of adoption. Compared with innovators, early adopters bear less pressure on avoiding the uncertainty of the innovation, which also due to their more utilisation on the innovation. The third category early majority play an important role in conveying the information of the innovation to others in the system because they are located between the early adopters and the relatively late adopters, which could make early majority as an significant connection to keep the diffusion developing. Rogers (2003, p284) studied that the early majority owns one third of all members in a system, which make it be one of the adopter categories owning the biggest quantity in terms of members. The fourth category late majority has the almost same percentage of members that shows one third of all members in a system with the early majority (Rogers, 2003, p284). They make their decision skepticaly and cautiously towards adoption and always adopt the innovation until most of the members in their system have implemented it in order to avoid uncertainty to make them feel safe. Sometimes, they choose to accept adoption just because of the surrounding pressure from other adopted members. The fifth category laggards adopt the innovation lastly in a system. They keep their transitional values and mainly interact with people who have same values. They seldom communicate with others in their social system and need to spend a long time to accept the adoption. If they can not make sure the security of the innovation, they would not adopt it. The skepticism is the dominant attitude they hold.

There are some generalisations on the adopter categories that have been studied by Rogers (2003, p287), which could be concluded on three aspects—socioeconomic status, personality values and communication behaviour. From the perspective of socioeconomic status, compared with later adopters, earlier adopters are higher educated, spend longer time in education, have higher social status, are more active in social mobility which shows a upward tendency, own larger-sized units.
3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The methodology part follows the theoretical part to launch the study in empirical way. It includes seven parts in this methodology part, which are (1) research philosophy: to describe the ideation of the method research and to describe its connections with the study aim and theoretical background as well as later discussions. (2) research methods. (3) questionnaire research. (4) three hypothetical measuring indicators. (5) Data collection. (6) superiorities and limitations.

3.2 Research philosophy

Research philosophy reflects the viewpoints of researchers towards the world and will run through the research processes. It also guides all the assumptions and operations of the research studies (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). Research philosophy is described as research paradigm to be the framework of a study with stating the thinking background and knowledge (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). It is necessary to build the basic knowledge of how to launch the study based on existed data and theoretical foundation. In this study, the research philosophy helps to formulate the research framework and guide the orientation of its empirical study. Which leads the study to be conducted in a reasonable and clear way. Therefore, the research philosophy is needed to be presented here.

The aim of this study is to analyse the condition of Chinese outbound tourism based on the diffusion theory. There were many theoretical foundations being used to study Chinese outbound tourism (Tse, 2011; Li et al., 2011; Arlt, 2013). Every theory has its own observation point and unique contributions towards Chinese outbound tourism. The importance of conducting this study is to absorb the essences from diffusion theory and use them to carry through this study. According to this, four points of penetration are planned in order to fulfil the aim. The considerations of these points come out based on the main elements in Rogers’ diffusion theory.

Firstly, it is essential to prove whether Chinese outbound tourism is an innovation. We have learned the knowledge of diffusion theory in last chapter. Innovation could be reckoned as the main subject in the diffusion theory. All of its related studies are centred on this basic conception. Identifying an innovation is the precondition of later analysis on its diffusion. This study is mainly based on the diffusion of innovation theory. It is important to match the subject of this study with the subject of diffusion theory. Which could show the correlation between them in order to carry out analy-
sis. Therefore, descriptive work on identifying Chinese outbound tourism as an innovation should be done primarily.

Secondly, the question of how the idea of outbound tourism forms and spreads among Chinese tourists to generate diffusion of this phenomenon is needed to be studied. This question corresponds the second element of diffusion theory-communication channels. Communications among individuals, organisations, groups in a system could spread the information of outbound tourism, which makes the later diffusion study possible. Empirical work should be surveyed from this perspective to collect the communication data to show how the idea of outbound tourism diffuse.

Thirdly, it is necessary to analyse the diffusion process of Chinese outbound tourism from the perspective of diffusion theory. S-shaped curve in diffusion theory is utilised to describe how the diffusion develops (Rogers, 2003). To explore how the diffusion of Chinese outbound tourism is developing and whether this diffusion could fit the diffusion theory of Rogers (2003) is necessary. Considering the diffusion of Chinese outbound tourism, many angles could be taken into account. For example, we can put the localities in China as the target to search the variations of them in term of outbound tourism. The number of outbound tourists who live in these localities and the number of localities with outbound tourists over years could be considered to show the diffusion. We also can target the outbound destinations to see that when and how Chinese outbound tourism developed in them, which could show another kind of diffusion. In this study, the diffusion mainly targets on the number of Chinese outbound tourists over years. To probe into this, the empirical work should be designed based on the principle that how to relate the diffusion of Chinese outbound tourism with the S-shaped curve. In other word, it is needed to find some measurements to test whether the diffusion of Chinese outbound tourism fit the S-shaped curve.

Fourthly, it is important to derive some suggestions from the diffusion theory to help future diffusion of Chinese outbound tourism lead to a positive consequence. S-shaped curve is a popular model in terms of studying diffusion (Kucharavy, 2013). If the Chinese outbound tourism could develop as the trend that S-shaped curve leads, it is possible to predict its future development and do related early tourism plans properly. Therefore, analysis work on empirical materials based on diffusion theory should be discussed.

3.3 Research methods

The qualitative method and quantitative method are used in this study. According to research philosophy, research methods of this study are designed in three aspects. Firstly, descriptive work will be launched to show (1) whether Chinese outbound
tourism is an innovation, (2) the diffusion situation of Chinese outbound tourism over years by data and materials that are collected from articles, journals, literatures, related authorities, etc. The criteria of choosing the collected data is based on that whether they could connect with the knowledge of diffusion theory. The main collections refer to the situation of Chinese outbound tourism, the numbers of Chinese outbound tourism over years, the related policies of Chinese outbound tourism, other facts such as economy that might influence the diffusion. Secondly, the questionnaire is formulated to understand the communication ways of Chinese tourists when it comes to the idea of traveling abroad. Thirdly, three hypothetical indicators are designed based on diffusion theory to test whether the diffusion of Chinese outbound tourism is following the S-shaped curve.

3.4 questionnaire research

3.4.1 Questionnaire design

The aim of this questionnaire is mainly to survey how Chinese tourists get the idea of traveling abroad. Basic personal questions like gender, age, place of residence are referred. Some other related questions are also designed for understanding their willings about outbound tourism. Several question types such as single-choice questions, multiple-choice questions and fills-up questions are involved. Considering the patience of respondents and the simplicity of the questionnaire, only several most meaningful questions are referred. The answering time is controlled within 3 minutes. The questionnaire is written in Chinese because it targets on Chinese respondents. The contents of translated questionnaire could be seen in Appendix 1.

3.4.2 Data collection

The questionnaire is raised on a Chinese questionnaire-specialised website — sojump.com. This website offers the service of showing the results in various forms (pie chart, bar graph, percentage, etc), which helps to ease the arrangement process of questionnaire results.

Two main channels are used to distribute questionnaires. Both of these two channels are designed by the Chinese company Tencent. The first one is a cellphone application which is called Wechat. It is used frequently by Chinese people as a daily communication tool. People can send messages, voices, pictures, videos, website links to each other by Wechat. The popularisation of Wechat in China could be considered as that of Fackbook in the world. The other channel is an online chatting tool which is called QQ. It is popular in China in the previous age before the generation of Wechat in 2011. The advantage of this online tool is that the questionnaires could be sent by the groups instead of sending them one by one.
The distribution of questionnaires is objectless. The more respondents are involved, the broader information we can gain. The way of the distribution is that the website links of the questionnaire were sent by author on Wechat and QQ. Then the questionnaire was requested to be distributed by the respondents to their acquaintances. The collecting period lasted for five days from 29th, May to 2rd, June. The original amount of questionnaires sent by author is 256. The quantity of final collections is 152.

3.4.3 Limitations

There are 82 respondents are from the province Inner Mongolia, 45 of whom are from the Baotou city which is the hometown of the author. The restriction of non-diversification might result in lacking of representation. Therefore, related description of Baotou should be carried out to show the distinction.

79 of all of the respondents are aged between 26 and 30, which shows a percentage of 51.3%. The result is mainly due to that most of the respondents are author’s friends with same age group. The limitation of relative singleness of ages might lead to one-sidedness of the results. Therefore, the age information of Chinese outbound tourists could be collected for analysing the results by comparison.

3.5 Three hypothetical measuring indicators

The first indicator is to evaluate whether the S-shaped curve has happened. We know that S-shaped curve is formed by the cumulative numbers of individuals in a particular system (the system here we have defined it as the social group with whole Chinese people). Rogers (2003, p274) presented by his study that “The S-shaped curve of diffusion ‘take off’ once interpersonal networks become activated in spreading individuals’ evaluations of an innovation from peer to peer in a system.” Which could show us that we can define this first indicator with “start communicating” for measuring. For implementing this indicator, we can connect to one of the basic attributes of innovations—communication channels to seek the criteria.

The second quantitative indicator is to measure whether the S-shaped curve could be successfully continued after it has started for a period. It is possible to find proof from Rogers’ diffusion theory. “The part of the diffusion curve from about 10 percent adoption to 20 percent adoption is the heart of the diffusion process. After that point, it is often impossible to stop the further diffusion of a new idea, even if one wished to do so. (Rogers, 2003, p274)” This deduction is usefully transforming the abstract conceptions into operable measurement standard for this study. This connection which made by the second indicator between theoretical knowledge and realistic application expands the practicability of diffusion theory. The second indicator could be
explained by “maintain developing” which could be displayed by the members that adopt the innovation who account for 10-20 percentage of whole individuals in the system. In this study, we can explore the answers of how about the positioning conditions of Chinese outbound tourism on the S-shaped curve by calculating how many percents of Chinese people traveling abroad during some years.

The third quantitative indicator is to measure the turning point of tourism diffusion on S-shaped curve before it becomes almost level-off by increasing sharply for a period. The S-shaped curve represents the cumulative numbers of adopters along the timeline. After this curve experiencing starting (first indicator) and continuing (second indicator), it will finally achieve a mature period. The third indicator is used to show whether it matures. According to Rogers (2003, p274)’ research, he said that “The S-shaped diffusion curve begins to level off after half of the individuals in a social system have adopted, because each new adopter finds it increasingly difficult to tell the new idea to a peer who has not yet adopted, for such nonknowers become increasingly scarce.” He indicated the particular proportion of the turning point and also interpreted the reasons of why such a situation appears. For my research, it could be depicted that when half of Chinese tourists go traveling in a particular area, the S-shaped diffusion curve of China outbound tourism in this area will enter in the relatively level-off stage. Under this circumstance, the third indicator could be concluded as “level-off transformation”.

Getting these methodological ideas into shape is helpful and foundational to my sequential study. It offers effective ways to some extent to normalise the later two parts—results, analysis and discussions.

3.6 Data collection

Official data is important for this study because it is needed objective statistics and information to analyse the diffusion of Chinese outbound tourism based on the hypothetical indicators, which leads to the further study on its matching-degree with S-shaped curve and discussions. Therefore, the sources should be authoritative and accurate. Main statistics are collected from several main organisations such as China tourism academy, UNWTO directly or indirectly (which means the data are from the articles that cite the statistics from these organisations).

Data and information are also collected from other channels such as articles from journals, official newspapers and articles, nonofficial statistics, statistics held by famous tourism website or consulting companies, related literatures, etc.

3.7 Superiorities and limitations
Superiorities

This research applies the diffusion theory to analyse Chinese outbound tourism in a comprehensive way, which could make this study contribute to the diffusion theory as its new application case. All of the research ideas are based on this theory. For example, the setting of research questions is according to the basic characteristics of diffusion theory. The design of questionnaire is to explore the communication channels which is one of four elements in diffusion theory. The hypothetical indicators which are derived from the conception of S-shaped curve shows the operability of diffusion theory. The three indicators are created systematically, science-reliably and cogitatively, which offers the research being launched reasonably. In a word, all these methods play a role in connecting the theoretical foundations and the empirical work.

As a Chinese, the process of collecting data and making the questionnaire research in Chinese is relatively easy. My existing experience and knowledge on Chinese tourism could also play some guiding roles on choosing data and using them.

Limitations

This study aims at learning current situation of Chinese outbound tourism, the latest data should be collected to launch it. Though the statistics related to Chinese outbound tourism are numerous, it is relatively hard to collect the data of the situation in 2014 which just passed less than half a year. Therefore, I will try my best to collect the latest data. The relatively old statistics will also be used in case of the latest data unavailable.
4. Results

4.1 Introduction

The results will be described in two aspects. The first one is to present the situation of Chinese outbound tourism based on the collected statistics, data and information. This first part will be described in five angles which are (1) the development process of Chinese outbound tourism, (2) the numbers of Chinese outbound tourists, (3) the economic facts, (4) the behaviours of Chinese outbound tourists, (5) the channels of outbound tourism information inquiry, (6) the attitudes of outbound destinations on Chinese outbound tourism (7) the passport-holders in China, (8) most outbound tourists concentrate in first-tier cities. The second aspect is to present the results of questionnaire by three samples.

4.2 Situation of Chinese outbound tourism

4.2.1 The development process of Chinese outbound tourism

China outbound tourism had only developed for around 30 years which could date back to 1983, in which year only Chinese people who were in Guangdong Province (border city with Hongkong) were allowed by Chinese government to travel to Hongkong with the aim of visiting friends and relatives (VFR)(Xie and Li, 2010). Which was the earliest outbound traveling for Chinese. The following year, Macao accessionally was permitted by China’s State Council to be visited by all Chinese citizens through the organisation of VFR tourism. In 1988, Thailand became the other outbound tourism destination for Chinese tourists. In 1990, two other counties in Southeast Asia which were Singapore and Malaysia were allowed to be travelled by Chinese tourists (Li, Harrill, Uysal, Burnett and Zhan, 2010). Later, Philippines was opened for Chinese tourists. However, all of these countries were only allowed to be visited as VFR tourism and organised by particular agencies, the expenditure of tourists’ journeys should be paid by their overseas relatives (Xie and Li, 2010). The ADS (approved destination status) scheme based on bilateral agreements between Chinese government and other governments was formulated by Chinese government with the aim of giving permission to other countries to accept Chinese leisure tourists. In 1999, Australia and New Zealand became the first two ADS countries (Xie and Li, 2010). These two destinations paved the way for Chinese outbound tourism towards countries outside Asia. In 2001, China joined in the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) to became an official member, which made China speed up its ADS scheme. In 2002, with the acceptance of ADS by Malta and Egypt, the doors of Chinese outbound tourism to Europe and Africa opened up. The following year, Cuba was approved as the first Americas’ ADS country to lead Chinese tourists to go
further. Until 2004, most of European countries received the ADS scheme. The opening of European area played an important role in Chinese outbound tourism, which also brought striking benefit to Europe. The amount of Chinese outbound tourists who traveled to Europe in 2004 was 9-fold compared that in 2003, which made China to be the fastest increasing travel market in Europe (Du and Dai, 2005). In 2007, China and America reached the agreement of opening outbound tourism, then the first tourism tour set out on the journey towards United State in 2008. Nowadays, there are 150 countries which are distributed in all continents in the world had opened as the outbound tourism destinations for Chinese tourists.

4.2.2 The numbers of Chinese outbound tourists (Figure 2)

Though Chinese outbound tourism originally started at the beginning of 1980s, the actual development could not be dated back to the same period because that the earliest outbound tourism was only limited with the VFR tourism and the policy restriction from Chinese government also took a relatively negative effect at that moment until the ADS unveiled. Although Chinese outbound tourism has only experienced a short period, the speed of its development shows a dramatical increase. During the 1990s, the arrival numbers of Chinese outbound tourists went up relatively steadily, which showed the amount was under 10 million before year 2000. From 2000, the arrival numbers of Chinese outbound tourists broke 10 million and since then it showed a rapid growth. In 2003, the Chinese outbound tourism number achieved to 20 million that doubled the figure of three years ago. In this year, China became the country with largest outbound tourists in Asia, which surpassed Japan (Xie and Li, 2010). Until last year 2014, the amount of arrival numbers of Chinese outbound tourism increased to more than 100 million which showed 107 million, an growth of 19.49% over 2013 (Travel China Guide, 2014). Which compared with the number in 2000 which was 9.8 million, it increased almost 11-fold and the average annual growth is nearly 40%. The breakthrough of tourist number of 100 million in 2014 came in advance compared with the estimated year of 2020 that predicted by United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO, 2008). The Chinese outbound tourism is still at the young stage, even the international arrivals it created had been expected to grow by 17 percent per year until 2020 (Yun & Joppe, 2011). The anticipated arrival numbers of traveling aboard of Chinese tourists in 2015 will achieve to 135 billion (National Tourism Administration of P. R. China, 2015). By the end of 2014, the most popular destinations for Chinese outbound tourists were countries in Asia which accounted for 89.5% including 70.4% came from Hongkong, Macao and Taiwan. Then Europe accounted for 3.5%. Africa, Americas, Oceania and others accounted for 3.0%, 2.7%, 1.1% and 0.2% separately. Arrival numbers of tourists who travelled to Korea, Japan, Thailand, America, Vietnam and Singapore in
2014 had achieved to 1 million separately (National Tourism Administration of P. R. China, 2014).

Figure 2. Numbers of Chinese outbound tourists over years (China Tourism Academy, 2014)

4.2.3 The economic facts

With the rapid increasing number of Chinese outbound tourists, the expenditure of Chinese outbound tourism went up quickly at the same time. Which proves that China has gained an economic status in the world and it also could bring a lot of economic benefits to all of the host countries. In 2012, there were 80 million Chinese outbound tourists being travelled aboard with related tourist expenditure of approximately 80 billion USD (Qi, 2014). In 2012, the expenditure of Chinese outbound tourism achieved 102 billion USD (China Tourism Academy, 2014). In 2013, the total expenditure showed a record-breaking figure which was 128.7 billion, which increased 25.5% compared with the expenditure in 2012 (China Tourism Academy, 2014). Travel&Tourism sector in China has a significant contribution to the global economy. China has been forecasted by the WTTC (2015) as one of the two biggest Travel&Tourism economies in the world in 2015. The consumption on luxury holds a big part in the whole outbound expenditure. In 2013, the luxury consumption in the whole world was 217 billion dollars which broke the former record with growth rate of 11% in spite of the negative economic background. Chinese tourists did a great contribution of sharing 47% of such a big new record. The bigger distribution of the luxury consumption of Chinese tourists mainly in Hongkong (64.6%) and Europe (46%) (Travelzoo Agency, 2014).

4.2.4 The behaviours of Chinese outbound tourists
With the travelling demands of Chinese tourists both in China and aboard going up rapidly, knowing Chinese travellers’ tastes and trying to provide them suitable tourism products seem to be the key to success for those countries who consider China as a big tourism market. Yun and Joppe (2011) studied that cultural experiences and natural activities were the most important attractions for Chinese travellers in seven countries which were Canada, United States, Australia, New Zealand, France, Germany and United Kingdom. Chinese outbound tourists are mainly people who are affluent or in the middle-class with big eager to see new places. Hence, getting to know the different demands of Chinese affluent travellers and middle-class travellers might be helpful for tourism planners in other countries developing their destinations. The ages of Chinese outbound tourists are between 25 and 44, which is different from primary group refer to western outbound tourists who are mainly senior people holding enough time and money to afford their journeys (Yun & Joppe, 2011). The tourists who have being higher-educated account for 81% of them (CTA, 2011). Which shows that Chinese outbound tourists tend to have higher purchasing capability, better educational level and knowledge of other languages. Most tourists choose the organised tours to travel aboard because of cultural distance and linguistic barriers (Andreu, Claver and Quer, 2014). The tourism tour could help tourists get a visa easily and also help them ease the selecting process in terms of tourism attractions, flight tickets, accommodations and cuisine. Although Chinese tourists who travel aboard tend to choose to visit many countries which guided by organised tourism tours, the tendency of travelling fewer countries even in one country by themselves seems show its market.

4.2.5 The channels of outbound tourism information inquiry

A survey named ‘Market research on Chinese outbound tourist (City) consumption’ made by WTCF (World Tourism Cities Federation) released in 2014 to understand the characteristics of Chinese outbound tourism and its future development tendency. They collected 3170 questionnaires online, the targeting respondents are mainly from southeast part, north part and east prat of China, representative cities are several developed cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangdong. There was a statistic related to the channels of outbound tourism information inquiry. Six categories were set. The results of them are: information from Chinese domestic websites accounted for 78.17%, information from travel agencies or official websites of tourism agencies accounted for 67.89%, information from friends and relatives accounted for 49.15%, information from official websites of tourism agencies of outbound cities accounted for 33.85%, information from outbound tourism websites accounted for 25.84%, information from promotional activities organised by cities accounted for 17.03%
(WTCF, 2014). Therefore, the main information-getting channels for Chinese tourists are Internet, tourism agencies, friends and relatives.

4.2.6 The attitudes from outbound destinations

Because of the economic effectiveness and deeply future potential, different countries gradually bring the tourism development strategy on Chinese tourists into their considerations. Therefore, different research institutes and tourism agencies had already paid a great attention to the traveling behaviour of Chinese tourists. Which could contribute to both their own countries’ tourism development and also future progress of the whole world. Related convenience for Chinese tourists had made by different countries to attract them, such as simplifying the visa-applying process, lowering the visa-applying fee, shortening the visa-applying time, investigating the Chinese market deeply, trying to increase the degree of satisfaction of Chinese tourists toward the destinations, beginning to understand the living habits of Chinese tourists, etc. Until now, China has been the second largest visitor market in New Zealand (Tourism New Zealand, 2015) and the second largest visitor market in Australia (Tourism Research Australia, 2015). The 11th China outbound tourism trade fair had just come to a close on April 16, 2015. Delegators from 65 countries shared their experiences and plans in attracting Chinese tourists. The delegator Safa Mustafa from Maldives presented that China was the biggest market for their 3s (sun, sand, sea) tourism over the past two years. Local hotels and transportation agencies formulated various favourable and customized tourism products for attracting Chinese tourists. Malaysian officer stated that they canceled the application fee of visa and shortened its applying time for Chinese tourists at the beginning of year 2015. The countries like Dominican Republic and Iceland those are not very familiar to Chinese tourists had also begun to target on Chinese tourists based on their unique tourism resources. The spokesman from Iceland said that China was firstly listed on the top ten of inbound tourism for their country.

4.2.7 The passport-holders in China

The arrival numbers was keeping increasing from 9.8 million in 2000 to 107 million in 2014. However, the total population of people who have outbound tourism experiences showed a low figure. In 2000, the number of Chinese citizens who held passports was 4.74 million. The number showed 20.3 million and 38 million in 2011 and 2012 separately. Bureau of Exit and Entry Administration of the Ministry of Public Security in China (2012) predicted that the growth rate will develop with speed of 20% by year (Figure 3). We can figure out the passport-holders in 2015 by this rate. The consequence is 65.6 million, which accounts for 5% of whole 1.36

Figure 3. Predicted population (billion) of Chinese outbound tourists 2011-2015.

4.2.8 Most outbound tourists concentrate in first-tier cities

First-tier city means that the city plays an important role in some social factors like economy and politics and could positively influence the other cities. It shows its strength on its capability of development, economic power, international competitiveness, scientific creativity, communicative competence on information, talent attractiveness, etc. The main four first-tier cities in China are Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen. During the year 2013 to 2014, there were over 15% of people in each province having outbound tourism experience in three provinces- Beijing, Shanghai, Guangdong (Guangzhou and Shenzhen are in this province). The percentages in Jiangsu province and Zhejiang province which are near Shanghai were between 5% and 10%. The other provinces showed the percentages under 5%. Most of these provinces had only under 1% of outbound people (World Tourism Cities Federation, 2014). Therefore, the main Chinese outbound tourists concentrated in first-tier cities.

4.3 Questionnaire results

4.3.1 Sample 1. All of the respondents

The questionnaires were filled by 154 respondents whom are 100 females (64.94%) and 54 males (35.06%). Nine age intervals are set (Figure 4). Participants who are aged between 26 and 30 form the biggest group with 79 (51.3%) participants. The number of participants who have passports is 100 (64.94%). 54 of participants
(35.06%) do not have passports. In terms of the question that whether they have the experiences on outbound tourism, 84 (54.55%) of them said ‘YES’ and 70 (45.45%) of them answered ‘NO’. We can deduce that 84% of respondents who have passports have travelled abroad, 16% of them have not yet.

![Figure 4. Age intervals and percentages of respondents.](image)

146 respondents (94.81%) have the willing of traveling abroad in the future. Only 8 respondents (5.19%) do not have the plan of outbound travel. However, all of these 8 respondents expressed that if the problems could be solved, they are pleasure to travel abroad.

For these 146 people who have the plan of traveling abroad, 97 of them (66.44%) have targeting destinations. 32 mentioned destinations include Europe (13), America (13), Japan (11), Australia (6), France (6), Thailand (6), Sweden (5), South America (5), Italy (5), South Korea (5), Nordic countries (4), Turkey (4), Taiwan (4), Greece (3), Hawaii (3), Spain (3), Maldives (3), England (2), New Zealand (2), Germany (2), Bali (in Indonesia) (2), Netherlands (2), Hongkong (2), Switzerland (1), Austria (1), South Africa (1), Nepal (1), Southeast Asia (1), Asia (1), Tahiti (in French Polynesia) (1), North Korea (1), Norway (1). 47 of respondents (32.19%) do not have targeting destinations. 2 of these 146 respondents did not answer this question.

Three questions are asked to these 146 respondents who want to travel abroad. They are including the reasons of traveling abroad (Figure 5), the patterns of traveling (Figure 6), the possible pressures in terms of traveling abroad (Figure 7).
Figure 5. The motivations of traveling abroad of respondents.

Figure 6. Traveling patterns of respondents.

Figure 7. The possible pressures when it comes to travel abroad for respondents.
When it comes to the question of obtaining ways of the information of outbound destinations (Figure 8), Internet is considered as the most frequent way, which is used by 104 of the respondents (67.53%).

![Figure 8](image.png)

**Figure 8.** Channels of obtaining information of outbound tourism (Sample 1)

### 4.3.2 Sample 2. The respondents from Baotou city

45 of the whole 154 respondents are from Baotou city which is the biggest city in province Inner Mongolia in north of China. Baotou is classified as the low-level second-tier city in China. The number of passport holders in these 45 respondents is 29 (64.44%). 25 of them have the outbound experiences, which accounts for 86.2% of the whole passport holders and accounts for 55.56% of the whole respondents in Baotou city. Most of the motivations of traveling abroad concentrated on travel arranged by tourism agencies, which accounts for 68%. 44 respondents (97.78%) want to travel abroad in the future. Only one person (2.22%) have no intention with outbound traveling. The obtaining ways of information of outbound destinations are various (Figure 9).
Figure 9. Channels of obtaining information of outbound tourism (Sample 2)

4.3.3 Sample 3. The respondents with age between 26 and 30

79 of the whole respondents are aged between 26 and 30. There are 54 of them (68.35%) have passports and 25 of them (31.65%) do not have passports. There are 41 respondents (51.9%) having outbound traveling experiences and 38 respondents (48.1%) having non-experiences on outbound travelling. 75.93% of passport-hold respondents traveled abroad before. The most traveling pattern they chose was the sightseeing arranged by themselves, which accounts for 80.49%. In terms of future plan of traveling abroad, 76 of respondents (96.2%) gave out the positive answer and 3 of respondents (3.8%) showed negative attitude. Internet is used most for getting information of outbound destinations by this age group. The usage rate is 77.22%.
5. Analysis

5.1 Analysis of reckoning Chinese outbound tourism as an innovation

To make sure whether Chinese outbound tourism is an innovation based on Rogers’ diffusion theory, the practical way is trying to build the bridge between “Chinese outbound tourism” and “an innovation”. In other word, it is the key to match the characteristics of them. As we learned, there are five attributes to measure and demonstrate whether a particular object is an innovation. From this perspective, the bridge between “Chinese outbound tourism” and “an innovation” could be described by these attributes. It is important here to analyse whether “Chinese outbound tourism” is equipped with these attributes.

Relative advantages

The degree of relative advantage could mainly be reflected by economic terms and also related tightly to social prestige factors, convenience and satisfaction (Rogers, 2003, p15). Chinese outbound tourism could partly be resulted by the economic growth domestically during these years after introducing the reform and opening-up policy. Increasing economic growth and disposable income stimulate the desire of consumption of Chinese people gradually. Therefore, traveling is a outcome produced after people being satisfied with basic life needs. In addition to this, Chinese outbound tourism brings the economic benefits for destinations. Chinese outbound tourists spend a lot of money on visa-applying, transportation, accommodation, tickets of tourism attractions, cuisine, and shopping which is the highest expenditure among all of the consumptions in their outbound traveling. Hence, economic factor could positively interpret both the reason and the consequence of Chinese outbound tourism. It proofs that Chinese outbound tourism could interact with economic terms. Chinese tourists who traveling aboard could experience the exotic culture and custom. At the same time, it is a indirect form to deliver the Chinese culture to other countries by communicating with each other in the destinations. With more and more Chinese tourists traveling aboard, outer world get the opportunity to understand and pay close attention to China. In a sense, such an infiltration could create a long-term and deep influence in terms of unveiling China’s mystery to the world. Chinese tourists go traveling to broaden their own horizon, experience the novelty, enjoy the relaxation, which could satisfy them spiritually and physically. With the globalisation and developing of technology, convenient transportation and diversified traveling patterns make traveling aboard more realisable. It is apparent to see that Chinese outbound tourism has it relative advantages to be an innovation.
Compatibility

Rogers (2003, p15) presented that compatibility is to show that the innovation should keep pace with the contexts which including existing values, previous experiences and demands of potential adopters. If considering Chinese outbound tourism as an innovation, the contexts could be described as the whole social environment both in China and in the world. Before starting to travel abroad, Chinese people had traveled domestically for many years. Undoubtedly, there are many natural tourism attractions or historical sites in China that are worthy to visit. The awareness of traveling had been accepted by Chinese tourists for a long time. Therefore, based on their existing desire, the openness of outbound tourism and increasing disposable income promote the development of Chinese outbound tourism. The appearance of internet accelerate the connection speed among people and also shorten the distance between individual and the outside world, which stimulates people’s eagerness to see and experience the real world rather than pictures online. In terms of interaction between human beings and tourism, they are relying on each other. People’s desire of seeing the world produces the tourism industry, then tourism industry react to human beings by creating more new originalities to attract people to travel. For tourism its own development, to discover more potential tourists is necessary. China has the biggest population in the world, it is very possible to affect more and more Chinese people to travel abroad. Which is what effort the different destinations are making currently. China is a country with massive potential individuals to contribute outbound tourism. Therefore, Chinese outbound tourism suits for the attribute compatibility.

Complexity

Complexity is defined by Rogers (2003) as one of the attributes of innovations to describe that the innovation could be difficult to understand and use. Though it seems that tourism could be easily understood by people because of its universality, the understanding of it only comes from its concept. Different destinations have different development models of tourism, different people have different attitudes towards traveling in various tourism attractions. If a destination is not well-developed in the field of tourism or is in the earlier stage of tourism, it is easily shown its complexity on both being understood and being used. Chinese outbound tourism had developed for around 3 decades, it is still not easy to be accepted by most of the Chinese people. Though the economic growth showed a rapid increase, the GDP per capita in China was only 7,589 dollars in 2014. This data ranking 77 in the world was under that of the world average GDP per capita. (Wikipedia, 2015). Though the numbers of outbound tourists in 2014 achieved to 117 million, the passport holders in China is only around 5%. Which means that at least 95% of Chinese people had never been
aboard until now. It should be serious to consider a outbound journey for a Chinese, it involve the considerations such as fund, time, communication, security, strangeness, necessity. The complexity could also be manifested on their attitudes towards destinations-choosing. For instance, for most of Chinese tourists, traveling towards Taiwan could be a pleasant choice without getting pre-knowledge of security or value. Oppositely, they might take a long time to make their decisions and get to know the related information if they could travel to Iceland. Therefore, the complexity of Chinese outbound tourism could be reflected by the above description.

**Trialability**

Trialability described that innovations could be experimented for a period in their earlier developing stages. Which generates that innovations those are divisible could be adopted more quickly by firstly being experimented on particular segments than those are indivisible (Rogers, 2003, p16). Hongkong had been allowed as the first outbound tourism destination to be travelled by Chinese tourists in 1983 (Li, Harrill, Uysal, Burnett and Zhan, 2010), which could be an successful example with Hongkong being ranked highest among outbound destinations in terms of the arrival numbers of Chinese tourists. Other destinations could follow Hongkong’s path to develop their own tourism. After getting the positive consequences of outbound tourism in Hongkong, China started to exploit its outbound tourism markets successively. The different outbound destinations could shape the divisibility for the trialability of Chinese outbound tourism. Relying on the different tourism advantages such as near location, shopping convenience, sea and island scenery, historical sites, different destinations have their own traveller groups. Some destinations get successful results under trailblazing, the instructional experience of which could gradually spread to other similar destinations and then together contributes to the innovation—Chinese outbound tourism.

**Observability**

Observability was applied to describe the visibility of the innovations’ results, which could lead a positive tendency of being adopted by others (Rogers, 2003, p16). The arrival numbers of Chinese outbound tourists from 2000 to 2014 shows a positive tendency of absorbing more and more adopters (tourists). The statistics of Chinese outbound tourism are collected and analysed by not only Chinese official organisations but also other countries’. All of the various viewing angles could show a positive situation of Chinese outbound tourism development. Many measuring indicators like arrival numbers, outbound expenditure, quantity of tourism agencies both in China and aboard could evaluate the successfulness of Chinese outbound tourism as an innovation. The case of Chinese outbound tourism in Australia could be
recognised as a relatively successful result of innovation of Chinese outbound tourism, which could be seen by other countries that have the willing to develop their tourism targeting Chinese tourists. In this aspect, the innovation of Chinese outbound tourism shows its observability.

5.2 The diffusion of numbers of Chinese outbound tourists

The yearly numbers of Chinese outbound tourists between 2000 and 2014 shows a rising trend. The records of every year’s number are independent, which could show that the yearly numbers symbolise an rate of increase in terms of development of Chinese outbound tourism (Figure 10). If it could be explained by diffusion theory, this tendency could be shown by the bell-shaped curve which shows the rate of increase of the adoption process (Rogers, 2003) (Figure 11). We can find that the rate of increase is always going up in the figure 1, which means that the number of outbound tourists in neighbouring two years, the number in the latter year is always at least twice than the former year.

![Figure 10. Curve of yearly numbers of Chinese outbound tourists. (China Tourism Academy, 2014)](image)

![Figure 11. Bell-shaped curve in diffusion theory (Rogers, 2003)](image)
Compare these two figures, we can not make sure whether the future tendency of figure 10 could develop as the tendency of figure 11. However, what we can see is that the tendency of figure 10 has the similar tendency with the early phase of figure 11.

If we consider the tendency of whole number of Chinese outbound tourists year by year. It shows a early phase of rising parabola (figure 12). The S-shaped curve expresses the accumulative number of adopters in the innovation to show the variation of adoption on the expending timeline (Rogers, 2003) (Figure 13). These two tendencies are in the same basic formation discipline. We can find that the curve of figure 12 could fit the starting part of the S-shaped curve (figure 13).

![Figure 12. Curve of accumulative numbers of Chinese outbound tourists.](image)

![Figure 13. Bell-shaped curve in diffusion theory (Rogers, 2003)](image)
5.3 Questionnaire analysis

The attitude of the respondents shows a very positive willingness on outbound traveling. The percentages of this question in three samples are 94.81% (Sample 1), 97.78% (Sample 2) and 96.2% (Sample 3) separately. Even in Baotou which is a low-level second-tier city, the willingness towards outbound traveling of residents in the sample survey is strong, which could speculate that there might be a big percentage of people who are living in the first-tier and second-tier cities keep the willing of traveling abroad. The result of respondents aged 26-30 could deduce that such a high willingness of Chinese young generations might lead to an active situation of future outbound tourism.

The expecting destinations are various. We can see that though Hongkong is the most popular outbound destination for several years (China National Tourism Administration, 2012, 2013, 2014), only two respondents target their future outbound destination as Hongkong. Many respondents prefer to go to farther destinations like Europe which is mentioned for 13 times rather than Asian destinations. South America and Nordic countries are mentioned for several times, which shows these unpopular destinations currently have been targeted by Chinese tourists on their future destination lists. Sweden is mentioned for 5 times in the survey might because that some of the respondents are friends and relatives of the author, which could influence their preference. From another perspective, it could partly indicate that the communication among friends or relatives could influence people’s choices on destinations. The diversification of expecting destinations shows that it might exist a big possibility for Chinese tourists to explore farther destinations that are not so popular currently, which could create higher numbers of outbound tourists because of the more choices of tourism attractions. In other word, the more outbound destinations become popular, the more possibilities are existed to increase number of Chinese outbound tourists.

The knowledge of destinations are gained by respondents from different ways. It could be anticipated that Internet is the most popular way under the society with high development of technology. Then the information-obtained way from friends and relatives is ranked after the Internet as the second popular way. More than 50% of respondents choose this option. The information from other medias such as advertisements, magazines, books and brochures is the third channel of getting outbound tourism information. The results of this question in this questionnaire have some similar points but also some differences with that of the survey made by WTCF (2014). Internet is the most popular channel for respondents getting information in
both surveys. The percentages of information from friends and relatives in two surveys are similar, which shows 51.3% and 49.15% separately. The survey made by WTCF did not take the advertisements, magazines, books and brochures into account. The different results between these two surveys is the information from tourism agency. The gap is showed by two percentages of 67.89% (WTCF) and 15.58% (author’s survey). The main reason of this difference might due to that the main respondents in the survey made by WTCF come from first-tier cities like Shanghai, Beijing. The tourism agencies in these big cities develop better than those in Baotou because they have more clients and more opportunities to communicate with outbound destinations. Therefore, the tourism agencies in the big cities could play an relative important role in promoting outbound tourism compared with the second-tier cities.

The communication among people in the reality seems to play a relatively important role in diffusing information. The choosing of traveling patterns could also prove indirectly that the importance of communication with friends and relatives. The two most favourite traveling patterns are traveling with friends and traveling with families. Therefore, we can see that acquaintances play an important role in both information acquisition and motivation formation in terms of outbound traveling.

5.4 The population of Chinese outbound tourists

The approximate value of population of Chinese outbound tourists could be deduced by the number of passport-holders in China. In the result part, the probable number and percentage of passport-holders was figured out by the official original data and investigative growth rate. There are around 5% of Chinese people having the passports. However, not all the passport-holders had the experience on outbound traveling. They might have the traveling plans without implementing, or they applied passports just in case. Therefore, the actual Chinese outbound tourists will be less than the passport-holders, which means the adopters of outbound tourism only account for less than 5% of whole Chinese people. In my questionnaire survey, the percentages of respondents who had the outbound tourism experience in the passport-holders are 84%, 86.2% and 75.93% separately in three samples. The average percentage of these three percentage is 82%. This percentage has reference value to some extent because that (1) it comes from three samples in three different angles, (2) these samples are small parts of the whole society, which shows its representativeness, (3) the respondents are direct or indirect friends or relatives of the author, which can assure the authenticity of this survey. Therefore, by using this 82% value to predict the population of Chinese outbound tourists, the result is around 54.4 million (4%) of Chinese people have the outbound traveling experience.
6. Discussion

6.1 Introduction

In this part, the research questions will be answered by discussion based on case studies and results to achieve the study aim. The theoretical foundation will be further interpreted and basis-provided for answering the questions. I have analysed the first research question in last chapter. Those five characteristics of innovations are most important measurements of interpreting the rate of adoption (Rogers, 2003, p17). They help to evaluate the Chinese outbound tourism as an innovation. The discourse analysis could demonstrate that the result is in the affirmative. In other word, the Chinese outbound tourism could be recognised as an innovation based on Rogers’ diffusion theory. The second and third research questions will be answered by the discussion below.

6.2 The stage of Chinese outbound tourism on S-shaped curve

Three hypothetical indicators formulated in the methodology part will be used in this part of discussion to measure which phase Chinese outbound tourism is going through now. If the first hypothetical indicator is fulfilled, related discussion will be launched. The rest indicators will be done in the same way. If it will be proved by indicators that related stages still not happen yet, the discussion of corresponding stages will not be carried out. Then the discourse in the next part (6.3) will be stated based on the unfulfilled indicators.

The first indicator is to measure whether the S-shaped curve has begun. The trigger was described by Rogers (2003, p274) as “once interpersonal networks become activated in spreading individuals’ evaluations of an innovation from peer to peer in a system”. To discuss this part, the knowledge of communication channels should be mentioned. The communication among people should be sent by communication channels which include mass media channels, interpersonal channels and interactive communication channels. In both questionnaire survey and WTCF survey, we can see that these three channels are used frequently by Chinese tourists. The mass media channels could be reflected by advertisements, books, magazines and brochures which are related in the author’s survey. The votes from respondents show that these mass media channels are used by half of respondents to gain outbound tourism information. The interpersonal channels are mainly reflected on the communication among friends and relatives when it comes to get outbound tourism information. Under the description and suggestion of relatives and friends, people choose to travel the countries that they think more familiar because of acquaintances. Many people choose to follow their friends who have traveling experience aboard, which shows
the effect of interpersonal communication. This could be proved by similar results of both surveys on the question ‘the information-obtained way in terms of outbound traveling’. Most of respondents in my survey showed that they prefer to traveling abroad with friends or families, which could also help us to imagine how important the influence from acquaintance to Chinese tourists. It also shows that how important the role that interpersonal channels play in the diffusion of Chinese outbound tourism. Internet as the interactive communication channel plays a significant role in diffusion of innovation. We got the positive results on Internet as an important communication channel from both surveys. Both surveys show that Internet is the most popular way for Chinese people acquiring outbound tourism information. People contact with each other by Internet. Tourism agencies sell tourism products to travellers by Internet. Tourists book accommodation, flight tickets by Internet. Internet acts as guidances and practical tools for tourists and Internet make progress for tourism development. Besides, Travel agencies could be an important channel to Chinese people who are living in relative big cities. Which had been proved in the survey made by WTCF. They offer consultation, destination planning, guidance, and so on. Some big tourism agencies take part in surveys of annual outbound tourism situation. Therefore, Chinese outbound tourism has begun by multiple communication channels. These different channels interact with each other. For example, tourism agencies use internet to promote their tourism products. Individuals express their tourism experiences online. Tourism agencies create advertisements for both themselves and outbound destinations. All of the communication channels offer Chinese outbound tourism a opportunity to start its diffusion.

The diffusion process is described by the number of adopters in the system. The second hypothetical indicator has studied that if 10-20 percent of individuals adopt the innovation, this innovation will keep on developing anyway without being easily stopped or decreased. The arrival numbers of these years showed a rapid increase of Chinese outbound tourists. The speed of growth shows a rising by times year by year. We have demonstrated in last chapter that it shows a early stage of a rising parabola with putting the numbers of Chinese outbound tourists in every year on the coordinate axis to form the curve. The tendency of this curve goes up steadily and suits the early stage of S-shaped curve, which could illustrate that a positive process of Chinese outbound tourism had been developing during these years. The curve which showed the rate of increase of numbers of Chinese outbound tourists could also reflect the positive process in Chinese outbound tourism. This curve is similar to the early phase of Bell-shaped curve in diffusion theory. These two tendencies (yearly numbers and rate of increase of numbers) could make a joint result that leads to a continuing increase on the number of Chinese outbound tourists. This rising
tendency in the future is also predicted by official organisations. From this perspective, we can deduce that the tendency of numbers of Chinese outbound tourists has a positive possibility to follow the track of Rogers’ S-shaped curve.

If we consider the population of Chinese outbound tourists as the object of the diffusion, it will show another tendency. To study the diffusion of Chinese outbound tourism from this perspective mainly because that the S-shaped curve is used to measure how many adopters in the system have adopted the innovation (Rogers, 2003). We can take a rough speculation on that the population of outbound tourists was increasing during past years based on the previous increasing numbers of Chinese outbound tourists. Then the result of around 4% of Chinese people have the outbound traveling experience have been deduced in last chapter. Apparently, this percentage is too low which could still not trigger the second indicator yet. There is a relatively long distance from around 4% to above 10% of adopters in this system. From this perspective, Chinese outbound tourism seems under the circumstance of immature stage. Though the yearly numbers of Chinese outbound tourists are huge, it is still surprising that such big outbound numbers every year only based on around 4% population. Only around 54.4 million of 1.36 billion Chinese people have the outbound experience, which reflects that there is a big gap between arrival numbers and population in terms of Chinese people traveling aboard. The data of 107 million of Chinese outbound tourists in 2014 could easily deduce that most of tourists had traveled aboard at least twice in this year. This situation might derive two possible results. One is that the Chinese individuals will show bipolar branches—the more outbound experiences one person has, the more outbound experiences he will get; people who have no outbound experience will never travel aboard. Another situation is that the outbound tourism has a big market in the around 1.3 billion potential Chinese citizens, which could be realised by a continuing increase of population of Chinese outbound tourists. In the questionnaire survey of this study, we can find that the percentages of respondents who had already experienced the outbound tourism in three samples are 54.55%, 55.56% and 51.9%, and the percentages of respondents have the outbound traveling willings are 94.81%, 97.78% and 96.2%. Which could prove that the trends of both passport-holders and outbound tourists will go up in the future because of the existing strong willingness. Hence, we can see the positive sides from both of the situations. The fail of fulfilling the second indicator is not negative. Instead, it shows the flexibility and plastically of future development of Chinese outbound tourism. Understanding its position on S-shaped curve gives us more space to take steps for its better development in the future. We can try to explore some suggestions based on known knowledge and diffusion theory to contribute the future
diffusion of Chinese outbound tourism. The second research question has been answered in this part.

6.3 The suggestions of developing Chinese outbound tourism based on diffusion theory

To discuss the future diffusion and development of Chinese outbound tourism, we could start with analysing the category of current Chinese outbound tourists. According to diffusion theory, we can find that Chinese outbound tourists are going through a phase from innovators to early adopters. Which because that the current adopters of Chinese outbound tourism could be reckoned around 4% of whole Chinese people, this figure is between the innovators (2.5%) and early adopter (13.5%) studied by Rogers (2003). We can find some characteristics of innovators existed on the current Chinese outbound tourists. For example, Chinese outbound tourists are mainly people who are affluent or in the middle-class (Yun & Joppe, 2011), which suits the feature of innovators that innovators own enough financial support to make them capable to accept the risk of failure of innovation (Rogers, 2003, p283). Using technology tool like Internet could also be considered as an eligible feature for current Chinese outbound tourists being innovators now. Nowadays, more and more people start using computer to acquire tourism information, which could show that the Chinese outbound tourists is gradually turning their roles from innovators to early adopters. During this phase, the main role of early adopters is to act as leaders in terms of sharing their opinions in most systems, which could be reflected by other potential adopters who search for suggestions about the innovation (Rogers, 2003, p283). Therefore, during this phase, the communication channels will play an important role as the opinion-sharers in the development of future Chinese outbound tourism. The smooth development of this phase could lead the diffusion to go into the third phase—early majority. If the process of early adopters could develop successfully, it implies that the whole diffusion of Chinese outbound tourism could develop following the S-shaped curve without obstacles (Rogers, 2003, p274). Therefore, it is important to develop this phase and the way we could currently conclude is to try to strengthen the effectiveness of existing communication channels and explore more new and useful communicational channels to help develop this phase. For example, the outbound destinations could develop the advertisements that focus on being released on the Chinese popular telephone applications like Wechat. Which could shorten the gap between destinations and Chinese people to let them understand these destinations well. The VisitSweden has registered its official account on Wechat for introducing Sweden tourism to Chinese people. The cooperations between outbound destinations and Chinese tourism agencies could also
be strengthened to offer convenience and security for Chinese tourists traveling abroad.

Another suggestion could be given out based on the discourse of the innovation’s consequences in Rogers’ diffusion theory. Rogers (2003, p456) mentioned in his theory that it is difficult to predict an innovation’s consequences. The consequences are full of uncertainty. However, his theory is still worthy for us to find some principles to apply to our study.

As the results I have studied, the Chinese outbound tourism is only implemented by a small part of Chinese people. Most of the Chinese people had never applied passports. This could be described by the notion of ‘gap’ in Rogers’ diffusion theory. People who had travelled aboard could be defined as innovators or early adopters (‘ups’); individuals who had still not experienced the outbound tourism could be defined as late majority or laggards (‘downs’). The increasing arrival numbers towards foreign destinations in previous 3 decades were contributed by ‘ups’ groups. Therefore, we can see that there are some differences between ‘ups’ and ‘downs’. The difference could be called ‘gap’ here. How to remove the gap or shorten the distance of the gap is important to promote the Chinese outbound tourism development. We have seen in my survey that even in the second-tier city Baotou, the percentage of passport-holders is still high which shows as 64.44%, which is much higher than the percentage (5%) of that in the whole country. We can deduce that the reason of this situation might because most the passport-holders (even the outbound tourists) are from the cities (first-tier cities, second-tier cities and maybe third-tier cities). The percentage of towns and villages could be lower. The percentage of Chinese people who live in towns and villages is 54.77% in 2014 (National Bureau of Statistics of the People’s Republic of China, 2015). Therefore, people who live in cities could be recognised as ‘ups’, people who live in towns and villages could be defined as ‘downs’. To raise the awareness of people in towns and villages on outbound tourism could be a way to shorten the gap between ‘ups’ and ‘downs’. Which could lead to a positive tendency of Chinese outbound tourism. The ‘ups’ and ‘downs’ could also be analysed from another perspective. The main Chinese outbound tourists are affluent or in the middle class. The gap between rich and poor is too big. There are 1% of whole families in China possess one third of the whole wealth of China, but there are 25% of whole families in China possess only 1% of the whole wealth of China (China human development report, 2014). The problem of wealth gap in China is severe. Therefore, we can define the affluent people and people who are in the middle class in China as the ‘ups’, people who are poor and in the 25% low-level families as ‘downs’. To develop the future Chinese outbound tourism, it is important to shorten the gap between
rich and poor. Which might be implemented under a long-term effort by the Chinese government and whole Chinese people.

Though some considerations are raised in my discussion based on diffusion theory, they are not enough to do the contributions when it comes to solve such a big social problem under a huge environment. The author wants to point out the possible existed problems of this study based on the theoretical foundation and hope that it could have some contributions to later researchers.
7. Conclusion

This research studied the diffusion of Chinese outbound tourism based on diffusion theory. The findings implied that though the Chinese outbound tourism is still in the immature stage of its diffusion process, some other clues (numbers of Chinese outbound tourists, strong motivations of Chinese people towards traveling abroad, etc) could show that it is possible for diffusion of Chinese outbound tourism to develop following the S-shaped curve in the future. To fulfil the positive development to achieve the mature stage for Chinese outbound tourism, some actions could be considered. They are strengthening the communication channels for offering information to Chinese people, narrowing the conscious gap between city citizens and people in towns and villages, narrowing the gap between rich and poor in China. This study could act as a test of applying diffusion theory into study of Chinese outbound tourism and hopefully offer some contributions for further studies. Further researches could focus on how to solve the problems that influence the diffusion development of Chinese outbound tourism.
8. Reference


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Appendix A.

Questionnaire survey: Situation of Chinese outbound tourism.

1. Your gender.
   □ Male □ Female

2. Your age.

3. Your place of residence. ______

4. Do you have passport?
   □Yes □No

5. Have you been traveled abroad before (including Hongkong, Macao, Taiwan)?
   □Yes □No

6. Which outbound destinations have you been? (Answer this question if question 5 is answered as Yes)
   __________

7. Do you have any future outbound traveling plans?
   □Yes, which places ______ □No

8. Do you have targeting destinations? (Answer this question if question 6 is answered as Yes)
   __________

9. (Multiple question) Which traveling patterns do you prefer? (Answer this question if question 6 is answered as Yes)
   □Travel with friends □Travel with families □Half-independent travel □Independent travel □Travel arranged by tourism agencies □Self-driving travel □Travel alone □Others

10. (Multiple question) What is your motivation of outbound traveling? (Answer this question if question 6 is answered as Yes)
☐ Leisure  ☐ Expend horizons  ☐ Shopping  ☐ Visit friends or relatives
☐ Recommended by others  ☐ Education  ☐ Immigration  ☐ Others

11. (Multiple question) What is the possible pressure you could face when it comes to travel abroad? (Answer this question if question 6 is answered as Yes)

☐ Time limitations  ☐ Economic limitations  ☐ Security of destinations
☐ Lack of good services of tourism agencies  ☐ No companions  ☐ Body condition  ☐ Others

12. (Multiple question) The reasons you don’t want to travel abroad in the future? (Answer this question if question 6 is answered as No)

☐ Not interested  ☐ Economic limitations  ☐ Time limitations  ☐ Worry about the security of destinations  ☐ Body condition  ☐ No companions

13. If the problems could be solved in question 12, would you like to travel abroad in the future? (Answer this question if question 12 is answered)

☐ Yes  ☐ No

14. (Multiple question) Which channel do you use for getting the outbound tourism information?

☐ Friends and relatives  ☐ Advertisements, books, magazines, brochures
☐ Internet  ☐ Tourism agencies  ☐ Others