

**Understanding the perceived destination image of  
New Zealand as revealed in the travel blogs of tourists from Mainland China**

**By**

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# Abstract

This thesis examines the perceived destination image of New Zealand as revealed in travel blogs written by Mainland Chinese tourists. A qualitative method with an interpretivism paradigm was used to explore travel blogs written by Chinese tourists. A textual content analysis of 139 blog entries written by 36 Chinese bloggers indicates that the overall perceived destination image of New Zealand is positive among these tourists.

Chinese tourists are particularly impressed by the New Zealand landscape, the hospitality and lifestyle of New Zealanders, and customer service in i-SITEs. This study identified a holistic view of New Zealand, ‘the New Zealand Dream’, constructed by Chinese tourists. They dream of living in New Zealand, a destination that has been perceived to offer a simpler and more peaceful lifestyle compared to China. Additional findings indicate Chinese tourists welcome unfamiliarity related to landscape and lifestyle. However, tourists respond to unfamiliarity that may pose a threat such as unfamiliar driving conditions with a less welcoming attitude. Familiarity such as familiar language and food are, overall, welcomed and accepted. This study also identified neutrally-toned advice from Chinese bloggers which suggests that the blogs are not only an effective way to understand the Chinese market – their likes and dislikes – but also, potentially, a valuable information source for tourists reading the blogs. Based on the results, implications and recommendations for managers and practitioners in New Zealand’s tourism industry are discussed.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

The rapidly growing middle class and the strong economy in China is prompting China's outbound tourism market to continue to grow. Chinese residents are becoming more fixated on the concept that travel is a "lifestyle essential" (Zhao, 2006). Chinese tourists are participating in much more outbound travel than in the past, especially to nearby Asian countries; there is also a growing interest in travel to New Zealand (Sun, 2013). The establishment of the free trade and bilateral agreement between China and New Zealand in 2008 has seen the Chinese market become New Zealand's second largest tourism market. Part of New Zealand's current tourism strategy is to cater to the Chinese market and increase the number from China. To cater to Chinese tourists effectively, tourism operators and managers need to understand the needs and preferences of Chinese tourists.

Chinese tourists are often experienced travellers around the Asian continent; they are also a group of tourists with a culture that is very different from those that New Zealand tourism operators are familiar with. Attributes such as food, respect, quality of service, language and shopping are all very important elements to the Chinese visitors which have been identified by the Tourism Industry Association (TIANZ) in their China market culture brief (Tourism Industry Association New Zealand, 2011) and by scholars such as Fountain, Espiner, and Xie (2011) and Ryan (2013). The China Market Review (Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment, 2012) and TIANZ have both recommended focusing on enhancing the value for customers by focusing on enhancing these key attributes and areas which are important to the Chinese that will help in establishing New Zealand as a primary destination for them (Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment, 2012).

Understanding tourists' perceptions in order to cater to what tourists seek is imperative not only to maintain product brand image, but also to obtain positive feedback and word of mouth about the product and for the purpose of product viability (Li & Carr, 2004; Neal & Gursoy, 2008; Alegre & Garau, 2010; Fountain, et al., 2011; Maunier & Camelis, 2013) Therefore, it is imperative for tourism product and service managers to understand Chinese tourists' perceptions towards their products and services.

Word of mouth is a powerful medium that attracts potential tourism buyers and consumers to a destination. An even more powerful medium is electronic word of mouth where satisfaction and dissatisfaction towards tourism products and services are expressed via online media such

as social media networks like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and also blogging platforms (Pujol, Sanguesa, & Delgado, 2002; Schmallegger & Carson, 2008; Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008; Lo, 2012). Social media has become an enormous part of everyday life, especially amongst the younger generation. The advancement of mobile technology devices allows people to carry social media with them at all times and to express their thoughts at any moment (Leibold, 2011). Their thoughts and feelings towards products and services can very quickly become ‘real time sharing’ with millions around the world. Scholars have suggested that potential tourists are more likely to read individual blogs about a destination rather than the destinations’ tourism website as it could be perceived as more authentic (Agarwal & Liu, 2008; Schmallegger & Carson, 2008). With the exception of blogging sites which contain promotional material and advertisements on the destination being blogged about, tourists’ blogs are perceived to be less biased because they do not usually appear to have any benefits for the bloggers if they were to blog only positive views of the destination (Agarwal & Liu, 2008). Therefore, when consumers are considering a destination and are researching information about the chosen place, they are more likely to read the blog entries of “real” people who they feel they can relate to. People who have been there and done that and have reviewed their tourists’ experiences and encounters at a destination. They often appear more truthful and consumers can relate more to these people as they were consumers of the destination and tourism product too.

Tourism is a highly fragmented industry incorporating different product and service sectors. The tourism experience can be considered a hybrid of many different experiences with different products and services at different stages as the whole experience takes place from pre-trip to post-trip (Neal & Gursoy, 2008). This makes it difficult for scholars and researchers to understand tourists’ overall perceptions towards a destination because the overall perception of a destination will be influenced by the different attributes. These could be external influences such as weather, general infrastructure like transport, tourism infrastructure, food and beverages, activities and attractions and political factors and also internal influences such as situations within the tourists’ party which tourists could encounter during their trip (Beerli & Martín, 2004; Law & Cheung, 2010). In the words of one group of researchers, the “multiple attributes are the elements of the final composite image” (Gallarza, Saura, & Garcia, 2002, p. 70). The contents of tourists’ blogs contain comments on all the aspects of the tourists’ trip that they have felt are worthy of sharing with others or keeping a

record of in their blogs. Therefore, blogs can be considered a good platform for researchers to study information on how a destination is perceived by tourists.

The different definitions of destination image by different scholars makes it more difficult to understand the different attributes which could contribute to the perception of an overall destination image (Tudor, 2012). Phelps (1986) has suggested there are two categories of perception towards destination image: primary, where perception is based on the actual visit and experience, and secondary where perception is based on external sources. It is important to understand Chinese perceptions towards New Zealand's destination image during and after their experience with New Zealand tourism products and to understand what the strengths and weaknesses of the tourism industry are when catering to the Chinese market. For the purpose of this research, tourists' perception of destination image will be based on their visits and experiences; primary perceptions will, therefore, be examined.

This thesis will explore the different tourism attributes Chinese tourists have commented on in their blog and attempt to gain an understanding of the perceived destination image of New Zealand as revealed in the travel blogs of tourists from Mainland China. The thesis will also be discussing the strengths and weaknesses of New Zealand tourism products that New Zealand tourism stakeholders need to consider to cater to the Chinese market.

The three research questions were:

1. What attributes of New Zealand are featured within blogs written by Mainland Chinese travellers?
2. How do Chinese perceptions of these different attributes contribute to their overall combined perception of New Zealand?
3. What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses of different tourism products and services in New Zealand according to Chinese travellers who blog?

The first question explores the different attributes which Chinese tourist have written about in their blogs and blog entries. This includes all the comments which have been made in regards to different products and services which they encountered from the pre-trip stage of their travels to New Zealand through to the post-trip stage of their trip. The second question examines how the all attributes together influences Chinese tourists' overall perception of New Zealand. Comments which focused on the bloggers commenting on what was the most memorable aspect of their trip and how they felt about New Zealand overall were analysed. The last question examines the current New Zealand tourism products and services which are

offered and which aspects of these products and services Chinese tourists have expressed a like or a dislike towards. This question aims to identify the strengths and weaknesses of New Zealand tourism products and services.

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter One, this introduction, outlines the scope of the thesis and identifies the three research questions that will be addressed. The characteristics of Chinese tourists, destination image, and social media and blogging will be addressed in the literature review, Chapter Two, which will identify possible attributes that have been considered important to the Chinese market in the literature. The literature review identified a study conducted by Law and Cheung (2010) which studies the perceived destination image of Hong Kong through analysing the travel blogs of Chinese tourists. This thesis has adapted the methodology used in Law and Cheung's (2010) article to understand the perceived destination image of New Zealand as revealed in travel blogs written by Chinese tourists. The methodology is in chapter three. The attributes that have been identified through the literature will be used along with a textual content analysis approach to analyse 139 blog entries written by 36 bloggers collected through three blogging platforms: Blog.Sina, Blog.163 and Blog.qq. This thesis will then proceed to discuss the findings of ten categories which identify the different attributes and aspects of New Zealand's destination image Chinese tourist have evaluated and commented on in their blogs. These findings are presented in chapters four, five and six.

The final chapter of the thesis, chapter seven, will conclude with a discussion about the major findings of this thesis which includes the concept of the "New Zealand Dream" which discusses the comments Chinese tourists have made in regards to a dream of an ideal lifestyle in New Zealand, Chinese tourists' responses to familiarity and unfamiliarity when they are travelling, and use of blogs as an information platform that provides various procedures, instructions and timetables, and costs of different tourism products and services. Implications and recommendations for future researchers and managerial implications are also discussed at the end of the thesis.

# Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review addresses the three main bodies of work relevant to this research: Chinese tourists, destination image and the relationship of tourism and information communication technologies (ICT) which focuses on social media and blogging. Firstly, looking at the Chinese market there has been a number of themes which have been widely studied including the Chinese market in general, what prompted the market to expand and grow so rapidly, the experience and characteristics of Chinese tourists and what are important attributes for them.

Secondly, the literature review will address the literature on destinations. Starting from a general overview of all the themes which have been discussed and studied on destinations from destination marketing, destination image, destination management (Pearce & Schanzel, 2013; Sigala, 2013), destination competitiveness, destination development, destination sustainability and more recently destination and information technology. The literature review will then focus on destination image which is more in-line with the purpose of this research. It will discuss the currently available academic literature on destination image from what is destination image, destination image formation and what attributes are often claimed to influence destination image.

Thirdly, the literature review will focus on literature in regards to tourism and information communication technology (ICT). This section will focus more on social media and blogging and it will attempt to identify the relationship between blogs and social media and Chinese tourists' blogging behaviours.

## **2.1 The Chinese Market**

China, officially known as the People's Republic of China, is the world's largest country with a population of 1.39 billion in 2014 (World Population Review, 2014). An estimated 47% of the 202 million households in China who have disposable income live in the urban areas of China (European Travel Commission and World Tourism Organisation, 2012). The country is governed by the Communist Party who controls and manages the inbound and outbound tourism of the country through the Approved Destination Status (ADS) scheme (Sparks & Pan, 2009; China Advisers Network, 2014). The Chinese government manages the outbound travel of their citizens through the system by granting destinations an Approved Destination

Status; once granted these approvals, Chinese people are permitted to travel abroad to these destinations (Sparks & Pan, 2009; China Advisers Network, 2014; Arita, Croix, & Edmonds, 2014). The ADS was first introduced in the early eighties and has allowed more opportunities for their citizens to participate in outbound tourism (Sparks & Pan, 2009). Prior to the ADS, outbound travel was restricted to only business travel and official visits; government approval was required every time (China Advisers Network, 2014; Arita et al., 2014). The introduction of the ADS was prompted by the growing interest of Chinese citizens wishing to travel abroad and the growing economy in China; the first ADS grants were to Southeast Asian destinations such as Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand (China Advisers Network, 2014). The number of ADS granted has increased from five in 1990 to 146 in 2013 (Arita et al., 2014; China Advisers Network, 2014). Approved Destination Status was granted to New Zealand in 1999 and it permitted New Zealand to promote itself as a destination in China (Becken, 2003; Tourism New Zealand, 2010). According to Becken (2003), New Zealand received the highest growth rate of Chinese travellers compared to the other top destinations for Chinese outbound tourism between 1999 and 2001. In the last decade, the Chinese outbound market has continued to grow rapidly as the total number of outbound Chinese travellers grew from 10 million in 2000 to 83 million in 2012; the calculations conducted by the Travel China Guide reported a number of 98.2 million in 2013 (Risi, 2013; Travel China Guide, 2013). China is New Zealand's second largest inbound tourism market; in the year ending 2014, New Zealand received 246,000 Chinese tourists from Mainland China (Ministry of Business Innovation & Employment, 2014). As a result of the relaxed travel barriers and visa requirements, and China's rapid economic expansion in the last decade, the Chinese outbound tourism market has grown significantly.

Over the last decade China's rapid economic growth has shifted many of their citizens out of poverty and many into the middle classes. The country itself is now perceived by westerners as a middle-income nation by western standards. Thirty five years ago, 64% of China's population was living on \$1USD a day; the percentage has since decreased to only 10% of the population today (World Population Review, 2014). The result of China's economic growth has prompted travel amongst Chinese residents as they now perceive travel as a "lifestyle essential" (Zhao, 2006). Chinese expenditure on outbound travel in 2012 was \$102 billion USD, which made it the largest tourism market in terms of expenditure (Risi, 2013). In 2014, Chinese tourists contributed \$912 million NZD to total tourist expenditure in New Zealand (Ministry of Business Innovation & Employment, 2014). Similar to tourism

stakeholders around the world, tourism stakeholders in New Zealand have recognised this trending market and are working together to cater to Chinese travellers. With a population of 1.39 billion, China is number one in the world in terms of potential market size. Therefore, if the tourism operators are able to target the market effectively then there is a lot of opportunity for everyone to develop their tourism products and businesses. As a result, scholars from tourism and other disciplines are conducting research on Chinese travellers and Chinese tourism in a variety of contexts. The extensive research on Chinese travellers includes topics such as Chinese culture and perceptions (Zhang & Heung, 2001; Yu, 2007; Choi, Liu, Pang, & Choi, 2008; Chang, Kivela, & Mak, 2010; Kwek & Lee, 2010; Fountain et al., 2011; Li, et al., 2011; Buzinde, Choi, & Wang, 2012; Ng & Lee, 2013; Ryan, 2013; Young, 2014), Chinese travellers' expectations, satisfaction and dissatisfaction towards their travel and destinations (Li & Carr, 2004; Alegre & Garau, 2010; Filep, Cao, Jiang, & DeLacy, 2013), Chinese tourists' internet behaviours and their blogs about their travels (Yu, 2007; Frias, Rodriquez, & Castaneda, 2008; Litvin et al., 2008; Banyai & Glover, 2012; European Travel Commission and World Tourism Organisation, 2012; Ng & Lee, 2013) and other studies (Becken, 2003; Li & Stepchenkova, 2011; Hsu & Song, 2013).

Although some may argue that Chinese tourists are not a very experienced travellers because they enjoy the packaged tours, recent research shows Chinese visitors are often experienced travellers (Arlt, 2013; Tourism Industry Association New Zealand, 2011) having travelled extensively in Asia; they have often travelled to many places around Asia and Europe. Their like for packaged tours may be highlighting they are a psycho-centric group of tourists rather than being inexperienced. However, research has also highlighted that although the Chinese inbound tourists from previous years to New Zealand were mainly packaged tour tourists, the Chinese visitors in recent years are part of the free independent travellers market; they are young and career focused and well educated Chinese (Tourism Industry Association New Zealand, 2011; Sun, 2013). This group of tourists are also a culture that is very different from those familiar to New Zealand operators. It has been widely studied by scholars that culture influences people's behaviours (Becken, 2003; Hofstede, 1980) and Chinese culture is strongly influenced by Confucianism (Kwek & Lee, 2010). Attributes such as respect, "guanxi" (social network or relationship with others), wisdom and "face" are important to Chinese tourists and are important attributes tourism operators need to be aware of (Kwek & Lee, 2010; Sun, 2013). Tourism operators need to respect the Chinese tourists they encounter and need to be aware that Chinese tourists will be looking at how well they are served and



how well the staff knows about the products and services they are trying to sell. When interacting with Chinese people it is important to give them “face” by simply respecting them so they feel honoured by their host. Face is very important to a Chinese person, especially elders. Almost everything they do will revolve around face as it is an important social behaviour for them to maintain good relationships with others (Sun, 2013). Once face is given to a Chinese person, it helps to build the “guanxi” – a relationship that will have future benefits. Attributes such as food, language, shopping and quality of service are also identified by the Tourism Industry Association New Zealand as important to the Chinese tourist (Tourism Industry Association New Zealand, 2011). It is important to understand the Chinese tourist market because they are one of New Zealand’s main international visitor markets.

## **2.2 Destinations**

Destinations are one of the main components of tourism considering tourists need to arrive at a destination to consume tourism. Therefore, it is no doubt that there is a sea of literature and research which has already been carried out in the academic sphere on destinations. Research concepts around destinations have included destination marketing (Teare & Williams, 1989; Palmer & Bejou, 1995; MacKay & Smith, 2006; Zhu, Gao, & Shi, 2013; Pike & Page, 2014), destination branding (Teare, 1992; Cai, 2002; Pike, 2005; Park & Petrick, 2006; Marzano & Scott, 2009; Qu, Kim, & Im, 2011), destination image (Chon, 1990; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Bigne, Sanchez, & Sanchez, 2001; Hosany, Ekinici, & Uysal, 2006; Hsu & Song, 2012; Hsu & Song, 2013), destination management (Pearce & Schanzel, 2013; Sigala, 2013), destination competitiveness (Meliá-González & Garcí’a-Falco’n, 2003; Parra-López & Oreja-Rodríguez, 2014), destination development (Lindroth, Ritalahti, & Siosalon-Sionilen, 2007; Haugland, Ness, Gronseth, & Aarstand, 2011), destination sustainability (Cooper, Fletcher, Gilbert, Wanhill, & Shepherd, 1998; Holleran, 2008) and more recently destination and technology such as destination and e-marketing (Frias et al., 2008; Litvin et al., 2008) and destination and information systems (Sigala, 2013). However, destination image itself is already very large and complex. Many of these studies has focused on the influence of perceived destination image on visitation intentions (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). This research will only attempt to illustrate what a destination image is and how it is constructed before trying to analyse specifically what Chinese tourists perceive of New Zealand’s destination image through blog analyses.

### 2.2.1 Destination Image Formation

Image can be described as the visual idealistic formation one forms based on each individual's own understanding, beliefs and then own interpretation (Kim & Richardson, 2003). The same destination may be perceived differently by two different people because the visual image will be interpreted based on the person's own experience, understanding, and beliefs which influences their interpretations. If two people go to the same destination and Person A has had a lot of travelling experience but Person B has only been to one other place, then Person A may find this destination average but Person B may find it extremely exciting and interesting because they do not have as many previous experiences and destinations to compare it to like Person B does. No matter how it is described, imagery is an important element which influences how things are perceived. Destination imagery is particularly important to a destination because it acts a psychological pull factor for tourists to visit a destination (Chon, 1990).

The term "destination image" can be very difficult to describe because what one person describes as important attributes and components of a destination image may be completely different to what another person thinks. Therefore, scholars can only collect data and study results based on a representation on the population rather than claiming an absolute definition and components of a destination image.

Many scholars have attempted to define what destination image is and how it is formed, although they all have different definitions of the term, there is generally a broad consensus that destination image influences tourists' buyer behaviour and interpretation of the destination (Bigne et al., 2001). Buyer behaviour can be influenced by the tourists' perceptions of the destination. If tourists do not have a positive image of the destination they are planning on travelling to, then they will more likely not purchase and not travel there. If tourists do not gain a positive image at a destination they are in, their satisfaction towards a destination will be negative and this can very well transform to negative word of mouth which will influence other potential visitors to the destination.

Destination image is not only influenced by an individual's own personal experiences and understanding, but it can also be influenced by external factors such as the media, marketing material and word of mouth by friends and family and the online citizens who are more commonly known as "neitzens". Studies have claimed that these external factors all serve as part of the formation of a destination image (Hsu & Song, 2013). Baloglu & McCleary (1999)

analysed different literature from different scholars and came to a theory that there are three main components to destination formation: personal factors, destination image such as promoted, and stimulus factors such as previous experience and information sources.

The external material prospective tourists are exposed to will influence their destination image before they travel and therefore will influence their buying potential and behaviour. The personal experience factors which the tourists are exposed to during their encounters at a destination will influence their destination image perception during their trip and will influence their satisfaction which will affect brand loyalty and future buying possibilities from both themselves and anyone who they share this information and feedback with. There are many factors and attributes which can influence the satisfaction of the consumer at the time of consumption; these different attributes will vary between people.

Scholars have also studied the connection between destinations and an individual's personality as well as the idealistic destination the individual is imagining they will get when they visit (Hosany et al., 2006). Gao et al. (2012) wrote about phantasmal destination image, a fantasy destination image a tourist will imagine before visitation.

Destination image and personality are addressed by Hosany et al. (2006). The destination's offering and the image it projects to an individual has to be perceived by the individual as a destination that will match their own personality type. Tourism stakeholders have identified this influential connection between tourists and their desire to travel, and has therefore utilised this through their marketing strategies by tailoring the image of the destination to suit the target market's perceptions (Hsu & Song, 2012).

The concept of destination image has also been defined in many different ways by different scholars which makes it more difficult to understand the different attributes which could contribute to the perception of an overall destination image (Tudor, 2012). Phelps (1986) has suggested there are two categories of perception towards destination image: primary where perception is based on the actual visit and experience, and secondary where perception is based on external sources. For the purpose of this research, tourists' perception of destination image will be based on their own visits and experiences; primary perceptions will therefore be examined.

In-line with Baloglu & McCleary's (1999) concept of how destination image is influenced by cognitive and perspective formation, attributes may be important to an individual depending

on how well the destination meets the requirements of what the individual is trying to achieve from going on holiday. If their intentions is to have a nice relaxing holiday away from the noise and chaos at home, then travelling to a crowded and noisy city area like Tokyo or New York may not be the first choice on their visitation agenda for relaxation. They may want to visit New Zealand, or Australia or Switzerland some quieter areas and destinations instead and have a pampered holiday.

### 2.2.2 Attributes Influencing Destination Image

Many scholars have studied the different attributes that are important aspects which influence tourists' destination image formation: attributes such as food and beverage, accommodation type and quality of service, attractions and activities, shopping, transportation, people involved (locals and tourism operators and staff), barriers to entry to a destination, price perceptions, environment and setting, technology and mobility, infrastructure, language and the overall holistic impression of a destination (Law & Cheung, 2010; UNWTO, 2012). Each of these attributes are weighted differently by individuals, based on what they feel is more important to them. The same set of attributes may not be applicable to two different people. Although it cannot be claimed that there are a certain number of important attributes for tourists, as each tourist will place a different rating scale towards different attributes, the above attributes have been studied the most by scholars who have reported that these are the most commonly expressed attributes their research subjects have identified as important.

#### 2.2.2.1 Language

Language could be a relatively important attribute; if there is a language barrier between tourists and the locals or the operators when they are interacting, this will impact on their visitor experience (Teare, 1992). People usually become frustrated when others do not understand them whether it be at home or on holiday; when a tourist is away from home and have had to spend a considerable amount of money to get to the destination, the situation could become more frustrating if people do not understand what it is they require or want. This frustration will influence the quality of the service the tourist perceives. Scholars have identified that language barriers are an important attribute for tourism operators and stakeholders to take into consideration if they are trying to attract more tourists to their products and services.

The New Zealand tourism industry has recognised this important attribute and are in the midst of developing strategies to resolve the problem. The Chinese market is the second largest inbound traveller market for New Zealand (Tourism Industry Association New Zealand, 2011); many Chinese visitors are not fluent in English. Language has been perceived as a major issue influencing the overall experience for Chinese visitors to New Zealand in the past (Ryan & Mo, 2001). One of the current strategies the New Zealand tourism industry is developing to cater to the Chinese market more effectively is the development of the China toolkit which has been introduced to the tourism industry to help tourism operators across the country gain understanding and to communicate with this market more effectively. Websites such as Immigration New Zealand's China Visa page and Tourism New Zealand has provided a Simplified Chinese translated version of their sites. The importance of understanding language between Chinese and Westerners in the tourism context has been recognised in the academic field as well. Ning (2013) wrote an academic article emphasising the importance of Chinese translators in the industry.

#### 2.2.2.2 People

The people element in tourism is very important because tourism involves people, whether it be tourists themselves, the locals or other tourism operators and stakeholders (Hsu, Killion, Brown, & Gross, 2008). People, whether it be the employees, the locals or other tourists will influence the quality of the products and services as they become a part of the delivery process of the service between provider and consumer (Hsu et al., 2008). In the study conducted by Tse and Zhang (2013) tourists reported the people element influenced about nine percent of their trip; these people included the tour guides, locals, shop assistants, local law enforcers, transport drivers and food and beverage staff.

#### 2.2.2.3 Accommodation

When tourists are travelling, they are away from their own home. Therefore, they might need to stay at an accommodation provider; the accommodation type could be anything from homestays to self-contained units to motels and hotels (Cooper et al., 1998). Apart from the rare occasion where tourists will stay at an accommodation provider for its own sake such as stays at themed hotels, the accommodation provider is there as a support service for tourists' main motivation to be in the destination. Accommodation providers are usually rated by attributes such as price, service quality, the environment of the accommodation setting, the

room quality and the location in regards to the main attractions for the tourist (Law & Cheung, 2010).

#### 2.2.2.4 Attractions and Activities

Attractions and activities are considered the most important reason for the leisure tourists to visit a destination because it is part of the recreational aspect of the tourism experience (Cooper et al., 1998). Attractions and activities can be categorised into two main categories of natural attractions and cultural or man-made attractions (Cooper et al., 1998; Fountain, et al., 2011). New Zealand is namely known for its natural beauty in scenery and its picturesque landscape (Fountain et al., 2011). The attractions in New Zealand in particular will have to focus on its attractiveness as the destination is geographically located far away from the rest of the world. They could be attractions which are unique, such as Maori culture or they need to be world famous attractions which prompt tourists to come see for themselves, such as New Zealand landscapes which has been promoted by Tourism New Zealand's *100% pure campaign*. However, the remoteness of the country could potentially be an attraction itself for tourists who wish to get-away from the bustling areas. Nevertheless, the ability to develop and maintain attractions to ensure they have enough drawing power to motivate tourists to travel across the globe to a destination is very important for destinations which are geographically disadvantaged (Hsu et al., 2008). Attractions and activities are commonly rated by tourists through attributes such as authenticity, price, quality and service (Cooper et al., 1998; Law & Cheung, 2010; UNWTO, 2012; Ryan, 2013).

Tourism New Zealand's responsibility is to promote and market New Zealand to the international market. (Tourism New Zealand, 2015). Their main tool is their *100% Pure New Zealand* campaign, this campaign not only show cases and promotes the natural landscape of New Zealand which captures the attention of many potential visitors worldwide, but also promotes the "Kiwiana" and the "New Zealand story" to consumers around the world (Tourism New Zealand, 2015).

#### 2.2.2.5 Transport

Transportation is an important aspect of tourism because not only is it the means to get to the destination but it is also the means for tourists to travel within a destination (Cooper, et al. 1998). There are many different types of transport categories from, aeroplanes, to buses, trams, ferries to bicycles and many more. These categories are usually rated by tourists

through attributes such as price, convenience, service quality, tidiness and in more recent years, the environmental impact the service has (Law & Cheung, 2010; Li, et al. 2011). on some occasions, tourists has also reported the frustration of the unclear instructions of driving in a foreign country which influenced their ability to hire and drive a rental vehicle (Li, et al., 2011).

Due to the geographical make up of New Zealand and distance between towns and attractions in the country, self-driving has been reported as one of the most convenient ways to the travel and “the best way to discover the country” (Sun, 2013, p. 212). In 2010, Lohmann and Zahra reported in their research, tourists from Europe, Australia and the United States especially prefer renting cars and then self-driving around the country. During this period, they also reported that, “visitors from Asia do not tend to often rent car while travelling in New Zealand and this is very much influenced by the culture of these countries, particularly Japan, China and South Korea, where visitors prefer travelling in package tour groups (Lohmann and Zahra, 2010, p. 11). However, in more recent years, there have been reports that there is an increasing number of free independent travellers to New Zealand from China (Tourism Industry Association New Zealand, 2011; Sun, 2013). Chinese tourists enjoy self-driving and the scenic route of New Zealand (Sun, 2013). However, it has been reported that due the differences in traffic regulations there are problems which the Chinese tourists encounter when driving in New Zealand such as turning the wrong way and driving to the “right side” when leaving a roundabout, (Sun, 2013). Sun (2013) also reported that some tourists confessed to neglect of the speeding limits due to the open roads in New Zealand resulting in warnings by police. Recent media attention on “bad” tourist drivers in New Zealand has brought awareness to the behaviour of tourist drivers on the road (Gates , 2015; news.com.au, 2015). If Sun’s (2013) findings are representative of Chinese tourists who are self-driving in New Zealand, then the transport agency and other self-drive authorities and stakeholders need to consider putting new strategies in place to ensure the tourists are practicing safer driving behaviours.

### 2.3 The Chinese Market and the Destination Image

In order for Chinese tourists to select New Zealand as their tourism destination amongst others around the world, New Zealand has to ensure their destination image is attractive enough for the Chinese. Understanding tourists' perceptions in order to cater to what tourists seek is imperative not only to maintain a positive brand image for a product, but also to obtain positive feedback and word of mouth about the product and for the purpose of product viability (Li & Carr, 2004; Neal & Gursoy, 2008; Alegre & Garau, 2010; Fountain, et al/ 2011; Maunier & Camelis, 2013). Therefore, it is imperative for tourism product and service managers to understand Chinese tourists' perceptions towards their products and services during and post consumption in order for them to cater to tourists

The differences in language, culture and lifestyle between the Chinese and New Zealanders could make the task to gain understanding of how the Chinese perceive New Zealand as a destination even more difficult. New Zealand tourism stakeholders will have to be creative and careful when they are tailoring and creating their marketing strategies for this market.

They may need to try and understand what destination image or image alone means to Chinese tourists; then they will need to try and gain an understanding of what the Chinese currently think of New Zealand as a destination. In 2006, Zhao suggested in her research that the information sources Chinese sought and obtain before they travel will influence their perception of the destination image after they filter the information with their own cultural perceptions and values. In other words, Chinese culture values will influence their perception of a destination. Therefore, tourism stakeholders who are trying to tailor their products and services to the Chinese market, will first have to gain an understanding on the Chinese cultural values.

Tourism New Zealand is known to be innovative with their marketing strategies. Tourism New Zealand's efforts to increasing the awareness of New Zealand amongst potential Chinese visitors in Mainland China included collaborations with a Chinese broadcasting station featuring 217 minutes of famous Chinese celebrities travelling around New Zealand with their children on the hit series *Where are we going, Dad?* (Tourism New Zealand, 2014). The natural beauty of New Zealand and cultural attractions of New Zealand such as Māori cultural experiences in Te Puia, Rotorua was exposed to over 400 million viewers across China (Tourism New Zealand, 2014). Tourism New Zealand also announced travel trade partners in



China were establishing official, *Where are we going, Dad?* itineraries as part of promoting in China (Tourism New Zealand, 2014).

Despite the efforts of the tourism industry to promote New Zealand as an attractive destination to the Chinese, it is known that there are still many aspects in the tourism sector that could be improved to cater to the Chinese market, such as reducing the language barrier and training of front-line staff to better understand a market that is vastly different from the European and Australian markets they are familiar with (Fountain et al., 2011; Ryan, 2013). As previously mentioned, the tourism industry has realised the importance of language as a determining attribute which influences their destination image and are working on developing a strategy to better serve this need. However, there are still many other attributes that are also important to the Chinese market which need to be taken into account.

### **2.3.1 Other Important Attributes to Chinese Tourists**

Various scholarly articles studying Chinese tourists revealed that apart from the previously mentioned attributes which are important to destination image, there are other attributes which are important specifically to the Chinese tourist (Becken, 2003; Sparks & Pan, 2009; Law & Cheung, 2010; Li, et al., 2011; Tse & Zhang, 2013; Ng & Lee, 2014). These include barriers to entry, local infrastructure such as Wi-Fi availability and Union Pay availability, culture, food and beverages, and shopping (Sparks & Pan, 2009).

The UNWTO (2012) has identified barriers to entry and the availability of Wi-Fi as important attributes for Chinese tourists. Barriers to entry includes predominantly visa applications. They are reported to be 'tedious' and often require a large amount of paper work and proof to obtain. This creates frustrations for the Chinese tourist and may prevent them wishing to travel. As destinations around the world have recognised the value of the Chinese market and competition to attract Chinese outbound tourists have become fierce, countries are relaxing their barriers to try and attract Chinese tourists to their destination (The Economist, 2012).

As Chinese people are becoming more tech-savvy, heavy online users and bloggers, there is a need for Wi-Fi access when they are travelling to provide them with the facilities to upload and share their photos and stories of their trip with loved ones back home. Therefore, the availability of Wi-Fi has become an important attribute for tourists at a destination especially when they are choosing accommodation.

Destinations which have been promoted as a destination for relaxation are attractive to Chinese tourists. Life in China can be very stressful given the number of large over-populated cities in the country. Therefore, many Chinese tourists seek relaxation, want relief from pressure, and get away from pollution and simply to rest when they travel (UNWTO, 2012). They seek simplicity and authenticity. (UNWTO, 2012). However, although they seek relaxing and authentic holidays, they remain price sensitive. (UNWTO, 2012).

#### 2.3.1.1 Culture

Culture is an important attribute to Chinese tourists. Chinese tourists are interested in the local cultures of the destination (Fountain et al., 2011; UNWTO, 2012; Sun, 2013). They seek authenticity and are eager to learn about the local culture as it is believed that by experiencing local culture, they are able make emotional connections to the destination (UNWTO, 2012; Sun, 2013). Chinese tourists enjoy local stories to help them gain deeper understanding of the local culture, it has been noted that they enjoy listening to the Māori stories and learning about the New Zealand culture (Tourism Industry Association New Zealand, 2011; Sun, 2013).

Another aspect of culture that influences Chinese tourists' experiences is the emphasis on cultural beliefs and customs they have. Chinese people are largely influenced by Confucianism and in turn this practice influences their behaviours (Kwek & Lee, 2010). They focus largely on respect and "face" (Kwek & Lee, 2010; Tourism Industry Association New Zealand, 2011; Sun, 2013). They believe in respect for elders, authority and guests. Therefore, tourism operators needs to remember the importance of respecting their Chinese customers in order to achieve higher tourist satisfaction. As Chinese people rate the importance of the concept of "face" which is the respect you give them in front of others and avoiding embarrassing moments for them highly, this is another key behaviour tourism operators needs to keep in mind when serving this group of tourists. They are also a culture who can be very careful in their actions when faced with the unknown (Deresky, 2008).

#### 2.3.1.2 Food and Beverages

Dining can be considered as a sensory activity that is part of the tourism experience. Although Chinese people are known to prefer a well prepared meal which includes a reasonable proportion of rice, the increased exposure to western cuisine and other ethnic foods have prompted a new fashion amongst Chinese tourists to try new foods that are different in taste, quality and culture that is different to what they are normally use to at home (Chang, et al.,

2010). Chinese food, local foods, other cultural foods are the three main food categories Chinese tourists may try during their travels (Chang et al., 2010; Law & Cheung, 2010). They may critique the quality of these meals and services through the attributes such as price, product, environment of the eatery, services and other potential influences (Law & Cheung, 2010; Ryan, 2013).

#### 2.3.1.3 Shopping

Chinese tourists are keen shoppers, they seek luxury brands when travelling because these brands appear to be cheaper abroad than back at home. They also enjoy shopping because they are more than likely going to shop for souvenirs to take back home for friends and family as this is a customary in Chinese culture (Becken, 2003; UNWTO, 2012). There are many different categories in shopping for Chinese tourists in the tourism context. These include personal items such as clothing, cosmetics and skincare, art and local crafts, department store items, home decorations, souvenirs and other general merchandise and miscellaneous items (Law & Cheung, 2010; UNWTO, 2012). Tourists' satisfaction towards the shopping experience are often influenced by attributes such as price, products, quality, and retail service (Law & Cheung, 2010).

Chinese tourists also like to barter for their products, it has been suggested in the literature, tourism operators and retail operators need to include flexibility in their pricing to allow room for some bartering with Chinese tourists to cater to this market. (Choi, et al., 2008). This could add value for their tourists' experience as they may perceive it as getting a bargain.

### **2.4 Tourism and the ICT**

The development of information and communication technology (ICT) in the last 20 years has prompted the acceleration of tourism growth and facilitated tourism marketing greatly. (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Nusair, et al. 2013). ICT introduces a whole new business model for tourism stakeholders which not only creates opportunities for the stakeholders and tourism operators but also threats (Buhalis & Law, 2008). The relationship between tourism and information technology has expanded into so many different possibilities to facilitate the many different aspects of tourism services that scholars have studied the relationship between the two in many different contexts (Cooper, et al. 1998): security in tourism management, online reservations booking systems, tourism products and services marketing, visitor management, and products and services development (Cooper et al., 1998; Buhalis &

O'Connor, 2005; Buhalis & Law, 2008; Frias, et al., 2008; European Travel Commission and World Tourism Organisation, 2012). Anyone is able to express their opinions on the online platform through different media, and if these expressions feature negative feelings towards a tourism destination or product other online users will know about them and that will affect the overall image of a destination. This introduces new concept of electronic word of mouth.

#### 2.4.1 Electronic Word of Mouth

Just as the traditional word of mouth has been the best marketing tool known to humankind, blogs have been recognised as the electronic version of word of mouth (also known as eWoM) (Litvin et al., 2008). Word of mouth is a powerful medium which influences buyers and consumers of all types in the market; potential buyers will listen to friends and family and retail staff comments on a product or service (Litvin et al., 2008; Lo, 2012). Word of mouth is particularly powerful in the tourism context because tourism remains a risky purchase as the benefits and quality of the tourism service itself is hard to evaluate before purchase, but word of mouth provides an element of consumer credibility to assure buyers (Schmallegger & Carson, 2008). Electronic word of mouth allows these comments to be shared between people who do not know each other and may not have physically been in the same location at the same time. People on opposite sides of the world could share with each other their reviews about a product or service without actually having to find out about each other's identity. This creates the threat to tourism operators if they do not manage their products well. If their consumers experience a negative experience with their offerings, they are not only going to share this with friends and family and other people they know but internet communication allows them the potential to share with everyone who has internet access, from a few family and friends to 39% of the world population (the total number of people with internet access in the world) (Miniwatts Marketing Group, 2013). This influences the powerfulness of social media, thus tourism operators need to utilise and manage their online presence well. If tourism operators manage their online presence well and cater and respond well to their consumers' needs online, then not only will they not be threatened by negative electronic word of mouth, but they will benefit from positive word of mouth and social media. Schmallegger & Carson (2008) claims there are opportunities for tourism operators in increasing their brand awareness and customer portfolios if they can effectively use the internet to communicate with their target markets.

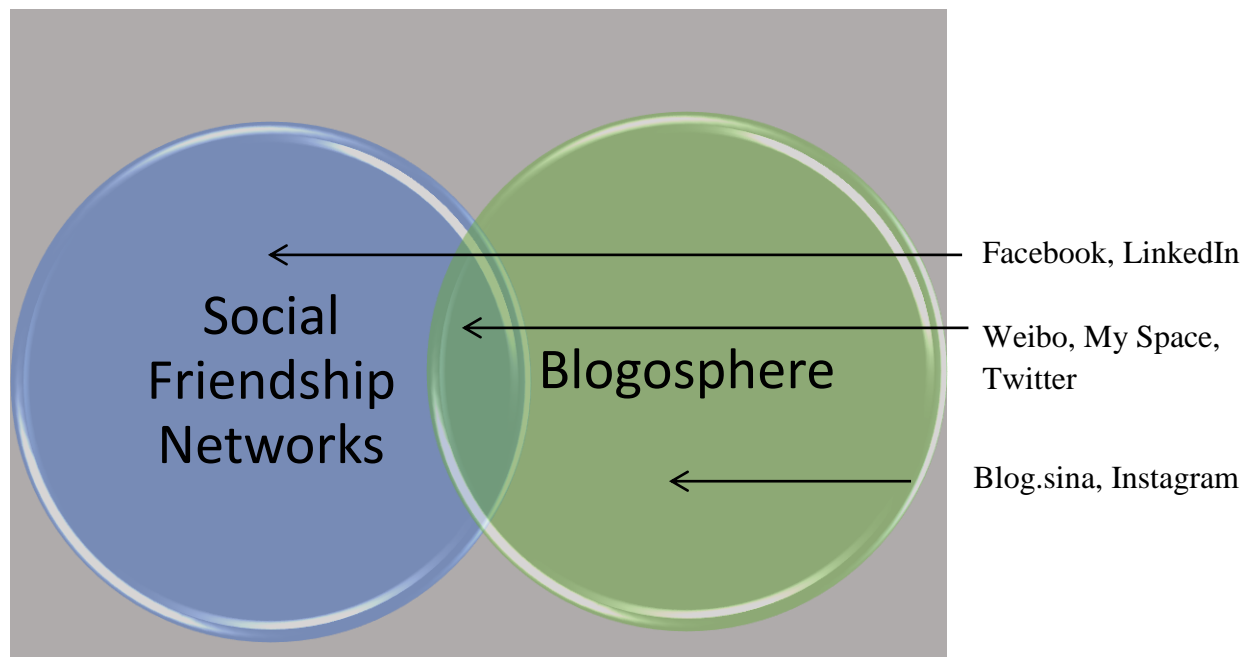
### 2.4.2 Blogs and Social Media

Social media is an electronic form of social networking in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Pujol, Sanguesa, & Delgado (2002, p.468) describe a “social network as a representation of the relationships existing within a community”. Within the same community there could be different relationship types between the people, from kinship, to acquaintances to colleagues (Pujol, et al., 2002). Social media is networking for people through the internet. Social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter are the venues and networks that are facilitating these networks, but within each individual social media account such as a Facebook account, there exist many different relationships. People have many different types of Facebook “friends” - from the close friends who they see often, colleagues, acquaintances, old school mates, or people who they may have only met once in their lifetime or may have never met before (Brandtzaeg, Lüders, & Skjetne, 2010).

Social media is an enormous part of the everyday life, especially amongst the younger generation who owns a smart phone, tablet or any other portable electronic device that allows communication with others. Facebook, Twitter, My Space, Weibo are all social media that are part of the everyday language and activities of people. People share with each other what happens to them, what is interesting or emotional events they have just or are about to encounter. People from all around the world share online via social media in general or blogging because they wish record their own feelings and emotions or express their opinions (Leibold, 2011). It is not surprising that social media plays a big part in tourism. Tourists are still people when they travel, therefore they will use social media to share and record their trips. Many people micro-blog about their events and feelings. Tourists will post these events and feelings on to their social media sites to connect and to share their trip with those back home. These micro-blogs are the posts people make on their social media accounts such as Facebook and Twitter and on Weibo or WeChat for users in China. However there are many people who are much keener internet-sharing enthusiasts who may have their own blogs.

Blogs are a type of social media which many people use to share their experiences. Blogs are websites where tourists can write and post about an event or feeling or encounter that has occurred or about to occur during their travels.

Figure 2.1: Social Friendship Networks and Blogosphere constitute part of Social Networks

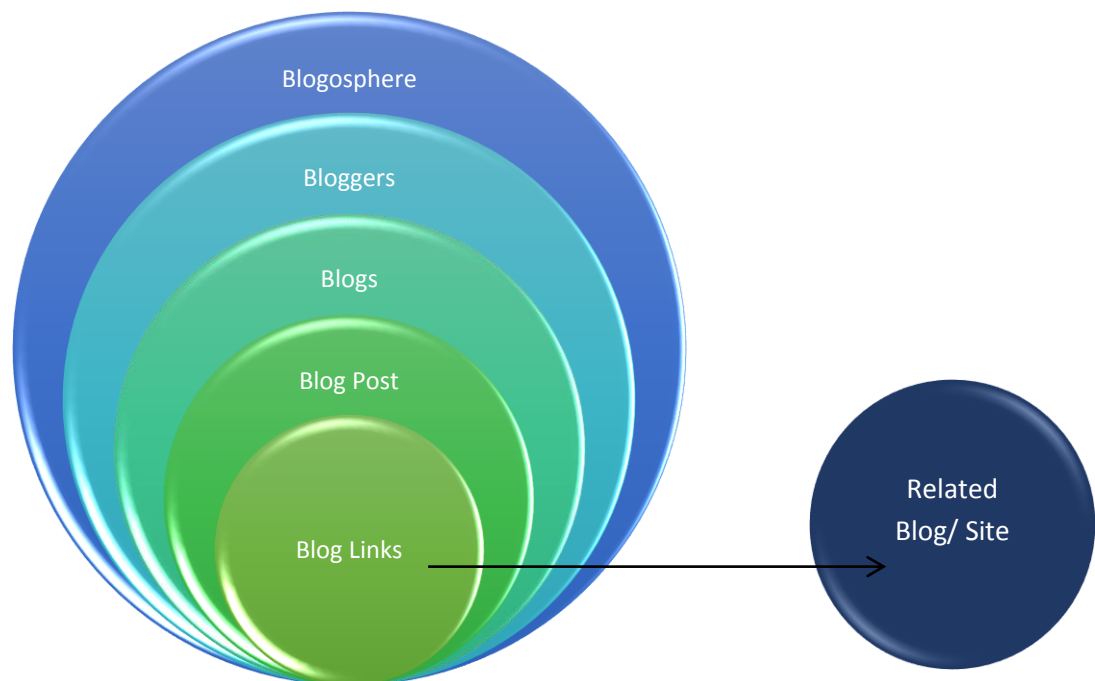


Source: Adapted from Agarwal & Liu, (2008)

The relationship between the blogosphere and the social friendship network is shown in Figure 2.1 which has been adapted from Agarwal and Liu (2008). Figure 2.1 the elements in social media; the grey background represents the greater social media network, the blue circle on the left is the social friendship networks sphere, the lime green circle on right is the blogosphere and there is also a threshold in the middle where both circles overlap, shown as the darker green leaf shape in the middle in Figure 2.1. The social friendship networks sphere consists of social networks platforms where one would have their friends as followers, ie: their followers are most likely friends or acquaintances whom they have meet somewhere in the past at some point. Examples of social friendship networks are social media such as Facebook and LinkedIn. Although different to blogs, some will still consider the posts on social media as “micro-blogging”. The blogosphere is also part of the greater social media network where one could have any type of followers and groups with people of all types of relationships. These types of blogs will be supported by sites such as Instagram and Blog.sina where authors can express their feelings through the media and their followers or online audience who are welcome to read and follow. The bloggers themselves may not actually know their followers or any of their audiences because the blogs are usually publically published where anyone with internet access will be able to read it. There is also the threshold

in the middle where the social friendship network areas and the blogosphere overlaps. Networking sites such as Weibo, My Space and Twitter are examples of sites in this category and they allow people to have their actual friends as followers and allows for private connections with their friends but also allows them to blog. Altogether Figure 2.1 attempts to illustrate that social friendship networks are different to blogs and how the blogosphere fits into the greater social networking sphere. However, the blogosphere itself is not just a simple platform which consists of many different posts. The blogosphere itself is made up of many different components; Figure 2.2 illustrates how the blogosphere is made up.

Figure 2.2: Illustrating the blogosphere



Source: Agarwal & Liu, 2008.

The blogosphere is a medium that allows people to express their feelings and emotions about something. Figure 2.2 illustrates the blogosphere and what it encompasses; the blogosphere is a cyberspace which encircles many layers within it. Within the blogosphere there are bloggers. Bloggers are people who creates blogs (an online site or platform) to express their feelings. These expressions and posts are what is known as blog posts. Within these blog posts, bloggers may add blog links to other related blogs or websites. However, the blog links in the blog posts are not to be confused with the relationship links that exist in social friendship

media. As illustrated in Figure 2.1, the blogosphere is different to social friendship networks but it is still part of the greater social media network. Blogs are different to social friendship networks because blogs are more a public publication rather than social posts to friends, family and acquaintances. A blog is when an individual expresses or documents something towards anyone in the public who has access to that site. Scholars such as Agarwal & Liu (2008) and Pujol, Sanguesa, & Delgado (2002) have tried to explain the relationships in the social media network within cyberspace as a network of nodes. A node could be a friend or a single page written by a person or organisation. In social friendship media there are explicit links between the nodes as the people in an individual's Facebook will have a direct relationship of some form with others. In blogs there is no explicit relationship between the nodes and although there are blog links they may just be purely a link to a relevant website the blogger has seen and may have prompted them to post feelings towards the same topic themselves. Blogging is a medium that is increasingly being utilised to express feelings and emotions towards something; it is a medium which is increasingly being used by tourists and stakeholders in the tourism industry (Schmallegger & Carson, 2008; Buhalis & Law, 2008; Volo, 2010).

#### 2.4.3 Travel Blogs

Similar to online diaries where tourists write about their planned, current or past travels, travel blogs allows tourists to share their travel experiences with family and friends and other audiences (Banyai & Glover, 2012). Travel blogs have become a popular source of information for prospective tourists who are looking at travelling to a particular destination. Many people are going online and reading other tourists' blogs, posts, and recommendations on destinations to try and gain an understanding of the destination before they travel to it themselves. Some turn to these blogs to help them choose their next holiday destination to see if it is worth visiting the place themselves. The internet has provided the facility for bloggers to create a collective tourism wisdom in the blogosphere for prospective tourists to access as reference for their own travel intentions (Schmallegger & Carson, 2008; Leibold, 2011). Scholars have said prospective tourists are more likely to read individual blogs about a destination rather than the destination's tourism website because individual blogs are perceived to be more authentic (Agarwal & Liu, 2008; Schmallegger & Carson, 2008). Tourist's blogs are perceived to be less biased because there does not appear to be any benefit for them if they were to blog only positive views of the destination. However, there are individual blogs which are perceived as biased because of the sponsorships they may have



gained through their popularity. The relaxed barriers to the blogosphere have also enabled anyone to blog and as well as creating a vast of collective knowledge available to the online audience. It also makes the trust and authenticity questionable to readers (Agarwal & Liu, 2008). Unlike social friendship networks where trust and reputation might be easier to achieve because of the relationship between the nodes, in a blog the reader most likely does not personally know the blogger or author, therefore trust is harder to achieve and the bloggers themselves will need to work harder to build a reputation (Agarwal & Liu, 2008). Users can refer to ratings and the sophistication in the responses that bloggers have for comments left by their audience (Agarwal & Liu, 2008). The issue of authenticity may arise if the blogs are managed or sponsored by destination organisations; some audiences can pick out the “real” experiences in blogs by looking at the sponsors on the blog page and also the language that has been used (Schmallegger & Carson, 2008). Seasoned travel bloggers who add personal touches to their blogging material are considered more credible to the audience (Ng & Lee, 2014).

However, blogging is also known to be a good source of income for professional bloggers as companies will pay popular bloggers to advertise on their blog sites, meaning the authenticity of the information in the blogs could be questionable. But when faced with the choice of reading either sponsored blogs or commercial blogs, audiences prefer sponsored blogs written by popular bloggers rather than commercial blogs written by organisations. However, the audience will start doubting the authenticity of the blogs if they reckon there are too many positives written about the destination or the language used in the blogs are too similar to language used in marketing materials (Schmallegger & Carson, 2008). Like the word “authenticity” itself, trying to judge the authenticity of a blog this way could be a bit tedious because the blogger themselves may genuinely have had such a great time at a destination that most of what they can say about it are just positive feedback.

Customer feedback is a very important phenomenon; not only does it allow production innovation and development but it affects the viability of a product. If the customer feedback is negative this will influence future buyers to purchase and if the customer feedback is positive the purchase quantity will have a higher chance of increasing.

#### 2.4.4 Customer Feedback

Although the majority of people do not normally like to be criticised, feedback is actually a very valuable thing to have. Customer feedback can shape product development; valuable

customer feedback is actually constructive feedback. Customer feedback is a good way to measure customer satisfaction towards a company's products and allows the understanding of what customers expect. This produces brand loyalty over time (Smith & Wheeler, 2002). It is a measure of the quality of service the company provides (Williams & Buswell, 2003). Feedback can be gathered from a variety of methods, such as complaints, customer surveys, advisory panels, focus groups, employee reporting and surveys and interviews (Williams & Buswell, 2003). Companies can conduct research surveys on both employees and customers to understand the perception of service from both supply and demand perspectives to see if there is a gap and if they can identify solutions to close that gap to improve service quality (Jones & Haven-Tang, 2005). In the past, these were the methods to gather feedback from consumers, however, with the advancement in technology in recent years, consumers have the power to provide feedback without being asked by expressing their feelings towards a service or product through social media.

#### 2.4.5 Chinese Tourists and their Blogging and Social Media Behaviours

The number of internet users in China have grown extensively in recent years. In a study conducted by Yu (2007) there were reportedly roughly 123 million internet users in China in 2006. However, in a study conducted by the UNWTO in 2012, they revealed that there are over half a billion internet users in China. In the UNWTO research, they also mentioned that in 2010 over 68% of Chinese tourists will search online for information about a destination before they travel. The particular study examined Chinese tourists' blogs about Europe, and revealed that there were 10 million blog posts written by the Chinese on European destinations (UNWTO, 2012). Further studies have also shown that blogging has become very popular amongst the Chinese and China is considered the largest internet community in the world (Tse & Zhang, 2013), which means it has risen in the ranks from second in place in 2002 (Yu, 2007). Chinese blogging habits started around the early 2000s when innovators tried out this new method of the communication (Sun, 2013). Studies have shown that strong cultural and political values in society can influence the usage of internet and the adoption of technology within a country (Leibold, 2011; Ng & Lee, 2013). The Chinese government, for instance believe the easy access and the combined knowledge and wisdom that is available through the internet in modern times could pose as threat to traditional values and the political behaviour of citizens. Therefore, in countries such as China, it is obvious that there is strong internet and technology governance which restricts people from using certain social media channels (Dardenne, 2011). Western social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter are

banned in China, in the most popular social media sites in China is Weibo and WeChat (Flare.pk, 2012).

## 2.6 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework Figure 2.3 was developed from the synthesis of the literature discussed in the literature review. It is read from the top down and its elements and relationships are explained in this section.

This research is examining what are important attributes to Chinese tourists when they evaluate a destination. In this case, it is examining the important attributes to Chinese tourists when they are evaluating New Zealand as a tourist destination. The three main concerns of this study are Chinese tourists, destination image and information technology in tourism. This framework has been colour-coded to aid with the description of the relationships between the three themes.

The conceptual framework starts with *Chinese tourists*, which is represented by the red section. The box below Chinese tourists defines what characterises Chinese tourists. Fuelled by the rapidly growing middle class in China, there is more Chinese outbound travel. Travel is now perceived to be a status symbol amongst Chinese society – the more travel they participate in to more exotic places are perceived to be a measure of social status. Important attributes which Chinese tourists are concern with when they are travelling are: the quality of customer service, language barriers and interpretation, food and availability of shopping. Chinese travellers are also becoming more adept at using social media. Many Chinese tourists will post on the Chinese social media site Weibo while travelling. Furthermore, similar to other tourists, Chinese tourists have constructed images of the destination they visit. Chinese tourists can be divided into two main categories: free independent travellers and group travellers. The free independent travellers are young travellers who are well educated and they have the habit of using social media while they travel. Group travellers are typically psychocentric group travellers who prefer familiar food and services whilst travelling.

The yellow section of the framework illustrates the elements which influences a perception of a destination image of a tourist. The destination image is influenced by both internal and external factors. Internal factors such as personal beliefs and personal encounters with elements such as, barriers, attractions, language, transport, people, customer service, food and accommodation can all be influential to how a destination is perceived by tourists. The

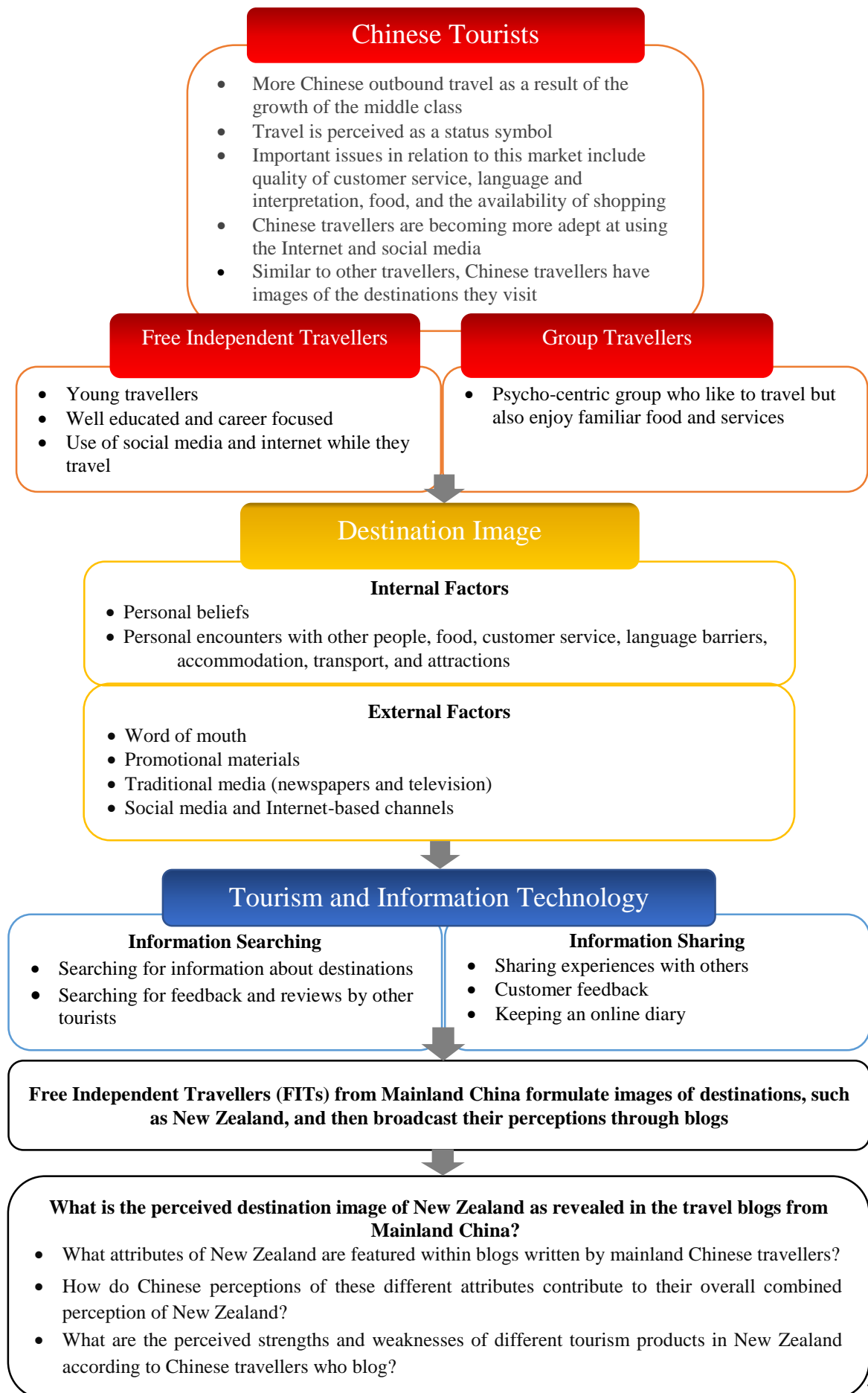
destination image could also be influenced by external factors such as the word of mouth of friends, family and other tourists who have been to the destination already and evaluated it, traditional media such as newspaper and television, and now-a-days social media and internet-based channels.

The blue sections explain the relationship between tourism and information technology, information technology is used for two main purposes in tourism: information searching and information sharing. Tourists use the internet to search for information on a destination. They look for information on the products and services available at the destination, including: visa requirements, flights, attractions and activities, types of transport available, and accommodation. Through social media and customer reviews on travel sites and companies' corporate websites, they are also able to view the feedback and reviews provided by other tourists – these comments are considered as electronic word of mouth. Information sharing includes the online activities tourists participate in such as sharing their travelling experiences with others, providing customer feedback and simply to keep an online diary to record their own travel experiences to share with their future self and others. The platforms they use to share this information include social friendship networks and the blogosphere. A difference between the two is explained in section 2.5.2.

The combined sections introduce the focus on this research and highlights the research instrument and methodology chosen. Free independent travellers from Mainland China broadcast their perceptions of a destination image through social media and blogs. The study has chosen to use the instrument of blogs to explore Mainland Chinese Tourists' perception of New Zealand as a destination. This thesis aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What attributes of New Zealand are featured within blogs written by Mainland Chinese travellers?
2. How do Chinese perceptions of these different attributes contribute to their overall combined perception of New Zealand?
3. What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses of different tourism products and services in New Zealand according to Chinese travellers who blog?

Figure 2.3: Conceptual Framework



# Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodology used to answer the research questions of this study. This section discusses the research method, the sample, the collection of the data, and the interpretation and analysis of the data. This study will explore the perceived destination image of New Zealand as revealed in travel blogs of tourists from Mainland China. The key areas of research are to understand the attributes which Chinese tourists perceive as important to a destination as revealed in their blogs. The study will also be analysing how these attributes might influence the strengths and weaknesses of New Zealand's tourism products.

## 3.1 Research Method

### 3.1.1 Paradigms

A paradigm was used as a guideline to this study; a paradigm is a set of beliefs which looks at how this world works (Jennings, 2010; Raines, 2013). Research is guided by a paradigm to help determine the relationship between the researcher/s and the subject/s. Within the paradigm, a set methodology is established as guidelines to collect the data using a variety of methods. While some researchers use the terms methods and methodology interchangeably, there is in fact a difference in the meaning between the two: methods are the tools used to collect and analyse the data where methodology is the set of guidelines. In this study these those terms will be used accordingly.

Traditionally research has been guided by a positivist paradigm which embraces the belief that the world is set within a collection of rules which are usually scientific that explains causal relationships (Jennings, 2010). Studies which adopt a positivist paradigm would normally adopt a quantitative methodology, testing hypothesis and causal relationships (Jennings, 2010). Postpositivism paradigm, critical realism and chaos and the complexity paradigm are paradigms which predominately adopt a quantitative methodology as well. Paradigms which predominately adopt a qualitative methodology are interpretive social sciences paradigm, critical theory paradigm, feminist perspective paradigm and post-modernism paradigm. There are also other paradigms such as participatory and pragmatism which adopt mixed methodologies. Each paradigm have their own ontological, epistemological, methodological and axiological viewpoints. In essence, this means each

paradigm has a different belief of the nature of reality (Ontology); different view of the relationship between the researcher and the participants/the subjects/the objects (Epistemology); a different set of guidelines for conducting the research (Methodology); and a different set of values and ethics (Axiology). The paradigm a researcher adopts for his or her study will determine the design of the research methodology. The epistemological basis for each paradigm is either subjective or objective. In paradigms such as positivism, postpositivism, critical realism and pragmatism the epistemological basis is objective as the researcher is not in any way influencing the results and findings. The epistemology basis in an interpretive social sciences paradigm is inter-subjective rather than objective. Interpretive researchers believes this world is constructed of different realities and consists of people's subjective experiences in this world. Therefore, they adopt an inter-subjective epistemology where they too enter the social setting to try and interpret the information.

This study adopts an interpretive social sciences paradigm. The researcher is making subjective interpretations of the blogs which are written by Chinese tourists who are making subjective judgement on their experiences and encounters while they are in New Zealand. Therefore, as the ontological basis of this study is to explore the different theories and realities in this world. This study has adopted a methodology which is more in the qualitative domain.

### 3.1.2 Quantitative and Qualitative Research

Dependent on the research objective and the paradigm the researcher adopts, there are different types of methodologies which could be used to guide research. These different types of methodologies all have their benefits and limitations, therefore it is very important the researcher adopts the right one that is most suitable to meet the objective of the study. Previous studies have predominantly used traditional quantitative or qualitative research methodologies. Quantitative methods such as questionnaires have been useful in collecting data to analyse the relationship between variables and to measure the components of image perception. However, quantitative approaches restrict the subjects to answering only questions that are asked and it will be testing only relationships the researcher is trying to test. Traditional qualitative methods such as interviews have been proven to be a good method for collecting exploratory data. Qualitative research allows greater flexibility and is often seen used in exploratory research. However, the limitation to qualitative research is that, at times, it could constrain the subjects to answer and express their thoughts within certain boundaries imposed by the order and type of questions that are asked in interviews.

For this study, a qualitative content analysis method was selected to analyse the blogs written by Mainland Chinese tourists who have visited New Zealand. A qualitative approach was selected because it provides the opportunity to yield rich data and allows the identification of important attributes which influences Chinese tourists' perceptions of destination images. Although there is a quantifying element in this research where the findings will be counted into a percentage of positive and negative comments made in regards to New Zealand's destination image, this study is more in the qualitative domain. Thus, this study adopts a qualitative methodology with a counting element, using a content analysis method.

### 3.1.3 Content Analysis, Blogs and Textural Analysis

Previous studies on blogs employed a content analysis approach (Law & Cheung, 2010; Banyai & Glover, 2011). Content analysis encompasses a wide range of approaches and techniques that could be either quantitative or qualitative (Jennings, 2010). Content analysis of travel blogs allows for exploratory research of the perceived destination image of New Zealand in a broader sense. A broader view of the destination overall can emerge rather than a focus on particular sectors of the tourism industry (Banyai & Glover, 2011). Different aspects of tourists' trips are able to be analysed when they blog about it, from pre-trip to during the trip to post trip.

Content analysis involves analysing the contents and themes of written texts or transcribed texts using a defined set of procedures (Klenke, 2008). Text data in content analysis is broken down or coded into words that are meaningful and manageable either manually or with a computer program (Klenke, 2008). There are four main components to content analysis: *openness, communicativity, naturalism, and interpretivity* (Jennings, 2010). The researcher is free to analyse the content any way they wish; therefore, there is an *openness* in the approach to interpretation. The researcher is responsible for the interpretation of the text along with the background context that has shaped the making of the text. Good *communication* is needed to convey the meaning of the text and the context. The researcher gains a comprehensive understanding of the text and interprets it through the lens of everyday real world settings; even if the text has been written in a fanciful or imaginative tone, the researcher is responsible for translating it into everyday context and meaning. However, as the interpretation is dependent on the environment of the text and the researcher's own interpretation, it is up to the researcher to make inferences about the text based on the subject and research objectives. Some previous research which has derived good findings from blogs have not explained



clearly how they coded the findings in the blogs and, therefore, the connections between their data and findings were unclear (Banyai & Glover, 2011). Thus, it is important to explain the whole methodology in the study to allow readers to understand every step and how the research questions were developed. It is important to define and explain one's methodology so it could be replicated by others if they wish to conduct the same or a similar study.

### **3.2 Selection Criteria**

In this study, blog entries were selected for analysis rather than entire blogs. As many of the travel bloggers are frequent travel bloggers and travel widely, selecting blog entries meant only the New Zealand holiday specific entries were selected and analysed for the research rather than having to analyse the bloggers' entire travel history. Similar to Law & Cheung's (2010) study on Chinese tourists' perception on Hong Kong, 139 blog entries were selected written by 36 different bloggers were selected. Some bloggers produced one entry and some produced as many as 14 entries, altogether over 250 printed pages of written Chinese text were translated to English and then analysed.

The criteria for the blog entries selected for analysis in the research were:

- To ensure the data were authentic and reflects what Chinese think of New Zealand's destination image, the blog entries selected had to appear authentically written by actual travel bloggers rather than filled with promotional material.
- Blog entries posted between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2011 to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2015 were selected in order to gain the most recent data and perceptions of Chinese tourists as tourists' perceptions and destination offerings change over time. Therefore, data that are too old may not be relevant anymore.
- This study is an example of textual content analysis rather than visual content analysis. Therefore, blog entries were selected if they had full paragraphs of text; blog entries which contain mainly photographs and less than 150 Chinese characters of text commentary were not selected for analysis as there was not enough text to be analysed.
- Blog entries written by tourists who visited New Zealand predominantly for leisure purposes rather than education, business or other engagements were selected as the research is trying to understand the perceptions of Chinese leisure tourists to New Zealand and why they have chosen New Zealand as a destination to travel and holiday.
- Business and International student travellers were identified through browsing of the blogs and excluded from this study.

These criteria were set to ensure the content in the blogs were more authentic in terms of perceptions of New Zealand from Chinese tourists. It is to ensure the thoughts were from genuine tourists so tourism stakeholders are able to gain a holistic overview of what are the strengths and weaknesses of New Zealand's tourism products and services.

The three research questions this study was based around were

1. What attributes of New Zealand are featured within blogs written by Mainland Chinese travellers?
2. How do Chinese perceptions of these different attributes contribute to their overall combined perception of New Zealand?
3. What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses of different tourism products and services in New Zealand according to Chinese travellers who blog?

### **3.3 Data Collection**

#### **3.3.1 Blog Sites**

There are many different blog sites available on the World Wide Web. Therefore, the decision about which blogging sites to use for this research had to be thought out carefully. As the population in this study are Mainland Chinese, the sites selected had to be the most frequently used amongst Mainland Chinese. The search for blog sites through search engines was done through first Google translating the term 'travel blogs' into Simplified Chinese which yielded '旅游博客'. Google translate is an online translating tool which Google offers that allows the user to quickly translate a phrase from one language to another. However, as Google translate is only an online tool programmed to translate phrases literally, it is not sophisticated enough to understand many underlying figurative terms unique to the different languages and culture; many times the tool might translate the phrase quite literally into another language and lose true meaning. However, for the purpose of this study, the researcher was able to manipulate the translation from the tool by using her own knowledge of Simplified Chinese to re-arrange characters and phrases to maintain the underlying meaning in the phrases. Simplified Chinese is the official language in Mainland China, hence the translation. The term '旅游博客' was first searched on Google, second on Bing and then on Baidu. As Google access is restricted in China, Bing and Baidu were also used to ensure suitable blog sites were appearing in the search. Bing was selected as Bing is the second most used search engine in the world after Google and it is the default search engine used on all Microsoft products (Lyons, 2015). Baidu

was selected as it is the number one most used search engine in Mainland China (China Promoter, 2015). The top three to five results for all three searches were very similar and incorporated all three of Blog.163, Blog.sina and Blog.qq. Thus, the decision to use these blog sites was made.

At the beginning of the data collection, the intention was to have a set procedure for data collection of blog entries on each of the three blog sites. However, during the process of data collection very quickly it became evident that all three blog sites were very different in terms of layout, ease of access to relevant data, and the types of blog entries that was available and accessible. Therefore, during the process of data collection, memos were taken as blog entries were collected from each site. This allow comparison between the three sites and aid with discussion of how data were collected from them, (Table 3.1). The following sections will describe the way blog entries were collected from each blog site and what was unique about each site.

Table 3.1: A Comparison of the Blog Sites Used

	<b>Blog.sina</b>	<b>Blog.163</b>	<b>Blog.qq</b>
<b>Operated by</b>	Sina Corp	NetEase – 163	Tencent
<b>Home Page Layout</b>	A collection of blog stories and entries	A collection of blog stories and entries	A collection of blog stories and entries
<b>Ease of finding relevant blogs</b>	Straightforward – clear section dedicated to blogs on New Zealand	Clear travel blog section but unclear section on New Zealand – Had to use search field to search New Zealand	Clear travel blog section but unclear section on New Zealand – Had to use search field to search New Zealand
<b>Presentation of Results</b>	Presented in a list format in chronological order by the date the blog entry was uploaded	Presented in a list format in random date order	Presented in a search engine results format. Random date order
<b>Relevance of results</b>	Blog entries were specifically about New Zealand.	There were some promotional material which were not blog entries and needed to be filtered out.	The results were not always blog entries about New Zealand holidays. Careful filtering was required.

### 3.3.2 Blog.sina

Blog.sina is part of the Chinese online media company Sina. Sina connects different online communities of China by combining media and entertainment all in one portal. Blog.sina is a blogging website which allows bloggers to upload and share their thoughts and experiences about almost anything with their online audience. The blog topics could be topical news to entertainment, lifestyle, fashion, cars to travel, food and even raising children. The layout of

this website is user friendly; the toolbar at the top of the home page allows the audience to quickly click into the category of blogs they wish to read and then blogs are further divided into smaller categories to make it even easier to find relevant blogs and entries.

Data was gathered from Blog.sina for this study by first filtering the blogs to just travel blogs by clicking on the travel blog tab located on the toolbar on the home page. In order to find the relevant travel blogs for this study, the New Zealand section had to be selected by clicking into the Oceania and Pacific category and then the New Zealand category. Blog entries were selected rather than entire blogs as many of the bloggers were frequent travel bloggers and had blogged about many other destinations besides blogging about New Zealand. Therefore, blog entries were selected instead to obtain relevant data to analyse the New Zealand travel context.

The sampling of the entries involved going down the list of blog entries available. However, as the blog entries were not collected on the same day, if there were new entries on top of that list the next time the researcher visited the page, the new additions were examined to see if they meet the criteria and if they did these entries were also collected for analysis.

At the beginning of data collection, it was decided text-only blogs were going to be collected to avoid complication with the analysis of photographs and images. However, it quickly became evident each blog entry incorporated pictures to illustrate bloggers' travels. Therefore, the selection of blog entries changed to selecting entries with a significant percentage of text: blog entries with at least one full paragraph of text. The blog entries with photographs and only one or two sentences of commentary under each were avoided. However, as there were still photographs and photo commentaries in the collected blog entries, these commentaries were also translated and analysed. Although the blog entries on Blog.sina provides an indication how many audiences have liked or commented on the entry, the popularity of the entry was not a selection criteria. The popularity of the blog was not an issue as the purpose of this study is to understand how the bloggers perceived New Zealand as a destination; the popularity of their blog is not relevant to the study in this case.

### 3.3.3 Blog.163

Blog.163 is part of the Chinese internet company NetEase, who operates the web portal 163.com. Blog.163 is the blogging site operated by the company. The layout of Blog.163 is similar to Blog.sina. The home page of the Blog.163 is a collection of many blogs of different

categories. Located on the top of the home page is a toolbar similar to the one on Blog.sina which allows the reader to select the category of blogs they would like to read; categories range from entertainment, to lifestyle, history to finance and travel and arts. However, Blog.163 does not have clear sections for travel blogs on New Zealand which could be selected but instead it requires searching using their search field. Therefore, the words 'New Zealand' first had to be translated into Simplified Chinese through Google translate and then entered into the search field of the travel section to search. It resulted in many blogs and blog entries which were sampled from the top to the bottom of the page using the same selection criteria.

An interesting discovery while sampling the blog entries on this site is there are many more blogs and blog entries on this site which appear to be promotional material rather than about one's travels. There are many blog entries which appears to promoting New Zealand lanolin products and milk formulas. These were blog entries which had many advertisements and external links to purchasing New Zealand products. Thus, these blog entries were not collected for this research. Also, many links from this site failed to load therefore some of these potential entries could not be viewed and thus analysed.

### 3.3.4 Blog.qq

Blog.qq is operated by QQ.com, which is one of China's largest portal views owned by the company Tencent. QQ.com is a portal which offers a combination of news, information, interactive communities and entertainment products. In the travel section of this website there is also a search field for getting quotations and information on flights.

Similar to both Blog.sina and Blog.163, there is a clear travel blog section located on the toolbar on the homepage of the site. However, like Blog.163 there is no clear section for the different destination areas. Therefore, 'New Zealand' had to be translated into Simplified Chinese again to search within this site. Unlike the Blog.sina and Blog.163 which presents their results in a simple list format of all the blog entries written about New Zealand, the results searched in Blog.qq prompts results in the search engine Soso and yields results within that search engine. Soso is the search engine owned and operated by Tencent. As the results were from a search engine, many of the results on the page were irrelevant; some of the results were presented purely because the search engine picked up the words '新西兰' (New Zealand). However, this could have been because someone had mentioned New Zealand in

an irrelevant context to this study. For example, there were results presented of blogs and web pages about Australia, they were picked up by the search engine because it may have mentioned the geographical location of New Zealand in relation to Australia. The results also yielded random entries posted from a range of different time periods dating pre 2009 to 2012, therefore the sampling from this site was the most difficult. Much more time was needed to carefully pick out relevant blog entries.

### **3.4 Translation and Interpretation**

#### **3.4.1 Translating**

The blogs collected were all in Simplified Chinese and these were later translated into English as best as possible by the researcher herself with the aid of her mother whose is fluent in Simplified Chinese as it is her first language. At times, Google translate was also used to translate individual characters and then pieced together into full sentences.

Translating was more complicated and required more time than first anticipated. At the beginning, the blogs entries which were collected were first downloaded and printed and the English translation was attempted underneath each line of the Simplified Chinese characters on the blog entries. However, after two blog entry translations the researcher changed her process by writing the translation on a separate piece of lined paper instead. The first process required too much effort to write in smaller print to fit onto the piece of paper and often this meant the characters were overlapping and became difficult to refer back to. The new process made it faster to write the translation and was easier to refer back to later on. Writing on lined paper enabled the researcher to make memos next to the translation as thoughts came into her head in the translation process. These thoughts were of categories and other information she could potentially use in her findings.

At this stage the researcher was reading through the blog entry and translating the overall piece into English as she read by writing as the translation came to mind. As this was done, there were characters the researcher did not recognise. The individual characters which the researcher did not recognised was first circled and was later translated with the help of her mother or Google translate. When using Google translate each character had to be translated individually; as mentioned before in section 3.3.1, the Google translation tool is not sophisticated or reliable enough to translate a complete phrase accurately. However, with the aid of the researcher's knowledge and fluency in spoken Chinese she was able to piece

together the individual characters into phrases which reflected the meaning of the original phrase in Chinese. Once the missing character translations were filled in the overall blog entry was examined carefully and edited to ensure the meaning of the English was reflecting the meaning in Chinese. This process was done by reading the written translation on the lined paper and then with reference to the original Simplified Chinese blog entry the translation was typed up on the computer. Through the editing process not only was the researcher ensuring the meaning of the Chinese phrase was not lost in translation, she was also making sure it made sense in English by filtering through the phrases to make sure the sentences were constructed in the correct order.

Some phrases were difficult to translate into English. Every culture and language have their own figurative language, metaphors and sayings that are unique to them. These figurative phrases may not be readily translated from original language to another. For example, there is a phrase in Chinese *Rénshānrénhǎi* and when it is translated literally into English means people mountain people sea. However, this is actually a phrase which means many people. At times of difficulty to translate a phrase from Simplified Chinese to English, the context of the phrase or sentence was studied to establish whether the tone was negative or positive in the situation. For example, the phrase *Rénshānrénhǎi* was used in the context to refer to the many people who were attending a local market and how lively and exciting it was; the sentence in context indicated a more positive tone towards the situation.

### 3.4.2 Interpretation

In this study, interpretation happened at two stages. First, as the content being analysed is in a foreign language, the first stage at interpretation was to interpret the data from Simplified Chinese to English. The process at this stage of interpretation was explained in the previous section 3.4.1. As there is figurative language used in the blog entries, interpretation was needed to ensure the meaning of the phrase was not lost in translation. The second stage of interpretation is data interpretation: interpreting the collected data into meaningful findings for the study. This process of interpretation was to derive meaning from the data being analysed to address the research questions. This type of interpretation was discussed previously in section 3.1.3. This interpretation has completed with the aid of codes which are developed to analyse the data.



### 3.4.3 Manual Coding and Interpretation

Codes are used when assigning meanings to descriptive information that has been gathered (Jennings, 2010). Coding involves the categorisation of the data by using tags and or labels to assign meaning and to aid in the process of interpretation (Aaker, Kumar, Day, Lawley, & Stewart, 2007; Jennings, 2010). There are many different types of coding; this research has used both straightforward open coding (Jennings, 2010) and the coding of metaphors.

This study used mostly straightforward coding throughout much of the analysis. After the text was translated from Simplified Chinese to English, sentences, phrases and words were coded into different categories and subcategories such as accommodation, transport, and activity type. The categories used in this study were adapted from previous studies on destination image (Teare, 1992; Cooper et al., 1998; Becken, 2003; Hsu et al., 2008; Chang et al., 2010; Fountain et al., 2011; UNWTO, 2012; Ryan, 2013; Tse & Zhang, 2013) and additional categories such as overall evaluation of trip were added as the blog entries were analysed and new attributes were mentioned. After coding the first time, the texts in each category were coded a second time into tone type: a negative, positive or neutral tone. The tone type aims to analyse the feelings a tourist had towards a particular attribute.

The process of coding into tone type required a comprehensive studying of the phrase in the overall context of the written text. For example, first a phrase like “the hotel room was very big and spacious” will be categorised into the accommodation category. Then to determine which tone it was, the sentence will be studied within the context it was written in. With careful analysis, the sentence was said as the blogger was describing the room they stayed in and they were using words like “spacious” along with “beautiful” and “pretty” in the same section. Therefore, although the word “spacious” could be either positive or negative dependant on how the blogger feels about a large room, the words “beautiful” and “pretty” are generally positive. Therefore, it becomes a positive score for this category.

Coding metaphors was also done in this study. As mentioned previously, some bloggers were using figurative language such as Chinese metaphors and poems in their blog entries which made it difficult to translate the text directly to gain understanding and meaning. Therefore, instead of translating these types of entries word for word into English the researcher coded these straight into either negative, positive or neutral tone entries based on her understanding

of the meaning of the metaphor and studying the overall context of the metaphor/phrase is written in.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

Analytical frameworks are useful in guiding the analysis of the data collected and can serve as a road map for the data (Pearce, 2012) an analytical framework was used to structure the analysis for the data collected and in order to communicate the findings. A tabular matrix type analytical framework, adapted from Law and Cheung (2010), presented in Figure 3.1 was used for this study. The framework was extremely helpful in sorting out and structuring the rich data collected from the blog entries.

Figure 3.1: Tabular Matrix Analytical Framework

Category	Subcategory	Evidence from Blogs	Positive	Negative	Neutral
Food and Beverage	Asian Western Bars Cafes				
Accommodation	Type and Rating				
Attractions	Cultural/Human-Made Natural				
Activities	Hiking Local Experiences				
Shopping	Souvenirs/Gifts Personal Items				
Transport and Infrastructure	Type of Transport				
People	Tourism Operators and Staff Locals				
Barriers, Limitations, Concerns about entry	Visas Flights				
New Zealand Infrastructure/ Services and Facilities	Wifi				
Language	Language (Signs and verbal communication)				
Overall Evaluation of New Zealand Trip	Comments				
Feelings about New Zealand	Air Feelings				

Figure 3. 1 has been adapted from Law and Cheung's study (2010), further categories have been added to the table based on findings in the literature review and the categories which have been mentioned by the Chinese bloggers in their blog entries. The categories which were derived from the literature and are listed down the first column are: Food and Beverages (Cooper et al., 1998; Chang et al.2010; Law & Cheung, 2010; Ryan, 2013), Accommodation

(Cooper, et al., 1998; Law & Cheung, 2010; Ryan, 2013), Attractions (Cooper, et al. 1998; Hsu, et al., 2008; Law & Cheung, 2010; Fountain et al., 2011), Activities (Cooper, et al. 1998; Hsu, et al., 2008; Law & Cheung, 2010; Fountain, et al. 2011), Shopping (Becken, 2003; UNWTO, 2012), Transport (Cooper, et al. 1998), People (Hsu, et al. 2008; Tse & Zhang, 2013), Barriers, Limitations and Concerns (UNWTO, 2012), New Zealand Infrastructure, Services, and Facilities (UNWTO, 2012) and Language (Teare, 1992). Overall evaluation of New Zealand and Feelings about New Zealand were categories which were added during the analysis of the blog entries in attempt to further understand Chinese tourists' perceptions towards to New Zealand. The second column presents possible subcategories which were listed based on findings from the literature and analysis of the blog entries. It is important to note that the both the categories and subcategories were grouped and listed differently at the final stages at the final stages of analysis to present a more understandable and robust piece of research.

The neutral category in the last column of Figure 3.1 was added to the analytical framework by the author and was not used by Law and Cheung (2010) who only assessed experiences that were positive or negative. Law and Cheung (2010) excluded neutral comments from their research as they claimed it did not provide further information on bloggers' feelings towards a destination. However, as the majority of the bloggers in this study included neutrally toned comments in their blog entries to convey information to potential tourists, these comments were recorded to indicate the usage of blogs as an information source. Zhao (2006) has suggested that the information sources Chinese obtain before they travel will influence their perception of the destination and the information obtained will be influenced by the Chinese culture (refer to section 2.3). Therefore, understanding the topics of information Chinese bloggers convey through their blog entries could provide indication on information Chinese tourists perceived to be important and useful information when travelling to New Zealand.

Printed versions of this framework were used for each blog entry for analysis. Quotations from the entries were inserted into the "evidence from blogs" column of the framework to sort out the category it fits under and then tone was studied. If the tone was positive then the positive tone will be ticked to indicate a positive tone, if it was negative it will be ticked negative. Some quotations which mention a particular category did not indicate a tone therefore these were coded as neutral. Many of these neutrally toned comments were comments conveying information, such as advice on visa applications to New Zealand; these

fit into the barriers to entry category, but has a neutral tone as the blogger does not appear to be expressing a positive or a negative feeling towards the process. Some of the blog entries addressed more than one of the categories and subcategories, so larger versions of the analytical framework was printed across different sheets of paper to fit all the quotations and comments. Figure 3.1 serves as an example of the framework used and illustrates the categories which were used for analysis. However, due to the restriction on the presentation size of this thesis the complete analytical framework with all the quotations and comments has not been presented.

Once all the blog entries were analysed with the framework, the information was gathered and grouped into related categories. Ten categories of; barriers, limitations and concerns; tourism infrastructure; overall evaluation of trip; attractions; activities; language; transport; people; food and beverages; and accommodation were identified. An Excel document was created to sort the data collected for all ten categories. Figure 3.2 presents as example of how the data was sorted in excel for the accommodation category.

Figure 3.2: An Example of Data Sorting in Excel – Accommodation category

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1		Positive	Negative	Neutral		
2	Hotel	8	0	3		
3	Environment	1	0	0		
4	Layout	1	0	0		
5	Price	0	0	3		
6	Motel	6	0	3		
7	Environment	1	0	0		
8	Layout	4	0	1		
9	Price	1	0	3		
10	B&B	8	0	10		
11	Environment	3	0	3		
12	Layout	3	0	3		
13	Price	2	0	2		
14	Holiday Park	6	0	22		
15	Environment	2	0	2		
16	Layout	2	0	2		
17	Price	2	0	2		
18	YHA	13	1	16		
19	Environment	8	0	8		
20	Layout	2	1	3		
21	Price	3	0	4		
22						

Janet Tang:  
Price was about  
600RMB per night -  
Blogger 28 on  
Queenstown

Subcategories and evaluating factors were identified for some categories. For example, the accommodation category identified different types of accommodations which were mentioned by the bloggers, these served as subcategories. Other information which was relevant to these subcategories such as price, the environment and layout were recorded too

and these became evaluating factors which were identified that tourists used to evaluate an accommodation. The first column in the excel document presents both the subcategories and the evaluating factors which were identified through the comments in the blog entries. The number of positive, negative and neutral comment related to each subcategory and evaluating factor was then inserted in the relevant columns. Any comments which was recorded as “evidence from blogs” were inserted as comments attached to the relevant cell. Figure 3.2 shows an example of a comment which was recorded for the price of holiday parks. At the end the cells were also colour coded to group the evaluating factors to the related subcategory and for easier identification. Excel sheets were produced for each of the 10 categories were used when writing the findings chapters.

### **3.6 Limitations to this Research**

There were limitations to this study. The main limitation is the constraint of the amount of different perspectives collected from the sample. A total of 139 blog entries written by 36 bloggers were analysed. Many of the bloggers wrote more than one entry – therefore, there is limitation to the different perspectives of tourism elements which were mentioned in the blog entries as there is only a small sample size of 36. This may put constraint on the overview of how the New Zealand destination image is perceived because the sample is not representative of the whole population of Mainland Chinese tourists.

The researcher is not fluent in written Simplified Chinese, therefore there may have been some expressions and figurative language she may have missed which a fluent Simplified Chinese reader would understand and identify. If a translator or second coder was available to help with translation and coding the findings, the study would have benefited from a more thorough analysis. A second coder would have been able to provide a different perspective of thoughts to the data being analysed.

This study only analysed the text on the blog entries. If the photographs were also studied, a more thorough understanding on the bloggers’ perception of New Zealand as a destination would probably be achieved. As people photograph what they find interesting, analysing the photographs will be able to provide a different perspective to what the tourists notice when they are in New Zealand.

## Chapter 4: Bloggers Profile, New Zealand Destinations, Barriers, Tourism Infrastructure and Overall Evaluation of Trip.

The purpose of this study is to examine the destination image of New Zealand as perceived by Mainland Chinese tourists. In order to examine the different perceptions they have towards New Zealand, ten categories have been identified in this study to aid with the examination. These categories are: barriers, limitations, and concerns; tourism infrastructure; overall evaluation of trip; attractions; activities; language; transport; people; food and beverage; and accommodation. These categories have been created with reference to previous research which were studied in the literature review (Law & Cheung, 2010; UNWTO, 2012) and also created based on the topics which was spoken about in the blog entries by tourists. Categories were developed from the literature reviewed as well as inductively through a careful reading of the blog entries. Subcategories were also identified under each category to aid with the comprehension of the perceptions. For example, under the overall evaluation of the trip category, the subcategory “environment” was identified (refer to section 4.5.1). This subcategory was identified because there were a number of bloggers who were referring to the environment of New Zealand as they were evaluating their trip. To examine this subcategory in more detail, evaluating factors were also used to further describe and understand the aspect of the category the blogger was referring to. In the subcategory “environment” the bloggers refer to factors such as “cleanliness” and “comfort” when they were commenting on the environment under the overall tour evaluation category. Therefore, “cleanliness” and “comfort” were added as evaluating factors which assisted in examining what these bloggers perceive to be positive and negative during their travels in New Zealand.

Each category presented in the findings section will be supported with subcategories which will be explained and illustrated with quotations from the bloggers. As some of the subcategories were further described by bloggers’ in their entries with factors which influenced their perceptions towards that category, some of the subcategories in this study were further analysed with evaluating factors which allowed for a more detailed illustration of tourists’ perceptions. The research findings section of this thesis will be divided into

chapters four, five and six. Chapter four will first identify the profile of the bloggers which includes their gender and where they usually reside.

Second, a description of which New Zealand destination was mostly blogged about will be presented in this chapter. Third, this chapter will examine the comments Mainland Chinese have blogged about in regards to the barriers, limitations and concerns, the tourism infrastructure and their overall evaluation of their trip. The discussions about attractions and activities will be presented in chapter five. The discussions about language, transport, people, food and beverage and accommodation will be presented in chapter six.

#### **4.1 Blogger Profiles**

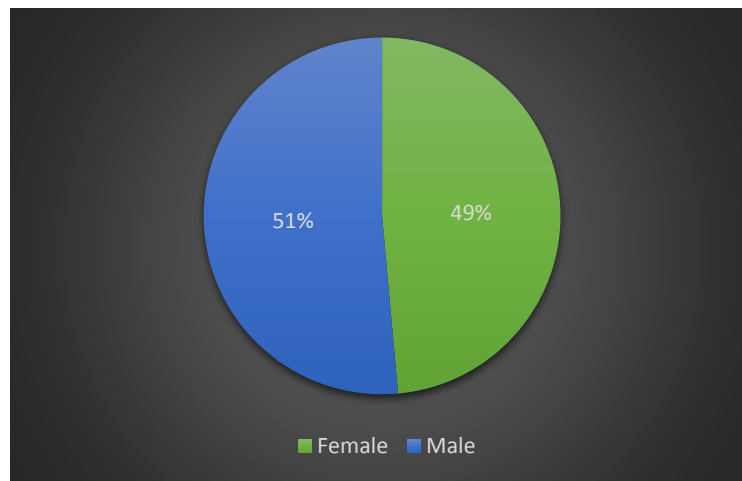
Understanding who the bloggers are and where they come from will provide an idea of the type of Chinese tourists who are blogging about New Zealand destinations. All of the blog entries contained a blogging name for the blogger and further information about the blogger which was obtained by clicking on the “about me” tab or section on the page of the blog entry. Simple information such as the gender, where they reside, and their interests are presented on the “about me” page. The process of identifying the bloggers on Blog.sina and Blog.163 was simpler compared to the identification process on Blog.qq. Blog.qq restricted access to the bloggers’ profile, information was only obtained after registering for a QQ account and then signing in. Although access was available to all bloggers’ profiles across the three blogging sites, not all of the bloggers presented all their personal information. Therefore, this study was only able to gather data about the gender of the bloggers and the bloggers’ place of residence. Details, such as names, about specific bloggers are not revealed in this study. Bloggers were assigned a number and those numbers are referred to when they are quoted in this chapter and the next two chapters. Other information such as the age of the bloggers and whether they were experienced travellers would have been useful for this study but this information was incomplete as not many of the bloggers provided this information. Most of the bloggers produced several blog entries for the duration of their trip in New Zealand. Some of the bloggers included the date of their travel in their blogs and almost all of the blog entries were illustrated with photographs from the trip which were complimented with commentaries of that specific scene by the blogger. Table 4.1 provides a profile of the bloggers which presents key information such as the blogger’s blog name, their gender and their place of residence. A total of 139 blog entries written by 36 bloggers were gathered and analysed.



Table 4.1: Profile of the Bloggers

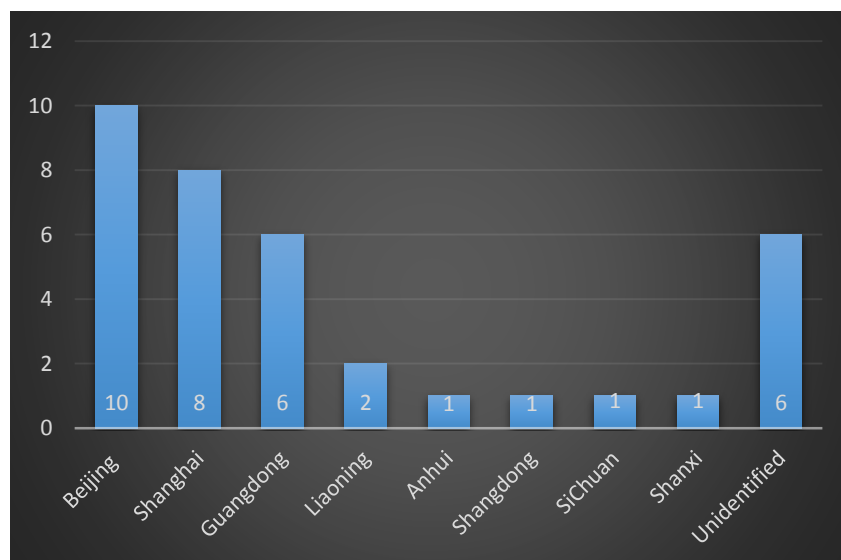
Blogger #	Blog site used	Gender	Age	Place of residence
1	163	Female		Shanghai
2	163	Female	46	
3	163	Male		Beijing
4	163	Female		Guangdong province
5	163	Male		Fujing (Guangdong)
6	163	Female		ShenZhen Guangdong
7	163	Male		Shanghai
8	163	Female		DaiLian
9	163	Male		Beijing
10	163	Female		Heifei Anhui Province
11	163	Male		Shanghai
12	163	Male		Shanghai
13	163	Male		Dai Lian
14	163	Female		Guandong
15	163	Male		Shanghai
16	163	Male		Shangdong
17	163	Male		Guangdong
18	163	Male		
19	163	Male		Beijing
20	163	Male		Shanghai
21	163	Female		DaiLian
22	QQ	Male	30	Beijing
23	QQ	Male		Beijing
24	QQ	Female		Beijing
25	QQ	Female		Beijing
26	QQ	Male		
27	QQ	Male		Beijing
28	QQ			
29	Sina	Female		Beijing
30	Sina	Female		Xian
31	Sina	Female		
32	Sina	Female		Shanghai
33	Sina	Female		Beijing
34	Sina	Female		
35	Sina	Female		Shanghai
36	Sina	Female		Sichuan

Figure 4.1 Gender of the Bloggers



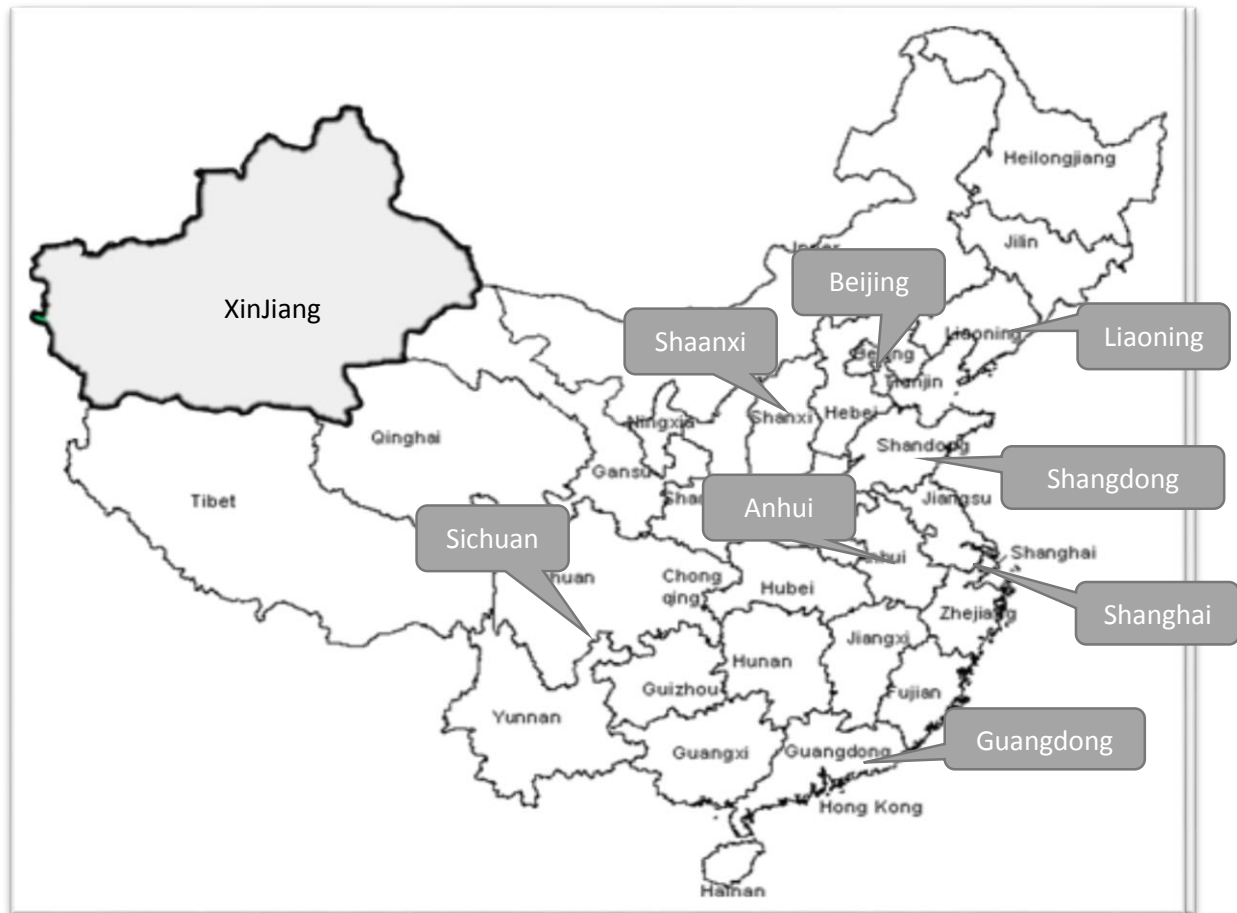
The blog entries were chosen across three different blogging sites. There was almost an even division between female and male bloggers (Figure 4.1). Of the 36 bloggers, 51% were male and 49% were female. These blog entries were written in the period from January 2011 to February 2015 and during this period, statistics show that the arrival of Chinese inbound tourists to New Zealand was almost evenly divided between genders as well. In 2011, 50.4% of the visitors were female and 49.6% of the visitors were male. In 2012, 52.5% of the visitors were female and 47.5% of the visitors were male. In 2013, 55% of the visitors were female and 45% of the visitors were male. In 2014, 56% of the visitors were female and 44% of the visitors were male (Statistics New Zealand, 2015).

Figure 4.2: Bloggers' Place of Residence by Province in China



The usual place of residence for six of the bloggers could not be identified. The majority of the bloggers reside in Shanghai, Beijing and the Guangdong province (Figure 4.2).

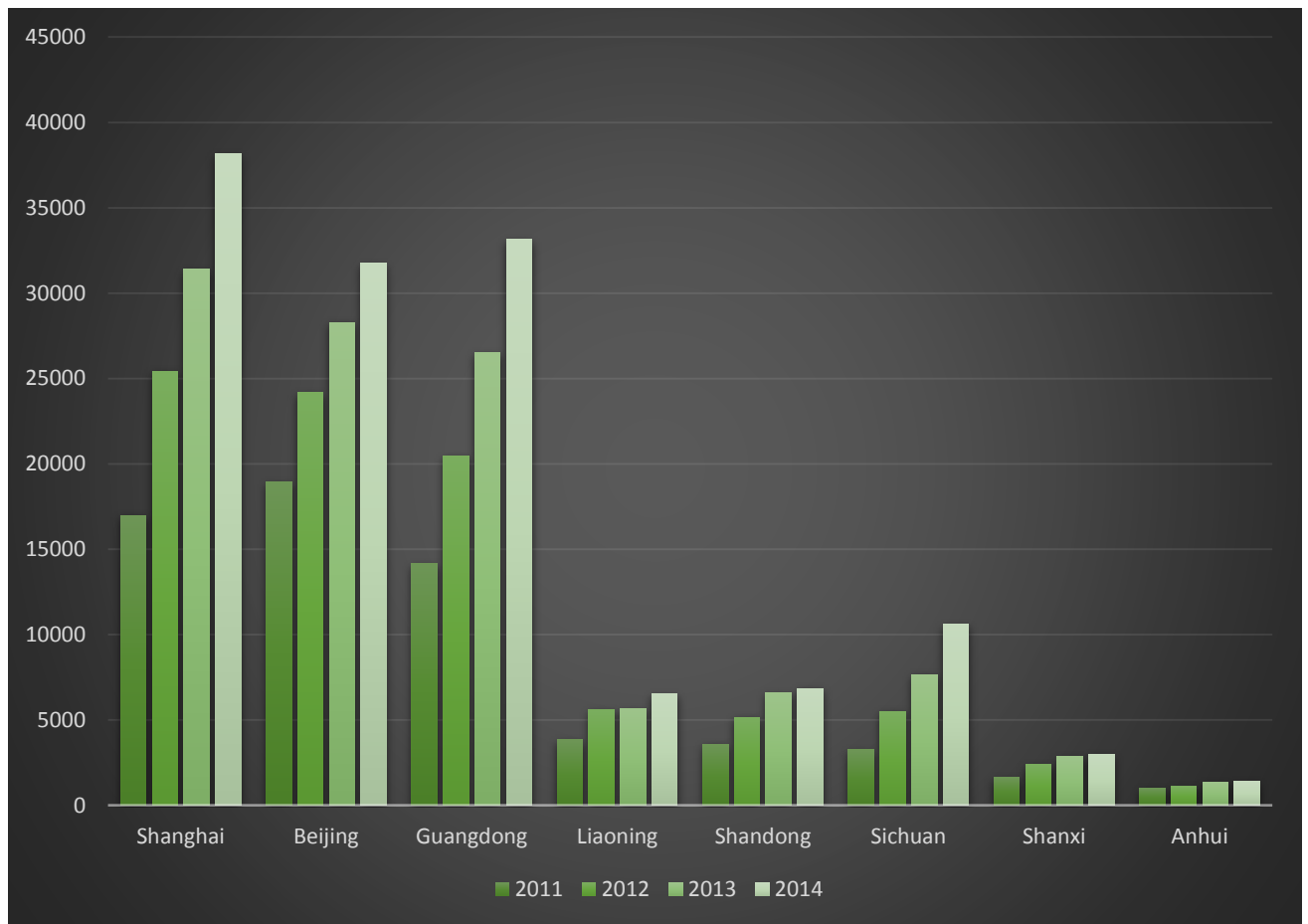
Figure 4.3: Map of Bloggers' Place of Residence



Source: Bing Images (2002)

Shanghai, Beijing and Guangdong are also the three main provinces in China with the largest populations (Figure 4.3 and Figure 4.4). They are tier one cities in China, which means they are cities with a population of more than five million people and have strong economic growth and advanced transportation infrastructure (New Zealand China Trade Association, 2015). The findings that Shanghai, Beijing and Guangdong were the main provinces the Chinese bloggers reside in are consistent with the data published by Statistics New Zealand in Infoshare which indicate that these three provinces are the main areas where Chinese visitors come from.

Figure 4.4: Visitor Arrivals from China by Province

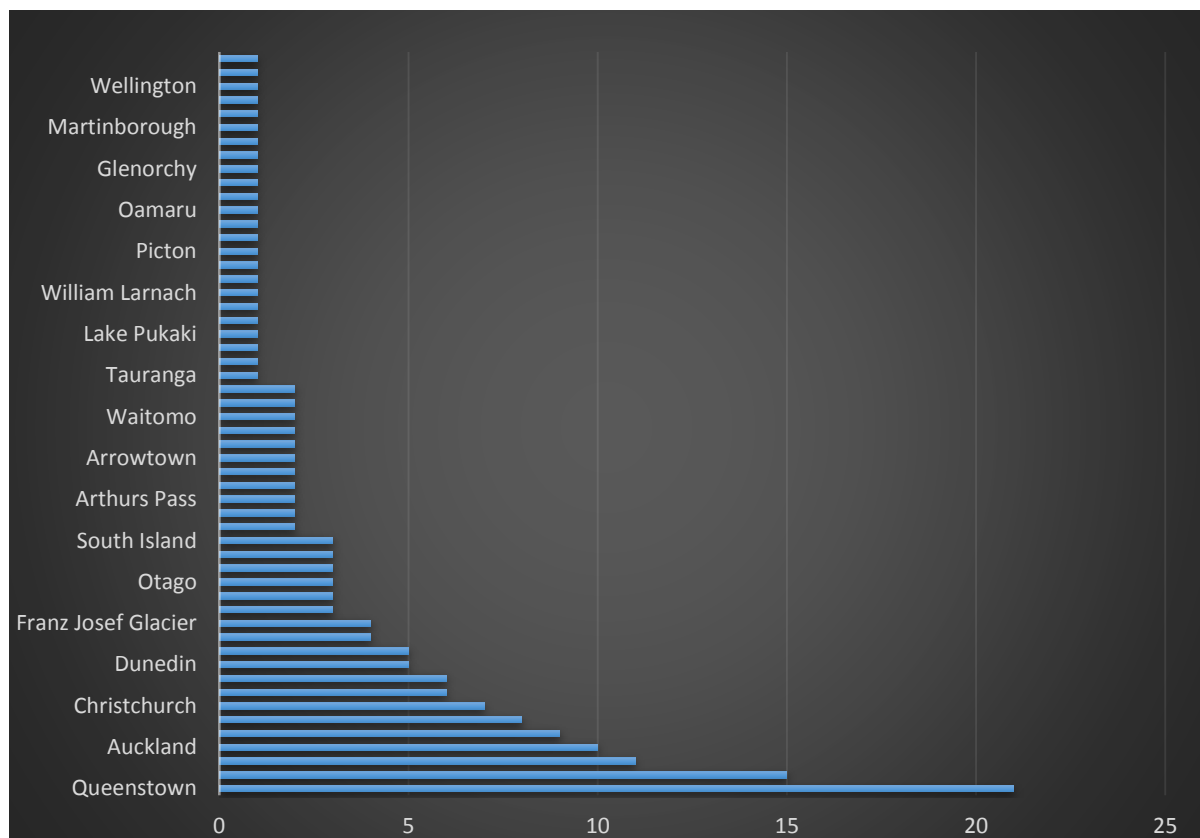


Source: Statistics New Zealand (2015)

## 4.2 Which New Zealand Destinations were Blogged About?

According to the Oxford dictionary a destination is “a place that people make a special trip to visit” (Oxford University Press, 2015). A destination has also been described by scholars as, “the focus of facilities and services designed to meet the needs of tourist” (Cooper et al., 1998, p. 102). In this study, the destinations will be referring to the places the bloggers have mentioned that they have intended to visit in the first place and also the places they have encounter during their journey between destinations.

Figure 4.5: Which New Zealand Destinations Were Mentioned in the Blog Entries?



Some blog entries commented on multiple destinations and these have all been accounted for (Figure 4.5). Queenstown, Auckland and Christchurch were the most mentioned destinations in the blog entries. Auckland and Queenstown were the most visited destinations in New Zealand by Chinese tourists. Auckland usually the first port of call for them when they arrive in New Zealand. Almost all the bloggers visited Queenstown to experience the scenery and the picturesque views the region has to offer.

### 4.3 Barriers, Limitations, and Concerns to Coming to New Zealand

At the pre-trip stage of every tourist's journey there are barriers, limitations and concerns which could prevent or delay tourists from making the decision or having the ability to travel to a destination. The "barriers, limitations and concerns to coming to New Zealand" category aimed to examine these possible obstacles tourists might come across or concerns tourists may have had. Analysis of this category enables further understanding of whether Chinese Mainland tourists perceived the influence of these barriers, limitations and concerns were positive or negative. Five subcategories which could influence tourists' ability to coming to New Zealand were identified in the analysis. These are visas, immigration, customs, cost of

journey and time (Figure 4.6). While analysing these five subcategories it became apparent that most of the comments gathered for this category did not actually indicate positive or negative perceptions from the tourists, but instead these comments were tips for future travellers to take note of if they were to travel to New Zealand. These tips included advice on visa entry requirements and going through customs in New Zealand. The tips were coded as “neutral” because they were not accompanied by any words which indicated a positive or a negative tone but rather were just addressing the topic. Comments in the blog entries were examined and analysed by coding into the different subcategories positive, neutral or negative tone. The positive tone comments were comments which came across as positive to the reader as it indicated the blogger was enjoying themselves or they have expressed their fondness for an aspect of the subcategory they were referring to. The negative tone comments were the comments which indicated disapproval to one or more aspect of the subcategory or dislike towards that subcategory. A neutral tone for a comment was recorded when the subcategory was mentioned and there was no tone associated with that particular piece of the text.

Figure 4.6: Barriers, Limitations and Concerns

<b>Barriers, Limitations and Concerns about coming to New Zealand</b>					
<b>Subcategory/ Evaluating Factors</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Overall %</b>
<b>Visas</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	60% Positive
Process	1	0	2	3	66% Neutral
Accessibility	1	1	0	2	50% Positive
<b>Immigration</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	50% Positive
<b>Customs</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	100% Neutral
<b>Cost of Journey</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	100% Positive
<b>Time</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	100% Negative

#### 4.3.1 Visas

The subcategory “visas” was examining the comments the bloggers made in regards to how they viewed the process of obtaining a visa to enter New Zealand and understanding how they felt about the accessibility of getting a visa to come to New Zealand. Therefore the two evaluating factors, process and access, were used in assisting the analysis of this subcategory. As shown in Figure 4.6, most of the comments made in regards to visas were positive. There

was one comment that was neutrally toned, as it was the blogger sharing information about the visa rather than expressing any positive or negative feeling. One of the bloggers made two positive comments on the visa system. The negative comment was a blogger commenting on the wait for visa applications. They could sometimes be longer in Guangzhou, and therefore they recommend applying for the visa in Hong Kong.

“New Zealand visa...will give multiple-entry tourists visa for two years, so if you don’t have travel plans set, you can first apply for a visa”

(Blogger 30, Female)

“Embassy processing time about five days, the efficiency of the New Zealand embassy is high, visas are also available online in real time. Progress with inquiries, very convenient”

(Blogger 6, Female)

Blogger 6 indicated that the visa processing system is convenient and efficient. She has also commented that the visa is flexible for those who do not have travel plans which are set in place yet. As the visas allow for multiple entries for a period of two years, tourists can first obtain a visa and then properly plan their trip without concerns that the visa will expire. These comments are promoting positive electronic word of mouth for her audience who are reading her blogs. Referring back to the literature review, positive electronic word of mouth is a powerful medium that will influence buyers and consumers from all markets. Potential buyers will be influenced more by real people who are reviewing products and services compared to any promotional material which is perceived to be biased (Litvin, et al., 2008; Lo, 2012). If future tourists realise how flexible, efficient and convenient it is for them to obtain visas to New Zealand, this will likely prompt them to consider New Zealand as a holiday destination.

Furthermore, considering there were only five comments in total out of the many comments overall in across all 139 blog entries this could indicate that the visa process has not had much of an influence on the bloggers’ travels to New Zealand for them to mention it in their blog entries. As there are only a fraction of comments on visas and of those mentioned there were more positive than negative it could be indicating the immigration system in New Zealand is providing a good system to Chinese tourists to make visa applications less of a hurdle and hassle in the New Zealand tourism experience.

#### 4.3.2 Immigration

The subcategory “immigration” aims to understand how the process of going through immigration was felt by the bloggers when they entered New Zealand. As shown in Figure 4.6 there were two comments in regards to immigration, one was positive and the other was neutrally toned. The neutral comment was an explanation of the process. The positive comment was in regards to the arrival card when entering New Zealand.

“The arrival card is also available in bilingual language, how very considerate!”

(Blogger 30, Female)

The use of the exclamation mark at the end of the comment emphasised the blogger’s positivity towards the arrival card written in both Simplified Chinese and English. Printing the arrival card in both languages helps Chinese tourists overcome the language barrier when they are entering the country. The happiness this blogger expressed could be an indication of how other Chinese tourists may respond. They may respond in a similar manner and perceive this as a positive factor for when they travel to New Zealand, especially if they are not fluent with the written English language.

#### 4.3.3 Customs

The subcategory “customs” examined comments the bloggers made towards customs when entering New Zealand. As shown in Figure 4.6, there were three comments made in this subcategory and they were all neutrally toned. These were comments bloggers made in their blog entries which provided information to others about what they need to be aware of when arriving into New Zealand. Blogger 9 provided a detailed list on his blog entry to indicate to other tourists what items are prohibited to bring into New Zealand.

“Prohibited goods

1, fish: fresh fish, frozen fish, salted fish, dried fish, such as: salmon, trout (except canned).

2, meat and meat products: fresh, cooked, including snacks (except canned). For example: sausage, ham, beef jerky, preserved pork, diced pork candy, brine chicken, duck, bacon moon cake and so on.

3, dairy products: milk, cheese, milk, butter, shortening, triple dairy drinks.

4, bee products: honey, pollen, propolis, honeycomb, royal jelly, beeswax, honey syrup.



5, eggs and egg products: eggs, cooked egg, salted egg, egg, spiced corned egg and the egg cartons and the like.

6, fresh fruit

7, fresh vegetables

8, rare animals and plants and their products (including traditional Chinese medicine, jewellery, souvenirs, handicrafts and antiques)

Common CITES protected species are: American Ginseng, woody, Tianma, musk, turtle shell, bear, antelope horn, tiger bone, rhino horn, seal, pangolin and some snakes, clam shells, coral, ivory.

9, medicinal animal products. For example: bird's nest, velvet, deer, bear, dried reptiles (such as snakes do, lizards dry), Gallus gallus domesticus, etc.”

(Blogger 9)

This detailed list from Blogger 9 would be very useful for other potential tourists to New Zealand who will read his blog entry for information on travel to New Zealand. This highlights that blogs is a platform which tourists use share information to help other tourists with their travels.

#### 4.3.4 Cost of Journey

The comments on the “cost of the journey” to New Zealand, which included the airline tickets, the cost of the accommodation and travel agent fees were commented on in the blogs. This subcategory aimed to understand how the bloggers perceived the cost of travelling to New Zealand and how much it will influence their decision to choose New Zealand as a travel destination. Two of the bloggers commented on the cost of their trip to New Zealand being an influential factor to consider when making the decision to travel to New Zealand. These comments were both positive.

“My friend and I were talking about where we should go for our holiday...there is a sale on travels to New Zealand recently...so we decided to go”

(Blogger 30, Female)

Blogger 30 explained while her and her friend was trying to decide on where to go for a holiday, the fact that New Zealand was on sale prompted the decision making. Considering the geographical distance between China and New Zealand, the cost of the journey is quite expensive compared to the cost of travel to other destinations. Therefore, as suggested here

in the comments from the bloggers, discounts on the journey could be a pull factor for tourists from Mainland China to travel to New Zealand.

#### 4.3.5 Time

The last subcategory under barriers, limitations and concerns to coming to New Zealand is “time”. Time was expressed by a few of the bloggers as an influencing factor to whether they could travel to New Zealand and what it meant for their itinerary while they were in New Zealand. Both comments recorded in this subcategory were negative. However, this negativity was not targeted towards the quality of the tourism products and services New Zealand has to offer as a destination. This negatively was expressed towards the time constraint the bloggers felt towards travelling in New Zealand and being able to participate in all the attractions and activities they wish to do.

“Because we don’t have a lot of time we had to do many activities one after another as we couldn’t get that much time off work”

(Blogger 30, Female)

The time tourists have available for holiday and leisure is often constrained by the amount of time they have unoccupied from doing their normal commitments. Often this constraint is the amount of leave they have off work in order to go travelling. The comments by the bloggers indicate that these Chinese tourists are also influenced by this constraint. If they had had more time off work to travel, they would have planned their travel differently and their travel experiences in New Zealand may have been different. Blogger 34’s constraint of time meant her trip in New Zealand was more rushed than she liked it to be.

“We were quite greedy and wanted to go to many places in New Zealand, couldn’t choose between destinations....but as there was only limited annual leave of 10 days we choose Auckland and Queenstown, staying five days at each place”

(Blogger 34, Female)

Blogger 34 wanted to explore more of New Zealand, but as she felt the time constraint and did not think 10 days was enough to explore many places in New Zealand, she had limited herself to choose only two destinations at the end. If Blogger 30 and Blogger 34 had had more time then they likely would have stayed longer and might have visited more destinations around New Zealand.

Overall, the comments in the “barriers, limitations and concerns” category were mostly positive and neutral. The bloggers were mostly positive about the subcategories and they expressed many recommendations and comments on overcoming some of these barriers, limitations and concerns for future tourists.

#### 4.4 Tourism Infrastructure

Once tourists have overcome barriers, limitations and concerns in the pre-trip stage of their journey, the next stage they enter is the during trip stage. This is the stage when they have entered New Zealand and will encounter many different elements that could influence their perceptions on how well a destination performs as a tourist destination. Tourism infrastructure includes elements which could influence tourists’ trip at a destination. The tourism infrastructure category examines how well the tourists perceive that the country accommodates tourists in areas such as the provision of information to tourists, the availability of Wi-Fi, information for tourists, proximity convenience, airport facilities, and infrastructure for tourist drivers. These subcategories have been grouped together into this category as they do not fit into the other broader categories such as attractions, activities and accommodation.

There were five subcategories which were identified in the category of tourism infrastructure. These are Wi-Fi; information for tourists; proximity and convenience; airport facilities and infrastructure; and facilities.

Figure 4.7: Tourism Infrastructure

<b>Tourists’ Infrastructure</b>					
<b>Subcategory</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Overall%</b>
<b>Wi-Fi</b>	2	2	0	4	<b>50% Positive</b>
Availability	1	1	0	2	50% Positive
Accessibility	1	1	0	2	50% Positive
<b>Information for Tourists</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>75% Positive</b>
Availability	5	0	2	7	71% Positive
Service	1	0	0	1	100% Positive
<b>Proximity and Convenience</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>100% Positive</b>
<b>Airport Facilities and Infrastructure</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>33% Positive</b>
<b>Facilities</b>	1	0	0	0	<b>100% Positive</b>

## 4.8 Wi-Fi

The subcategory “Wi-Fi” examined the comments tourists made in regards to the accessibility and availability of Wi-Fi during their trip in New Zealand. Considering how heavily the modern person relies on their smart phone devices and the internet, it was actually quite surprising to find that only three people made comments in regards to Wi-Fi during their time in New Zealand. As shown in Figure 4.7, there were two positive and two negative comments made in regards to both availability and accessibility. Blogger 35 made two comments in regards to Wi-Fi – one of the comments was negative and it was on the annoyance of the Wi-Fi at their accommodation always disconnecting. Then she made a positively toned comment, expressing gladness that they had Vodafone as a backup and that Vodafone worked every time for them.

“Wi-Fi keeps disconnecting ...well, fortunately we have a life-saving card that Zhang had. VODAFONE was our solution”

(Blogger 35, Female)

“Internet only available when back at the hotel”

(Blogger 11, Male)

The frustration of not being able to access the internet properly was negatively influencing the tourists. Therefore, it was fortunate they managed to access the internet with the Vodafone card which helped them solve their problem. They were very grateful that Vodafone enabled them to have internet access. This was highlighted with their capitalisation of the word ‘Vodafone’.

### 4.4.2 Information for Tourists

“Information for tourists” is referring to the information provided to tourists during their time in New Zealand. These comments were predominately made about i-SITEs tourists came across when they were travelling. Comments in regards to i-SITEs were mainly positive and the rest were neutral comments. These neutral comments were from bloggers who were just addressing where i-SITEs are and how they can offer help. The positive perceptions towards i-SITEs were expressed towards to availability of aid and information there is for tourists and there was one comment made in regards to the service they received from a particular i-SITE.

“No matter where you are, as long as you find an i-SITE...it’s the way to know your direction”

(Blogger 30, Female)

Blogger 30 has perceived i-SITEs to be a helpful source for tourist if they get lost. Blogger 6 commented on how impressed she was with the staff at the i-SITE correcting their mistake of providing the wrong information to the tourists earlier about departure times.

"Unexpectedly they very quickly admit their mistake and assured us the day is right....they are very helpful and very friendly..."

(Blogger 6, Female)

The positive comments posted about i-SITEs in New Zealand could reassure other tourists that travelling in New Zealand will be safer and less of a hassle as there is a good tourist system in place for tourists to get help from if they get lost. Blogger 30 made another comment about i-SITEs during her trip which expressed how impressed she felt towards the services of i-SITEs,

"In NZ we experienced what it means to be a tourism passionate destination"

(Blogger 30, Female)

Blogger 30 perceived New Zealand to be a country that is 'passionate' about tourism through the services she received at i-SITEs. The positive feedback Blogger 28 has given indication that i-SITEs are performing well in their services to tourists, they are perceived to be main point of contact for tourists when they are seeking information, therefore it is important that they are perceived positively.

#### 4.4.3 Proximity and Convenience

"Proximity and convenience" was a subcategory which was analysed as well. This subcategory involved examining the comments the tourists' made towards how convenient they thought it was to purchase or to obtain a service. There were three comments made and they were all positive. One of these comments addressed the convenience of having dairies and supermarkets near the accommodation and the tourists being able to purchase things when they need to. One of the bloggers commented on the convenience of being able to buy breakfast in the morning from the supermarket nearby.

#### 4.4.4 Airport Infrastructure

“Airport infrastructure” was also commented on in the blogs and therefore has been used as a subcategory to understand what tourists think of the airport infrastructure in New Zealand. The comments made were in regards to baggage handling in Auckland Airport and the transfers made at Auckland Airport. Blogger 1 expressed negativity towards the transfer system between the international and domestic terminals at Auckland Airport.

“There is no direct transfer at the Auckland Airport, we have to collect our luggage at the international airport and then carry the heavy luggage bags to catch the bus to the domestic airport...very inconvenient”

(Blogger 1, Female)

Blogger 1 is emphasising they perceived having to carry their luggage which was heavy on top a bus to transfer to the domestic airport as a nuisance. In reality, there is a transfer system at international terminal at Auckland Airport to transfer bags on to domestic flights (Air New Zealand, 2015). The information conveyed to Blogger 1 may not have been thorough enough and the signage at Auckland Airport may not have been obvious enough. Although, this may be a minor aspect of the tourists’ trip it has occurred at the beginning of their journey when they arrived in New Zealand. Therefore, the first impression of New Zealand could have been affected negatively and tourists may perceive New Zealand as not very efficient at creating visitor flow between the airports.

#### 4.4.5 Other Facilities

“Other facilities” were also commented on in the blog entries. These included facilities such as bathrooms.

“Each spot has a clean bathroom for the convenience of visitors”

(Blogger 4, Female)

Blogger 4 was quite happy with the fact that there are clean bathroom facilities for visitors nearby in all the places that they travelled to.

### **4.5 Overall Evaluation of the Trip**

The availability of tourism infrastructure will influence tourists’ overall evaluation of the trip. The “overall evaluation of the trip” category examines any comments the blogger have made

in regards to their overall trip in New Zealand. Many of the bloggers posted more than one blog entry describing the different days and moments of their visit in New Zealand, the comments about their overall evaluation of their trip was usually in the last blogs. However, some of the bloggers who were blogging after they returned home had commented in their first entry with their most memorable moment in New Zealand.

Although over 80% of the blog entries included comments from bloggers in regards to how much of a “paradise” they perceive New Zealand to be, the majority of these comments were expressed in the duration of the bloggers travels around New Zealand rather than at the reflective stage. Therefore, these comments were accounted for and analysed in the attractions category instead. Only the comments which were made in the reflective stage of the bloggers’ trip were analysed for this category; these were often sign posted by phrases such as “Most memorable...”, “I miss...”, “Overall...” which allows the reader to know this blogger is reflecting on their overall trip in New Zealand. Although there were only a few comments in this category, the available comments in this category all yielded a 100% positive perception of tourists’ overall evaluation of their trip in New Zealand. This category was divided into three subcategories of “environment”, “food” and the “New Zealand Dream”.

Figure 4.8: Overall Evaluation of Trip

<b>Overall Evaluation of Trip</b>					
<b>Subcategory</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Overall %</b>
<b>Environment</b>	5	0	0	5	<b>100% Positive</b>
Clean	2	0	0	2	<b>100% Positive</b>
Comfort	3	0	0	3	<b>100% Positive</b>
<b>Food</b>	1	0	0	1	<b>100% Positive</b>
<b>New Zealand Dream</b>	11	0	0	11	<b>100% Positive</b>

#### 4.5.1 Environment

The subcategory “environment” accounted for the comments which were about how the condition of the environment of New Zealand made the blogger feel while they were in New Zealand. There were two evaluating factors under the subcategory environment and these were “cleanliness” and “comfort”. All of these comments were positive; out of the five comments on the environment of New Zealand, two comments were about the cleanliness of New Zealand’s environment and three comments were about the comfortable feeling the tourists felt while they were in the New Zealand environment. Another comment was made about the subcategory food. This comment was made about the all the foods that the blogger reminisced about after her trip. Another subcategory is the “New Zealand Dream”.

The comments made in regards to the environment indicated that Chinese tourists have a positive feelings towards the environment in New Zealand. Comments were made about the cleanliness of the environment in New Zealand. One of the bloggers made the comment,

“This is a piece of pure land, air, no harmful substances and suspended solids”

(Blogger 7, Male)

The comment was expressed by the blogger during his reflection towards how he felt about New Zealand after having visited the country. He perceived this place as “pure” with no “harmful substances” which addresses the image of 100% Pure New Zealand which Tourism New Zealand promotes. The purity of New Zealand’s landscape and environment was so well received by blogger 7, he was simple astounding by the natural beauty. As the environment in China is heavily polluted and over-populated, these simple things in life such as the air and the land prompted positive feelings and amazement for blogger 7. Other comments made towards the environment were also in regards to the “comfortable” feelings tourists had felt while they were surrounding by the New Zealand environment. These included comments such as,

“The environment here doesn’t make one uncomfortable at all”

(Blogger 17, Male)

From this quotation the blogger’s perception towards the way he feels about being in New Zealand is highlighted and appears positive. He indicates that he is perfectly comfortable



being in New Zealand. He was describing the environment in New Zealand and similar to blogger 7, he was amazed with the purity of his surroundings. Unlike the pollution and dust they experience in their home country, he felt "comfortable" in New Zealand because it felt "clean" and "tidy". Another blogger who expressed a positive perception towards the environment of New Zealand was Blogger 1.

"I don't know why, I find it difficult to blog about New Zealand, I don't know where to start. Maybe, I'm afraid I would not be able to describe all the beauty I see though my writing. Honestly, I don't even know how to describe this beauty or describe my experience"

(Blogger 1, Female)

As Blogger 1 was trying to record her New Zealand travel experiences, she wrote at the beginning of the entry she found it difficult to start writing about New Zealand. She found it difficult because she was afraid her writing alone would not be able to describe the beauty of the country and the experiences she has had in New Zealand. This emphasises the "paradise" like world tourists perceive New Zealand as. Many of bloggers have used the words "pure" and "paradise" to describe New Zealand in their blog entries. As a "paradise", New Zealand is perceived to not only be physically beautiful but beautiful within an environment that is aesthetically pleasing and provides positive feelings to all the senses. In the next chapter, in section 5.1.1, comments the bloggers made towards how the beauty of New Zealand's nature 'touches' the sense will be examined.

#### 4.5.2 Food

One of the bloggers reflected on the food New Zealand had on offer to her while she was in New Zealand, as she was reminiscing she listed the foods she ate while she was in New Zealand that was memorable to her.

"...fruits and vegetables, meat and seafood, fresh and delicious: such as lamb, venison, lobster, avocado, strawberries, kiwi fruit and salmon"

(Blogger 2, Female)

The foods she has listed here highlights the foods which could be memorable to other Chinese tourists who visit New Zealand. Research has suggested that gastronomy related experiences during travel can be very memorable (Kivela & Crofts, 2006). A more detailed analysis and

findings will be discussed about the bloggers' perception towards the food and beverages they had during their time in New Zealand is featured in chapter six.

#### 4.5.3 The New Zealand Dream

The "New Zealand Dream" subcategory entails the comments the bloggers have made in regards to the lifestyle in New Zealand. The comments have indicated there is an attraction for Mainland Chinese tourists to New Zealand to dream about a lifestyle in New Zealand. They perceive New Zealand as a paradise and the simple life that they can achieve here becomes a factor for them to want to experience and explore more of this country. All of the comments made in this subcategory were positive and these will become positive word of mouth for others to seek this experience themselves. They seek what they perceive as the simple life in New Zealand, a contrast to their lifestyle in China, amongst the populated cities and the air pollution. Compared to home, New Zealand appears more pure and less congested.

"To live in such a place...am I actually willing to leave?"

(Blogger 6, Female)

"Glorious sunshine, small town with mountain and water, row upon row of cottages of white, red, grey, blue, green, yellow and flowers amongst the trees all along the hillside, it's like a fairy-tale"

(Blogger 4, Female)

Upon checking out of her accommodation and leaving, Blogger 6 had made this comment as she was reflecting on her trip. She expresses a desire to stay in New Zealand longer as it appears to her to be a positive place to live by questioning whether she actually wants to leave. Many of the bloggers were referring to New Zealand as a "paradise". Blogger 4 perceived New Zealand like a fairy-tale and as fairy-tales are usually happy, it can be interpreted this blogger is perceiving New Zealand as a place where happiness is. In modern society, technology and lifestyles have changed from simple lifestyles to those that are more stressful and busy. Chinese tourists are constructing an ideal New Zealand Dream where the lifestyle could be much more relaxed and simple compared to home.

"Watching the young and the old and their dogs happily playing around the lake while eating a healthy breakfast with such a peaceful mind-set, this is the lifestyle I aspire to have, nothing can match it"

(Blogger 1, Female)

"New Zealanders might be the luckiest people on earth, they can enjoy a paradise like environment, in such a pure and beauty environment, people, air, food, landscape, and lifestyle can all be summed up one word: Pure, pure paradise"

(Blogger 2, Female)

Bloggers 1 and 2 expressed envy and aspiration towards New Zealanders being able to live with a lifestyle that is perceived to be much more relaxing and carefree. This holistic view constructed by these Chinese bloggers is perceived to be only positive and they imagine that all the elements in New Zealand including "people, air, food, landscape and lifestyle" are pure and good. These bloggers were imaging the ideal lifestyle and New Zealand has been perceived to be the destination which can offer this ideal lifestyle. Blogger 18 illustrated in detail through his blog entry what it will be like to live in New Zealand.

"I will settle down here, build my own big house, make my own wine, bake my own cakes, make my own coffee, do everything myself. The inside of the house will be filled with artistic photography, I will have long hair, sport a long beard wearing a cool cow boy hat, drive a safari jeep, with my Cinderella by my side, ride over mountains, swim in the sea, ride over paddocks...what a 'hard-life' it will be"

(Blogger 18, Male)

New Zealand is perceived to be able to facilitate the ideal simple lifestyle Chinese tourists are seeking. Due to the air pollution and over populated cities, the lifestyle in China can be extremely stressful. Amongst the bustling population and the stress, Chinese tourists have almost forgotten about the simple life that they may have once had since being a child. Immersed in the simple life New Zealanders have compared to Chinese, Blogger 12 expressed that he felt like a child again doing a simple chore, helping an elderly couple at his farm stay peel garlic.

"One day I was helping them peel the garlic, all of a sudden I didn't feel like I was in New Zealand anymore, like I had time travelled so an afternoon many years ago and I was helping mum peel garlic...I wonder at this very moment right now how mum and dad are, what are they doing? Their son thousands of miles away peeling garlic like a child, peeling them slowly one by one"

(Blogger 12, Male)

Many of the descriptions about the New Zealand Dream the bloggers commented on involved the nature in New Zealand. These comments were made as the bloggers were participating in the local attractions and activities amongst the natural New Zealand scenery. There were many positive comments made in regards to these natural attractions. These will be discussed in the next chapter.

# Chapter 5: Attractions and Activities

## 5.1 Attractions

An attraction is what attracts tourists to a destination. Attractions were a popular theme of expression in the comments made by Chinese tourists in their travel blogs. Attraction are a big part of travel and tourism and play a vital role in drawing people to a destination. Scholars have claimed a collection of attractions is what makes up a destination (Hsu et al., 2008). This category is divided into five subcategories: New Zealand nature, location specific attractions (locations with icons, such as Moeraki Boulders), New Zealand flora and fauna, cultural attractions, and *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* related attractions.

Figure 5.1: Attractions

Attractions					
Subcategory	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total	Overall %
<b>New Zealand Nature</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>95% Positive</b>
New Zealand Beauty	193	4	6	203	96% Positive
Touch with the Senses	10	0	0	10	100% Positive
<b>Location Specific Attractions</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>52% Positive</b>
<b>Flora and Fauna</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>74% Positive</b>
<b>Cultural Attractions</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>70% Positive</b>
<b>Hobbit/Lord of the Rings</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>56% Positive</b>

New Zealand has been marketed with a 100% Pure identity, making our natural resources such as mountains, lakes and rivers a main attraction for tourists when they visit. These are the icons of New Zealand and it is how Chinese tourists perceive New Zealand. Blogger 34 claimed,

“This is the original New Zealand. Clouds wrapped around the waist of glaciers, emerald lakes”

(Blogger 34, Female)

“Beneath pure blue sky, lake glittering lakes, forceful magnificent glaciers and snow-capped mountains, surging waves of the coast, rivers such as the weaving of plain, open valleys...rich and vast natural beauty...there is a 100% Pure nature”

(Blogger 17, Male)

Blogger 34 was describing what she was seeing while she was in New Zealand, the picturesque view she saw was how he perceived “the original New Zealand”. Blogger 17 also described the parts of New Zealand nature she saw that he reckons makes up the 100% pure nature of New Zealand. All the bloggers had commented on the natural environment and it was obvious the natural New Zealand beauty was the most common topic for bloggers and tourists alike.

#### 5.1.1 New Zealand Nature

The subcategory “New Zealand nature” was examining all the comments made by the bloggers on the natural environment of New Zealand. This includes all the mountains, the atmosphere, the lakes, and the fields of New Zealand. New Zealand nature was the most commented on subcategory in the blog entries. The bloggers adore New Zealand nature and perceive New Zealand as a “paradise” because of this beauty. As shown in Figure 5.1, there was total of 213 comments made in regards to the nature of New Zealand and 96% of these comments were positive.

“Glacier water was calm and clear...all very pure”

(Blogger 4, Female)

“On the way we came across a lookout and had the chance to admire the stunning sapphire blue Lake Wakatipu....faced with such a peaceful scenery was just marvellous”

(Blogger 35, Female)

“The view was spectacular, magical”

(Blogger 19, Male)

These positive comments bloggers wrote in their blog entries highlighted the beauty New Zealand has which have been perceived amongst the tourists. The natural scenery is so “peaceful” and “stunning” it is “magical”. Some of the comments expressed indicated there was more than the physical beauty of the nature that was perceived by the Chinese bloggers. Chinese bloggers also expressed deeper feelings about the beauty of New Zealand beyond the aesthetics. Ten comments were made in regards to how the nature of New Zealand “touch the other senses”.

“I can imagine even the most stressed and busiest person would be able to peacefully relax here and enjoy the peaceful isolation”

(Blogger 29, Female)

“Beautiful scenery...so every morning the first thing I do is to come to the door and take a deep breath”

(Blogger 30, Female)

“The sun shining through the leaves of forest, listening to only the sounds of birds chirping. Strolling along like this is like strolling in paradise, so relaxed and so beautiful”

(Blogger 36, Female)

Blogger 29, 30 and 36 have expressed the deeper feeling of nature being able to bring relaxation and peace to them. The first thing Blogger 30 did in the morning was to get fresh air from the outdoors as it made her feel better. Blogger 12 and Blogger 17 described deeper feelings towards the nature of New Zealand.

“I fell in love with this place as soon as I got here, the place is filled with aura, all the cells in my body are filled with a natural comfort and every breath is filled with fresh air and you can taste the minerals in the pure water ...a dream paradise”

(Blogger 12, Male)

“This 100% pure nature is enough to wash the soul”

(Blogger 17, Male)

The descriptions Blogger 12 and Blogger 17 have provided, suggest the nature of New Zealand is perceived so ‘pure’, psychologically it makes one feel as if everything else

including their own mind-set and body has been influenced and in turn has become ‘pure’ as well.

Physical beauty influences the psychological mind-set of the tourists – the Chinese tourists all perceive New Zealand to be beautiful, the physical aesthetics of the New Zealand nature has influenced Chinese tourists to perceive the country to be beautiful. However, when the “beauty” of New Zealand does not presented itself like the way it is perceived to be, like at times when the weather in New Zealand is bad, the tourists are disappointed with the view they are given.

“Unfortunately, bad weather, far can see snow-capped mountains surrounded, but not clear enough”

(Blogger 17, Male)

“We were a little disappointed, because NZ scenery needs to have blue skies and white clouds, cloudy weather is wasting the natural beauty of NZ”

(Blogger 1, Female)

“A grey overcast, like a plain Chinese ink painting, no colours and no sharpness, unable to see the dreamy blues and greens”

(Blogger 1, Female)

New Zealand nature is promoted to potential visitors in their countries of origins by Tourism New Zealand. Therefore, at the first stage of the pre-trip tourists are already exposed to the idea that New Zealand has a lot of natural beauty and purity to offer. The promotional material creates a perception for tourists of what New Zealand nature should look like, these include the “blues” the “greens” like the tourist have commented. Thus, these are the expectations tourists have towards the scenery in New Zealand. When these expectations are not meet it they become disappointments like Blogger 1 and Blogger 17’s experiences when they had bad weather. However, the majority of the comments on New Zealand nature were positive. These positive feedback from the tourists indicated their expectations have been met and this will likely prompt their audience who are reading these blog entries to consider New Zealand as a destination as New Zealand can offer what it promotes.



### 5.1.2 Location Specific Attractions

The “location specific attraction” subcategory was examining all the comments the tourists made in regards to the attractions which are unique to a specific region of New Zealand. These were attractions such as the geothermal pools in Rotorua and the Moeraki Boulders. Although these types of attractions are part of the nature of New Zealand, these comments were coded differently to provide more detail into the types of attractions in New Zealand the bloggers were writing about.

Once again the majority of these comments were positive, with a focus on how great the experiences were at these locations.

“The Moeraki Boulders were an amazing sight...all round, some were smooth and some had cracks on them...they look like they might be dinosaur eggs left behind”

(Blogger 35, Female)

“Once you enter Rotorua, you will immediately notice the gentle smell of sulphur, there is geothermal activity everywhere and you can see the white smoke”

(Blogger 21, Male)

Comments the bloggers made in this sub-category revealed what these tourists noticed and how they perceived each attraction at these locations. It is important to understand what aspects of the attractions tourists pay attention to and how they perceive these attractions in order for tourism stakeholders in New Zealand to cater well to their visitors when they visit their destination. The most mentioned attractions at the different locations were Moeraki Boulders, Puzzling World, The Sky Tower, geothermal activity in Rotorua, the Hot Air Balloon Festival in Wairarapa, the Cadbury Chocolate Factory in Dunedin, The Pancake Rocks, Larnach Castle and gold mining in Arrowtown. Puzzling World and The Sky Tower were popular as Queenstown, Wanaka and Auckland were the top New Zealand destinations to visit for the Chinese bloggers. They also enjoy the Moeraki Boulders as they remind of them of “dinosaur eggs”. The colourful array of colours amongst a clear blue sky proved to be so picturesque it dazzled these Chinese tourists. A blogger had even suggested to their audience to visit during this time of year so they capture this beautiful picture and experience the array of colours in the sky for themselves.

### 5.1.3 Flora and Fauna

The “flora and fauna” of New Zealand is also commented on the blog entries. Chinese tourists were not only fascinated by the overall natural beauty such as the scenery with the mountains and the lakes, but they were also fascinated by the flora and fauna in these environments. The beauty of the flowers and the birds and animals are noted by these Chinese tourists. These comments were mainly positive; they were especially interested in the flowers of New Zealand. Lupin flowers were mentioned a few times across different blog entries by different bloggers.

“Lupin flowers...are huge and gorgeous flowers. I love this wild beauty”

(Blogger 34, Female)

“The faint floral scent in the flowers...the wonderful sea of lupin flowers”

(Blogger 30, Female)

This flower is perceived to blossom well and is perceived as beautiful to these Chinese tourists. Many New Zealanders may not be aware of the Lupin flower and as they resemble the more commonly known Lavender, they might be mistaken as Lavender. Therefore, it was interesting to find that not only do Chinese tourists know what type of flower they were but they took notice of in particular while they were in New Zealand. This information could reveal the types of flora Chinese people are interested in and could help New Zealand tourism stakeholders cater to these tourists by suggesting or creating tailored tourism products to the Chinese with these flora in mind.

The fauna part of this subcategory was examining all the comments these bloggers made in regards to the animals and birds they came across while they were travelling through New Zealand. These were animals which they came across through happenstance rather than the animals they were intentionally visiting. These were animals such as wildlife by sea or farm animals when they were passing by rural areas.

“So beautiful, we encountered dolphins”

(Blogger 36, Female)

“We encountered a little penguin coming onto shore from the sea...wiggling and walking slowly, so cute”

“There was no warning...the grass was as tall as half a human...all of sudden the grass moved and there was a sea lion amongst it all...it really gave us a fright”

(Blogger 17, Male)

Blogger 36’s journey on a boat while travelling to their next destination was enhanced because they encountered dolphins beside their boat through happenstance. Blogger 17 also felt happy about her encounter with the little penguin. It was a happy surprise for her to see a little penguin waddling out of the water. Although the blog entries revealed that Chinese tourists participated in organised animal encounters such as farm visits, the blog entries also revealed the bloggers derived pleasure from the unplanned and unexpected encounters with wildlife too. Organised animal encounters will later be discussed in section 5.2.1 of this chapter. As shown in Figure 5.1, there were 77 comments made in the blog entries in regards to New Zealand flora and fauna; 74% of these comments were positive.

However, there were also encounters which the Chinese tourists were a little bit unsure of. The encounter with the sea lion was slightly different to the encounter with the penguin for Blogger 17. The sea lion is bigger in size and can be more intimidating, he also stated ‘there was no warning’ for his about the sea lions. This will be useful information for relevant tourism stakeholders to manage their visitor experience. Regional tourism operators can publish guidelines which warn the tourists about the types of wildlife they may encounter and provide guidelines for interaction. However, the unplanned nature of many tourism encounters does mean that they are hard to manage. Happenstance happens; it cannot necessarily be managed.

#### 5.1.4 Cultural Attractions

As with all destinations there are always cultural attractions as well as natural attractions. Cultural attractions, sometimes known as human attractions, are attractions which have not been created naturally but have been created by humans over time. These attractions could be the presentation of one’s culture or it could be physical structures which reveals history or stories about that specific culture. The cultural attraction comments examined in this study were Māori cultural attractions and modern day human made attractions which reveal the local lifestyle such as local markets. The most mentioned cultural attractions is the Māori cultural attractions, especially in the blog entries written about Rotorua.

“Lots of Māori carvings everywhere”

(Blogger 24, Female)

“Early Māori housing, barricades and bushes and palm branches around them, and they were simple and low”

(Blogger 34, Female)

The Chinese tourists were interested in Māori culture, they paid attention to the Māori carvings and sculpture and they were interested in the history of Māori culture. They viewed the early housing Māori people had and they described it. This highlights they were paying very close attention to these artefacts and were expressing interest in them. Chinese tourists were also interested in the local markets which sold local produce.

“It happens to be Saturday, there are many small local markets where we can explore and we can also buy many different local produce”

(Blogger 32, Female)

Local markets are a cultural attraction as they offer a window into everyday life at the destination. Referring back to the literature review, Chapter Two, TIANZ (2011) suggested Chinese tourists enjoy gaining in-depth understanding of other cultures; visiting early Maori housing and visiting local markets allows Chinese tourists to immerse themselves more into New Zealand’s history and culture, which allows them to understand more about New Zealand culture.

#### 5.1.5 Hobbit/Lord of the Rings

Ever since Sir Peter Jackson made the *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy and *The Hobbit* trilogy, New Zealand has been placed on the map in the film industry. It became evident that many of the Chinese bloggers are fans of *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings* as many of these bloggers commented on the films and the sets in their blog entries. They wanted to visit the sites the film was shot at and see the scenery for themselves. Therefore, this subcategory was examining the comments these tourist made in regards to the films. Many of the bloggers have visited attractions which relate to these two films. They wish to visit the sites which have appeared in the scenes of the film and see it for themselves.

“*The Hobbit 2* was shot with an overcast in the sky, dwarf army hand-held razor, toward the vast wilderness from among the mountains, and on the fields, the endless purple pink flowers....my friend excitedly grab my hand and said look...seeing it for ourselves”

(Blogger 34, Female)

Blogger 34 and her friends were very excited to finally be in the scene where the dwarf army was filmed in *Hobbit 2*.

“Remembering the scene with Matamata in the *Hobbit* movie, I was shocked to see how the place was portrayed as an isolated paradise; blue sky and big flower big flower cotton candy clouds, clear turquoise creek nestled in the village quietly flowing, with a 5000 square meters of vegetable and flower garden...At that time I was thinking: This is where exactly? Where in the world is this fairy-like existence?!...so this it is New Zealand  
(Blogger 32, Female)

Blogger 32 was very excited to find New Zealand had met the perceived paradise she had imagined in her head based on how the paradise had been portrayed in *The Hobbit*. When she was watching *The Hobbit* she wondered where the wonderful place on screen was and she was excited to find that this place is New Zealand. This was emphasised by the exclamation mark she used at the end of her comments. These films also provide a vehicle for showcasing aspects of the natural landscape. Although fictional works, they do reinforce the idea that New Zealand's landscapes are distinctive. This highlights the influences of New Zealand films and New Zealand scenery have on consumers when they are viewing New Zealand on the big screen overseas. Therefore, it is important to remember that marketing campaigns such as the *100% pure New Zealand* campaign are not the only “touch points” or exposure Chinese people and other consumers have to New Zealand. There are many different types of media which different markets are exposed to and these exposures will influence their perceptions on destinations.

## 5.2 Activities

There were many different types of activities which the Chinese tourists blogged about. These activities included farm activities, animal related activities, shopping, adventure activities scenic activities and relaxation activities.

Figure 5.2: Activities

Activities					
Subcategory	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total	Overall %
Animal and Farm related activities	5	0	0	5	100% Positive
Shopping	6	2	2	10	60 Positive
Adventure Activities	11	0	17	26	42% Positive 65% Neutral Tone
Scenic Activities	12	1	1	14	86% Positive
Relaxation	7	0	5	12	58% Positive

### 5.2.1 Animal Activities, Farm Activities

There were many activities which involved animals that were mentioned in the blog entries. This subcategory examined the comments which the bloggers made in regards to the animals they encountered intentionally when they participated in an activity which was animal related; such as farm visits, and visits to the aquarium or places like the International Antarctic Centre in Christchurch. The difference between this subcategory and the flora and fauna subcategory in attractions is that these animal encounters were intended by the tourists rather than through happenstance. Previously in the attractions section, 5.1, one of the bloggers commented on penguins they encountered while they were visiting the shore. Another blogger had also mentioned penguins in their blog entry, but this encounter was at the International Antarctic Centre, so it was an intended encounter.

“The ridiculously foolish look the penguins have, make them look cute and comparable to our national treasure, the panda”

(Blogger 7, Male)

Similar to Blogger 34, Blogger 7 had also found penguins to be “cute” and had positive perceptions towards the encounter. Blogger 7 has even compared the penguin to their “national treasure, the panda”. Penguins are not common in China. The comparison Blogger 7 made between penguins and panda could suggest he is trying to compare his current encounter with a similar encounter with an animal at an enclosure previously. This suggest Chinese tourists might be evaluating their tourists’ experiences in New Zealand against other tourists’ products that they have experienced previously. In this scenario, Blogger 7 is evaluating the display of penguins against his possible previous experience with displays of pandas.

One of the main animal related activities which was mentioned quite a few times in the blog entries were farm activities which involved alpacas. Through the blog entries, Chinese tourists gave an impression that they are very fond of alpacas.

“Velvet upper body, long neck, round beady eyes...do not forget that lock of beautiful bangs...alpacas”

(Blogger 32, Female)

“Chinese people love alpacas”

(Blogger 35, Female)

These animals are perceived to be rare to them and are cute. The bloggers also like the products which are made from alpaca wool.

“Alpaca wool quality and colour is unique and famous, it is twice as tough as sheep wool...fewer impurities and the net rate of cashmere is 90%...comfortable and soft, it is considered a soft gold”

(Blogger 32, Female)

Some of the places mentioned in the blogs, such as the Agrodome in Rotorua had souvenir stores as well where the tourists were able to purchase alpaca related souvenirs. The Chinese bloggers enjoyed purchasing souvenirs for family and friends back home.

### 5.2.2 Shopping

It is commonly perceived that Chinese tourists enjoy shopping (refer to section 2.4.3). Tours and shopping activities have been tailored to cater to Chinese shopping habits when they travel. Their liking for shopping was highlighted in their comments about shopping in their blog entries. Chinese tourists enjoy shopping in New Zealand. They enjoy purchasing New

Zealand made products. There were several things they shopped for while they were in New Zealand, the most common category were souvenirs such as lanolin products, sheepskin and woollen products, but they were also interested in local markets which sold local arts and crafts as well. However, there was one blogger who expressed an interesting comment in comparing the souvenirs of New Zealand to the ones in Japan. This tourist is an experienced traveller and has visited many different places before he visited New Zealand. Blogger 28 wrote,

“The souvenirs here in New Zealand are rather small, a little pot of lanolin cream is not very good for a gift, for the same price in Japan although things are expensive as well, it is a much better look”

(Blogger 28, Gender Unknown)

Comparing the souvenirs New Zealand has to offer to Japan, this blogger claims the two countries are both expensive price-wise when it comes to purchasing souvenirs for those back home. However, for the same price the souvenirs in Japan will appear as a better gift compared to a little pot of lanolin cream they can get in New Zealand. Japanese gifts are very well packaged and presented compared to souvenirs sold in New Zealand. A little jar of lanolin cream may not look as aesthetically impressive.

There were a total of 10 comments made in regards to shopping as presented in Figure 5.2, one of topics discussed in the blog entries within the shopping subcategory is the quality of the products that they can purchase when they are in New Zealand. These comments usually referred to the wool products and souvenirs of New Zealand. The bloggers also commented on the trips they made to the local supermarket to purchase food and beverages for meals. They were happy with the range of the products at the supermarket.

“Visiting the supermarket to buy steak, spaghetti and red wine to cook and we enjoyed a delicious dinner with family...”

(Blogger 4, Female)

Although eating out had been good for some tourists, some other tourists had also enjoyed being able to purchase produce and cooking it themselves to eat with their family. The meal was also delicious to them.

### 5.2.3 Adventure Activities

New Zealand is known as an adventure tourism destination, tourists from around the world travel to New Zealand to participate in adventure tourism; activities such as jet boating, bungy



jumping and sky diving are popular amongst tourists. These are the popular adventure activities which were mentioned in the blog entries. Hot air ballooning in the Wairarapa has also been recorded in this subcategory. Some of the tourists were excited about participating, some were nervous, but felt they should participate considering they had travelled so far to New Zealand and these activities were perceived as a ‘must do’ in New Zealand.

“Actually, I am a scaredy cat, afraid of heights and afraid of getting dizzy. When everyone else went to sign up for skydiving, I said how about we try the less heart dropping experience – paragliding instead. However, with many unsuccessful attempts in doing it and with the scenery we saw along the way...in the days just as we were about to leave the South Island we completed an item off the bucket list, a 200km per hour free fall. Afterwards, I felt there is nothing worth being scared about, just have to take the first step”

(Blogger 35, Female)

Blogger 35 claimed she normally will be too scared of activities such as sky diving as she is scared of heights and afraid of getting dizzy. However, being in an environment surrounded by other travel companions who wanted to skydive and see the beauty of New Zealand’s nature she decided to give it a go and ended up loving the experience. The experience also changed her mind-set towards life; she now reckons, “nothing worth being scared about, just have to take the first step.”

“Helping the staff start the balloon, waiting for it to spread and fill with air makes one super excited”

(Blogger 33, Female)

Some of the bloggers expressed excitement in the ability to fully immerse themselves in the environment and being able to participate in activities. Blogger 33 was very excited to help the hot air balloon staff in the procedure of getting the balloon ready. The ability to be more involved in the activity and being able to participate added to the excitement of the adventure.

#### 5.2.4 Scenic Activities

Scenic activities were also popular amongst Chinese tourists. These included activities such as scenic boat rides, glow-worm tours and helicopter rides. Glow-worm tours were popular amongst these tourists, many of them participated in the glow worm tours in both the South Island and in Waitomo in the North Island.

“The amazing underground caves or the challenging outdoor caves will bring you memorable adventurous experiences...so beautiful, so beautiful...the experience will never be forgotten...A lot of the times we thought we were admiring the milky way”

(Blogger 30, Female)

Blogger 30 found the glow-worm tour experience “amazing”, she thought the experience was truly beautiful and this was emphasised by the double description of “so beautiful, so beautiful” she claimed the glow-worms caves are. She also claimed that the scene was so beautiful her and other tourists on the tour thought they were viewing the “milky way” rather than just glow-worms.

The scenic views from the helicopter ride in Queenstown was also popular and has been positively received by tourists. Blogger 35 described the view from the helicopter as “magnificent”

“...two mountains, waterfalls...magnificent moment”

(Blogger 35, Female)

#### 5.2.5 Relaxation

Chinese tourists seek to travel because they seek relaxation, want relief from pressure, and get away from pollution and simply to rest (UNWTO, 2012). The comments made in the blog entries revealed 12 comments made in regards to the relaxation activities in New Zealand (Figure 5.2). Seven of these comments were positive, where tourists were describing particular relaxing activities they participated in while in New Zealand. The five other comments were information about available relaxation activities that are available in New Zealand.

"You can admire the glittering glow-worms while you relax in a hot spring”

(Blogger 27, Male)

“Lazing around lying in the sun, you can relax on the beach”

(Blogger 34, Female)

These positive comments and information about relaxation activities available in New Zealand could serve as possible eWom through the blog entries to potential Chinese tourists who are considering New Zealand as a destination. As life in China can be very stressful given the number of large over-populated cities in the country, Chinese tourists seek relaxation,

want relief from pressure, and get away from pollution and simply to rest when they travel. The comments made by bloggers about how relaxing it is in New Zealand could prompt potential tourists to visit New Zealand to find relaxation. However, considering there were only 12 comments over many comments across all 139 blog entries it could suggest that due to the short period of time Chinese tourists have to spend in New Zealand they did not have much time to enjoy many relaxation activities. As mentioned previously in section 4.3.5, time is concern Chinese tourists have when they are planning their trips to New Zealand. There is a lot New Zealand has to offer and many different areas Chinese tourists wish to see. They are often faced with having to try and plan a strict and full itinerary to get the most out of their New Zealand experience.

Overall, this chapter has indicated that the many positive comments have included many different themes including New Zealand's nature, landscape and wildlife. While New Zealand's natural features (the sky, waterways, and mountains) are appreciated by Chinese tourists – similar to tourists from other countries – there are dimensions of this nature appreciation that might vary between cultures. This is highlighted in the Chinese tourists' appreciation towards the Lupin flowers – New Zealanders do not have the same appreciation towards this flora.

Furthermore, despite the best efforts by managers to create enjoyable tourist experiences, many positive encounters happen by chance. There could be serendipitous moments which occur during tourism. The serendipitous encounters Chinese tourists had with the wildlife indicated they enjoy most of the surprise encounters with wildlife such as penguins. However, when these surprise encounters may pose as a threat to them such as the encounter with a large animal like the sea lion, may be less welcomed by Chinese tourists. This chapter only discussed attractions and activities, the other categories worthy of attention such as language, transport, people, food and beverage and accommodation will be discussed in the next chapter, chapter 6.

# Chapter 6: Language, Transport, People, Food and Beverages and Accommodation

## 6.1 Language

Although this category was not mentioned a lot in the blog entries, language is an important category which could influence the perceptions of how well a destination caters to tourists. If there is a language barrier between tourists and locals or tourism operators during interaction it will impact on tourists' visitor experience (Teare, 1992). Tourists are from different countries and different parts of the world and therefore they do not always speak or understand the same language as the host country. Therefore, for a country to cater well to tourists, they need to make efforts to communicate effectively to their tourists by providing solutions to the language barrier with solutions such as signage, translations, staff who speak the foreign language and other media. There were two subcategories in this category: written and spoken.

Figure 6.1: Language

Language					
Subcategory	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total	Overall %
Written Language	3	0	0	3	100% Positive
Spoken Language	3	1	0	4	75% Positive

### 6.1.1 Written Language

Written language was analysing the comments made on what was available to Chinese tourists in written form. These included the entry cards, and guidelines at attractions and activities.

“Taileri Gorge has a complimentary Chinese guide map explaining the Maori meaning of the name Dunedin”

(Blogger 4, Female)

While at the Gorge, Blogger 4 was very pleased to see the guide map was in Simplified Chinese and she was able to learn the Māori meaning of the word Dunedin, a city on the South

Island. Through the translated guide map, she was able to understand thoroughly what the attraction was all about and this enhanced the experience for her. Other tourists were also pleased they had Chinese speaking guides in person and on screen during their trip.

#### 6.1.2 Spoken Language

The issue of spoken Chinese involved examining the comments made in regards to the people with whom tourists interacted with who may or may not have spoken the Chinese language. There were comments made in regards to tour guides being able to communicate in Chinese and this made it much easier for the tourists to understand. Blogger 30 commented on how much more convenient it was to have a Chinese speaking tour guide and Blogger 35 had positive perceptions towards Helipro providing their instructional video in a bilingual version of their instructional video.

“The tour guide even speaks Chinese, it made it so much more convenient for communication”

(Blogger 30, Female)

“At the Helipro, even the instruction video was bilingual”

(Blogger 35, Female)

There was one negative comment made in regards to language. This comment was made towards the operator of a rental car company. This blogger claimed the operator was speaking too fast over the phone. The operator spoke English and did not take into consideration that they might need to adjust the way they speak to foreigners who do not speak fluent English. The tourist apparently was also afraid to express that she was confused to the operator so she just said “yes”, but was actually trying to say “no”. The Chinese markets’ English fluency might be increasingly improving, but English is not a main language in China – even if Chinese people aspire to learn better English, without the ability to practice it in daily conversation their English may not be equivalent to those from English speaking countries.

The New Zealand tourism industry will have to prepare for Chinese tourists who are willing to try experiment with their English skills, but may need assistance. Front-line tourism staff could be advised to speak slowly, repeat instructions and explain carefully these tourists.

## 6.2 Transport

Transport is an essential element of tourism. It is the means for tourists to reach a destination and the means of travel between places once tourists are within a destination (Cooper et al., 1998). The “transport” category examines all the transport types tourists comments about in their blog entries. These included transport they took from the beginning of their trip to the end of the trip. Therefore, it includes the airline they flew on and the convenience of getting to and from New Zealand. It includes how they perceive the local transport system from public buses and trains to private rental cars. An example of the commented one of the bloggers made about transport was,

“This rental car company only had five rental cars in total”

(Blogger 35, Female)

Figure 6.2: Transport

Transport					
Subcategory	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total	Overall %
Flights China to New Zealand	4	0	6	10	40% Positive 60% Neutral
Flights within New Zealand	1	0	5	6	83% Neutral
Public Transport	3	0	3	6	50% Positive 50% Neutral
Rental Car	10	10	2	22	46% Positive 46% Negative
Service from Company	3	1	1	5	60% Positive
Infrastructure and Support	5	9	1	15	60% Negative

### 6.2.1 Flights from China to New Zealand

Starting from the pre-trip phrase of the tourists’ travels, the flights are the first type of transport that has been included in this study. These include all the comments the Chinese tourists have expressed in regards to the flights and airlines they took to travel from China to

New Zealand. There were 10 comments in total as presented in Figure 6.2 that were made in regards to flights to New Zealand. The comments expressed around the price and convenience of the flights and were mainly neutral. Most of the comments were the tourists providing information on the flights they took to travel to New Zealand. These comments had an informing tone to rather than a positive or negative tone. These bloggers were informing their audience of routes available if they wish to travel to New Zealand and the price of the airfares for the service.

“Currently there are direct flights to Beijing and Shanghai from Auckland”

(Blogger 33, Female)

The positive comments made in regards to the flight were related to the services they received on the flight. There were two positive comments made towards Air New Zealand services.

“Best safety video instructions too cute, full of *The Lord of the Rings* elements”

(Blogger 36, Female)

“It is very comfortable to sleep at night, the chair can be completely flat as a bed, just like a train sleeper”

(Blogger 1, Female)

A safety video is a safety procedure all airlines play, but Air New Zealand’s innovative presentation of their video not only captures their audiences’ attention on such a small aspect of their trip but has also highlighted the carrier’s connection with the country through the use of *The Lord of the Rings* elements.

Blogger 1 was impressed with the comfort of the seating on the flight. However, it was evident that this blogger was seating in business class based on the seat description they offered in their blog entry, so the same situation will not apply to all tourists. Nevertheless, Air New Zealand seems to cater well to this tourist in this area and it has gained some positive word of mouth.

#### 6.2.2 Flights within New Zealand

Once the tourists had arrived in New Zealand, they took various types of transportation to travel around the country. On longer journeys some of the tourists chose to take domestic flights between cities. The comments the bloggers made in this subcategory were mainly

neutral as they were once again informing others of the flight services available between destinations within New Zealand. As shown in Figure 6.2, there were seven comments on domestic flights in the blog entries and five of these comments were information provided with a neutral tone. For example, Blogger 30 commented on the amount of time it takes to travel between Auckland and Queenstown via flight.

“It takes over an hour to fly from Auckland to Queenstown”

(Blogger 30, Female)

### 6.2.3 Public Transport

Once the tourists arrived in New Zealand, they needed transportation to travel between places. This subcategory analyses the comments where the bloggers have commented on public transportation. These included all comments on taxis, trains, buses and coaches while they took while they were in New Zealand. There were six comments in this subcategory, three were positive and three neutral.

“Small train, convenient transport”

(Blogger 4, Female)

“As the airport is too far from the city we decided to take a taxi and it only cost \$19NZD”

(Blogger 30, Female)

Blogger 4 and Blogger 30 expressed positive perceptions towards public transportation. Blogger 4 felt the train was a convenient transportation method and Blogger 30 felt the taxi fare was reasonable from the airport to their accommodation. These comments on public transport not only indicate how tourists perceive the public transport system in New Zealand but it also provides indication which public transports they are taking.

### 6.2.4 Rental Cars

As many of the bloggers were free independent travellers, many of them rented cars and explored the country themselves rather than participate in a tour. These tourists had commented on the experience of driving while they were in New Zealand and had also provided tips and recommendations for other tourists if they wish to drive in New Zealand as well. “Infrastructure and support for rental car drivers and users” was also an evaluating factor. These refer to infrastructure such as the state of the roads, the instructions for foreign drivers written or on signage on roads. There were a total of 22 comments made in regards to



the rental car driving experience by the bloggers as presented in Figure 6.2. Five of these comments were made in regards to the service of the rental car company and 15 were made in regards to the infrastructure and support for driving on the road. There were 9 comments out of 15 that were negative about the infrastructure and support, and these were usually comments in regards to the driving conditions on the road. Bloggers perceived them to be dangerous.

"For our two new drivers...no lights on the road, unfamiliar car, unfamiliar roads..."

(Blogger 11, Male)

"Road is not wide, two-lane; bridge is only a single line"

(Blogger 4, Female)

"Over the Takaka Hill was the most dangerous period of our trip"

(Blogger 36, Female)

These bloggers implied that they did not feel safe while driving on New Zealand roads. They perceive some of the roads to be too narrow and dim and it makes them feel unsafe. Recent media has claimed that there are bad tourists drivers in New Zealand who are putting other road users in danger (Gates , 2015; news.com.au, 2015) which had prompted the chairman of the Rental Vehicle Association, Barry Kidd, to propose a black list of bad foreign drivers and prevent them from renting cars in New Zealand. The comments from bloggers reveal that these tourists are not necessary bad drivers, instead, they perceive New Zealand road conditions to be unsafe to begin with. Blogger 35 had a near-crash encounter while she was driving under common New Zealand road conditions which may be familiar to locals but are unfamiliar to tourists.

"The road to the lighthouse was difficult, it was a gravel road going up and down hill and along with the heavy rain it was difficult. In fact, as I was going downhill I didn't notice the turn and almost went down the cliff, I urgently slammed the brakes and the car skidded and spun...then I gained control of the car again...that was the second most frightening experience I've had in New Zealand after skydiving"

(Blogger 35, Female)

Previous studies have shown tourists have reported the frustration of the unclear instructions of driving in a foreign country and it affects their ability drive a rental vehicle (Li et al., 2011). Blogger 35 felt the road conditions were difficult to drive on to begin with, the road was unfamiliar to her and with the poor weather conditions it created a hazard for her to drive under. In order to support tourism, local regional tourism councils and the greater city councils will have to come up with solutions to ensure that the tourists feel safer while driving. This could be road improvements or it could be better guidance for tourists who are planning to drive while in New Zealand. If tourists were well-educated and informed about the types of conditions they will encounter when driving in New Zealand, it may prompt them to reconsider their mode of transport; instead of driving they might decide to take public transport. This will create a safer journey for both the tourists and other road users. Based on her own driving experiences in New Zealand, Blogger 6 provided recommendations to other tourists when driving on New Zealand roads.

“There are no lights on the roads after dark, so it is important for drivers to understand that you should try and reach your destination before it gets dark”

(Blogger 6, Female)

Despite the negative comments on road conditions, there were some positive comments from bloggers in regards to the signage on the side of the roads. Blogger 4 did not believe the road conditions were good enough, but she did feel the signage on the side of the road provided good indication for drivers to know what was coming up next. Another positive comment in regards to self-driving was Blogger 6’s comment on the convenience of parking in Queenstown.

“New Zealand has good concise indication. The road on both sides, you can often see a marked tree trunk and signs that will indicate a rest stop is coming up”

(Blogger 4, Female)

“Queenstown centre parking very convenient”

(Blogger 6, Female)

### 6.3 People

The “people” category examines the comments the bloggers have made on the people they have interacted with while they were in New Zealand (Figure 6.3). These could be front-line service staff, other tourists, or simply the locals who tourists have encountered during their trip. The bloggers made comments on how these people they have encountered have influenced their trip. An interesting example from one of the bloggers was when she commented how she enjoyed travelling with people from a specific star sign, she said,

“The girl is a Virgo, I love travelling and talking to people who are Virgos, they are always fun to interact with”

(Blogger 35, Female)

Figure 6.3: People

People					
Subcategory	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total	Overall %
Locals	6	0	0	6	100% Positive
Tourism Staff/Operators	4	0	0	4	100% Positive
Other tourists	3	0	2	5	60% Positive
Accompanying tourists	3	0	0	3	100% Positive

#### 6.3.1 Locals

The majority of the comments in regards to people from the blog entries were positive as shown in Figure 6.3. Overall, tourists feel positive towards the people they interacted with while they were in New Zealand. They perceive New Zealanders to be friendly and welcoming and therefore felt quite welcomed while there were in the country. Blogger 25 was quite surprised by the friendliness he got from a couple he meet at a kiwifruit orchard.

“I am a stranger, why is there so much trust and love I feel from these people? Then I realised, as long as you are being genuine, dogs will treat you as a true friend”

(Blogger 27, Male)

This is an interesting comment from Blogger 27; New Zealanders have commonly been referred to as friendly and welcoming, but no one has elaborated on this observation beyond that. After spending some time with this couple, Blogger 27 learnt that if you are genuine to others, then you will receive the same treatment back even from an animal. This has highlighted many New Zealanders and New Zealand organisations’ key value of “Manaakitanga” – hospitality and being kind. This is an unfamiliar concept for Chinese tourists, in the culture in China is different and people are more cautious, so “Manaakitanga” may not be common. This is reflected up Blogger 11’s comment on his experience with a local elderly couple she encountered when she arrive in Auckland.

“While transferring at Auckland Airport we meet an elderly couple who has just returned from overseas, when they heard it was our first time in New Zealand they were very enthusiastic to show us to the domestic terminal. We happily chatted away and they were very friendly and even invited us to the Koru Lounge and gave us a lot of recommendations for travel in New Zealand and they didn't want any monetary tips in return. It was strange I couldn't help but think whether they are trying to sell us something as this sort of thing does not happen at home often...but after a while and all the recommendations and tips they gave us I realised we really did meet someone genuine”

(Blogger 11, Male)

Blogger 11 has indicated that the genuine kindness and friendly attitude provided by an elderly couple was unfamiliar to them. The concept was so foreign she did not know how to respond to their kindness and was doubting whether the elderly couple was “trying to sell” to them. But afterwards he finally realised this elderly couple were genuinely kind and friendly. As shown in Figure 6.3, all of the comments made in regards to the locals are positive. Chinese tourists perceive New Zealanders to be very kind and friendly. The friendly faces of the locals draws Chinese tourists to New Zealand even more as it adds to the idea of New Zealand being a “paradise” – adding to the overall positive image New Zealand has.

### 6.3.2 Tourism Operators and Staff

The Chinese bloggers were also very pleased with the communication and service they got from the operators while they were in New Zealand.

“The staff were very good, texted us every day to keep us informed whether the day was a good day for diving...finally we got a text that today is perfect diving day”

(Blogger 35, Female)

Blogger 35 was impressed with the staff from the sky-diving company's daily contact with them to inform them on when it will be a good diving day. The daily updates made them feel like they were well looked after and being able to know in advance whether they could sky-dive or not on the day allowed them to plan other activities for the day.

### 6.3.3 Other Tourists

This subcategory examines the comments the bloggers made in regards to the interactions they had with other tourists while they were travelling in New Zealand. There were five comments made about other tourists (Figure 6.3), three were positive and two were neutral comments which were only mentioning other tourists and did not express a positive or negative tone.

“Encountered a Taiwanese girl who is on a gap year and has just been to Australia and now travelling New Zealand, it was interesting encounter”

(Blogger 1, Female)

Other tourists could affect a tourist's trip, especially if they are sharing the same facilities. These comments about other tourists were positive and neutral, which indicate these tourists did not have any problems with other tourists when while they were travelling. Blogger 1 had a positive encounter with a Taiwanese tourists who she meet at the YHA and enjoyed time talking to her.

### 6.3.4 Accompanying Tourists

This subcategory examine the comments the bloggers made about how their travel companion/s influence their trip in New Zealand.

“Thankfully throughout the during we had Ming, he has acted as a translator, driver, plan accommodation and put up with us old people...he must be tired”

(Blogger 4, Female)

Blogger 4 was very thankful to have her nephew Ming accompany them on their trip around New Zealand as he helped plan their accommodation, drove them around and helped with translation as well. She has indicated she was relieved with Ming's aid throughout the journey, as she realises that Ming must be tired with all the hard work. The accompanying tourists who are friends and family provides familiar faces to the travelling tourists. It helps reassure the tourists that things are under control as the trust factor is usually higher with familiar people. Having a familiar friend or family member also provides support for tourists if they were to encounter the unfamiliar. For example, Blogger 4 has expressed thanks to her nephew Ming being able to translate and plan accommodation for her. In an unfamiliar environment, the familiar face of Ming was able to help Blogger 4 overcome issues of booking accommodation in an unfamiliar place and translating unfamiliar language into familiar language for her. Blogger 4 was also very happy to have the family accompany her through dinner as well.

“...spaghetti and red wine, we enjoyed a very delicious dinner accompanied by many grandchildren”

(Blogger 4, Female)

The accompanying tourists who are friends and family provides familiar faces to the travelling tourists. It helps reassure the tourists that things are under control as the trust factor is usually higher with familiar people.

## 6.4 Food and Beverages

“Food and Beverage” examines the comments which tourists’ blog about in regards to the food and beverage they wish to try, have consumed, and have encountered during their visit in New Zealand. The subcategories which were examined here were Western food, Chinese food, food and wine, local food, fruit, food at the accommodation, seafood and other cuisines.

Figure 6.4: Food and Beverages

Food and Beverage					
Subcategory	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total	Overall %
Chinese Food	2	1	1	4	50% Positive
Western Food	5	1	5	11	46% Positive 45.5% Neutral
Food and Wine	6	0	0	6	100% Positive
Local Food	5	0	1	6	83% Positive
Fruit	2	0	0	2	100% Positive
Seafood	15	0	0	15	100% Positive
Other Food	1	1	0	2	50% Positive 50% Negative
Food at Accommodation	2	0	0	2	100% Positive

### 6.4.1 Chinese Food

There were comments made about the Chinese food available in New Zealand.

A Chinese food restaurant called Mr Yang had taste, quantity and service that was real"

(Blogger 4, Female)

Blogger 4 expressed a feeling towards a meal they had at a Chinese restaurant named “Mr Yang”, she indicated that the “taste, quantity and service was real”. This comment was considered as neutral because the Chinese version of it gave a neutral tone. The “real” component actually indicates there is nothing special about the meal but it was just considered as a meal that meet the need of hunger. Chinese is a familiar cuisine to Chinese tourists. Therefore, it may be harder to meet expectations when catering Chinese meals to Chinese tourists. However, for some Chinese tourists who are more psychocentric, they may prefer the familiar food compared to unfamiliar foods such as fish and chips during their entire New

Zealand trip. Blogger 1 indicated familiar food could be missed as they have not had it a while.

"Taste was good, it was nice to be able to eat Chinese food after so many meals of western food"

(Blogger 1, Female)

#### 6.4.2 Western Food

Most of the comments on Western food were positive. There were many bloggers who commented on grilled and roast meats such as chicken lamb and beef steaks. There were also some neutral comments where the tourists were recommending the types of western style cuisine and eateries that were available to them.

"It was a delicious dinner that night, roast chicken, curry potato and beef salad...very tasty"

(Blogger 29, Female)

Blogger 17 expressed a dislike towards a western meal they had while in New Zealand. He did not find the meal tasty and he did not perceive it to be a healthy option either. However, this could be because Blogger 17 prefers Chinese food as he claims "the world's best cuisine is Chinese food"

"Really not very tasty. Invariably coupled with high-calorie fried, potatoes cannot be separated. Well, the world's best cuisine is Chinese food"

(Blogger 17, Male)

#### 6.4.3 Food and Wine

Once again the majority of these comments were positive. Chinese tourists enjoyed the food they ate when they were in New Zealand, especially New Zealand food and wine. Blogger 30 and Blogger 36 were amongst the bloggers who expressed positive views towards the food and wine in New Zealand.

"Food and Wine tourism a treat for the taste buds"

(Blogger 30, Female)



“Seafood and wine are great”

(Blogger 36, Female)

#### 6.4.4 Local Food

There were comments made towards to local foods, the most commonly mentioned was the Ferburger in Queenstown.

“..recommended Ferburger big burger...the world’s best burger”

(Blogger 35, Female)

Blogger 35 tried the Ferburger as it is a recommendation for a must-do, must-eat when in Queenstown. She was not disappointed with the recommendation as she agreed it is the world’s best burger.

#### 6.4.5 Fruit

When these bloggers were in New Zealand, they tried many different local fruits such as the kiwifruit and the blackberry.

“Good eating habit...golden and green kiwifruit...healthy body and youthful looking skin”

(Blogger 27, Male)

“Blackberries...Tangy taste...very delicious”

(Blogger 35, Female)

Blogger 27 developed a liking towards both the golden and green kiwifruit while he was in New Zealand. He believed eating kiwifruits provided health benefits, so he was eating them daily while he was in New Zealand to try and develop a better eating habit.

#### 6.4.6 Seafood

Amongst all the food, seafood was particularly popular amongst the Chinese tourists. There were 15 comments made in regards to seafood as presented in Figure 6.3 and there were all positive.

"Big juicy oysters leads the top in being delicious, fried whitebait is sure also sure to satisfy the taste buds"

(Blogger 33, Female)

“Good seafood and lobster, fish and blue cod...super delicious”

(Blogger 36, Female)

Chinese people are familiar to fresh seafood in China. The markets in China sell fresh seafood which are caught daily and sold alive. Therefore, the experience of being able to experience the seafood offshore in New Zealand has been received positively by Chinese tourists.

#### 6.4.8 Other Cuisines

There were other cuisines besides western and Chinese food that tourists ate while in New Zealand.

“The recommended Japanese food – the scenery was good, food was delicious and was not expensive”

(Blogger 35, Female).

The Japanese cuisine recommended to Blogger 35 was well received, she thought the environment of the restaurant and the food was good and did not think it was expensive for the service and meal.

New Zealand has a variety of food, wines and seafood to offer that have been received well by Chinese tourists. However, although most Chinese tourists welcome unfamiliar foods and are willing to experiment and try local cuisines, some Chinese tourists who seek the comfort of familiarity at times during their trip will prefer Chinese cuisine. It is important for regional tourism operators to be aware of the preference of their Chinese visitors to help enhance the experience for them. By recommending local Chinese restaurants they serve above average food if possible with added value for Chinese tourists.

### **6.5 Accommodation**

Accommodation is another essential element of tourism. As tourists are away from home, they need a place to stay and rest while they are travelling. This accommodation could be commercial such as hotels, motels and backpackers or it could be private accommodation with friends and family. The accommodation category examines all the comments the bloggers made within their blog entries about the accommodation type they stayed at. The subcategories included the different types of accommodation, such as, hotels, motels, bed and breakfast, youth hostels and private accommodation with family and friends. The evaluating

factors include, price, the layout of the rooms, the environment the accommodation was situated in, and the service provided.

Figure 6.5: Accommodation

<b>Accommodation</b>					
<b>Subcategory</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Overall %</b>
<b>Hotel</b>	8	0	3	11	72% Positive
Environment	1	0	0	1	100% Positive
Layout	1	0	0	1	100% Positive
Price	0	0	3	3	100% Neutral
<b>Motel</b>	6	0	3	9	7% Positive
Environment	1	0	0	1	100% Positive
Layout	4	0	1	5	80% Positive
Price	1	0	2	3	67% Neutral
<b>Bed and Breakfast</b>	8	0	2	10	80% Positive
Environment	3	0	0	3	100% Positive
Layout	3	0	0	3	100% Positive
Service	2	0	0	2	100% Positive
<b>Holiday Park</b>	6	0	16	22	72% Neutral
Environment	2	0	0	2	100% Positive
Layout	2	0	0	2	100% Positive
Price	2	0	0	2	100% Positive
<b>YHA</b>	13	1	2	16	81% Positive
Environment	8	0	0	8	100% Positive
Layout	2	1	0	3	67% Positive
Price	3	0	1	4	75% Positive

### 6.5.1 Hotels

The comments in this subcategory are mostly positive as presented in Figure 6.5. Tourists are mostly commenting on the environment in which their accommodation is situated.

“As you walk out of the door there is the blue, blue lake water”

(Blogger 30, Female)

"The hotel window, you can see the sea. Beautiful. Makes one unable to blink, mind imagining the wonderful views through the different seasons"

(Blogger 29, Female)

Blogger 29 and 30 are both describing the view they get from the rooms of their accommodation. The beautiful environment they are situated in enhances their stay. Other positive comments made towards the accommodation were comments made in regards to the layout of the accommodations.

"The rooms are big and there are even internal doors which are especially suitable for big families and friends travelling together"

(Blogger 33, Female)

Blogger 31 was impressed with the spacious layout of their room and found the internal doors between the rooms practical.

#### 6.5.2 Motels

The comments on motel accommodation were similar to the comments in regards to hotel accommodation. The tourists were evaluating their accommodation based on room layout, environment of their hotel, the service and the price.

"Spacious rooms, comes with kitchenette and bathroom and shower"

(Blogger 35, Female)

"Laying in bed you see the snow-capped mountains"

(Blogger 36, Female)

Blogger 35 and 36 were also impressed with the view from the bedroom and spacious layout of the rooms they got at their accommodation. Spacious rooms enable tourists to enjoy their stay more as they are able to relax within the environment without having to feel confined within a small space.

#### 6.5.3 Bed and Breakfast

The comments made towards the bed and breakfast accommodation were positive as well.

"The decoration in the room was minimal. It was simple and warm"

“Entering the living room...so beautiful I wanted to cry”

(Blogger 29, Female)

Blogger 27 liked her bed and breakfast accommodation at Great Barrier Island. She thought the interior decorations were wonderful. She has not only thought the bedroom was simple and warm, but the decoration in the living was “so beautiful (she) wanted to cry”.

#### 6.5.4 Holiday Parks

There were a number of comments about the holiday parks in New Zealand. Most of these comments were neutral as they were just indications of where there are holiday parks available around New Zealand. There were a couple of positive comments made towards these holiday parks.

“There are also cabin suites, with kitchens, very convenient”

(Blogger 36, Female)

“Can walk directly to sandy beach, save parking fees”

(Blogger 36, Female)

Blogger 36 was impressed with the facilities available at the park and the location of the park as it meant she was able to save money on parking because the beach is only walking distance away.

As previously mentioned in the literature review, chapter 2, there is a rise in independent Chinese travellers. This is reflected through the comments in the blog entries – many of the tourists are independent travellers travelling with friends and family. They find their own accommodation and seek the accommodation which meets their own requirements dependent on the situation and the people they are travelling with. The increase in independent travellers will mean a wider range of accommodation types will be used by the Chinese market – Referring to the Figure 6.5, there are six types of accommodation which has been mentioned in the blog entries. The Chinese market in the past was mainly group travellers on package tours – staying at hotels, but Figure 6.5 reveals the comments made in regards to hotels only account for 17% of the total comments on accommodation. In order to cater to Chinese independent travellers, the accommodation sector needs to prepare themselves to meet Chinese tourists’ needs and requirements.

# Chapter 7: Conclusion

The focus of this study was to identify the perceived destination image of New Zealand as revealed in the travel blogs by Chinese tourists who have already visited the country. The approach used here differs from the traditional types of methodology such as interviews and questionnaires. This study adopted a content analysis approach. A thorough literature review was first conducted at the beginning of this study in an attempt to understand what information is already established in regards to destination image and what is important to Chinese tourists at the stages of when they are planning their travels and during their travels. The literature review identified a few attributes which are important to Chinese tourists when they are travelling.

## 7.1 Literature Review

Through the literature review, an academic article written by Law and Cheung (2010) which examines how Mainland Chinese tourists perceived the destination of Hong Kong was reviewed. The research objectives in Law and Cheungs' article was similar to the research objectives of this study. Therefore, the content analysis methodology in Law and Cheungs' article was adapted for this study. Law and Cheung analysed blogs written by Chinese tourists using content analysis to understand the perceived destination image of Hong Kong as revealed by Mainland Chinese bloggers. Literature on social media and blogs was also reviewed and added into the literature review. The attributes which were identified in the literature review were: attractions, activities, transport, accommodation, language, food and beverage and people. These attributes were used to develop an analytical framework which helped with the analysis of the blog entries.

## 7.2 Methodology

Traditional research is guided by a positivist paradigm which embraces the belief that the world is guided by a set of rules which are usually scientific that explains causal relationships (Jennings, 2010). Studies guided by a positivist paradigm would normally adopt a quantitative methodology, test hypotheses and causal relationships. In contrast, this study was guided by an interpretative social science paradigm which adopted a qualitative content analysis methodology.

This thesis used content analysis to analyse blog entries by Chinese tourists who have visited New Zealand in order to try and understand their perceived destination image of New Zealand. Content analysis of travel blogs allowed for exploratory research of the perceived destination image of New Zealand from a more holistic perspective. The different aspects of the bloggers' trip from pre-trip to during trip to post trip were able to be analysed.

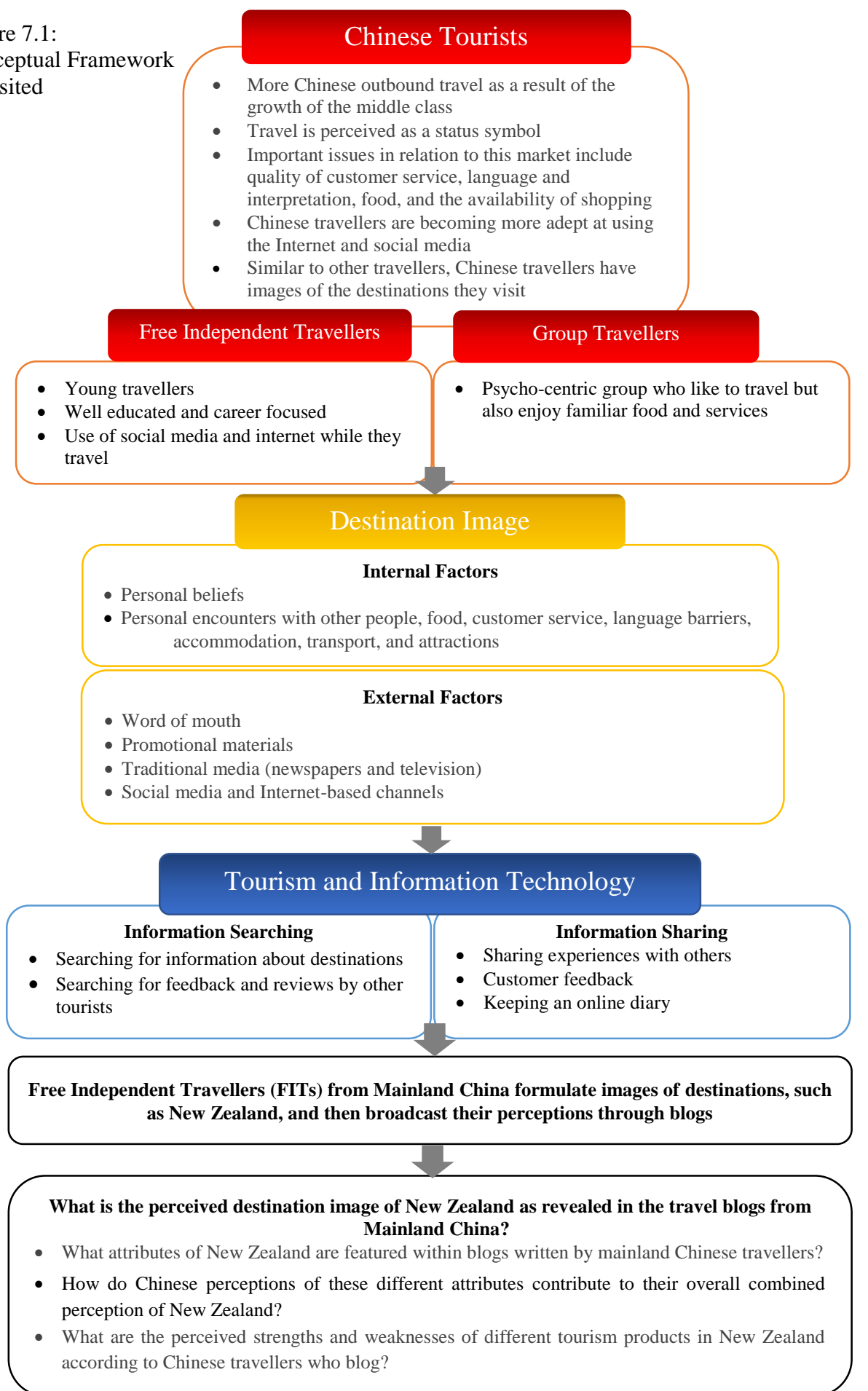
A total of 139 blog entries written by 36 bloggers were analysed in this study. These blog entries were collected from three different blogging sites: Blog.sina, Blog.163, and Blog.qq. Blog entries were selected from a list of search results on the New Zealand travel blog sections. Blogs which did not meet the criteria of being written between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2011 to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2015; containing more than 150 simplified Chinese characters; written by tourists from Mainland China, and is a personal travel blog were not analysed in this study. The purpose of analysing the blogs was to answer the research questions of this study. The three research questions were:

1. What attributes of New Zealand are featured within blogs written by Mainland Chinese travellers?
2. How do Chinese perceptions of these different attributes contribute to their overall combined perception of New Zealand?
3. What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses of different tourism products and services in New Zealand according to Chinese travellers who blog?

The conceptual framework (Figure 2.3), was developed from the synthesis of the literature discussed in the literature review. It is read from the top down and its elements and relationships are explained at the end of the literature review.

This research is examining what are important attributes to Chinese tourists when they evaluate a destination. In this case, it is examining the important attributes to Chinese tourists when they are evaluating New Zealand as a tourist destination. The three main concerns of this study are Chinese tourists, destination image and information technology in tourism. This framework has been colour-coded to aid with the description of the relationships between the three themes.

Figure 7.1:  
Conceptual Framework  
Revisited





In the literature review, chapter 2, this bottom box of the conceptual framework was introduced as a research gap. The research questions inside the box are the questions which this thesis is attempted to answer. The three research questions will be addressed in turn sections 7.3, 7.4 and 7.5

### **7.3 What attributes of New Zealand are featured within blogs written by Mainland Chinese travellers?**

As this thesis has shown comments were made about a wide range of issues and sectors. The unstructured and qualitative data revealed a variety of attributes which Chinese people take notice of when they are travelling. These attributes have been grouped into ten different categories. These categories were: barriers, limitations, and concerns; tourism infrastructure; overall evaluation; attractions; activities; language; transport; people; food and beverage; and accommodation.

#### 7.3.1 Barriers, Limitations and Concerns about coming to New Zealand

At the pre-trip stage of every tourist's trip there are barriers, limitations and concerns which could prevent or delay the tourist from making the decision or having the ability to travel to a destination. This category examined the obstacles the Chinese bloggers encountered when they were planning their trip to New Zealand. The identified obstacles were visas, immigration, customs, the cost of journey and the time the tourists had to spend in New Zealand.

The limited number of comments (five out of many across 139 blog entries) could indicate that process of visa applications for Chinese tourists to New Zealand is hassle free and is not worth mentioning in their blog entries. This could highlight New Zealand is performing well in the visa system and the experience is well received by Chinese tourists.

The cost of the journey to New Zealand and the amount of time tourists had to spend in New Zealand were influential factors which affected tourists' decision to choose New Zealand as a destination. The tourists commented on the decision to choose New Zealand as a destination was prompted by the sale of the airline tickets at the time of decision making. Comments about the time they had to go on holiday were also made in the blog entries. Two of the tourists claimed if they had more leave from work, they would have liked to explore more of New Zealand. Overall, the comments in the barriers, limitations and concerns to coming to New Zealand category was positive.

### 7.3.2 Tourism Infrastructure

Once tourists have overcome barriers, limitations and concern in the pre-trip stage of their journey, the next stage they enter is the during trip stage. This is the stage when they have entered New Zealand and will encounter many different elements that could influence their perceptions on how well a destination performs as a tourists' destination. The Chinese bloggers commented on five different types of infrastructure which influenced their trip in New Zealand. These were: Wi-Fi, information for tourists, proximity and convenience, airport facilities and infrastructure and general support facilities such as restrooms.

Overall, the bloggers were positive about the tourism infrastructure in New Zealand. Most of the comments made were in regards to how well i-SITE centres were performing. Tourists have positive perceptions towards the service i-SITEs offer.

### 7.3.3 Overall Evaluation

The availability of tourism infrastructure will influence tourists' overall evaluation of their trip. This category examines all the comments the Chinese bloggers made in their blog entries in regards to how they evaluated their overall experience in New Zealand and how they perceived New Zealand overall. The environment, the food and the dream of living in New Zealand were the most common attributes which were commented on by the bloggers on the overall evaluation of New Zealand. The comments tourists made towards their evaluation were all positive. The environment was the most mentioned attribute when the bloggers were reminiscing about their trip. These findings were in line with the findings from Sun's (2013) research – where he reported comments from his respondents commenting on the “unspoiled” and “natural...fresh air” that New Zealand has to offer (p. 224).

The concept of the “New Zealand Dream” has also been developed in the analysis of comments tourists made when evaluating their trip. The concept of the “New Zealand Dream” illustrates the perceived image of New Zealand as a “paradise” by the Mainland Chinese bloggers. The perceived lifestyle in New Zealand as revealed in the blog entries is a contrast to the lifestyle the bloggers have at home back in Mainland China. The population and pollution in New Zealand are considerably less than in Mainland China, the Chinese bloggers perceive the lifestyle in New Zealand to be much less stressful. The working culture in China has employees working more than eight hour days; therefore, when tourists saw the locals being able to casually walk their dogs along the beach, having time to have a picnic with their

families in the park they think the lifestyle in New Zealand is much simpler and stress free, which in turn, is perceived as a “paradise”. Therefore, the New Zealand Dream concept is describing how the bloggers dreamt of being able to have a lifestyle in the “paradise” of New Zealand.

#### 7.3.4 Attractions

Attractions are a popular theme in the comments made by Chinese tourists in their blog entries. There is no sense that the number or quality of attractions available in New Zealand are lacking. The attractions described in the blog entries were categorised into five subcategories: New Zealand nature, location specific attractions, New Zealand flora and fauna, cultural attractions, and *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings* related attractions.

The comments made in regards to the attractions were mainly positive, with a strong emphasis on the natural beauty of New Zealand. The bloggers were all amazed with the scenery and the aesthetically pleasing encounter they were able to witness while in New Zealand. The New Zealand glaciers, lakes, mountains, flora and the blue skies were the most mentioned aspects of nature that were discussed in the blog entries. “Location specific” attractions examined the comments tourists made in regards to the attractions which were unique to the locations they were in, such as, geothermal activity in Rotorua, Moeraki Boulders in the Moeraki, and hot air balloon festival in the Wairarapa.

#### 7.3.5 Activities

There were many types of activities which Chinese bloggers blogged about and these were grouped into four subcategories, which included: animal and farm related activities, adventure activities, and shopping activities and scenic activities. The Agrodome in Rotorua and the Waitomo Caves tour were common activities the bloggers participated in. The Chinese bloggers enjoyed the activities New Zealand has to offer; the comments made in regards to the activities were positive overall.

One negative comment made towards activities was in relation to shopping. It was an interesting comment raised by one of the bloggers on the presentation of New Zealand souvenirs as gifts for family and friends back home in China. Comparing the souvenirs New Zealand has to offer to Japan, this blogger claims the two countries are both expensive price wise when it comes to purchasing souvenirs for those back home. However, for the same price the souvenirs in Japan will appear as a better gift compared to a little pot of lanolin cream

they can get in New Zealand. Japanese gifts are very well packaged and presented compared to souvenirs sold in New Zealand. A little jar of lanolin cream may not look as aesthetically pleasing and therefore the blogger felt, if gifted, he will lose face

#### 7.3.6 Language

Language is an important attribute for Chinese tourists in New Zealand as not all Chinese tourists are fluent in English. This category examined comments made in regards to the written and spoken languages while they were in New Zealand. Written language was analysing the comments made on what was available to Chinese tourists in written form. These included the entry cards and guidelines at attractions and activities. Spoken Chinese involved analysing the comments the Chinese bloggers made about conversing with service providers.

The comments in regards to written Chinese were positive. The bloggers had positive perceptions towards the availability of Simplified Chinese translation on entry cards into New Zealand and tourists' guides. In regards to spoken Chinese, one blogger made a comment that she was very pleased her tour guide was able to converse in Mandarin as it made communication much easier. Another blogger commented on the difficulty she had trying to converse in English with a staff member from the rental car company over the phone. The rental car staff spoke very fast English and the blogger felt like the person failed to consider she does not speak fluent English and should have slowed down while talking and have spoken in simple English.

#### 7.3.7 Transport

Transport is an essential element of tourism. It is the means for tourists to reach a destination and the means of travel between places once tourists are within a destination (Cooper et al., 1998). This category examined all the modes of transport tourists mentioned they travelled on right from the beginning of their trip to the very end of the trip. These included their flights between New Zealand and China. Comments on flights to and from New Zealand, flights within New Zealand, public transport, which included bus services, train services and taxis, and comments on rental cars were examined. Overall, the Chinese bloggers had positive perceptions towards the services and the price of their flights and public transport. However, there were negative comments made towards the infrastructure of the roads which affected the perception of the support for self-driving for the Chinese tourists.

Recent media in New Zealand has claimed there are bad tourists drivers on New Zealand roads who are putting other road users in danger (Gates , 2015; news.com.au, 2015). Sun's (2013) research also presented comments from Chinese tourists who confessed to neglecting the speed limit resulting in warnings by the police. However, the findings in the thesis did not reveal any comments from the bloggers in regards to taking advantage of the open roads while driving in New Zealand. Instead, the respondents in this thesis indicated that they perceive driving on New Zealand roads to be unsafe because of the unfamiliar road conditions. These bloggers did not feel safe when driving on New Zealand roads, especially in the rural areas. The roads in these areas have many turns and often lack street lights which makes it difficult to see. A blogger expressed anxiety about driving on the roads because they are "unfamiliar roads" in an "unfamiliar car". In order to support tourists drivers, local tourism stakeholders could work together with authorities who issue drivers' licenses in New Zealand and China to improve the driving experiences for tourists. As well as road improvements, better guidance and education for tourists who are planning to self-drive could improve the driving experience for both tourists and local road users. Although, these tourists were nervous about the driving conditions in New Zealand, they still wanted to drive in New Zealand as they reported that they felt driving was part of the New Zealand experience. This finding is in-line with previous research of which suggests self-driving is free independent travellers preferred way of transport to discover New Zealand (Lohmann & Zahra, 2010; Sun, 2013). The emergence of the independent Chinese traveller (see section 2.1) could mean there will be many more Chinese tourists who may self-drive when they are travelling in New Zealand. Local tourism and transport authorities need to prepare for these Chinese tourists with better infrastructure and support.

#### 7.3.8 People

The people category in this study examined the comments the bloggers have made on the people with whom they have interacted with while they were travelling in New Zealand. These included the locals, the tourism operators, other tourists and accompanying tourists.

The Chinese bloggers positive perceptions towards the people they encountered and interacted with while they were in New Zealand. Chinese tourists felt New Zealanders are friendly and kind; one of the bloggers is that he also thought New Zealanders are genuine. He felt that if you are kind and genuine to someone, then you will receive the same treatment in return. The tourists perceived the kindness of the locals to be welcoming and the comments made

highlighted that New Zealanders are expressing the value of “manaakitanga” well towards tourists (Refer to section 6.3.1).

#### 7.3.9 Food and Beverages

The “food and beverages” category examined the comments which tourists’ blogged about in regards to the food and beverage experiences they had or wished to they had while they were in New Zealand. Types of food such as Chinese food, Western food, food and wine, local food, fruit, seafood, and others were discussed. The Chinese bloggers had positive perceptions towards the food and beverages New Zealand had to offer them. They were particularly interested in the local seafood, food and wine. Food and wine were perceived to be a “treat for the taste buds” and of many of the Chinese tourists positively commented on their dining experiences with seafood such as “lobster”, “fish”, “blue cod”, “white bait” and “oysters”. Chinese enjoy fresh seafood dining; therefore, they very much enjoyed the seafood dining experiences while they were in New Zealand.

#### 7.3.10 Accommodation

The Chinese bloggers stayed at different types of accommodation. Amongst the 36 bloggers, accommodation types such as hotels, motels, bed and breakfast, holiday parks, and private accommodation were all rated in the blog entries. The most common comments made in regards to accommodation were about the layout and the surrounding environment of the rooms. Chinese bloggers enjoyed the rooms with beautiful scenery and views which they can see simply by opening the door or window. The layout of their bedrooms which are fully equipped with facilities were seen as a positive by Chinese tourists. The layout of the rooms were commonly perceived as spacious to the Chinese tourists.

The increase in independent travellers (Tourism Industry Association New Zealand, 2011) will mean a wider range of accommodation types will be used by the Chinese market – There are six types of accommodation which has been mentioned in the blog entries (Figure 6.5). In order to cater to Chinese independent travellers, the accommodation sector needs to prepare themselves to meet Chinese tourists’ needs and requirements.

#### **7.4 How do Chinese perceptions of these different attributes contribute to their overall combined perception of New Zealand?**

The overall perception of New Zealand was positive amongst the Chinese bloggers. There is a common perception that New Zealand is a “paradise”. New Zealand is perceived to be performing well in most of the categories and is catering well to Chinese tourist. The concept of New Zealand as a paradise was highlight through the various themes and categories throughout the thesis. The New Zealand environment has been the focus of the attractions for Chinese tourists, there were over 200 comments made in this subcategory and they were 95.3% positive. New Zealand is perceived as a paradise not only because of the natural beauty in the landscape, but the locals are also perceived to contribute to the idea of a “paradise”. The “people” category reveal the value of “manaakitanga” within the New Zealand culture that has been received by Chinese tourists from the locals. This has added value for Chinese tourists are they perceive New Zealanders to be friendly like people would be in a “paradise”.

Although, the overall perception of New Zealand is being “paradise” like, there were still weaknesses which were found within the comments of the bloggers. The weaknesses in New Zealand’s tourism products and services were in spoken language, self-driving infrastructure, and presentation and packaging of souvenirs.

#### **7.5 What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses of different tourism products and services in New Zealand according to Chinese travellers who blog?**

##### **7.5.1 Strengths**

There were many positive comments made by the Chinese bloggers on the different categories in this study. Therefore, there are many strengths New Zealand tourism has to offer to this market. These strengths include the *100% Pure campaign*, New Zealand’s nature and landscape, the character and personality of New Zealanders, information centre services through i-SITEs, and the film assets of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* sets.

Tourism New Zealand’s *100% Pure New Zealand* campaign, which promotes New Zealand’s natural assets of nature and landscape, people and activities is well received by Chinese bloggers. The bloggers came to New Zealand with the pure and natural scenery as expectations are they were already exposed to these picturesque views before arriving in New

Zealand. Once they were in New Zealand, they were all very happy to find that their expectations from what they saw in promotions in China of New Zealand had been met. All of the Chinese bloggers commented on the purity and beauty of New Zealand. Adjectives such as “pure”, “beautiful”, “peaceful”, and “simple” were commonly used across the blog entries by all 36 bloggers. Therefore, the New Zealand landscape is a very strong tourism product for the Chinese market.

Chinese tourists have commented in the past that they enjoy New Zealand and think New Zealanders are friendly (Sun, 2013). One of New Zealand tourism services’ value, “Manaakitanga” – hospitality and being kind - was also well received by Chinese tourists. The Chinese bloggers in this thesis had also commented on how friendly and welcoming the locals and tourism staff were while they were in New Zealand. They perceived New Zealanders to be very hospitable and genuine towards them. The genuineness from New Zealanders are not often encountered when they are in Mainland China. Feeling welcomed by New Zealanders’ friendly attitude, had left a long lasting impression on these Chinese tourists.

The experience with animals in New Zealand whether they are staged or wildlife encounters are also well received by Chinese tourists. The Chinese tourists enjoy encounters with animals such as penguins and alpacas.

Tourism information services provided by i-SITEs are also perceived to be well established and helpful for tourists and are positively perceived by the Chinese bloggers. They think services at i-SITEs are very helpful. These positive comments have become positive electronic word of mouth through these bloggers’ blog entries.

Another tourism strength New Zealand has is the availability and the publicity of *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* related attractions and activities. The Chinese tourists are fans of Sir Peter Jackson’s films and therefore were very happy they were able to visit the sets. Chinese tourists were thrilled and excited to be able to see the scenes in real life.

#### 7.5.2 Weaknesses

The categories which received some negative comments from Chinese bloggers were spoken language, road infrastructure for self-driving tourists and the presentation of souvenirs.

Although the Chinese bloggers had positive perceptions towards the written Simplified Chinese that are already available on entry cards and some visitor guides, there needs to be



more effort put into the spoken language. Front-line tourism staff should be trained to be aware that not all tourists are fluent in English and they need to be considerate when conversing to foreign tourists who do not speak English fluently.

Chinese tourists are not all comfortable with driving on New Zealand roads. Therefore, a weakness New Zealand tourism has is the lack of support New Zealand provides to Chinese drivers.

Another weakness that has been perceived is the presentation of souvenirs. New Zealanders do not place a lot of emphasis on packaging presentation compared to Asian countries such as Japan and Hong Kong. Therefore, Chinese tourists may perceive packaging of the available souvenirs as not suitable for gifting purposes.

## **7.6 Further Findings**

### **7.6.1 Influence of Chinese Culture**

The Chinese culture is very different to New Zealand culture. Chinese culture places a strong emphasis on the concept of “face” as mentioned in the literature review (Tourism Industry Association New Zealand, 2011). Chinese people do not like to lose face in front of their friends and family. This concept was highlighted through one of the blogger’s comments of gifting souvenirs. The fact that the souvenirs in New Zealand are not packaged well to a highly aesthetically pleasing standard, he perceived he will lose face if he was to gift such a gift to friends and family back in China. Also, the lack of presentation in the souvenirs will influence the perceived value of the gift given and Chinese tourists may feel this will influence their “guanxi”- relationship with the person or people they are gifting to.

Chinese culture are more cautious with uncertainty (Deresky, 2008). This was reflected when Blogger 1 was not so sure about the friendly and kind attitude the elderly couple who they meet at the airport was providing to them. She thought the elderly couple was trying to sell them something. This behaviour of Chinese culture has been reflected throughout most of the categories, Chinese tourists received the familiarity well, but unfamiliarity can be less welcoming at times, especially when the situation is perceived to be threatening.

It is also important to highlight that different cultures and different markets focus on different areas and aspects. The Lupin flowers for example, highlighted the differences in appreciation towards different elements between Chinese and New Zealanders. New Zealanders do not

have the same appreciation towards Lupin flowers. The differences towards appreciation is important to consider and focus on when tailoring tourism products and services toward the Chinese market as they will enjoy different things to what traditional inbound tourists markets such as Australia and United Kingdom enjoy.

### 7.6.3 Unfamiliarity vs Familiarity

The concept of unfamiliarity versus familiarity was presented from the analysis of the blog entries. It appears Chinese tourists receive familiarity well. This was highlighted through their encounters with familiar language (see section 6.1.1), and familiar food (see section 6.4.1) However, when approached with unfamiliarity it may or may not be well received. When the situation appears to be non or less threatening, then the unfamiliar situation is well received by Chinese tourists. The unfamiliar landscape of beautiful scenery was well received by all of the Chinese bloggers. However, the unfamiliarity with the roads and driving conditions was not well received by Chinese tourists (see section 6.2.4). In most situations, Chinese tourists were willing to give the unfamiliar, such as encounters with small wildlife, local food and local lifestyles a try. However, when the unfamiliar poses as a threat to them, the unfamiliarity escalates to an unwelcome concept. Situations where they had to drive on dangerous roads and surprise encounters with larger animals, such as a sea lion which can appear harmful and dangerous were not as well received by Chinese tourists.

However, familiarity can make unfamiliarity better in some situations. In Blogger 4's situation (see section 6.3.3), where her nephew Ming is a familiar person who made the unfamiliar encounters with unfamiliar language and unfamiliar environments better for her by providing the assistance with translation and support. Ming turned the unfamiliar language into familiar language for Blogger 4. Blogger 4 has expressed relief that Ming was able to provide this support. Tourism operators could implement strategies to improve the visitor experience for Chinese tourists by providing similar support by making the "unfamiliar" better with the "familiar". These could be simple strategies such as translating their tourists' guides into familiar Simplified Chinese. This is especially important considering there are more independent travellers in the Chinese market. As independent travellers these Chinese tourists will not have a tour guide to translate for them unless they have relatives like Ming who can do the translating. Therefore, supportive resources such as electronic guides and brochures in Chinese could aid these tourists.

### 7.6.2 Neutral Tone

In Law and Cheung (2010), only positive and negative comments were recorded. This study recorded neutrally toned comments as well. A key finding in this research is that there is often information conveyed in a neutral tone by the tourists. These were comments which were made by the Chinese bloggers simply to convey information to their audience. These included information and advice on visa applications, the steps, procedures, instructions and timetable for other tourism aspects of their trip which other tourists who are considering New Zealand as a destination may find useful. These types of comments appeared across all of the categories; this indicates that blogs can serve almost as a source of information for tourists who are seeking information on tourism in New Zealand. As suggested in the literature review (see section 2.5.3), travel blogs have become a popular source of information for tourists before travel. The provision of information from the Chinese bloggers in this research has shown that travel blogs are indeed another platform for tourists to convey travel information. Tourism managers and stakeholders need to prepare that the evaluation of their tourism products and services can be readily read on these travel blogs. Therefore, they need to make sure they manage their products and services well to achieve positive feedback on these blogs to achieve positive eWoM.

### 7.6.4 The Independent Chinese Traveller

The emergence of the independent Chinese traveller has been documented in the literature (Tourism Industry Association New Zealand, 2011). Across the blog entries – and across the different themes that were analysed – a portrait emerges of (some) independent travellers willing to try adventure activities (see section 5.2.3), rent vehicles (see section 6.2.4), interact with locals in New Zealand (see section 6.3.1), sample local foods (see section 6.4), and stay in a range of accommodation types (see section 6.5). The blogs show evidence of a market taking initiative and growing more confident in its own abilities. A step in this process, for Chinese travellers, is sharing their experiences as independent travellers with others, and the blogs analysed in this study demonstrate the firm steps the Chinese market is taking towards becoming more independent in terms of its travel orientation. The blogs confirm that the Chinese market is evolving and can no longer be solely associated with the low-price package tours.

## **7.7 Recommendations and Implications**

### **7.7.1 Future Academic Research**

This research was an ambitious challenge by the author, as it attempted to analyse Chinese blog entries in Simplified Chinese. The translation process was challenging because not only did it involve translating the direct meanings of the blog entries, but careful consideration had to be put into translating the underlying messages the bloggers were trying to convey. In the future, similar research might benefit if a professional translator was involved with the translation process. If possible, a second researcher will also be beneficial to aid with the process of coding and analysing the data to gain another perspective on which comments made by the Chinese bloggers are important.

Examining the importance of the different categories with respect to Chinese tourists' holiday in New Zealand, this research is only at the exploratory stages and does not have enough data to comment on the importance of one category compared to another. Therefore, future research should consider netnography (Wu & Pearce, 2014) to engage the bloggers by conducting further interviews with them to gain a deeper understanding on their perceptions on each category. Interviewing the bloggers may also provide more in-depth insight on what their thoughts were when they were travelling in New Zealand. There might be aspects which they did not mention in their blog entries.

All of the blog entries contain photographs of the bloggers' holiday in New Zealand, but this study only conducted textual content analysis. Future research could consider examining the photographs as well to reveal more insight into Chinese tourists' perception of New Zealand while they are here on holiday. Photographs are tourists' photographic representations and memory of how they perceived a particular moment. They capture photos of what they think are worth remembering. Therefore, analysing photographs along with the text in the blog entries could provide another avenue of enquiry.

### **7.7.2 Industry**

Understanding the perceived destination image of New Zealand by Chinese tourists can also provide managerial implications for New Zealand tourism stakeholders and destination managers to develop the strategies and policies to cater to Chinese tourists. This is particularly

important considering the Chinese market is one of New Zealand's top targeted markets in terms of visitor numbers.

The Chinese outbound market is growing and there are many opportunities for tourism stakeholders around the world to target this rapidly growing market. In order for New Zealand to compete with other destinations, New Zealand needs to cater well to Chinese tourists so they are satisfied with their trip and will generate positive word of mouth to attract more Chinese tourists to New Zealand.

Considering Chinese tourists are showing interest in the concept of the "New Zealand Dream", where they dream of having a lifestyle in New Zealand, New Zealand destination managers and operators could target Chinese visitors with the idea of the relaxation, simplicity, and tranquillity that could be achieved while on holiday in New Zealand. Tourism operators could package paradise holidays for tourists when they are in New Zealand; these could include activities which allows tourists to immerse themselves into New Zealand culture and lifestyle. Accommodation types such as bed and breakfast operators could package their accommodation with a more 'at home' atmosphere to allow the tourists to feel more like they are living in New Zealand rather than simply on holiday.

Chinese tourists appear to love the seafood dining experiences while they are in New Zealand. Regional tourism councils and operators could promote seafood experiences such as fishing, cray-fishing, and oyster shucking to Chinese tourists as packages where they will be able to participate in the catch and also the preparation of the food afterwards and then eating. Chinese people love fresh food, so a seafood experience where they are able to catch it themselves then eat it straightaway will be well received.

In recent months there has been a few discussion in the media in regards to tourist's suitability to drive on New Zealand roads (Gates , 2015; news.com.au, 2015). This has been prompted by the increased number of road accidents which have involved tourists. The industry might wish to consider working with Chinese authorities to implementing a stricter driving test for Chinese people before they are granted a licence to drive on New Zealand roads. Chinese people are used to driving on the opposite side of the road compared to New Zealand. When an accident occurs their force of habit may prompt them to turn the wrong way on New Zealand roads which could create more accidents. The driving test should also include a surprise elements to see how the drivers may react in accidents.

This research is an exploratory study, Future research could try and use different modes of analysis to gain further insight into the topic area. This study has proved analysing blogs by Mainland Chinese tourist could yield interesting information about how they perceive New Zealand as a destination.

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