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# Understanding Mainland Chinese tourists' motivation and constraints of visiting

## Taiwan

### *Journal of China Tourism Research*

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## **Abstract**

China has been by far the fastest growing source market in recent years, and now is the biggest tourism source market in the world. Mainland Chinese travellers were permitted to directly visit Taiwan in 2008. Within a short period of time, the Mainland Chinese travel market has become the top source market for Taiwan's tourism industry. However, limited attention has been paid to the travel behaviour of this significant market, such as why and why not Mainland Chinese travellers visit Taiwan. Using interviews, this study identified a list of motivation factors and travel constraint factors. Three themes, *intrapersonal*, *interpersonal*, and *contextual factors*, influenced Mainland Chinese tourists' intention to visit Taiwan. Particularly, *contextual factors*, such as 'the cross-strait relations' between Mainland China and Taiwan, play a key role in influencing tourists' visit intention. Like two sides of the same coin, 'the cross-strait relations' could be the facilitator to attract Mainland Chinese tourists or the inhibitor to stop Mainland Chinese visiting Taiwan.

**Keywords:** travel motivation, travel constraint, Mainland Chinese, Taiwan, the cross-strait relations, outbound tourism

## **Introduction**

China has been by far the fastest growing source market in recent years, and now is the biggest tourism source market in the world (China Outbound Tourism Research Institute, 2015). The growth in Chinese outbound tourists can be attributed to a range of factors, such as increased income, more public holidays, and more countries have been given approved destination status (ADS). The booming Chinese outbound tourism market has attracted the attention from academia. Chinese outbound tourists' behaviours, such as travel motivation and constraints, were examined by many researchers. Previous research has been focused mainly on short-haul destinations, such as Hong Kong (Hsu & Lam, 2003; Huang & Hsu, 2005), and Macau (Wong & Rosenbaum, 2012). The majority of the short-haul destinations are mature destinations (e.g., Hong Kong and Macau) for Mainland Chinese outbound tourists, whereas newly opened up destinations, such as Taiwan, have been rarely examined.

Taiwan has become a newly opened up destination for Mainland Chinese tourists since 2008. Previously, the tight cross-strait relations between Mainland China and Taiwan restricted Mainland Chinese directly visiting Taiwan. Specifically, travel between Mainland China and Taiwan was highly restricted prior to 1978. In 1988, the government of Taiwan approved Mainland Chinese residents to enter into Taiwan for the purpose of visiting sick relatives or attending funerals. In the early 1990s, the relationship between Mainland China and Taiwan was gradually normalized, and the Taiwanese government's policy relating to Mainland

Chinese tourists was further relaxed. In 1993, the Taiwanese government allowed Mainland Chinese to attend cultural and academic events, and international conferences in Taiwan (Guo, Kim, Timothy, & Wang, 2006). With the further relaxation of restrictions on travel between both regions, Mainland Chinese tourists have been permitted to visit Taiwan since 18 July 2008.

Within a short period of seven years, the Mainland Chinese travel market has become the top source market for Taiwan's tourism industry. According to the Taiwan Tourism Bureau (2015), the number of Mainland Chinese tourists to Taiwan increased from 0.33 million in 2008 to 3.99 million in 2014, indicating that the Mainland Chinese market developed dramatically from 2008 to 2014 (see Table 1). In 2014, around 40% of the tourists who visited Taiwan came from Mainland China.

*(Table 1 here)*

Mainland Chinese tourists need to have both *the 'Travel Permit for Mainlanders to Enter and Exit Taiwan'* (authorised by Mainland Chinese Government), and *the 'Exit and Entry Permit Taiwan'* (authorised by Taiwan Government) to enter into Taiwan. Chinese tourists could either travel within package tours or travel independently. A package tourist is a holiday tourist who has booked the transportation and accommodation, or other elements of the vacation, through a travel retailer (Hyde & Lawson, 2003). Independent travellers are all

tourists who are not package tourists, and they are all the holiday tourists who have not booked an air travel and accommodation package with a travel retailer (Hyde & Lawson, 2003). Independent travellers also referred as Free Independent Travellers (FITs). In the Chinese outbound tourism context, not everyone is allowed to freely visit every overseas destination. In terms of visiting Taiwan, some can travel independently and some must travel within package tours. Until now, only residents from 47 Mainland Chinese cities are allowed to apply for independent travel visa to visit Taiwan through the FIT program (See Table 2).

*(Table 2 here)*

Despite the Mainland Chinese tourism market plays an extremely important role in Taiwan's tourism industry, an understanding of Mainland Chinese tourists visiting Taiwan remains limited, except a small number of studies (e.g., Chung, Chen, & Lin, 2015; Y. H. Lin, Chen, & Park, 2012; Song & Hsu, 2013). Even though the complicated cross-strait relations between Mainland China and Taiwan may influence tourists' behaviour, there is a lack of comprehensive understanding of the relationship between 'the cross-strait relations' and travel behaviour. Until now, only one study, using the quantitative approach, briefly described the influence of the cross-strait relations on Mainland Chinese travel motivation of visiting Taiwan (Chung et al., 2015). In order to fill the knowledge gap, the current study aims to examine the Chinese outbound tourists' motivation and constraints of visiting Taiwan, with a particular focus on the 'cross-strait relations'.

## Literature review

### Travel motivations for Mainland Chinese

The current literature examines Chinese travel motivation from either general travel motivation (combining all motivation items together) or the push-pull perspective (separating all motivation items into two broad perspectives) (Hsu & Lam, 2003; Zhang & Lam, 1999).

The push-pull theory refers to the perspectives from traveller and destination perspectives (Baloglu & Uysal, 1996). Zhang and Lam (1999) analysed Mainland Chinese travellers' motivations to visit Hong Kong, and concluded that *knowledge, prestige and enhancement of human relationships* were the most important push factors; whereas *high-technology image, expenditure and accessibility* were the most significant pull factors. They found that *positive attitude from the locals and service staff* was the top motivation factor attracting Mainland Chinese to visit Hong Kong.

Another study undertaken by Hsu and Lam (2003) disclosed eight push factors and five pull factors, and found that *sightseeing* was the strongest motivation driving Mainland Chinese travellers to Hong Kong. Li, Wen, and Leung (2011) examined Mainland Chinese female tourists' motivation to visit Hong Kong. Examining 30 motivation factors, they identified that *shopping and quality of goods* were the top two motivations. They also grouped motivation

items into push or pull factors. Four push factors were: *knowledge and prestige; enhancement of social relationships; rest and relaxation; and adventure and excitement*. Five pull factors were: *modern image; natural environment and attractions; safety and cleanliness; ease of tour arrangement; and shopping*.

Hua and Yoo (2011) examined Mainland Chinese travel motivation to visit the United States. They examined 29 motivation items, and found that *personal safety during the trip, natural attractions, and to rest and relax* were the top three motivations. They identified five major motivation categories: *ego enhancement, international exposure, communication opportunities, financial incentives, and destination stimuli*. Another study on Chinese tourists to visit the United States was conducted by Johanson (2008). The author combined push and pull factors together, and identified that *clean air/environment; rest and relaxation; and safe and secure travel destination* were the three top motivation items. The author also developed four major motivation categories: *relaxing and peaceful surroundings; perceived quality, excitement and variety that is available to visitors; great family environment and superior value for the traveller; and unique culture/history and unspoiled romantic beauty*. By surveying Mainland Chinese tourists in Italy, Corigliano (2011) found that the major motivation for Mainland Chinese travellers is *leisure*. Specifically, travellers wish *to visit places of historical and cultural interests; to visit renowned destinations; and to taste local food and beverages*.

A review of previous Chinese travellers' motivation studies shows that the majority of these studies are quantitative studies (see Table 3). Many studies utilised similar scales to measure travel motivation. It should be noted that destinations have different characteristics, and travellers have different motives to visit a specific destination. Therefore, it is important to identify some unique motivation items for certain destinations. In this case, the qualitative approach can serve as the function of identifying some unknown items or factors. A few qualitative studies have found some new motives for Chinese travellers. For example, Huang and Hsu (2005) used focus groups to examine Mainland Chinese travel motivation to Hong Kong, and found that *shopping* is the major motivation item.

*(Table 3 here)*

The current literature has mainly focused on the travel motivation from two dimensions: either the travellers themselves or the destinations. It should be noted that the peers, friends, relatives, and family also influence travellers' behaviours (Gitelson & Kerstetter, 1994; Y. C. Lin & Lehto, 2006); however, the current travel motivation literature hasn't paid much attention to this important topic. It is proposed that travellers' visit intention and travel behaviours (e.g., travel motivation) could be influenced by their that friends and family members.

## **Travel constraints for Mainland Chinese**

Travel constraints were well examined in leisure studies rather than in the tourism literature.

Travel constraint, in simple terms, is a consumer's perception of having, or not having, the resources to engage in a specific travel behaviour which then affects travel intention (Ajzen, 1991). Generally, there are three types of travel constraints: *intrapersonal*, *interpersonal*, and *structural constraints* (Crawford & Godbey, 1987; Crawford, Jackson, & Godbey, 1991).

*Intrapersonal* are internal constraints, which are related to individual psychological states and attributes; *interpersonal constraints* result from interpersonal interactions, and *structural constraints* are external to intervening factors. Moreover, Crawford et al. (1991) proposed a hierarchy of constraints model, beginning with *intrapersonal constraints* that affect leisure preferences, followed by *interpersonal* and *structural constraints* that influence final participation. Based on this model, they identified that each level of constraint has to be overcome step by step for a participator to encounter the subsequent level of constraint. Typically, adults identified time and money as the most important constraint (Hinch & Jackson, 2000). Previously most leisure constraint research has focused on *structural constraints* (Hinch & Jackson, 2000), and few have focused on *intrapersonal* and *interpersonal* constraints (Jackson, 2000).

Recently, the tourism literature has illustrated that travel constraints can be identified as important factors for anticipating travel intention to visit a specific destination or a specific

tourism/leisure activity (Hung & Crompton, 2006; Hung & Petrick, 2012a, 2012b; Lam & Hsu, 2006). Hung and Crompton (2006) examined the benefits and constraints for Hong Kong seniors using a public park, and found three types of constraints: *interrelations*, *personal*, and *communication problems*. Hung and Petrick (2012b) grouped people's travel constraints of choosing a cruise tour into four types: *intrapersonal*, *interpersonal*, *structural constraints*, and *not an option*.

There are no generally agreed items in relation to the measurement of Mainland Chinese travel constraints. In limited studies, papers have been produced on Mainland Chinese travel to three outbound destinations, these being Hong Kong (Hsu & Lam, 2003; Huang & Hsu, 2009), Australia (Sparks & Pan, 2009), and United States (Lai, Li, & Harrill, 2013). For instance, Hsu and Lam (2003) examined Mainland Chinese travellers' barriers to visiting Hong Kong, and found that the two most important barriers were *expensiveness* (cost) and *short holidays* (time). Furthermore, Huang and Hsu (2009) amended the measurement of Mainland Chinese travel constraints and grouped these items into three types: *interpersonal*, *disinterest*, and *structural constraints*. *Interpersonal constraints* are related to the constraints about family/friends or companions. *Disinterest constraints* are about disinterested in Hong Kong. *Structural constraints* are about the rest factors, such as money and time.

Chinese tourists perceived two major constraints when considering travel to Australia: *external constraint beliefs* (i.e., the exchange rate, flight time, media warnings, the cost,

language barriers, high risk, news about Chinese and Australian governments, and VISA regulation), and *safety constraints* (Australia is low risk, and travelling to Australia would be a safe choice) (Sparks & Pan, 2009). Li, Zhang, Mao, and Deng (2011) analysed Chinese outbound travellers, and categorised 16 constraint items into four factors, namely: *structural*, *cultural*, *information*, and *knowledge constraints*. Lai et al. (2013) examined the constraints on Chinese travellers visiting the United States, and identified two major constraints: *intrapersonal constraints* and *structural constraints*. *Intrapersonal constraints* include: have been there before; want to travel to other countries; and too old to travel. *Structural constraints* include: have no time; lacking security; not convenient to get a visa; far away; high price levels; not enough disposable income.

Until now, there is an over-reliance on quantitative methods for data collection and analysis in the constraint research (Jackson, 2000). Most of the constraint studies focused dominantly on the structural constraint perspective, and less on the intrapersonal and interpersonal constraints. Therefore, an examination of travel constraints by incorporating qualitative methods could enrich the travel constraint theories by identifying new insights into the context of outbound tourism context.

## **Research method**

There have been limited studies examining Mainland Chinese tourists' motivation and

constraints of visiting Taiwan. In order to gain an in-depth understanding of the unknown phenomenon, a qualitative method was considered appropriate. Among the alternative qualitative approaches, interviews can be an approach to gather detailed information about individuals' thoughts, interpretations, and behaviours (Langley, 1999). In addition, interviews can provide a great amount of information by recalling previous experiences that involve a long timeframe (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Therefore, this study utilised interviews to achieve the research objectives.

Despite the fact that there are a large number of Mainland Chinese tourists visiting Taiwan, only a relatively small proportion of Mainland Chinese have visited Taiwan in relation to its population of 1.3 billion. In order to interview a part of interviewees who had visited Taiwan already, the researchers of this study implemented purposive and snowball sampling to select interviewees. One author involved in this study recruited interviewees based on his networking in Mainland China. First of all, the researcher contacted his friends, classmates, relatives, and colleagues in Mainland China thorough emails. In the email, this researcher introduced the objective of the research project, and inquired about whether people had visited Taiwan or not. Then, the researcher invited these people to participate in the research project, and also asked these people to recommend other people who had visited Taiwan to participate in this study. Second, in order to gather different views in terms of the research topic, the researcher also asked his friends, classmates, relatives, and colleagues to recommend different age groups of interviewees. Altogether 30 participants agreed to

participate in the project. Before the interview, the researcher sent out an email listing detailed information about the research project, and the appropriate interview time for both interviewer and interviewee.

Interview questions were developed from previous literature and the researchers' understanding of these topics. Interview questions for travel motivation were: *Why do you want to travel to Taiwan? What do you think are the propelling factors which make you travel to Taiwan? What do you think are the most attractive aspects of Taiwan as a tourist destination?* Interview questions for travel constraints were: *What do you think are the important factors that prohibit you from visiting Taiwan? What barriers are most difficult to overcome?* As this study examined both visitors and non-visitors, the interview questions were tailored to fit two types of interviewees, namely visitors and non-visitors. During the interviews, many follow-up questions were asked in order to obtain the necessary detail and depth. Information related to the general demographic characteristics of each interviewee was sought in the final part of the interview.

Face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews were conducted. All of the interviews were voice-recorded, and interviews were around 30-50 minutes. A total of 30 interviews were conducted. Due to the poor quality recordings, only 27 interviews were useful in this study. The number of interviewees was decided based the guidelines of data saturation. Saturation is the point in data collection when no new or relevant insights emerge on the research topic

(Shank, 2006). This project included two rounds of interviews. The first round had 20 successful interviews, and an initial round of data analysis was conducted to generate key categories and themes. The second round had another seven valid interviews, and no more new categories or themes emerged. The number of interviews in this study coincide with the statement that qualitative researchers in the tourism context normally interview around 28 interviewees (Juvan & Dolnicar, 2014). Altogether 14 visitors and 13 non-visitors were interviewed in this study (see Table 4). All of them were from affluent areas (e.g., Beijing, Shanghai, Guangdong, and Jiangsu) where people have a greater potential to visit Taiwan due to their relatively high earning capacities.

*(Table 4 here)*

Before analysing data, all interview recordings were carefully transcribed into Chinese by a research assistant who is a native Chinese. Then interview transcripts were imported into qualitative data analysis software: NVivo 10 for data analysis. The data analysis was guided by an inductive approach in which codes naturally and progressively emerge from the data collected and the ongoing interpretation of the researchers (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Specifically, coding was conducted by following three steps to generate themes or major content categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). These three coding stages are: 1) open coding; 2) axial coding; and 3) selective coding. Figure 1 shows these three coding stages. In the first stage, an open coding of transcripts was conducted to generate the “categorization” of the

transcripts. In this step, the data analysis mainly focused on the meaning captured in the content. Two researchers separately coded the interview materials, and then discussed the appropriateness of the coding assigned by each. Altogether 162 codes were generated from this process. In the second stage, an axial coding approach was implemented to group the codes into major categories. The previously identified codes were analysed into higher levels of codes, which are referred to the “abstraction” of the data (Spiggle, 1994). Discussions between both researchers produced 21 abstraction categories. In the final stage, the abstraction categories were compared to analyse the data, and build some relationships between the different abstractions. From this, three high level themes were generated. The next section reports the results derived from the interview materials.

*(Figure 1 here)*

## **Results and discussion**

### **Mainland Chinese travel motivation of visiting Taiwan**

One of the research objectives was to examine Mainland Chinese tourists’ motivation to visit Taiwan. This study identified 12 motivation factors for Mainland Chinese who visited or haven’t been to Taiwan (see Table 5). Based on the similarities and relationships between these 12 motivation factors, this study developed three higher-level themes, *intrapersonal*,

*interpersonal*, and *contextual factor*, that influence the tourist visit intention. *Intrapersonal factor* refers to tourists' internal psychological states, attributes, and characteristics about visiting Taiwan. Specifically, this factor is about tourists' travel purpose and personal interests of visiting Taiwan. This factor is similar with the push factor of the push-pull theory, where the push factor drives travellers to visit Taiwan. *Interpersonal factor* is related to interpersonal or relationship interaction with family and friends that drives tourists to visit Taiwan. *Contextual factor* is not about tourists themselves, but other situational factors (e.g. suitable package tours, the relationship between Mainland China and Taiwan, and so on) contributing to their visit to Taiwan.

*(Table 5 here)*

### ***Theme 1: Intrapersonal factor***

In this theme, the top motivation item is 'to fulfil the dream' of visiting Taiwan. Other motivation items are about developing an in-depth understanding of Taiwan, such as: 'to experience local lifestyle, culture, and customs'; 'to experience Taiwan's political system'; 'to taste Taiwanese-style snacks'; 'to sightseeing'; 'to interact with local people'; and 'to experience Taiwan's economy'. The responses from visitors and non-visitors showed that visitors more frequently mentioned this theme than non-visitors. Visitors may have a stronger internal motive to visit Taiwan, so they made the trip; whereas non-visitors may have a

weaker internal motive visit Taiwan. Due to this difference, visitors and non-visitors responded differently in terms of the intrapersonal issues.

‘To fulfil the dream’ is the top motive to visit Taiwan. Many interviewees, especially middle-aged and senior people, had emotional feelings about Taiwan, which drove them to visit Taiwan. Two quotations in Table 5 illustrate this travel motive from the perspective of middle-aged and senior people. Many interviewees mentioned that it would be a pity if they couldn’t visit Taiwan in their whole life; therefore they wanted to cross the straits to fulfil their dream. Such emotional feelings can be explained by the restricted cross-strait relations before 2008.

Due to the previous restricted relationship between Mainland China and Taiwan, interviewees were eager to experience an in-depth understanding of Taiwan, rather than just only sightseeing in Taiwan. ‘To experience local lifestyle, culture and customs’ is also one of the key travel motives for Chinese tourists. Even though Mainland China and Taiwan share much similarity in terms of culture, ancestry and language, many interviewees mentioned that they would like to see the difference between Taiwan and Mainland China through their own eyes. It is also interesting that some young interviewees mentioned that they were particularly interested in exploring cultural activities on TV dramas, music, and entertainment programs, such as watching a live talk show in Taiwan. The finding is similar with previous studies stating that knowledge-related motivation (e.g., seeing something different, experiencing a

different lifestyle) is one of the key motive for Chinese outbound tourists (Zhang & Lam, 1999).

‘To experience Taiwan’s political system’ was frequently mentioned by informants. Mainland China and Taiwan have two different types of political systems. Taiwan is a capitalist society, whereas Mainland China is a socialist society. Due to this contrast, many interviewees were willing to go to Taiwan (or visited Taiwan) so as to experience the different political system. Interviewees were particularly interested in activities such as observing different types of election campaigns in Taiwan. It seems that this specific travel motive is obvious in the Taiwan context. Even though some overseas destinations, such as Hong Kong and the United States, are a capitalist society, Mainland Chinese did not consider ‘experiencing a capitalist society’ a key motive to visit these destinations (e.g., Hua & Yoo, 2011; Huang & Hsu, 2005).

‘To taste Taiwanese-style snacks’ and ‘to sightseeing’ were also mentioned by interviewees. Some interviewees said that the cuisine and delicacies were what attracted them to visit Taiwan. They mainly heard of the snacks from TV programs and local food festivals. The finding is consistent with previous literature saying that Taiwan is famous for its delicious snacks (Hsu & Song, 2012). A few interviewees mentioned that they wanted to see Taiwan’s beautiful natural scenery, such as *Sun Moon Lake* and *Alishan*. Different from a study noting that Chinese travellers’ major motivation to visit Hong Kong was sightseeing (Hsu & Lam, 2003), sightseeing was not the key motive to visit Taiwan.

‘To interact with locals’ and ‘to experience Taiwan’s economy’ were other newly emerging categories. Several interviewees mentioned that they would like to not only experience local culture and customs, see the attractions, taste local food, but also interact with local people in order to develop an in-depth understanding of Taiwan. For example, Miss Xu (23, a college student, non-visitor, Nanjing, Jiangsu Province) would like to stay in the local’s house and live with the local people for several days in order to understand more deeply about Taiwan.” Only young interviewees mentioned this motivation item, showing that some young Chinese were eager to have much interaction with locals, rather than do the superficial sightseeing (for example, joining package tours with limited interaction with locals). Several interviewees mentioned that they wanted to experience the high-developed Taiwan, and to witness the different economic system of Taiwan. Possible reason is that Taiwan is a well developed economy, and it is termed as one of the *Four Asian Tigers*. Previous studies also found that Chinese outbound tourists consider experiencing different economic systems a way to enhance their knowledge about overseas destinations (Hsu & Lam, 2003; Huang & Hsu, 2005).

### ***Theme 2: Interpersonal factor***

*The interpersonal factor* is related to interpersonal or relationship interaction in the context of Mainland Chinese tourists visiting Taiwan. This theme shows that tourists’ visit behaviour is

mainly determined by interpersonal or relationship factors such as the relationship with family and friends (see Table 5). Specifically, tourists may accompany their friends and family to visit Taiwan, even though they were not interested in the destination. In the current study, spending time with the family/friends was a factor driving people to visit Taiwan. Until now, motivation studies (e.g., Li, Wen, et al., 2011; Zhang & Lam, 1999) have just briefly mentioned the relationship factors, rather than considered the interpersonal influence as a major category.

### ***Theme 3: Contextual factor***

Different from *intrapersonal* and *interpersonal factors* on tourists themselves or other family members/friends, contextual factors are about other situational factors contributing to their visit, such as suitable package tours and specific factors (e.g., as a new market, and the relationship between Mainland China and Taiwan) on the destination itself.

In this theme, ‘a delicate political relationship between Mainland China and Taiwan’ was the most popular motive, showing that the current cross-strait relations make Taiwan a unique destination. The majority of interviewees mentioned that the special political relationship between Mainland China and Taiwan drove (or will drive) them to visit Taiwan. Many interviewees described such a relationship “subtle” and “confusing”. Due to the special political relationship, Taiwan was frequently described by interviewees as “a mysterious

destination". In this study, non-visitors more frequently mentioned 'a delicate political relationship between Mainland China and Taiwan' than visitors'. As non-visitors haven't been to Taiwan, they strongly emphasised the relationship between Mainland China and Taiwan subtle; however, visitors focused particularly on other motive items. In contrast with a study by Hsu and Lam (2003) stating that 'experiencing the mysterious city' was not the major motive for Mainland Chinese visiting Hong Kong, the current study found that 'a mysterious destination' together with 'a delicate political relationship' was the key motivation item for Mainland Chinese to visit Taiwan. The study, for the first time, found that the relationship between the tourist destination (Taiwan) and the tourist generating region (Mainland China) could be a strong travel motive for tourists, which hasn't been identified in other outbound destination contexts, such as Hong Kong, and the United States (Hua & Yoo, 2011; Huang & Hsu, 2005). Possible reasons could be Hong Kong officially belongs to China, and the United States has a stable relationship with China, but the relationship between Mainland China and Taiwan was somewhat uncertain during a long period of time.

In addition, several interviewees mentioned that as direct flights to Taiwan from the Mainland were not permitted for decades, Taiwan can be considered as 'a newly opened up destination'. It seems that new destination is also an attractiveness of Taiwan. "There is a suitable package tour at the right time and at the right price" was mentioned by a few interviewees as to why they travelled to Taiwan. These Chinese travellers may visit other

destinations if there is a suitable package tour at the right time and at the right price for some other destinations.

### **Mainland Chinese travel constraints of visiting Taiwan**

A small number of interviewees (5 out of 27) stated that they don't (didn't) have any travel constraints that prevent them visiting Taiwan. However, a majority of informants (22 out of 27) mentioned nine types of travel constraints (see Table 6). Similar with the themes on motivation factors, constraints factors were also coded under the three themes: *intrapersonal*, *interpersonal*, and *contextual factors*. This study found that the contextual factor was the most common travel constraint for Mainland Chinese visiting Taiwan.

*(Table 6 here)*

#### ***Theme 1: Intrapersonal factor***

This theme includes four travel constraint items: 'I am not interested in Taiwan'; 'I've visited Taiwan already'; 'I don't have time'; and 'I think travelling to Taiwan is expensive'. Visitors and non-visitors in this study perceived different types of travel constraints. Visitors only mentioned the first two constraints, and non-visitors focused particularly on the last two. Interviewees who visited Taiwan pointed out that the scenery in Taiwan wasn't attractive, and

attractions could be the least attractive thing for them to visit Taiwan. Several interviewees said that they were not going to visit Taiwan again, and they would like to visit other destinations that they haven't been visited. Similar with the findings from a previous study (Lai et al., 2013), disinterest is one of the key travel constraints that Mainland Chinese face when choosing an international destination.

Only several non-visitors perceived the time and high cost (value for money) issues as the major concerns when considering visiting Taiwan, showing that time and money are not the key constraints. The finding is inconsistent with previous literature (Hinch & Jackson, 2000; Hsu & Lam, 2003; Jackson, 2000). A possible reason could be Mainland Chinese travellers now have a growing spending power which is resulted from China's rapid economic development recently. In addition, interviewees of this study came from affluent areas, so they may be able to afford to travel to Taiwan. Also, Taiwan is a short-haul overseas destination for Mainland Chinese; therefore, the travel cost is comparatively low compared with some long-haul overseas destinations, such as Australia, European countries, and the United States.

### ***Theme 2: Interpersonal factor***

The family members could be travel constraints preventing them to visit an overseas destination. Interviewees mentioned that 'family responsibility', such as taking care of family

members, was another reason that impedes their travel intention to visit Taiwan. The interpersonal factors have been focused by other constraint studies (e.g., Crawford & Godbey, 1987; Crawford et al., 1991).

### ***Theme 2: Contextual factor***

*The contextual factor* is the most common constraint factor mentioned by informants. Specifically, 'visa', 'travel style', and 'political instability' were the three most frequently mentioned barriers. These three barriers were highly related to, or were influenced by, the relationship between Mainland China and Taiwan. Additionally, 'natural disasters' were the only factor related to Taiwan. The result of this study showed that non-visitors perceived more *contextual factors* than visitors'. Non-visitors frequently stated 'visa', 'travel style', 'political instability', and 'natural disasters' in the interviews. Possible reasons could be visitors had already overcome certain difficulties to travel to Taiwan, so they perceived less difficulty than non-visitors. It seems that previous travel experience influences Mainland Chinese tourists' perceived constraints of visiting Taiwan.

The difficulty and complexity of obtaining travel documents (and visa) became a more salient behavioural inhibitor, as a majority of interviewees perceived that the process of applying for a visa (travel document) to visit Taiwan to be complicated. Due to such complexity, some interviewees avoided visiting Taiwan, and therefore selected some other outbound

destinations with easier visa application process, such as Hong Kong and Macau. The finding is similar to Lai et al. (2013) and Sparks and Pan (2010) in that the difficulty and complexity of obtaining travel documents became a salient behavioural inhibitor.

Another major travel constraint was the 'travel style', which refers to package tourists or independent tourists. Many interviewees considered travel style (i.e., travelling independently or travelling by joining a package tour) as an important factor affecting travel to Taiwan. Specifically, a high proportion of interviewees did not like to join package tours to visit Taiwan, and they would like to travel to Taiwan independently. However, the reality is only permanent residents from a list of cities in Mainland China (47 cities in 2015) are eligible to apply for an independent travel document (visa) to visit Taiwan. Travellers from other cities or the travellers who are temporary residents from these selected cities must apply for the package tour visa. In this situation, travel style is somewhat connected to the visa application issue.

'Political instability', refers to the cross-strait relations and the political situation within Taiwan, was another barrier for Mainland Chinese travellers to visit Taiwan. It is interesting that the political safety issue in this study was not only related to the destination itself, but also the cross-strait relations between the tourist destination (Taiwan) and the tourist generating region (Mainland China). An interviewee, Mr Ding (29, a manager, visitor, Wuxi, Jiangsu Province), visited Taiwan in 2011, and he stated that "I know now the Kuomintang

(KMT) is governing Taiwan, in the future the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) might govern Taiwan, which supports ‘independence’. In that case, I am not going to Taiwan”. The quotation shows that the positive or negative cross-strait relations are mainly determined by the ruling party of Taiwan. Due to some historical reasons, the Mainland Chinese government has a better relationship with the KMT than the DPP. Similarly, Mainland Chinese also have a positive attitude towards the KMT. In this situation, the ruling party of Taiwan plays an extremely important role in influencing the cross-strait relations, which could directly affect Mainland Chinese intention to visit Taiwan.

### **The framework**

This study summarized the above results and developed a framework on factors affecting tourists’ visit intention. The rationale of developing the framework based on the materials of travel motivation and constraint is that both travel motivation and constraint are important components of tourist decision-making, and both could significantly influence tourists’ visit (or revisit) intention. Common themes and values affecting tourists’ visit (or revisit) intention can be abstracted from the materials of travel motivation and constraint. The current study identified three categories (i.e., *intrapersonal*, *interpersonal*, and *contextual influence*) affecting tourists’ visit intention in the context of Mainland Chinese visiting Taiwan (See Figure 2).

(Figure 2 here)

### **Theoretical contribution**

This study has made several theoretical contributions to the current literature. First of all, different from previous studies (e.g., Hsu & Lam, 2003; Huang & Hsu, 2005; Li, Wen, et al., 2011; Zhang & Lam, 1999) stating that *shopping, sightseeing, or positive attitude from the locals and service staff* were the major motivation factors attracting Mainland Chinese, the current study found that ‘to fulfil the dream’ and ‘the delicate political relationship between Mainland China and Taiwan’ were the major travel motivation factors for Mainland Chinese visiting Taiwan. Both motivation factors haven’t been identified by previous literature. Previous studies focused on either the destination-related or the origin market-related motivation factors (e.g., Uysal & Jurowski, 1994; Uysal, Li, & Sirakaya-Turk, 2008), this study found that the relationship between the source market (Mainland China) and the tourism destination (Taiwan) could also play an extremely important role in attracting tourists to visit the tourism destination.

Secondly, this study contributes to the travel constraint literature (e.g., Hinch & Jackson, 2000; Hsu & Lam, 2003; Jackson, 2000) in that ‘the cross-strait relations’ were also one of the most important travel constraints for Mainland Chinese visiting Taiwan. Specifically, visa issues, travel style, and political instability were highly related to the cross-strait

relations. It is interesting that this study found that time and money was not important constraints for Mainland Chinese tourists, which is different from previous assumption by the current literature (Hinch & Jackson, 2000; Hsu & Lam, 2003; Jackson, 2000). The findings of this study showed that with the growth of China's economic development and the increasing public holidays, Mainland Chinese tourists may have other types of barriers when visiting overseas destinations.

Thirdly, this study developed a framework on the factors affecting tourists' visit intention based on the motivation and constraint materials, namely: *intrapersonal*, *interpersonal*, and *societal influence*. Using the qualitative approach, this study found that *interpersonal factors* also played an important role in influencing Chinese travellers' behaviours (i.e., motivation and constraints), however, this factor was only briefly mentioned by previous studies (e.g., Li, Wen, et al., 2011; Zhang & Lam, 1999).

### **Managerial implications**

This study provides an in-depth understanding of Chinese tourists' behaviours of visiting Taiwan. The findings of this study show that majority of the interviewees visited (or expected to visit) Taiwan are due to emotional feelings about the cross-strait relations. Feelings about the cross-strait relations are the uniqueness of Taiwan, which could be developed as the unique selling points when Taiwan Tourism Organisations promote Taiwan in the Mainland

Chinese market. However, just like two sides of the same coin, such a delicate political relationship between Mainland China and Taiwan may significantly influence Mainland Chinese travel intention (or even revisit intention). The subtle political relationship between Mainland China and Taiwan is determined by the two governments, thus Taiwan tourism practitioners are not capable to change the relationship. The travel constraints, such as visa application, travel style (independent travel or package tours), and political instability, could not be easily solved through the effort from the Taiwan government and Taiwan tourism practitioners. What Taiwan tourism practitioners can do is to emphasis 'the stable cross-strait relations' between both regions in the promotional materials, which may reduce Mainland Chinese's concerns about visiting Taiwan.

Taiwan tourism practitioners may also work closely to the travel agencies in Mainland China in order to attract package tourists to visit Taiwan. In order to overcome some Mainland Chinese tourists' stereotypical image (e.g., the unattractiveness of Taiwan's attractions), promoting the uniqueness of Taiwan is necessary. As majority of Mainland Chinese interviewees in this study were interested in developing an in-depth understanding of Taiwan, such as experiencing local customs, lifestyle, and political activities. In addition to providing sightseeing service, travel agencies can also include some less-sensitive activities such as staying in local's house, dining with local people, or observing the local elections in the customised itinerary. Such marketing practices may change Mainland Chinese perception towards Taiwan from unattractive to attractive.

## **Conclusion, limitations and recommendations**

This study identified a list of travel motivation and constraints when Mainland Chinese consider visiting Taiwan. The factors on the relationship between the origin market and the tourism destination, such as ‘the cross-strait relations’, ‘visa issues’, ‘travel style’ and ‘political instability’, plays an important role in influencing tourists’ visit intention. However, findings from this qualitative exploratory study might be unique to the 27 interviewees. Further studies could adopt a quantitative approach to survey a large number of Mainland Chinese to test the results of the current study.

Following a three-step coding process, this qualitative study identified three broader factors, *intrapersonal*, *interpersonal*, and *societal factors*, influencing tourists’ visit intention. The current study only generally identified the three themes. Possible connections between these three themes could be explored in the future studies. In addition, this study found that *the contextual factor* is one of the most frequently mentioned themes, with a particular focus on ‘the cross-strait relations’. Further studies could focus on this particular theme, and explore how *the contextual factor* influences tourists’ behaviour, and how *the contextual factor* can be used in promoting and marketing tourist destinations.

Based on 27 interviews, this study briefly investigated the difference between visitors and

non-visitors in terms of their travel motivation and constraints. Different age groups and people from different areas may perceive diverse motivation and constraint when travelling to Taiwan. However, due to the uneven distribution between different age groups and geographical regions, this study didn't identify some significant differences. In the future, statistical tools can be used to examine the difference in diverse age groups and geographical regions based on a large scale survey.

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Table 1: Mainland Chinese to visit Taiwan

Year	All inbound tourists to Taiwan	Mainland Chinese tourists	Market share of Mainland Chinese tourists
2008	3,845,187	329,204	8.6%
2009	4,395,004	972,123	22.1%
2010	5,567,277	1,630,735	29.3%
2011	6,087,484	1,784,185	29.3%
2012	7,311,470	2,586,428	35.4%
2013	8,016,280	2,874,702	35.9%
2014	9,910,204	3,987,152	40.2%

Source: (Taiwan Tourism Bureau, 2015b).

Table 2: Free independent traveller program for Mainland Chinese to visit Taiwan

Starting date	Cities
21 June 2011	Beijing, Shanghai, and Xiamen
28 April 2012	Tianjin, Chongqing, Nanjing, Guangzhou, Hangzhou, and Chengdu
28 August 2012	Jinan, Xi'an, Fuzhou, and Shenzhen
28 June 2013	Shenyang, Zhengzhou, Wuhan, Suzhou, Ningbo, and Qingdao
28 August 2013	Shijiazhuang, Changchun, Hefei, Changsha, Nanning, Kunming, and Quanzhou
18 August 2014	Harbin, Taiyuan, Nanchang, Guiyang, Dalian, Wuxi, Wenzhou, Zhongshan, Yantai, and Zhangzhou
15 April 2015	Haikou, Hohhot, Lanzhou, Yinchuan, Changzhou, Zhoushan, Huizhou, Weihai, Longyan, Guilin, and Xuzhou
TOTAL	47 cities

Source: (Taiwan Tourism Bureau, 2015a)

Table 3: Previous studies on Mainland Chinese travel motivation

Author/year	Destination	Methodology	Key motivation factors
Zhang and Lam (1999)	Hong Kong	Quantitative	Push factors: <i>knowledge; prestige; and enhancement of human relationships.</i> Pull factors: <i>high-technology image; expenditure; and accessibility.</i>
Hsu and Lam (2003)	Hong Kong	Quantitative	Eight push factors: <i>experiencing the capitalist society; experiencing different culture; seeing the city under one-country-two-systems; visiting the metropolitan city; experiencing the mysterious city; interacting with Hong Kong people; experiencing a new and different lifestyle; and fulfilling self-curiosity about Hong Kong.</i> Pull factors: <i>shopping; visiting the Ocean Park; sightseeing; sharing travel experience with friends; and seeing movie stars and celebrities.</i>
Li, Wen, and Leung (2011)	Hong Kong	Quantitative	Four push factors: <i>knowledge and prestige; enhancement of social relationships; rest and relaxation; and adventure and excitement.</i> Five pull factors: <i>modern image; natural environment and attractions; safety and cleanliness; ease of tour arrangement; and shopping.</i>
Corigliano (2011)	Italy	Quantitative	Top three motives: <i>to visit places of historical and cultural interests; to visit renowned destinations; and to taste local food and beverages.</i>
Huang and Hsu (2005)	Hong Kong	Qualitative	Top five major motivation items: <i>shopping; knowledge enhancement; Ocean Park; world-famous branded goods; and curiosity.</i>

Table 4: Interviewee profile

<b>Demographics</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<i><b>Gender</b></i>	
Male	12
Female	15
<i><b>Age</b></i>	
19-25	3
26-35	14
36-45	6
46-55	3
56-65	1
<i><b>Areas</b></i>	
Beijing	4
Guangdong	6
Jiangsu	12
Shanghai	5
<i><b>Visitor vs. non-visitor</b></i>	
Visitor	14
Non-visitor	13

Table 5: Mainland Chinese travel motivation of visiting Taiwan

Theme	Category	Quotation
Intrapersonal factor	To fulfil the dream	<p>“My grandfather is 80 years old, and he thinks that visiting Taiwan would be the process of fulfilling his dream, that was the key reason that he visited Taiwan.” (Miss Qian, 26, an administrator, visitor, Shanghai).</p> <p>“Mainland Chinese can visit anywhere in the world, except Taiwan even if he/she has a lot of money... If I couldn’t visit Taiwan in my life, it would be a great pity. Therefore, visiting Taiwan is to fulfil my dream.” (Ms Qian, 42, an accountant, visitor, Wuxi, Jiangsu Province)</p>
	To experience local lifestyle, culture, and customs	<p>“I had some Taiwanese clients in my business... I wanted to see their real lifestyle... or different lifestyle... I wanted to compare what I would see with what I had learned from the textbooks... I wanted to see the difference.” (Mr Ding, 29, a manager, visitor, Wuxi, Jiangsu Province).</p> <p>“I am willing to visit Taiwan because of the folk songs by Teresa Teng. Many of her songs describe Taiwan, e.g., <i>Girls from Alishan</i>, which makes me willing to go. (Ms Cai, 35, an event organiser, visitor, Guangzhou, Guangdong Province)</p>
	To experience Taiwan’s political system	<p>“Taiwan has a different political system from Mainland China’s... I want to compare the different political systems between both.” (Mr Song, 19, a college student, non-visitor, Nanjing, Jiangsu Province).</p> <p>“I want to see Taiwan’s political system. For example, President Ma Ying-jeou is approachable by local residents. I want to experience canvass activities and election campaigns in Taiwan.” (Mr Shi, 32, a real estate agent, non-visitor, Shanghai)</p>
	To taste Taiwanese-style snacks	<p>“I tried some delicious Taiwanese-style snacks in a local food festival in Nanjing, but I think it’s good to taste these snacks in Taiwan... I also wanted</p>

		to know whether the Taiwanese-style snacks I tried in Nanjing were authentic or not” (Miss Xu, 23, a college student, non-visitor, Nanjing, Jiangsu Province).  “I think one of the major reasons to visit Taiwan might be to taste local food, such as Oyster omelette, Small sausage wrapped in big sausage, Hand shredded chicken, etc.” (Mr Shi, 32, a real estate agent, non-visitor, Shanghai)
	To sightseeing	“I was impressed by the beautiful scenery of <i>Sun Moon Lake</i> and <i>Alishan</i> ... I wanted to see both attractions.” (Mr Song, 26, a postgraduate student, non-visitor, Shanghai)
	To interact with local people	“I want to interact with locals, such as local businesspersons, or to stay in the local’s house and live with the local people for several days in order to understand more about Taiwan.” (Miss Xu, 23, a college student, non-visitor, Nanjing, Jiangsu Province).
	To experience Taiwan’s economy	“I knew that Chiang Ching-kuo was a talented person, and he governed Taiwan very well... I just wanted to know how Taiwan is being developed, and that’s the reason why I visited Taiwan.” (Ms Tan, 52, a factory worker, visitor, Nanjing, Jiangsu Province).
Interpersonal factor	To accompany with my family members	“I accompanied my mother to visit Taiwan... to be frank; I am not interested in visiting Taiwan” (Ms Wang, 32, a HR officer, non-visitor, Beijing)
	To accompany my friends	“I will go to Taiwan with my friends in the next week. I accompany them... If they are going to other destinations, such as South Korea, I am likely to go as well” (Ms Zhang, 53, Chinese medicine practitioner, non-visitor, Beijing).
Contextual factor	A delicate political relationship between Mainland China and Taiwan	“The relationship between Mainland China and Taiwan is so subtle ... Mainland Chinese have a profound sentiment to Taiwan ... I am not talking about the government, I am just talking about the relationship between Mainland Chinese and Taiwanese ... so I just want to visit Taiwan.” (Miss Yang, 32, an administrator, visitor, Wuxi, Jiangsu Province).

		“I feel that Taiwan is a part of China, but now China hasn’t unified with Taiwan. Because of this situation, I want to visit Taiwan, a part of China. Comparing with other Mainland cities, Taiwan’s attractiveness lies in such a delicate relationship.” (Ms Sun, 38, housewife, non-visitor, Wuxi, Jiangsu Province).
	Taiwan is a newly permitted destination for mainland Chinese	“I would like to go to Taiwan since it has been opened up to the Mainland Chinese market since 2008.” (Miss Feng, 30, a manager, visitor, Guangzhou, Guangdong Province).
	There is a suitable package tour at the right time and at the right price	“I travelled to Taiwan because there was a suitable package at the right time... and the price of the package is okay...” (Miss Lu, 26, an administrator, visitor, Guangzhou, Guangdong Province).

Table 6: Mainland Chinese travel constraints of visiting Taiwan

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Quotation</b>
Intrapersonal factor	I am not interested in Taiwan	<p>“The attractions were quite normal... the tourism industry in Taiwan wasn’t very good, the scenery was not as beautiful as I expected, and the economy wasn’t well developed. I think I am not going anymore... (Ms Yan, 49, a housewife, visitor, Nanjing, Jiangsu Province).</p> <p>“I think it was so so ... I am not going anymore... I didn’t feel anything special in Taiwan” (Ms Tan, 52, a factory worker, visitor, Nanjing, Jiangsu Province).</p>
	I have visited Taiwan already	<p>“I’ve visited Taiwan already, so I am not going anymore.” (Mr Wang, 56, a governmental officer, visitor, Beijing).</p> <p>“I won’t go to Taiwan again by myself, because I’ve already travelled. There is no point to revisit it again.” (Miss Qian, 26, an administrator, visitor, Shanghai).</p>
	I don’t have time	<p>“I know that normally it takes eight days to travel around the island by joining a package tour... I don’t have such a long holiday.” (Miss Zhu, 31, an administrator, non-visitor, Wuxi, Jiangsu Province).</p>
	I think travelling to Taiwan is expensive	<p>“I’ve heard that the package tour of visiting Taiwan is around RMB 7,000-8,000, but the tour to visit Singapore-Malaysia-Thailand is around RMB 2,000-3,000... I will definitely choose the latter tour.” (Miss Zhu, 31, an officer, non-visitor, Wuxi, Jiangsu Province).</p>
Interpersonal factor	Family responsibility	<p>“I will not visit Taiwan in a couple of years. You know, my daughter is now studying in the secondary school, and she is preparing for the entrance examination of high school, she needs to study hard, and to concentrate on her study... so I will not consider travel to Taiwan with my family” (Ms Sun, 38, housewife, non-visitor, Wuxi, Jiangsu Province).</p>

		<p>“I have to take care of my father-in-law... he is 80 years old, I can’t travel to anywhere” (Ms Han, 51, retired, non-visitor, Yancheng, Jiangsu Province).</p>
Contextual factor	Obtaining a visa (travel document)	<p>“I will never visit Taiwan again, because the process of applying for a visa was really inconvenient. It was really inconvenient ... inconvenient. I don’t want to do the application again. It took me around one week to submit all of the documents, because I need to submit many certificates, such as bank statement. I don’t understand... Taiwan is a part of China. Why the visa application process of visiting Taiwan is so inconvenient? ...” (Miss Qian, 26, an administrator, visitor, Shanghai).</p> <p>“It’s complicated to apply for a visa to visit Taiwan, and we even need to provide a bank statement to apply for that visa.” (Miss Zhu, 31, an officer, non-visitor, Wuxi, Jiangsu Province).</p>
	Travel style (FIT)	<p>“I don’t want to visit Taiwan through package tours, because the schedule is really busy, there are many shopping stops in the itinerary, these are unscrupulous activities” (Mr Wang, 33, a factory worker, visitor, Changzhou, Jiangsu Province).</p> <p>“If you want to join a package tour to visit Taiwan, that’s easy. But I don’t like package tours. If I must join a package tour to visit Taiwan, I might not go to Taiwan. Package tours have a busy schedule, and lots of shopping stops, and also some cheating activities in the itinerary.” (Ms Wang, 32, a HR officer, non-visitor, Beijing)</p> <p>“One barrier is that Mainland Chinese have to join a package tour to visit Taiwan. I’ve known that only residents from a small number of cities can travel independently to Taiwan without joining a package tour. But the application process for independent travel is really complicated. For example, the applicant needs to provide employment certificate and bank statement.</p>

		Anyway, it's really complicated.” (Miss Zhang, 26, an administrator in a 4-star hotel, non-visitor, Beijing)
	Political instability	<p>“I think the political relationship between Mainland China and Taiwan plays a role. If the relationship is positive, I might visit Taiwan again. If the relationship is strained, I might think about whether I should go. I know now the Kuomintang (KMT) is governing Taiwan, in the future the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) might govern Taiwan, which supports ‘independence’. In that case, I am not going to Taiwan. (Mr Ding, 29, a manager, visitor, Wuxi, Jiangsu Province).</p> <p>“I know that there were some political accidents in Thailand and the Philippines previously... if there are some similar political accidents in Taiwan, I am not going there” (Mr Zhou, 31, an accountant, non-visitor, Shanghai)</p>
	Natural disaster	<p>“I am worried about the natural disasters, such as typhoon, earthquake...” (Miss Hui, 26, an officer, non-visitor, Shanghai)</p> <p>“I’ve known from TV news that typhoon often affect Taiwan, which influence my decision to visit Taiwan” (Mr Wei, 27, a governmental officer, non-visitor, Jiangsu Province)</p>

Figure 1: Diagram of the coding process

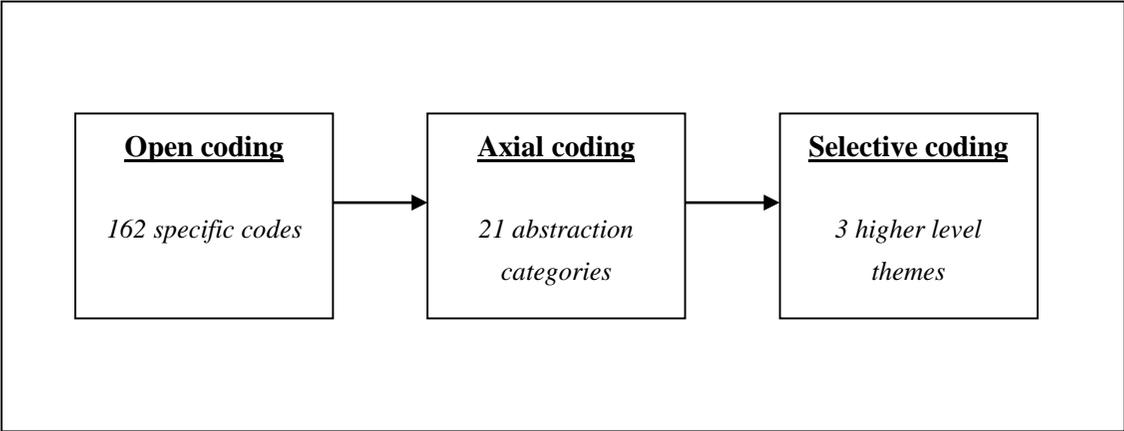


Figure 2: Three factors influencing tourists' visit (revisit) intention

