PERCEIVED TOURISM DESTINATION IMAGE OF WESTERN CHINA: EVIDENCE FROM HONG KONG RESIDENTS

By

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it reproduces no material previously published or written nor material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

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ABSTRACT

Perceived Tourism Destination Image of Western China: Evidence from Hong Kong Residents

The main purpose of this study was to examine the tourism destination image (TDI) of southwestern China (SWP) as perceived by Hong Kong residents. The impacts of visitation to similar destinations on TDI and the relationship between TDI and likelihood of visiting SWP were also studied. Data were obtained through a telephone survey by using a questionnaire developed from literature review and focus groups in this study. Respondents were asked to rate on their level of agreement on 22 TDI statements of SWP, and consider the importance of 22 TDI attributes for a general tourist destination.

The results revealed that an overall favorable TDI of SWP was perceived by Hong Kong residents. Six TDI factors were generated from a factor analysis on the 22 TDI statements. "Tourist Attractions and Activities" was the most favorable factor whereas the "Tourism Development" factor was least favorable and was slightly negatively perceived. This study also identified six perceived important TDI factors among Hong Kong residents through a factor analysis on the 22 TDI attributes. The perceived most important TDI factors were "Safety" and "Tourism Development". Hong Kong residents with visitation experience of similar destination(s) of SWP were found to perceive the TDI of SWP more positively than those who had no such experience(s). Satisfaction level of visitation experience of similar destination(s) was found to positively correlate to TDI. In contrast to the perceived favorable TDI of SWP, the likelihood for Hong Kong residents to visit

SWP was found to be low. Results from a multiple regression analysis indicated that the "Environment" and "Tourist Attractions and Activities" TDI factors (from perceived SWP TDI statements) could best predict respondents' likelihood of visiting SWP; however, the results indicated a low explanatory power of this prediction.

The findings generally concluded that SWP was a favorable tourist destination for Hong Kong residents. While there is a wealth of tourism resources in SWP, the tourism development there has to be improved. Hong Kong residents who have experience in traveling similar destination(s) of SWP would be a favorable market segment to be targeted in promoting SWP as a tourist destination, but there could be many determinants apart from TDI affecting their likelihood to visit a destination. The findings of this study supported the existing literature of visitation influence and satisfaction influence, and provided evidence of visitation influence on TDI of similar destination(s).

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of International Tourism in China

China has experienced extensive growth in international tourism since the "Open Door Policy" of 1978. The "Open Door Policy" first enabled the tourism industry in China to shift from being policy-driven only to being more economy-driven, and this has stimulated its growth (Zhang, Chong, & Ap, 1998). Researchers (Zhang, 1995; Zhang, Chong, & Ap, 1998; Zhang, Pine, & Zhang, 2000) have marked this as the formal take-off point for tourism development in modern China. Recent statistics in Table 1.1 show that the total number of overnight visitors to China in 2001 was 33.2 million, a forty-six-fold increase from 1978 (China National Tourism Administration [CNTA], 2002a). The total international tourism receipts in China in 2001 was US$17.8 billion, a sixty-eight-fold increase from 1978 (CNTA, 2002a). In both instances, China placed fifth in world rankings (World Tourism Organization [WTO], 2002).

It is believed that the growth trend for international tourism in China will continue. The WTO has forecasted that by 2020 China would be ahead of the United States and France, which are the current top destinations, and will rank first in international tourist arrivals (WTO, 1999). It is noted that the global economic downturn during the past few years has not stopped the growth of international travel to China. Rather, a favorable environment for future tourism development is foreseen due to China's success in bidding for the 2008 Olympic Games, and her accession to the World Trade Organization in late 2001. The Olympic Games are expected to draw large numbers of tourist not only during, but before and after the event. Meanwhile, China's accession to the World Trade Organization will not only

bring direct investments in tourism, but also strengthen ties between China and various World Trade Organization member nations. The resulting increase in the number of international connections will also benefit tourism businesses in China. Clearly, there is a promising future for international tourism in China.

TABLE 1.1

CHINA'S INTERNATIONAL TOURIST ARRIVALS AND TOURISM RECEIPTS FROM 1978 TO 2001

YEAR	TOURIST ARRIVALS (OVERNIGHT) (,000)	TOURISM RECEIPTS (MILLION US$)
1978	71.60	263
1979	152.90	449
1980	350.00	617
1981	376.70	785
1982	392.40	843
1983	379.10	941
1984	514.10	1,131
1985	713.30	1,250
1986	900.10	1,531
1987	1,076.00	1,862
1988	1,236.10	2,247
1989	936.10	1,860
1990	1,048.40	218
1991	1,246.40	2,845
1992	1,651.20	3,947
1993	1,898.20	4,683
1994	2,107.00	7,323
1995	2,003.40	8,733
1996	2,276.50	10,200
1997	2,377.00	12,074
1998	2,507.29	12,602
1999	2,704.66	14,099
2000	3,122.66	16,224
2001	3,316.67	17,792

Source: CNTA (2002a)

1.2 International Tourism in Eastern and Western Regions of China

According to Table 1.2, Eastern China clearly dominates the international 17 tourism industry in China. In 2001, about 80% of international tourism receipts and tourist nights in China were recorded in the Eastern region. Moreover, over half of the star-rated hotels and tourism employees in China were supplied in the Eastern region. However, considering that Western China has an area of 5.4 million square kilometers which comprises 56% of the country's total land mass and contains 50% of the country's total natural resources (e.g., energy and natural tourism resources) (CNTA, 2002b), there is considerable room for tourism development in the Western region.

In June 1999, Chinese President Jiang Zemin, during an inspection tour of China's Northwest, first articulated the need for large-scale development of the Western region. In November of the same year, at a central government economic work conference, the government officially launched the "Go West Campaign", a large-scale development plan for China's Western region. This plan consists of a package of policies and measures to accelerate economic growth in this region with priority government support. In March 2000, the central government issued bonds for a total sum of US$72.6 billion specifically earmarked for the development of tourism infrastructure in Western China (ChinaOnline, 2000). Thus, one can expect great potential for the tourism industry to develop along with the overall economy in the region. In fact, various localities in the region (e.g., Tibet, Qinghai and Xinjiang) have regarded tourism as a mainstay in their development strategy for the campaign (CNTA, 2002c).

TABLE 1.2

TOURISM IN EASTERN AND WESTERN CHINA IN 2001

Region	International Receipts (Billion US$)	% of Country Total	Tourist Nights (Million)	% of Country Total	No. of Star-Rated Hotels	% of Country Total	No. of Tourism Employees (Million)	% of Country Total
Eastern[a]	13.09	82	69.5	80	3,943	54	3.26	55
Western[b]	1.71	11	10.0	12	1,600	22	1.26	21

Source: CNTA (2002a)

Remark: Data were calculated by summing up the statistics for localities

a. Eastern China refers to the coastal provinces of Liaoning, Tianjin, Hebei, Shandong, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong, and Hainan (excluding Hong Kong and Macao) and the municipalities of Beijing and Shanghai.

b. Western China refers to Sichuan, Guizhou, Shaanxi, Qinghai, Gansu, Yunnan, Guangxi, Tibet, Ningxia, Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Chongqing

As discussed earlier, the Olympic Games in Beijing and the accession to World Trade Organization would speed up the growth of tourism throughout China. Together with favorable policies, tourism in the Western region will continue to grow at an unprecedented rate.

1.3 Outbound Travel of Hong Kong Residents

Outbound travel is a popular activity for Hong Kong residents. According to the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) (2002), departures by Hong Kong residents in 2001 reached 61 million (including departures to mainland China). Dividing this figure by Hong Kong's population of 6.8 million (Census & Statistics Department, 2002), this means that on average each Hong Kong resident traveled overseas nine times in 2001. Considering the fact that Hong Kong is a city of only 1,100 square kilometers (Census & Statistics Department, 2002), it can be seen that traveling outside Hong Kong is a preferred and popular choice for Hong Kong people to enjoy their vacation and to get away from city crowds.

In the past, traveling abroad was difficult for Hong Kong residents because they lacked either the disposable income or holiday time. However, with the economic prosperity since the 1970s and the passing of legislation during that period mandating seven days of paid holidays per year for all employees, the outbound travel of Hong Kong residents underwent a major take-off (Yuen, 2001). The upward trend has persisted as Hong Kong's economy thrived in subsequent decades. The number of outbound trips made by Hong Kong travelers in 1980 was 0.92 million (Hong Kong Tourism Association [HKTA], 1981). Surprisingly, the number

surged to 61.1 million in 2001 which represents a sixty-six-fold increase over the two decades (HKTB, 2002).

During the last five years, despite the economic downturn, the growth trend in departure numbers has not stopped (see Table 1.3). The total number of Hong Kong resident departures from 1997 (41.6 million) to 2001 (61.1 million) represented a 12% annual growth (HKTB, 2002). Mainland China was the favorite destination for Hong Kong residents; throughout this five-year period, departures to mainland China made up more than 80% of all departures (HKTB, 2002).

The number of departures to Asian destinations, namely mainland China, North Asia (Japan and Korea), South and South East Asia, Taiwan, and Macao, increased as a whole from 1997 to 2001 (HKTB, 2002). However, only the percentage of departures for mainland China increased during that period, from 80.9% in 1997 to 85.1% in 2001, while the percentages for South and South East Asia and Taiwan remained stable. Departures to North Asia and Macao actually decreased from 1.5% and 10% in 1997 to 1.2% and 7%, respectively, in 2001.

It was also realized that the percentage of departures to all long-haul destinations, namely the Americas, Europe and the Middle East, and Australia and New Zealand decreased from 1.1%, 0.8%, and 0.5% in 1997 to 0.6%, 0.6%, and 0.4%, respectively, in 2001 (HKTB, 2002). The actual number of departures for Europe and the Middle East, and Australia and New Zealand remained steady, but for the Americas it decreased significantly from 446 thousand in 1997, to 377 thousand in 2001 (HKTB, 2002). The general trend was a decrease in the percentage of Hong Kong outbound travelers to higher-cost destinations (i.e., the Americas, Europe, Middle East, Australia, New Zealand and North Asia), implying that cheaper destinations (e.g., mainland China and South and South East Asia) will be

TABLE 1.3

HONG KONG RESIDENT DEPARTURES BY DESTINATION, 1997 – 2001

Destination	1997	%[a]	1998	%	1999	%	2000	%	2001	%
Mainland China	33,677,567	80.9	39,140,463	82.2	45,175,166	85.0	50,083,105	85.0	52,002,944	85.1
The Americas	446,109	1.1	432,233	0.9	398,255	0.7	399,206	0.7	376,635	0.6
Europe and the Middle East	342,012	0.8	332,633	0.7	323,873	0.6	347,556	0.6	347,612	0.6
Australia and New Zealand	226,693	0.5	236,636	0.5	230,350	0.4	231,576	0.4	237,493	0.4
North Asia	623,283	1.5	879,607	1.8	778,186	1.5	738,991	1.3	761,616	1.2
South and South East Asia	1,711,044	4.1	1,888,443	4.0	1,985,675	3.7	2,389,619	4.1	2,504,621	4.1
Taiwan	363,363	0.9	380,979	0.8	420,094	0.8	468,688	0.8	525,526	0.9
Macao	4,169,582	10.0	4,257,141	8.9	3,793,785	7.1	4,206,853	7.1	4,293,622	7.0
All others	45,475	0.1	46,187	0.1	38,291	0.1	35,477	0.1	38,493	0.1
Grand Total	41,605,128	100.0	47,594,322	100.0	53,143,675	100.0	58,901,071	100.0	61,095,895	100.0

Source: HKTB (2002)

a. % rounded off to one decimal

preferred by Hong Kong outbound travelers if economic conditions in Hong Kong do not improve dramatically.

Supplementing the above data, a study by McKercher and Hui (2001a, 2001b) revealed that, during the period from 1999 to 2000, 33.6% of Hong Kong residents did not travel, 33.2% traveled regionally (within Guangdong and Macao), 15.5% traveled internationally (outside Guangdong and Macao), and 17.6% traveled both regionally and internationally. They also found that active outbound travelers in Hong Kong were generally younger (aged 26-45), richer and better educated, and 18% of overall travelers traveled three or more times in the year. In addition, the typical duration of Hong Kong residents' overseas travel was three to seven nights. Package tours were found to be preferred for short-haul trips, but those who intended to go to China preferred independent and package travel equally.

1.4 Hong Kong Outbound Travelers to China

Hong Kong was the biggest single market (in terms of tourist generating country/city) for China's international tourism in 2001 (see Table 1.4). The figure for Hong Kong travelers was almost four times that for Macao travelers and five times that for all foreigners (CNTA, 2002a).

According to CNTA (2002a), of the 58.6 million arrivals by Hong Kong travelers in 2001, 18.7 million were overnight visitors. The figure was more than seven times the respective figure of 2.6 million for Macao travelers and more than double the respective figure of 8.1 million for all foreigners.

TABLE 1.4

ARRIVALS, AVERAGE DAILY PER CAPITA EXPENDITURE AND TOTAL EXPENDITURE OF TRAVELERS IN CHINA IN 2001

Rank	Origin	Number of Arrivals (Million)	%	Average Daily Per Capita Expenditure (US$)	Total Expenditure (Billion US$)	%
1	Hong Kong	58.6	65.8	102	4.5	25.3
2	Macao	15.8	17.7	120	2.0	11.3
3	Taiwan	3.4	3.9	126	2.8	15.5
4	Japan	2.4	2.7	N/A	N/A	N/A
5	Korea	1.7	1.9	N/A	N/A	N/A
6	Russia	1.2	1.3	N/A	N/A	N/A
7	USA	0.9	0.1	N/A	N/A	N/A
8	Malaysia	0.5	0.1	N/A	N/A	N/A
	All Foreign Countries*	11.2	12.6	157	8.5	47.9

Source: CNTA (2002a)
*Including all countries and regions except Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan.

In addition to arrivals, Hong Kong travelers contributed significantly to international tourism receipts in China. Although the average daily per capita spending of Hong Kong travelers was found to be less than that of other travelers, one fourth of the international tourism receipts in China in 2001 was contributed by Hong Kong travelers (CNTA, 2002a). After the reversion of sovereignty to China in 1997, Hong Kong has had closer contact and communications with mainland China, in its status as a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China. The number of departures to mainland China made by Hong Kong residents in 1997 was 33.7 million and increased by 50% to 58.6 million in 2001.

Given that Hong Kong outbound travelers have contributed significantly to China's international tourism, it is expected that Hong Kong tourists will continue to play an influential role in the development of China's tourism industry. Although

there has been an upward trend for Hong Kong residents to choose destinations in China for vacation travel, it has been observed that Hong Kong residents tend to travel far more to Eastern China than to Western China. According to Table 1.5, the total number of arrivals in Eastern China in 2001 made by Hong Kong travelers was 10 million, which was much more than the figure of 0.6 million for Western China. Similarly, almost 21 million Hong Kong tourist nights were spent in Eastern China in 2001, which was far more than the 1 million tourist nights spent in Western China. The Eastern dominance also appeared in the average length of stay of Hong Kong travelers in various Eastern and Western China destinations in 2001: Hong Kong travelers spent 2.61 days on average in Eastern China destinations and 1.68 days in Western China destinations.

In terms of popularity among Hong Kong tourists, the gap between various destinations in China was tremendous. Some destinations (i.e., Ningxia and Inner Mongolia) received as few as 1,500 Hong Kong tourist arrivals in 2001, whereas top destinations in Eastern China, namely Guangdong and Fujian, received as many as 7.9 million and 0.6 million Hong Kong tourist arrivals, respectively, in the same year (see Table 1.5). In general, most of the popular destinations for Hong Kong travelers are located in the Eastern region.

It is clear that the future development of tourism in China is, to a large extent, influenced by Hong Kong outbound travelers. Attracting more Hong Kong travelers to Western China will be the key to success. Hong Kong outbound travelers have demonstrated their essential role in the development to date of China's international tourism industry. In the future, their role is expected to be even more important due to the extensive connections between Hong Kong and mainland China. In particular, it is tourism to the Western region that has great potential for growth, as Hong Kong

residents have thus far explored Eastern China much more extensively than Western China.

TABLE 1.5

A COMPARISON OF HONG KONG TOURISTS TO EASTERN AND WESTERN CHINA (2001)

Localities	Number of Arrivals	Tourist Nights	Average Stay (Day)
EASTERN CHINA			
Guangdong	7,938,047	14,843,040	1.87
Fujian	589,004	2,094,088	3.50
Jiangsu	293,202	985,204	3.36
Beijing	269,265	805,725	2.99
Shanghai	187,201	767,524	4.10
Zhejiang	218,949	510,088	2.33
Hainan	231,108	308,483	1.33
Shandong	128,978	258,528	2.00
Liaoning	44,460	139,635	3.14
Tianjin	20,861	89,725	4.30
Hebei	29,120	69,548	2.39
	Total: 9,950,195	Total:20,871,588	Mean: 2.61
WESTERN CHINA			
Guangxi	197,275	271,316	1.38
Yunnan	132,243	211,775	1.60
Sichuan	80,432	142,906	1.78
Guizhou	55,613	108,407	1.95
Chongqing	37,240	93,011	2.50
Shaanxi	50,092	90,562	1.81
Xinjiang	18,625	30,246	1.62
Gansu	21,463	29,184	1.36
Qinghai	6,498	12,609	1.94
Tibet	3,198	6,129	1.92
Ningxia	1,500	3,636	2.42
Inner Mongolia	1,491	2,387	1.60
	Total: 605,670	Total: 1,002,168	Mean: 1.68

Source: CNTA (2002a)

1.5 Statement of the Problem

It is noted that China has a bright future in international tourism. As Western China is now being promoted under the "Go West Campaign", great prospects for the tourism industry are expected. In order to attract Hong Kong travelers to Western China, particular attention should be paid to the Hong Kong residents' perceived image of destinations in Western China. According to Witt and Moutinho (1989), tourism destination image (TDI) is a type of product image in traditional marketing which can influence a customer's purchase decision.

Unlike many other products, there is no opportunity to physically touch or sample tourism products (destinations) prior to purchase: that is, the attributes related to destinations are intangible (Gartner, 1993). Jenkins (1999) claimed that whether or not the TDI represents the truth of a particular destination is less important. This was in line with what Hunt (1975) suggested to the effect that the image of a destination may be just as, or even more, important than actual tourism resources. In all cases, TDI is first attached to one's mind before and during purchase, and the reality comes next. With the intangible nature of destinations for potential travelers, TDI is therefore a key component in destination selection. This makes TDI crucial to the tourism businesses of a destination.

Various studies have been conducted to examine TDI in tourism marketing (e.g., Chen & Hsu, 2000; Choi, Chan, & Wu, 1999; Gartner & Shen, 1992). None has, however, investigated the TDI held by Hong Kong residents towards mainland China. In view of a lack of such research, this study was designed to examine the TDI, as perceived by Hong Kong residents, of the three southwestern provinces (SWP), including Sichuan, Yunnan, and Guizhou, in Western China. In 2001, SWP

constituted 35% of the total international tourism receipts and 32% of the total international tourist nights of Western China (CNTA, 2002). SWP is the gateway to Western China and it is usually considered as a sub-region in Western China due to the location and similarity in culture among the three provinces.

Previous studies (Gartner & Hunt, 1987; Pearce, 1982) have demonstrated the possible influence of prior visitation experience in different regions on TDI of places tourists have not visited. For example, Gartner and Hunt (1987) found that the experience of visiting Utah had improved the state's as well as the region's TDI. In the case of China, whether the visitation experiences of Hong Kong residents in various destinations in China would influence their perceived TDI of the SWP was of particular interest. By studying the TDI of SWP as perceived by Hong Kong residents with different visitation experiences in China and their likelihood of visiting SWP, strategies to attract Hong Kong travelers to visit SWP can be suggested for destination marketing and positioning.

1.6 Specific Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to identify the TDI of SWP as perceived by Hong Kong residents. The specific objectives of this study were to:

(1) assess Hong Kong residents' perceived TDI of SWP,

(2) examine the relationship between prior visitation experience of similar destination(s) and perceived TDI of SWP,

(3) examine the relationship between satisfaction level of visitation experience of similar destination(s) on perceived TDI of SWP,

(4) identify Hong Kong residents' perceived important TDI attributes and dimensions for a tourist destination in general, and

(5) assess the relationship between perceived SWP TDI dimensions and the likelihood of visiting SWP.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This study concentrated on Hong Kong residents and their TDI of SWP. The target population was the generic Hong Kong population but delimited to those who were Hong Kong permanent residents and eighteen years of age or older. Travel experience in China was delimited to experiences from at least one visit of more than one day in China in the past two years.

1.8 Significance of the Study

This study provided some theoretical and practical insights. From a theoretical perspective, results of this study contributed to the existing literature of the influence of similar destinations on perceived TDI of a particular destination. With the on-going development of tourism and the increasing travel experience of modern people, the increasingly important role of visitation influence on TDI was realized. Results of this study specifically highlighted the visitation influences on TDI of visit(s) to similar destination(s). It is noted that there have been a number of past studies on visitation influence on TDI (e.g., Chon, 1991; Phelps, 1986), however, almost all of them have focused solely on investigating tourists' perceived image change of the destination that was visited. One exception was an empirical

study by Pearce (1982), who investigated the image generalization effect and found that a visit to one destination influenced a similar destination's TDI. It is believed that this study would provide greater understanding of TDI modification, which will help predict the TDI formed by an individual or a particular group of people of a particular place.

From a practical perspective, in view of the great contributions made by the Hong Kong outbound travelers to China's tourism industry, it is vital for tourism promoters in mainland China to understand the TDI of Western China as perceived by Hong Kong residents. TDI is influential in travelers' destination choice (Chon, 1989, 1990; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Gartner, 1996; Mayo & Jarvis, 1981; Murphy, 1999), which results in tourist arrivals that hinge the success of tourism development. In particular, this study identified Hong Kong residents' perceived important attributes of the TDI for a tourist destination in general and dimensions of the TDI that correlate to their likelihood of visiting SWP. The identified dimensions and perceived important attributes are invaluable in shaping and achieving a better TDI of SWP. A positive and better TDI would help attract more Hong Kong tourists to SWP. It is believed that SWP, being the gateway and hub of tourism in Western China, would be instrumental in promoting tourism of the entire Western China. More Hong Kong tourists traveling to SWP would be a good start in narrowing the gap between east and west and obtaining a more balanced situation of tourism development throughout the nation.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of literature pertaining to the study is divided into the following sections: (1) the psychology of perception; (2) background of TDI studies; (3) TDI components and formation; and (4) visitation influence on TDI. Propositions of the study are provided at the end of this chapter.

2.1 The Psychology of Perception

Psychologists (e.g., Gross & McIlveen, 1998; Hayes, 2000) described perception as the organization and interpretation of a human being's basic sensations, such as vision, hearing and touch. Image in psychology is often referred to as a visual representation (Jenkins, 1999) because visual stimuli predominate in the process of perceptual organization (Gross & McIlveen, 1998). The study of perception is therefore valuable in understanding the formation of images.

Perception has been the primary concern of gestalt psychologists since the early nineteenth century. Gestalt psychology describes how people organize bits and pieces of information into meaningful wholes, by suggesting the basic principles of perceptual organization (Feldman, 2003). These principles determine the structuring of perceptions and also determine the structure of how the information is stored in the memory (Bower & Hilgard, 1981).

2.1.1 Gestalt Psychology

"Gestalt" is a German word that means "pattern." Gestalt psychology emphasizes the tendency of people to perceive an object as an organized whole (Mayo & Jarvis, 1981). Individual elements that people sense upon seeing an object will be structured into patterns, representing an active constructive process occurring in the mind (Humpreys & Müller, 2000). Figure 2.1 demonstrates the constructive process when people perceive things. At first glance it is difficult to recognize anything meaningful, but human minds will be able to interpret and organize the black dots in the picture and eventually signals that there is a Dalmatian dog at the center. In this case, the dog is a perceptual whole that represents something greater than the sum of the individual elements (Feldman, 2003).

FIGURE 2.1

CONSTRUCTIVE PROCESS IN PERCEPTION

Source: Gross and McIlveen (1998), p.171

The fundamental principle of perceptual organization in gestalt psychology is the law of Prägnanz (Bower & Hilgard, 1981; Eysenck, 2001). Prägnanz has the meaning of "loaded with meaning" (Hayes, 2000) or "compact and significant" (Bower & Hilgard, 1981). In essence, its meaning is, as stated by Koffka (1935), "Of several geometrically possible organizations that one will actually occur which possesses the best, simplest and most stable shape" (p.138). Practically, there are a number of laws subsumed under the law of Prägnanz. Four of these laws can be applied to tourism situations, and they will be discussed in the order of (1) figure and ground relationship, (2) the law of proximity, (3) the law of similarity, and (4) the law of simplicity.

2.1.1.1 Figure and Ground Relationship

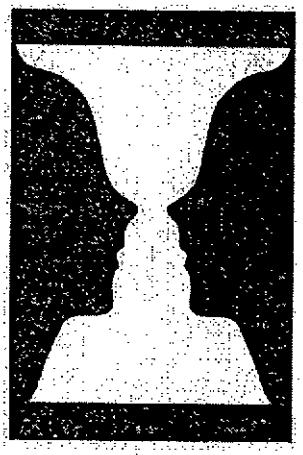
Figure and ground refers to object and background when people perceive things. In most cases, an object can only be perceived when people are able to distinguish the background (Bower & Hilgard, 1981). Figure 2.2 illustrates a reversible situation of perception when the object and background are ambiguous. If the black portion is treated as the background, a vase can be seen; however, when the white portion is viewed as the background, the profiles of two faces emerge (Feldman, 2003).

In tourism, for example, a person may know nothing about Tongren, but when told that it is a city in China, he/she will be able to form an image of it based on the image of China. In this case, China is the background. In another example, a traveler to Tongren may know nothing about China before the visit, but after the

visit the image of Tongren will be extended to the image of China. Tongren becomes the background instead.

FIGURE 2.2

FIGURE AND GROUND RELATIONSHIP



Source: Feldman (2003), p. 99

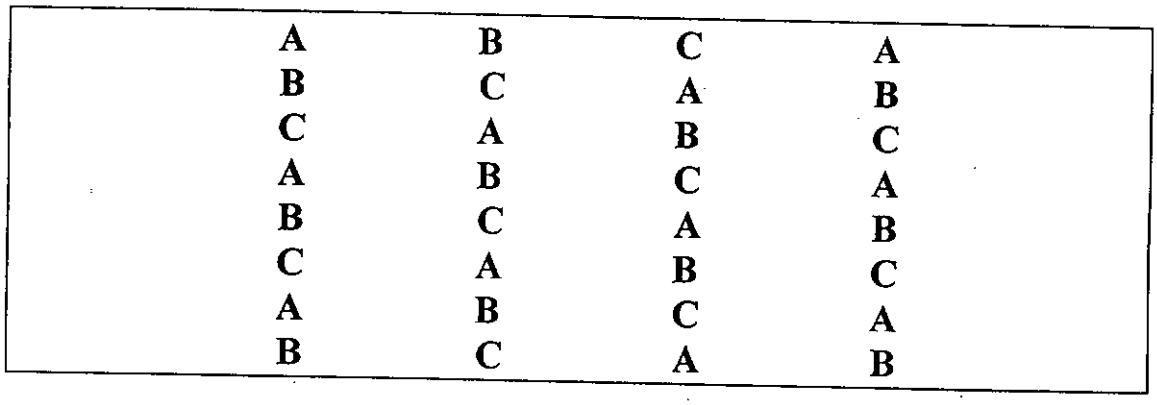
2.1.1.2 The Law of Proximity

People tend to perceive elements that are closer together as belonging to each other and as part of a group (Bower & Hilgard, 1981). Figure 2.3 shows that most people tend to perceive the letters "A", "B", and "C" as being in four vertical columns rather than in eight rows. Since the vertical distance is smaller than the horizontal distance between the letters, or the letters in vertical manner are closer together, this explains why people tend to perceive them together.

Mayo and Jarvis (1981) suggested a typical example is that many people perceive England, Scotland, and Wales as belonging together, but each of them is unique in many important ways. An example for China is that people tend to perceive Xinjiang and Tibet as belonging together, but actually they are quite different (e.g., in climate, culture and landscape).

FIGURE 2.3

THE LAW OF PROXIMITY



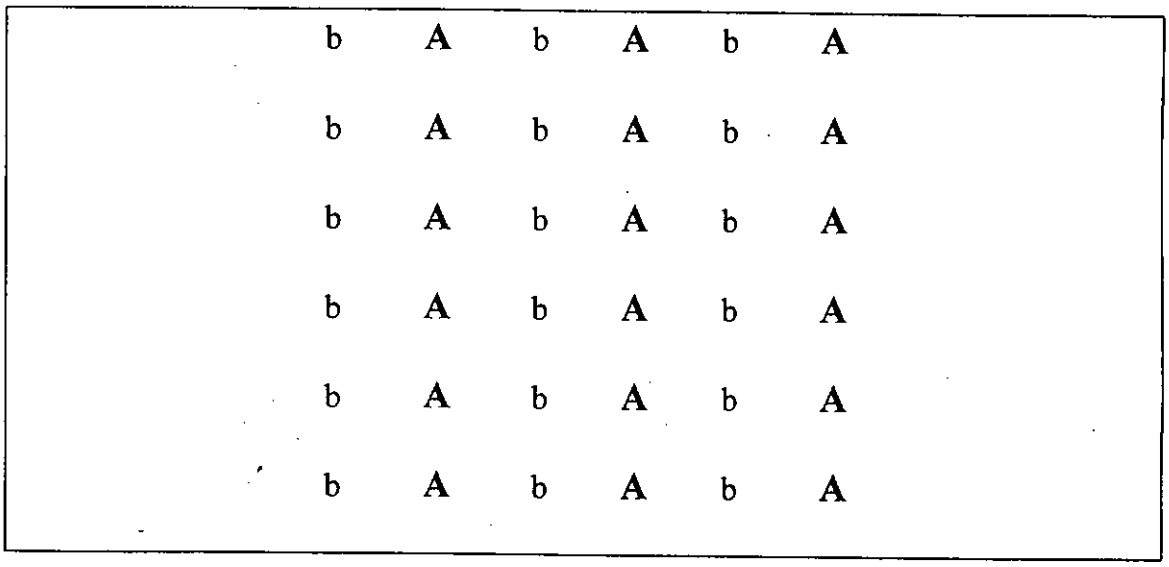
2.1.1.3 The Law of Similarity

The law of similarity states that items with similar features tend to be grouped together (Bower & Hilgard, 1981). Figure 2.4 demonstrates that most people tend to perceive the letters as separate vertical columns of "b"s and "A"s, rather than as horizontal rows with a mixture of "b"s and "A"s.

Mayo and Jarvis (1981) provided an example that some people perceive Puerto Rico, Bermuda, and Jamaica as very similar because to them these are all island resorts; however, these places are different in many other ways. For China, many people consider Xian and Luoyang as similar and group them together. Xian and Luoyang are perceived similar because both of them were ancient capitals of China, but Xian is in Western China, while Luoyang is in Central China.

FIGURE 2.4

THE LAW OF SIMILARITY



2.1.1.4 The Law of Simplicity

This law suggests that people tend to perceive things in the most basic and straightforward manner (Bower & Hilgard, 1981). Those objects that appear to be in symmetry, parts of a whole, and have a regular pattern are perceived as being grouped together. The object in Figure 2.5 shows that people prefer to say this is a triangle consisting of "A"s and "B"s instead of saying there is one rhombus consisting of "A"s and two triangles consisting of "B"s.

An example in tourism could be about how people perceive China. People tend to perceive China as a country consisting of different geographical regions (e.g., Western and Eastern) rather than perceiving seperate regions in China alone. This implies that when people think of one region, the information they hold of China overall will also be considered.

FIGURE 2.5

THE LAW OF SIMPLICITY

A
AA
AAA
AAAA
AAAAA
AAAAAA
BAAAAAB
BBAAAABB
BBBAAABBB
BBBBAABBBB
BBBBBABBBBB
BBBBBBBBBBBB

In sum, the above concepts of gestalt psychology suggest that perceptions of things are somewhat interrelated in individuals' minds. In the context of a TDI study, that means that the TDI of one destination could include elements of TDIs of other similar destinations.

2.2 Background of TDI Studies

Literally, TDI means the image of a destination in tourism. Sussman and Ünel (1999) stated that "image" is sometimes used interchangeably with "perception" and "attitude" in marketing literature. In psychology, "image" is usually related to "perception", whereas "perception" is an area in cognitive psychology studying the "organization and interpretation of incoming sensory information to form inner representations of the external world" (Gross & McIlveen, 1998, p.170). As for the term "attitude", Sussman and Ünel (1999) defined it as "a learned mental state that conditions an individual's response to all objects and

situations in a predetermined manner" (p. 223). In the present study, the term "image" was used.

In the tourism industry, there are numerous types of image, such as the image held of a service, an activity, a hotel, and a facility. However, the image of a destination deserves more attention in tourism marketing since TDI includes all services and products that a destination has to offer to tourists. The following sub-sections will discuss the definitions and importance of TDI in detail.

2.2.1 Definitions of TDI

In consumer behaviorists' view, image is one's own personalized, internalized and conceptualized understanding of what one knows, and it has nothing to do with knowledge of the truth (Markin, 1974). In the field of tourism, the World Tourism Organization (1979) suggested that there are three types of definitions for image: (1) artificial imitation of the apparent form of an object, (2) resemblance, and (3) ideas and conceptions.

TDI as an important "image" in tourism has been extensively studied by researchers, and various definitions of TDI have been proposed. No consensus, however, has been reached among researchers (Gallarza, Saura, & García, 2002). Jenkins (1999) claimed that defining TDI is a dilemma and scholars in different fields tended to provide different definitions. The definitions listed here were provided by some well-known researchers in the tourism field.

Hunt (1971), who is a pioneer in destination image studies, first defined the image of a state (destination) as the impressions that a person or persons hold about a state (destination) in which they do not reside. However, the most frequently

quoted definition is by Crompton (1979), holding that a destination image is "the aggregate sum of beliefs, ideas, impressions and expectations that a tourist has about a tourist destination area" (p. 18). Kotler (1994) recently defined the image of a destination as the net result of beliefs, ideas, feelings, expectations and impressions that a person holds of it, which is similar to Crompton's definition. Echtner and Ritchie (1991) defined TDI as "the perceptions of individual destination attributes and the holistic impression made by the destination" (p. 8). Their definition contributed significantly to the knowledge of TDI measurement.

2.2.2 Importance of TDI

TDI has been an important area of research in tourism marketing (Gallarza, Saura, & García, 2002). Contemporary researchers have substantiated TDI's pivotal role in the travelers' decision making process, destination choice and consuming behavior (e.g., Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Chon, 1990; Gartner, 1993; Murphy, 1999).

The intangibility of tourism products makes the TDI a crucial factor for destinations to attract prospective tourists. Previous empirical studies have provided evidence that people's TDI influences their travel behavior, which includes destination choice. For example, Goodrich (1978) and Telisman-Kosuta (1987) found that there was a strong and direct association between favorable TDI and preferred destination. Mayo and Jarvis (1981) also asserted that when travelers made decisions on destination choice, image and perceived ability of destination to satisfy their needs were the two most important factors to be considered. Obviously, a more

favorable TDI helps generate arrivals to destination, which is the goal of the tourism businesses.

In view of the importance of TDI in tourism marketing, some researchers have proposed different models to examine the relationship between TDI and destination choice (Chon, 1989, 1990; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Gartner, 1996; Woodside & Lysonski, 1989; Um & Crompton, 1990). For example, Woodside and Lysonski (1989) proposed that destination awareness, which is related to the formation of TDI, is influential in destination decisions. Destination awareness, as the nucleus in their model, comprised the consideration set (destinations to be considered), the unavailable-aware set (destinations to which it is not feasible to go), the inert set (destinations with insufficient information to consider), and the inept set (destinations rejected). Their study found that the order of alternatives in the consideration set was positively associated with preferences, whereas preferences were found to positively associate with visit intention.

Another important aspect is that TDI affects the post-travel satisfaction levels of tourists (Chon, 1992). Through actual travel, the pre-formed TDI (pre-visit expectations) on the destination will be evaluated by the post-visit perceptions and finally a post-visit TDI will be formed (Chon, 1992). By assessing the pre-visit and post-visit TDIs, the satisfaction or dissatisfaction levels of tourists can be measured. A clear understanding of TDI can help determine a better destination positioning strategy, which in turn enhances the satisfaction of tourists. It has been suggested that tourist satisfaction plays a role in repeat visits, and repeat visits are beneficial to a destination (Reid & Reid, 1993; Witt & Moutinho, 1994).

2.3 TDI Components and Formation

Elements or components that contribute to the formation of TDI have aroused the interest of researchers in tourism marketing. An understanding of the TDI formation process helps identify ways to shape one's TDI of a particular destination (Mill & Morrison, 1992).

Gunn (1972) suggested that there are two levels of TDI formation, the organic and the induced. Organic images relate to indirect sources of information that are achieved non-purposefully through daily exposure to the outside environment. This may include television and radio programs, books, word of mouth, newspapers, magazines, and the Internet. Eventually, an imagery is formed by making sense of all such information on a destination; this can also be explained by gestalt psychology that information is organized into patterns (Gunn, 1972). Induced images result from direct marketing information obtained through deliberate marketing sources, such as pamphlets from travel agents, television commercials, and destination publications.

Phelps (1986) also proposed two types of images (i.e., primary and secondary), which were different from Gunn's idea. She argued that images are formed by actual visits (primary) and external information (secondary). Although Phelps's idea seems to be too general to explain TDI's complex nature and formation, the importance of actual visits in forming a TDI was highlighted.

Fakeye and Crompton (1991) modified Gunn's model by adding the complex images formed through destination visitation. They explained that actual contact to various aspects of the destination can help develop a complex image with more differentiated qualities and less stereotyping. In addition, visitation experience

can provide feedback that influences the future evaluation of destination alternatives. The findings of their study supported the importance of visitation experience in destination image formation.

Gartner (1993) went further and proposed three hierarchically interrelated TDI components, including cognitive, affective and conative. The cognitive image component is an evaluation of existing attributes of a destination derived from facts that are acquired through learning. It can be viewed as the total sum of the inherent qualities of the destination. The affective image component is the feeling about a destination that is dynamic in nature. Travel motives determine the feeling and eventually affect the evaluation of a destination. For instance, a beach resort is perceived as more favorable for those who seek relaxation than those who seek excitement. This dynamic nature will influence travel decision-making. The conative image component is the action and behavior of decision making. It is formed when a decision is made after the cognitive image component has been assessed with the influence of the affective component.

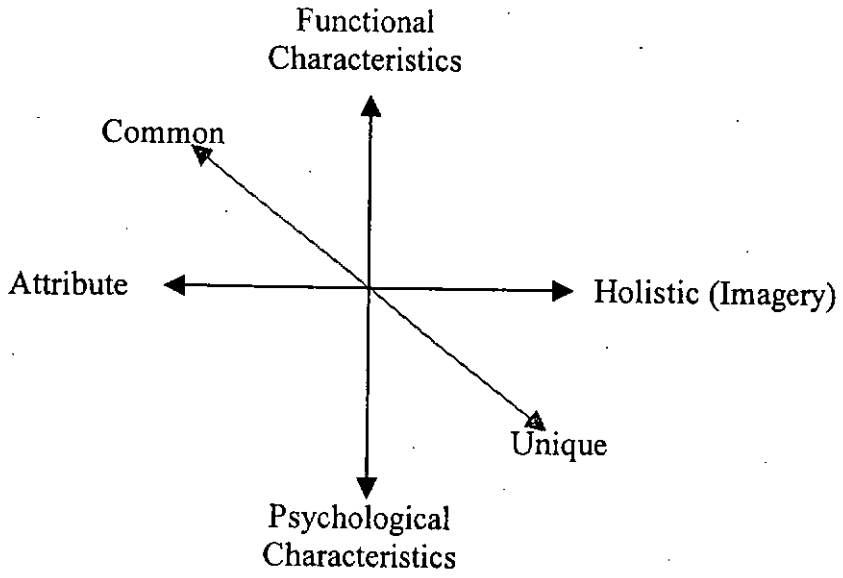
There are various sources of information that contribute to image formation. Gartner (1993) identified eight categories of information sources, put them into a continuum and named them image formation agents. The agents in order are: Overt Induced I (traditional advertising), Overt Induced II (e.g., information received/requested from tour operators and wholesalers), Covert Induced I (advertisements through a recognized second party), Covert Induced II (an unbiased form of highly credible information such as a travel writer's article), Autonomous (independently produced documents such as reports), Unsolicited Organic (unrequested information received from others), Solicited Organic (requested

information from a source that has no interest in the outcome), and Organic (visitation). Each category has a specific effect on the formation of TDI.

Echtner and Ritchie (1991), on the other hand, focused solely on investigating TDI's components and provided an detailed description of the complex nature of TDI. Through reviewing and examining prior research related to TDI measurement, they developed a conceptual framework for TDI (Figure 2.6). This framework consists of three continuums: (1) Attribute-Holistic, 2) Functional-Psychological, and 3) Common-Unique. These three continuums form a three-dimensional model with twelve quadrants that allow TDI to be accurately divided into twelve aspects.

FIGURE 2.6

COMPONENTS OF DESTINATION IMAGE



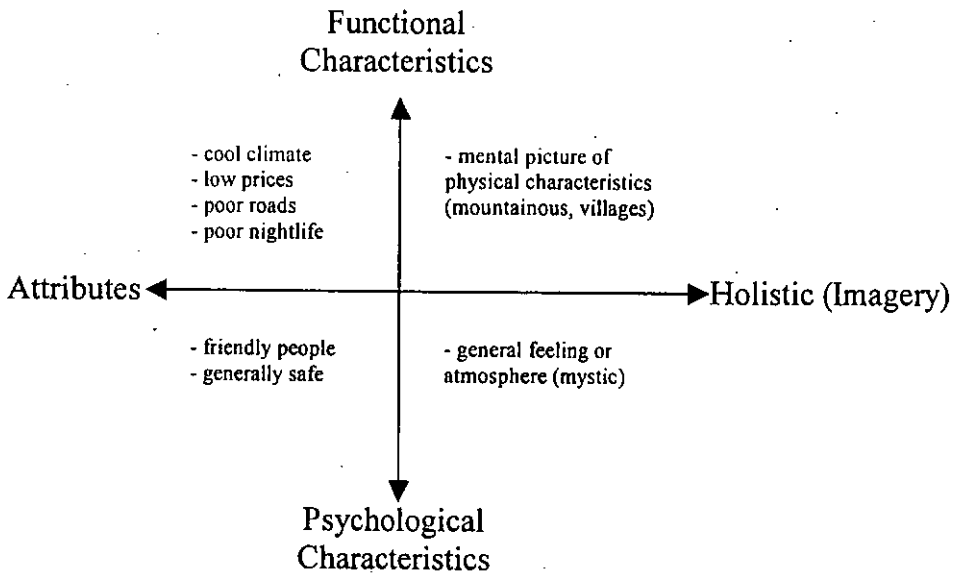
Source: Echtner and Ritchie, 1991 (p. 6)
Note: This figure should be envisaged in three dimensions.

According to Echtner and Ritchie (1991), the two major components of TDI are attribute-based perceptions (e.g., climate) and holistic impressions (e.g., mental pictures), which form the first continuum. Each component is composed of

functional (more tangible/measurable) and psychological (more abstract/non-measurable) characteristics so that the second Functional-Psychological continuum is crossed against the first Attribute-Holistic continuum. An example of this interaction is adopted from Echtner and Ritchie (1991) and is shown in Figure 2.7. For quadrants on the attribute side, perceptions can be of a cool climate (functional) or friendly people (psychological), while for quadrants on the holistic side, impressions can be a picture of a particular scene (functional) or atmosphere (psychological).

FIGURE 2.7

AN EXAMPLE OF FOUR TDI COMPONENTS



Source: Echtner and Ritchie, 1991 (p. 1)

The third continuum, Common-Unique, crossed against both the first and second continuums (Figure 2.6). With the addition of the third dimension, destination perceptions (attributes) can be common (e.g., cool climate) or unique (e.g., Montego Bay in Jamaica), and destination impressions (holistic) can also be common (e.g., relaxing environment) or unique (e.g., slow-paced but funny and happy) (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993).

Echtner and Ritchie (1993) believed that this framework could help fully capture the components of TDI. Contemporary researchers reckoned that this theoretical framework can significantly contribute to TDI conceptualization (Gallarza, Saura, & García, 2002) and measurement (Chen, 2001; Chen & Hsu, 2000).

2.3.1 The Perceived Importance of TDI Attributes

The formation of perception is always characterized as a "process of successive filtering of stimuli" so that millions of perception sources can be manipulated with limited mental capacity (Mayo & Jarvis, 1981). They called this selective attention, that only essential, relevant, and acceptable things will be consciously noticed. Jenkins (1999) pointed out that people tend to perceive some attributes as more important than others in the TDI (i.e., construct preference). A similar idea was proposed by Perdue (2000) that enduring involvement would affect destination choice. Enduring involvement was defined by Havitz and Dimanche (1990) as the tourist perceived degree of self-relation or importance of a product or behavior in achieving personal goals and values. That is, an individual would tend to involve more actively in some aspects of TDI that are more important or more related to the personal goals or values. Perdue (2000) found that enduring involvement affected TDI and consumer confidence, and eventually affected the destination choice indirectly through TDI and consumer confidence.

2.4 Visitation Influence on TDI

Consumer experience has been extensively studied by consumer behavior researchers. It was proposed that individuals who have more product experiences would be able to interpret and elaborate a new product better (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987), and thereby, a more specific and precise product image could be formed (Coupey et al., 1998). Consumer experience could be divided into destination experience (actual experience of a specific destination) and behavioral experience (individual's personal experience) (Perdue, 2000). Perdue (2000) suggested that consumer experience affects consumer confidence. He defined consumer confidence as "the respondent's belief in his or her ability to accurately assess the attributes of a destination (p. 20)". His study found that consumer confidence was positively correlated with positive TDI, and when consumer confidence increased, the association between TDI and destination choice was intensified. As such, the destination experience could be regarded as one primary factor involved in the process of TDI formation.

In the formation process of TDI, visitation influence has been an important factor (Chon, 1990; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Gartner, 1996). While Phelps (1986) conceptualized that TDI is formed based on primary (visitation) and secondary (external information) images, Gartner (1996) contended that visitation is an "organic" image formation agent that can provide inputs to the cognitive image component. Rittichainuwat, Qu, and Brown (2001) also stated that multiple experiences with a destination would help uncover the hidden qualities of that destination.

Chon (1989, 1990), with more emphasis on customer satisfaction, proposed a model of TDI as influenced and modified by different satisfaction/dissatisfaction situations after visitation. The different satisfaction/dissatisfaction situations are formed by evaluating post-travel perceived reality and pre-travel expectations of the destination (i.e., evaluative congruity). TDI is improved under satisfactory conditions. In situations of dissatisfaction, TDI is adversely affected by visitation. Subsequent empirical study on this model was done by Chon (1992) which supported the argument that tourists' evaluative congruity was correlated to their satisfaction/dissatisfaction situations.

A number of studies on visitation influence has found that pre-travel and post-travel TDIs of tourists were different. Studies relating to visitation influence on TDI that were reported in major journals from the early 1970's to the present are summarized in Table 2.1.

Findings of these studies generally echoed the concepts of consumer experience and consumer confidence discussed earlier. Three observations were made based on these studies:

1. These studies generally provided evidence of visitation influence on TDI. One exception was the study by Wee, Hakam, and Ong (1986) that the visitation influence on TDI was only found for one of the four sub-sample groups.
2. For the direction of visitation influence on TDI, no conclusion could be drawn from the study findings due to conflicting results. Some studies (e.g., Gartner & Hunt, 1987; Rittichainuwat, Qu, & Brown, 2001) reported positive influence of visitation on TDI. However, two other studies (i.e.,

TABLE 2.1

STUDIES ON VISITATION INFLUENCES ON TDI

Author(Year)	Focus	Method	Findings
Pearce (1982)	Post-travel images and pre-travel images on destinations and origin, image generalization	Repertory Grid	Visitation changed TDIs of visited destination, home destination, similar destinations, and destinations with particular similarity to the home destination.
Phelps (1986)	Secondary image assessment and tourist decision making	Questionnaire	Travel experience altered travelers' impressions of the destination.
Wee, Hakam, & Ong (1986)	Temporal and spatial differences in image of Singapore	Self administered questionnaire	Only 1 out of the 4 sub-sample groups showed significant differences between before and after visit TDIs.
Gartner & Hunt (1987)	Change of Utah's TDI over a twelve-year period	Questionnaire	Visitation improved the state's TDI and extended the TDI improvement to a larger geographical area.
Gyte (1988)	TDI of Tunisia perceived by student visitors	Questionnaire	Different images on environment were reported after visitation (from rough and vivid to smooth and drab).
Shen (1989)	U.S. travelers' TDI on China	Questionnaire	7 of the 32 attributes improved after visitation.
Chon (1991)	TDI modification through touristic experience of American visitors to South Korea	Self administered questionnaire	4 out of 7 aspects of destination image (including shopping-related attributes, safety and security, scenic beauty and natural resources, and general attitude toward Korea) were significantly improved after visitation.
Fakeye & Crompton (1991)	Image differences between prospective, first-time, and repeat visitors to the Lower Rio Grande Valley	Questionnaire	Those who visited the valley scored significantly higher than nonvisitors in destination image factors of social opportunities and attractions; infrastructure, foods, and friendly people; and bars and evening entertainment. However, those who visited the valley

			gave significantly lower scores than nonvisitors in factors of natural and cultural amenities; and accommodations and transportation.
Milman & Pizam (1995)	Awareness and familiarity on TDI and likelihood to visit Central Florida	Telephone questionnaire	For respondents who had previously visited Central Florida, a more positive TDI of it was perceived, and a higher repeat visit intention was demonstrated. No such results were found between those who were and who were not aware of Central Florida as a tourist destination.
Dann (1996)	Cognitive, affective and conative images perceived during pre and on-trip situations by travelers to Barbados	Interview	Travelers had different cognitive, affective and conative image descriptions before and during the trip.
Andreu, Bigné, & Cooper (2000)	British travelers' projected and perceived image of Spain	Structured self administered questionnaire	Respondents who had visited Spain before evaluated its "value for money" and "culture" better than those who had not previously visited.
Chaudhary (2000)	European travelers' pre-trip and post-trip destination images of India	Structured question survey	A more impressed destination image was formed after visit: most positively framed items (e.g., variety of good arts) and negatively framed items (e.g., unhygienic conditions) were rated with a greater level of agreement after visitation.
Rittichainuwat, Qu, & Brown (2001)	International image of Thailand perceived by first-time and repeat travelers	Self administered questionnaire	Repeat visits improved perceived TDI attributes of scenic and natural beauty, ease of immigration procedures, value for money, good vacation place for children and family, and easy access.

Fakeye & Crompton , 1991; Chaudhary, 2000) demonstrated that visitation exerted negative influence on some aspects and positive influence on other aspects of TDI simultaneously.

3. Almost all studies investigated the image change of the destination visited; only Pearce's (1982) study examined whether visitation to one destination would influence a similar destination's TDI.

Mayo and Jarvis (1981) stated that people tend to generalize things in order to make decisions easier, and that this generalization effect can happen when thinking about similar destinations. They illustrated this idea with an example that individuals may expect similar experiences in Club Med Resorts that are located in different places. Gartner (1996) presented the same thought with the example of Monrovia, the capital of Liberia, to argue that people's cognitive image component of TDI may be developed based on images referred from another destination. He stated that many people may not know that Monrovia is located in Liberia; in this case, people's cognitive image component of TDI is formed based on images of West Africa in general. Pearce (1982) found that British travelers to Greece not only changed their perceived TDI of Greece, but also of Britain and Italy, after visiting Greece. Similarly, it was found that British visitors to Morocco not only changed their perceived TDI of the visited country, but also of Britain, Tunisia and Iceland, after the visit. He suggested that perceptions were carried over from visited destination to the home destination (Britain), similar destinations (Greece-Italy, Morocco-Tunisia), and destinations with particular similarity to the home destination (both Iceland and Britain lack sun and good beaches). Another study which alluded to the generalization effect was conducted by Gartner and Hunt

(1987). They examined the change in Utah's TDI over a twelve-year period and found that visitation not only improved the state's TDI, but also extended the TDI improvement to a larger geographical area. The TDI of the region in which Utah is situated was found to have improved as well.

2.5 Propositions

Visitation is an organic image formation agent (Gartner, 1993) for TDI. There had been strong evidence of visitation influence on TDI of the visited destination (e.g., Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Phelps, 1986) and some evidence of influence of TDI through visiting similar destinations (Gartner & Hunt, 1987; Pearce, 1982). Visitation to similar destination(s) is thus believed to have an influence on the TDI. Similar destination(s) are destination(s) that possess(es) similar character(s) in nature (e.g., Chinese culture, mountain scenery). Different cities or regions in a country can be regarded as similar destinations because they are under the same political system and possess a similar socio-cultural background. Based on this, the following proposition is suggested:

Proposition 1: There is a relationship between visitation to similar destination(s) and perceived TDI of a destination.

According to Chon (1989, 1990), the situation of post-travel dis/satisfaction had a positive or negative influence on evaluating the original pre-travel TDI. In satisfactory situations, TDI will be improved. In dissatisfactory situations, TDI will be adversely affected. Thus, the following proposition is suggested:

Proposition 2: There is a relationship between satisfaction level after visitation to similar destination(s) and individuals' perceived TDI of a destination.

It has been discussed in the literature review that TDI plays a role in influencing the likelihood of visit, traveler decision making, and destination choice. Researchers (e.g., Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Chon, 1990; Gartner, 1993; Murphy, 1999) have provided evidence that TDI was a factor affecting likelihood of visit. Therefore, the following proposition is suggested:

Propositions 3: There is a relationship between perceived SWP TDI and likelihood of visit.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purposes of this study were to assess the TDI of SWP as perceived by Hong Kong residents and to examine the impacts of visitation to similar destinations on TDI and likelihood to visit. The methodology pertaining to this study is divided into the following sections: (1) research design, (2) research framework, (3) hypotheses, (4) questionnaire design, (5) pilot test, (6) sampling, (7) data collection, and (8) data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional research design. Both qualitative and quantitative techniques were employed in this study.

The studies of Gallarza, Saura, and García (2002) and Jenkins (1999) reviewed past empirical TDI studies extensively. They generally found that the majority of previous studies used quantitative methods for TDI measurement and data analysis. Questionnaires predominated the quantitative methods in TDI measurement. Respondents for these questionnaires were usually asked to rate on a prepared set of attributes of TDI using semantic differential scales, Likert scales, categorical answers or rank orders. The nature of data resulted in strong preferences for using multivariate techniques (e.g., factor analysis, multiple regression and MANOVA) in analyzing data. Catalone, Di Benedetto, Kakam, and Bojanic (1989) claimed that using multivariate techniques allow various image components for different publics and destinations to be captured.

However, Jenkins (1999) emphasized that the use of pre-determined attributes in questionnaires can produce poor results because of inappropriate choice of attributes. In order to obtain valid results, she suggested a combined methodological approach with a qualitative phase prior to a quantitative phase. The qualitative phase (e.g., content analysis, focus groups) is a "construct elicitation" process to determine the best representative combination of attributes for a destination on a particular population. The quantitative phase is then to measure TDI by using the instrument with the best representative attributes. In fact, the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods has been recognized in social science disciplines as a good practice for quality research (Jenkins, 1999).

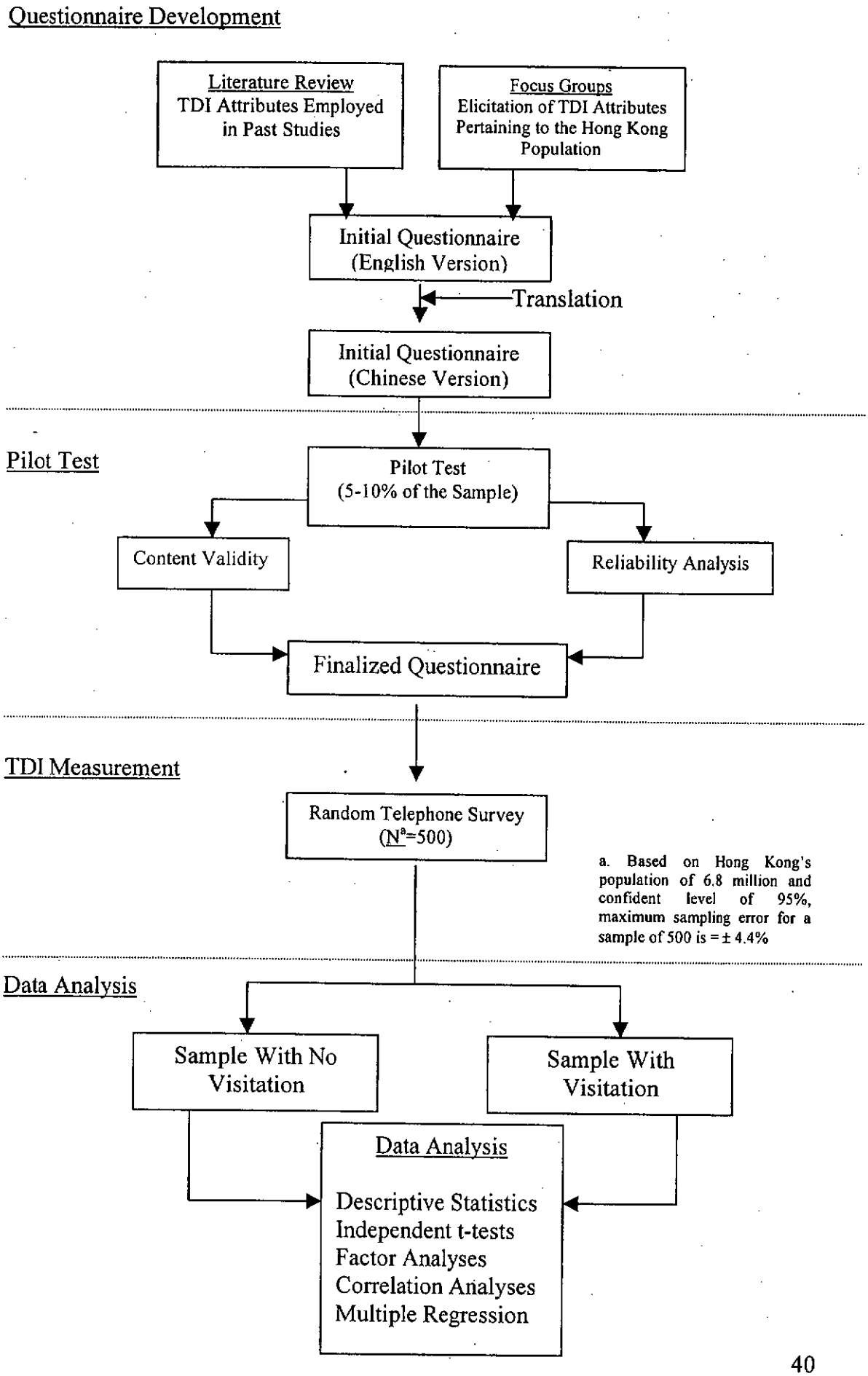
For the present study, the qualitative phase was a focus group discussion which assisted in the development of a valid questionnaire about Hong Kong residents' TDI on tourist destinations in general. The quantitative phase was the measurement of Hong Kong residents' TDI of SWP by using the questionnaire.

3.2 Research Framework

A research framework was developed based on the research design (see Figure 3.1). Basically, there were four main stages of this study, namely the questionnaire development, pilot test, TDI measurement, and data analysis. In subsequent sections, the details included in the research framework will be discussed.

FIGURE 3.1

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK



3.3 Hypotheses

Based on the propositions in this study, the following hypotheses were suggested and tested:

Hypothesis 1: Visitation to similar destination(s) influences the individuals' perceived TDI of a destination.

Hypothesis 2: Satisfaction level of visitation to similar destination(s) influences the individuals' perceived TDI of a destination.

Hypothesis 3: There is a relationship between dimensions of perceived SWP TDI and likelihood of visit.

3.4 Questionnaire Design

The English version questionnaire is shown in Appendix B. A Chinese version of the questionnaire (Appendix C) was subsequently prepared through translation to ensure its suitability for data collection. Since the respondents could be local Chinese or overseas people who have obtained permanent residency status in Hong Kong, both Chinese and English versions of the questionnaire were used in the data collection process. The questionnaire started with an introduction which briefly describes the main objectives and contributions of this study. The names of the provinces in SWP are also listed for respondents' reference. There were three parts in the questionnaire, namely the introduction and screening questions (Part A), level of agreement on statements for SWP and level of perceived importance of TDI attributes (Part B), and demographic characteristics (Part C).

Part A is screening questions which helped identify target respondents before the survey actually started. The first question was to ensure that only Hong Kong permanent residents were surveyed. The next few questions assisted in separating the sub-sample groups (i.e., sample with no visitation experience in China and sample with visitation experience in destinations other than SWP) for data analysis. A question was also included to obtain more details of the respondents' travel experience. In particular, the respondents were asked to rate their overall satisfaction/dissatisfaction level for visits in China during the past two years, on a scale ranging from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 10 (very satisfied). Respondents were also asked to rate on their likelihood of visiting SWP in the next two years, on a scale ranging from 1 (very unlikely) to 10 (very likely).

Part B of the questionnaire was designed to measure two aspects. First was the respondents' perceived importance of attributes of a tourist destination in general (question B1). Respondents were requested to consider their answers in a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (very unimportant) to 5 (very important). Second was the TDI of SWP as perceived by respondents (question B2) in their level of agreement with the TDI statements. Respondents were requested to provide their answer using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The last part in the questionnaire, Part C, included five demographic questions. Respondents' age, gender, education, income, and marital status were used for classification purposes.

3.4.1 Operationalization of TDI

Operationalization of TDI involved the right choice of TDI attributes (statements) to be included in Part B in the questionnaire. There were two steps in determining what attributes to be included, namely review of TDI measurement literature and focus group discussions.

Past TDI empirical studies were reviewed to locate the commonly recognized attributes in TDI measurements. Among the studies reviewed, the study by Echtner and Ritchie (1993) has a great impact on the issue of TDI assessment. They identified thirty-five attributes (see Table 3.1) of TDI by reviewing fourteen previous studies, performing twelve focus groups, and employing expert ideas. Because of the comprehensiveness of their study, these attributes formed the basis for developing the TDI attribute list in the questionnaire.

Two focus groups of Hong Kong residents were performed for elicitation of TDI attributes pertaining to the Hong Kong population. The first focus group was conducted on 9th January 2003 with 6 members of permenant Hong Kong residents who were research students in the School of Hotel and Tourism Management, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. The second focus group was conducted on 11th January 2003 with 8 permenant Hong Kong residents with different age, occupation and background. For both focus group discussions, the researcher was the moderator to guide and facilitate the discussion in an unstructured way. The discussions were performed in a comfortable environment (e.g., quiet and well-ventilated). The discussions lasted for about one hour and were audio-taped with the permission of the participants.

TABLE 3.1

PRELIMINARY IDENTIFIED ATTRIBUTES OF TDI

1	Tourists sites/activities
2	National parks/wilderness activities
3	Historic sites/museums
4	Beaches
5	Fairs, exhibits, festivals
6	Scenery/natural attractions
7	Nightlife and entertainment
8	Shopping facilities
9	Facilities for information and tours
10	Sports facilities/activities
11	Local infrastructure/transportation
12	Cities
13	Accommodation/restaurants
14	Architecture/buildings
15	Costs/price levels
16	Climate
17	Crowdedness
18	Cleanliness
19	Degree of urbanization
20	Economic development/affluence
21	Extent of commercialization
22	Political stability
23	Accessibility
24	Personal safety
25	Ease of communication
26	Customs/culture
27	Different cuisine/food or drink
28	Hospitality/friendliness/receptiveness
29	Restful/relaxing
30	Atmosphere (familiar versus exotic)
31	Opportunity for adventure
32	Opportunity to increase knowledge
33	Family or adult oriented
34	Quality of service
35	Fame/reputation

Source: Echtner & Ritchie (1993)

Finn, Eliott-White, and Walton (2000) stated that a focus group is able to generate rich ideas and insights into a topic. The focus groups for this study contributed to developing a precise, comprehensive and specific TDI measurement questionnaire for Hong Kong residents. The focus group participants were first asked to brainstorm their suggestions of TDI attributes pertaining to the Hong Kong population, and then they were asked to comment on the prepared list of attributes from the literature.

Results from the focus groups together with the thirty-five attributes from previous literature were analyzed to determine what attributes should be included in the initial questionnaire. Basically, their suggestions of TDI attributes were within the scope of the prepared list of attributes from the literature. Some attributes were deleted because the focus group participants found them inapplicable or less relevant to the Hong Kong population (e.g., economic development/affluence, good architectural structures). Other items were combined.

Both telephone survey centres, namely the Social Science Research Centre at The University of Hong Kong and The Computer-Assisted Survey Team (CAST) at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, recommended that the optimum length of questionnaire should be less than 50 variables (inclusive of everything, such as demographics) in order to secure response rate. Thus, a total of 22 attributes was included in Part B of the questionnaire.

3.5 Pilot Test

Before conducting the main survey, a pilot test using the Chinese version questionnaire was conducted on 11th February 2003. The purpose of the pilot test

was to assess the reliability (internal consistency) of the questionnaire and the appropriateness of format and wordings.

Twenty eight respondents (about 5% of sample size of this study) who were Hong Kong residents and 18 years or older participated in this pilot test. The first purpose of the pilot test was to assess the reliability of the questionnaire through a reliability analysis. Another purpose was to seek feedback on the format of the questionnaire and to check whether respondents can understand the statements clearly.

Result of reliability analysis indicated that satisfactory internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha > .80) was obtained for the questionnaire. For question B1 (respondents' perceived importance of attributes of a tourist destination in general), the Cronbach's alpha was .7803; for question B2 (TDI of SWP perceived by the respondents), the Cronbach's Alpha was .8601.

3.6 Sampling

The target population of this study was Hong Kong residents and its size was 6.8 million. The sampling was conducted through random telephone survey. With the advantage of penetration through residential telephone lines, telephone survey was able to randomly reach the target respondents with different demographic backgrounds and travel experiences.

For the sample size, based on the following formula (Finn, Elliott-White, & Walton, 2000) and with a confidence level of 95% and acceptable error of ± 5%, the optimum sample size for the Hong Kong resident population was found to be 384.

$$N = \frac{z^2 \pi(1-\pi)}{H^2}$$

Where:

N = sample size
z = standard error associated with the chosen level of confidence (when using 95% confidence, z = 1.96)
π = estimated variability in the population 50/50
H = acceptable sampling error ± 5% (confidence interval)

3.7 Data Collection

Data collection for the study was conducted from 12th to 14th March 2003. The mode of data collection, random telephone survey, was conducted in the time slot of 6:00 to 10:30pm during the data collection period.

The random telephone survey was conducted by the Telephone Survey Unit of the Social Science Research Centre (SSRC) at The University of Hong Kong. The telephone interviewers used the bilingual computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI) method run by the Market Research Statistics Package (MRSP).

Before the start of the telephone survey, a verbal format of the Chinese version questionnaire was transformed from the original written format because of the discrepancy between spoken Cantonese and written Chinese. For the questionnaire of this study, major discrepancy between spoken Cantonese and written Chinese was the usage of question words and linkage words. Some written question and linkage words are not normally used in Cantonese speech, but there are substitutes in spoken Cantonese that have the exact same meanings. The transformation of questionnaire from written to verbal format was done by the SSRC staff with their professional knowledge. A final check was performed by the

researcher to ensure the accuracy and suitability of the transformation. The transformation helped make sure that every interviewer asked questions in a more natural, efficient, and standardized way.

Residential telephone numbers were first drawn randomly from the residential telephone directory as "seed numbers", from which another set of numbers was generated by changing the eighth digit randomly. When telephone contact was successfully established with a target household, one of the eligible household members (Hong Kong permanent resident, 18 years or above) was asked to respond to the survey. Interviewers, who were thoroughly trained by SSRC, only dialed the number assigned by the computer. The average time spent for each telephone survey was about 15 minutes. In order to minimize survey error, appointments for the out-of-home target respondents and redialing (up to 3 attempts) for the unanswered calls were made. At least 10% of successful cases of each interviewer were re-approached for verification by asking them whether they had been interviewed.

The survey was basically conducted in Cantonese; for those eligible respondents who speak other languages (i.e., English and Mandarin), a suitable interviewer was arranged to handle the case as much as possible. During the interviews, the interviewers entered respondents' answers directly to the computer so that a raw data file was provided by SSRC when the survey was finished.

In order to further ensure a standardized survey with reliable results, the researcher stayed with the survey team to oversee the whole telephone survey process. All data collected together with the analytical procedures were in accordance with the ethical standards of the American Psychological Association (American Psychological Association, 2001).

A record of political and world events during the week before and the week after the data collection was made to ensure the responses were not interfered by ad-hoc issues. No event occurred was found to have effect on the responses during the entire data collection process. The timing of the data collection was well before the nationwide outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in China that was unveiled in April 2003 and the mass outbreak of SARS in the Hong Kong community during late March to mid April 2003.

For the present survey, 536 successful responses (see Table 3.2) from the generic adult Hong Kong population were obtained, representing a successful rate of 48.1% from the 1,115 telephone calls (i.e., successful responses, partial responses, and refusals) answered by target households. The sample size for this study was more than the optimum sample size of 384, thus the maximum sampling error could be reduced to ± 4.4% according to the formula stated earlier (Finn, Elliot-White, & Walton, 2000).

TABLE 3.2

TELEPHONE SURVEY CONTACT RESULT

	No. of Contact	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Successful responses	536	12.3	12.3
Partial responses	48	1.1	13.5
Refusals	531	12.2	25.7
Language problem	2	0.0	25.7
Fail to qualify (not Hong Kong permanent resident and/or not aged 18 years or older)	150	3.5	29.1
Business lines	179	4.1	33.3
Problem (fail to connect the line due to unknown reasons)	13	0.3	33.6
Not in	665	15.3	48.9
No answer	1,093	25.2	74.0
Lines busy	99	2.3	76.3
Fax/Data lines	243	5.6	81.9
Invalid numbers (numbers do not exist)	761	17.5	99.4
Answering machine	22	0.5	100.0
Total	4,342	100.0	

3.8 Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) (Norusis, 2000) was used as a tool for analyzing data. Statistical analyses in this study included descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, independent sample t-test, correlation analysis, factor analysis, and multiple regression. Before applying the statistical techniques, the data were carefully examined and checked for accuracy of data entry, missing values, and normality (skewness and kurtosis) and outliers (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996).

For objective 1 (assess Hong Kong residents' perceived TDI of SWP), descriptive statistics of means and standard deviations were used to determine the level of agreement of each statement (see Part B Question 2 of the questionnaire: Perceived TDI of SWP). These statements were ranked in descending order according to their mean value. This was followed by a factor analysis (orthogonal) conducted to identify the underlying factor structures among all TDI statements. Factors with an eigenvalue of greater than 1 were selected for the final rotation. Items met the minimum loading criteria (.40) were considered to be significant and were retained for further analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha) was conducted to determine the internal consistency of the identified factors.

For objective 2 (examine the relationship between prior visitation experience of similar destination(s) and perceived TDI of SWP), independent sample t-tests were employed to determine if there were any significant mean differences on statements of perceived TDI of SWP between respondents with and without previous visitation of similar destination(s).

For objective 3 (examine the relationship between satisfaction level of visitation experience of similar destination[s] on perceived TDI of SWP), Pearson's product moment correlation analysis was employed to determine if there was linear relationship between the statements of perceived TDI of SWP and respondents' satisfaction level of visiting similar destination(s).

For objective 4 (identify Hong Kong residents' perceived important attributes for a tourist destination in general), descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations were conducted to determine the importance of the respondents' perceived attributes (see Part B Question 1 of the questionnaire: Perceived important attributes). Each attribute was ranked in descending order according to its mean value. Mean split method was employed to classify important and unimportant attributes: attributes that had mean value higher than the overall mean were considered as important attributes; attributes that had mean value lower than the overall mean were considered as unimportant attributes. A factor analysis (orthogonal) was conducted to identify the underlying factor structures among all TDI attributes; similar steps and criteria as the factor analysis for objective 1 were employed. Reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha) was conducted to determine the internal consistency of the identified factors.

For objective 5 (assess the relationship between perceived TDI dimensions and the likelihood of visiting SWP), a multiple regression was employed to determine whether underlying dimensions of TDI that derived from factor analysis (as independent variables) would predict the likelihood to visit (as dependent variable). Likelihood of visiting SWP was presented by mean.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The results of this study, which examined the TDI of SWP as perceived by Hong Kong residents and the impacts of visitation to similar destinations on TDI and likelihood to visit, are presented in the following sections: (1) respondents profile, (2) Hong Kong residents' perceived TDI of SWP, (3) prior visitation experience of similar destination(s) and perceived TDI, (4) satisfaction level of visitation experience of similar destination(s) and TDI of SWP, (5) Hong Kong residents' perceived important TDI attributes, and (6) the relationship between perceived TDI and likelihood of visiting SWP.

4.1 Respondents Profile

The data were analyzed with descriptive statistics of frequency and percentage in order to show the demographic profile of respondents (see Table 4.1). Respondents comprised 536 Hong Kong permanent residents who were aged 18 years or older.

There were slightly more female respondents (51.9%) than male respondents (48.1%). Larger proportions of respondents appeared in categories of 25-44 years old (49.6%), secondary educated (55.2%), a monthly household income below HK$30,001 (61.9%), and married (61.4%). Smaller proportions of respondents appeared in categories of 65 years or above (5.0%), divorced or widowed (3.2%), master level educated or above (1.5%) and a monthly household income between HK$50,001 and HK$70,000 (4.6%). Among the "Never Married" respondents, a

TABLE 4.1

PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS (N=536)

Demographic Characteristics	n	%	% of Hong Kong Population[a]
Age			
18-24	95	17.7	16.4 (Age 15-24)
25-34	118	22.0	19.8
35-44	148	27.6	24.3
45-54	98	18.3	17.1
55-64	48	9.0	9.0
65 or above	27	5.0	13.3
Refuse to answer	2	0.4	N/A
Gender			
Male	258	48.1	49.0
Female	278	51.9	51.0
Education Level			
Primary or below	50	9.3	28.9
Secondary	296	55.2	45.2
Matriculation	51	9.5	9.4
Tertiary (Non-degree)	50	9.3	3.7
Tertiary (Degree)	80	14.9	12.7
Master or above	8	1.5	N/A
Refuse to answer	1	0.2	N/A
Monthly Household Income			
HK$10,000 or below	89	16.6	24.1
HK$10,001-20,000	136	25.4	28.3
HK$20,001-30,000	107	20.0	18.7
HK$30,001-40,000	50	9.3	10.7
HK$40,001-50,000	31	5.8	9.6 (HK$40,001-60,000)
HK$50,001-60,000	19	3.5	9.6 (HK$40,001-60,000)
HK$60,001-70,000	6	1.1	8.7 (HK$60,001 or above)
HK$70,001 or above	24	4.5	8.7 (HK$60,001 or above)
Refuse to answer	39	7.3	N/A
Do not know	35	6.5	N/A
Marital Status			
Never Married:	185	34.5	31.9
Dependent	58	10.8	
Independent	116	21.6	
Refuse to indicate / Do not know	11	2.1	
Married	329	61.4	59.4

Divorced / Seperated	8	1.5	2.7
Widowed	9	1.7	6.0
Refuse to answer	5	0.9	N/A

a. Information based on 2001 Hong Kong Population Census whereas Hong Kong citizens age 15 or older were included. (Census and Statistics Department, 2003)

majority or 116 of them indicated that they were independent which represented 21.6% of all respondents. The demographic profile of respondents was generally similar to the profile reported by the Hong Kong Population Census in 2001, which supported that the respondents could well represent the Hong Kong population.

Due to the extensive usage of telephone marketing by various industries such as banks, insurance companies, and credit card centers, telephone survey respondents were very cautious in providing personal information to the interviewers. Even when the interviewers informed the respondents clearly that the purpose of getting demographic data was for academic research only, there were still 0.2% to 7.3% of respondents chose "Refuse to answer" in some of the demographic questions. The largest percentage of refusals was found in the "monthly household income" question that 39 respondents (7.3%) refused to answer. Besides, some respondents (6.5%) did not know their household income because they were dependent on their family members.

4.2 Hong Kong Residents' Perceived TDI of SWP

4.2.1 Perceived TDI of SWP

In Part B Question 2 of the questionnaire (see Appendix B), respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement on the 22 statements about the TDI of SWP. These statements were positively worded which mirrored the attributes in Part

B Question 1. The TDI of SWP perceived by Hong Kong residents is presented by means of the 22 TDI statements (see Table 4.2).

TABLE 4.2

MEAN VALUES OF SWP TDI STATEMENTS PERCEIVED BY HONG KONG RESIDENTS (N=536)

Rank	TDI Attribute	Mean[a]	Std. Deviation
1	SWP offers a lot in terms of natural scenic beauty	3.89	0.64
2	The visit offers new knowledge	3.88	0.66
3	The life there is different from ours	3.71	0.76
4	Prices are low	3.68	0.68
5	There are delicious local foods	3.67	0.75
6	There are many places of interest to visit	3.62	0.69
7	Restful and relaxing place to visit	3.61	0.72
8	SWP is not crowded	3.53	0.71
9	Local people are friendly	3.50	0.65
10	SWP is politically stable	3.48	0.77
11	Overall, the weather is pleasant	3.43	0.74
12	There are many festive activities	3.36	0.74
13	In general, it is a safe place to visit	3.32	0.83
14	There is no difficulty in communication	3.19	0.95
15	Good quality restaurants are easy to find	3.07	0.80
16	Good quality hotels are easy to find	3.05	0.80
17	Tourist attractions are easily accessible	3.00	0.78
18	Overall, the service is of a high quality	2.97	0.72
19	It has good shopping places	2.75	0.77
20	It offers comfortable means of transportation	2.75	0.79
21	It has good nightlife	2.73	0.74
22	Local standards of cleanliness and hygiene are high	2.63	0.80
	Overall	3.31	

[a] Means measured on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)

Seventeen out of the 22 statements had scores equal to or greater than 3.0 (3 represents Neutral in the Likert scale ranging from 1 [Strongly Disagree] to 5 [Strongly Agree]). The overall mean of 3.31 indicated that a slightly positive TDI of SWP was generally perceived by Hong Kong residents. A small variability of the answers given by respondents was revealed with standard deviations of the 22 TDI

statements ranged from 0.64 to 0.95. Higher values were found on "SWP offers a lot in terms of natural scenic beauty (M=3.89)" and "The visit offers new knowledge (M=3.88)". Lower values were derived on "Local standards of cleanliness and hygiene are high (M=2.63)" and "It has good nightlife (M=2.73)". Overall, the unique characteristics of SWP were perceived with higher ratings by the respondents. Some examples of these original characteristics included natural scenic beauty, different life, delicious local foods and low prices which were ranked high in Table 4.2. In contrast, the characteristics relating to SWP's tourism development and establishment were perceived with lower ratings. Examples for the characteristics included good shopping places, comfortable means of transportation, good nightlife, and high local standards of cleanliness and hygiene.

4.2.2 Underlying Dimensions of SWP TDI Statements

In order to gain a more concrete understanding of Hong Kong residents' perceived TDI, a factor analysis was conducted to determine the underlying dimensions among the 22 TDI statements. This was based on the assumption that there could be possible interrelationships between variables. According to Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black (1998), factor analysis can be utilized to "examine the underlying patterns or relationships for a large number of variables and to determine whether the information can be condensed or summarized in a smaller set of factors or components (p. 88)".

A principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation was performed. Factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 were selected and retained for final rotation (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Minimum factor loading criteria of .40 was

employed. The factorability of items was proved by the results of Barlett's Test of Sphericity (df=231, sig. <.001), Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (>.6) and Measures of Sampling Adequacy (MSA) (>.5).

Six factors accounted for 54.0% of the total variance were obtained (see Table 4.3). A factor loading of .40 or above was considered to be significant for interpretation of factors (Coakes & Steed, 1999). It was found that all 22 statements met the minimum loading criterion. Three of the 22 statements showed dual loadings. Statement "Local standards of cleanliness and hygiene are high" had factor loadings of .55 and .43 in factor 4 and 1 respectively. Similarly, both the statements "Good quality hotels are easy to find" and "Good quality restaurants are easy to find" showed factor loading of .41 in factor 3, whereas they had factor loadings of .65 and .69 respectively in factor 1. According to Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black (1998), the interpretation of factor loadings should focus on identifying the highest loadings for variables on each factor. The inclusion of multiple loading items in a factor is at the discretion of the researcher (Coakes & Steed, 1999). For this study, the dual loading statements were considered to be included in the factors where higher loadings had been shown. Therefore, statement "Local standards of cleanliness and hygiene are high" was included in factor 4 only. Both the statements "Good quality hotels are easy to find" and "Good quality restaurants are easy to find" were included in factor 1, not in factor 3.

In Table 4.3, the first factor comprised a combination of statements associated with the level of tourism development (e.g., transportation, accessibility, hotels) of a destination, thus was named "Tourism Development". This factor accounted for 21.4% of the variance with an eigenvalue of 4.71. The second factor was named "Tourist Attractions and Activities" which reflected such statements as

TABLE 4.3

FACTORS FOR THE TDI STATEMENTS DERIVED FROM PRINCIPAL COMPONENT METHOD WITH VARIMAX ROTATION

	Factor Dimensions	Factor Loading	Eigen-value	% of Var.	Cum. Var.
1	**Tourism Development**		**4.71**	**21.39**	**21.39**
	It offers comfortable means of transportation	.75			
	Tourist attractions are easily accessible	.71			
	Good quality restaurants are easy to find	.69			
	It has good shopping places	.66			
	Good quality hotels are easy to find	.65			
	It has good nightlife	.56			
2	**Tourist Attractions and Activities**		**2.40**	**10.90**	**32.29**
	There are many places of interest to visit	.79			
	It offers a lot in terms of natural scenic beauty	.64			
	There are many festive activities	.63			
	The visit offers new knowledge	.61			
3	**Environment**		**1.48**	**6.71**	**39.00**
	Overall, the weather is pleasant	.66			
	Restful and relaxing place to visit	.51			
	There are delicious local foods	.50			
	SWP is politically stable	.47			
4	**Safety and Service**		**1.21**	**5.48**	**44.48**
	In general, it is a safe place to visit	.67			
	Overall, the service is of high quality	.58			
	Local standards of cleanliness and hygiene are high	.55			
5	**Local Life**		**1.06**	**4.84**	**49.32**
	Prices are low	.80			
	SWP is not crowded	.55			
	Local people are friendly	.51			
6	**Interaction with Locals**		**1.03**	**4.67**	**53.99**
	There is no difficulty in communication	.78			
	The life there is different from ours	.57			

Total Scale Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha) = .80
Barlett's Test of Sphericity (df=231, sig. .000)
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy =.835

"festive activities" and "scenic beauty". With an eigenvalue of 2.40 for factor 2, it explained 10.9% of the variance. For factor 3, it included statements related to the overall environment of a tourist destination, such as food and weather, so it was named "Environment". Factor 3 explained 6.7% of the variance with an eigenvalue of 1.48. Factor 4, labeled "Safety and Service" directly from its statements that were related to the overall safety and service quality of a destination, explained 5.5% of the variance and had an eigenvalue of 1.21. Factor 5 was associated with local situations such as "price level" and "crowdedness", thus was labeled "Local Life". This factor accounted for 4.8% of the variance with an eigenvalue of 1.06. The last factor was labeled "Interaction with Locals" which was associated with "communication" and "different local life," it explained 4.7% of the variance with an eigenvalue of 1.03.

The six identified TDI dimensions were tested for internal consistency by reliability analyses, and the results were presented in Table 4.4. Cronbach's Alpha (α) greater than .60 was generally treated as acceptable (Nunnally, 1994). Two factors, namely "Tourism Development" and "Tourist Attractions and Activities" revealed substantial internal consistency with α values of .80 and .70, respectively. The "Safety and Service" and "Environment" factors, with α values of .57 and .54 respectively, were marginal in considering them as internally consistent. The "Local Life" and "Interaction with Locals" factors showed unstable consistency with α equal to .44 and -.33 respectively. In order to gain additional insights, 4-factor and 5-factor solution analyses were performed to see if the items in the unstable factors could be included in other factors, however, no satisfactory results were found.

TABLE 4.4

MEAN AND CRONBACH'S ALPHA FOR THE SIX TDI FACTORS

	Factor	Mean	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Tourism Development	2.90	6	.7962
2	Tourist Attractions and Activities	3.69	4	.6983
3	Environment	3.56	4	.5408
4	Safety and Service	2.97	3	.5771
5	Local Life	3.58	3	.4389
6	Interaction with Locals	3.45	2	-.3324

When the mean values for the factors were compared, factors could be ranked in the descending order of "Tourists Attractions and Activities (M=3.69)", "Local Life (M=3.58)", "Environment (M=3.56)", "Interaction with Locals (M=3.45)", "Safety and Service (M=2.97)", and "Tourism Development (M=2.90)". "Tourists Attractions and Activities" was perceived as the most favorable TDI factor for Hong Kong residents whereas "Tourism Development" was the least favorable TDI factor. Both of these factors were considered to be internally consistent as mentioned before. The results from this factor analysis indicated that the favorable aspects of SWP's TDI for Hong Kong residents were tourist attractions and activities, whereas the tourism development in SWP has to be improved.

4.3 Prior Visitation Experience of Similar Destination(s) and Perceived TDI

Respondents' travel experiences in China were obtained through 3 screening questions (questions A2 to A4) in Part A of the questionnaire. These questions were important in identifying whether they had prior visitation experience of similar destination(s).

The first question asked the respondents if they had in the past two years traveled in China for more than one day. Results showed that there were 350 respondents (65.3% of total respondents) replied "yes" whereas 186 respondents (34.7% of total respondents) replied "no". For those respondents replied "yes", they were further questioned for their purpose(s) of that/those trip(s). Respondents were asked to indicate the travel purpose(s) in the categories of pleasure, visiting friends and relatives, business and other purposes. Table 4.5 summarized the responses for this question. It was obvious that the majority of their travels were for pleasure purpose. Some respondents indicated that their travel was for other special purposes. These special purposes included grave sweeping, Ching Ming Festival, exchange activities, religious visit and match making. The researcher did not consider these as pleasure, visiting friends and relatives, or business purposes, so they were classified as other purposes.

The third question was about respondents' travel experience in China in the past two years. Among the 350 respondents who had visited China during last two years, more than half (60.9 %) of them provided 1 or 2 destination names in China for their previous travels whereas 2% of the respondents indicated that they could not remember the names of destinations they visited during their travels in China.

TABLE 4.5

PURPOSES OF PREVIOUS VISITS IN CHINA

Purpose(s)	Number of Respondents
One purpose:	
Pleasure	219
Visiting friends and relatives	37
Business	16
Other[a]	4
Two purposes:	
Pleasure and visiting friends and relatives	42
Pleasure and business	18
Pleasure and other[a] purpose	4
Visiting friends and relatives and other[a] purpose	2
Business and visiting friends and relatives	1
Three purposes:	
Pleasure, visiting friends and relatives, and business	6
Pleasure, visiting friends and relatives, and other[a] purpose	1
Total	350

[a] Other purposes included grave sweeping, Ching Ming Festival, exchange activities, religious visit and match making

For the purpose of this study, the 536 respondents were differentiated into groups according to their travel experience in China (see Table 4.6). Two hundred and eighty six respondents, representing a majority (53.4%) of all respondents, had travel experience in China excluding Western China. There were another 186 respondents (34.7% of all respondents) who had no travel experience in China in the last 2 years, and 57 respondents (10.6% of all respondents) who had traveled to Western China. Those respondents who could not remember the name(s) of the destination(s) for their travel(s) in China were not classified.

TABLE 4.6

BREAKDOWN OF RESPONDENTS BY TRAVEL EXPERIENCE IN CHINA IN LAST TWO YEARS

Respondent Group	Frequency	Percentage
With travel experience in China excluding Western China	286	53.4
No travel experience in China	186	34.7
With travel experience in Western China	57	10.6
Not Classified[a]	7	1.3
Total	536	100.0

[a] Those respondents who could not remember the names of the destinations they had visited were not classified.

As mentioned earlier in the literature review that similar destination(s) are destination(s) that possess(es) similar character(s) in nature (e.g., Chinese culture, mountain scenery). Different cities or regions in China could be regarded as being similar destinations because they are under the same political system and possess similar socio-cultural backgrounds. The respondent group of "With travel experience in China excluding Western China" could then be regarded as having travel experience in similar destination(s) of Western China.

4.3.1 Relationship Between Prior Visitation Experience of Similar Destinations(s) and TDI

In order to examine the relationship between prior visitation experience of similar destinations(s) and perceived TDI of SWP, independent sample t-tests were

performed between the groups "With travel experience in China excluding Western China (N=286)" and "No travel experience in China (N=186)" on the 22 TDI statements (as dependent variables) of SWP. According to Coakes and Steed (1999), it is important to test the assumption of homogeneity of variance before consulting the independent sample t-test outputs. The assumption of homogeneity of variance states that the groups should come from populations with equal variances. In this study, this assumption was tested by the Levene's test for equality of variances and the results are presented in Table 4.7.

TABLE 4.7

LEVENE'S TEST FOR EQUALITY OF VARIANCES FOR INDEPENDENT SAMPLE T-TESTS

TDI Statements of SWP	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	
	F	Sig.
1. SWP is politically stable	.373	.542
2. In general,it is a safe place to visit	.241	.624
3. SWP is not crowded	1.009	.316
4. Local standards of cleanliness and hygiene are high	.464	.496
5. There is no difficulty in communication	.922	.338
6. Prices are low	13.134	.000*
7. Local people are friendly	.976	.324
8. Overall, the service is of a high quality	1.260	.262
9. Overall, the weather is pleasant	.054	.817
10. Restful and relaxing place to visit	.588	.444
11. The life there is different from ours	2.386	.123
12. The visit offers new knowledge	3.069	.080
13. There are many places of interest to visit	3.073	.080
14. There are many festive activities	.700	.403
15. It offers a lot in terms of natural scenic beauty	3.244	.072
16. It has good nightlife	.139	.709
17. It has good shopping places	3.221	.073
18. It offers comfortable means of transportation	.122	.727
19. Tourist attractions are easily accessible	.279	.597
20. Good quality hotels are easy to find	.038	.845
21. Good quality restaurants are easy to find	.000	.993
22. There are delicious local foods	.260	.611

* Represents significant probability ($p \leq .05$)

The Levene's test reported non-significant probability ($p > .05$) in 21 out of the 22 independent sample t-tests. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there were no significant differences between the variances of the groups could be accepted for the 21 independent sample t-tests, and the equal variance estimates in the t-test outputs would be consulted. The only exception was the 6th TDI statement of SWP "Prices are low" that the Levene's test showed a significant probability ($p < .05$) for its independent sample t-test. In this case, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis that the variances of the groups were unequal was accepted. The unequal variance estimate in the t-test output for this statement was consulted and reported.

Table 4.8 showed the mean differences on 22 TDI statements between the two groups (i.e., Group 1 - With travel experience in China excluding Western China; Group 2 - No travel experience in China) together with the corresponding results from the independent sample t-tests. A comparison of the means for the two groups suggested that Group 1 had higher level of agreement than Group 2 in 14 TDI statements of SWP. The positive mean differences ranged from 0.0187 for TDI statement "Good quality restaurants are easy to find" to 0.2055 for TDI statement "There are many places of interest to visit". Larger positive mean differences appeared in TDI statements "Prices are low," "There are many places of interest to visit," and "It offers a lot in terms of natural scenic beauty."

The mean comparisons also revealed that Group 1 rated lower level of agreement than Group 2 in the remaining 8 TDI statements of SWP. The negative mean differences ranged from -0.0055 for "Local standards of cleanliness and hygiene are high" to -0.0695 for "It has good shopping places". Larger negative

TABLE 4.8

MEAN COMPARISONS FOR TDI STATEMENTS OF SWP

TDI Statements of SWP	Mean for Group 1[b]	Mean for Group 2[b]	Mean Difference	Sig. (2-tailed)	t-value	df
1. SWP is politically stable	3.4923 (0.78)	3.4432 (0.73)	.0491	.508	.663	434
2. In general, it is a safe place to visit	3.3129 (0.82)	3.2919 (0.82)	.0211	.787	.271	461
3. SWP is not crowded	3.5801 (0.70)	3.4176 (0.71)	.1625	.015*	2.435	461
4. Local standards of cleanliness and hygiene are high	2.6263 (0.77)	2.6319 (0.74)	-.0055	.939	-.077	461
5. There is no difficulty in communication	3.1825 (0.95)	3.1720 (0.94)	.0104	.907	.117	469
6. Prices are low[a]	3.7544 (0.64)	3.5622 (0.71)	.1922	.003**	2.969	363
7. Local people are friendly	3.5158 (0.66)	3.4293 (0.61)	.0864	.155	1.425	467
8. Overall, the service is of a high quality	2.9296 (0.72)	2.9620 (0.70)	-.0324	.630	-.481	466
9. Overall, the weather is pleasant	3.3811 (0.75)	3.4462 (0.75)	-.0651	.358	-.920	470
10. Restful and relaxing place to visit	3.5709 (0.73)	3.5892 (0.69)	-.0183	.788	-.269	465
11. The life there is different from ours	3.6890 (0.80)	3.7351 (0.71)	-.0461	.523	-.640	466

12. The visit offers new knowledge	3.8877	3.7903	.0974	.117	1.570	469
	(0.65)	(0.67)				
13. There are many places of interest to visit	3.6678	3.4624	.2055	.001**	3.238	467
	(0.66)	(0.69)				
14. There are many festive activities	3.3843	3.2944	.0899	.203	1.276	459
	(0.74)	(0.74)				
15. It offers a lot in terms of natural scenic beauty	3.9190	3.7473	.1717	.005**	2.840	468
	(0.64)	(0.64)				
16. It has good nightlife	2.7438	2.6667	.0771	.264	1.119	465
	(0.74)	(0.72)				
17. It has good shopping places	2.7228	2.7923	-.0695	.333	-.969	466
	(0.78)	(0.73)				
18. It offers comfortable means of transportation	2.7413	2.7459	-.0047	.950	-.063	469
	(0.77)	(0.80)				
19. Tourist attractions are easily accessible	2.9930	3.0000	-.0070	.923	-.097	466
	(0.78)	(0.76)				
20. Good quality hotels are easy to find	3.0456	2.9837	.0619	.408	.829	467
	(0.78)	(0.80)				
21. Good quality restaurants are easy to find	3.0632	3.0444	.0187	.804	.248	463
	(0.78)	(0.80)				
22. There are delicious local foods	3.6961	3.5892	.1069	.122	1.548	466
	(0.74)	(0.72)				

[a] Unequal variance estimates in the t-test output for this statement was consulted and reported

[b] Group 1 represents the "With travel experience in China excluding Western China" group; Group 2 represents the "No travel experience in China" group; Standard deviations are in parentheses

* t-test two tail probability < .05, ** t-test two tail probability < .01

mean differences appeared in TDI statements "Overall, the weather is pleasant" and "It has good shopping places".

Among the above mean differences, four of them were found statistically significant. All four statistically significant differences were positive mean differences. These positive mean differences appeared in TDI statements "SWP is not crowded," ($p < .05$) "Prices are low," ($p < .01$) "There are many places of interest to visit," ($p < .01$) and "It offers a lot in terms of natural scenic beauty" ($p < .01$). This shows that visitation experience of similar destination(s) of Western China would improve some aspects of the TDI of SWP. Apparent differences in other TDI statement mean scores were more likely to be caused by the sample rather than by any real difference between Hong Kong residents with and without visitation experience of similar destination(s) of Western China.

4.4 Satisfaction Level of Visitation Experience of Similar Destination(s) and TDI of SWP

4.4.1 Satisfaction Level of Hong Kong Residents' Visitation Experience of Similar Destinations

Data on the level of satisfaction for respondents' visitation experience in China were obtained by asking the respondents to rate on a scale from 1 (Very Dissatisfied) to 10 (Very Satisfied). Responses from the 286 respondents who had visitation experience in China except Western China (visitation experience of similar destination of Western China) are demonstrated in Table 4.9.

TABLE 4.9

SATISFACTION LEVEL OF VISITING SIMILAR DESTINATION(S) IN CHINA

Satisfaction Level	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
1	0	0	0
2	2	0.7	0.7
3	5	1.7	2.4
4	7	2.4	4.9
5	60	21.0	25.9
6	70	24.5	50.3
7	73	25.5	75.9
8	50	17.5	93.4
9	3	1.0	94.4
10	16	5.6	100.0
Mean Score = 6.521			
1 = Very Dissatisfied, 10 = Very Satisfied			

The mean rating of satisfaction level was found to be 6.52, representing that the respondents with traveling experience of similar destination(s) were generally satisfied with their visits. This was further confirmed by less than 5% of the respondents rated 4 or lower, more than 5% of the respondents rated 10 in the scale, and about 90% of the respondents gave the rating of 5 to 8.

4.4.2 Relationship Between Satisfaction Level and TDI

Both the collected data for satisfaction level and TDI statements were continuous (interval) data. In order to examine the relationship between satisfaction level of visitation experience of similar destination(s) and perceived TDI of SWP, a Pearson's product moment correlation analysis was performed. Pearson's product moment correlation is a simple bivariate correlation (sometimes referred to as zero – order correlation) analysis to assess the possible linear relationship (correlation)

between two continuous variables (Coakes & Steed, 1999). The coefficient ranges from -1 to +1, with the sign indicating the direction and the value indicating the strength of the relationship. Results for the correlation analysis between TDI statements and satisfaction level are listed in Table 4.10.

TABLE 4.10

CORRELATION OF TDI STATEMENTS WITH SATISFACTION LEVEL

TDI Statements of SWP	r value	Sig. (2 tailed)
1. SWP is politically stable	.100	.107
2. In general, it is a safe place to visit	.169**	.005
3. SWP is not crowded	.024	.694
4. Local standards of cleanliness and hygiene are high	.093	.119
5. There is no difficulty in communication	.102	.086
6. Prices are low	.006	.919
7. Local people are friendly	.244**	.000
8. Overall, the service is of a high quality	.212**	.000
9. Overall, the weather is pleasant	-.015	.803
10. Restful and relaxing place to visit	.056	.352
11. The life there is different from ours	-.107	.071
12. The visit offers new knowledge	.013	.822
13. There are many places of interest to visit	.113	.058
14. There are many festive activities	.142*	.017
15. It offers a lot in terms of natural scenic beauty	.091	.127
16. It has good nightlife	.051	.397
17. It has good shopping places	.127*	.032
18. It offers comfortable means of transportation	.189**	.001
19. Tourist attractions are easily accessible	.136*	.022
20. Good quality hotels are easy to find	.168**	.004
21. Good quality restaurants are easy to find	.154**	.009
22. There are delicious local foods	.102	.087

* Represents r value with significant probability of p <.05
**Represents r value with significant probability of p <.01

Twenty of the 22 TDI statements of SWP showed positive correlation with respondents' satisfaction level of their previous visit(s) to similar destinations in China. Only 2 TDI statements, namely "Overall, the weather is pleasant (r = -.015)" and "The life there is different from ours (r = -.107)" showed negative correlation

with satisfaction lavel. The positive correlations ranged from r value of .006 ("Prices are low") to .244 ("Local people are friendly"), indicating that overall there were only weak correlations (Salkind, 2000) between TDI and satisfaction level of previous similar destination visit(s).

Nine of the 22 TDI statements showed statistically significant correlations with satisfaction. All these 9 TDI statements were found positively correlated to the satisfaction level. Six of which were reported with significant probability of $p < .01$, namely in descending order of correlation level, "Local people are friendly ($r = .244$)", "Overall, the service is of a high quality ($r = .212$)", "It offers comfortable means of transportation ($r = .189$)", "In general, it is a safe place to visit ($r = .169$)", "Good quality hotels are easy to find ($r = .168$)", and "Good quality restaurants are easy to find ($r = .154$)". And the remaining 3 were reported with significant probability of $p < .05$, including "There are many festive activities ($r = .142$)", "Tourist attractions are easily accessible ($r = .136$)", and "It has good shopping places ($r = .127$)".

Overall, positive relationships were found between satisfaction of visitation experience of similar destination(s) and TDI of SWP. In order words, satisfaction in visitation experience of similar destination(s) could slightly improve part of the TDI of SWP.

4.5 Hong Kong Residents' Perceived Important Attributes

The first question in Part B of the questionnaire was designed to ask respondents about their perceived importance on the 22 TDI attributes. The data would be able to identify Hong Kong residents' perceived important attributes for a

tourist destination in general. Descriptive statistics of means and standard deviations for the ratings of the 22 TDI attributes are ranked in descending order and presented in Table 4.11.

TABLE 4.11

MEAN VALUES OF PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF TDI ATTRIBUTES FOR HONG KONG RESIDENTS (N=536)

Rank	TDI Attribute	Mean[a]	Std. Deviation
1	Personal safety	4.53	.79
2	Cleanliness	4.27	.73
3	Political stability	4.15	.89
4	Local infrastructure/transportation	4.03	.77
5	Accessibility to attractions	3.95	.79
6	Quality of service	3.94	.72
7	Accommodation	3.90	.78
8	Tourists attractions	3.86	.84
9	Restful/relaxing environment	3.83	.80
10	Scenery/natural beauty	3.81	.82
11	Opportunity to increase knowledge	3.69	.83
12	Restaurants	3.67	.80
13	Friendliness of residents	3.57	.86
14	Cost/price levels	3.48	.86
15	Crowdedness	3.46	.92
16	Delicious local cuisines/food	3.45	.89
17	Climate	3.28	.95
18	Ease of communication	3.21	.95
19	Shopping facilities	3.14	.98
20	Festive Events	3.04	.96
21	Different lifestyle	2.80	.92
22	Nightlife	2.62	.90
	Overall	3.62	

[a] Means measured on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Very Unimportant) to 5 (Very Important)

Twenty of the 22 TDI attributes scored greater than 3.0 (3 represents Neutral in the Likert scale ranging from 1 [Very Unimportant] to 5 [Very Important]). The overall mean was 3.62 which is in the midway between "Neutral (3)" and "Important (4)". The results generally indicated that Hong Kong residents

considered most of the TDI attributes as important. Variability of the answers given by respondents for the 22 TDI attributes ranged from 0.72 to 0.98 as indicated by the standard deviations.

The highest ratings were received by "Personal safety (M=4.53)" and "Cleanliness (M=4.27)" which denoted that they were perceived by Hong Kong residents as the most important. The lowest values were for "Different lifestyle (M=2.80)" and "Nightlife (M=2.62)" where they were the only two attributes with means lower than 3.0. Overall, the results suggested that Hong Kong residents tended to concern more on safety (e.g., personal safety), tourism development (e.g., local infrastructure/transportation), and establishments (e.g., accommodation) than on uiniquetourism elements (e.g., festive events) offered by the destination.

4.5.1 Important TDI Attributes for the Hong Kong Population

In order to identify the more important TDI attributes for Hong Kong residents, a mean split method was employed to classify the TDI attributes into 2 groups: important and unimportant TDI attributes. Thus, attributes with mean value above the overall mean (M=3.62) were considered as important TDI attributes for the Hong Kong population; attributes with mean value below the overall mean were treated as unimportant TDI attributes for the Hong Kong population. With reference to Table 4.11, the following 12 attributes were classified as important TDI attributes:

1. Personal safety
2. Cleanliness
3. Political stability
4. Local infrastructure/transportation
5. Accessibility to attractions
6. Quality of service
7. Accommodation
8. Tourists attractions

9. Restful/relaxing environment
10. Scenery/natural beauty
11. Opportunity to increase knowledge
12. Restaurants

And the following 10 attributes were considered as unimportant attributes:

1. Friendliness of residents
2. Cost/price levels
3. Crowdedness
4. Delicious local cuisines/food
5. Climate
6. Ease of communication
7. Shopping facilities
8. Festive Events
9. Different lifestyle
10. Nightlife

4.5.2 Underlying Dimensions of TDI Attributes

Apart from identifying the important and unimportant TDI attributes, a factor analysis was conducted to determine the underlying dimensions among the 22 TDI attribute items. Similar to the analysis of SWP TDI statements, a principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation was performed the 22 TDI attributes. The factorability of items was proved by the results of Barlett's Test of Sphericity (df=231, sig. <.001), Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (>.6) and Measures of Sampling Adequacy (MSA) (>.5).

Six factors which accounted for 53.8% of the total variance were obtained (see Table 4.12). It was found that 20 of the 22 items met the minimum loading criterion. Two items, the "Restful and relaxing environment" and "Crowdedness, did not have any loadings in the six identified factor matrix. Dual loading appeared with item "Friendliness of residents" in factor 1 (factor loading = .49) and factor 4 (factor

TABLE 4.12

FACTORS FOR THE TDI ATTRIBUTES DERIVED FROM PRINCIPAL COMPONENT METHOD WITH VARIMAX ROTATION

Factor Dimensions	Factor Loading	Eigen-value	% of Var.	Cum. of Var.
1 **Tourism Development**		4.72	21.47	21.47
Local infrastructure/transportation	.78			
Accessibility to attractions	.76			
Quality of service	.60			
Cleanliness	.52			
Friendliness of residents	.49			
2 **Tourist Attractions**		1.87	8.52	30.00
Scenery/natural beauty	.73			
Tourists attractions	.71			
Opportunity to increase knowledge	.56			
Festive events	.52			
3 **Accommodation and Restaurant**		1.60	7.28	37.28
Restaurants	.77			
Accommodation	.74			
Delicious local cuisine/food	.68			
4 **Environment**		1.38	6.26	43.53
Ease of communication	.70			
Cost/price levels	.58			
Climate	.54			
Different lifestyle	.51			
5 **Safety**		1.22	5.52	49.05
Personal safety	.83			
Political stability	.82			
6 **Tourists Activities**		1.04	4.74	53.80
Nightlife	.79			
Shopping facilities	.72			
Total Scale Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha) = .81				
Barlett's Test of Sphericity (df=231, sig. .000)				
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy =.808				

loading = .43). It was not considered to be included in factor 4 because of the relatively lower factor loading for this item on factor 4.

In Table 4.12, the first factor comprised a combination of items like "local infrastructure/transportation" and "accessibility to attractions" associated with the level of tourism development of a destination, thus was named "Tourism Development". This factor accounted for 21.5 % of the variance with an eigenvalue of 4.72. The second factor was named "Tourist Attractions" which reflected its items like "tourist attractions" and "scenic beauty". With an eigenvalue of 1.87 for factor 2, it explained 8.5% of the variance. Factor 3, named "Accommodation and Restaurant" directly from its items, explained 7.3% of the variance with an eigenvalue of 1.60. Factor 4, labeled "Environment", related to the overall environment of a destination such as "price", "lifestyle" and "climate;" it explained 6.3% of the variance and had an eigenvalue of 1.38. Factor 5 was associated with tourists safety, thus was labeled "Safety". This factor accounted for 5.5% of the variance with an eigenvalue of 1.2. The last factor was labeled "Tourist Activities" which was associated with "shopping" and "nightlife," explained 4.7% of the variance with an eigenvalue of 1.04.

Subsequent reliability analysis was conducted on the 6 identified factors (see Table 4.13). Four (including "Tourism Development", "Tourist Attractions", "Accommodation and Restaurant" and "Safety") out of the six factors revealed satisfactory internal consistency with α ranged from .61 to .75. The "Environment" and "Tourist Activities" factors showed marginal consistency with α values of .52 and .53, respectively. In order to gain additional insights, 4-factor and 5-factor solution analyses were performed to see if the items in the unstable factors could be included in other factors; however, no satisfactory results were found.

When the mean values for the factors were compared, factors could be ranked in descending order of "Safety (M=4.34)", "Tourism Development (M=3.95)", "Accommodation and Restaurant (M=3.67)", "Tourist Attractions (M=3.60)", "Environment (M=3.19)", and "Tourist Activities (M=2.88)". That means "Safety" was the most important TDI factor perceived by Hong Kong residents whereas "Tourist Activities" was the least important TDI factor. The means of factors were similar to the mean ratings of TDI attributes that Hong Kong residents perceived safety, tourism development and establishments as more important than the original tourism elements offered by the destination.

TABLE 4.13

MEAN AND CRONBACH'S ALPHA FOR THE SIX TDI ATTRIBUTE FACTORS

	Factor	Mean	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Tourism Development	3.95	5	.7487
2	Tourist Attractions	3.60	4	.6097
3	Accommodation and Restaurant	3.67	3	.6637
4	Environment	3.19	4	.5216
5	Safety	4.34	2	.6981
6	Tourist Activities	2.88	2	.5305

4.6 The Relationship Between Dimensions of Perceived TDI and Likelihood of Visiting SWP

4.6.1 Hong Kong Residents' Likelihood of Visiting SWP

Data on the likelihood of visiting SWP in the next 2 years were obtained by the asking the respondents to rate on a scale from 1 (Very Unlikely) to 10 (Very Likely). Responses from the 525 respondents (11 missing cases excluded) on their likelihood of visiting SWP are demonstrated in Table 4.14.

TABLE 4.14

LIKELIHOOD LEVEL OF VISITING SIMILAR DESTINATION(S) IN CHINA (N=525)

Likelihood Level	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
1	171	31.9	32.6
2	46	8.6	41.3
3	53	9.9	51.4
4	32	6.0	57.5
5	97	18.1	76.0
6	35	6.5	82.7
7	19	3.5	86.3
8	30	5.6	92.0
9	6	1.1	93.1
10	36	6.7	100.0
Mean Score = 3.87			
1 = Very Unlikely, 10 = Very Likely			

The mean rating for Hong Kong residents' likelihood of visiting SWP in the next 2 years was 3.87 (see Table 4.14). Since the respondents were asked to rate on a scale from 1 (Very Unlikely) to 10 (Very Likely), the reported mean suggested that their intention to visit SWP was quite low. Note that there was 31.8% of Hong

Kong residents who were very unlikely (rating 1) to visit SWP in the next 2 years. Less than one fourth (23.4%) of respondents showed a positive likelihood (rating 6-10).

4.6.2 Perceived SWP TDI and Likelihood of Visiting SWP

In the literature reviewed, there were evidence of a positive relationship between perceived TDI and visit intention. In this study, a multiple regression was performed to examine the impact of SWP TDI on the likelihood to visit SWP. Since six TDI factors had been derived in section 4.2.2 by a factor analysis on the SWP TDI statements, the mean values from these TDI factors were used in the multiple regression analysis.

The six TDI factors were treated as independent (predictor) variables whereas the Hong Kong residents' likelihood of visiting SWP was regarded as the dependent (criterion) variable. The results for the multiple regression analysis are presented in Table 4.15. The coefficient of determination (R^2) value of .056 indicated that the six TDI factors together explained 5.6% of variance in the likelihood of visitation. The F-ratio of 4.187 with significant level of .000 suggested that the results in this regression analysis could hardly have occurred by chance. The low R^2 implied that the prediction of variance of visitation likelihood by TDI factors in this study had low explanatory power. Two factors, namely "Tourist Attractions and Activities" and "Environment," were found to have significant impact on predicting the variance of visitation likelihood. The beta values suggested that "Environment" (beta = .137) carried heavier weight in explaining the variance of visitation likelihood than "Tourist Attractions and Activities" (beta = .119). Overall,

the six TDI factors did not show substantial impact on the likelihood of visiting SWP.

TABLE 4.15

REGRESSION ANALYSIS RESULTS OF HONG KONG RESIDENTS' LIKELIHOOD OF VISITING SWP IN RELATION TO SIX TDI FACTORS

(N=536)

Dependent Variable:	Hong Kong residents' likelihood of visiting SWP in 2 years
Independent Variables:	Six factors of TDI: Tourism Development, Tourist Attractions and Activities, Environment, Safety and Service, Local Life, and Interaction with Locals

Multiple R	.237
R Square	.056
Adjusted R Square	.043
Standard Error	2.700
F ratio	4.187
Significance F	.000

Variable in Equation

Independent Variable	Standardized Coefficient (Beta)	T-Value	Sig.
Tourism Development	.029	.515	.607
Tourist Attractions and Activities	.119	2.136	.033
Environment	.137	2.446	.015
Safety and Service	.012	.216	.829
Local Life	.003	.052	.958
Interaction with Locals	.005	.094	.925
Constant		-1.411	.159

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This chapter includes a summary of the overall findings and a discussion relating to the findings. The discussion aimed to interpret the underlying meanings of the findings as well as making comments. The discussion of the findings followed a logical flow as in the last chapter.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The main purpose of this study was to identify the TDI of SWP as perceived by Hong Kong residents. The following is a summary of findings related to each specific objective in this study:

(1) Assess Hong Kong residents' perceived TDI of SWP

On average, 17 out of the 22 positively worded TDI statements were agreed by the respondents. Four out of the 6 derived TDI factors had mean ratings greater than 3.0 (3 = neutral). These represent that a favorable TDI of SWP had been perceived by Hong Kong residents. The TDI dimension of "Tourist Attractions and Activities" received the highest score/level of agreement, whereas the dimension of "Tourism Development" received the lowest score/level of agreement.

(2) *Examine the relationship between prior visitation experience of similar destination(s) and perceived TDI of SWP*

Respondents with visitation experience of similar destination(s) of SWP rated 14 TDI statements with higher values than those respondents who had no such visitation experience (indicating by positive mean differences). Opposite results were obtained for the remaining 8 TDI statements. However, only 4 of the 14 positive mean differences of TDI statements were found statistically significant (see Table 5.1). The results showed that visitation experience of similar destination(s) could improve some aspects of the perceived TDI of SWP.

TABLE 5.1

SIGNIFICANT MEAN DIFFERENCES FOR TDI STATEMENTS OF SWP

TDI Statement of SWP	Ranking of Overall Mean	Mean[a]	Mean[b]	Mean Difference	Sig. (2-tailed)
There are many places of interest to visit	6	3.6678	3.4624	.2055	.001
Prices are low	4	3.7544	3.5622	.1922	.003
It offers a lot in terms of natural scenic beauty	1	3.9190	3.7473	.1717	.005
SWP is not crowded	8	3.5801	3.4176	.1625	.015

[a]Mean rated by respondents with visitation experience of similar destination(s) of SWP

[b]Mean rated by respondents without visitation experience of similar destination(s) of SWP

(3) *Examine the relationship between satisfaction level of visitation experience of similar destination(s) and perceived TDI of SWP*

In general, respondents with visitation experience of similar destination(s) of SWP showed a moderately high satisfaction level (M=6.521) after their visits. Correlation analysis revealed that there were 9 TDI statements of SWP had positive, but low, correlation with the satisfaction level of visitation experience of similar destination(s). These statements were related to safety, local people, service quality, infrastructure/transportation, accommodation, restaurants, festive events, shopping facilities, and accessibility to attractions. Thus there was a slight positive relationship between the satisfaction of visitation experience of similar destination(s) and TDI of SWP.

(4) *Identify Hong Kong residents' perceived important TDI attributes/dimensions for a tourist destination in general*

The overall mean for perceived importance of TDI attributes was 3.62, which indicated that the respondents generally considered most of the TDI attributes as important. Six underlying dimensions were derived by factor analysis, namely and in descending order of perceived importance, "Safety (M=4.34)", "Tourism Development (M=3.95)", "Accommodation and Restaurant (M=3.67)", "Tourist Attractions (M=3.60)", "Environment (M=3.19)", and "Tourist Activities (M=2.88)".

(5) *Assess the relationship between SWP TDI dimensions and the likelihood of visiting SWP*

The likelihood value of 3.87 denoted that Hong Kong residents' likelihood of visiting SWP was quite low. Results from a multiple regression analysis suggested that the six TDI factors explained 5.6% of the variance of likelihood of visiting SWP. "Tourist Attractions and Activities" and "Environment" were the factors that could significantly predict the likelihood of visiting SWP; however, substantial impact of TDI factors on the likelihood of visiting SWP was not observed.

5.2 Hong Kong Residents' Perceived TDI of SWP

Results of this study revealed that a favorable TDI of SWP was perceived by Hong Kong residents, suggesting that SWP is a favorable destination for Hong Kong tourists. At present, the tourism development in Western China is at an early stage, and it lags behind coastal areas in terms of tourist arrivals and tourism receipts (CNTA, 2002a). With the foreseeable extensive tourism development in SWP under the "Go West Campaign", a favorable TDI of SWP perceived by Hong Kong residents would be of particular importance in the development process.

According to the findings, the SWP's TDI dimension of "Tourist Attractions and Activities" was perceived the most favorable by Hong Kong residents. This is consistent to the fact that Western China has rich tourism resources as stated earlier. And this could be explained by the marketing resources provided by travel agents and tourism authorities of Western China in recent years. The promotions generally emphasize the extensive tourism resources and the unique and spectacular scenery in

Western China. This could serve as a major pull factor for decision of visiting SWP (the gateway to Western China).

While the region provides abundant and cheaper supplies of manpower, land, energy, and raw materials to keep the prices low, the unique historic heritage and natural scenery of the Western region, in particular of SWP, are precious tourist resources offering tremendous development opportunities. For example, the ancient Silk Road, the Dunhuang Grottoes, the ancient city of Xian and the terracotta army that mark the evolution of human cultural development have strong appeal to most visitors, including those from Hong Kong. Similarly, the Jiuzhaigou and Huanglong Temples in Sichuan which had been listed as the "World Legacies of Nature" (CNTA, 2002c) possess very high tourism development value. The SWP is also a "museum" of Chinese ethnic cultures with at least 12 famous and important ethnic groups located in SWP and 26 out of the 52 ethnic groups in China located in Yunnan. Guizhou was listed by the World Local Culture Fund as one of the "Ten Folk Culture Destinations in the World" (CNTA, 2003). All these provide scenic beauty, knowledge, and cultural experiences to the tourists, thus SWP has great advantages in promoting herself as a tourist destination to Hong Kong residents.

However, the results also indicated that the tourism infrastructures (e.g., roads, shopping places, hotels), safety, and service quality in SWP have to be improved. Factors led to the relatively poor image on these aspects could be the dispersed location of tourist spots, underdeveloped transport facilities and supporting infrastructure, inefficient management, short tourism season (e.g., extreme and long winter in Xinjiang), and a lack of decent local tour services. There is a need for the SWP to initiate a thorough tourism plan as part of the tourism development, particularly addressing the transportation and supporting infrastructure

issues. Although TDI might not represent the exact factual information of a destination, it would enable destination promoters to identify those strong and weak TDI aspects as perceived by tourists, and therefore, provide some implications on how the tourist destination could be improved.

According to Kotler, Haider, and Rein (1993), in order for a TDI to be effective in destination promotion, it should be valid, believable, appealing, but not merely fantasy. It is believed that the facts of a tourist destination will eventually affect the TDI perceived in the long run through word-of-mouth effect after visitation and personal dis/satisfaction of visit. With better tourism development, SWP will not only provide a glimpse of Western China, but also a tourism hub and gateway for all destinations in Western China, including Tibet and Xinjiang.

5.3 Visitation Experience and Satisfaction Level of Similar Destination(s) and Perceived TDI of SWP

5.3.1 Visitation Influence on TDI of Similar Destination(s)

Results showed that visitation experience of similar destination(s) could improve the perception on positive aspects of SWP TDI (i.e., interesting places, cheap, scenic beauty, and uncrowdedness) among Hong Kong residents. Hong Kong residents' experience in traveling to similar destinations in China might have affected their perceived TDI of SWP. Their feelings about the interesting places, cheap prices, scenic beauty of China, and uncrowdedness as compared to Hong Kong, were enhanced, confirmed, and consolidated during their actual visits of

similar destinations. And these feelings could have been transferred to their TDI of SWP.

Results for the visitation influence on similar destination's TDI was in line with the literature reviewed. In short, visitation experience is a source of information in forming the TDI (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Gartner, 1996; Perdue, 2000; Phelps, 1986) and it is a factor regulating TDI formation (Chon, 1989, 1990; Perdue, 2000). As gestalt psychology suggested that perceptions in our human mind are somewhat interrelated; the TDI formed from visitation of similar destinations would then be involved in the TDI formation of a destination.

This finding also serves as an evidence of visitation's influence on TDI of similar destination(s), which was consistent with the findings of Pearce (1982) and Gartner and Hunt (1987) discussed earlier. Therefore, the following hypothesis in this study was accepted.

Hypothesis 1: Visitation to similar destination(s) influences the individuals' perceived TDI of a destination.

5.3.2 Satisfaction Level of Visiting Similar Destination(s) and TDI

The perceived moderately high satisfaction level (M=6.521) denoted that Hong Kong residents' travel experience(s) in China generally matched with, or even exceeded, their expectations of the destinations (Chon, 1989, 1990). With intensive connections (e.g., family, business) between Hong Kong and China, Hong Kong residents generally have good knowledge of the various situations in China. There are also many channels that allowed Hong Kong residents to be updated with the

recent development in China easily, including the tourism development. For example, major local newspapers and television news programmes in Hong Kong have set aside particular sections for China news, and the local outbound travel agents are promoting China tours extensively to the public. These are image formation agents (Gartner, 1993) that could help produce TDIs of destinations in China. More image formation sources would give rise to a TDI that is more closely mirrored the facts related. As expectations are highly linked with perceptions (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000), the gap between truth and expectations could be narrowed by a more truthful TDI. Therefore, the satisfaction of Hong Kong residents' travel experience in China could be enhanced by the more truthful TDIs of China destinations.

For the positive correlations found between SWP TDI aspects of safety, local people, service quality, infrastructure/transportation, accommodation, restaurants, festive events, shopping facilities, and accessibility to attractions and satisfaction of visitation experience of similar destination(s), they further supported the above statements that visitation of similar destination(s) and TDI of SWP are related. Although only weak correlations were shown, this finding still agreed with the results of Chon's (1991) study that has been discussed in the literature review. So, the following hypothesis was accepted.

Hypothesis 2: Satisfaction level of visitation to similar destination(s) influences the individuals' perceived TDI of a destination.

5.3.3 Implications

The findings of visitation and satisfaction influence implied that Hong Kong residents who had experiences of traveling to similar destinations in China would be a preferred target group for promoting SWP as a tourist destination because they were found to have a better overall TDI of SWP which was due to visitation and satisfaction. Primary promotion efforts for this segment should focus on the unique attractions (e.g., Huanglong Temples in Sichuan), cheap prices, scenic beauty, and uncrowdedness of SWP in order to maximize the marketing effect. Promotion focusing on these aspects would have the biggest advantage because they were already better perceived by Hong Kong residents with experiences of traveling to similar destinations in China.

On the other hand, promoters of similar destinations in China could work together and promote each other to the tourists. For example, promotions of Xian in Western China could be made to tourists who plan to travel to Beijing, and vice versa. Thus, similar destinations would be able to take advantage of each other and be mutually benefited.

The results also connoted the importance of enhancing traveler satisfaction. A positive correlation between TDI of SWP and satisfaction level of visiting similar destinations may have two opposite representations. First, when satisfaction level improves, TDI improves. Second, when satisfaction level decreases, TDI deteriorates. According to the findings in this present study, one prior visitation to a destination could have effect on a list of other similar destinations' TDIs; if the visitation was a dissatisfying experience, a list of other TDIs of similar destinations could be negatively affected. Bigné, Sánchez, and Sánchez (2001) confirmed in their

study that the quality of a destination is an immediate antecedent of satisfaction, which also affects the intention of repeat visit. It can be seen that maintaining the quality of destinations is of utmost importance. However, there have been many cases that the travel destinations in China showed inconsistent qualities due to lack of control or regulation on areas such as the performance of inbound tour guides in China. In order for the SWP or Western China to develop tourism successfully, maintaining quality of destinations throughout the nation would be an important step.

5.4 Perceived Important TDI Dimensions

A moderately high overall mean rating (M=3.62) for perceived importance of TDI attributes suggested that the questionnaire in this study captured the important TDI attributes. Safety and tourism development were the two most important TDI dimensions of a tourist destination in general considered by Hong Kong residents. As Hong Kong is the most developed and generally a safe city in China, it is reasonable to say that Hong Kong residents have adapted to the safe and modernized lifestyle. As a tourist, they would then tend to choose those safe and developed destinations where they would encounter minimum difficulty in traveling.

5.4.1 Implications

Of the six SWP TDI dimensions derived from statements, the "Tourism Development" and "Safety and Service" dimensions received the lowest ratings. Therefore, when both the perceived important TDI dimensions in general and the perceived SWP TDI dimensions are considered, it could be realized that the

perceived important TDI dimensions were similar to the perceived least favorable SWP's TDI dimensions (i.e., tourism development and safety). This could be one reason why there was a low likelihood of visiting SWP.

Obviously, an understanding of the relative importance of TDI attributes/dimensions considered by the prospective traveler market would provide additional insight to the assessment of perceived TDI of a destination. For SWP, the considered more important dimensions of tourism development and safety should therefore deserve priority attention of the destination management and promoters.

5.5 Relationship between TDI Dimensions and the Likelihood of visiting SWP

A low likelihood mean rating (3.87 of 10) of visiting SWP in the next 2 years for Hong Kong residents suggested that their intention to visit SWP was quite low. Part of the reason for the low likelihood rating may be the feeling of uncertainty in an economic downturn situation. At the time when the data collection were conducted, Hong Kong was still under an economic recession. The uncertainty would cause individuals to choose to save their disposable income rather than plan ahead to travel, especially for those who would like to travel to the farther destinations in China like SWP.

Since Hong Kong residents usually consider Western China as a remote and unfamiliar place, it could be expected that people tend to consider the destination's basic environment (e.g., safety, weather, political) before making any decision to travel. This is consistent with the findings by Sonmez and Graefe (1998) that perceptions of risk and safety are predictors of likelihood to visit.

The results suggested that there could be a number of variables apart from TDI to affect the likelihood of visit. The low R^2 (.056) found in this study suggested that TDI may be only one of the many determinants for the likelihood to visit. Other determinants may include situational variables (Woodside & Lysonski, 1989) such as financial constraints and time constraints. These constraints are especially prevailing under present economic downturn situation in Hong Kong. As similar result about the likelihood of visit was obtained by Shoemaker (1994) that respondents' choice of major destination concerns (e.g., "low crime rate") did not appear to be related to their final decision.

Although two predictor TDI factors ("Environment" and "Tourist Attractions and Activities") were identified, only minor impact on likelihood to visit could be observed. Obviously, there is a gap between TDI and the likelihood of visit. An insight can be obtained from the study by Pizam and Milman (1995) who investigated the effect of awareness and familiarity on TDI and likelihood to visit Central Florida. Two of their major findings could help explain the results in this present study. First, they discovered that the likelihood to visit Central Florida did not differ among subjects who were aware of Central Florida as a tourist destination and those who were not. Second, those subjects who were familiar (due to past visit) with Central Florida perceived the TDI better and showed higher intention to visit than those who had no familiarity.

The regression model in this study was considered to have achieved "goodness of fit" in predicting the variance of likelihood of visiting SWP even though the R^2 was relatively low. It is considered acceptable given the fact that likelihood to visit could be affected by many other factors. TDI is only one of the many factors contributing to travelers' intention to visit. Based on this practical

consideration and the identified predictor TDI factors, the following hypothesis is accepted:

Hypothesis 3: There is a positive relationship between dimensions of perceived SWP TDI and likelihood of visit.

5.5.1 Implications

Destinations in Western China including SWP are at present very new to many Hong Kong residents. In spite of Hong Kong residents' extensive travel experiences in coastal and southern China, many of them may not even be aware of Western China as a travel destination. Even if they are aware of Western China as a travel destination, only a small number of them actually have travel experience in Western China. Thus, Pizam and Milman's concepts of awareness and familiarity could help explain why there was a gap between the TDI and likelihood to visit.

Another observation is that although Hong Kong residents' perceived TDI of SWP was favorable, the perceived important TDI dimensions did not receive high scores. For example, Hong Kong residents' perceived more important TDI dimension of "Tourism Development" only had a rating of 2.97 in SWP's TDI assessment. This could be another reason why a low likelihood to visit was reported even with a favorable overall TDI perceived.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the TDI of SWP perceived by Hong Kong residents. Specific objectives were set to assess the Hong Kong residents' perceived TDI of SWP, to examine the impacts of visitation to similar destinations on TDI, to identify Hong Kong residents' perceived important TDI attributes/dimensions, and to assess the relationship between TDI and likelihood of visit.

Overall, a favorable SWP TDI perceived by Hong Kong residents was reported. Tourist attractions and activities of SWP were perceived as most favorable, whereas tourism development was perceived as least favorable. Hong Kong residents viewed safety and tourism development of a general destination as most important. Mild relationships were revealed between SWP TDI and visitation of similar destination(s), and between SWP TDI and the satisfaction level of visiting similar destination(s), of Hong Kong residents. Hong Kong residents' likelihood of visiting SWP was found to be low and the impact of TDI on likelihood was not substantial. Discussion was made on the results specific to the objectives and it is believed that the research objectives have been achieved.

Practically, the findings in this study could help formulate specific strategies and promotion plans to attract Hong Kong travelers to visit SWP and in turn contribute to tourism development in Western China. Hong Kong residents would be a favorable market for SWP to promote itself as a tourist destination, particularly of those who have traveled to place(s) other than SWP in China and with satisfactory experience(s). In addition, Hong Kong residents with high likelihood of visiting SWP should be the primary market segment to be targeted in the promotion.

The existing tourist attractions and activities in SWP were appealing to Hong Kong residents, but more effort has to be placed in tourism development. According to Dadgostar and Isotalo (1995), both influencing the TDI perceived by tourists and improvements to destination infrastructure are strategies to be considered in tourism planning. Therefore, apart from designing and implementing successful marketing plans, the infrastructure development of SWP is of the same importance.

In the discussion, the author has pointed out that there was a gap between favorable TDI and likelihood of visit. The first reason could be the perceived favorable but unimportant aspects of TDI, such as tourism development. The second reason could be the Hong Kong residents' low familiarity of SWP. In order to enhance the effect of promotion, the tourism promoter of SWP should not only focus on perceived TDI, but also the perceived important aspects of TDI and the familiarity of SWP in the Hong Kong population.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study advanced the understanding of the relationships between visitation of similar destination(s) and TDI, between satisfaction level of visiting similar destination(s) and TDI, and between TDI and likelihood of visit. This study concluded that both visiting similar destination(s) and the satisfaction level of visiting similar destination(s) have impact on TDI. The results of this study also revealed that the linkage between TDI and likelihood of visit was not clear.

One of the major theoretical contributions of this study was that it provided evidence of similar destination(s) influence on TDI. While there is a lack of such evidence from previous studies, this study has added the richness of the TDI literature. The insights from this study would be valuable for future research in the area of similar destination and TDI studies.

Another theoretical contribution of this study was the exploration of the versatile and complex nature of TDI. While this study supported the existing literature that visitation and satisfaction of visitation have influence on TDI, the findings in this study further indicated the possible complex linkages between TDIs in one's mind. The concept of similar destination influence on TDI suggests that one destination could include elements of the TDIs of other similar destinations. In other words, the formation and construct of one TDI in travelers' mind could be linked to many other TDIs, and therefore, give rises to a versatile and complex nature of TDI. However, this study only provided limited evidence in the influence on TDI by visiting similar destination(s). Particularly, significant differences were only found in 4 out of the 22 TDI statements between respondents with and without visitation experience of similar destination(s).

6.1 Recommendation for Future Research

The recommendation for future research in this study was four-fold. First, the present study found that visitation of similar destinations(s) did influence the TDI of SWP, more research in this particular new area of TDI study is needed to cross validate the results in difference settings.

Second, the present study suggested that TDI may be only one out of the many determinants of likelihood to visit, that is, in order to better understand the likelihood to visit a destination, the concepts of awareness, familiarity, and perceived importance on different aspects of TDI are recommended to be included in the future studies. It is believed that these concepts could help fill the gap between the TDI and likelihood to visit.

Third, there was a lack of TDI studies conducted in the China/Hong Kong context. According to Mackay and Fesenmaier (2000), a TDI perceived by an individual is largely mediated by cultural backgrounds. Therefore, a set of TDI studies specifically designed for the China/Hong Kong context would be valuable in obtaining more culture specific findings, which eventually will contribute to the knowledge of TDI.

Finally, future studies to revise the instrument in this study are recommended. The factors obtained from factor analyses in this study had relatively low internal consistency indicating that the factors were unstable. More studies are needed to revise and to enhance the validity and reliability of the instrument.

6.2 Limitation of Study

It was believed that the random telephone survey in this study was a good sampling method in terms of randomness, but the telephone survey respondents were generally less patient than the respondents of other questionnaire survey occasions, such as face to face questionnaire interviews and self-administered questionnaire surveys. After considering the ideal and practical situations, therefore, the telephone survey questionnaire in this study was designed to be short and concise (i.e., less than 54 variables). The assessments of SWP TDI and importance of TDI attributes were limited to 22 variables each so that the successful response rate could be enhanced. However, this may also limit the comprehensiveness of the assessments.

For the SWP TDI assessment, it was limited to the use of positively worded TDI statements for respondents to rate their agreement between "Strongly Disagree"

to "Strongly Agree". Discrepancies may arise if the results were to cross reference with the results from other TDI assessment studies that used negatively worded items.

The interpretation of results should be considered cautiously before generalizing them into other situations. Since a favorable TDI of SWP was perceived by Hong Kong residents and the respective data set was used in subsequent analysis, the results may be valid for favorable TDI situations only. If an unfavorable TDI was reported instead, the results from subsequent analysis may be different. For example, it was found that visitation of similar destination(s) could improve the TDI of SWP, but whether the TDI will improve or become worse under an unfavorable TDI data set was not tested.

6.3 Delimitation of Study

As telephone survey was used as the mode of data collection, the study population was limited to those Hong Kong residents who can be contacted at home by telephone, willing to respond, and can speak Cantonese, English or Mandarin.

For the questions concerning respondents' travel experiences and likelihood to visit, a time frame of 2 years was set as a reference point. Any travel experiences that was more than two years ago were disregarded.

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APPENDIX A

List of Abbreviations

CAST	Computer-Assisted Survey Team
CATI	Computer Assisted Telephone Interview
CNTA	China National Tourism Administration
HKTA	Hong Kong Tourism Association
HKTB	Hong Kong Tourism Board
MANOVA	Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA)
MRSP	Market Research Statistics Package
SAR	Special Administrative Region
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SSRC	Social Science Research Centre
SWP	Southwestern China
TDI	Tourism Destination Image
WTO	World Tourism Organization

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire (English Version)

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

School of HTM
Hotel & Tourism Management
酒店及旅遊業管理學院

Tourism Destination Image of Western China

This study aims to examine the tourism destination image of the southwestern provinces (SWP) of Sichuan, Yunnan and Guizhou in Western China as perceived by Hong Kong residents. It is hoped that the results of this study can contribute to tourism development in Western China.

This questionnaire is to assess your image of SWP as a tourist destination and the importance you place on various tourism destination image attributes. Your opinion is invaluable to the study and we hope you will spend about ten minutes to finish the questionnaire. All of the information collected will be used for academic purposes only and will be treated confidentially.

Would you like to participate in this study?

PART A: Screening Questions

A1. Are you a Hong Kong permanent resident aged eighteen years or older?

Yes No (terminate interview)

A2. Have you been to any places in mainland China for travel for more than one day in the past two years?

Yes (go to A3) No (go to A6)

A3. What is/are your purpose(s) of that/these travels?

For pleasure
Visiting friends and relatives
Business
Others:_____(Please specify)

A4. If yes, which city or province in mainland China have you visited?

_____

Overall, how satisfied were you with this visit/these visits to mainland China? "1" being very dissatisfied, and "10" being very satisfied.

1------2------3------4------5------6------7------8------9------10

A5. Please use the scale below to indicate how likely you will be to visit Western China. "1" being very unlikely, and "10" being very likely.

1------2------3------4------5------6------7------8------9------10

PART B: Image of SWP as a Tourist Destination

B1: Perceived Importance of TDI Attributes

How would you rate the importance of the following attributes for a tourist destination?

Please indicate your answer with 1 (very unimportant) to 5 (very important)

	Very Unimportant	Unimportant	Neutral	Important	Very Important
1. Political stability	1	2	3	4	5
2. Personal safety	1	2	3	4	5
3. Crowdedness	1	2	3	4	5
4. Cleanliness	1	2	3	4	5
5. Ease of communication	1	2	3	4	5
6. Cost/price levels	1	2	3	4	5
7. Friendliness of residents	1	2	3	4	5
8. Quality of service	1	2	3	4	5
9. Climate	1	2	3	4	5
10. Restful/relaxing environment	1	2	3	4	5
11. Different lifestyle	1	2	3	4	5
12. Opportunity to increase knowledge	1	2	3	4	5
13. Tourists attractions	1	2	3	4	5
14. Festive events	1	2	3	4	5
15. Scenery/natural beauty	1	2	3	4	5
16. Nightlife and entertainment	1	2	3	4	5

17. Shopping facilities	1	2	3	4	5
18. Local infrastructure/transportation	1	2	3	4	5
19. Accessibility to attractions	1	2	3	4	5
20. Accommodation	1	2	3	4	5
21. Restaurants	1	2	3	4	5
22. Delicious local cuisines/food	1	2	3	4	5

B2: Perceived TDI

How far do you agree with the following statements for SWP?

Please indicate your answer with 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	SWP is politically stable	1	2	3	4	5
2.	In general, it is a safe place to visit	1	2	3	4	5
3.	SWP is not crowded	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Local standards of cleanliness and hygiene are high	1	2	3	4	5
5.	There is no difficulty in communication	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Prices are low	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Local people are friendly	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Overall, the service is of a high quality	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Overall, the weather is pleasant	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Restful and relaxing place to visit	1	2	3	4	5
11.	The life there is different from ours	1	2	3	4	5

12.	The visit offers new knowledge	1	2	3	4	5
13.	There are many places of interest to visit	1	2	3	4	5
14.	There are many festive activities	1	2	3	4	5
15.	It offers a lot in terms of natural scenic beauty	1	2	3	4	5
16.	It has good nightlife	1	2	3	4	5
17.	It has good shopping places	1	2	3	4	5
18.	It offers comfortable means of transportation	1	2	3	4	5
19.	Tourist attractions are easily accessible	1	2	3	4	5
20.	Good quality hotels are easy to find	1	2	3	4	5
21.	Good quality restaurants are easy to find	1	2	3	4	5
22.	There are delicious local foods	1	2	3	4	5

PART C: Demographic Data

D1. What is your age category?

18-24
25-34
35-44
45-54
55-64
65 or above

D2. What is your gender? Male Female

D3. What is your educational level?

Primary level or below
Secondary level
Matriculation
Tertiary (Non-degree)
Tertiary (Degree)
Master or above

D4. Average monthly household income (HK$)

10,000 or below
10,001-20,000
20,001-30,000
30,001-40,000
40,001-50,000
50,001-60,000
60,001-70,000
70,001 or above

D5. What is your marital status?

Never Married – Dependent
Never Married - Independent
Married
Divorced / Seperated
Widowed

Thank You Very Much!

APPENDIX C

Questionnaire (Chinese Version)

香港理工大學

School of HTM
Hotel & Tourism Management
酒 店 及 旅 遊 業 管 理 學 院

中國西南三省旅遊目的地形象調查

此次研究的目的是調查香港居民對中國西部地區的西南三省(包括四川、雲南和貴州)的旅遊目的地形象的看法。希望研究結果能對中國西部地區的旅遊開發有所貢獻。

此次調查著眼於了解西南三省作爲旅遊目的地在您心目中的形象以及您對一般旅遊目的地形象特徵的重要性的評價。您的意見對此次調查十分重要，我們希望您能抽出大約 10 分鐘的寶貴時間來回答以下問題。您提供的所有資料將只供純學術用途並絕對保密。

第一部分：篩選類問題及一般問題

1. 您是否香港永久性居民，年齡在 18 歲或以上？

   是　　否（結束訪問）

2. 在過去兩年內你是否在中國大陸進行過一天以上的旅行？

   是（請繼續回答問題 3）　　否（請直接回答問題 6）

3. 如果回答問題 2 爲“是”，請問您這次/這些旅行的目的爲何？(可選多項)

   遊玩

   探親

   商務

   其他（請註明）：_____

4. 您在這次/這些旅行中，曾去過中國大陸的哪些省或城市？

   _____

5. 總體而言，您是否滿意你在中國大陸的這次/這些旅行？ “1” 爲非常不滿意，而 “10” 爲非常滿意。

   1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10

6. 請註明您在未來兩年內去西南三省遊玩的可能性。“1” 爲極不可能，而 “10” 爲極有可能。

   1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10

第二部分：旅遊目的地形象

1: 一般旅遊目的地形象特徵的重要性

請問您如何評價以下一般旅遊目的地特徵的重要性?
請在 1（非常不重要）到 5（非常重要）之間註明您的選擇

		非常不重要	不重要	沒意見	重要	非常重要
1	政治穩定	1	2	3	4	5
2	人身安全	1	2	3	4	5
3	擁擠程度	1	2	3	4	5
4	清潔衛生	1	2	3	4	5
5	語言溝通	1	2	3	4	5
6	價格及費用	1	2	3	4	5
7	當地居民的友好程度	1	2	3	4	5
8	服務質素	1	2	3	4	5
9	氣候條件	1	2	3	4	5
10	輕鬆休閒的環境	1	2	3	4	5
11	不同的生活方式	1	2	3	4	5
12	增長見識的機會	1	2	3	4	5
13	旅遊景點	1	2	3	4	5
14	節慶活動	1	2	3	4	5
15	自然風光	1	2	3	4	5
16	夜生活	1	2	3	4	5
17	購物設施	1	2	3	4	5
18	當地的交通基礎設施	1	2	3	4	5
19	景點交通便利度	1	2	3	4	5
20	住宿	1	2	3	4	5
21	餐館	1	2	3	4	5
22	當地菜肴/食品	1	2	3	4	5

2: 西南三省(四川、雲南和貴州)的旅遊目的地形象

請問您對以下各項關於西南三省的描述的認可程度？
請在 1（非常不同意）到 5（非常同意）之間註明您的選擇

		非常不同意	不同意	沒意見	同意	非常同意
1	西南三省政治穩定	1	2	3	4	5
2	社會環境大致比較安全	1	2	3	4	5
3	西南三省人口不太擁擠	1	2	3	4	5
4	當地的清潔和衛生水準爲高	1	2	3	4	5
5	沒有語言交流障礙	1	2	3	4	5
6	價格便宜	1	2	3	4	5
7	當地居民是友好的	1	2	3	4	5
8	總的來說，服務質素高	1	2	3	4	5
9	總的來說，氣候宜人	1	2	3	4	5
10	適合休閒與放鬆	1	2	3	4	5
11	生活方式與我們的不同	1	2	3	4	5
12	在那裡遊覽可以增長見識	1	2	3	4	5
13	有許多有趣的旅遊景點	1	2	3	4	5
14	節慶活動豐富	1	2	3	4	5
15	自然風光景色宜人	1	2	3	4	5
16	夜生活豐富	1	2	3	4	5
17	擁有良好的購物環境	1	2	3	4	5
18	提供舒適的交通運輸工具	1	2	3	4	5
19	旅遊景點交通方便	1	2	3	4	5
20	容易找到好的酒店/旅館	1	2	3	4	5
21	容易找到好的餐館	1	2	3	4	5
22	有可口的當地風味菜肴	1	2	3	4	5

第三部分：個人資料

1. 您所屬的年齡組？

18-24
25-34
35-44
45-54
55-64
65 及以上

2. 您的性別？　　男　　女

3. 您的受教育程度？

小學程度或以下
中學程度
大學預科
大專（非學位）
大學（學位）
碩士或以上

4. 平均每月的家庭收入（港幣）

10,000 或以下
10,001-20,000
20,001-30,000
30,001-40,000
40,001-50,000
50,001-60,000
60,001-70,000
70,001 或以上

5. 您的婚姻狀況？

從未結婚 - 非獨立
從未結婚 - 獨立
已婚
離異
喪偶

非常感謝您的合作！