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ASSOCIATION NEW ZEALAND



China

CULTURAL BRIEF

Fuelled by a strong economy and a rapidly growing middle class, China's outbound travel market is expected to almost double between 2011 and 2015 to reach 100 million as consumers seek to broaden their horizons and experience foreign cultures.

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This China Cultural Brief is produced by the Tourism Industry Association New Zealand (TIA) and is available free to our members. See our website www.tianz.org.nz (News & Media - publications) for more information about the China market, including business meeting etiquette and dress code and links to further sources of information, including Tourism New Zealand research.

Sources include: Tourism New Zealand Asia Visitor Study 2011 and Target Market: Active Considerers Research, TravConsult.

Why the China market is important

The Chinese desire for travel is reflected in visitor arrivals to New Zealand, which have surged since 2009, boosted by new and increased air links between the two nations.

This growth is expected to continue, with China forecast to become New Zealand's second largest visitor market in terms of numbers and expenditure by 2014.

Making improvements in areas like service and better understanding Chinese expectations will help us accelerate this growth. It will also ensure New Zealand competes successfully with the many other destinations eager to capture a bigger share of this important visitor market.



Understand politics and history

Home to the world's largest population, China has been influenced by a long and rich history that has shaped its culture and values.

China became a communist state in 1949. On the surface, the country is modernising, but don't forget China remains a socialist country, under the leadership of the Communist Party of China.

This can affect the communication style of potential business partners, protocols in entering the market and the need to form a network of relationships (*guanxi*) to gain a foothold in the market. Travel patterns can be affected by directives given by the government.

The Chinese are very proud of their country's history and achievements. When they travel they tend to compare what they see to what China has.

'Face' is key

The concept of face or *mianzi* is extremely important to the Chinese. It is a complex value that shouldn't be underestimated.

Face is status, self-esteem or dignity in social relations.

Give face by:

- Praising someone in front of others
- Making allowances in negotiations
- Acknowledging their status by having your top person meet and greet them

Losing face

It will potentially harm your relationship and business if you cause someone to lose face, especially in front of others, for example:

- Interrupting or disagreeing with them in public
- Embarrassing them in public
- Giving them less attention than their position requires

About the Chinese visitor

The Chinese visitor is often an experienced traveller, having holidayed extensively in Asia and Europe before choosing New Zealand. The new breed of Chinese traveller is:

- 25+, highly ambitious, career focused
- Well educated, speaks at least conversational English
- A big user of technology and social media and wants to stay connected
- Sees travel as a break from the high pressured environment they live in – they want to "feel alive in the real world"

Chinese visitors to New Zealand fit into two style categories:

Guided tours

The majority of Chinese holidaymakers come here on organised group tours but there is a growing FIT (free independent traveller) market.

The group market:

- Do little research beforehand
- Want to fit in as much as possible in a short period of time
- Are happy to "dip their toes in" and see New Zealand

FIT young, affluent travellers

- Arrange their trip as they go – arrive, pick up the rental car and have one or two nights' accommodation booked
- Use i-SITES and brochures to plan their trip
- Are interested in "feeling" the product and getting up close
- Look for opportunities to enrich themselves

Opportunities

New Zealand's natural scenery and the clean, green environmental image of New Zealand rate as the two highest reasons for deciding to visit New Zealand. It's all about new experiences, things they can't experience in China.

We could do more to meet the Chinese desire to get close to nature and to deliver more fun and enjoyment into the holiday experience.

Here are some of the things Chinese particularly enjoy about a New Zealand holiday that could offer opportunities for your business.

Chinese visitors:

- Want to experience contemporary New Zealand life – what it's like to live in a home and what local people eat day to day
- Are interested in indigenous cultural experiences that are clearly explained
- Want activities that are about experiencing "real nature" tied with learning and exploring boundaries safely
- Are interested in learning and personal development
- Like to end their holiday on a high note – seeing the order of the trip from least impressive in scenery and experience to the most impressive should be considered to optimise impact and satisfaction
- Find going to beaches, taking a scenic boat cruise and visiting natural attractions highly appealing
- Enjoy urban-based activities like visiting historic buildings and sites, walking in the city and shopping
- Relish cuisine-related activities, including fine dining, trying new cuisine and food and wine events

Target FIT market

The FIT market is looking for more customised experiences where they make the choices. They are high users of social network sites and want to book online. They want more personalised options and tailored trips around the destination.

MIX ROMANCE WITH NATURE

Promote specific places and times of sunset, walks on beaches, look-outs, pleasure trekking, restaurants where there is romantic alfresco

dining – overlooking sea or mountains and ideally a waterfall! Offer more do-it-yourself travel experiences such as feeding animals.

WEAVE STORIES INTO THE EXPERIENCE

Add depth to the visitor experience by weaving stories into the experience, for example Maori legends, cultural beliefs and history, family heritage stories, world famous people/events/sights.

Customer needs and expectations



SERVICE

Chinese travellers have become more discerning about customer service over the past decade:

- Speed of service is very important in all areas, e.g. bags to the room, processing of retail purchase, food and beverage delivery
- Give personalised attention by manager
- Offer price flexibility – group discounts
- Provide authentic products and services
- Keep the service experience simple and easy
- Give assistance with equipment or any other requirements
- Provide clear and precise information with easily understood instructions around times and expectations and options available
- Provide more service and activity information and look at other ways to be more proactive in communications
- Ensure key contact points in your business, such as the concierge, are well informed of activities that are available and sights that visitors should see

Accommodation operators should provide:

- A porter service
- More than one power converter plug
- Fast, low-cost internet connection

FOOD

Chinese have very high food and beverage expectations. Food is an extremely important experience for Chinese, who value it from a social, health and cultural perspective.

They want to try local cuisine, but appreciate it if you can incorporate some foods they are familiar with into your menu:

- breakfast – congee and condiments, noodles, hard boiled or fried eggs
- fresh produce
- freshly caught seafood
- Chinese tea (tea leaves, rather than coffee)
- hot water (rather than iced)

Chinese often don't know what New Zealand delicacies are – we must promote them more, for example develop a "top ten Kiwi food" list, including such things as golden kiwifruit, greenshell mussels, New Zealand honey, sauvignon blanc, lamb, pavlova, kumara, paua, whitebait fritters, crayfish.

Provide chopsticks as an option for every meal.

Alcohol consumption is becoming more common, especially amongst more sophisticated and affluent travellers – for FITs offer local wine and explain meal matches.



LANGUAGE

Translate menu items and activity and safety information into simplified Chinese. This will maximise visitor appreciation and experience of your products or service.

FIT travellers in particular research everything on the internet – an option to translate a website into Mandarin is expected.

Master some everyday Chinese terms so you can at least acknowledge, welcome, thank and farewell Chinese guests in their own language:

- hello – *ni hao* (nee how)
- welcome – *huan ying* (hu aan ying)
- thank you – *xie xie* (shi-er shi-er)
- goodbye – *zai jian* (zai jen)



SHOPPING

Bartering is part of everyday life in China and they expect it when travelling. To cater for Chinese enjoyment and expectations around bargaining, incorporate flexibility into your pricing and allow for group discounts and added value.

Popular shopping items:

- Products that give health benefits natural to New Zealand, e.g. manuka honey, deer velvet
- New Zealand-made products such as sheepskin rugs
- Latest brand names with latest styles at a good price compared with China
- Products that reflect status or good investment value, e.g. premium wine, leather handbags
- Men like shopping too – they commonly buy watches for themselves and friends



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