DESTINATION IMAGE, RISK PERCEPTION AND THE UNITED STATES AS AN EDUCATIONAL DESTINATION FOR CHINESE COLLEGE STUDENTS

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Learning has long been a strong travel motivation. Herodotus (484–425 BC) traveled much of the Greek world and wrote its history. In the seventeenth century, young and wealthy scholars traveled to Italy for education known as the Grand Tour. One important result of travel and learning is the fostering of talents that change history. With their knowledge and world views obtained through travel, Charles Darwin, Alexis de Tocqueville, and Che Guevara became recognized the world over. In recent years study abroad has become a global trend, in which leisure travel is frequently included (Williams, 2010). Ritchie (2003) defined educational tourism to be learning as a primary or secondary part of a trip. In 2011, it was estimated that a total of 723,277 international students studying in a different country, among them 286,925 originated in China. The U.S. was the dominant country receiving 490,933 international students in 1999 (Australian Education International, 2000). At the end of 2025, the global demand for international higher education will reach 7.2 million placements (International Development Program of Australian Universities and Colleges, 2002). Host countries gain economic benefits from international students. The net economic contribution by international students and their families were $15 billion dollars during the 2007-2008 year in the United States. A significant part of the spending was on travel for leisure and visiting family and friends inside the country. Though it is clear that educational travel is
win-win for those involved, it is important to understand what factors affect education related travel. Destination images and perceptions of risk are major concerns. Because the U.S., appeals to many potential international students, and because China is a major market for U.S. tourism and higher education, it is the purpose of this study to investigate perceptions of the U.S. as a destination among the students in China. To this aim, there are four research questions: (1) what are the images of the U.S. among college students in China? (2) What are the perceptions of risk associated with traveling in the U.S.? (3) What are the perceptions of the U.S. as an educational destination? (4) Are Chinese college students interested in educational travel? There are eight hypotheses to be tested on the relationship between two variable sets: interest in educational travel, perception of the U.S. as an educational destination, and risks of traveling are dependent variables, and tourist type, desire to study in the U.S. and past international travel experience are independent variables. Data collection involves a survey questionnaire and snowball sampling of students at three universities across China. Four types of data analysis will be performed: descriptive, t-test, chi-square and linear regression. Result of this study could be useful by marketers to better provide travel programs to international students, and could be useful for U.S. universities to recruit in China.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Travel for Educational Purposes

Education has long provided a strong travel motivation. Herodotus (484 BC – 425 BC) was an ancient Greek historian who traveled much in the known world of the Mediterranean and who contributed information about the Seven Wonders of The Ancient World. During almost the same time in the East, Confucius (551 BC – 479 BC) and his disciples traveled around the various nations of China propagating Confucianism. In Europe, beginning in the middle of the seventeenth century, young and wealthy people traveled around that continent for study. That large-scale movement for study became known as the Grand Tour. One of the important results of travel and learning is the fostering of many talents that change history. With their knowledge obtained through travel, outstanding scholars such as Marco Polo, Charles Darwin, Alexis de Toqueville, became recognized. Now study abroad is a global trend. A new survey from Opendoors data in the fall of 2013 shows that, compared with the 2012 academic year, the number of international students increased by more than seven percent in only one year (Institute of International Education, 2013).

Definition of Educational Destination and Interested in Educational Travel

Educational destination means educational travel attractions, includes schools, museums, zoos, parks and other attractions with educational meaning. Some “attractions” are not physical, such as culture. When people travel to a specific destination, added
culture and, language have also been seen as “attractions”. There are lots of educational destinations in the United States including not only universities, colleges and schools where people learn knowledge and skills, people also learn lots of things from museums, national parks, and other places. For example, there are some special educational programs in zoos in the summer designed for kids. So educational destinations are the attractions with educational meanings.

Interest in educational travel means people are interested in learning when they travel to educational attractions. Interest in educational travel is that people acquire a taste for learning when travel to educational attractions including both cultural and physical at-tractions.

The Grand Tour

Beginning with the start of the European Grand Tour in about 1660, educational tourism continually developed into study abroad until today’s virtually universal popularity of this venture. Richard Lassels introduced the term “Grand Tour” in his 1670 book, Voyage to Italy. The Grand Tour gained in popularity all through the eighteenth century among those who wanted to learn directly about language, architecture, geography and culture (Towner, 1985). The Grand Tour could last from a few months to perhaps eight years. It became popular originally among wealthy European family members who could afford to stay for an extended period abroad. However, the numbers of people who participated in the Grand Tour is still a question. Towner (1985) indicated that “it is difficult to assess the possible numbers of tourists who have been involved in the Grand Tour” because passports were not common. The age of the young travelers
was around fourteen to twenty three years old. Those grand tourists were primarily interested in visiting cities considered the major European centers of culture at that time. Paris, Rome, Florence and Venice were not to be missed (Towner, 1985).

The Grand Tour travelers usually spent weeks in smaller towns and months in major cities. There were several set routes for the Grand Tour. From Paris, tourists had to cross the Alps or take a boat on the Mediterranean Sea to Italy (Black, 1992). For those who wanted to cross the Alps, Turin was the first Italian city at which they arrived; however, some of them just went directly to Rome or Venice (Black, 1992). During the 1740’s because of archaeological excavations at Herculaneum and Pompeii, those two sites became major destinations on the Grand Tour (Towner, 1985).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, many psychologists mentioned that interests were the most important motivational factors in learning and development (Claparede, 1905; Dewey, 1913; Thorndike, 1935; Lunk, 1926; Berlyne, 1949; Arnold, 1906). Many colleges have wanted to improve the quality of education by developing students’ interests in study through various methods such as travel. This is the reason why educational travel has developed. Many people show positive attitudes if they have positive educational experience during travel. Educational interests develop well when associated with tourism.

At the present time, economic globalization has been developing quickly and knowledge-driven economics has become recognized by the people and governments of most countries. For example, Britain has announced “the creation of a high-skilled, high-wage economy by upgrading the education and skills of its workforce” (Teaching and
Learning, 2008, p. 2). China and India are moving into the manufacture of high-value-added and high-technology products for international sale (Brown, Lauder, & Ashton, 2008). This phenomenon is inseparable from high levels of education. The development of political and economic globalization is closely associated with the development of global education. That means students should gain advanced knowledge and overseas experience from study abroad. At the same time, host countries can also gain economic benefits from international students. This is a win-win proposition for both sides – international students and host countries.

Economic benefit is one of the most important impacts that international students bring to host countries. A 2007 study found that the total net income international students brought to the United Kingdom, combining the figures for tuition fees and other expenditures, was around 3.74 billion pounds in 2004-2005 (Vickers & Bekhradnia, 2007, p.11). Canada, and the United States, and other popular study abroad countries also have the same situation in economic. It is obvious that international students bring a large amount of money to host countries every year. The international student market continues to grow with forecasts predicting that this trend will continue for many decades to come.

Faculty members and senior administrators in American colleges and universities increasingly recognize that study abroad and exchange study can have important influences on students’ knowledge of other countries and cultures and their improvement in foreign language fluency (Von Prummer, 1990). Richard Riley, Education Secretary of the U.S., put forward the proposition that the U.S. should encourage more foreign
students to study at U.S. colleges as promoting international education is essential to “future global co-operation and understanding” (BBC NEWS, 2000). There are also more and more international students studying in the United States because the U.S. has advanced technology in the world (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). From Open Doors data in 2013, the number of international students in U.S. was 202,970 in 2009-2010, 214,490 in 2010-2011, 228,467 in 2011-2012, 250,920 in 2012-2013. New international students enrollment in 2013 increased 9.8% over the previous year (IIE, 2013).

**International Students from China**

In the trend toward study abroad, China is one of the nations where students strongly prefer to study advanced technology and science in other developed countries such as the United States (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). More than 80 percent of university students in China want to study abroad (China Daily, 2008). A survey showed 42 percent of respondents believe an overseas education will benefit their career development (China Daily, 2008). It also showed 66 percent felt that students with an overseas educational background were more competitive than graduates from domestic universities when it came to job hunting (China Daily, 2008). Statistics from the Ministry of Education of China stated that in 2006 more than 130,000 Chinese went abroad for further study and 180,000 students studied abroad in 2008 (Ministry of Education of China, January 2009). Figures from the British Council also show that visa applications from Chinese students who wished to study in the UK in the first six months of 2008 increased 46 percent over the same period in 2007. Colleges in the U.S. and the UK are always the first choices for Chinese students who want to study overseas. Other
favorite destinations by rank for overseas study were France, Australia and Canada. The main reason students choose these developed countries is that they have high quality education (Kanter, 2011). Most of the Chinese students believed that there would be differences between students who had experience studying in the U.S. versus those who did not. That is, the students believed they would be more competitive in the job market if they had international experience (China Daily, 2008). However, some students preferred to study domestically or in countries other than the U.S. In the present survey, 56 of 298 students would prefer not to study in the U.S. Reasons included that they had relatives and friends in other countries and that they truly disliked the U.S.

**More Things to Consider for International Visitors**

However, students also need to consider some important factors when they choose a foreign country for study. Destination image and any perception of risk are important considerations in the decision of whether to travel to an overseas location or not (Lepp & Gilbson, 2003).

Destination image is a topic that many researchers have investigated over a long period of time. Crompton (1979) stated that “It is from the sum of beliefs and ideas and impressions that a person has a destination.” Destination image determines how a traveler thinks about the destination. In addition, because of special characteristics which make it unlike any other physical product, tourism service itself is a product. Tourism cannot be seen before one experiences it. Thus, it is important for promoters of the destination to provide a proper and positive image, especially for the potential tourist. In
particular, a positive image is critical for the officials of any nation who wish to attract
more students to study there.

After a person considers the destination image, risk also often comes to mind
when one mentions travel. It is a serious theme in the tourism industry. As Lepp and
Gibson (2003) stated “previous investigations have identified four major risk factors:
terrorism, war and political instability, health concerns and crime” (p. 607). Research has
also revealed some details as to what and how these risk factors bring tragedy and misery
to countries, governments and people. Most tourists will stay away from perceived risky
destinations. Furthermore, knowledge and image of the destination is especially
important for potential international students and their families.

The United States, as a developed nation and a super power, appeals to many
potential tourists every year. Because of its rapid economic development, China is also a
major target market for the U.S. tourism industry.

The development of comparatively inexpensive rapid air transportation today
provides ever more opportunities for study abroad. One hundred years ago, the Pacific
Ocean between China and America hindered people from traveling across the ocean to
see the other side. That is less of a problem now. In addition, the advanced science and
technology in developed countries attract more people to study abroad. For example,
after China re-opened in the late 1970’s, increasing numbers of Chinese students started
to go abroad to study in the U.S. and in European countries. After decades of study and
research abroad, some of them returned to China and strongly boosted the development
of the sciences and technology in their mother country. In developing countries with
large populations, advanced knowledge and overseas experience can help people attain desired positions in competition with large numbers of other job candidates.

**Purpose for Study**

Because more Chinese students are going overseas for education, and because the United States is one of the top destinations, the purpose of this study is to investigate educational travel in the United States. To this aim, there are four research questions: (1) what are the images of the U.S. (IUS) among college students in China? (2) What are the perceptions of risk associated with traveling (RT) in the U.S. that college students in China think of the U.S.? (3) What are the perceptions of the U.S. as an educational destination (ED) among college students in China? (4) Are college students in China interested in educational travel (IET) in the U.S.?

The result of this study may be used by marketers to better understand strengths and weaknesses in the idea of coming to study in the United State. This study focuses on how Chinese students think about the United States. For example, do Chinese students want to travel or study in the United States? Thus, this study may be useful for the potential international student market of China for the U.S. In addition, by learning how Chinese students think about the United States, tourism marketers will be able to promote particular aspects of study in America and attempt to reduce any negative thoughts about the United States. For example, Chinese students prefer to stay in inexpensive accommodations when they travel. After understanding this aspect of Chinese culture, tourism markers can design some inexpensive but interesting routes for the travel of Chinese students during vacations. This has the potential to reduce some cultural conflict
during the international students study. This kind of information may be valuable for educational tourism exchanges between China and the United States. Chinese students may have positive attitudes after studying in the U.S., and may talk about the U.S. with their friends. This sensitivity may also attract more Chinese students to choose the United States as an educational destination for study or travel. In addition, educational tourism exchange programs may be easier to promote after Chinese students develop more positive attitudes toward the United States.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourist Roles

Many researchers have investigated the typology of tourists. Cohen (1972) was an early sociologist who subdivided tourists into categories. His four types of tourist roles (organized mass tourists, individual mass tourists, explorers and drifters) are based on the degree of institutionalization of those tourists. Polg (1974) discussed five groups of tourists (psychocentric, near psychocentric, mid-centric, near allocentric and allocentric) and fo-cused on the psychology of tourists in the process of travel. In 2002, according to Cohen’s (1972) sense of the individual mass tourist, Wickens interviewed 86 British holidaymakers and developed a five-fold classification for them (the Cultural Heritage, the Raver, the Shirley Valentine, the Heliolatrous, and the Lord Byron).

Other researchers have expressed some important opinions on tourist types and roles. Wickens (2002) mentioned that instead of acting out a single institutionalized role (Cohen, 1972), tourists may display an additional role while traveling, i.e., a multi-typology. Pearce (1985) analyzed fifteen travel-related roles (e.g., traveler, migrant, holiday-maker and others.) based on Cohen’s approach to tourists’ roles and found that there are highly different interpretations among them. In sum, most researchers have classified tourists into different groupings to help understand their processes in choosing destinations. Especially, Cohen (1972, 1974) and Plog (1974) have contributed a great deal toward the perception of tourist typology.
Cohen (1972) is one of the earliest researchers that came up with systematic typology of tourists. He separated the tourists into two groups, the institutionalized tourist and the non-institutionalized tourist. The institutionalized type of tourist includes the organized mass tourist and the individual mass tourist subtypes. The two types of tourists (organized mass tourist and individual mass tourist) act similarly in choosing a destination. In addition, they prefer to enjoy comfortable experiences such as organized lodgings and fixed routes. However, individual mass tourists seek more novel experiences than do organized mass tourists, although this difference of novelty preference is often shown in their travel routines (Cohen, 1972).

Non-institutionalized tourists include explorers and drifters. These two types of tourists seek more novelty than familiarity when they choose their destinations (Cohen, 1972). Compared with explorers, drifters tend to immerse themselves in a host country. Although both novelty and familiarity are essential to the tourist experience, most people shrink back toward familiarity when an environment becomes too unusual for them. The difference between institutionalized tourists, who use hotels, airplanes, attractions, travel agencies during travel, and non-institutionalized tourists, who attach loosely to the tourist establishment, lies in the different levels of novelty and familiarity that each type seeks during the process of traveling.

Plog (1974) had a similar theory about the typology of tourists. He divided tourists into five typologies—psychocentric, near psychocentric, mid-centric, near allocentric and allocentric, based on variations in tourist psychology. He found that psychocentric travelers are less motivated by new experiences and novelty. They like
fixed and safe routes and feel comfortable and excited when they meet familiar things. However, allocentric travelers prefer to explore new worlds which provide high levels of stimulation.

Plog (1974) described the allocentric traveler as “the individual who is outgoing and self-confident in his behavior” (p. 56). What is more, the allocentric traveler possesses more aggression than does the psychocentric, because he/she acts with more enthusiasm for the discovery of new things and new experiences. The definition for allocentric (Plog, 1972) is similar to that of Cohen’s (1972) non-institutionalized tourist; he/she avoids travel to common attractions or structured routes but hopes to experience destinations as would a local (Cohen, 1972). Plog (1974) summarized that allocentric tourists are those people who want to experience more novelty and differences than do other tourists; and they prefer to immerse themselves in local cultures which provide new activities and challenges. They also look for the “true identity” of a destination. However, psychocentric travelers wish to find a familiar and comfortable experience. This defines the most distinguishable difference between institutionalized (psychocentric) and non-institutionalized (allocentric) tourists (Cohen, 1972; Plog, 1974).

Some other researchers have expressed some important perceptions on tourist roles such as Lepp & Gibson. They stated that the level of novelty and familiarity may affect tourists’ destination selections. For example, a familiarity seeker might avoid destinations considered risky and too full of novel experience, while a novelty seeker might be interested in destinations with high levels of risky or stimulating experiences. In other words, what might be considered a source of fear for a familiarity seeker might
be viewed as a source of attraction for novelty seeker (Lepp & Gibson, 2003). Again, novelty and familiarity are the most important factors to distinguish different types of tourists.

**Destination Image**

Many authors have studied destination image (e.g. Pike, 2002; Park & Petric, 2006; Aaker, 1991; Kapferer, 1997). One early author, Hunt (1975), said “The lure to visit a particular region or fly a certain airline is often more visionary than tangible” (para. 4). That means that people have fantasies before they travel to a destination. Travelers tend to imagine new destinations more positively than realistically. Baloglu and Brinberg (1997) borrowed a general definition from some the authors: “Image is the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that people have of a place or destination” (p. 11). Some researchers use specialty words to distinguish the concepts of image and perception (Tasci, Gartner, & Cavusgil, 2007). Fridgen (1987) defines image as “a mental representation of an object, person, place, or event which is not physically before the observer” (p. 102). The above definition provides another point of view regarding image. That means image might or might not include actual perception. Potential tourists might develop the perception of image from media before travel to a destination. In addition, other researchers have focused on what the components of the images are and how people structure their knowledge of destinations (e.g. Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Mayo, 1975; Prebensen, 2005). The definition of destination image is different according to the different understandings of tourists’ perception.
Hunt (1975) was one of the first researchers to demonstrate that a good destination image can increase the number of tourists to visit a destination. This is one of the most important reasons why each year governments, airlines, resorts and many other organizations spend billions of dollars to develop excellent images in customers’ minds (Hunt, 1975). Destination image can be influenced by many factors. Beerli and Martí (2004) developed a mode of formation of destination image based on the previous literature in 2004. This model is composed of two major factors, and information sources are also known as stimulation factors (Baloglu & McCleary 1999a), image forming agents (Gartner 1993) or personal factors. Information sources includes secondary (e.g., induced, organic and autonomous) and primary (e.g., previous experience, intensity of visit). Secondary information includes how people have perceived the information before a visit to a destination, while primary information refers to how people have perceived the information during travel. Personal factors include motivations, socio-demographic characteristics and vacation experiences.

Tourists always search for information about destinations before they travel. Previous academic literature has studied the ways in which people gain information about foreign destinations (Jenkins, 1999; Prebensen, 2007; Tasci & Gartner, 2007). One of the most convenient and popular ways people acquire knowledge of possible destinations is to search through the media. However, media can spread both bad and good news to potential tourists and can heavily influence the destination image. Castelltort and Mader (2009) discovered that negative news has a marked negative effect on destination image and positive news has a distinct positive effect on destination. The internet is seen as an
immediate importance. What is more, it is being accepted by more and more tourists right now. Written information such as guide books can promote a good image by showing beautiful pictures and magnificent words. Word of mouth from one person’s experience can affect other people’s destination images. However, most people talk about the negative aspects of their travel instead of the positive parts; and, thus, such talk is not necessarily fair toward a destination (Govers, Go, & Kumar, 2007).

A positive image can influence a tourist to travel to a destination. On the other side, negative images may reduce the number of tourists. Risk is an important factor of concern when people consider travel to a new destination, especially travel to a foreign country.

**Risk**

Risks are stated in advisories from government agencies, travel agents and social media associated with international tourism. Risks are of concern to all travelers, especially international tourists. Thus, risk is an important element affecting destination imagery. For example, when people perceive that the destination is associated with some risk factors, they are less likely to choose that destination. According to Cohen’s four tourist types, compared with familiarity seekers, novelty seekers accept or sometimes seek out more risks during travel. Lepp and Gibson (2003) summarized four major risks pertinent to the tourism industry: terrorism, war and political instability, health concerns and crime.

The Munich Olympic Games in 1972 demonstrated the beginning of the influence of terrorism on tourism. After such a spectacular attack of terrorism, international
tourists have grown progressively more concerned about choosing destinations because tourists are potential targets for terrorism. One of the reasons already stated by Aziz (1995) is that tourism represents capitalism and conspicuous consumption. If terrorists attack tourists, they strike out at western values. Significantly, the tourism industry is a major economic resource in some countries. An attack on tourists serves also as an attack on the government (Richter and Waugh 1986; Sonmez 1998). A more recent example in the terrorism attack in September 11, 2001 in the U.S has been demonstrated to have caused 6.8% fewer international tourists to visit North America in the following year (World Tourism Organization 2002).

Similar to terrorism, war and political instability can also increase perception of destination risk. For example, the Persian Gulf War in 1990 caused many tourists to avoid the Middle East. War and political instability can also cause perception of risk for tourism in neighboring countries. After the Persian Gulf War, countries close to the Persian Gulf such as Kenya and Tanzania also suffered from negative effects on tourism (as cited in Lepp & Gibson, 2003, p. 608).

Health concern is another risk that people care about when they travel abroad. The foot and mouth disease that broke out in the United Kingdom in 2001 caused the U.K. to lose thousands of potential tourists from the United States (CNN Europe 2001). Similar examples can easily be found in the historical records. Compared to the United States and Europe, where the food safety level is high, tourists to Africa and some parts of Asia are concerned about health issues when choosing locations in those regions as destinations (as cited in Lepp & Gibson, 2003, p. 608).
The last risk is crime. In general, tourists are easy targets for criminals. The reasons include that tourists are not familiar with a new environment including languages, customs and signs. They may carry a lot of cash when they travel and lack local relatives or friends (Pizam, Tarlow and Bloom 1997). On the other hand, because of the increasing rates of crime against tourists in the world, they seek to become more and more low in profile while traveling. Brunt, Mawby and Hambly (2000) found that crime occurs with the lowest probability to British tourists abroad because British tourists “hide” themselves in the environment by dressing like local residents.

In summation, tourists usually feel safer when they travel in a familiar environment while a novel environment may present more risks, especially for international tourists.

Educational Destination

During the era of the Grand Tour (1660s to early 1900s) in Europe, young people studied abroad. During that time, many wealthy people, who wanted to be closer to high level social classes and more respected by others, sent their children to study languages, cultures, history, art, architecture and philosophy in other enlightened countries. Large numbers of wealthy and young travelers began their tours after the Peace of Munster in 1648.

From Towner’s (1985) research, we can understand the typical itineraries of the Grand Tour, which covered the major centers of culture at that time, such as Paris, Rome and Venice. For example, tourists from Britain usually started from Dover, England, and crossed the English Channel to Osten in the Spanish Netherlands/Belgium, or Calais or
Le Havre in France. If they were wealthy enough, they possibly went as far as the Alps, either starting near Paris, or up the Rhine to Basel, often accompanied by a tutor. From France, travelers went to Geneva or Lausanne through urban Switzerland. In Spain, people visited Barcelona, or even Madrid and Seville. In Italy, tourists would visit Turin, Florence, Venice, and/or Rome.

*Figure 1. Itinerary of Grand Tour in Europe*


The Grand Tour gained major popularity during the seventeenth century. There is no special data for how many travelers made a Grand Tour in these years. One of the most relevant reasons was that passports did that exist during the early Grand Tour period;
thus, it is difficult to calculate the number of travelers (Towner, 1985). The French Revolution in 1789 marked the end of the Grand Tour of the early nineteenth century; and, in addition, the invention of rail transportation totally changed methods of travel across the continent. The Grand Tour had deep impact all over the world. It provided the earliest opportunities for travelers officially to study abroad. It promoted communication and development between countries. After the Grand Tour, many young travelers accepted the responsibilities of being aristocrat. The Grand Tour changed several aspects of people’s lives.

In a modern version of the Grand Tour, nowadays there are many young people who travel for study all over the world. With the development of science and technology, study abroad has become a global trend, even a fad in some people’s eyes. There are data from United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in their 2009 World Conference Higher Education report, which refer to the numbers of international students from 2008 – 2009 (as cited in The New York Times, 2009). There were 2.5 million students study outside their countries (The New York Times, 2009). The top three educational destinations for international students were United States (number of international students 671,616), United Kingdom (330,000) Australia (280,000). The world total is around 2.5 million international students (The New York Times, 2009).

There are students from colleges and universities, middle schools and primary schools, and even mature people from all walks of life who choose to experience a different life in another country. Normally, there are two kinds of study abroad, long
term and short term. Short term is about one to six weeks, such as a summer program and training, which mainly focus on short-term learning and practice during which people can experience a quick and effective trip. There is a negative factor in that one cannot learn much about a culture during a short time. On the contrary, long-term study may last two months to two years or more, such as programs offered for undergraduate and graduate study and even for post-doctoral positions. Students who participate in long-term study can experience the real culture in another country by studying languages, living closely with local residents and travelling away from the study location.
CHAPTER III
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate educational travel in the United States. Based on this purpose, there are four research questions: (1) What are the images of the U.S. (IUS) among college students in China? (2) What are the perceptions of risk associated with traveling (RT) in the U.S. in the minds of college students in China? (3) What are the perceptions of the U.S. as an educational destination (ED) among college students in China? (4) Are college students in China interested in educational travel (IET) in the U.S.? There are eight hypotheses pertinent to this study: (1) There is no relationship between RT and ED. (2) There is no relationship between the desire to study in the U.S. and ED. (3) There is no relationship between the desire to study in the U.S. and IET. (4) There is no relationship between tourist type and ED. (5) There is no relationship between tourist type and IET. (6) There is no relationship between international travel experience and ED. (7) There is no relationship between international travel experience and IET. (8) There is no relationship between the desire to study in the U.S. and tourist type.

Instrument Design

This study used a quantitative approach to investigate the research questions. The design included a survey questionnaire, sampling of university students in China, and statistical testing of relationship among the variables. The leading question of this
questionnaire was intended to measure perception of the United States in Chinese students’ minds. Because participants were college students in China and most had not visited the United States before, a free-elicitation approach was used in this part (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993). In addition, Prebensen (2007) suggests that an inductive approach may be a good way to gain valid findings when people have not visited a destination. Thus, the question “what are the first two things that come into your mind when you think of the United State?” was used. This method has been used by Lepp & Gibson (2010) to measure perceptions of Uganda.

The next part of the questionnaire measured the risks of traveling in the United States. Thirty-one items were selected from previous research with regard to risk (Romines, 2008; Qi, Gibson, & Zhang, 2009; Shani, Chen, Wang, & Hua, 2010). This part included different dimensional questions on the riskiness of the United States. There were questions such as: “The United States was crowded.” “United State is a safe destination.” and “The threat of terrorism could influence my decision to travel to the United States.” This part used a five-point Likert scale including strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree which sat in 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 respectively.

The third part measured the United States in terms of an educational destination. There were questions such as “the U.S. is a good educational destination for international visitors.” Four questions came from several sources such as the Institute of International Education, International Students, and USA Today. The fourth part of this questionnaire measured the interest in educational travel among students. For example, “I am
interested in learning from travel.” Both the third and fourth parts used the same five-point Likert scale method, similar to the second part.

The fifth part of the questionnaire regarded questions about travel in the U.S. such as “List three destinations you are most interested in, if you will travel in the U.S.” and “What are the reasons for your travel in the U.S.” The sixth part of the questionnaire had four statements regarding the Cohen (1972) tourist types (i.e., organized mass tourist, individual mass tourist, explorer, and drifter). Participants elected the statement which best describes their travel characteristics. This method also came from a similar study by Lepp & Gilbson (2003) relative to tourist typology of U.S. born young adults. The last part had questions about the respondents themselves such as “I am male/female” and “I have international travel experience.”

**Data Collection**

Data was collected from four universities in mainland China: Nankai University, Shanghai Normal University, Chongqing Normal University, Chongqing University of Technology; from three cities in mainland China: Tianjin (northeast), Shanghai (southeast) and Chongqing (southwest) which were the sites for data collection. All of the respondents were full-time college students from a variety of majors. This researcher, through contact with professors in China, collected one hundred surveys from classes in each of the universities. A total of 300 students joined this research and 298 gave their responses. It took three months to obtain all the data for this research.
**Data Analysis**

This study used five main types of data analysis: descriptive, t-test, linear regression Chi-square. First, frequencies and distributions were used to describe the image of the U.S. (IUS) according to (1) type of tourist and (2) previous international travel experience. In addition, this analysis was used to study the relationship between the perceptions of the U.S. as an educational destination (ED) among college students in China and college students in China interested in educational travel (IET) in the U.S.

The second analysis was an independent t-test. It will be applied to factors of desire for study in the U.S., tourist type and international travel experience, to study the relationship with ED and IET. The third analysis is liner regression to examine the relationship between the perceptions of risk associated with traveling (RT) in the U.S. in the minds of college students in China and ED. The fourth analysis is Chi-Square to study the relationship between desire study in the United State and tourist type. (Figure 2).
Figure 2. A chart of research questions of educational travel in the U.S.

Desire to Study in the U.S. → Educational Destination (ED)
Desire to Study in the U.S. → Interest in Educational Travel (IET)
Tourist Type → Educational Destination (ED)
Tourist Type → Interest in Educational Travel (IET)
International Travel Experience → Educational Destination (ED)
International Travel Experience → Interest in Educational Travel (IET)
Risks (RT) → Educational Destination (ED)
Risks (RT) → Interest in Educational Travel (IET)

1. Regression
2. t-test
3. t-test
4. t-test
5. t-test
6. t-test
7. t-test
8. \( \chi^2 \)
In this study, we aimed to answer four research questions:

(1) What are the images of the U.S. (IUS) among college students in China?

(2) What are the perceptions of risk associated with traveling (RT) in the U.S. in the minds of college students in China?

(3) What are the perceptions of the U.S. as an educational destination (ED) among college students in China?

(4) Are college students in China interested in educational travel (IET) in the U.S.?

We considered eight hypotheses pertinent to this study:

(1) There is no relationship between RT and ED.

(2) There is no relationship between the desire to study in the U.S. and ED.

(3) There is no relationship between the desire to study in the U.S. and IET.

(4) There is no relationship between tourist type and ED.

(5) There is no relationship between tourist type and IET.

(6) There is no relationship between international travel experience and ED.

(7) There is no relationship between international travel experience and IET.

(8) There is no relationship between the desire to study in the U.S. and tourist type.
Description of the Sample

In total, 300 questionnaires were distributed, and 298 were completed; thus, the effective rate was close to 100%. Of the questionnaires, 152 were distributed at Shanghai Normal University, 119 at Chongqing Normal University, and the remaining 29 at Chongqing University of Technology. Most of the students were undergraduates (n = 295, 99%); only three were graduate students. The sample included 60 males (20.1%) and 238 females (79.9%).

Several questions in this survey asked about students’ past travel experiences. Three students (1.0%) had previously traveled to the U.S. The most common reason for this may be that students do not have enough money or time. Traveling across the oceans is not easy for a middle-income family, and especially for a low-income working class family. Accommodation expenses in U.S. are also considerable. Another reason that only a few Chinese students had traveled to the U.S. may be the long distances involved. Parents might worry about the safety of their children on the other side of the Pacific. In total, 117 (39.3%) students reported that their family or friends had travelled to the U.S. at least once. Only 60 (20.1%) students said “yes” to the last question “Have you ever spoken to an American student on campus.” In Chongqing, the city where 148 (49.3%) questionnaires were distributed, there are not many American students, and thus students there may have limited opportunities to talk to Americans.

Otherwise, 24 students (8.1%) had traveled to countries other than the U.S. Of these, one (0.3%) had traveled to Australia, and others (7.7%) to Russia. Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia were the most common destinations according to the survey.
When the students were asked whether their family or friends had traveled to the U.S., 117 (39.3%) gave positive answers. Thus, traveling to the U.S. was popular among the Chinese. However, only 60 students (20.1%) had ever chatted with American students.

When students were asked “Which areas in the U.S. interest you most,” New York (137), Washington, DC (59), and Las Vegas (57) were the top three destinations. However, some students gave unrelated answers, such as places located outside the United States. The results included Buckingham Palace (the United Kingdom), London (the United Kingdom), and Florence (Italy). Two students answered “unknown” for this question.

Images of the United States

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nine Different Groups of Images of the U.S.</th>
<th>137 (29.40%)</th>
<th>5. Economy &amp; Industry</th>
<th>46 (9.90%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statue of Liberty</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Dollar</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White House</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Wall Street</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hollywood</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Las Vegas</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>iPhone</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disney</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellowstone National Park</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Apple</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractions</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Luxury</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi River</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Wealthy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Prosperous and strong</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocky Mountains</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Booming</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooklyn Bridge</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara Falls</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>iPod</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beach</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Advanced technology, rich materials</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wal-Mart</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Culture &amp; Life</td>
<td>77 (16.50%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NBA</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>US TV series</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Star-Spangled Banner</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Open</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>American movies</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beauty</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Life style</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diversified nation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Twilight</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dream</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Amorous</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>American dress</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Life style</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. State &amp; city</td>
<td>76(16.30%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Modern city</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seattle</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Empire State Building</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manhattan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Celebrity</td>
<td>53 (11.40%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Obama</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jobs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kobe</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bush</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Roosevelt</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Images of the U.S. were investigated by asking the Chinese college students to list two things that occurred to them when they thought of the United States. In total, 298 students answered the question, though some only listed one thing instead of two. All images were divided into nine categories, and similar answers were grouped together. These image groups were (1) travel (29.4%), (2) culture and life (16.5%), (3) state and city (16.3%), (4) celebrity (11.4%), (5) economy and industry (9.9%), (6) education (8.6%), (7) food (2.6%), (8) politics (2.8%), and (9) others (2.6%).

Travel-related images were the most common among all groups. Travel images, such as the State of Liberty (10.7%), the White House (7.1%), and Hollywood (4.5%) left deep impressions on Chinese students. The second most frequent image group included life and culture images. Within this group, the NBA (6.9%) was the most recognizable image, especially among male students. Also, U.S. TV series, programs, firms, and shows (2.1%) were popular among Chinese students New York City was commonly mentioned when discussing the U.S. (12%). Among the 298 responses, 46 (9.9%) students mentioned President Obama.

Recently, study abroad has become a hot topic in China. More importantly, the U.S. has famous universities, especially the Ivy League schools, led by Harvard University. As seen above, common images of the United States among some Chinese students include burgers, safety, Steve Jobs, and capitalism. Based on the data sets, we further employed eight different hypotheses.
Perceptions of Risk Associated with Traveling in the U.S. (RT) and Perceptions of the U.S. as an Educational Destination (ED)

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Risks (RT)</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>0.6158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Destination (ED)</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>0.6260</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson Correlation

Correlation between Risk (RT) and Educational Destination (ED) = 0.272

Simple Linear Regression Model on Educational Destination (ED) Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>2.963</td>
<td>0.189</td>
<td>15.655</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk (RT)</td>
<td>0.267</td>
<td>0.055</td>
<td>4.856</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To assess the relationship between perception of risk (RT) and perception of the U.S. as an educational destination (ED), a simple linear regression was conducted. The fitted regression equation was obtained using SPSS software: ED = 2.963 + 0.267 × RT. (t = 4.857, p < 0.05). Thus, Hypothesis 1 was rejected. The intercept of this regression was around 3, indicating that even when students thought of the U.S. as a risky destination, on average, they still thought of it as an educational destination. As RT increased by 1, ED increased, on average, by 0.267. Thus, the safer the students felt about the U.S., the higher they ranked it as an educational destination. Therefore, the null
hypothesis that there was no relationship between safety in the U.S. and educational destination was rejected.

**Desire to Study in the U.S. and Perceptions of the U.S. as an Educational Destination (ED)**

Table 3

*Desire to Study in the U.S. and Educational Destination (ED)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desire to study in the U.S.</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>4.0155</td>
<td>0.5588</td>
<td>-1.56</td>
<td>0.1193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>3.8705</td>
<td>0.8594</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the results for students’ desire to study in the U.S., 242 students expressed a desire to further their studies in the U.S. if time and money permitted. However, 56 students would not choose to study in the U.S. even without money and time considerations. The independent t-test was used to test the relationship between desire to study in the U.S. and U.S. as an educational destination. The result was not statistically significant ($t = -1.56, p = 0.1193$), meaning that we cannot conclude that there was a linear relationship between the two. Hence, the null hypothesis that there was no relationship between desire to study in the U.S. and educational destination cannot be rejected.

**Desire to Study in the U.S. among College Students in China and Interest in Educational Travel in the U.S. (IET)**

Table 4

*Desire to Study in the U.S. and Interest in Educational Travel (IET)*
The independent $t$-test was used to test the relationship between desire to study in the U.S. and students’ interest in U.S educational travel. The result of the $t$-test was not statistically significant ($t = -0.08$, $p = 0.9359$). Thus, the null hypothesis that there was no significant relationship between the desire to study in the U.S. and interest in educational travel in the U.S. among college students in China cannot be rejected.

**Tourist type and Perceptions of the U.S. as an Educational Destination (ED)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tourist Type</th>
<th>$n$</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$P$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Familiar</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>3.7753</td>
<td>0.6089</td>
<td>-1.691</td>
<td>0.837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novel</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>3.9067</td>
<td>0.6160</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The independent $t$-test was again used to test the relationship between tourist type and perceptions of the U.S. as an educational destination (ED). There was no significant difference between the familiar group ($M = 3.7753; SD = 0.6089$) and the novel group ($M = 3.9067; SD = 0.6160$) ($t = -1.691$, $p = 0.837$). Thus, the null hypothesis that there was no significant relationship between tourist type and perceptions of the U.S. as an educational destination (ED) cannot be rejected.
Tourist Type and Interest in Educational Travel in the U.S. (IET) among College Students in China

Table 6

Tourist Type and Interest in Educational Travel (IET)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tourist Type</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Familiar</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>3.3525</td>
<td>0.5646</td>
<td>1.984</td>
<td>0.059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novel</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>3.2261</td>
<td>0.4755</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An independent t-test was conducted to compare the interest of familiar and novel travelers in U.S. educational travel. There was no significant difference between the familiar group (M = 3.3525; SD = 0.5646) and the novel group (M = 3.2261; SD = 0.4755) (t = 1.984, p = 0.059). These results suggested that interest in educational travel in the U.S. was not associated with tourist type. Thus, the null hypothesis that there was no significant relationship between tourist type and IET cannot be rejected.

Previous International Travel Experience and Perceptions of the U.S. as an Educational Destination (ED)

Table 7

International Travel Experience and Educational Destination (ED)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desire to study in the U.S.</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4.0938</td>
<td>0.5889</td>
<td>1.885</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>3.8476</td>
<td>0.6152</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the table shows, only 24 students had previous international travel experience. A t-test for independent samples revealed no significant relationship between international
travel experience and perception of the U.S. as an educational destination (ED) \((t = 1.885, p = 0.06)\). Thus, the null hypothesis that there was no relationship between previous international travel experience and ED cannot be rejected.

**Previous International Travel Experience and Interest in Educational Travel in the U.S. (IET) among College Students in China**

Table 8

*International Travel Experience and Interest in Educational Travel (IET)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desire to study in the U.S.</th>
<th>(N)</th>
<th>(M)</th>
<th>(SD)</th>
<th>(t)</th>
<th>(P)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3.4427</td>
<td>0.5173</td>
<td>1.812</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>3.2482</td>
<td>0.50308</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A *t*-test for independent samples revealed no significant relationship between international travel experience and interest in educational travel in the U.S. \((t = 1.812, p = 0.07)\). Thus, the null hypothesis that there was no relationship between prior international travel experience and IET cannot be rejected.

**Desire to Study in the U.S. and Tourist Type**

Table 9

*Desire to Study in the U.S. and Tourist Type*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>(df)</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson chi-squared</td>
<td>4.134</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Chi-squared test of independence was performed to examine the relationship between the desire to study in the U.S. and tourist type. As shown in Table 9, there was a significant relationship between desire to study in the U.S. and tourist type. It seems that novelty-type tourists preferred to study in the U.S. more than did familiarity-type ones. Thus, the null hypothesis that there was no relationship between desire to study in the U.S. and tourist type was rejected.

**Previous International Travel Experience and Images of the United States as a Destination**

Table 10

*International Travel Experience and Destination Image*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination Image</th>
<th>Yes (n = 24)</th>
<th>No (n = 274)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>27.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture and Life</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20.93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State &amp; City</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrity</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy &amp; Industry</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Frequencies and percentages were used to examine the relationship between previous international travel experience and images of the United States as a travel destination. Students with and without international travel experience identified the United States as a good travel destination. Places such as the Statue of Liberty and
Yellowstone National Park were mentioned many times by both groups. One major difference was that students with international travel experience were able to think of more cities and states in the U.S. than were students without international travel experience (25.58% of Yes compared with 16.21% of No). The second most frequently mentioned impression of the U.S. had to do with culture and life. More students with than without international travel experience thought about culture and life when the United States was mentioned (20.93% of the Yes group compared with 16.67% of the No group). Other answers commonly mentioned by both groups included President Obama, the dollar, and universities.

**Tourist Type and Images of the United States as a Destination**

Table 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination Image</th>
<th>Tourist Type</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Familiar ($n = 89$)</td>
<td>Novet ($n = 209$)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$n$</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>$n$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>23.74%</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture and Life</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>24.05%</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State &amp; City</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>17.09%</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrity</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12.66%</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy &amp; Industry</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.43%</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8.86%</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.70%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.53%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.80%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>438</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Frequencies and percentages were again used to determine the relationship between Tourist Type and Destination Image of the United States. As a result, both
familiarity and novelty seekers thought frequently of travel in the U.S., which was attractive to Chinese college students. Attractions like Yellowstone National Park and the Statue of Liberty were commonly mentioned by students of both tourist types. However, the familiarity seekers mentioned culture and life (24.05%) more often than novelty seekers (10.05%) did. The items associated with American culture and life included U.S. TV series, the NBA, and the Star-Spangled Banner. Additionally, familiarity seekers thought more frequently about celebrities than novelty seekers (12.66%) did. Celebrities such as President Obama, President Bush, and Steve Jobs were listed by the familiarity seekers. The top three categories listed were the same for novelty and familiarity seekers.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

Totally, 300 questionnaires were distributed, and 298 were completed. Most of the students were undergraduates \( (n = 295, 99\%) \). The sample included 60 males \((20.1\%)
\) and 238 females \((79.9\%) \). The results of this study show that most college students had positive images of the United States. There is a question in this survey about the degree of risk in the U.S. The average rating was 3.4 on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from very risky \((1)\) to very safe \((5)\). Thus, higher numbers indicated that students perceived the U.S. as safer, so the score of 3.4 indicated that the U.S. was considered a safe destination on average. Other positive images included the image of the U.S. as a developed economy, the beautiful natural environment, a powerful social security system, and an advanced education system. According to the survey, most students \((81.2\%) \) were very interested in studying in the U.S. if time and money allowed. The annual growth of Chinese studying in the U.S is about 20\% \( (\text{Lu Liang}, 2013)\).

These findings are significant because China is a major source country of international students. Despite any concerns, most Chinese students would still like to travel to the U.S. when possible. It seems that Chinese students did have some concerns about security in the U.S. The rating of risk \((3.4)\) was close to 5 \((\text{the highest score is 5 and the higher of this score, the safer students think of the U.S.})\). These reasons may include terrorist attacks \((\text{e.g., 9/11})\) and natural disasters \((\text{hurricanes, tornadoes})\) that have happened relatively recently, with their associated negative images of the U.S.
Hypothesis 1 assumed that there was no relationship between perceptions of risk associated with traveling (RT) and the perceptions of the U.S. as an educational destination (ED) among college students in China. The result showed a significant positive relationship ($p < 0.05$) between RT and ED. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was rejected, indicating that the safer students felt the U.S. to be, the higher they ranked it as an educational destination.

The survey yielded some other interesting findings. When participations in China were asked whether they would like to study in U.S., novelty seekers seemed to have more desire to study in the United States than did familiarity seekers. If we describe studying abroad as an adventure, it seems that novelty seekers prefer to experience such an adventure more than familiarity seekers do. Thus, Hypothesis 8 (There is no relationship between the desire to study in the U.S. and tourist type) was rejected.

**Limitations of this Study**

This study may be useful to promoters or educational institutes that want to attract Chinese students to study in the United States. However, the study has some limitations. One is that the study only collected 298 surveys. Among them, only 24 students had previous international travel experience. This shortage of students with prior international travel experience limits the accuracy of the comparison with the 274 with no such experience. The second is that the design of the questionnaire should be improved to increase its reliability. One defect is that there was no time limit for finishing the survey, which meant that many students thought over their answers rather than submitting their first reactions. Another problem was the long list of questions. There
are 50 questions in total, and some students did not complete the whole survey. In particular, they did not bother to answer some of the open-ended questions. In the future, the questionnaire should be designed to be more succinct so as to get more effective responses. Third limitation is that the questionnaires were only distributed in Shanghai and Chongqing, so the results are not a fair representation of the opinions of students from the whole of China. Finally, the severely skewed male-to-female ratio could have a potential biasing effect on the scope of the research.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This study only investigated how some Chinese college students think of the United States. The scheme can be used to analyze other similar educational destinations, such as how college students think of Canada, England, and Australia. Future research can also examine students who are currently studying in the U.S. and compare their perceptions of the U.S. as an educational destination with those of people who have not yet been to the U.S. Finally, researchers can also study how American students or students from other countries think of China, such as the perception of risk in China and interest in educational travel in China.

**Implications for Educators**

Based on this study, the question of how some Chinese college students think of the U.S. as an educational destination can be applied to other countries. Questions like “how do other countries’ college students, such as Canadian and Australian students, think of the U.S.?,” are good examples. The importance of this study lies in understanding the students’ purposes in studying abroad and exploring why a specific
country is attractive to international students. The U.S. can learn from these findings to improve its marketing efforts and to better understand how to accommodate Chinese students’ needs.

Also, promoters can collect data from Chinese students regarding what they think of other countries as educational destinations. These findings will provide useful insights for future marketing efforts by education centers and institutes. Furthermore, non-students may also like to study abroad; people from other groups may also be interested in U.S. educational attractions such as museums and historical sites. Marketers can also analyze other groups’ opinions of educational and cultural travel. Marketers of colleges and universities in the United States can design a short-term program for Chinese college students. For example, they might design an educational trip to the U.S. whose purpose is to let students gain more knowledge about the United States generally. They can also design special programs focused on the various needs of people from other walks of life. Educational trips can include different topics, such as food culture, transportation culture, geographic topics, and arts appreciation.

**Reflections on this study**

The first question in the survey was “What are the first two things that come to mind when you think of the United States.” There are still some students who think of negative images of the United States, such as the corruption of capitalism and exploitation of the working class. One reason for these responses may be that history courses in mainland China typically spread negative images of capitalist countries, which deeply influence many people.
In terms of educational travel, as human beings, we learn from each other and from experiencing different cultures; this experience is universal. The things we see, hear, and feel can be anywhere and anything. The purpose of education is to provide a different perspective for students that cannot be learned from books. In the view of Williams (2010), “all tourism is educational.”

It is beyond doubt that positive images can help attract more travelers (Awritefe, 2004; Hosany, Ekinci, & Uysal, 2006). Because China is exporting more and more students, a positive image of the U.S. among Chinese students will boost the number of students studying and traveling in the U.S.

Another thought for future research would be to focus on different geographical areas of the U.S., such as east and west coasts. Research can be conducted in multiple groups of potential Chinese travelers.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

SURVEY
Appendix A

Survey

大学生对美国旅游目的地的认识

University Students’ Perception of the U.S. as a Travel Destination

介绍：这个问卷是调查人们对美国作为一个旅游目的地的认识。本着自愿参加的目的，所有的参与者都是匿名答卷。在答卷的时候，你可以随时停止答题，不必继续。如果你有任何的疑问和想法，请联系Molly的联系信箱gquan2@kent.edu，感谢你的参与。

Introduction: This questionnaire asks about the perceptions you have of the United States as a travel destination. Participation is voluntary and all participants will remain anonymous. If at any time you feel like not participating, you are free to stop and will have no obligation to continue. If you have any questions or comments please contact Gui Quan by email (gquan2@kent.edu). Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study.

第一部分：当你想起美国的时候，哪两个事物是你首先想到的？

Part I. What are the first two things that come to mind when you think of the United States?
A. ___________________________________  B. ___________________________________

第二部分：下面是对美国的几点描述，对每个描述，请在最能表达您的意见的选项上面画圈。

Part II. Below are several statements about the United States. Using the scale, please circle the number that best describes your feelings about each statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The United States is crowded.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language barriers could be a source of misunderstandings and problems.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The United States is a safe destination.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political stability in the United States is an important consideration.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural differences could be a source of misunderstandings and problems.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. 去美国旅游前我想对它有所了解
   I would prefer to travel in the United States if I knew something about it.
   1 2 3 4 5

7. 我担心美国的小偷
   I would worry about pick-pockets and petty thieves when in the United States.
   1 2 3 4 5

8. 恐怖组织的威胁将影响我去美国旅行的决定
   The threat of terrorism could influence my decision to travel to the United States.
   1 2 3 4 5

9. 美国有现代化的城市
   The United States has modern cities.
   1 2 3 4 5

10. 在美国的旅途会很简单
    Traveling around the United States would be easy.
    1 2 3 4 5

11. 美国人民很友好
    The people in the United States are friendly.
    1 2 3 4 5

12. 传染病疾病在美国很危险
    Infectious diseases are a danger in the United States.
    1 2 3 4 5

13. 我担心当地的食品和饮料的安全
    The local food and beverage would be a concern to me.
    1 2 3 4 5

14. 美国有很稳定的政府
    The United States has a stable government.
    1 2 3 4 5

15. 我担心美国的自然灾害
    The threat of a natural disaster would be a concern to me.
    1 2 3 4 5

16. 我担心当地的食品和饮料的安全
    The local food and beverage would be a concern to me.
    1 2 3 4 5

17. 美国有广大的农村
    The United States has vast rural areas.
    1 2 3 4 5

18. 美国有种类繁多和各具特色的民族
    The United States has diverse and unique ethnic groups.
    1 2 3 4 5

19. 在美国旅游的时候，我喜欢待在我熟悉的地方居住
    I prefer to stay in accommodations that are familiar to me when staying in the United States.
    1 2 3 4 5

20. 在美国，清洁的卫生环境很重要
    Proper sanitation and hygiene in the United States are important.
    1 2 3 4 5

21. 如果美国周边的国家有战争，我将不会去美国旅行
    I would not travel to the United States if one of its neighboring countries was at war.
    1 2 3 4 5

22. 在美国，外国人受到很糟糕的待遇
    1 2 3 4 5
Foreigners are treated badly in the United States.

23. 比起自己国家的文化，美国文化非常不同
The United States culture is very different than my own.

24. 美国是一个贫穷的国家
The United States is a poor country.

25. 我担忧在美国被绑架
Kidnapping is a concern in the United States.

26. 美国是不可预测的
The United States is unpredictable.

27. 美国有很多的迷人的自然风景名胜
The United States has many beautiful landscapes and natural attractions.

28. 在美国旅行，我不会引人注意
I would not want to stand-out when traveling in the United States.

29. 人权在美国是受尊重的
Human rights are respected in the United States.

30. 美国的网络审查是个问题
Internet censorship is a problem in the United States.

31. 综上所述，你认为在美国旅行的风险程度是怎么样的
How would you rate the overall degree of risk associated with traveling to United States?

___ 非常危险 Very Risky ___ 危险 Risky ___ 一般 Neither risky or safe ___ 安全 Safe ___ 非常安全 Very safe

第三部分：美国是一个有教育意义的目的地

Part III. The U.S. as an Educational Destination

1. 对于国际的旅游者来说，美国是一个很好的教育性目的地
The U.S. is a good educational destination for international visitors

2. 美国有很多有意思的教育性景点
There are many interesting educational attractions across the U.S.

3. 对于国际学生来说，在美国旅游是一个很好的了解美国文化的方式
Traveling in the U.S. is a good way for international students to learn about American culture

4. 国际学生应该通过在美国旅游而了解美国
International students should travel to learn about the U.S.

第四部分：对教育性旅游的兴趣

Part IV. Interest in educational travel

1. 我很有兴趣在旅行中学到知识
I am interested in learning from travel

2. 我对在美国旅行持乐观态度
I am optimistic about traveling in the United States
2. I would take a trip just because it has educational value

3. I would pay more for a trip if it had educational value

4. The educational value of a trip is important to me

5. If it has educational value, I would pay more for a trip

6. My parents would give me the permission to travel if the trip had educational value

7. Travel is a luxury in life

8. I would travel because it has status.

Part V. Travel in the U.S.

1. Which destination are you most interested in? (List three places)

   A__________ B__________ C__________

2. If you travel to the U.S., what is the reason for your travel. (Please cycle one)

   A. Family/friend  B. Relaxation
   C. Education/learning  D. Shopping
   E. Other, please specify ______________________

Part VI. Of the following, please check the one that best describes your travel characteristics. (please cycle one)

   A. I enjoy packaged tours with pre-planned itineraries. I enjoy traveling with a knowledgeable guide along with a group of friends, family or other Americans. Comfort while traveling is very important to me.

   B. I prefer to travel alone, but I can accept arranged tours for part of the trip. I enjoy traveling with friends and family to appreciate historic sites.

C. 我只会去有教育价值的地方
C. 如果目的地有教育价值，我会付更多的钱去那个地方旅行
D. 在旅行中的教育价值对于我来说十分重要
E. 对我来说，旅行中的教育成分能够增加旅游的价值
F. 如果旅行有教育价值，我的父母会允许我去旅行
G. 在生活中，旅行是奢侈品
H. 因为旅行是地位的象征，所以我愿意去旅游
I travel independently of a tour but I appreciate the services of a travel agent who can plan parts of my trip. I enjoy traveling with friends or family, and together we visit the famous sights.

C. 我喜欢自己安排行程，自己旅行或者和一些关系很密切的朋友旅行。和当地人交流是很重要的，我喜欢去一些未被很多人踏足的地方，但是，舒适和安全的交通工具也是很重要的。

I enjoy arranging the trip myself and traveling alone or with a few close friends. Meeting local people is important and I prefer to get off the beaten path, however, comfort and reliable transportation are important.

D. 我喜欢沉浸在到所在国文化中。我喜欢自由自在没有路线，时间，或者明确目标的旅行。我会避开游人多的路线。我会节约钱财不追求舒适，甚至一边打工一边旅行。

I enjoy engaging completely in a host country's culture. I enjoy the freedom of having no travel itinerary, timetable, or well-defined travel goals. I shun the beaten path. I will forgo comfort for economy and even work along the way to fund my travels.

第七部分: 一些关于自身的问题 (请在其中一个选项上画圈)

Part VII. A few questions about yourself: (please cycle one)

1. 我是 ___男 Male  ___女 Female

2. 我是 ___读语言 ESL (English as Second Language)  
   ___本科生 Undergraduate student  
   ___研究生 Graduate student  
   ___博士生 Ph.D. student

3. 我有国际旅行的经验 I have international travel experience.
   ___是 Yes 如果有，是哪些国家？ if so what countries? ____________________
   ___否 No

4. 你曾经去美国旅行过吗？ Have you traveled in the United States before?
   ___是 Yes 如果有，去过几次？ if so how many times? ____________________
   ___否 No

5. 你有朋友或者家人曾经去美国旅行过的吗？
   Have you had a friend or family member who has traveled to the U.S.? ___是 Yes ___不是 No

6. 你曾经和学校的美国学生交谈过吗？
   Have you ever spoken to an American student on campus? ___是 Yes ___不是 No

第八部分: 如果排除时间和金钱的因素，你愿意来美国读书吗？ (请在其中一个选项上画圈)

Part VIII. Assuming time and money are not concerns, would you like to study in the U.S.

A. 愿意 YES  B. 不愿意 NO
Appendix B
Consent Form

This questionnaire asks about the perceptions you have of the United States as a travel destination. Participation is voluntary and all participants will remain anonymous. If at any time you feel like not participating, you are free to stop and will have no obligation to continue. If you have any questions or comments please contact Gui Quan by email (gquan2@kent.edu). Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study.
APPENDIX C
RECRUITMENT SCRIPT
Appendix C
Recruitment Script

My name is Gui Quan. I am a second year graduate student in Hospitality and Tourism Management. I am currently doing research on destination images, risk perception, and the United States as an educational destination for Chinese college students. You are being invited to participate in a research study. This questionnaire asks about the perceptions you have of the United States as a travel destination. This research will not benefit you directly. However, your participation in this study will help us to better understand what Chinese college students think of the U.S. There are no anticipated risks beyond those encountered in everyday life. It will take you five to seven minutes to finish this survey. Participation is voluntary and all participants will remain anonymous. If at any time you feel like not participating, you are free to stop and will have no obligation to continue. No identifying information will be collected. Your signed consent form will be kept separate from your study data, and responses will not be linked to you. If you have any questions or comments please contact Gui Quan by email (gquan2@kent.edu). This project has been approved by the Kent State University Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or complaints about the research, you may call the IRB at 330.672.2704. Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study.
REFERENCES
REFERENCES


Choice of Education is a site that presents the full text of many essential works in the literature of study abroad ([http://www.choiceofeducation.com/](http://www.choiceofeducation.com/)).


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