CAREER DECISION MAKING
AMONG YOUNG GENERATIONS IN CHINA

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The primary objectives of this study are to examine the factors affecting career decision making among young generations in China, and to investigate the impacts of contextual and background information on career decision making and other career-related variables. Independent $t$-test and regression analysis were designated for college students within three universities and three vocational schools. Results of the present study show that young generations are affected by preference between international and domestic hotels, perceived external prestige, and career indecision when making career decisions. Furthermore, university students prefer international hotels, while vocational students prefer domestic hotels. This study also indicates that career indecision mediate the relationship between brand preference and perceived external prestige through the career decision-making process. The results from this study could be helpful to students, educators, and human resource managers.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Due to the crisis with the US subprime mortgages that quickly escalated to a global economic downturn, in 2008, the global economy started to fluctuate dramatically. As a result, the economic output of many countries has slowed down dramatically, with many economies still experiencing negative growth (The World Bank, 2015). However, since 2008, the Chinese Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has increased annually by 8.81% on average (The World Bank, 2015), which indicates a slow but steady growth in the overall economic development. Benefitting from this positive trend, the China’s tourism and hospitality industries have also experienced rapid growth. In 2014, revenues from tourism reached about 459.3 billion USD (Statista, 2015), placing China in the 10th place globally based on the contribution of travel and tourism revenue to the GDP (The World Travel & Tourism Council, 2015). This favorable climate has prompted many international hotel groups to shift focus of their development to the mainland China. For example, in 2013, management of Starwood Hotels & Resorts has announced that the chain would open 20 hotels in China to expand their market presence. To date, 285 Starwood hotels have been opened in China (Starwood Hotels & Resorts, n.d.). In addition, Four Seasons is planning to open as many hotels in China as they have in the United States (Jing Daily, 2013). Since 2002, Four Seasons have opened nine hotels in China. While these developments are noteworthy, they should be interpreted in the right context. For example, one of the well-known domestic brand hotels, Jin Jiang, operates over 6,000 hotels across the country (Jin Jiang International Hotels Company, n.d.). As China’s hospitality and tourism industrie
have clearly experienced a significant boom in the last decade, there is a need to attract more industry professionals and students in related majors to this sector, and the service quality must match that offered in other countries (Chen, 2013).

As world-renowned brands are rapidly increasing their presence in the country, tourism and hospitality, which was not a traditionally popular educational and career path for Chinese, has become a viable choice for young generations. According to the 2014 Annual Report of National Tourism Education and Training in China (2015), 566 universities and 2,001 vocational schools were offering hospitality related majors in 2014, to which 206,482 university students and 318,700 vocational students were enrolled. A review of the available statistics for the 2011-2014 period indicates that the number of students studied in hospitality and tourism programs has increased from 376,200 to 525,182, equivalent to annual growth of 13.2% (Annual Report of National Tourism Education and Training, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015). Yet, despite these encouraging facts, Chinese hospitality and tourism industries still have difficulty in recruiting employees of the right caliber and are experiencing high turnover rate (Wolfington & Wolfington, 2012). Empirical evidence suggests that college graduates majoring in H&T prefer not to enter in this field (Chen & Shen 2012; Richardson, 2010) due to low salary, busy work schedules, and poor working conditions (e.g., Wong & Liu, 2010; Zellweger, Sieger, & Halter, 2011).

While it seems surprising that students would be willing to invest in college education in a field they would not like to pursue as a career, this is likely influenced by incongruence between their expectations and the realities of the profession. As a result, labor shortage at all levels is the main issue the China’s hospitality and tourism (H&T) industries are presently facing (Wolfington & Wolfington, 2012).
Yet, some authors attribute this issue to more than just poor working conditions in this sector. Richardson and Thomas (2012) stated that members of Generation Y have “dramatically different perceptions of the work environment and industry compared with their predecessors” (p. 1). In addition, Generation Y has “high expectations of job content, training, career development, and financial rewards” (De Hauw & De Vos, 2010, p. 293). When choosing their career path, members of this generation are driven by the need for pursuing self-value and personal interests, as well as achieving the work identity that would provide them with a sense of accomplishment (Richard & Thomas, 2012). However, such pursuits are also governed by the desire to “ensure a meaning and satisfying life outside of work” (Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010, p. 281). Given that most new entrants to the hospitality and tourism organizations are members of Generation Y, their perceptions and aspirations must be fully understood and incorporated into human resource (HR) strategies in order to attract and retain the right caliber of workers (Richardson & Thomas, 2012). If the organizations fail to adapt their recruitment policies and remuneration packages, recent graduates will likely either seek a different profession or leave their positions soon upon arrival (Brown, Arendt, & Bosselman, 2014), thus increasing the turnover rate (Pettijohn, Pettijohn, & Taylor, 2008). High employee attrition is not only very costly for the organizations in terms of financial investment into training and recruitment of new staff members, but also undermines organizational performance due to the loss of continuity and compromised customer relations (Davidson, Guilding, & Timo, 2006). Wolfington and Wolfington (2012) observed that, “Such turnover rates, combined with rapid industry expansion, create a widening gap between supply and demand for employees” (p. 1). While these problems are not unique to China, they are particularly pronounced in the Chinese
hospitality and tourism industries, as they are developing rapidly and must align with the standards imposed by reputable international chains. Thus, a better understanding of Generation Y and factors affected their career choices is necessary.

The H&T industry is labor-intensive and highly dependent on customer satisfaction. Empirical evidence shows that a great customer service is the key factor in attracting new and retaining existing customers, thus ensuring market presence and profitability. Given that those in customer-facing roles are usually associated with the brand image, it is essential that they hold the values and beliefs that are aligned with the image hotels aim to project. Young generations are the potential employees in this expanding industry and their attitudes and behaviors must be understood in order to ensure that they would make a good impression on customers. If hotels are able to attract graduates willing to embrace the company culture and convey the right image to the customers, they will be more likely to improve customer satisfaction in the long term.

Career decisions are usually made early in life, when choosing schools and university majors. This pertains to “the decisions about one’s future occupation or career” (Jung, 2012, p. 189). As such decisions are usually made based on one’s impression of a certain profession, and are often influenced by advice from parents and career advisors, upon leaving university, many students find that their expectations are not aligned with the reality. The career decision is one of the major life choices (e.g., Arendt & Bosselman, 2014; Mohd, Salleh, & Mustapha, 2010), as it determines individual’s future occupational development direction and social positioning (Blustein, 2008; Fouad & Bynner, 2008).

Making a wrong career decision can have many adverse effects, as such individuals would have no passion for work, which will result in low efficiency, frequent absenteeism,
and unsatisfactory relationships with coworkers. This, in turn, will have a bad effect on one’s future career, and even impede career success (Johnson & Mortimer, 2002; Gati & Levin, 2012). However, choosing a career at a relatively young age is challenging, as it requires an individual to be aware of not only his/her aptitudes and preferences, but also be objective about the life expectations in terms of salary, status, and other aspects associated with one’s profession (Duncan, Scott, & Baum, 2013; Zellweger et al., 2011). Most people at times face incongruence between personal interests and practical needs, reality and long-term development, and life goals and economic benefits (Burns, Morris, Rousseau, & Taylor, 2013; Song & Chon, 2012; Xu, Hou, & Tracey, 2014). Thus, these have to be carefully assessed when making career decisions. Such contradictions and confusion may result in inappropriate career choices, especially for young generations who are transitioning from school to work, and from relying on their family to self-independence. Given the importance of career decision, it is often seen as the first step into the society and a gateway to independent life.

When choosing their majors, very few students are fully aware of the realities of occupations this educational choice will lead them to (MNW.cn, 2011). They usually have some vague notions about the work they will do upon graduation and often seek advice of other people such as parents, friends, and professors (Chen & Fan, 2010; Mohd et al., 2010). Due to not having a clear career goal, they are easily influenced by the social media, television shows, and movies, where certain careers are portrayed as glamorous or highly desirable (Mudhovozi & Chireshe, 2012). For example, young generations want to be doctors or lawyers as they see these professions promoted in TV series (Dai & Zou, 2012). In addition, in many cases the education they receive is mostly theoretical, with little
practical exposure to the jobs they will perform upon graduation. The resulting discrepancies between exception and experience lead to disillusionment and decisions to change profession (Brown et al., 2014). Given that students have unrealistic perceptions of working life, the gap between their perceptions and actual experience in a profession must be addressed if they are to lead fulfilling and productive lives. This issue is further exacerbated in the hospitality and tourism industries, as these are traditionally perceived as service sector and are not associated with high status and affluent lifestyle many young generations strive for (Brown et al., 2014). Those entering industry face lack of opportunities, low salary, and poor work conditions, which are usually cited as the main reasons for leaving the profession (e.g., Duncan et al., 2013; Wong & Liu, 2010).

These issues notwithstanding, China faces further challenges, due to the recent changes in graduate assignment policy, whereby recent graduates are offered work in a specific area, department, or position based on the needs of the government and individual aptitudes. This employment policy is referred to as a two-way match between graduates and organizations (Bao, 2014), as a part of which graduates are interviewed by the companies offering positions they believe would best suit their preferences. This policy places a significant pressure of Chinese graduates to carefully consider their career choice, as they will have limited job opportunities upon graduation, which will primarily be governed by their educational attainment. As those students are not fully mature and prepared for making such a life-altering decision, they often struggle with the process of making career decisions (Wang, Zhang, & Shao, 2010). While in the course of their education students gain theoretical knowledge in a wide variety of subject areas, curricula rarely include information on various careers, industries, or labor market in general. While these young
individuals face a variety of complex career choices, they lack career information and have limited understanding of their abilities to make optimal decisions (China Daily, 2015). As a result, they experience anxiety, helplessness, fear, and pressure due to having no confidence in their ability to make correct career choices (Liu, 2013). This phenomenon is called career indecision and is defined as “the problems individuals may have in making career decision as well the precursors that may influence or impede career choice” (Estes, 2007, p. 131). Career indecision is a common problem among students worldwide, but is particularly acute in China, where the need to meet the expectations of one’s parents often supersedes one’s preferences and desires (Feldman, 2003). Understanding the factors that lead to career indecision is beneficial for universities, as it can help develop strategies aimed at assisting students in exploring various career options and their suitability for potential jobs. This will increase their confidence in making career decisions, and reduce the likelihood that they will face career indecision or even make wrong career choice (Beheshtifar, Esmaeli, & Hashemi-Nasab, 2012). Empirical evidence shows that, when students are given ample time to choose among alternatives, they are more likely to take all relevant factors into account, thus decreasing the probability that they would make inappropriate choice (Rassin & Muris, 2005).

In addition, Chinese traditional culture is dominated by family-centered Confucian culture (Kwong, 1996), with an emphasis on the relationship based on ethical values (Huang & Gove, 2012), which functions as a powerful conservative force. Chinese parents have a great impact in the lives of their children, and are dedicated to helping them deal with everyday challenges, as well as career decisions, based on their own values and experience. However, this desire to ensure that their children have better opportunities in life also makes
many parents put too much pressure and expectation on the new generations. This often results in parents ignoring their children’s desires, interests, and preferences when making important decisions. As any parents, Chinese parents want their children to gain quality education, so that they can have a successful career and a stable source of income. Chinese children are often expected to cover not only the cost of their living, but also support the elders and plan for the educational expenses of the next generation. Thus, it is not surprising that Chinese parents have negative attitudes toward their children working the hospitality industry because they perceive it as service sector with few opportunities for growth and prosperity (Wong & Liu, 2010). These findings further confirm that Chinese traditional culture and parental influence affect Chinese students’ value orientation and behaviors (Li, Li, & Kambele, 2012) as well as career decisions (Leong & Chou, 1994). Many Chinese students studying hospitality-related majors have to pursue other career paths upon graduation, due to the lack of parental support for this profession. Consequently, some of them feel dissatisfied, resistant, and skeptical, suggesting that parental barrier effect can lead to career indecision among young generations in China. Hence, when investigating career decision making among Chinese students, it is essential to consider not only common factors, but also reflect its distinct cultural background.

In Chinese traditional culture, perceived external prestige is the first priority (Mak, Ho, Wong, Law, & Chan, 2015). This is exemplified by the old saying, “Death by starvation is preferable to losing chastity” (Cheng & Cheng, 2000, p. 10), implying that, for Chinese, prestige is placed above everything else and should be defended at all costs.

However, recent economic development has resulted in changes in attitudes of many Chinese people, who show great enthusiasm for luxury brands (Jiang & Cova, 2012).
Available statistics indicate that China has become the world’s largest luxury consumer market (China Daily, 2014). Consumers purchase luxury brand products to show their wealth and attract attention of others. They convey success and social status to others through purchasing, owning, and using these emblems of achievement. In China, social status is increasingly being equated with luxury brand ownership (Nelissen & Meijers, 2011). Customers feel the urge to improve their own image and status by purchasing and consuming luxury brand products (Nelissen & Meijers, 2011).

In this new era of rapid economic development and expansion of middle class in China, career has become a reflection of prestige, because a person’s career determines his/her social status (Watt et al., 2008). As Chinese people place great value on social status, finding a good job is a way of making one’s parents proud, allowing them to boast about their child’s success in front of friends and relatives. This phenomenon, while not unique to Chinese society, seems to be particularly pronounced in Chinese culture. Zuo and Wen (2009) found that most Chinese college students prefer high prestige careers (e.g., in business, medicine, law, or engineering), as low prestige careers (e.g., construction work or farming) do not convey a desired social status. These more prestigious occupations require much higher educational attainment, and thus result in higher social reputation, as they command higher salaries and provide certain level of job security. Hence, it is not surprising that Chinese parents have great expectations for their children to work in these occupations, while young generations favor these careers due to the perceived external prestige. Chinese young generations gradually form prestige values under the impact of social-economic environment, vanity culture, and status. Hence, perceived external prestige
is an important factor to examine when studying career decision making of the Chinese Generation Y.

Perceived external prestige affects consumption patterns (Kim, Ko, Xu, & Han, 2012). As the frequency of brand name purchases increases, customers gradually start to identify with the values that a brand image conveys. The brand is an intangible and abstract notion associated with products (Wasserman, 2015). Owing to their high involvement with a particular brand, customers can form links between self-image and brand (Chaplin & John, 2005) and express themselves through attachment between self and brand (Yu, Lin, & Chen, 2013). This attachment is known as self-image congruity, defined as “the process of matching between consumers’ self-concept and the user image of a given product, store, sponsorship event” (Sirgy, Lee, Johar, & Tidwell, 2008, p. 1091).

The concept of self-image congruity emphasizes the importance of congruity between self-image and brand image. The higher the level of congruence between a person’s image and brand image, the more positive attitudes a person will have. Kehoe and Wright have shown that individuals with strong attachment to specific brands would gradually translate their positive attitudes into opinions and behaviors. As a result, their purchasing behaviors will change, whereby they will start purchasing branded products as a means of reaffirming the desired self-images. Thus, self-image congruity is a significant factor affecting consumers’ evaluation of brands (Swaminathan, Page, & Gürhan-Canli, 2007), which positively influences brand preference and loyalty (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006), and customers’ purchase intentions and attitudes toward products (Moore & Homer, 2008).

The unprecedented economic growth that China has recently experienced has resulted in seemingly unlimited supply of business opportunities. In order to benefit from the
increased economic wealth of Chinese citizens, international chain hotel groups are expanding their operations across the mainland China (Chen, 2005). China’s domestic hotels are facing much fiercer competition and are experiencing very heavy pressure from the foreign entrants to the local market (Kong & Cheung, 2009). International hotel chains have recognizable international brand reputation, perfect service system, and advanced hotel management and technology (Okoroafo, Koh, Liu, & Jin, 2010), all of which are attractive to customers, making them more likely to stay at the international brand rather than a local hotel (Zhang, Pine, & Lam, 2005). Based on successful brand management, international chain hotel brands are recognized and accepted, and can thus ensure customer loyalty by meeting their guests’ preferences in order to gain profits.

On the other hand, Chinese hotels rely on cultural and local decorations, low prices, and great locations as their main marketing strategy (Shi, 2013; Zhang, 2011). For example, Homeinns Hotel Group, as one of successful economy hotel chains in China, offers a comfortable stay for reasonable prices at convenient locations (Homeinns Hotel Group Investor Presentation, 2015). However, domestic hotels generally lack effective brand management and strategies (Travel Daily, 2014), and thus have low international recognition (Laforet & Chen, 2012), due to their fuzzy image (Wang, Siu, & Hui, 2004). Consequently, their brand cannot be differentiated from the competition in order to generate brand loyalty that is crucial in the service sector.

In the context of the career decisions made by Generation Y, which is the focus of the present investigation, brand preference pertains to graduates’ willingness to select domestic or international hotels as workplace. It is hypothesized that the higher level of hotel brand preference a person has, the greater the likelihood that he or she would apply for a position in
that hotel. Most of the available studies explore brand preference based on organizational performance and marketing strategy (e.g., Howard & Kerin, 2013; Hu, Liu, Wang, & Yang, 2012), or through customer behaviors (e.g., Batra, Ramaswamy, Alden, Steenkamp, & Ramachander, 2014). However, the number of extant studies focusing on the impact of brand preference on career decision making is currently limited (Yang, 2014; Zhang, 2014). Thus, the aim of the present study is filling this gap by examining the relationship between brand preference and career decision making in Chinese hospitality and tourism industries. Establishing the type of hotel brand (domestic or international) that is a preferred career choice in China is a further study goal, as this would allow management of domestic and international brand hotels to develop strategies aimed at attracting graduates into their organizations.

The analyses performed as a part of this study will focus on the influence of brand preference, perceived external prestige, and career indecision on career decision making. In addition, the influence of Chinese culture and social pressure on career choices of recent graduates will also be explored. In the context of this research, brand image is defined as a perception that hotels aim to induce in their customers in order to differentiate their services from those offered by their competitors (Rhee & Johnson, 2012). For a recent graduate looking for a first job, the brand image must also reflect his/her ideal image of being different, unique, prosperous, and accomplished. The higher the congruence between a person’s self-image and brand image the greater the likelihood of forming a preference for a particular hotel brand (e.g., domestic or international brand). These preferences are governed by students’ beliefs, norms, values, and expectations. Furthermore, perceived external prestige refers to the general impression one projects to the outside world (Mishra,
Bhatnagar, D’cruz, & Noronha, 2012). Empirical evidence indicates that higher prestige results in higher brand identification (Hanzaee & Hamedani, 2013), leading to the formation of positive images of this brand, which in turn generates brand preference. Chinese young generations are affected by culture and need for prestige in their daily life. With higher level of perceived external prestige and brand preference, young generations will easily make career decisions. However, those facing career indecision are likely to be further confused about career choice due to the impact of brand preference and perceived external prestige. Thus, career indecision is examined in this study, as it can have a significant effect on Chinese students’ attitudes toward specific brands and potential career options these offer. Consequently, the aim of this research is to investigate the aforementioned factors and examine their impact on career decision making among young generations (Generation Y) in China.

Gaining in-depth understanding of the career decision-making process young generations undergo when choosing their educational path and future jobs will assist researchers and practitioners in making practical suggestions to students, educators, and the industry (specifically the HR department). The findings yielded by this study will also be of use to educators, as they will be better prepared to assist students with their career plans and help them to establish more accurate perceptions of the reality of hospitality and tourism industries. Young generations facing the daunting process of choosing future profession will also greatly benefit from the results obtained in this study, as they will better understand the factors affecting their career decision making, and will be more likely to avoid career indecision. For hiring managers in H&T industries, the findings reported in this work may be of value when designing and implementing corporate strategies aiming to attract
Generation Y. The study results will also allow them to fully realize the competitive advantages of their hotels and minimize their downsides compared with other brands, which may help improve retention rates in China’s hospitality and tourism industries.

**Research Purpose and Questions**

Despite immense growth in the hospitality and tourism industries in China, rapid expansion of this sector combined with reluctance of young generation to enter this industry has resulted in severe labor shortages. Chinese students pursuing degrees in H&T management have no desire to work in this field due to the unsatisfactory working conditions and perceived lack of prestige associated with the service professions. Thus, there is an evident gap between supply and demand in China’s hospitality and tourism sector. In order to address this growing issue, graduates should be encouraged to enter the industry and remain employed in this sector, as high turnover rate has detrimental effect for both profitability and the brand image (Chuang, Goh, Stout, & Dellmann-Jenkins, 2007). As Chinese young generations making career decisions are affected by a variety of factors, such as culture, parental influence, education, and work experience, these must be explored in order to increase their aptitude for making decisions. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the effect of contextual or environmental factors on young generations’ ability to make career decisions.

Owing to the rapid economic boom China has experienced in the last decade, many domestic and international brand hotels are expanding their operations, further exacerbating the issue of manpower shortage in this sector. Thus, in order to ensure their profitability, both domestic and international brand hotels must implement strategies that would attract graduates to enter this industry, as this would ensure their competitive advantage.
Empirical evidence shows that graduates with strong preference for a particular brand tend to have positive image of this brand and are thus more likely to work for such an organization, which in turn influences their career choices. However, most studies in this field focused on the effect of brand preference in China. Thus, there is evident limited research exploring the relationship between brand preference and career decision making. Therefore, the objectives of this research are to investigate (1) the factors affecting career decision making among young generations in China. In particular, self-image congruity, brand preference, perceived external prestige, and career indecision will be examined; and (2) the impacts of contextual and background information on career decision making and other career-related variables. Based on the rationale motivating this study, the following research questions are proposed:

**Research Question 1 (RQ1):** Which hotel brand type, domestic or international, is preferred among young generations in China when making a career choice?

**Research Question 2 (RQ2):** What are the impacts of the external (i.e., brand preference and perceived external prestige) and internal (i.e., career indecision) factors on career decision making?

**Research Question 3 (RQ3):** How does career indecision mediate the relationship between brand preference and perceived external prestige and their effect on the process of making career decisions?

In order to answer the aforementioned questions, the following hypotheses will be tested as a part of the study:

*Hypothesis 1:* The congruity between young generation’s self-image and a brand hotel image relates to brand preference.
Hypothesis 2: Perceived external prestige is correlated with brand preference.

Hypothesis 3: Brand preference is related to career indecision.

Hypothesis 4: Perceived external prestige is related to career indecision.

Hypothesis 5: Brand preference is related to career decision making.

Hypothesis 6: Perceived external prestige is related to career decision making.

Hypothesis 7: Career indecision mediates the relationship between brand preference and perceived external prestige through the career decision-making process.

Hypothesis 8: Domestic hotel brands have lower perceived external prestige relative to their international counterparts, resulting in low brand preference.

Hypothesis 9: Making career decisions is more difficult for men than it is for women.

Hypothesis 10: Young generations with vocational degrees are more likely to work in the H&T industry than are university students.

Hypothesis 11: Young generations whose majors are related to hospitality and tourism industry are more likely to work in the H&T industry than are their peers with non-hospitality majors.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is dedicated to the review of pertinent literature. It commences by briefly describing the development of the hotel industry in China. This is followed by a review of extant studies examining the topics of interest for the present study, namely self-image congruity, brand preference, perceived external prestige, career indecision, and career decision making. Before closing the chapter, the conceptual framework and research objectives are proposed and other relevant background information and its relationships with key constructs is presented.

The Development of the Hotel Industry in China

The development of China’s hotel industry during the past 60 years has fluctuated considerably; however, it has recently started to blossom due to the favorable economic conditions in the country and increased foreign investment. China’s hospitality industry is developing vigorously, and is now recognized as one of the most dynamic industries in the country (Travel Daily, 2012). Owing the increased presence of international hotels, Chinese hospitality industry is progressing toward a more economically diversified future.

In ancient China, Ke Zhan (the term used to refer to a hotel in ancient times) provided basic accommodation on the road, as a means of meeting the needs of excursions and travelers. However, when China was established in 1949, the government changed these Ke Zhan into “Reception Sites,” such as Grand Hotel des WagonLits and Peace hotel, designated for serving foreign officers and dignitaries (Baidu Encyclopedia, n.d.). In the years following their establishment, Chinese government used “Reception Sites” to serve city leaders (Mak, 2008), eminent individuals on official visits, and retired government official.
With the establishment of the international relationship with other countries, these Reception Sites changed their function to protect governmental official. Due to security issues, Reception Sites were protected by police officers and military personnel (Mak, 2008). This situation was still prevalent in the 1960s, as the government did not think it as a priority of the hospitality industry.

However, as the conditions in the country gradually changed, this culminated in the open-up policy enacted in 1978. Pine and Philips (2005) stated that the China’s hospitality industry was nonexistent until the open-up policy was implemented. This policy was government’s initiative aimed at actively expanding foreign economic development and investment due to which market economy was introduced (Baidu Encyclopedia, n.d.). Due to these changes, the China’s hospitality industry started to develop and, for the first time, modern hotels were opened in the country. In 1982, the first joint venture hotels were opened, defined as “more than two companies invest and manage hotels together” (MBAlib, n.d., para.3). In China, joint venture hotels that were opened since then are commonly co-managed by both foreign and Chinese enterprises. For example, Jianguo Hotel Beijing, opened in 1982, is the first joint venture hotel managed by both local and foreign investors in China (Jianguo Hotel Beijing, n.d.). This was followed by many more international hotel groups diversifying their portfolios to include hotels in China, such as Shangri-La hotel, which opened in 1984 (Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts, n.d.), Sheraton hotel in 1985 (Starwood Hotels & Resorts, n.d.), and Hilton hotel in 1988 (China Business Review, 2012). These investments marked the start of a rapid growth in China’s hospitality industry (Mak, 2008). As a result, the significance of hospitality industry was finally recognized by the Chinese government, due to its potential for bringing in revenue, and allowing visitors from
all over the world to visit the country, thus revitalizing the economy (e.g., Tsang & Hsu, 2011; Zou, Huang, & Ding, 2014). In recognition of its importance, the government included the hospitality industry into the Seventh Five-Year Plan for the 1986 to 1990 period (Tsang & Hsu, 2011). The Five-Year Plan is a long-term plan of national economic and social development for Chinese government, allowing goals and direction for the future development in China to be set (CPC News, n.d.).

During the reform era, the government also created policies in order to attract foreign investment. For example, the “Star-rating Standard for Tourism Hotels,” which came into effect in 1998, has provided quality and operational standards that must be met by all hotels and tourism sites, in order to efficiently meet different customer needs and expectations (Yong, 2011). Moreover, China joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, as well as hosted Beijing Olympic Games in 2008 and Shanghai Expo in 2010, which placed the country into the focus of the entire world. These changes, combined with China’s long and rich cultural history, attracted numerous visitors, wishing to experience the charm of traditional Chinese culture.

In response to China’s embracement of market economics in the last two decades, both local and international tourists are starting to see China as a desirable travel destination with much to offer. In response to this increased interest in the country, many new domestic hotels have been opened, such as Jin Jiang Hotels, HNA Hotel Group, and Home Inn. Jin Jiang International Hotels are the most representative domestic hotel brand (Gross & Huang, 2013; Qin, Adler, & Cai, 2012), as well as the largest hotel group in China (Wikipedia, n.d.). Furthermore, a variety of international hotels have expanded their operations to include mainland China, such as Starwood Hotels and Resorts, Marriott
International, and Intercontinental Hotel Group. While this development has certainly been beneficial for the country’s economy and international relations, the growing presence of international chains in China has resulted in a fierce competition between domestic and international brands. Hospitality industry is labor intensive and was not traditionally perceived in China as a viable career option. However, due to its rapid expansion, many Chinese citizens are now competing for the jobs in domestic and international brand hotels. As international brand hotels have long tradition and ample resources for marketing and promotion, domestic hotels must work to attract young generations in order to remain sustainable.

Self-image Congruity and Brand Preference

Self-image Congruity

The self-concept is defined as “the totality of the individual’s thoughts and feelings with reference to the self as an object” (Rosenberg, 1988, p. 548). According to Hong and Zinkan (1995), it can be defined as “the knowledge of oneself which includes the driving trust of other behaviors, or the images which individuals shape their subjective thought related to them” (p. 54-55). Self-concept is a potent mediator of views and perceptions people form of others (Cross & Madson, 1997). It also influences consumers’ affective connection with product (Sirgy, 1982). Therefore, understanding self-concept is beneficial, as it illuminates how consumers’ attitudes and behaviors are influenced by their self-image.

In the early studies in this field, self-concept was treated as a one factor comprising solely of the actual self-concept. However, Malhotra (1988) challenged this view, proposing that it should include both the actual and an ideal self-concept. A few years prior, Sirgy (1982) offered a multidimensional definition, consisting of four components:
actual self-concept (who individuals think they really are), ideal self-concept (a person an individual wishes to become), social self-concept (how an individual is viewed by others), and ideal social self-concept (the way an individual wishes to be perceived socially).

Following this delineation of self-concept, the notions of actual and ideal self-concept have been examined and are now considered significant in determining consumer behaviors (Sirgy, 1982). This has prompted research interest in self-concept and its role in buyer behavior. According to extant studies, buyers express their self-concept by the consumption of a product whose image matches with customer’s self-image. In other words, buyers are likely to purchase products they perceive as congruent with their actual or ideal self-image. Consequently, the closer the alignment between a product’s image and customers’ self-concept, the greater the intention to purchase this particular product.

Once Sirgy (1982) defined the self-concept components, the author proposed the theory of self-image congruity. Self-image congruity was initially defined as “the extent that an individual’s self-image is congruent with typical brand-user imagery” (p. 288). According to Kim (2015), the concept of self-image congruity exceeds the “comparison between self-image and a brand’s user-imagery” (p. 350). Rather, its definition refers to “the congruence between self-image and a variety of images related to a brand” (p. 350). Based on the definition provided in the current literature, the extent to which the product image is compatible with consumers’ self-image has a significant effect on consumer behavior (e.g., Ha & Im, 2012; Han & Huyn, 2013; Taylor, Strutton, & Thompson, 2012). In other words, the greater the congruence between product image and customers’ self-image, the more positive attitudes toward the product customers will have (Helgeson & Supphellen, 2004; Liu, Li, Mizerski, & Soh, 2012; Tuškej, Golob, & Podnar, 2013). Self-
image congruity has been used to predict customer behaviors in many studies exploring, for instance, consumer purchase intentions (e.g., Cho & Youn-Kyung, 2012; Yu et al., 2013), consumer attitudes (e.g., Claiborne & Sirgy, 2015; Sirgy, Johar, & Claiborne, 2015), and consumer brand loyalty and satisfaction (e.g., Das, 2014; Jamal & Goode, 2001; Mazodier & Merunka, 2012).

In a recent study, Badrinarayanan, Becerra, and Madhavaram (2014) examined the influence of self-image congruity on customers’ purchase intentions in relation to products offered by multichannel retailers with online stores. In line with the postulates of theory of self-image congruity, their findings revealed that customers had higher intentions to purchase when their self-image was compatible with the store online and offline images. This assertion also confirmed observations made by Kang, Hong, and Lee (2009). Besides self-image congruity, the authors investigated the effect of “buyer’s remorse” on online users’ behavior. Their results revealed that the effect of regret on purchase intention was continuous. Thus, the authors proposed that online stores focus on maintaining long-term relationship with users that experience buyer’s remorse, as this would result in higher customer retention and enhanced purchase intentions in the future.

Koo, Cho, and Kim’s (2014) study also supported the assertions made by Badrinarayanan et al. (2014). In their study, the authors examined the influence of customers’ actual and ideal self on a store value. They highlighted that customer’s actual self-image leads to positive evaluations, while the ideal self-image has the opposite effect. More specifically, the ideal self leads to negative evaluations of the store’s brand and products. The authors explained this finding, noting that customers whose actual selves are expressed by an online store rate it favorably, while they may experience doubt regarding the
congruence between their ideal self and the image the store promotes when they receive extensive attention from the store.

Hee, Kwak, and Kang (2009) observed that self-image congruity also has a significant effect in sports. Their empirical findings indicated that spectators’ self-image congruity with professional basketball games enhanced their intentions to buy products endorsed by the teams. Particularly, when perceived quality was examined, self-image congruity was found to influence consumer’s purchasing decisions, values, and intentions to buy the team-licensed merchandise. Based on these findings, the authors concluded that perceived quality, rather than self-image congruity, played the key role in purchase intentions.

Career decisions reflect individual’s self-image or an image that the individual wishes to project. An individual that perceives higher congruity between the career image and his/her self-image tends to develop positive attitude towards a particular occupation (Ericksen & Sirgy, 1992). The more positive the image of an occupation an individual forms, the more likely it is that he/she would select that particular career (Ericksen & Sirgy, 1992). Moreover, a person aspiring toward a higher social status would typically select a career that reflects the image the person wishes to convey. In brief, self-image congruity is also relevant in the context of career attitudes and behaviors.

Based on the extant works discussed above, customers that perceive high level of congruence between their self-image and product’s brand image would generate positive attitudes toward this brand. The more positive attitudes these individuals have, the more positive perceptions they will develop, which will in turn affect their brand image evaluation. Many researchers have also examined self-image congruity effect on the attitudes of young generations (e.g., Cheng, White, & Chaplin, 2012; Giovannini, Xu, & Thomas, 2015). For
example, Kang et al. (2009) investigated the impact of self-image congruity on undergraduate students’ behaviors. Their findings revealed that customers continually assess alignment between their image and a product’s image, and once this is achieved, they will develop commitment and preference, resulting in consumption. Similarly, Liu, Lu, Liang, and Wei (2010) studied the effect of self-image congruity on Chinese young generations. They specifically noted that Chinese traditional culture influenced purchase intentions. The studies discussed in this section confirm that young generation is driven by the desire for positive self-image, while Chinese young generations are also influenced by their cultural norms and values.

**Brand Preference**

American Marketing Association (1994) defined brand as “a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them intended to encourage prospective customers to differentiate a producer’s product from those of competitors” (p. 9). Thus, a brand represents a symbolic perception, including values and norms an enterprise aims to convey through its image (Rhee & Johnson, 2012). Owing to its high importance, brand should be treated as an asset and a tool to maintain competitive advantage (Denoue & Saykiewicz, 2009). For this reason, many researchers have examined factors associated with brands, including brand attitudes (e.g., Alwi & Kitchen, 2014; Parise & Spence, 2012), brand image (e.g., Michel & Rieunier, 2012; Tu, Wang, & Chang, 2012), brand loyalty (e.g., Laroche, Habibi, & Richard, 2013; Selnes, 2013), brand personality (e.g., Avis, 2012; Das, 2014), brand equity (e.g., Hsu, 2012; Namkung & Jang, 2013), brand identification (e.g., Carlson & Donavan, 2013; Papista & Dimitriadis, 2012), brand management (e.g., Balmer, 2012; Sola, 2012), and brand awareness (e.g., Huang & Sarigöllü, 2014; Lu, Chang, & Chang, 2014).
Brand preference is critical in highly competitive businesses, and is defined as “the extent to which the customer favors the designated service provided by a certain company, in comparison to the designated service provided by other companies in his or her consideration set” (Hellier, Geursen, Carr, & Rickard, 2003, p. 1764). The formation of brand preference is closely associated with customers’ earlier experience (Hwang & Ok, 2013). In this context, it is essential to differentiate between brand image the company wishes to convey and the actual image, as perceived by the customers. According to Hwang and Ok (2013), brand is an ideal image based on perceptions from a company before pre-purchase experience, whereas customers’ experience reflects an actual image during post-purchase. Consistency between brand image and previous experience will result in customers’ brand preference and will generate loyalty for a brand. Thus, understanding factors affecting brand preference is beneficial to organizations, as this helps them identify to customer needs and preferences. This, in turn, can assist in developing positive and lasting relationships with customers, as well as increase purchase intentions, due to implementing practical strategies to improve customers’ experience (Bahng, Kincade, & Yang, 2013; Chimboza & Mutandwa, 2007; Hwang & Ok, 2013; Mantonakis, 2012).

Owing to its great importance for businesses, brand preference is considered as a viable method to boost sales. From the business perspective, “the challenge is that the customers could change their favorite brands by trying products of other brands” (Mathur, Moschis, & Lee, 2003, p. 138) due to the influence of other absorbing brand products providing similar function. In other words, customers may change brand preference if they have access to better products with similar function and quality. In order to mitigate the potential for losing customers due to the shift in their brand preference, managers must
identify factors influencing brand preference and address them as a means of establishing lasting brand loyalty among consumers.

Extant studies on brand preference primarily focused on factors influencing consumer preferences for products, restaurants, and goods (e.g., Bahng et al., 2013; Chang & Liu, 2009). The study conducted by Chimboza and Mutandwa (2007) revealed four factors influencing brand preference, consisting of promotion, price and availability, product packaging, and quality. The authors reported that promotion and competitive price resulted in greater focus on the product based on good packaging and quality, and vice versa.

Wang (2013) further discussed the importance of snack food packaging and quality. The findings yielded by this study indicate that products with good packaging lead to positive customer attitudes and evaluations toward these products, which in turn generates brand preference. In particular, Wang asserted that developers of product packaging should focus on “color, typeface, logo, graphics, name, and so on” (p. 812). According to Hellström and Nilsson (2011), packaging is considered as a tool to communicate with customers and capture their cognition. As packaging conveys certain brand image to the customers, they gradually establish commitment and connection between the brand and themselves. This, in turn, affects their behaviors, making them more likely to recommend the products to others. However, most studies in this field focus on external factors and their impact on brand preference, while overlooking the effects of self-concept and its connection to brand image. Hellström and Nilsson (2011) and Wang (2013), nonetheless, confirmed the connection between brand-image congruity and brand preference. Their findings indicate that, the higher the congruity between brand image and their self-images, the greater the brand preference customers will generate.
The theory of brand preference can also be used as a mechanism to measure customer purchase intentions and personal values (e.g., Bruwer & Buller, 2012; Li, Zhao, & Yang, 2012). Cobb-Walgren, Ruble, and Donthu (1995) indicated that higher brand equity creates greater intention to purchase. Brand equity refers to “a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm’s customers” (p. 15). Chen and Chang (2008) demonstrated that customers that possess greater understanding of brand equity would have a greater level of brand preference. Furthermore, Chang and Liu (2009) argued that brand attitude has a stronger impact on brand equity, as brand equity is positively associated with both brand attitude and image. More recently, Tolba (2011) found that brand preference positively correlated with brand loyalty. While the aforementioned studies were conducted with different sample populations and products, and their authors applied different measurements, they all confirm that higher levels of brand equity generate higher level of brand preference among consumers. In addition, higher level of customer preference for the brand is related to greater willingness to purchase the brand, which increases brand loyalty. In sum, brand preference not only affects brand attitudes and loyalty, but also plays a significant role in the decision-making process. In other words, customers that already have preference for a particular brand will likely purchase that product rather than investing time and effort into researching other brands for which they have no prior preference.

The theory of preference can also be used as a mechanism to measure career (e.g. Dehal, 2016). Stevens (2011) examined student nurses’ career preference for caring for older people through a longitudinal survey. Based on his results, he stated that working with
older people for students was considered as a lower status and less desirable job for nurse students. Furthermore, he explained that the longer time students stayed with elder people, the less preference students had intentions to choose as their career direction. Moreover, nurse students categorized caring older people as low-tech job, thus the experience to stay with older people also negatively influenced on career choice. Meanwhile, major and demographic variables lead to preferences to a career, such as gender, grades, economic status, religious, and occupational of parents (Yun & Min, 2015). The aforementioned studies offered support for the link between career and preference toward a specific area or direction.

In previous research, self-image congruity has been applied to measure brand preference in a variety of aspects, including adolescents’ accessory categories (Rhee & Johnson, 2012), automobile market (Hu et al., 2012; Jamal & Al-Marri, 2007), magazines (Sirgy, 2015), and precious jewelry (Jamal & Goode, 2001). Jamal and Goode (2001) explored the effect of congruity between self-image and brand image on consumers’ preference and satisfaction in the valuable jewelry market. Their results revealed a positive effect of the congruity level on consumer preference and satisfaction. The authors thus suggested that a higher level of congruity between perceptions of self and the valuable jewelry brand would lead to greater customer satisfaction and higher level of brand preference. The congruency between self-image and a brand was also examined and supported by Jamal and Al-Marri (2007). The authors aimed to explore the congruity between customer’s self-image and automobile brands, confirming its positive effect on customers’ behavior and purchasing preferences. The authors suggested that high level of congruity between customer’s self-image and automobile brand would result in customer’s
preference for that particular brand, as well as greater satisfaction with the purchase. The aforementioned studies offered support for the link between self-image congruity and preference toward a specific brand or product.

While extensive body of research on brand preference exists, there is evident paucity of studies conducted in the Chinese context (Li et al., 2012). Yet, this is an important area to study, due to the impact of culture and values on Chinese consumers’ preferences and purchasing behaviors. In one of the few studies conducted in China, Li and colleagues (2012) found that Chinese consumers’ preference were strongly affected by traditional culture and values, such as family values, social relations, and face culture. Given the long-term impact of culture and values, their effect is likely to be subliminal. Furthermore, Hu et al. (2012) demonstrated that Chinese customers are sensitive and show affinity for products whose image exceeds their expectations. The greater the distance between the ideal and the actual image, the higher brand preference customers will have. This will, in turn, enhance their intentions to purchase and help them make decisions more easily. However, young generations are not fully mature and their opinions are likely subject to change due to external influences. This makes it challenging for companies to promote brand loyalty among adolescents and young adults (Noble, Haytko, & Phillips, 2009). This assertion also applies to their career decisions. While members of young generation are under high pressure to fit in and convey positive image, they also value personal values and personality (Mueller, Remaud, & Chabin, 2011). Generation Y strives to attain high degree of alignment between their self-image and how they want to be perceived by others. This sense of acceptance generates good feelings, and may even influence their decision-making (Rhee & Johnson, 2012).
In summary, brand preference is a significant factor to consider when aiming to understand customer perceptions and attitudes toward products. Organizations can use their knowledge of brand preference to develop effective and innovative marketing strategies.

As previously noted, the Chinese hospitality industry is rapidly expanding, requiring that customer perceptions and attitudes toward brands be examined, as these are the key factors in ensuring competitive advantage (Ha, 2004). Although the studies reviewed above focused on tangible products (i.e., jewelry and automobiles), their findings are applicable to service industry and hotels as well. Hotel image is conveyed through marketing strategies, but also through its location, décor, staff, culture, and management. As Chinese hotel industry is rapidly expanding, many new positions are becoming available and must be filled with the right candidates. In order to attract high-quality individuals, hotel management must ensure that the image their brand conveys is aligned with the actual as well as ideal self-image of Generation Y. This will generate positive attitudes and perceptions of Chinese youth, making them more likely to choose tourism and hotel industry as their career path.

As noted earlier, the competition between domestic and international hotels is becoming extremely challenging for the former that lack the necessary experience and resources to create the desired brand image and attract both the clients and the staff of the right caliber. Thus, management of both domestic and international hotels must be aware of the critical factors affecting brand preference, as this will enable them to improve their evaluations of customers’ perceptions, attitudes, or even decision making. The changes implemented in their strategies may even allow them to outpace their competition. In light of the above, and owing to the limited research in Chinese context, the present study aims to investigate the brand preference between domestic and international brand hotels among
Chinese young generations, and assess if the congruity between individual self-image and hotel brand image (domestic or international) affects young generation’s decision-making process related to their career choice.

**Perceived External Prestige**

Image can generate potent feelings and many companies use it as a benchmark to examine whether other peoples’ evaluations of their organization is positive (Mishra et al., 2012). Image is defined as a general impression of the outside world’s views and attitudes (Mishra et al., 2012). Some researchers view it as “perceived external prestige,” while others describe it in relation of work, using the terms such as “job prestige,” or “occupational prestige” (Bartels, Pruyn, & Jong, 2009; Cheng, & Furnham, 2012; Kim, Lee, Lee, & Kim, 2010; Mishra et al., 2012; Sala, Terraneo, Lucchini, & Knies, 2013; Wee, 2014). On the other hand, an individual may “receive and interpret various massages from diverse external constituencies” (Kang, Stewart, & Kim, 2011, p. 4). Such messages help individuals establish how outsiders see their organization. Job prestige or occupational prestige only relates to job’s reputation or status, and is thus unaffected by interpretations of an organization or person based on outside views. However, perceived external prestige is essential for a formation of social status and is thus examined in this study.

Perceived external prestige is defined as opinions of outsiders about, for example, organizations, events, and people (Herrbach & Mignonac, 2004). Perceived external prestige can also be viewed as “a process of deriving self-esteem from identifying with one’s organization or job” (Ojedokun, Idemudia, & Desouza, 2015, p. 2). These assertions imply that perceived external prestige is affected by many aspects of social evaluation, such as moral, competence, and influence. For the organizations, “constructed external image
relates to the employee’s own perceptions of the way outsiders, such as customers, competitors, and suppliers, think about the organization” (Carmeli & Freund, 2009, p. 3). Organizations with good perceived external prestige are highly competitive in their market (e.g., Hanzae & Taghipourian, 2012), easily attract talent (e.g., Rathi & Lee, 2015), increase customers’ confidence about products and services (e.g., Jin, Line, & Merkebu, 2015), and promote their core competitiveness (e.g., Popescu & Crenicean, 2013).

Given the importance of perceived external prestige, it is essential to identify the factors affecting and promoting it. For example, Cheng and Furnham (2012) conducted a longitudinal study on adults’ occupational prestige that spanned a period of 17 years. These authors identified that perceived external prestige consisted of parental social status, childhood cognitive ability, education and occupation, and personality traits. Their findings further indicated that the age played an important role in the formation of occupational prestige. For example, parental social status played an important role in career prestige for adults aged 33, while personality had a much greater effect on career prestige at age 50. Furthermore, childhood intelligence and education are very important for occupational prestige, while the impact of family weakens as the individual matures. As the stronger impact of occupational prestige, it is more likely to influence perceptions to career, as well as employment. Based on their study findings, Sala et al. (2013) asserted that facial attractiveness was also a significant factor in the perceived external prestige, as it positively influenced perceived external prestige of both males and females, thus having a lasting effect on employment.

Therefore, it can be surmised that perceived external prestige is a complex concept and needs to be examined comprehensively. A number of investigations have focused on
the subject of organizational and career commitment, as well as turnover intentions, in relation to perceived external prestige (e.g., Bian & Forsythe, 2012; Lee, Wang, & Hong, 2013).

Organizational and career commitment. Most individuals aspire towards becoming a part of socially valued organizations (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). The social value of organizations as perceived by its employees is usually based on how outsiders view their organization. This process is called as “constructed external image” (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994), which is used to measure employees’ opinions about “how outsiders judge the status and image of their organization” (Mignonac, Herrbach, & Guerrero, 2006, p. 478). Most of the studies about perceived external prestige explored the relationship between social value of organizations and organizational identification (e.g., Smidts et al., 2001).

For example, Kang et al. (2011) proposed, “commitment can be conceptualized as an individual’s identification, involvement, and loyalty to the belonging organization or career” (p. 6). This assertion implies that commitment is generated once a mutually beneficial relationship between an individual and the organization is established. Such relationship was explored in studies, aiming to ascertain how perceived external prestige influences employee commitment. Ashforth and Mael (1989) noted that commitment must be explored in relation to personal values and life goals.

Ashforth and Mael (1989), Carmeli and Freund (2009), Mishra et al. (2012), and Ojedokun et al. (2015) revealed that perceived external prestige influences affective organizational commitment. Furthermore, Alniacik, Cigerim, Akcin, and Bayram (2011) reported when working for organizations with higher level of prestige, employees are more
likely to establish positive attitudes and be committed to not only the company but also their chosen career.

Ashforth and Mael (1989) found that perceived external prestige promoted organizational identification and resulted in positive work outcomes. Employees that took part in their study established a favorable image of their organization, as they could clearly and easily understand its core values and norms. Thus, the authors concluded that, the higher the level of perceived external prestige the organization has, the more favorable image employees would establish. In turn, employees will have positive attitudes and great passion for their work, which will result in higher work efficacy and greater commitment.

Turnover intention. Employee turnover is a significant problem at the global level, due to its impact on organizational effectiveness and profitability (Cascio, 1991). Employees’ turnover intention is considered as “a key element in the modeling of employee turnover behavior” (Egan, Yang, & Bartlett, 2004, p. 286) and “an important component of organizational performance” (Kamasak, 2011, p. 212). Thus, understanding the factors contributing to turnover intention is beneficial, as this would allow companies to implement changes aimed at increasing staff loyalty.

Many authors provide evidence in support of the view that employees are committed to the organization with a favorable image and are thus unlikely to resign (e.g., Alniacik et al., 2011; Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Kamasak, 2011). In their study, for example, Herrbach, Mignonac, and Gatignon (2004) revealed that prestigious firms with a positive image have a greater chance of retaining quality employees. The authors further noted that having a greater understanding of an organization facilitated formation of a more positive
view of the organization, resulting in greater commitment to the organization and thus reduce turnover rates.

Similarly, Carmeli and Freund (2009) reported that perceived external prestige leads to employee commitment and reduced turnover intentions. In addition, the higher the level of perceived external prestige, the higher the level of employee job satisfaction, which results in lower turnover rates. In sum, these researchers verified that employees with positive perceived external prestige of their organization would have increased intention to stay and greater commitment to the job and the organization.

The aforementioned findings are particularly relevant to the Chinese context, as perceived external prestige is highly important in China (Upton-McLaughlin, 2013). The Confucianism is the backbone of Chinese culture, where prestige is derived from image, appearance, and success (Clopton & Finch, 2012; Ferreira, Pinto-Gouveia, & Duarte, 2013; Sung & Yang, 2008). However, young generations are increasingly influenced by global culture, and therefore also care about what benefits them. They draw parallels with Western culture and thus expect instant gratification, and want to follow trends in order to fit in (e.g., Gin, Choi, Kwon, & Kim, 2013; Hills, Ryan, Warren-Forward, & Smith, 2013).

Growing up in such environment, young generations tend to internalize the prestige values and behave accordingly. Moreover, due to the recent global economic downturn, young generations are under increased pressure to obtain jobs and this has become another way to attain prestige (People.cn, 2004).

Most Chinese consumers, especially younger ones, like xenocentric products and have low intentions to purchase local products (Zhou & Belk, 2004). Owing to the rapid economic development the country has recently experienced, many foreign brands have
become widely available in China, prompting the emergence of competitive psychology among young generations. Members of Generation Y are eager to express their unique individuality and affirm their values through owning foreign brands. Their perceptions, attitudes, and purchasing behaviors are influenced by these circumstances, as are their career decisions.

Career decision making among young generations now is very utilitarian, and is impacted by a strong sense of material benefit. According to the data from Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (2014), income and further study abroad are the main factors influencing career choices of Chinese youth. Thus, young generations first consider occupational characteristics, such as salary, compensation, housing, and position, when determining their educational and career path. In other words, young individuals’ value orientation in the choice of a career is based on economic benefits. Moreover, young generations base their career choice on the potential to work overseas, in coastal regions, or in the most lucrative regions. Chinese youth are increasingly forming their job preferences without considering the utilization of learning resources and benefits. This is a serious concern, as it results in waste of human resources and may have significant repercussions for the country’s economy. In sum, perceived external prestige has a great impact on young generations.

Under the influence of the Confucianism, Chinese consider prestige as an effective tool to test whether their decisions are correct (Wang & Mao, 2006). Perceived external prestige leads to preferences toward particular products, as well as career choices. Hanzaee and Hamedani (2013) demonstrated that a higher prestige leads to higher brand identification. Furthermore, Han, Nguyen, and Lee (2015) verified that brand reputation
was beneficial for chain restaurants aiming to build a positive image. The authors asserted that, the more positive image customers have, the higher level of perceived external prestige and brand preference they will develop.

In order to capitalize on economic boom in China, the top 10 international hotel chains have entered the country (Heung, Zhang, & Jiang, 2008). Those chains include Starwood, Hilton, Intercontinental, Marriott, Four Seasons, and so on, all of which are popular among Chinese and international tourists due to abundant capital, advanced management, and brand advantages (Xu, 2012). On the other hand, Chinese public perceive domestic hotels as lacking the brand culture and service quality (Zhou, 2013). Due to this discrepancy in the perceived image of international and domestic hotels, Chinese customers have preference for the former. This not only generates greater business for these hotels, but also makes them preferred choice for those seeking employment in the tourism and hotel industry.

**Career Indecision**

Career certainty and indecision are essential to understand, as these variables measure individual behaviors when making career decisions. Career certainty refers to “the degree to which individuals feel confident, or decided, about their occupational plans” (Hartung, 1995, p. 1). Conversely, career indecision is defined as “an inability to make decision about the vocation one wishes to pursue” (Guay, Senecal, Gauthier, & Fernet, 2003, p. 165). An individual that is unable to make a career decision will feel powerless (Guay et al., 2003).

As young generations are driven by the need for instant gratification and prestige, many are facing career indecision. Furthermore, many young generations are not objective when assessing their abilities and interests and are thus not capable to align their needs with
those of others, which typically results in ineffective career exploration. As a result, when faced with the prospect of choosing a profession, these young generations feel anxious and often fail to take concrete actions to explore their options. Previous research has shown that the overall level of anxiety experienced by young generations when making career decisions is higher than ever before (Zhang & Liu, 2002). Therefore, identifying the factors that may cause career indecision and providing assistance to these young individuals is highly beneficial, as improving their ability to make the right choices will result in more satisfied and productive workforce (Richard, 2008).

Salomone (1982) pointed out that individuals facing career indecision have no confidence to make decisions because of insufficient information at their disposal. Hartman, Fuqua, and Blum (1985) identified three categories of career indecision, namely developmental career indecision (related to the self, career, and decision-making skills), acute/situational career indecision (related to external factors), and chronic career indecision (a kind of psychological disorder). They further noted that developmental and chronic career indecision forms are those usually explored in literature. More recently, Lucas and Epperson (1998) conducted a study of 302 college students that struggled with making career decision. They classified the study participants into five groups, comprising of those happy and work-oriented, anxious and unclear on goals, undecided and limited in interests, caught in a dilemma as to work salience, and happy and playful. According to their findings, the group classified as undecided and limited in interests lacked motivation, which contributed to their career indecision. In an earlier study, Larson, Heppner, Han, and Dugan (1988) proposed existence of four subtypes of students based on their approach to decision making, labeling them as planless avoiders, informed indecisives, confident but uniformed, and
uninformed. Planless avoiders included those that were engaged in “minimal career-planning and avoidant problem-solving,” whereas informed indecisives tended to “be very well informed about career-planning but unable to make decision perhaps because of a negative appraisal of themselves” (p. 442). According to the authors’ classification, confident but uniformed individuals had “a positive appraisal of problem-solving abilities but lack information about the career-planning process,” while those deemed uniformed tend to “appraise their problem-solving moderately and lack some career-planning information” (p. 442). Based on their analysis, Lucas and Epperson (1998) stated that individuals that are confident but uniformed have ability to deal with problems, but lack information necessary to form a career plan, which leads to career indecision.

From the results presented above, it is evident that career decision making involves different methods and can be approached from different perspectives. Similarly, there are many reasons behind career indecision. However, it is important to note that low levels of anxiety about one’s future are not the major cause of indecision (Vignoli, 2015). Rather, most individuals are indecisive due to weak self-assessment of personal ability and lack of required information. Lastly, while career indecision is a short-term phenomenon, it has long-term consequences. Despite comprehensive assessment of personal characteristics of indecisive individuals, studies have failed to address the causes behind this phenomenon.

A number of researchers have investigated the factors affecting career indecision and its impact (e.g., Bańka & Hauziński, 2015; Di Fabio, Palazzeschi, Asulin-Peretz, & Gati, 2013; Feldman, 2003). In a study focusing on professional career development, Shen (2000) revealed factors determining an individual’s career development, including personal qualities and experience (i.e., psychological and physical traits and experience), background (i.e.,
parental background, ethnics, and religion), personal circumstances (i.e., changing career trends and public policy), and some unexpected factors. Based on these findings, the author concluded that career development is influenced by personal, family, social, and interpersonal factors.

Wang and Ma (2001) claimed that factors influencing the career decision-making process and outcome consisted of intrinsic factors, namely personal situation, job satisfaction, career goals, and career interests, as well as extrinsic factors, such as career guide, employment policy, and regional differences. Similarly, Lent et al. (2002) investigated obstructive factors in the career decision-making process from personal and emotional sides. They demonstrated that college students tended to focus on personal barriers such as interests and values, whereas contextual barriers such as economy and absence of role models were rarely recognized as obstacles to successful career selection.

Many authors recognize limited skills required for appropriate career decision making as one of the reasons contributing to career indecision. Many individuals prefer a career that they believe would yield the greatest gains, without having an effective method for making that choice. As a result, they face indecision and anxiety when required to choose a profession. Findings of many studies also reflect a close relationship between career decision making and skills (e.g., Agarwal & Mazumder, 2013). For example, Holland (1997) noted that decision ability is one of the factors that can be used to assess career indecision and career certainty. Furthermore, Zigarmi, Houson, Witt, and Diehl (2011) emphasized decision ability as one of eight factors affecting the decision-making process. In this context, decision ability is defined as the ability to make appropriate career decisions.
Family background, such as parents’ income and job security, also have an impact on the level of individual’s career indecision (e.g., Kush & Cochran, 1993; Nota, Ferrari, Solberg, & Soresi, 2007). Research shows that parents’ income and support from family members are negatively related to career indecision (Kush & Cochran, 1993). Normally, parental income and education is positively related to the earning potential and educational attainment of their children. In a recent study, Stărică (2012) indicated that having involved parents is beneficial to their children’s career choice, and leads to lower levels of career indecision. On the other hand, Mojgan, Kadir, Noah, and Hassan (2013) demonstrated that mothers played a greater role than fathers in reducing the level of career indecision experienced by their children.

In addition to exploring gender differences in parental influence on career indecision, factors related to career indecision among males and females were also examined in a variety of studies with incongruent conclusions (e.g., Crişan & Turda, 2015). While some researchers showed no significant gender differences in the level of and reasons behind career indecision (e.g., Crişan & Turda, 2015a; Mansor & Rashid, 2013), others refuted these findings (e.g., Mojgan et al., 2013). For example, Crişan and Turda (2015b) found that males experience higher degree of career indecision than females, and pay more attention to the choice of profession (Osipow, Carney, & Barak, 1976, as cited in Crisan & Turda, 2015). Conversely, Öztemel (2014) argued that females experienced greater career indecision than males, because females were more easily influenced by others, such as parents and friends (Gati, Landman, Davidovitch, Asulin-Peretz, & Gadassi, 2010) and lacked sufficient information to make optimal decisions (Vahedi, Farrokhi, Mahdavi, & Moradi, 2012).
Career indecision is a common problem young generations presently face (Feldman, 2003). Review of pertinent literature revealed three reasons behind this phenomenon. Firstly, young generations are not fully aware of their career interests and personality traits (Taylor & Keeter, 2010). On the other hand, they feel confident and have high level of career expectations when making career decisions (Richardson, 2010). Thus, due to this incongruence, after the internship, their views of future career choice often change remarkably, while some feel disappointed about their future career. As young generations have limited understanding of jobs that they would perform if they choose a particular career, they struggle to transform from students to employees. Inadequate or even absent occupational training in most academic curricula is a widespread problem, resulting in a gap between students’ abilities and career goals, which lead to high turnover. Finally, young generations’ social cognition is not mature (Madahi, Sukati, Mazhari, & Rashid, 2012), and they are not aware of the factors necessary to make rational career choices. They tend to select a profession based on some idealized notions about their future, which results in misguided career decisions. Thus, when faced with the reality, young generations struggle to make career choice and are often dissatisfied with the chosen profession. Owing to their unique characteristics, many researchers opted to specifically study young generations when examining the concept of career indecision (e.g., Cascio, Guzzo, Pace, & Pace, 2013; Crișan & Turda, 2015a; Miller & Rottinghaus, 2013). Their findings indicate that career indecision is related to personality, family influences, life goals, and life satisfaction (e.g., Carr et al., 2014; Jaensch, Hirschi, & Freund, 2015; Vignoli, 2015; Walker & Peterson, 2012). These factors are also applicable to Chinese young generations.
In addition to these widely applicable factors, Chinese young generations face other influences specific to their culture and circumstances. For example, statistics published by the Chinese Education Ministry (Statistical Analysis of total number of Chinese college graduates, n.d.) indicate that the population of college graduates is rapidly increasing, which may result in high unemployment. For example, 4.95 million students graduated in 2007, compared to 7.27 million that graduated in 2014, corresponding to a 46.9% increase in seven years. Furthermore, evidence shows that Chinese college graduates are inadequately prepared for job hunting. Despite never having a job prior to graduation, college students usually receive no support or guidance from college’s career service system. In addition, curriculum offered in Chinese colleges and universities is not aligned with the needs of the job market. Knowledge and skills gained at university are hardly relevant to the actual work graduates are expected to do (Matching Skills and Labor Market Needs, 2014), which results in inconsistencies between career and educational requirements. This problem is further exacerbated by professors providing practical career suggestions to their students despite very few of professors in China having any work experience beyond academia (Mohrman, Geng, & Wang, 2011). In such circumstances, students feel confused when having to make career choice, which often results in indecision (Liu, 2013; Qiu, 2014).

While work in many sectors may be lacking, Chinese tourism is experiencing a boom, as many international and domestic brand hotels are expanding their operations in China. As a result, this industry is now seen by young generations as a viable career option. In addition, Chinese graduates want to enter the industry due to the expectation of travel experience and job security (Liu, Law, Rong, Li, & Hall, 2013). However, while they may be fairly certain about the sector they want to work in, they still face the choice between
domestic and international brand hotels. In this case, young generation with higher level of brand preference typically have clear goals, and can make career choice without any indecision. As international brand hotels have higher level of perceived external prestige than domestic hotels, they would usually be a preferred choice for college graduates (Okoroafo et al., 2010). Based on the discussions presented above, the aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between brand preference and perceived external prestige on career indecision, and establish how these factors affect the career decision-making process.

**Career Decision Making**

Decision making as a concept was first mentioned in the America’s management literature in 1930s. This prompted some scholars to define it. For example, Simon (1992) defined it as the process that involves exploring, judging, and evaluating until the choice is made. On the other hand, Koontz and O'Donnell (1964) thought that decisions were made based on alternative schemes of the plan. In brief, decision making is a process individuals go through as they make evaluations of various options based on their purposes and identify an optimal choice pertinent to a specific situation and their characteristics. Decisions are among the most significant actions people perform in their lives because they are obligated to make decisions persistently (Cascio et al., 2013). Every decision has an influence on people’s lives, and people need to be prepared for constant changes based on the decisions they have made. Among all the decisions people make in their lives, those related to their career are likely the most important (Jung, 2012), as such decisions will have implications for their future, including job, salary, and ability to live independently (e.g., Saunder & Fogarty, 2001).
While people always made decisions related to their career, the term “career decision making” was first introduced in literature in 1979. Parsons (1909) is the first to discuss career decision. As a part of his pioneering work, he introduced three components of career decision: a clear understanding of oneself, one’s aptitudes, abilities, interests, ambition, resources, limitations, and knowledge of their causes; knowledge of the requirements, conditions of success, advantages and disadvantages, compensation, opportunities, and prospects in different lines of work; and true reasoning on the relations of these two groups of facts. The findings noted by Parsons increased the understanding of factors involved in making a career choice (Junes, 1994). In addition, these guidelines confirmed the importance of considering all the information prior to making a career choice. The currently accepted definition of career decision making is “the decision about one’s future occupational or career” (Jung, 2012, p. 189).

The changes in employment policies and the social environment that have taken place in recent decades have prompted researchers to investigate factors influencing career decision making. These factors consist of family (e.g., Paloş & Drobot, 2010), skills and interests (e.g., Song & Chon, 2012), choice of major (e.g. Marchante, Ortega, & Pagán, 2007), prior work experience (e.g., Brown et al., 2014), and role models (e.g., Chlosta, Patzelt, Klein, & Dormann, 2012; Mohd et al., 2010), among others. For example, Mudhovozi and Chireshe (2012) investigated the impact of socio-demographic factors on career decision-making process. The authors examined the role of family, school, career guidance program, media, and peers and found that teachers, friends, mother, and media play a much greater role in career decision making. The significance of family in the career decision-making process was also recognized by Chen and Fan (2010), who further
emphasized the importance of Confucian culture in decisions Chinese youth make regarding their career path. They further noted that the influential factors can be categorized into internal and external factors. Internal factors are those influenced by each individual, such as personality, aptitude, choice of major, and gender, while the external factors include social media, policy, education, and family and friends.

Internal factors. The role of self-efficacy in career decision making is examined and discussed by a variety of scholars (e.g., Jadidian & Duffy, 2011; Walker & Tracey, 2012). The extensive body of these studies includes research on different participants groups, in different settings, and using different measurement instruments. Self-efficacy is defined as “arising from diverse sources of information conveyed by direct and mediated experience” (Bandura, 1977, p. 203). Similarly, career decision making self-efficacy pertains to “one’s belief in his or her ability to successfully perform occupationally relevant behaviors” (Smith, 2001, p. 201).

For example, Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, and Pastorelli (2001) investigated the relationship between self-efficacy and aspiration and trajectories, and demonstrated that children preferred to make career choice based on their self-efficacy. Furthermore, the authors also emphasized the influence of socioeconomic environment on children, stating that socioeconomic environments indirectly influenced children through parents’ self-efficacy and their academic aspirations. Based on the concept of career decision making self-efficacy, it is not primarily influenced by personal abilities, but rather one’s self-confidence to complete the task. However, the extent to which an individual is able to appraise his/her abilities and aspirations, and the degree of influence of external factors, may affect individual’s confidence in his/her ability to make decisions (Bandura, 1986). Thus, it
is questionable whether this measurement reflects individual’s real degree of confidence. As self-efficacy also affects individual’s attitude toward risk taking (Pajares, 1996), it is not examined in this study.

While gender differences are widely recognized in various contexts, while being questioned in others, it cannot be disputed that not all career paths are open to both males and females. For example, Salami (2006) was of view that career decisions made by males and females are governed by gender characteristics. In particular, female study participants preferred gender-specific careers such as nursing and teaching. According to Wong and Liu (2010), daughters tend to follow parents’ career advice (Wong & Liu, 2010) and their career decisions are influenced by parents’ opinions. However, university major also plays an important role in the career decision-making process, as most students choose majors with a certain career in mind (Gore, 2002). The relationship between academic major and career decisions was verified by Chuang, Walker, and Caine-Bish (2009), who found that the majority of hospitality management students that were impressed by their education and work experience showed strong intentions to enter the industry upon graduation.

External Factors. Social media has become ubiquitous in the daily lives of young generations and thus plays an important role in their career decisions (e.g., Hills et al., 2012). The types of social media usually examined in pertinent studies include television, internet, and advertising. Many authors have investigated the influence of social media on career decisions (e.g., Nancy Spector & Kappel, 2012; O'Keefe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). For example, Mudhovozi and Chireshe (2012) investigated the influence of media on career, reporting that internet and other forms of advertising were often used to obtain information
about different occupations. However, such information is rarely accurate and may skew the image of a certain profession, thus misleading those wishing to pursue a particular career.

Policy is another important factor affecting career decision making. For example, in 2003, Chinese government proposed a plan for college students to volunteer as teachers after their graduation in western part of the country (Li, 2015). As a result of this policy, an increasing number of students are deciding to migrate and work as teacher volunteers. Furthermore, this policy proposed that volunteers complete a certain period of teaching in the west as a means of gaining preferential treatment when applying for work in a government office. Thus, in China, it is evident that some students make their career decisions based on policy.

As career decision-making often results in career indecision, some authors explored these phenomena as a part of a single study (e.g., Braunstein-Bercovitz, 2013; Gati, Ryzhik, & Vertsberger, 2013; Taber, 2013). Thompson and Subich (2006) found that social status had an effect on career indecision, while career decision self-efficacy mediated the effect of social status and career indecision. Furthermore, Guay et al. (2003) believed that parental and peer attitudes toward individuals influenced their career indecision through parents’ self-efficacy and autonomy. These results indicate that the less support and the more control parents and peers exert on individuals, the lower their level of self-efficacy would be, leading to greater career indecision.

However, the career decision-making process most Chinese young generations undergo is unique in many respects. China is a “family-based and harmony-oriented bioethics” (Chen & Fan, 2010, p. 573) country grounded in the Confucian lifestyle. As family is one of the core ideas of Confucianism, family plays a significant role in every
aspect of one’s life, career decisions in particular (Chen & Fan, 2010). Chinese parents are highly influential in their children’s work. Bai (2005) noted that Chinese parents have a strong effect on their children’s career decisions. Moreover, parents are willing to make decisions for their children based on their social relationship and previous experience. Parents think that their children have no social experience and lack ability to select a career that would provide them with a generous salary and a stable job. Consequently, parents tend to select a stable career for their children or one that is similar to their own occupation. Hence, the career decision-making process in China is complex (Xu et al., 2014) and needs to be examined comprehensively.

While parental influence remains dominant in Chinese culture, young generations are increasingly affected by external factors and are forming distinct preferences for products and brands (Hu et al., 2012). Given the increasingly fierce competition between domestic and international hotels, young generations wishing to enter this industry must consider many factors when making career decisions. Brand preference is one of these aspects. Some of them prefer international hotels and want to work for globally recognized chains, while others prefer domestic hotels (Zhu, Wang, & Lu, 2003). Chinese people tend to perceive foreign products as superior to the local equivalents, irrespective of the actual reputation and quality. As the same applies to the hotel industry, the higher level of brand preference they have, the more likely it is that they will choose to work in that particular hotel.

In Chinese culture, perceived external prestige is often seen as synonymous with the brand preference. Under the influence of traditional Chinese culture and values, young generations prefer to choose the jobs that convey high social status and command respect of others (Parsons, 2014). Hence, income and prestige play an important role in the career
choices of Chinese young generations (Wong & Liu, 2010). This focus on social status and income reflects the prevalent values in China, which influence young generations’ behaviors as well as career decisions. The more prestige the job has, the more likely it is that it would be chosen by young generations. In sum, perceived external prestige closely correlates with career decision making in the Chinese context. Therefore, this study is designed to investigate (1) the impact of perceived external prestige and brand preference, and (2) the role of career indecision in the process of making career decisions.

**Generation Y**

Generation is defined as “an identifiable group that shares birth years, age, location and significant life events at critical developmental stages” (Kupperschmidt, 2000, p. 66). Generation Y refers to “the population born between 1980 to 2000” (Weingarten, 2009). The student population included this study, all of whom are aged from 18 to 24, thus belong to Generation Y. Many researchers have investigated the Generation Y as it is deemed different from other generations (Twenge & Campbell, 2008). Kwok (2012) suggested that managers need to understand Generation Y, and make corresponding strategies to recruit and retain them.

In identifying the unique characteristics of Generation Y, researchers noted that they prefer to work as a team to achieve goals (Berkowitz & Schewe, 2011), aim to be distinctive in their lives and schools (Ruble, 2013), and have high job expectations (De Hauw & De Vos, 2010; Ng et al., 2010). They are also highly “confident, well-educated, self-sufficient, tolerant, team builders, and socially/politically conscious” (Brown, Thomas, & Bosselman, 2015, p. 131), pursue work-life balance (Twenge, 2006), and have inadequate verbal and trouble-shooting skills (Hill et al, 2012). Guided by these characteristics, Martin (2005)
investigated ways to improve retention and productivity among Generation Y. The study findings indicated that managers need to know more about characteristics of this generation in order to meet their expectations, as this is the most effective way to motivate and retain them. Furthermore, Richardson (2010) investigated the impact of Generation Y perceptions and attitudes in hospitality and tourism (H&T) industry. As members of Generation Y have high career expectations, the author noted that those with work experience in H&T industry typically have no intention to stay due to long working hours, unstable employment, difficulties in finding time for family, low social status, poor working conditions, and low benefits.

In previous research, Generation Y was chosen as a focus group to investigate and discuss a variety of issues, including turnover intentions (e.g., Brown et al., 2015), career expectations and aspirations (e.g., Maxwell, Ogden, & Broadbridge, 2010), career decision making (e.g., Viswanathan & Jain, 2013), career attitudes (e.g., Richardson, 2010), and job satisfaction (e.g., Kim, Knight, & Crutsinger, 2009). Brown et al. (2015) focused on turnover issues among hospitality graduates. The empirical findings yielded by this study revealed similar reasons for leaving and staying among hospitality graduates, including compensation, work-family conflict, and no changes in career. The authors concluded that these reasons resulted in gaps between graduates’ expectations and actual experience, in turn affecting their retention in the industry. The problem of employee retention was also examined by Luscombe, Lewis, and Bigs (2012). The authors demonstrated that Generation Y evaluated their aspirations against the benefits the job offered not only when entering an organization, but also in terms of long-term benefits of staying in the organization. Many authors also noted that Generation Y usually has higher level of turnover intention because
they desire a challenging career. Their decision to stay in a position is also affected by their prior work experience.

Chinese Generation Y, while sharing all of the aforementioned traits, is also unique (Kwok, 2012). Most of those belonging to this generation where the only child in their family due to policy requirement that was only recently changed. While one child policy was in place, China experienced sustained and rapid economic development (Zhang, 2012) due to the previously discussed open-up policy. The open-up policy resulted in the reformation of the traditional economic system into market economy (Baidu Encyclopedia, n.d.). However, owing to the development of market economy in China and the impact of foreign culture, Generation Y has changed their perceptions and is now driven by pursuit of money, which has had a profound influence on their career choices. Furthermore, as Chinese culture values social hierarchy, individuals are expected to obey the rules and criteria imposed by the organization/family (Zhang, 2005). Parents are the absolute authority of the family, and influence all aspects of their child’s life, including career choice. They usually rely on their social networks to help the child, while also supporting him/her financially (Kwok, 2012).

Career decision-making process that Chinese Generation Y undergoes is distinctive because, in addition to the widely applicable factors discussed earlier, it is also influenced by traditional culture, values, family, and social media (e.g., Xu et al., 2014; Chen & Fan, 2010). For example, Xu et al. (2014) emphasized the importance of family and parental influence in the career decision making among Chinese young generations, who would not make career decisions that were not approved by their parents due to the impact of traditional culture. Furthermore, Chen and Fan (2010) discussed decision making based on Confucian idea of
family and harmony and stated that family played a great role in the decision-making process.

In sum, Generation Y is unique and should be studied comprehensively. However, studies examining how Chinese Generation Y make career decisions are limited (e.g., Kwok, 2012). Therefore, this study aims to fill this research gap by investigating the career decision making among Generation Y in China and elucidate how they make career decisions, as its findings can assist future students in making sound career choices.

**Contextual Background**

In addition to the aforementioned factors, other variables also affect young generations’ career decision making, such as different types of schools, majors, and gender, which are also examined in the present study.

In the Chinese education system, higher education consists of vocational training and academic qualifications (Min, 2004). These two forms of higher education lead to different kinds of school training and curricula. Vocational schools refer to “a post-secondary educational institution designed to provide vocational education required to perform the tasks of a particular job” (Wikipedia, n.d., para. 1), while university and college are associated with “an institution of higher education and research which grants academic degrees” (Wikipedia, n.d., para. 1). The main difference between vocational schools and universities in China stems from the career goals students have. Vocational schools aim to cultivate applied talents with relevant professional knowledge and skills, while universities and colleges are seen as educational choice for those with high academic aptitude that would be the core force behind the development of the society (Baidu Encyclopedia, n.d.). As a
result of these distinctions, students graduating from vocational schools and universities would have different career expectations, goals, and decisions.

Furthermore, academic major also plays a role in the career options a graduate will likely have. For example, Brown et al. (2014) and Gore (2002) demonstrated gaps between the academic major and working experience, which in turn affected career choice. Furthermore, Chuang et al. (2009) examined the influence of academic major on career; their findings demonstrated that major had a great effect on career decisions. Chinese college students’ career choices are increasingly revealing new trends, as they prefer to change their major to seek employment due to no interests and willingness to engage in major’s related work (Most college students have intentions to change their major to find job, 2015). Investigating students’ major is thus essential, as this will affect their intentions to enter the related industry after graduation.

Moreover, some authors have examined the impact of gender on career decision making (e.g., Mudhovozi & Chireshe, 2012; Soviet & Metz, 2014). Bartley and Robitschek (2000) highlighted the need to study gender differences and similarities related to career decisions more extensively. Many studies indicate that career decisions are affected by gender (e.g., Khairul Anwar, 2003; Mohd et al., 2010), whereby females tend to have greater difficulties in choosing a career compared to males. For example, Crișan & Turda (2015) investigated the relationship between career indecision and decision making among college students, reporting that male students exhibited higher levels of career indecision than did their female counterparts. Furthermore, female students are more sensitive to the effects on career goals, and are more easily influenced by lack of career information than are males, who tend to make decisions conservatively (Chuang, 2010).
Consequently, gender is another factor that is examined in this study, as it is influential on the decision-making process. Based on the discussions presented in this chapter, the framework adopted in this study was developed, as shown in Figure 1.

![Figure 1. Framework to Be Tested in This Study](image)
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the study methodology and contains information about the use of human subjects, sampling selection and procedure, instrument design, and the data analysis techniques administered in this research. This study conducted using a quantitative method in order to answer the research questions. The questionnaire utilized as a data collection instrument contains six parts: (1) perceived external prestige; (2) self-image congruity; (3) brand preference; (4) career indecision; (5) career decision making; and (6) demographic and career background information.

Human Subject Review

The researcher conducting the present study has completed human subjects training and was certified by Kent State University. The Kent State University Human Subject Review Board approved the proposal application for this study on September 30, 2016. The research was approved and met the criteria for Level-1 Exemption under federal regulation stating involved with minimal risk to human subjects.

Sample and Sampling Procedures

Sample

The target population for the present study is the young generation in China. The researcher used convenience sampling when surveying Chinese youth aged from 18 to 24, which corresponds to the majority of university students in China (Stork & Hartley, 2014). More specifically, the selected sample comprised of students from vocational schools and universities in Tianjin due to the differences in the education offered by these academic institutions.
Firstly, educational mission and objectives of vocational schools and universities are different. The mission of vocational school is to cultivate talents with relevant professional knowledge and applied skills (Vocational Education in China, 2006). The missions for colleges or universities are to “cultivate advanced professional talents who not only possess innovative spirit but also practical ability, developing scientific and technological culture and promote the construction of the socialist modernization” (Wu, 2003, pp. 30-35). Secondly, internship requirement for graduates of these two institutions is different. Students from vocational schools are required to complete at least six months of internship within three years of completing their education in order to obtain graduation certificates (China Labor Bulletin, n.d.). Empirical evidence shows that, upon completion of the internship experience, many students change their perceptions and attitudes toward the career in the hospitality industry (Brown et al., 2014). Although both positive (e.g., learning about the operational management and establishing a close relationship with colleagues) and negative perceptions are developed toward the industry, the latter seem to be more influential on these students’ future career options (Roney & Oztin, 2007). Examples of negative perceptions are busy schedule, low salary, and bad working conditions (e.g., Ducan et al., 2013; Wong & Liu, 2010), resulting in many students losing interest in working in the industry (Jenkins, 2001). On the other hand, college students are not required to have internship experience as a part of their education (China Labor Bulletin, n.d.). Finally, the future career development paths are different. Vocational students often obtain entry-level positions, such as technical workers or frontline staff, whereas college students are likely to gain their first job in enterprises and institutions, such as government offices and academia (Liu, 2005).
Furthermore, students are appropriate sample for the present study, the aim of which is to explore career decision-making process and career indecision (Xie & Yu, 2013). The data collected from them is a sufficient indicator of their career decisions (Brown et al., 2014; Chuang & Dellmann-Jenkins, 2010; Chen & Shen, 2012; Tse, 2010; Richardson & Butler, 2012). The sample included students from various majors, such as hospitality and tourism management, economy, and engineering, in order to make a valid comparison between those majoring in hospitality and other subjects, as one of the study aims is to ascertain if the major has an impact on the hotel brand and types of hotels they are interested in working and whether the impact on career-related variables is difference between hospitality and non-hospitality. Furthermore, the hospitality and tourism (H&T) industry is provided a variety kinds of jobs, including employees of engineers, information technology (IT), accounting, marketing analysis, and chef, thus working in the H&T industry is not only limited hospitality students but also made up of non-hospitality students and even students have interests to enter to this field.

In addition, Tianjin is one of five municipalities and major industrial and commercial city in northern China, with an urban population of approximately 15 million (Baidu Encyclopedia, n.d.). Tianjin is located in close proximity to Beijing and Bo Hai (Baidu Encyclopedia, n.d.). Because of its convenient geographical location, it attracts a significant number of international tourists and thus has many hotels (China Daily, 2015). According to the available data, 36 five-star hotels are located in Tianjin, including Four Seasons hotel, Mandarin Oriental, and Platinum Wyndham Grand Luxurious hotel (Marketing Analysis, 2015). However, there are approximately 400 domestic hotels in the region, most of which are economy chains and independent hotels (Baidu Map, n.d.). The
number of domestic and international hotels in this city provides an adequate exposure for students to build suitable image of the industry. Therefore, Tianjin was selected as a city in which to conduct the research.

Furthermore, there are 55 universities and 112 vocational schools in Tianjin (Baidu Encyclopedia, n.d.). The number of students in vocational schools is different from that at the universities. According to Tianjin ENORTH NETNEWS, (2012), approximately 150,000 students attend the vocational schools, while 500,000 are enrolled at university courses.

To investigate the impact of career decision making among students from different types of schools and in different majors, three vocational schools and three universities were randomly selected for this study. Proportional stratified sampling was used (Levy & Lemeshow, 2013). The subsample size of each site also was stratified proportionately, whereby study participants were chosen from different grades of the universities or vocational schools.

**Sampling Procedures**

The researcher used both paper and online questionnaire formats to conduct the survey. Before conducting questionnaire, the researcher completed CITI human subjects training, selected two representatives as research assistants to complete questionnaires, trained them about how to collect data and deal with questions about survey, and how to explain consent form for participants. The researcher also went to the universities and vocational schools to introduce this study and questionnaire to course instructors to get permission to assess students to complete this survey. Furthermore, the researcher gave
promises to the course instructors that the survey would conduct on fifteen minutes left and keep students’ privacy.

The questionnaire in paper format was distributed to the three universities and three vocational schools by designated persons. The students that completed the questionnaire in paper format did so on the campus or as a part of their courses. Participants were asked to complete the survey in the course to guarantee certain number of questionnaires for all majors. Other participants were approached at the campus.

**Instrument Design**

The instrument used in this study is a self-administered two-part questionnaire. Questions related to career background and demographic information of young generations were included in the first section of the questionnaire. The participants were asked about their gender, school type, academic major, and factors affecting their career decision making. The second section of the questionnaire includes survey items investigating five major career-related constructs, namely self-image congruity, brand preference, perceived external prestige, career indecision, and career decision making. The questionnaire responses were given on a 5-point Likert scale.

The original version of the survey was developed in English. The back-translation method was used to translate the questionnaire to Chinese to ensure full understanding of the Chinese participants. In line with the recommended procedure for this method (Chen & Boore, 2010), three experts who are fluent in both English and Chinese were recruited to check the face content validity and credibility of the translation.
Self-image Congruity

Self-image congruity were assessed by the Self-image Congruity scale (Sirgy et al., 1997). Examples of the survey items the respondents will be asked to rate are “The personality of its brand is consistent with how I see myself,” “The personality of its brand is a mirror image of me,” and “Its brand is consistent with who I am.” There are eight items, each requiring a response on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The reliability of this scale was 0.8, verified by Opiri (2015). The scale was used in the Table V of section B.

Brand Preference

Brand preference is measured by a combination of scales utilized in three studies (Chen & Chang, 2008; Sirgy et al., 1997; Davies, Veloutsou, & Costa, 2006). First, the Brand preference scale was proposed by Chen and Chang (2008) and comprises of four items. The reliability of this scale is 0.766, as verified by Vinh (2016). It includes items such as “I feel that X is appealing to me.” This scale is used to measure brand preference. The second scale utilized for this purpose is a preference scale proposed by Davies et al. (2006), which was based on the original work by Sirgy et al. (1991). This scale measures consumer’s attitudes towards/preference for a product. It contains three items, such as “I consider X more than I would consider other similar things,” and its reliability was examined by Ar (2012). Both of these two scales were measure preference to brand as the scale of brand preference in the Table I of the section B.

The last brand preference scale was proposed by Sirgy et al. (1997). It consists of four items and its reliability was verified by Liu et al. (2012). An example of the item is “I would use X more than I would use Y.” This scale is used to compare local and
international hotel brands and ascertain which brand hotel is more attractive, as the scale of brand preference in the Table III of Section B.

The combination scale utilized in this study comprises of 15 items, and each item will be measured using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In this section, participants will first need to choose one of the most favorite brand hotels from international or local hotel brands and then give evaluation based on their perceptions.

**Perceived External Prestige**

The measure of perceived external prestige was based on the organizational prestige scale developed by Mael and Ashforth (1992). There were eight items in this scale. Examples of the survey items are “X is considered one of the best hotels,” “People from other hotels look down at X” (reversed item), and “It is considered prestigious in my community to be an employee of X.” Once again, the respondents will be required to rate the items on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), in the Table II of Section B. The reliability of this scale is 0.68, based on Mael and Ashforth’s (1992) study that measured a model of organizational identification.

**Career Indecision**

Career indecision was examined by the career decision scale (Osipow et al, 1976). The career decision scale was used to assess participants’ degree of career indecision (Rojewski & Hill, 1998). This scale had 18 items that required response on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (not at all like me) to 5 (exactly like me). Examples of items included in this scale include: “Several careers have equal appeal to me. I’m having a difficult time deciding among them,” “I know what I’d like to major in, but I don’t know what careers it
can lead to that would satisfy me,” and “I know I will have to go to work eventually, but none of the careers I know about appeal to me.” This scale assesses certainty in a career choice as well as career indecision, in the Table I of Section C. A higher score on this scale will imply a higher level of career indecision (Miller & Rottinghaus, 2013). The reliability of this scale is 0.86, as reported by Burns et al. (2013), who measured the relationship between interests and personality.

**Career Decision Making**

Career decision making was measured by the Assessment of Career Decision Making (ACDM; Harren, 1978). The scale of career decision-making styles measures three decision-making styles: rational, intuitive, and dependent. Rational style is defined as “the ability to know the results of decisions, and intuitive is defined as the emotional feelings to make decisions; then dependent is defined as individual duty to make decisions by himself” (Harren & Biscardi, 1980, p. 234). The ACDM is designed to measure decision-making styles and progress in coping with developmental tasks of young generations. The respondents’ career decision-making styles will be assessed through 30 items in the Table II of Section C, including: “I double-check my information sources to be sure I have the right facts before deciding,” “A decision is right for me if it is emotionally satisfying,” and “I usually don’t have a lot of confidence in my decisions unless my friends give me support on decisions.” The scale reliability was verified by Mau (2000).

**Data Analysis**

The SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) was used to analyze the collected data. Six methods of data analysis were performed in this study to examine the study hypotheses and answer research questions. First, descriptive statistics was used to
summarize participants’ background and demographic information. Second, Cronbach’s alpha analysis was performed to measure the internal consistency of each scale used. In addition, factor analysis was used to investigate subcategories among the two scales, Career Decision Scale, and Assessment of Career Decision Making. Third, simple linear regression and multiple regression analysis were used to test the relationship among the major career variables, including self-image congruity, brand preference, perceived external prestige, career indecision, and career decision making. Finally, independent t-tests and one-way ANOVA were used to examine whether there are differences in those career variables based upon demographic and background information, such as gender, school type, and academic major.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

The aim of the present study was to gain an understanding of Chinese college students’ career decision-making behaviors. After receiving the study approval by the IRB, the data collection could commence, whereby a convenience sample of students attending three universities and three vocational schools in Tianjin, China, was surveyed during October 2016. Potential study participants were approached either during the course or on the campus. The students that met the study inclusion criteria and volunteered to take part in the study were divided into two groups—comprising of those pursuing hospitality and non-hospitality majors—both of which completed the questionnaire in paper format.

Description of the Sample

Of the 550 hard copies of the questionnaire that were sent to three universities and three vocational schools in China, 430 were completed correctly, corresponding to the response rate of 78.1%. Thus, 430 valid questionnaires were available for analysis. Among the 430 students that complete the survey, 186 (43.3%) were males and 244 (56.7%) were females. In addition, 74.4% of the respondents were university students \((n = 320)\) and 25.6% were vocational school students \((n = 110)\). Demographic characteristics of the participants are summarized in Table 1.
As shown in Table 1, while majority of the participants study their preferred major, this percentage is greater among university students. In addition, relative to the university students, vocational students have more work experience in the hospitality and tourism (H&T) industry, such as restaurants and other food outlets, as well as lodging and other accommodation. It is particularly noteworthy that more than half of vocational and university students have no intention to work in the H&T industry upon graduation, confirming the supposition that Chinese people have negative attitudes toward careers in this field.
Factors Affecting Career Decision-making

Several survey questions aimed to examine students’ career assistance behaviors and factors affecting their career choices. About one-fifth of the participating students \((n = 68, 15.8\%)\) indicated that they received career help while at school. While most of these students obtained career-related information from course instructors \((n = 28, 41.8\%)\), some received help from university career center \((n = 16, 23.9\%)\), college career service center \((n = 8, 1.9\%)\), or counselors \((n = 8, 1.9\%)\). Furthermore, they were asked to select and rank the top three influential factors on their career decision-making. The item “myself” was rated at the top most frequently, followed by “parents,” “relatives,” and “friends.” Somewhat surprisingly, “course instructor” was chosen with relatively lower frequency (see Table 2).

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First Most Influential</th>
<th>Second Most Influential</th>
<th>Third Most Influential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myself</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>75.3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatives</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internship</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guest Lecture</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Career Fair</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-workers</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Domestic vs. International Hotels

Participants were asked to make a comparison between domestic and international brand hotels based on the ranking of the brands. Among the international brand hotels listed in the survey, Hilton was reported most frequently (n = 176, 13.6%), followed by Marriott (n = 142, 11%), Sheraton (n = 138, 10.7%), and Ritz-Carlton (n = 119, 9.2%). Furthermore, Hilton was reported the most frequently by students as the top career choice (n = 136, 10.5%); Marriott was reported the second most frequently as the second choice (n = 67, 5.1%); and Sheraton was reported the third most frequently as the third choice (n = 68, 5.3%) (see Table 3).

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Third Choice</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Second Choice</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Top Choice</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Wanda</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tangla</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td></td>
<td>HNA Grand Hotel</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the domestic brand hotels, Wanda was reported most frequently (n = 276, 21.4%), followed by Tangla (n = 178, 13.8%), HNA Grand Hotel (n = 163, 12.6%), and Green Tree
Inn ($n = 110, 8.5\%$). Furthermore, Wanda was reported the most frequently by students as the top career choice ($n = 140, 10.9\%$) and third choice ($n = 99, 7.7\%$); and HNA Grand Hotel was reported the second most frequently as the second choice ($n = 102, 7.9\%$) (see Table 4).

Table 4

*Ranking of Domestic Brand Hotels*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Top Choice %</th>
<th>Second Choice %</th>
<th>Third Choice %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wanda hotels</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangla</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Tree Inn</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country Garden</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Days</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crystal Orange</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jin Jiang</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vienna</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HNA Grand Hotel</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Inn</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanting</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furama Hotels</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Century Hotel</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Seasons</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Measurements of Career Variables**

In order to gain a better understanding of the participating students’ career decision-making process and the factors influencing it, six measurements were used, namely Self-image congruity scale, Brand Preference scale (Brand Preference\textsuperscript{a} and Brand Preference\textsuperscript{b}), Organizational Prestige scale, Career Decision Scale (CDS), and Assessment of Career Decision Making (ACDM).
**Factor Analysis**

Initially, the factorability of the 18 Career Decision Scale (CDS) items was examined. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .76, which was above the recommended value of .6 (Pallant, 2009), and Bartlett’s test of sphericity was significant ($p < .001$). Principal component analysis was used to identify and compute composite scores for the factors underlying the short version of the CDS. The initial eigenvalues showed that the first through fifth factor explained 23.86%, 11.42%, 8.19%, 7.15%, and 6.26% of the variance, respectively. Exploratory factor analysis used in this study revealed that five factors were sufficient to explain the data. The pattern matrix revealed that the first factor comprised of eight items, the second factor of four items, and the third, fourth, and fifth factor contained two items each. They were labeled as Indecision (Factor 1), Reasons to Lead Indecision (Factor 2), Ideal Career (Factor 3), Major/ Career Certainty (Factor 4), and Additional Resources (Factor 5).

In addition, the 30 items comprising the Assessment of Career Decision Making scale were examined by exploratory factor analysis. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .75, which was acceptable as it was above the recommended value of .6 (Pallant, 2009), and Bartlett’s test of sphericity was significant ($p < .001$). Only the first eight components recorded eigenvalues above 1, and they respectively explained 15.53%, 13.01%, 8.16%, 6.16%, 5.21%, 4.26%, 3.81%, and 3.57%. The factor analysis used in this study revealed that eight factors were sufficient to explain the data. The pattern matrix revealed that each component respectively comprised of four, six, five, four, three, four, two, and two items. They were labeled as Quick Decisions (Factor 1), Strategies used
to Make Decision (Factor 2), Brainstorming (Factor 3), Imaginary (Factor 4), Support (Factor 5), Right Decision (Factor 6), Time Preparation (Factor 7), and Internal Feelings (Factor 8).

**Reliability**

Cronbach’s alpha was computed to assess the internal consistency reliability for each scale used. The alpha value of the coefficient, the mean, and the standard deviation for each scale are provided in Table 5. As can be seen from the tabulated information, the alpha value for most scales exceeds .60, with the exception of the perceived external prestige scale (.55), confirming that most of the scales used in this study were internally consistent and highly reliable. The low reliability value for perceived external prestige was also reported by Jones and Volpe (2011), who developed the Organizational Prestige scale (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Thus, the reliability of their study supports the reliability of the scale the authors employed, justifying its use in the present research.

Table 5

*Summary of the Statistics for the Scales used to Measure Career Preferences among Chinese Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-image Congruity</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Preference&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Preference&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived External Prestige</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Indecision</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Decision Making</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Brand Preference<sup>a</sup> = preference toward a hotel brand; Brand Preference<sup>b</sup> = preference toward international or domestic hotels.
Relationships among Career Variables

The survey data were first investigated in order to ascertain the impacts of self-image congruity, brand preference, perceived external prestige, and career indecision as the key career related variables examined in the present study. Simple linear regression and hierarchical multiple regression were performed to examine the relationship among the major career variables, as these directly related to the second and third research question.

Regression Analysis

A series of regression analyses were computed to determine the relationship between each pair of career variables. The analysis results revealed that career indecision and career decision making had significant positive relationship with brand preference\(^a\) \((p < .001, p < .001\), respectively). Specifically, brand preference\(^a\) could predict 4.5% and 5.6% of variance in career indecision and career decision making, respectively. The corresponding regression equations are:

\[
\text{Career Indecision} = 2.28 + .16*\text{Brand Preference}^a \\
\text{Career Decision Making} = 2.66 + .13*\text{Brand Preference}^a
\]

Furthermore, career indecision and career decision making had a significant relationship with brand preference\(^b\) \((p < .001, p < .001\), respectively). Specifically, brand preference\(^b\) could predict 16.5% and 23.3% of variance in career indecision and career decision making, respectively. The corresponding regression equations are:

\[
\text{Career Indecision} = 1.68 + .32*\text{Brand Preference}^b \\
\text{Career Decision Making} = 2.12 + .35*\text{Brand Preference}^b
\]
The above findings indicate that brand preference among the Chinese students is correlated with career indecision and career decision making, providing support for Hypothesis 3 and 5, which are thus accepted.

Brand preference\(^a\) and brand preference\(^b\) also had a significant positive relationship with self-image congruity \((p<.001, p<.05, \text{ respectively})\), supporting Hypothesis 1. Self-image congruity could explain 12.2% of the variance in brand preference\(^a\) and 2.3% of brand preference\(^b\), which is reflected in the regression equations:

\[
\text{Brand Preference}^a = 2.07 + .47*\text{Self-image Congruity}
\]

\[
\text{Brand Preference}^b = 2.42 + .2* \text{Self-image Congruity}
\]

Similarly, career indecision and career decision making had a significant positive relationship with perceived external prestige \((p<.001, p<.001, \text{ respectively})\), providing support for Hypothesis 4 and 6, which are thus accepted. Specifically, perceived external prestige could predict 5.4% and 5.8% of variance in career indecision and career decision making, respectively. This corresponds to the regression equations:

\[
\text{Career Indecision} = 2.17 + .23*\text{Perceived External Prestige}
\]

\[
\text{Career Decision Making} = 2.41 + .11*\text{Perceived External Prestige}
\]

Moreover, career decision making had a significant positive relationship with career indecision \((p<.001)\), whereby career indecision could explain 23.3% of variance in career decision making. This is represented by the following regression equation:

\[
\text{Career Decision Making} = 2.12 + .35*\text{Career Indecision}
\]

On the other hand, brand preference\(^a\) had no significant predictive effect on perceived external prestige \((p > .05)\), while brand preference\(^b\) had a positive and significant relationship with perceived external prestige, thus providing partial support for Hypothesis 2 and 8.
Perceived external prestige could explain 1.6% of variance in brand preference. The corresponding regression equation is given by:

\[ \text{Brand Preference} = 2.23 + 0.04 \times \text{Perceived External Prestige} \]

The coefficients of determination among variables are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

*Coefficients of Determination for Each Hypothesis*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1 Self-image Congruity</td>
<td>.122</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-image Congruity</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2 Perceived External Prestige</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>Reject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived External Prestige</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3 Brand Preference</td>
<td>.045</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Preference</td>
<td>.165</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4 Perceived External Prestige</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5 Brand Preference</td>
<td>.056</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Preference</td>
<td>.110</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6 Perceived External Prestige</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, hierarchical multiple regression was used to assess the ability of three control measures (brand preference, brand preference, and perceived external prestige) to predict career decision making, after controlling for the influence of career indecision. Career indecision was entered at Step 1, explaining 23.3% of the variance in career decision making. After entry of the brand preference, brand preference, and perceived external prestige in Step 2, the total variance explained by the model as a whole was 28.4%, \( F (3,426) = 56.40, p < .001 \). The control measures explained an additional 5.1% of the variance in career decision making, \( \Delta R^2 = .05, F (2,426) = 15.23, p < .001 \). In the final model, all of these variables were statistically significant, with the indecision scale recording a highest beta value (beta = 0.37, \( p < .05 \)) (See Table 7).
Table 7

ANOVA Results of Career Decision Making among Chinese Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1(^a)</td>
<td>130.09</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2(^b)</td>
<td>56.40</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. \(^a\) = Step 1 (career indecision and career decision making), \(^b\) = Step 2 (brand preference\(^a\), brand preference\(^b\), perceived external prestige, career indecision, and career decision making), *** \(p < .001\).

Compared with the data presented in Table 6 and 7, the values reported in Table 8 indicate that the effects of brand preference\(^a\), brand preference\(^b\), and perceived external prestige on the Chinese students’ career decision making weaken under the impact of career indecision, while the impact of indecision becomes stronger. These findings confirm that career indecision influences the relationship among brand preference\(^a\), brand preference\(^b\), and perceived external prestige, all of which play a role in the career decision-making process, supporting H7.

**Group Differences Based on Career Variables**

The survey data were also investigated in order to ascertain the impacts of contextual and background information on career decision making among Chinese students, as well as explore its relationship with other career-related variables of interest for the present investigation. In order to meet these objectives, the survey data were analyzed using independent samples \(t\)-tests and one-way ANOVA to establish whether there are any differences in career variables (gender, academic major, school type, and academic level), as this allowed Hypothesis 8, 9, 10, and 11 to be tested.

The \(t\)-test was first conducted to determine whether the values of the aforementioned career variables differed between male and female students and other career-related variables...
were gender-specific. Table 8 presents the independent samples \( t \)-test results, revealing a significant difference between male and female students in perceived external prestige, career indecision, and career decision making (\( t = 3.12, p < .01; t = 2.55, p < .05; \) and \( t = 4.17, p < .01 \), respectively). Hypothesis 9 was thus partially supported. However, no differences between male and female students were found with respect to self-image congruity, brand preference\(^a\), and brand preference\(^b\).

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>( t )</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-image Congruity</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>-.21</td>
<td>.831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Preference(^a)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>-1.91</td>
<td>.056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Preference(^b)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived External Prestige</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>.002**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Indecision</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>.011*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Decision Making</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* \(^*\) \( p < .05; ^{**} \) \( p < .01; ^{***} \) \( p < .001 \).

The \( t \)-test was also conducted to determine whether these background and career variables varied between students whose major was in hospitality and non-hospitality fields, respectively. Table 9 reports the results of the independent samples \( t \)-test, revealing a significant difference in intention to work in the H&T industry, career indecision, and career decision making between these two groups (\( t = 3.12, p < .05; t = 3.37, p < .01; t = 2.07, p < .05 \), respectively). These findings provide support for Hypothesis 11, which was thus
accepted. On the other hand, no significant differences in self-image congruity, brand preference\textsuperscript{a}, brand preference\textsuperscript{b}, and perceived external prestige between students majoring in hospitality and non-hospitality subjects were noted.

Table 9

\textit{Academic Major Influence on Career Decision Making among Chinese Students}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>\textit{t}</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intentions to Work in H&amp;T Industry</td>
<td>H&amp;T</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>.002\textsuperscript{**}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-hospitality</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-image Congruity</td>
<td>H&amp;T</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>.185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-hospitality</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Preference\textsuperscript{a}</td>
<td>H&amp;T</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>.059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-hospitality</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Preference\textsuperscript{b}</td>
<td>H&amp;T</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-hospitality</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived External Prestige</td>
<td>H&amp;T</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>.113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-hospitality</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Indecision</td>
<td>H&amp;T</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>.001\textsuperscript{***}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-hospitality</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Decision Making</td>
<td>H&amp;T</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>.04\textsuperscript{*}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-hospitality</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textit{Note.} \*\textit{p} < .05; \**\textit{p} < .01; \***\textit{p} < .001; H&T = Hospitality and Tourism Related; Non-hospitality = Management and Economy, Arts and Sciences, Social Science, etc.

Next, the \textit{t}-test was conducted to determine whether the values of these career variables and contextual variables varied between university and vocational school students. The results of the independent samples \textit{t}-test reported in Table 10 reveal a significant difference in working experience in the H&T industry, brand preference\textsuperscript{b}, career indecision, and career decision making among the two groups (\textit{t} = 2.56, \textit{p} < .05; \textit{t} = -4.6, \textit{p} < .001; \textit{t} = -2.95, \textit{p} < .05; \textit{t} = -3.84, \textit{p} < .001, respectively), while no significant difference was noted in intention to work in the H&T industry, self-image congruity, brand preference\textsuperscript{a}, and perceived external prestige. Thus, Hypothesis 10 was rejected.
Table 10

Influence of School Type on Career Decision Making of Chinese Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intentions to Work in H&amp;T Industry</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>.123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocational School</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Experience in H&amp;T Industry</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>.011*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocational School</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-image Congruity</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>-.126</td>
<td>.900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocational School</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Preference&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>-1.24</td>
<td>.215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocational School</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Preference&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>-4.6</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocational School</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived External Prestige</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>-1.52</td>
<td>.128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocational School</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Indecision</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>-2.95</td>
<td>.004**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocational School</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Decision Making</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>-3.84</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocational School</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was subsequently computed to examine the variances in career decision making among students at different academic levels. Levene’s test was used to test the homogeneity of variances (Loh, 1987), revealing no differences in variances in career indecision and career decision making (p = .200, p = .234, respectively). As the variances in these three career variables were not equal, this implied that the sample means were not equal either.

The ANOVA results revealed that the relationship among academic status (e.g., 1st year, 2nd year, 3rd year, 4th year, and graduate student at the master level) and three career variables were significant at .05 level (Table 11). Moreover, differences among students at different academic levels were significant with respect to self-image congruity [F(4,425) =
6.46, $p < .001$, brand preference$^a$ [$F(4,425) = 6.95, p < .001$], brand preference$^b$ [$F(4,425) = 4.94, p < .01$], and perceived external prestige [$F(4,425) = 6.56, p < .001$].

Table 11

**ANOVA Results Pertaining to the Differences in the Career Decision Making of Chinese Students at Various Academic Levels**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-image Congruity</td>
<td>6.46</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Preference$^a$</td>
<td>6.95</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Preference$^b$</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>.001**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived External Prestige</td>
<td>6.56</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Indecision</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>.200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Decision Making</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>.234</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Furthermore, Turkey HSD was used to identify the specific student group that caused the difference in the findings. The results revealed presence of several group means that were significantly different at the .05 level. More specifically, third-year students differed significantly from all other levels of academic status in brand preference$^a$ ($p < .001$). Furthermore, graduate students at the master level differed significantly from other groups (except third-year students) in brand preference$^b$. When perceived external prestige was examined, the findings revealed that third-year students differed significantly from first-year and second-year students, while graduate students at the master level differed significantly from second-year students. Moreover, graduate students differed significantly from all other students in self-image congruity.

**Demographic and Background Effects on Career Behaviors**

The survey data were also investigated in order to ascertain the impacts of demographic and background information on career behaviors among Chinese students. In
order to meet these objectives, the questionnaires were analyzed using open-ended questions to examine the factors influence career decision making and other career-related questions.

**Factors Influencing Career Decision Making**

Several questionnaire items aimed to elicit the reasons behind the students’ decision whether or not to enter the H&T industry upon graduation. The findings are reported in Table 12 and 13.

Table 12

*Selected Responses from Students Planning to Work in the H&T Industry*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Hospitality Major</th>
<th>Non-hospitality Major</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University Students</td>
<td>Match with Your Major</td>
<td>Good Benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interested in Career</td>
<td>No Suitable Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunities and Positions</td>
<td>Opportunities and Positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Income</td>
<td>Interest in This Field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good Working Environment</td>
<td>Have Fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Impact of Internship</td>
<td>Great Potential Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reach More People and Expand Social Networking</td>
<td>Family Members Work in This Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learn about Different Culture</td>
<td>No Professional Employment Prospects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Students</td>
<td>Match with Your Major</td>
<td>High Income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Income</td>
<td>Intention or Interests to work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consideration with Good Salary and Position</td>
<td>Opportunities and Positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunities</td>
<td>No or Low Impact on Daily Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>College Recommendation</td>
<td>No Proper Job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local H&amp;T Industry</td>
<td>Interest in Tourism and Travel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Development Situation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 12, the reasons for entering the H&T industry students majoring in hospitality cited are similar between two school types and include matching with their majors, welfare treatment (income and position), and social networking. On the other hand, students pursuing other majors most frequently cited interests, income, and positions.
Table 13

Selected Responses from Students that do not Plan to Work in the H&T Industry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Hospitality Major</th>
<th>Non-Hospitality Major</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>Customers are too difficult to serve</td>
<td>Inconsistent with your major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Heavy workload</td>
<td>No interests and intentions to work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low pay</td>
<td>Heavy workload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time conflict with holiday and vocation</td>
<td>Lack of understanding of the industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low status as employees</td>
<td>Unstable Income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational</td>
<td>Low pay</td>
<td>Inconsistent with your major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Hesitation with working</td>
<td>No interests and intentions to work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time conflict with holiday and vocation</td>
<td>Heavy workload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No interests and intentions to work</td>
<td>Long working hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 13, hospitality students from university and vocational schools that do not plan to work in the H&T industry mostly cite low pay and time conflict with public holidays, while the reasons given by the non-hospitality students include inconsistent profession, no interests, and heavy workload.

Domestic vs. International Hotels

One of the study aims was to ascertain hotel brand preferences (domestic or international) among Chinese students faced with making career choices. In order to meet this objective, as a part of the data collection process, the participating students were asked to state which hotel brand they preferred to work in. Based on this information, hotel brand ranking was produced (for both international and domestic hotel brands) for the two school types (university and vocational school). As shown in Table 14 and 15, the top ranked
international brand for university students is Marriot, while Marriot, Hilton, Four Seasons, and Holiday Inn are ranked as the first four brands by vocational students. Green Tree Inn emerged as the top ranked domestic hotel by both university students (who ranked Wanda hotel as the second) and vocational students. It is interesting that participants from both school types have almost the same preference for domestic hotels.

Table 14

*Ranking of International Brand Hotels in Terms of Chinese Students’ Career Preference*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Top Choice</th>
<th>Second Choice</th>
<th>Third Choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Ritz-Carlton</td>
<td>2. Westin</td>
<td>2. InterContinental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Ritz-Carlton</td>
<td>2. Marriott</td>
<td>2. The Venetian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Four Seasons</td>
<td>5. Renaissance</td>
<td>5. Holiday Inn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15

*Ranking of Domestic Brand Hotels in Terms of Chinese Students’ Career Preference*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Top Choice</th>
<th>Second Choice</th>
<th>Third Choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University Students</td>
<td>1. Wanda hotel</td>
<td>1. HNA Grand Hotel</td>
<td>1. Wanda hotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Tangla</td>
<td>2. Jin Jiang</td>
<td>2. HNA Grand Hotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Crystal Orange</td>
<td>5. Wanda hotel</td>
<td>5. Hanting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Students</td>
<td>1. Wanda hotel</td>
<td>1. Home Inn</td>
<td>1. Wanda hotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Tangla</td>
<td>2. HNA Grand Hotel</td>
<td>2. Jin Jiang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. 7 Days</td>
<td>4. Green Tree Inn</td>
<td>4. 7 Days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Green Tree Inn</td>
<td>5. Jin Jiang</td>
<td>5. Green Tree Inn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As a part of the survey, the respondents were given the opportunity to respond to two open-ended questions, which aimed to ascertain the factors influencing young generations’ career decision-making process. The students were prompted to (1) discuss their views and perceptions of careers in domestic and international brand hotels; and (2) list words and/or statements that they associate with international and domestic brand hotels. Their responses were subsequently categorized based on the major and school type. As shown in Table 16 and 17, the results indicated that the majority of respondents preferred working in international hotels. Moreover, the participating students indicated that, if they had to work in domestic hotels, they would do so in order to gain work experience that would increase their chances of attaining a job in one of the international hotels.

Table 16

*Selected Items Related to Feelings Associated with Working in International Brand Hotels*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Hospitality Major</th>
<th>Non-hospitality Major</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University Students</td>
<td>Feel proud among others</td>
<td>Be satisfied and happy to work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be a part of international chain hotel groups</td>
<td>Looking forward to different Challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work hard to get further promotion</td>
<td>Have expectations about the this job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reduce the quality of life</td>
<td>Work in foreign enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bright career development path</td>
<td>English work environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be cognized about your ability</td>
<td>Good welfare treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High income</td>
<td>Frequent travel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Free accommodation in the hotel</td>
<td>Be proud to work in these hotels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Students</td>
<td>Feel happy and have strong intentions to work</td>
<td>Be satisfied and happy to work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feel proud and prestige among other people</td>
<td>Work hard and learn more about this industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be a part of international chain hotel group</td>
<td>Meet people with higher levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Happy and have interests</td>
<td>Be surprised to work here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work hard</td>
<td>High-end environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feeling so-so</td>
<td>Match with</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 17

Selected Items Related to Feelings Associated with Working in Domestic Brand Hotels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University Students</th>
<th>Hospitality Major</th>
<th>Non-hospitality Major</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not satisfied with this job</td>
<td>Feel disappointed and frustrated about own self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gain more working experience in this industry and job-hop to another hotel</td>
<td>Have no willingness to work in this hotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feel lower status as employees to work in this hotel</td>
<td>A chance to face up to challenge through actual experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor management</td>
<td>Lower social status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Basic hotel facilities</td>
<td>Feel satisfied about yourself to live independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low educational level among colleagues</td>
<td>No value for future career development path</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Waste time to work there</td>
<td>Tired and bored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Customers are difficulty to serve</td>
<td>May meet with acquaintance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-limited thinking</td>
<td>Bad mood because of customers’ complaints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Students</td>
<td>Just a job without extra emotion</td>
<td>Be satisfied and happy to find a job to live independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfied to find a major related job</td>
<td>Cover the living expenses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quit this job</td>
<td>Hard to decide based the job position and compensation package</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feeling so-so</td>
<td>Work hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No or low social status</td>
<td>Bored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accumulate work experience in H&amp;T industry</td>
<td>Have fewer opportunities to deal with some problems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, as shown in Table 18 and 19, the participants’ responses to the open-ended questions indicated that their attitudes toward international brand hotels were more positive compared to domestic brand hotels, partially supporting Hypothesis 8.
### Table 18

*Selected Items Revealing Chinese Students’ Perceptions of International Brand Hotels*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Hospitality Major</th>
<th>Non-hospitality Major</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University Students</td>
<td>Worldwide Brand</td>
<td>Perfect Service System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Welfare Benefits</td>
<td>Global Brand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Global Chain of Large Enterprises</td>
<td>Higher Social Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Renown and Famous Hotels</td>
<td>Standardized Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English Working Conditions</td>
<td>Good Staff Treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Four or Five Star Hotel</td>
<td>Starred Hotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comfortable Accommodation</td>
<td>Large Scale Enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time-honored Enterprise Culture</td>
<td>Unshakable Industry Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>List Some International Brand</td>
<td>List Some International Brand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Students</td>
<td>High Income</td>
<td>Famous Brand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Global Famous Brand</td>
<td>Expensive Price and Luxurious Enjoyment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comfortable Environment</td>
<td>More Positive Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Located in Bustling Area</td>
<td>Effective Human Resource Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Social Cognition</td>
<td>Making Good Money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wear Uniform</td>
<td>Larger than Domestic Hotels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Free Employee Meals</td>
<td>Customers’ Feedback Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Orientation for New Employees</td>
<td>Standardized Dressing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 19

*Selected Items Revealing Chinese Students’ Perceptions of Domestic Brand Hotels*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Hospitality Major</th>
<th>Non-hospitality Major</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University Students</td>
<td>Low Prestige Brand</td>
<td>High Quality-price-ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Affordable Price for Customers</td>
<td>Unbalanced Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Budget Hotel Chain</td>
<td>Inefficiency and Mismanagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cover All Level of Customers</td>
<td>Low Level of Professional Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Welfare Treatment</td>
<td>Low Prestige Brand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>List Some Domestic Brand Name</td>
<td>Affordable Price</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A larger number of hotels</td>
<td>Large Market Demands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simple Room Decoration</td>
<td>List Some Domestic Brand Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Students</td>
<td>Low Salary</td>
<td>Misunderstanding about Hotel Brands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsafe Environment</td>
<td>Regional Characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Brand Awareness</td>
<td>Limited Chance to promote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Budget Hotel</td>
<td>Low Recruitment Requirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simple Function</td>
<td>Reasonable Price for Customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chain Operation</td>
<td>Tourists as Target Customers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

The aim of the present research was to investigate the factors affecting career decision making among young generations in China. In particular, self-image congruity, brand preference, perceived external prestige, and career indecision were examined, in order to determine the impacts of contextual and background information on career decision making and other career-related variables. The findings revealed that, when making career choices, Chinese young generations are primarily driven by brand preference, perceived external prestige, and career indecision. Moreover, their career decision-making processes were influenced by gender, type of major, school type, and academic status.

Factors Affecting Career Decision Making

Background Information

The analysis of the questionnaire responses given by the study participants revealed that, in line with the findings reported by Wang (2011), 38.6% of the study sample reported not pursuing their preferred major. This discrepancy between student preferences and the degree they are pursuing is due to the college admission policy in China, which places significant emphasis on prospective students’ performance on college entrance examinations (Zhang, 2009; Zhang, 2011). In the present study, for the purpose of analyses and comparisons, the participants were segregated into those pursuing hospitality major and those studying other subjects, as the focus was on determining their career preferences in the hospitality and tourism (H&T) sector. However, irrespective of their majors, 62.1% of the participants declared interest in H&T industry, even though only 28.1% of the sample pursued hospitality and tourism related majors. This prevalent interest in H&T industry is
a relatively recent phenomenon, stemming from rapid economic development in China, which has resulted in extensive foreign and domestic investments into the H&T sector. According to the available statistics, while this industry contributed to the national GDP by 3% growth in 2005, this percentage has risen to 13% in 2015 (International Trade in Services, 2016; International Transactions Tables, 2016). China has also become more open to international visitors, which prompted expansion of the tourism sector to new regions, as well as generated the need for more human resources. In particular, new branches of tourism emerged, such as educational and medical tourism, opening the possibilities for new careers in this sector (The Tourism Market in China, 2015). Due to its immense growth opportunities, the H&T industry has started to attract a wide range of professionals (e.g., commercial, business, hospitality, fitness, entertainment, etc.), which mandated introduction of new educational curricula. Although tourism and hospitality was traditionally viewed as a labor-intensive sector, without many career opportunities, this has recently changed, whereby many university students are now pursuing H&T-related majors. In addition, those studying other subjects are also expressing interest in this industry.

However, findings yielded by this study indicate that most participants have limited work experience in this sector and base their career preferences on other factors, as will be discussed later. This assertion is in line with the statement of Wong and Liu (2010), who noted that Chinese students commonly ignore their interests when making career choices due to parental and cultural influences, which make it hard to make career decisions based on objective assessments of a particular profession. This explains the incongruence between the interest participants express in the H&T industry in general and their actual intention to seek job in this field upon graduation.
The career decision making among the Chinese youth is further exacerbated by the fact that they are given limited professional support by, for example, career advisers, school staff, etc. This finding points to the lack of alignment between services offered by schools and universities and practical needs of student population. Firstly, career guidance provided by schools is deficient and tends to be driven by the national and departmental employment policy (Sun, 2013). Thus, when offering career advice, such services tend to promote specific companies, while failing to provide related occupational education, career planning services, strategies to choose jobs, and occupational ethics education. Moreover, while schools are mandated to produce Reports of Graduate Employment Status, no records are kept on the changes in demand for specific skills or qualifications in various industries and enterprises (Chan, 2015). In addition, studies aiming to forecast future employment trends are lacking, making it very difficult for students to make informed decisions when selecting their majors and considering different career paths. Their career decision-making process is made more difficult by the fact that, at such young age, students have less social and work experience based on which to make choices (ManpowerGroup, 2012). They also may have limited understanding of the practicalities of being a member of workforce, and specifically working in different sectors. Consequently, they tend to think of various professions in abstract terms, and often idealize certain careers based on the images formed by media. Thus, it is not surprising that, when they acquire more information about certain profession, the incongruence between their expectations and realities of working in that job makes them reluctant to enter the labor market. This career indecision may be detrimental, as it may result in missing job opportunities. In addition, as the study findings have shown, most students are primarily driven by their own views of certain professions, but are also heavily
influenced by their parents’ preferences when making career choices. Due to the one-child policy that has prevailed in China since 1979, which started to be phased out in 2015, most of the Chinese university students are the only child in their families. Thus, most Chinese parents feel that they need to compensate for the lack of siblings by being particularly supportive. As a result, they usually do not want to go against the child’s wishes. Nonetheless, through the upbringing, parents exert significant influence on their child’s values, norms, and expectations. In addition, their educational attainment and career choice are also relevant when children come to make educational and career choices.

Self-image Congruity

Results yielded by the analyses conducted as a part of the present study indicate that the brand image of a hotel and a student’s self-image shared similar personality attributes. This finding is also supported by the self-image congruity theory in that most students favor brands that are similar to their self-image (Sirgy, 1982). Brand preference is exhibited through students’ perceived congruity between their own interests, attitudes, personality, and self-expression and those conveyed by a particular brand. This link is evident in the preferences for a specific hotel over others shown by the study participants, as they believe that its image carries certain personality traits that students could identify with. This study also revealed that Chinese students have preference with respect to domestic or international brand hotels, depending on their view of their congruence with their self-image, in line with the findings reported by Jamal and Goode (2001). These authors reported a positive effect of congruity level on customer preference and satisfaction. This led them to posit that a high level of congruity between perceptions of self and a particular brand would lead to higher level of brand preference and greater customer satisfaction. These assertions also
applied to brand preference as, according to Jamal and Goode (2001), customers would generate positive attitudes toward the brand. These assertions can be interpreted in the context of the present investigation to imply that students’ perception of better alignment between a specific hotel image and their self-image would improve their assessment of the career in this hotel brand.

**Brand Preference – Preferences Related to Hotel Brands**

The results yielded by the current study indicate presence of a relationship between self-image congruity and brand preference. This finding is congruent with the assertion made by Rhee and Johnson (2012) that customers tend to prefer brands that have images compatible with their perceptions of self. Furthermore, the perceptions of self can be separated into those related to one’s ideal and actual self-image, both of which are, according to Sirgy (1982), influential on consumer behaviors. As noted by Sirgy, consumers generate more positive attitudes toward a specific hotel brand if they perceive its close alignment with their self-image, which leads to brand preference and stronger intentions to visit this hotel. This relationship is widely recognized in research and marketing, whereby management of many famous brands focuses on ensuring that the brand conveys the desired image as a means of attracting not only customers, but also employees with the right characteristics. The present investigation also revealed that consumers with higher levels of self-image congruity with a particular brand are more likely to expect that brand to meet their needs and images.

**Brand Preference – Preferences in Terms of International vs. Domestic Brand**

As China’s hospitality and tourism industry has experienced a significant boom in the last decades, management of many international hotel brands has commenced strategic
expansion of their portfolios to include development in mainland China. Prior research suggests that brand preference may impact customers’ perceptions of the industry and thus influence their purchasing decisions (Bahng, et al., 2013; Hwang & Ok, 2013). However, brand preferences with respect to career choices are insufficiently explored in extant research in this field. This gap in extant knowledge was addressed in the present study by aiming to answer the first research question—Which hotel brand type, domestic or international, is preferred among young generations in China when making a career choice? Analyses aimed at this specific question indicated that brand preference with respect to international vs. domestic hotel brands is correlated with students’ self-image congruity, and this finding is consistent with the assertions reported by Rhee and Johnson (2012). More specifically, when student data was analyzed separately for those attending vocational schools and universities, the results revealed that vocational students scored higher on brand preference, in terms of both international and domestic hotels. However, while vocational students tended to prefer domestic hotels, university students exhibited greater preference for international hotel brands. This discrepancy confirms that vocational and university students have different career goals. In China, vocational school curricula focus on imparting practical skills and require students to complete at least six-month internship before their graduation (China Labor Bulletin, n.d.; Wu, 2003). Consequently, upon graduation, these students have more realistic perceptions of the hotel brand, allowing them to make an informed decision regarding the hotel brand they want to work in. In other words, as by the time they are ready to enter the job market they have a clear understanding of their abilities and interests, and are better able to determine which hotel, international or domestic, would be most likely to meet their needs. In addition, while university students
showed greater affinity for international brand hotels, both student groups have positive attitudes toward this hotel type. This finding is aligned with the general attitudes of Chinese people, most of whom associate premium quality with foreign products, recognizable style, expensive price, uniqueness, and global reputation (Bian & Forsythe, 2012). Thus, by consuming such products, they believe that they convey higher social status and greater sophistication. Kim and Jang (2013) went as far as suggesting that highly priced international hotels are synonymous with higher level of service quality and leading to greater consumer engagement.

The vocational and university students that took part in the present study also have similar opinions on the ranking of international hotel brands, while their ranking of domestic hotel brands revealed some notable differences. The congruence in their ranking of international hotels is not surprising, as their image is carefully cultivated and well known worldwide. Thus, Chinese people may have similar perceptions of international hotels because these brands have successful management and marketing system that has taken years to develop and refine. Thus, most world-renowned international hotels can benefit from brand-name recognition, economies of scale, and managerial expertise when entering new markets, such as China, thus making it much easier to overcome many of the problems related to internationalization, such as cultural, linguistic, legal, and employment differences encountered in the host country (Alon, Ni, & Wang, 2012). However, the same does not apply to the domestic hotels in China, as hundreds of domestic hotel management enterprises have been developed in the last three decades, making it very difficult to create a widely recognized and trusted brand. This issue is further exacerbated by the fact that they have to compete for the same clients with the international brands. Thus, when ranking domestic
hotels, university and vocational students struggled to make a distinction among the choices offered. Furthermore, due to the lack of practical work experience, university students may have limited understanding of the domestic hotels, and thus tended to rank only those that are most easily recognizable in China. On the other hand, while many of the vocational students worked as a part of their degree in one or more of these establishments, they struggled to rank them due to low confidence in their abilities and negative self-image due to their educational background (Bean, Bush, McKenry, & Wilson, 2003). As a result, even those that show preference for certain domestic hotels do not believe that they would be able to work there due to the limited education they will receive upon graduation (Siu, Wong, & Feng, 2010).

**Perceived External Prestige**

Perceived external prestige is considered important by most individuals, as one of the human needs, according to Maslow (1954), is the feeling that one means something to others. In the context of the present study, this can be translated to one’s perceptions of the occupation and organization the individual works for (Dutton et al., 1994). As proposed by Herrbach, Mignonac, and Gatignon (2004), perceived external prestige is a vehicle for displaying one’s power and wealth, and is also a way for self-expression. Results yielded by the present study suggest that perceived external prestige influenced both international and domestic hotel brand preferences reported by the participating students. This finding is supported by the self-image congruity theory, which postulates that consumers prefer hotel brands that are similar to the image they want to portray to others (Sirgy, 1982). In the context of the present study, this implies that preference for domestic or international brand
hotels would be governed by the image vocational and university students wish to exhibit externally.

However, given that most Chinese hotels have been opened recently and operated on a small scale with limited budget for improving service quality or promoting their brand (Hospitalitynet, 2014), not many students would associate them with positive external image. Domestic hotels also tend to adopt traditional management strategies that are customer-driven, and view low price as the main means of competition (Ye, Law, Gu, & Chen, 2011). Finally, they lack of effective online marketing techniques and thus struggle to compete with international brands (Gu, 2003; Hai-yan & Baum, 2006). As a result, in the Chinese H&T sector, very few domestic hotel groups are prominent and may convey a recognizable brand that is synonymous with quality and prestige. Unlike domestic hotels, international hotel groups have attached importance to brand building and conduct effective diversified brand marketing strategies when entering new markets (De Chernatony & Segal-Horn, 2001). For example, the French Accor Group (AccorHotels, n.d.) operates under luxury five-star brand (Sofitel Hotel), four-star brand (Novotel Hotel), three-star brand (Mercure Hotel), second-star business hotel brand (IBIS), and no starred brand (FOEMULEI), in order to meet the needs of customers at different levels through a variety of brands. As international hotels benefit from the economies of scale and longstanding reputation, they can invest into such diversified portfolios, aligned with the purchasing abilities of a wide range of customers. This leads to customers developing a close connection between hotel brand and their self-image, creating a lasting bond and loyalty. International studies have shown that consumers enhance their social status and reflect their inner self through staying in well recognized international hotel brands (Caroll & Ahuvia, 2006), because people largely judge other
people based on their purchasing power and taste, and how they present themselves through what they use, wear, and purchase (Joy & James, 2012). As Nueno and Quelch (1998) stated, owning items produced by prestigious brands is often equated with the owner’s social status, as it communicates success and prestige. The same assertion can be applied to international hotels, as merely being their guest conveys the same level of prestige and financial wealth.

Students also exhibit brand affinity when making their career decisions. The findings yielded by the present study demonstrate that perceptions of prestige are highly influential in career decision making, as was reported by Dodson and Borders (2006). For example, some traditionally male occupations, such as builder or electrician, carry low prestige, and are thus not attractive to either gender, women in particular. Furthermore, as was previously noted, vocational and university students exhibit many differences in their characteristics, which extends to perceived external prestige of domestic and international hotels. Students are admitted to universities based on the scores attained at college entrance exams, while vocational schools have lower admission requirements than universities (Sun, 2010), allowing many less capable individuals to gain a place on one of their courses. As a result, university students harbor a sense of superiority over their vocational school peers and are likely to wish to retain it later in life by pursuing careers that are deemed prestigious. In China in particular, when university students make career choices, they always pay attention to prestige and social status (Wan, Wong, & Kong, 2014), resulting in choosing professions that would allow them to increase their perceived social standing.
Career Indecision

Career indecision is a common problem among students, as it is widely recognized “a stressful situation including dilemmas and conflicts triggered by interpersonal, intrapersonal, and environmental factor” (Argyropoulou, Sidiropoulou-Dimakakou, & Besevegis, 2007, p. 318). Results yielded by the present study suggest that, for Chinese students, perceived external prestige may contribute to career indecision. This assertion is in line with the prestige theory postulate that adolescents prefer to choose a career with higher prestige (Ali et al., 2005; Thompson, 2013; Thompson & Subich, 2011; Vondracek et al., 1995). Thompson and Subich (2006) examined the relationship between career decision and social status, reporting that social status was a predictor of successful career decision making. More specifically, according to their study findings, the greater the economic resources, social power, and social prestige students have, the stronger their ability to make career decisions. This relationship exists, as students with higher social status and prestige tend to be more confident in their ability to make important life decisions, including those pertaining to their future career. Furthermore, the present investigation also revealed that Chinese students’ brand preferences have an effect on the extent of their career indecision. This finding is in line with the statement made by Okoroado et al. (2010), who reported that college students tend to make career decisions with greater certainty, as they exhibit stronger preferences for companies that convey a higher prestige.

In addition, analyses performed as a part of this investigation also revealed that career indecision mediated the relationship between brand preference and perceived external prestige, as well as their effect on the career decision-making process. These findings highlight the implications of brand preference, as well as perceived external prestige, for
students’ capacity for making important life decisions. Thus, both the foundational theory of brand preference and perceived external prestige are supported by the study findings, as their postulates clearly apply to the manner Chinese students approach making career decisions. Mediated effect of career indecision was also found between brand preference and perceived external prestige through the career decision-making process, whereas moderate to weak effect existed between brand preference and perceived external prestige. The study results further demonstrated that career indecision plays a greater role relative to brand preference and perceived external prestige in the context of career decision making. According to Brown (2004), youth aged between 18 and 24 are highly curious about the outside world and prefer to explore new opportunities. However, as they lack maturity and practical life experiences (including social acumen and work experience), they are highly influenced by parents and friends, and increasingly social media. Thus, if the information they obtain is inaccurate, their decisions will likely be flawed too (Ashby & Schoon, 2010; Lee & Rojewski, 2009). As some youth are aware of these issues, they struggle with making decisions.

The present study also revealed that, even participants with strong preference for specific hotel brands may struggle to make career choices, as they are not fully cognizant of their abilities, interests, and desires. This creates a sense of uncertainty, which translates into career indecision. Moreover, given that brand preferences and perceived external prestige are merely perceptions or opinions based on the external environment, they can easily change, as new information or government policies are introduced. Consequently, brand preference and perceived external prestige are not decisive factors in Chinese students’ decision making, which is primarily hindered by their inability to arrive at the career choice
due to limited knowledge of professions and lack of understanding of their own affinities and aptitudes. In sum, although external effect is rather weak when compared with the internal effect, it nonetheless plays a role in Chinese students’ career decision making.

**Contextual Information**

The present investigation also revealed significant differences in career decision-making processes and student preferences for specific hotel types in terms of gender, major, and school type. For example, male study participants performed better in terms of their career decision-making capacity, which is consistent with Correll’s (2001) findings. Empirical evidence indicates that, in most cultures, males are perceived as the main providers, which focuses them even when young toward making career choices that would ensure their prosperity (Law, & Chan, 2004; Stafford, 2000). Although both male and female students that took part in this study did consider prestige of certain hotel brands when rating them as the potential employers, male students seemed to be more sensitive to prestige when making career decisions. In Chinese traditional culture, women are primarily responsible for taking care of the family and raising children, while men are still perceived as the main breadwinners (Sharina, 2011). Furthermore, in Chinese traditional culture, great value is ascribed to prestige (Mak et al., 2015). Thus, every decision an individual makes is considered in relation to not only one’s but also family image, especially that of the parents. Hence, men are more likely to choose prestigious career, as it will make their parents proud, while women can attain prestige by marrying a successful man (Zuo & Wen, 2009).

On the other hand, male students performed significantly higher than their female counterparts on career indecision measures. While this finding is in line with the results reported by Crișan and Turda (2015b), it contradicts those yielded by Oztемel’s (2014)
study, where women were found to experience greater degree of career indecision compared to males. However, in the Chinese context, the current study findings are plausible, as males have a much more responsible role in the society and family (Sharina, 2011), and thus tend to experience greater pressure to make a correct career choice, which results in indecision. Furthermore, Chuang (2010) reported that Chinese female students are reluctant to live far away from friends and family, and would thus choose career that would provide them with the right work-home balance. On the other hand, male students may be willing to relocate for a job, especially if they have no training or prior work experience, if this would provide them opportunities for career advancement. Moreover, in China, female students still experience discrimination and certain limitations in their career opportunities, as many women still place greater importance on family and children, making employers reluctant to hire female staff (Chuang, 2010). These findings indicate that female students are more conservative and tend to be affected by family influences and future needs of their own households in their career choices, while male students are under pressure to make correct career decisions, which makes them more indecisive. This is reflected in male students’ higher scores on the career indecision measures.

This study also showed that hospitality students tend to be more indecisive. Chinese people have biased views toward working in the H&T industry (Chen & Shen, 2012). The H&T industry is a service industry, and is thus associated with menial, unrewarding, dead-end jobs (Brown, 2011). In addition, given that recent college graduates tend to be given the most subordinate positions, for university students that aspire toward prestigious positions, this is an unattractive prospect. The H&T industry has low entry barriers, as most jobs do not require extensive education and expertise (Janta & Ladkin, 2009). Thus, service
quality is the main standard on which to judge their current and prospective employees. Consequently, personality traits, rather than education, are the decisive factor when offering a position to a new hire. For university students, this is a disadvantage, as their educational background has no obvious value for starting a career in the H&T industry. Furthermore, frontline staff mostly have poor educational background and non-ambitious personal goals, as well as lack long-term prospects (Xu, 2011). Thus, as income is highly important in China, most graduates will accept a job at a company that would provide higher income, irrespective of its other characteristics. In addition, the quality of facilities in hotels is good, which entices many graduates to this industry, as while employees merely work in that environment, they may tend to associate with the prestige and opulence, often drawing parallels between themselves and guests. Conversely, as frontline employees typically have heavy workload, and have to cater to every guest’s wish as mentioned before, this may be demeaning for some individuals, who then avoid entering this industry, or leave employment soon after gaining a position. Thus, it is not surprising that many students, even if majoring in hospitality-related subjects, would be ambivalent towards a career in the H&T sector.

Nonetheless, results from the present study suggest that students pursuing hospitality and tourism related majors are more likely to make career decisions when compared to students in other majors. This finding coincides with past researchers’ assertion that major has a great effect on students’ career decisions (e.g., Chuang et al., 2009; Eun, Sohn, & Lee, 2013). This is not surprising, as those that opt for this major have much greater knowledge of the industry itself, as well as specific segments in which they could potentially work upon graduation. The H&T industry is the collective term that refers to all aspects of service industry, including lodging, theme parks, transportation, cruise liners, event planning, and
additional fields in the tourism industry (Wikipedia, n.d.), thus offering a wide range of opportunities for recent graduates to enter the profession. While students pursuing other majors also have the potential to work in hospitality and tourism, in for example, management, marketing, etc., their options are clearly more limited. Still, irrespective of their majors, graduates will have opportunities for career advancement, if they are dedicated and provide guests with high quality of service (Fan, Kang, & Liu, 2013). This potential to climb the career ladder from the bottom attracts many individuals to the China’s H&T industry, especially since it has experienced rapid growth in recent years, and thus offers many more career options. In sum, there is a huge opportunity for students majoring in hospitality and tourism management, but also for those majoring in other subjects, if they are willing to train and work hard.

Finally, it is meaningful to make comparisons among study participants and analyze their career preferences based on school type, as vocational school and university students have some unique features that affect their approach to career decision making. Age is not a differentiator, as both vocational school and university students enter their course and are expected to graduate at the same age, thus making career choices in the same phase of their lives. However, as previously noted, due to the differences in their education and training, their knowledge about the H&T industry, as well as their career expectations, are vastly different. Under the Chinese university admission system, prospective students initially choose six to seven majors that they desire to study, and are admitted to their respective courses based on the scores they achieve on their entry exams and their prior educational achievements (Chen & Kesten, 2014). Thus, students that do not obtain place at the major of their first choice will be allocated to the next one, and so on (Chen & Kesten, 2014). As
a result, sometimes university students may be forced to study a major for which they have no interest or aptitude. As vocational schools are less popular, the competition for places is not as strong, and the admission requirements are thus much lower than those of universities. Allen and Robins (2008) highlighted the importance of being able to study one’s preferred subject, as this increases the likelihood of academic success. While it is likely that many vocational students also study for a profession that they have no interest in, they benefit from practical skills and training they acquire (Vocational Education in China, 2006). On the other hand, as universities focus on theoretical knowledge, gaining qualifications in the field one does not wish to pursue as a career may seem futile for many students (Wu, 2003). Most importantly, as vocational students gain work experience as a part of their course, they can develop a more realistic image of the H&T industry (Xiao, 2012). While university students not only feel pressure to attain more prestigious positions, they are often unaware of the opportunities offered by this sector. Yet, even those that apply for jobs in the H&T industry face a further burden, as they are expected to be highly educated and skilled and are often not given sufficient training when arriving in a new job. The issue is further exacerbated by the fact that, in China, university education is held in high esteem, resulting in graduates feeling privileged and having high expectations of the career opportunities that would be available to them (China Daily, 2004). These differences result in students from vocational schools being better prepared to make career decisions, and facing fewer career indecisions, as was shown in the present study. However, as vocational education is still perceived in China as inferior, they have fewer expectations for their future career and social status and more readily accept jobs offered to them. On the other hand, due to the recent expansion in China’s H&T industry, the competition has become much fiercer, resulting in
sub-performing vocational students lacking the confidence to pursue more favorable careers in this sector. Some even face career indecision, which may compromise their chances of obtaining a good job.

**Factors Influencing Students’ Decision to Work in the H&T Industry**

Despite immense growth opportunities in the hospitality and tourism industry in China, rapid expansion of this sector combined with reluctance of young generation to enter this industry has resulted in severe labor shortage (Wolfinton & Wolfington, 2012). According to the available evidence, majority of Chinese students pursuing degrees in hospitality and tourism management have no desire to enter the industry upon graduation. Thus, there is an evident gap between supply and demand in China’s H&T sector. In order mitigate this problem, it is necessary to identify the factors influencing students’ decision to work in this industry or choose a different sector.

In order to identify these factors, study participants were divided into four categories comprising of university students with hospitality major, university students with non-hospitality major, vocational students with hospitality major, and vocational students with non-hospitality major, respectively. As a part of the survey, the participants were asked to indicate the reasons for working in the H&T industry. Their responses revealed that both university and vocational students pursuing hospitality majors cited the topic of their academic major and job security as the key factors (Kiolbassa et al., 2011; Newton, Grayson, & Thompson, 2005). On the other hand, university students also cited other factors (such as ability to extend their social network and learn about different cultures) and long-term career development (e.g., opportunities and positions, great potential for career growth in the industry) that working in this industry will bring, while vocational students focused primarily
on the short-term goals (e.g., high income). This discrepancy in expectations is due to the differences between hospitality and university students’ self-confidence and aspirations. In addition, due to the one-child policy that was until recently in force in China, children feel obliged to repay the effort that their parents invested in bringing them up and educating them. Thus, if a child has gained a university degree, which costs more, there is an expectation that he/she would obtain a better paid job. Under the influence of higher expectations, university students are under great pressure to make optimal educational and career choices and perform well.

When the responses of university and vocational students with non-hospitality majors were analyzed, it was apparent that most chose H&T industry due to the expectations regarding income, position, and professional development. In sum, when making career decisions, Chinese hospitality students are driven by income, position, and major. Similar reasons were cited by non-hospitality students, who stated that they would not choose to work in this industry if they find jobs related to their major or offering better work conditions.

The participants were also asked to state reasons that would prompt them not to work in the H&T industry. They cited low income, lower social status, heavy workload, time conflict with public holidays, and lack of interest in working in this industry most frequently. Young generations are highly active and extroverted, and have strong interpersonal skills, which tends to limit their dedication to a career. Hence, if they find a job with better work conditions and higher salary, they will immediately resign from their current position (Guan et al., 2014). As the current study participants belong to Generation Y, they have different aspirations from those of their parents, and strive for work-life balance as well as ways to
differentiate themselves (Twenge, 2006). Thus, if they find a job that is overly de-mining or interfering with their other life pursuits, they will likely resign. As noted previously, Chinese young generations tend to make career decisions based on high social status and respect of others (Parsons, 2014), making income and status the most important factors in their career choice (Wong & Liu, 2014). As H&T industry is still viewed unfavorably in China, they are unlikely to pursue career in this sector.

**Ranking of International and Domestic Hotels**

In the present study, hotel brands were ranked by university and vocational students separately, in order to allow for comparison of their scores. Both groups were asked to rank a predefined list of hotels from 1 (denoting their top choice) to 3 (indicating least favorable choice). Subsequent analysis revealed that both university and vocational school students have similar view of international hotel brands (i.e., Marriot, Westin, and Sheraton). This is not surprising as international hotel brands are well established in China and have global reputation. However, university and vocational school students differed in their ranking of domestic hotels, as only Wanda hotel (as their top choice) was the same. On the other hand, while university students ranked HNA Grand Hotel and Wanda hotel as their second and third choice, vocational students chose Home Inn in these two positions. Clearly, while both groups have common preferences and similar attitude toward international hotels, they have different perceptions of domestic hotels. As mentioned before, vocational students can rely on their work experience when ranking domestic hotels, while university students likely base their views on what is generally known about these brands. This explains why they chose Wanda hotel and HNA Grand Hotel, as their recent rapid growth has been widely publicized. In addition, the cultures of these two hotels focus on teamwork, whereby every
employee is considered as a guest and family member regardless of differences among
gender, race, and religious beliefs, while also placing emphasis on spreading Chinese culture.
Some Chinese hotels, such as Wanda hotel and Jin Jiang, have started entering the overseas
market, making them more attractive for vocational students.

Feelings Related to Career in International and Domestic Hotels

Participants were also asked to share the feelings conjured when considering working
in specific hotel brands, international or domestic hotels. The findings indicated that
majority of vocational and university students have positive attitudes toward working in
international chain hotel groups, even though the former focused primarily on job security,
while the latter were mostly concerned with career prospects.

When the same comparison was made for university and vocational non-hospitality
students, the former viewed international hotels as enterprises with immense career
opportunities, while the latter were mostly concerned with job practicalities. Furthermore,
their views were somewhat idealized, as they have no knowledge about hotels and the H&T
industry. Thus, their perceptions of hotels could be based on information from the Internet,
friends, parents, and even their experiences as hotel guests, resulting in ideal or inaccurate
views to hotels and a gap between reality and ideal image. Based on these findings, it can
be asserted that university students think broadly and do not consider one aspect when
making career decisions.

However, the perceptions of university and vocational non-hospitality students
toward domestic brand hotels are very different. First, overall responses from vocational
students are more positive than those given by the university students with regard to working
in domestic hotels, as the former see it as the potential to gain work experience in the H&T
industry. Although they are aware of the negative aspects, such as low social status, they would be willing to work in domestic hotels. On the other hand, most university students have no willingness to work in domestic hotels because they have high expectations and would not accept starting their career at the bottom. Furthermore, as academic performance and abilities of vocational students are not as good as those university students possess (Neild, Boccanfuso, & Byrnes, 2013), the former cherish every career opportunity and would thus be more dedicated in any job they can obtain. In sum, while vocational students are willing to work in both international and domestic hotels, university students have preference for international hotels and would not accept a position in a domestic brand hotel.

**Students’ Perceptions of International and Domestic Hotels**

At the end of the first section in the questionnaire, the participants were given an option to share their perceptions toward certain hotel brands, both international and domestic. The responses that both hospitality and non-hospitality students gave in relation to international hotels mostly focused on the positive aspects, such as international chain hotel, global brand, comfortable environment, and four or five starred hotel. When describing domestic hotels, on the other hand, university students majoring in hospitality focused on negatives and cited low salary, budget hotel, and chain operation. As both university and vocational students have negative perception of domestic hotels, this suggests that if these brands are to attract quality workforce they must change these misconceptions. When university and vocational students majoring in non-hospitality subjects rated domestic hotels, it became apparent that their views were vastly different. More specifically, students from vocational schools valued decoration, recruitment, target customers, and status, whereas university students tended to focus on mismanagement. In sum, Chinese university students
could be insufficiently informed about domestic hotel brands, while vocational students may have practical work experience that allows them to make more objective assessment.

**Implications**

High turnover rates in hospitality and tourism industry have always been an issue in China due to the negative perceptions about work in this sector (Wolfington & Wolfington, 2012). The difficulty to attract and retain talent not only results in increasing the operational costs, but compromises the potential for the H&T industry to expand further. The issues associated with high staff turnover and resource shortages include reduced service quality, limited work progress and low efficiency, and lack of employee’s work enthusiasm, which adversely affect the brand (Joppe, 2012; Wong & Liu, 2010). As a result, it is important for both educators and HR managers to understand students’ career decision-making process and the factors influencing it. Positive interventions should be performed promptly to motivate a greater number of students to start career in the H&T industry, which can only be achieved if they have clear understanding of this sector. Given the rapid expansion of the H&T sector in China, both students majoring in hospitality-related subjects and those pursuing other degrees can find a variety of positions and progress in their career.

While Chinese still respect many traditions, young generations are increasingly placing their interest first and are willing to move away from their family to pursue their aspirations. Thus, graduates prefer living in developed cities, where they can pursue their future careers because these cities provide tremendous opportunities for new employment and higher income and welfare. However, this lifestyle does not suit everyone. Life in big cities is highly pressured and costly, and many young people are forced to live beyond their means (Li, 2014). Yet, despite the hardships, many are reluctant to give up and pursue
The Chinese government has recently started to strongly advocate for the development of underdeveloped cities in order to reduce the pressure of living and working in larger cities. This shift is already evident in the expansion of international hotel groups, which are starting to open their hotels in second- and third-tier cities. Relying on local tourism resources, these cities will become newly emerging tourist destinations. However, at present, compared to the high quality of infrastructure and services in more developed cities, hospitality and tourism industry is in the initial stages among underdeveloped cities. As they are thus less attractive for more experienced professionals, students have the opportunity to start their career in these locations. Many students may be advised to pursue this path by their course instructors, who are aware of regional tourism development.

The present study aimed to establish whether young generations in China prefer domestic or international hotel brands when making a career choice. Thus, when examining the brand preferences, domestic and international hotels were grouped separately, and their ranking was explored in terms of student characteristics. The findings show that university students prefer international hotels, whereas vocational students have preference for domestic hotel brands, supporting the findings from the first question of the Table I in the Section B. This finding has implications for hotel managers as well as the human resource (HR) department. In the current severe competition between domestic and international hotels, HR managers need to attract university graduates, as this will improve their position in the market. Yet, in order to motivate more graduates work in their hotels, HR managers in both international and domestic hotels should find more suitable strategies, which should be specifically tailored for university and vocational students. Given that HR managers from
international hotels consider university graduates as not only be capable of creating economic benefits, but also an important part to the enterprise, they should focus on their career planning. In such strategies, the aim should be to align personal goals with enterprise development aims, as this would ensure that graduates remain motivated and loyal to the brand. Furthermore, given that university students have limited practical work experience upon graduation, HR strategies aimed specifically at this group should incorporate skill development training in a wide range of hotel and wider enterprise operations. With the immerse growth of Chinese economy, such skills would be beneficial for not only rapid growth of the hospitality industry, but can also be transferred to other sectors. To achieve that objective, education should also be modified, whereby talent nurturing should commence in schools, where emphasis should be on contributions not only to specific professions, but also the society as a whole. Schools and universities should also enhance communication and collaboration with hotels in order to develop internship programs allowing students to gain practical skills, as well as experience of working in various segments of the H&T industry. Upon their return, schools should encourage students to share their internship experiences with others. In addition, given that the H&T industry is highly competitive, for brands to remain sustainable, they have to offer high quality customer service. Thus, many jobs in this sector involve high level of stress, for which university students need to be prepared by offering them training on coping strategies and stress management. Empirical evidence indicates that many graduates are highly engaged and proactive upon entry to the H&T industry, but tend to lose enthusiasm due to long work hours and busy work schedules. As a result, they become unmotivated and less dedicated to their job. Thus, strategies should be put in place to ensure that students are offered requisite
support in order to better adapt to the working environment and prepare themselves to face difficulties.

In addition, managers need to establish fair promotional policy that is geared toward rewarding high performance and work enthusiasm. Furthermore, HR managers need to pay attention to compensation incentives, which should be aligned with performance targets, as this would encourage graduates to create more benefits for hotels. Moreover, HR managers should establish a cooperative relationship with universities by hosting organization-related events, such as summer internship programs, non-hospitality programs, and guest speaker lectures, to attract more graduates pursuing a wide range of academic majors to enter the industry.

When developing strategies for non-hospitality students, HR managers should ensure that they provide ample information about the H&T industry, as well as offer advice on various options for careers in fields that are not directly related to hotel operations. Furthermore, hotel managers should be invited to universities as guest speakers, as by sharing their views and experiences of their current and previous jobs in the industry, they can provide a more realistic picture of the career in the industry, allowing non-hospitality students to evaluate various positions available in this field. However, in order to motivate a greater number of university students to work in domestic hotels, HR managers from these establishments should strive to publicize their brands, thus ensuring that university students are aware of the job opportunities and career prospects in this sector. For example, Jin Jiang International is one of travel and hospitality conglomerates in China that comprises of budget chain hotels, a four-star hotel, and a five-star hotel. Thus, it employs a large
workforce at many levels and in many fields, offering numerous opportunities for individuals with interests.

The present study also explored Chinese young generations’ career decision making from the perspective of self-image congruity, brand preference, perceived external prestige, and career indecision. The findings yielded by data analyses show that these factors are correlated with career decision making among students. In addition, given that the perceived external prestige of domestic hotels is lower than that of international hotels, it must be increased if these brands are to attract a greater number of graduates. For example, domestic brand hotels may expand to multi-brand structure and gain advantages on brand scale to extend brand reach, thus increasing their market share and improving brand influence. Moreover, given that brand management is important for the development of hotel groups, domestic hotels should strive to provide sufficient information to students at all levels and pursuing a wide range of majors, increasing their awareness of the many career opportunities in this H&T market segment. Given that international hotels are preferred by university students, their managers should also aim to attract vocational students, who often do not consider career in this sector due to the lack of self-esteem (Van Houtte, Demanet, & Stevens, 2012). Thus, as a part of their strategies aimed at the vocational students, HR managers should host career events to increase their understanding of their recruiting requirements and brand, and should advertise job openings on their website. On the other hand, given that the domestic hotels are already popular among vocational students, they should aim to attract more university students, who consider working in these hotel brands unattractive, due to the lack of prestige and limited career prospects. Hence, to attract more university students, HR managers of domestic hotels should cooperate with universities to
create internship programs, allowing the university students to gain a better perspective of work in this sector.

Brand expansion and innovation is an important part of the business strategy of most international hotels. However, domestic hotels must adopt this model if they are to remain viable. In doing so, they should strive to develop new brands, such as theme-based and budget hotels, while focusing on traditional elements and personalized products to meet constantly changing market demand. In support of this development, schools and universities should dedicate more resources to students’ career planning and choices in order to reduce career indecision. As a part of this initiative, they should invite guest speakers, who should align the content of their presentations to the students’ major and interests, in order to present them with suitable career options. The schools also need to act as a bridge between students and companies and must communicate with companies to exchange information, as this would help students in making more informed career decisions.

As a part of the present study, the effect of career indecision on students’ attitudes toward career choices was also examined. The findings revealed that career indecision mediated the relationship between brand preference and perceived external prestige in the career decision-making process. Even though these external factors play an important role in this endeavor (through the effects of brand preference and perceived external prestige), students still mainly focus on their abilities and preferences when making career decisions. To assist them in making the most optimal choice, students should be encouraged to take more internships. By allowing them to apply their academic knowledge in practice, they will not only gain a better perspective on their aptitude for certain jobs, but will also expand their horizons and potentially consider careers in H&T sectors they previously did not know
much about. Moreover, internship allows students to address various job-related difficulties, thus increasing their confidence and making them better prepared for the labor market.

In the present study, male students were found to place a greater emphasis on perceived external prestige, career indecision, and career decision making than female students. In China, H&T employees are mostly female; thus, there is evidence of the need to attract more males to this sector. As Chinese males are still perceived as the main breadwinners, they are likely to be attracted to the industry if they could be given a clear career path with the potential to earn bonus for exemplary performance. As they also value prestige, they could be given special recognition for contribution to the hotel or department, and certificates for the best employees can be awarded every month, along with material rewards. Moreover, hospitality students that took part in this study scored higher than non-hospitality students on the measures related to brand preference (international vs. domestic brand), as well as career indecision and career decision making. As in China, H&T industry is still associated with lower status, such attitudes must change if the sector is to attract and retain talent. Thus, managers should focus on promoting the competitiveness of H&T industry, and should improve public reputation through good remuneration packages and high quality of service. In addition, greater efforts should be made to improve the overall societal view of hospitality and tourism, as the increased recognition would attract more students to this field. Hotels should also work with the community to help them build a positive image of their brands and thus attract a greater number of students.

University students expressed limited interest in careers in domestic hotels. On the other hand, vocational students scored higher on career indecision and decision-making
measures. Thus, in order to mitigate issues faced by both groups of students, both university and vocational school curricula should focus on the factors that affect students’ attitudes toward domestic brands, as well as their ability to make career decisions. The curriculum currently provided does not enable students to reach important decisions, as they lack confidence in their capacity to choose the right career path. This is particularly true for vocational students, who have a sense of inferiority due to their educational status (Van Houtte, Demanet, & Stevens, 2012). Vocational schools should be required to design market-oriented courses based on changes in market demand. Schools and hospitality companies should also collaborate in efforts aimed at fostering students’ professional consciousness (Lu & Zhou, 2007). Career service can also be considered to help students to prepare for interviews, writing résumés, and preparing job applications. Similarly, universities should expand their career-oriented services by collaborating with experts and senior managers in the H&T industry in designing study plans and setting educational goals, as this would promote talent cultivation and ensure that curriculum is aligned with the industry needs. Furthermore, universities should provide a variety of training courses, in order to enhance students’ practical skills and thus job readiness.

Lastly, when study participants were asked to share their perceptions on international and domestic hotels, as well as state the reasons for wishing (or not) to work in this field, they offered some important insights for HR managers. Even though each hotel brand has a specific vision and mission, international and domestic hotels should take note of the students’ views of their brands, as this would allow them to attract more talent. Managers of international hotels should ensure that their brand resonates with local community by introducing some traditional cultural characteristics, as this would allow them to forge bonds
with the local society, thus motivating more graduates to work in these establishments. On the other hand, managers of domestic hotels should aim to promote their brand, which can only be achieved by creating a unique and consistent image that is aligned with values and aspirations of locals. Furthermore, domestic hotels should improve management and operations, as well as offer employee training in order to increase staff quality, as this would improve the image guests have of their brand. Furthermore, both domestic and international hotels need to improve the working environment and remuneration, as well as offer flexible working schedule, while also forging stronger bonds with universities and vocational schools. Such strategies would ensure that students have positive attitudes toward this industry, making them more likely to seek jobs in this sector upon graduation.

**Research Limitations**

This study draws attention to career decision making among young generations in China by investigating self-image congruity, brand preference, international and domestic brand preference, perceived external prestige, and career indecision. This is significant for the development of the H&T industry in China, which has recently expanded significantly, resulting in severe shortage of quality workforce. However, some limitations should be noted when interpreting the findings reported in this thesis. First, due to the fact that the survey participants mainly came from six schools, this study may be limited in regard to generalizing its results.

Second, the reliability of perceived external prestige scale used in the present study was not high. The scale was developed by Male and Ashforth (1992), who highlighted limited reliability of their study. Third, given that the Chinese students’ academic results were converted to GPA equivalent, this introduced a degree of inaccuracy that could have
affected the relationship with other variables. Thus, this variable was excluded from the analyses. For future studies in this filed focusing on the Chinese context, grades could be expressed in the 1-100 range, for example. Lastly, while the entire questionnaire was expected to be completed within 30 minutes, as Chinese students took longer time, they might have become impatient, potentially introducing errors into the results.

**Suggestions for Future Studies**

In the present study, the aim of this research was to investigate career decision making among university and vocational school students in China, future studies could explore other career variables, employ other measuring scales, or add more items to examine their career decision-making process. For example, career exploration and person-job fit would be interesting to explore, as these determine the likelihood that an individual would remain in his/her current position. Career exploration is considered as “a career-related information gathering process” (Xu, Hou, & Tracey, 2014, p. 2), which helps individuals learn about themselves and the vocational world. This knowledge would help students make career decisions. Furthermore, information about the external environment that students obtain from their friends and family, as well as from online sources, is seldom accurate, resulting in misunderstandings about jobs and even leading to wrong career choices. Person-job fit refers to the fit between individual’s personality and his/her career characteristics (Carless, 2005). Students should thus be encouraged to partake in internship programs, as this would allow them to ascertain if a particular hotel brand is suitable for them. As graduates’ perceptions of their first job will change after a certain period, there should be initiatives in place to keep them motivated and dedicated. Otherwise, some graduates will leave the job or even the profession as a whole, further exacerbating the staff
shortage in this sector. Available evidence indicates that the turnover rate in the initial stage of entry among Chinese graduates is high, confirming the importance of person-job fit as a research subject (ifeng.com, 2014). Hotels should also improve their pre-screening methods, in order to ensure that they choose the right candidates, as this too would lead to higher retention rate.

The present study considered the hospitality and tourism industry as a whole when investigating students’ perceptions of the industry and their intentions to pursue career in this sector. Further studies may consider classifying the industry into different sectors, such as lodging, food service, transportation, and tourism-related. In fact, some Chinese universities or vocational schools categorize their courses or programs into many types, such as hotels, food service, meetings and exhibitions, and leisure. Moreover, as the present study participants were students, it would be beneficial to replicate this research with a sample comprising of recent graduates who currently work in the hospitality and tourism industry. Investigating their perceptions of their jobs may allow gaining a better understanding of the factors affecting career decision-making. It would also be meaningful to examine the gap between their career decisions, expectations, and preferences for domestic or international brand hotels, as this may yield helpful suggestions for both educators and students, as well as those aiming to attract talent to this industry.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM IN ENGLISH
Appendix A
Consent Form in English

Study Title: Career decision making of young generations in China

Principal Investigators: Ning-Kuang Chuang and Yuan Liang

You are being invited to take part in a research study of how impacted on career decision making among young generations in China. This consent form will provide you with information on the research project, what you will need to do, and the associated risks and benefits of the research. Your participation is voluntary. Please read this consent document carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to participate in this study.

Purpose of the research study
The purpose of this study is to examine the career decision making of young generations in China. For this research, we firstly want to identify what affects career decision making in China. Secondly, we examine the relationship among the variables: perceived external prestige, brand preference, self-image congruity, career indecision, and career decision making. Thirdly, we examine whether career indecision will mediate the process of career decision making. Finally, we want to compare which domestic and international branded hotel is attractive for young generations.

Procedures
Participants will be invited to fill a 5-page questionnaire; the questionnaire will be collected when finished. The questionnaire will normally take less than 20 minutes to complete. The data will be collected from Tianjin, one of the four special municipalities of China.

Benefits
This research will not benefit you directly. However, your contribution to this research will help us to better understand the behaviors of career decision making among young generations in China. More importantly, the result of this research will be applicable for students, educators, and hospitality and tourism hiring managers.

Risk and Discomforts
There are no anticipated risks beyond those encountered in everyday life.

Privacy and Confidentiality
Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. Your information will be assigned a code number. Your signed consent form will be kept separate from your study data, and responses will not be linked to you.

Voluntary Participation
Participating in this research is completely voluntary. You may decide not to take part or you may stop at any time.
**Contact Information**
If you have any questions or concerns about this research, you may contact me at (001) 234.281.6727, or Ning-Kuang Chuang at (001) 330. 357.9989. This research 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.

**Agreement**
If you wish to voluntarily participate in this study, please sign the form below. A signature will indelicate agreement to participate.

________________________                           _________________
Participant Signature                           Date
APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM IN CHINESE
Appendix B
Consent Form in Chinese

研究题目：中国年轻人的职业决策
主要研究者：庄甯光教授和梁媛

您已被邀请参加一项关于探索中国青年人的职业决策是如何被影响的。本问卷调查知情同意书将提供您关于此项研究的相关内容，以及如何回答此问卷，此研究的风险，及此研究的好处等相关信息。您的参加为自愿行为。请仔细阅读此同意书，并且在同意参加前可以提出任何问题。

研究目的：
此研究的目的为探索中国青年人职业决策。首先我们将会辨别出哪些因素会影响职业决策。然后，再检查这些因素之间的关联，包括：声誉，品牌偏好，自我形象的一致性，职业决策困难和职业生涯决策。进而检查是否职业决策困难是否在职业生涯决策的过程中起到调节作用。最后，我们还想要比较国内还是国际品牌酒店对中国的年轻人更有吸引力。

研究步骤：
参与者将被要求填写 5 页的问卷调查，当完成填写，问卷将被收回。一般情况下，问卷将在 20 分钟内完成。问卷将在中国的直辖市之一的天津进行。

研究益处：
此研究将不会给您带来直接的好处。但是，你对此项研究的贡献将帮助我们更好地了解中国青年人的职业决策行为。更重要的是，这项研究的结果有助于学生，教育者和酒店旅游业的招聘经理。

风险及不便：
没有超越日常生活所遇的预期风险。

隐私及保密：
您的身份信息将被保密。您的信息将被按号码排列。您所签署的告知书将会与研究数据本身分开收集，并且不会进行研究对象关联。

自愿参与：
参与此次研究是完全自愿的。您可以选择不参加此次调查或是在任何时候停止。

联系信息：
如果您对此研究有任何疑虑，请联系我(001) 234 281 6727，或庄教授(001) 330 357 9989。此项研究已被肯特州立大学学术道德审查委员会所批准。如果您对作为一个参与者权利有疑问或是投诉，请联系学术道德审查委员会(001)330 672 2704。

同意声明：
如果你是自愿参加此次研究，请在下方签名。您的签名意味着你同意参加此次研究。

____________________                              __________________
签字                                                                 日期
APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRE IN ENGLISH
Appendix C
Questionnaire in English

Please answer every questions and check the answer that suits you the best.

Section A. Background Information

1. Gender: ____ A. Male ______ B. Female

2. Your school is: ______ A. University ________ B. Vocational school

3. Academic status:
   ____ A. 1st year ______ B. 2nd year ______ C. 3rd year
   _____ D. 4th year ______ E. Graduate (master level)

4. Academic GPA: __________________

5. Major Category:
   ______ A. Hospitality and Tourism Related ______ B. Management and Economy
   ______ C. Arts and Humanities _______ D. Science, Math, and Technology
   ______ E. Social Sciences _______ F. Others, please specify: ___________

6. Was it your desired major when you entered the school?
   ______ A. Yes ________ B. No

7. Are you interested in this industry (e.g., the hospitality or tourism industry)?
   ______ A. Yes ______ B. No
   _____ C. Hard to say, please specify your reasons: ________________

8. Have you ever worked as an internship or part-time in the hospitality and tourism industries?
   ______ A. Yes (Please specify how long the job is taken: __________)  
   _____ B. No (skip to question # 10)

9. In what segment of the hospitality industry have you had employment (including part-time, internship, etc.)?
   _____ A. Not employment in the past
   _____ B. Lodging and other Accommodation
   _____ C. Restaurants and other Food Service
   _____ D. Travel-Related Business (including Attractions)
   _____ E. Others, please specify: ____________________

10. Do you intend to work in the hospitality and tourism industries? (Check one)
    _____ A. very unlikely ______ B. unlikely ______ C. neutral ______ D. likely
    _____ E. very likely ______ F. undecided

11. If you are considering a career in the hospitality and tourism industries after graduation please indicate the major reason(s)?

12. If you are not considering a career in the hospitality and tourism industries after graduation, please indicate the reason(s):
13. Did you seek help with regard to your career planning?
   _____ A. Yes  _____ B. No (skip to question # 15)

14. Where on campus do you currently get the most help regarding your career path?
   _____ A. University Career Center
   _____ B. College Career Service Center
   _____ C. Course Instructor(s)
   _____ D. Counselors
   _____ E. Student Organization
   _____ F. Other: Please specify: ________________________________

15. Which of the following has had the most influence on your career decision-making?
   _____ A. Myself
   _____ B. Parents/ Guardian
   _____ C. Relatives
   _____ D. Friends
   _____ E. Faculty
   _____ F. Employer
   _____ G. Co-workers
   _____ H. Internship/ Practicum
   _____ I. Student Organization
   _____ J. Career Fair
   _____ K. Class Guest Lecture
   _____ L. Others, please specify: ______________________________

16. Of those you just checked on question 15, rank on their influence on your career decision making, ranging from 1 (influence me a little) to 5 (influence me a lot):

   For example, if you check on “Myself” and believe “you” are the most influential in your career choice decision, you will circle “5”

   Myself  1  2  3  4  5
   __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________

17. Which of the following international hotels do you most likely to work? (Write 1=top choice; 2= second choice; 3=third choice)
   1:_____  2:_____  3:_____  4:_____  5:_____  6:_____  7:_____  8:_____  9:_____  10:_____

18. Which of the following domestic hotel do you most likely to work? (Write 1=top choice; 2= second choice; 3=third choice)
   1:_____  2:_____  3:_____
19. Assuming you are working in an international hotel, what will you feel like?

20. Assuming you are working in a domestic hotel, what will you feel like?

If you are studying another major have no interests in hospitality industry, you will skip next two questions. Thank you.

21. Name three words that come to your mind when mentioned about international branded hotels, and rank on their influence on your career choice, ranging from 1 (influence me a little) to 5 (influence me a lot).

_______________________ 1 2 3 4 5
_______________________ 1 2 3 4 5
_______________________ 1 2 3 4 5

22. Name three words that come to your mind when mentioned about domestic branded hotels, and rank on their influence on your career choice, ranging from 1 (influence me a little) to 5 (influence me a lot).

_______________________ 1 2 3 4 5
_______________________ 1 2 3 4 5
_______________________ 1 2 3 4 5

Section B
1. Thinking about branded hotels (international and domestic) that you identified and show interests in working in one mentioned earlier (Question 20/21), please fill them in the blank with the statement below and circle the extent to which you agree with the statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I feel this hotel brand ______ is appealing to me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I prefer this hotel brand to other brands of its type.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. If I was to work in a hotel, I would prefer this brand if everything else was equal.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. This brand meets my career needs better than other comparable hotel brands.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. This brand meets my career image better than other comparable hotel brands.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I would consider working in more than I would consider other similar brands.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. In total, I prefer this brand.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. To what extent do you think in the following statements?</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. This hotel is one of the best hotels.</td>
<td>1 Strongly disagree</td>
<td>2 Disagree</td>
<td>3 Neither</td>
<td>4 Agree</td>
<td>5 Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Employees of other hotels will be proud to work in this hotel.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. People in my community think highly of this hotel.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. It is considered prestigious in the community to be an alumnus of my hotel.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. This hotel does not have a good reputation in my community.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. People from other hotels look down at this hotel.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. When other hotels are recruiting, they would not want employees from my hotel.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. A person seeking to advance his or her career in this area of employment should downplay his or her association with my hotel</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>III. How do you think in the following situations?</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. This brand meets the image I want to be perceived by my friends or peers.</td>
<td>1 Strongly disagree</td>
<td>2 Disagree</td>
<td>3 Neither</td>
<td>4 Agree</td>
<td>5 Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. This brand meets the image I want to be perceived by my significant others (parents, relatives, spouse).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. This brand meets the image I want to project in the society.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. This brand fits to my personality.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. International hotel brand is my preferred brand over local hotel brand.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Local hotel brand is my preferred brand over international hotel brand.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I would be inclined to work in an international brand over a local hotel brand.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I would be inclined to work in an local hotel brand over an international hotel brand.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Section C

I. How closely does each item describe in your thinking about a career choice among these following situations?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I have decided on a career and feel comfortable with it. I also know how to go about implementing my choice.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I have decided on a major and feel comfortable with it. I also know how to go about implementing my choice.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. If I had the skills or the opportunity, I know I would be a hotelier, but this choice is really not possible for me. I haven’t given much consideration to any other alternatives, however.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Several careers have equal appeal to me. I’m having a difficult time deciding among them.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I know I will have to go to work eventually, but none of the careers I know about appeal to me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I’d like to be a hotelier but I’d be going against the wishes of someone who is important to me if I did so. Because of this, it’s difficult for me to make a career decision right now. I hope I can find a way to please them and myself.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Until now, I haven’t given much thought to choosing a career. I feel lost when I think about it because I haven’t had many experiences in making decisions on my own and I don’t have enough information to make a career decision right now.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. I feel discouraged because everything about choosing a career seems so “ify” and uncertain; I feel discouraged, so much so that I’d like to put off making a decision for the time being.  

9. I thought I knew what I wanted for a career, but recently I found that it wouldn’t be possible for me to pursue it. Now I’ve got to start looking for other possible careers.

10. I want to be absolutely certain that my career choice is the “right” one, but none of the careers I know about seem ideal for me.

11. Having to make a career decision bothers me. I’d like to make a decision quickly and get it over with. I wish I could take a test that would tell me what kind of career I should pursue.

12. I know what I’d like to major in, but I don’t know what careers it can lead to that would satisfy me.

13. I can’t make a career choice right now because I don’t know what my abilities are.

14. I don’t know what my interests are. A few things “turn me on” but I’m not certain that they are related in any way to my career possibilities.

15. So many things interest me and I know I have the ability to do well regardless of what career I choose. It’s hard for me to find just one thing that I would want as a career.

16. I have decided on a career, but I’m not certain how to go about implementing my choice.

17. I need more information about what different occupations are like before I can make a career decision.

18. I think I know what to major in, but I feel I need some additional support for it as a choice for myself.

II. How do you behave when making career decisions in the following situations?  

1. I am very systematic when I go about making an important decision.

2. I often make a decision that is right for me without knowing why I made the decision.

3. When I make a decision it is important to me what my friends think about it.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. I rarely make an important decision without gathering all the information I can find.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Even on important decisions I make up my mind pretty quickly.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I like to have someone to steer me in the right direction when I am faced with an important decisions.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. When I make a decision I consider its consequences in relation to decisions I will have to make later on.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. When I make a decision I just trust my inner feelings and reactions.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I really have a hard time making important decisions without help.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. When I need to make decision I take my time and think it through carefully.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I often decide on something without checking it out and getting facts.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I often make decisions based on what other people think, rather than on what I would really like to do.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. When an important decision is coming up, I look far enough ahead so I’ll have enough time to plan and think it through before I have to act.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I don’t really think about the decision; it’s in the back of my mind for a while, then suddenly it will hit me and I know what I will do.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I rarely make a decision without talking to a close friend first.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I double-check my information source to be sure I have the right facts before deciding.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. In coming to a decision about something, I usually use my imagination or fantasies to see how I would feel if I did it.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I put off making decisions because thinking about them makes me uneasy.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Before I do anything important, I have a carefully worked out plan.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. I don’t have to have a rational reason for most decisions I make.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. I seem to need a lot of encouragement and support from others when I make a decision.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. I don’t make decisions hastily because I want to be sure I make the right decision.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. I make decisions pretty creatively, following my own inner instincts.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. There’s not much sense in making a decision that is going to make me unpopular. I usually make my decisions based on how things are for me right now rather than how they’ll be in the future.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Often I see each of my decisions as stages in my progress toward a definite goal.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. I usually make my decisions based on how things are for me right now rather than how they’ll be in the future.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. I don’t have much confidence in my ability to make decisions, so I usually rely on other opinions.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. I like to learn as much as I can about the possible consequences of a decision before I make it.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. A decision is right for me if it is emotionally satisfying.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. I usually don’t have a lot of confidence in my decisions unless my friends give me support on them.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D

QUESTIONNAIRE IN CHINESE
Appendix D
Questionnaire in Chinese

第一部分：背景信息
1. 性别： ______A. 男 ______B. 女
2. 学校： ______A. 本科院校 ______B. 专科院校
3. 年级： ______A. 大一 ______B. 大二 ______C. 大三 ______D. 大四 ______E. 研究生
4. 平均成绩： __________
5. 所学专业： ______A. 旅游及酒店管理相关专业 ______B. 商科 ______C. 艺术与人文 ______D. 科学，数学和技术 ______E. 社会科学 ______F. 其他，请说明： __________
6. 此专业是你入校时的理想专业吗？
______A. 是 ______B. 否
7. 你现在对这个专业及行业感兴趣吗？（如：旅游及酒店管理）
______A. 是 ______B. 否 ______C. 不好说，请说明原因： __________
8. 你在旅游/酒店行业实习或者兼职过吗？
______A. 是（请说明工作的时间长度： __________） ______B. 否（请直接跳至第10题）
9. 你被旅游行业内哪个类型的部门雇用过？（包含兼职，实习等）
______A. 过去没有被雇用过 ______B. 酒店旅馆客栈 ______C. 餐饮 ______D. 俱乐部（私人会所和大众的） ______E. 与旅游相关的事业（包含旅游景点） ______F. 其他，请说明： __________
10. 你打算在酒店/旅游业就业吗？（选择一个即可）
______A. 完全没有可能 ______B. 没有可能 ______C. 都可以 ______D. 有可能 ______E. 完全有可能 ______F. 还没有决定
11. 请列出主要原因会促使你毕业之后会考虑进入酒店/旅游业就业？

12. 请列出你毕业之后不想要进入酒店/旅游业就业的理由或原因？

13. 你是否在职业规划方面寻求过帮助？
______A. 是 ______B. 否（请直接跳至第15题）
14. 在学校以下哪个地方对于你的职业发展路径给予过最大的帮助？
______A. 学校就业发展中心 ______B. 学院就业发展中心 ______C. 任课老师 ______D. 辅导员 ______E. 学生社团 ______F. 其他，请说明： __________
15. 以下哪个因素对于你的职业决策影响最为显著？
______A. 自己 ______B. 父母 ______C. 亲戚 ______D. 朋友 ______E. 导师 ______F. 雇主 ______G. 同事 ______H. 实习经验 ______I. 学生社团 ______J. 招聘会 ______K. 任课老师 ______L. 其他，请说明： __________
16. 在第15题中列出的因素，它们根据对于你职业决策的影响从1（对自己影响很小）到5（对自己影响很大）排列：举例，如果你选择“我自己”对职业决策影响最大的，你就要圈“5”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>我自己</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17. 提到国际品牌酒店，列出你想到的三个词并且根据它们对职业决策的影响，从1（对自己影响很小）到5（对自己影响很大）进行排列

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18. 提到国内品牌酒店，列出你想到的三个词并且根据它们对职业决策的影响，从1（对自己影响很小）到5（对自己影响很大）进行排列

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19. 假设你现在在国际品牌酒店工作或是被它聘用，你会有怎样的感觉？

20. 假设你现在在国内品牌酒店工作或是被它聘用，你会有怎样的感觉？

21. 在下面这些国际酒店中，你最有可能在以下哪个品牌工作？(1代表首选，2代表第二选择，3代表第三选择)

A.希尔顿 B.威斯汀 C.丽思卡尔顿 D.万豪 E.四季酒店 F.万丽酒店
G.凯悦酒店 H.假日酒店 I.瑞吉 J.英迪格酒店 K.喜来登 L.利顺德
M.W酒店 N.凯宾斯基 O.威尼斯人酒店 P.洲际酒店

1: ______ 2: ______ 3: ______

22. 在下面这些国内酒店中，你最有可能在以下哪个品牌工作？(1代表首选，2代表第二选择，3代表第三选择)

A.7天 B.如家 C.锦江 D.格林豪泰 E.碧桂园酒店 F.唐拉雅秀 G.海航酒店
H.汉庭 I.全季酒店 J.维也纳酒店 K.桔子酒店 L.万达酒店
M.新世纪酒店 N.丽华酒店

1: ______ 2: ______ 3: ______

第二部分：
I. 根据之前题目所列出的众多品牌酒店（国内外和国际都可以），你很认同并且有兴趣将来可能会因此工作，请把它填充在下面空白地方，并且圈出能表明你对下列陈述的评价的选项

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>完全不同意</th>
<th>不同意</th>
<th>中立</th>
<th>同意</th>
<th>完全同意</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. 我觉得________酒店的品牌很吸引我。

2. 比其他种类的品牌，我更加喜欢这个酒店的品牌。
3. If I were to work at a hotel and if all other conditions were the same,
I would prefer to work at this hotel's brand.

4. The hotel's brand is better than other brands in meeting my career needs.

5. The hotel's brand better meets the needs of my professional image.

6. I would consider this brand when choosing a similar hotel.

7. In general, I prefer this brand.

II. Based on the hotel you have indicated,
Please rate the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Absolutely Different</th>
<th>Different</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Completely Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. This hotel is one of the best hotels.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Other hotel employees feel proud to work at this hotel.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Local people have a high opinion of this hotel.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Working at this hotel is respected in the local community.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Other hotel employees feel ashamed of working at this hotel.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Other hotel work at this hotel in hiring.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Employees in finding career advancement should avoid mentioning the association with this hotel.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III. Based on the hotel you have indicated,
Please rate the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Absolutely Different</th>
<th>Different</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Completely Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. This brand meets the image I want to be recognized by friends or peers.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. This brand meets the image I want to be recognized by important people (e.g.,长辈,父母,亲戚,伴侣).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. This brand meets the image I want to be recognized in society.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. This brand meets my personality.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Compared to local hotel brands, I prefer international hotel brands.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Compared to international hotel brands, I prefer local hotel brands.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Compared to local hotel brands, I would prefer to work at international hotel brands.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Compared to international hotel brands, I would prefer to work at local hotel brands.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
V. 根据你之前所填写的酒店来评价以下选项？

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>选项</th>
<th>完全不同意</th>
<th>不同意</th>
<th>中立</th>
<th>同意</th>
<th>非常同意</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. 这个酒店品牌的特征和我对自己的看法是一致的。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 这个酒店品牌的特征是我自己的镜像反映。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 这个酒店品牌和我自己是一致的。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. 我是通过这个品牌来向其他人展示出自己的形象。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. 我是通过这个品牌来展现自己的价值。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. 这个酒店品牌帮助我成为自己想要成为的人。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. 这个酒店品牌的特征和我想成为的人的形象相符合。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. 这个酒店品牌的特征反映出我想成为的人的形象的镜像反映。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

第三部分：

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>情境</th>
<th>根本不像我</th>
<th>有一点像我</th>
<th>不确定</th>
<th>非常像我</th>
<th>完全像我</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. 我已经决定了我的职业生涯并且对此选择很有自信，我也知道如何去实现我的职业选择。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 我已经决定了我的所学专业并且对此选择感到很自信，也知道如何去实现我的选择。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 我有技能或机会，我会成为一个酒店经营者，虽然我没有充分考虑其他选择，但这个选择对我可行性很低。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. 有很多的职业对我的吸引力都很大，但是我很难在他们中间做出选择。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. 我知道我要出去工作，但是目前为止还没有一个工作对我有吸引力。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. 我想成为酒店经营者，但是我不违背对我很重要人的意愿。有鉴于此，目前我很难做出职业决策。我希望我可以找到一个能让我和他人都满意的方法。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. 到目前为止，我还没有过多的想过未来的职业。由于我自己没有过多的经验和足够的信息，每当我做职业决策时都感到很迷惘。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. 因为职业选择的一切都是不确定，所以我感到很气馁，所以目前暂不作决定，以后再说。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. 我以为我知道我想要从事什么职业，但是最近发现不太可能去实现，所以我现在只能去寻找其他可能的职业。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. 我要绝对肯定我的职业选择是“正确的”，但是在我所了解的职业中没有一个可以称得上是理想的。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
根本不像 | 有一点像 | 不确定 | 非常像我 | 完全像我
------- | -------- | ------ | --------- | --------
1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

11. 做职业决策对我来说很是困扰。我想要快速作出决策尽早完成。我甚至希望可以有一个测试来帮助我知道什么样的职业是我应该从事的。

12. 我知道自己想要学习什么专业，但却不知道什么职业可以让我满意。

13. 因为我不知道我自己的能力，所以我现在还不能做出职业选择。

14. 我不知道我的兴趣是什么。有些事情可以让我很快乐，但我不确定它们和我的职业生涯有没有关系。

15. 我对很多事情感兴趣，也知道无论选择什么样的工作以自己的能力都可以做得很好。但对我来说，困难的事就是只专注在一个职业上。

16. 我已经决定了我的职业生涯，但不知道如何去实现它。

17. 我在做出职业选择前需要更多的关于不同职业的信息。

18. 我知道我所学的专业是什么，但我还是需要一些额外的支持作为自己职业的选择。  |  |  |  |  |  |  

II. 在以下情况中，在你做出职业决策时你会如何表现呢？

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>完全不同意</th>
<th>不同意</th>
<th>中立</th>
<th>同意</th>
<th>非常同意</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. 当我做很重要的决定时，我会很有条理。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 我做决定更多的是基于这个决策的正确性而不是为什么而做出的决定。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 当我做决定时，我朋友的想法对我很重要。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. 我很少在没有收集所有的信息就做出重要的决定。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. 即使在很重要的决策上面，我也是很迅速地做出决定。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. 在我做重要决策时，别人可以引导我走向正确的方向。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. 我作出决定时都会考虑到它的后果及对它的影响。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. 我做决定时，只相信自己内心的感觉和反应。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. 我很难在没有帮助的情况下作出重要决定。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. 我做决定时都会花时间仔细考虑。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. 我经常在不验证所获取信息真假的情况下作出决策。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12. 我经常根据别人的想法来做决定，而不是根据我自己真正喜欢的来做决定。

13. 当快要作出重要决策时，我都会看得很远，因此在决定前有足够的空间去计划和考虑。

14. 我不会花时间考虑决定，它只是在我的脑海中，然后我就会知道我将要怎么行动。

15. 做决定时我很少不和亲密的朋友先讨论。

16. 我会反复检查我的信息来源以确保在决策前有足够的事实去佐证。

17. 在做关于一些事的决定时，我通常用我的想象或幻想来体验，假如我这么做会有怎样的感受。

18. 因为考虑的太多会让我不安，我就会推迟做决定。

19. 在我做重要的决定前，都会制定相应的计划。

20. 对于我做的决策，我不需要有合理的理由。

21. 当我作出决定时需要很多的鼓励和支持。

22. 为了做出正确的决定，我不会匆忙地作出决策。

23. 我作出的决策都很有创造性并遵循我自己的本心。

24. 我不会做出让我不受欢迎的决策。

25. 我经常能看到我的每一个决定都是朝着一个明确前进的阶段。

26. 我都是基于现在适合我作出的决定，而不是将来。

27. 我对我做决策的能力没有太大的信心，所以我都是依赖其他人的意见。

28. 我喜欢在做决定前尽可能多的了解它所带来的可能的后果。

29. 只要情感上达到满足，这个决定就是正确的。

30. 除非我的朋友给我支持，不然我不太有信心作出决定。
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