



Can tourism break the barriers of STEREOTYPE?: Creating Mutual Understanding between Thailand and China through tourism

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Background

- As a result of the rapid growth of China's economy, Chinese outbound tourism has increased with a growth rate of more than 10% per year. According to the China National Tourism Administration, the number of Chinese outbound tourists in 2014 was over 100 million. This is likely to be a result of the rapid increase in Chinese discretionary income.



Problem

- outbound Chinese tourists have frequently been criticized for engaging in some inappropriate behaviors which have led to the creation of stereotypes such as ‘the loud tourist’, ‘the luxury brand shopper’, and ‘the photographer trespassing on private property’. Such prejudices have been exaggerated by traditional media and social media. To mitigate these negative images of China, the Chinese government has been trying to educate their citizens about the “Do and Don’t” while traveling.



Purpose

- Thailand, which has received Approved Destination Status (ADS) from China, has benefited considerably from the increase of tourist arrivals from China. Consequently, it is important to create a mutual understanding of the two countries. This study aims to compare and contrast tourist perceptions of China and Thailand as tourist destinations.



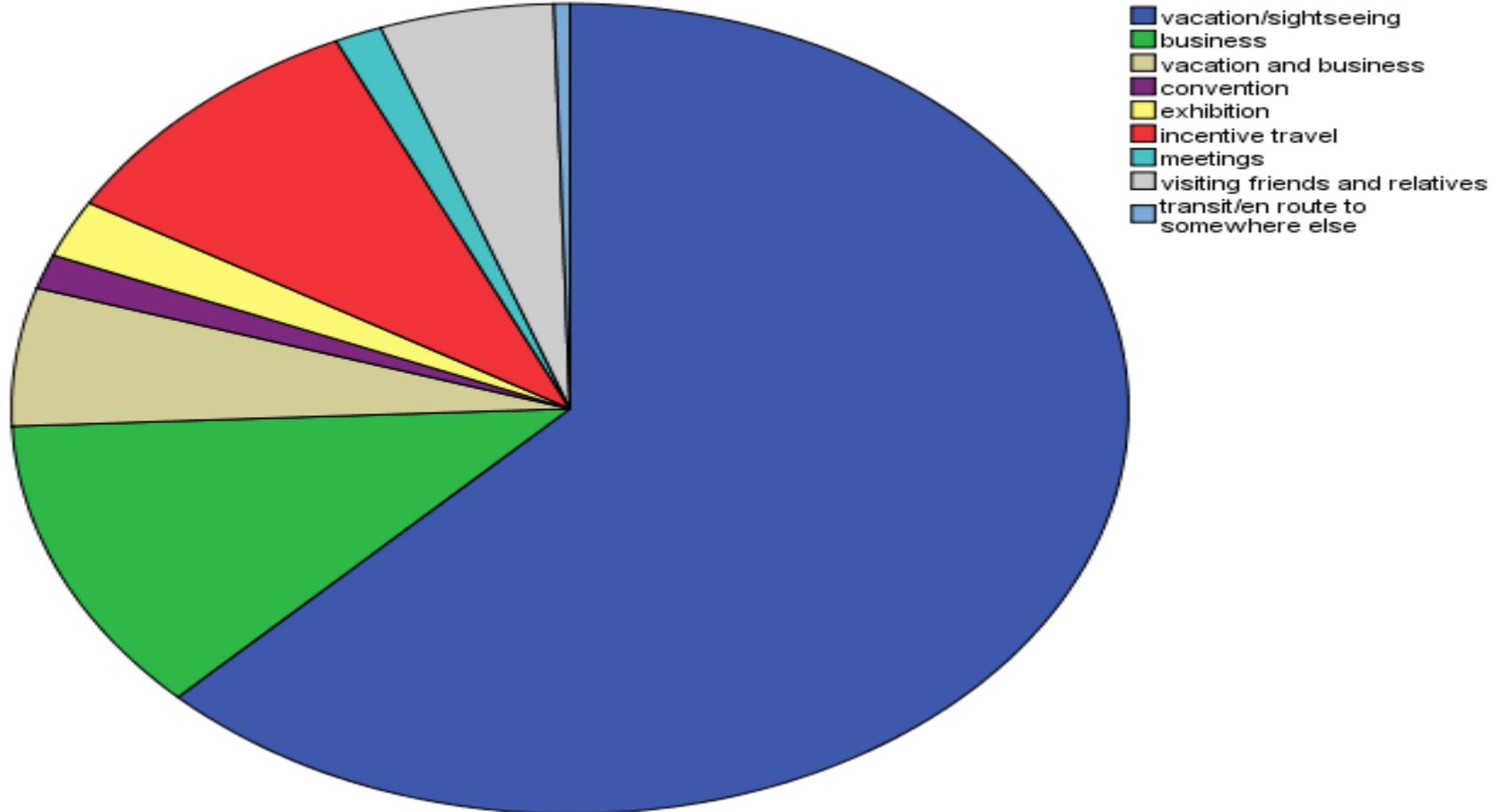
Method

- Chinese and Thai nationals who were waiting for departure flights to China at the Bangkok International Airport were the respondents for this study. The instrument of this study was a self-administered survey questionnaire. The questionnaire contained three sections: travel behavior, the image of China and Thailand from the perception of tourists and demographic profiles. The respondents were asked to indicate the level of agreement with each of the 18 image attributes on a 5-point semantic differential scale that ranged from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). A total of 204 completed questionnaires were included in this study. Data were analyzed using ANOVA to assess any significant difference in the destination image from the perception of Chinese and Thai tourists.



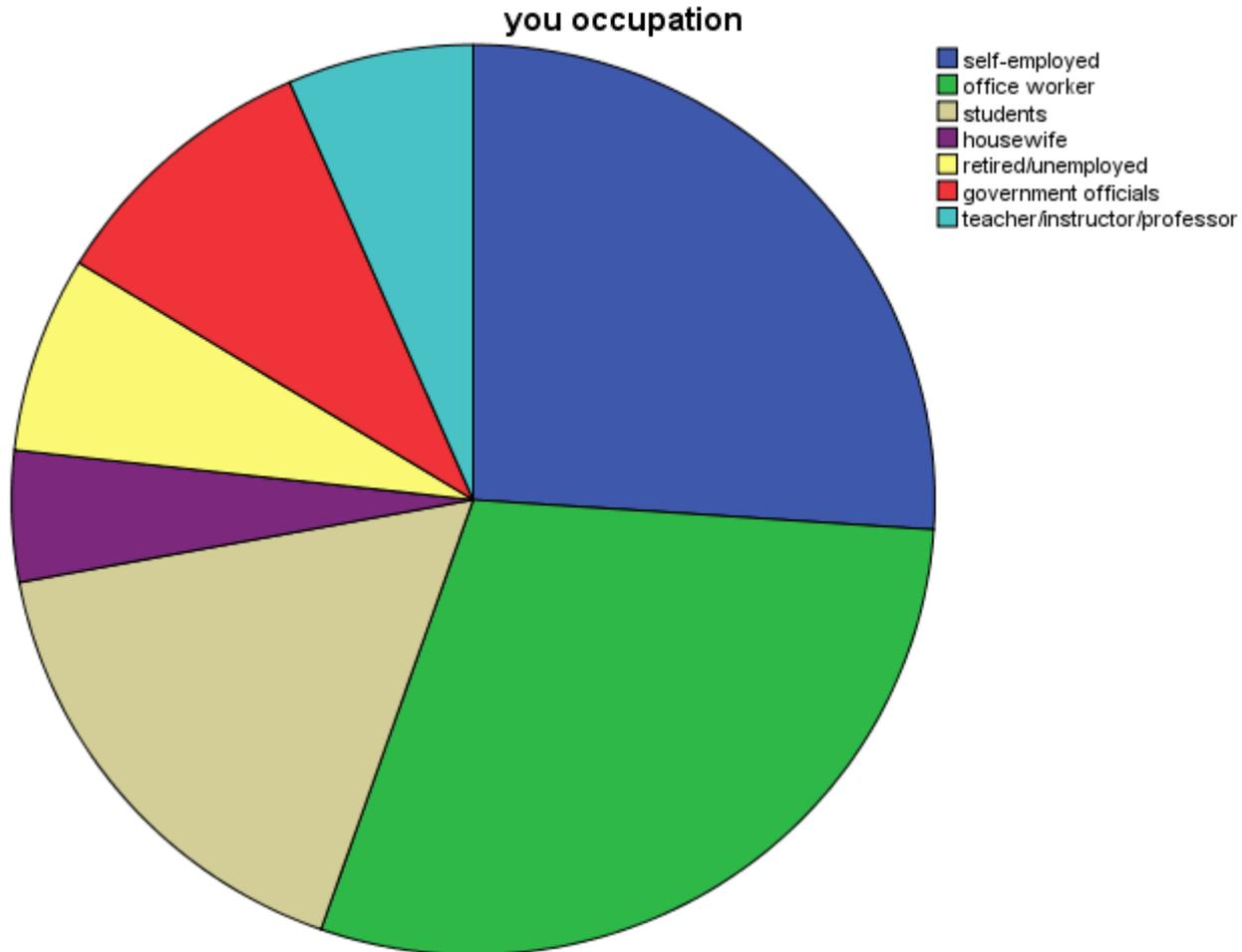
Purpose of the trip

what is the purpose of this trip?

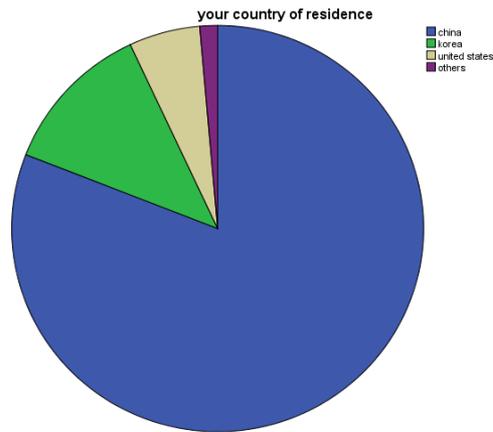
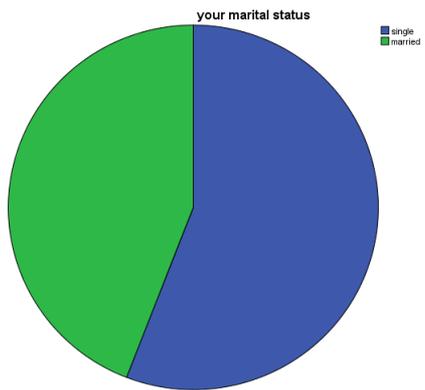
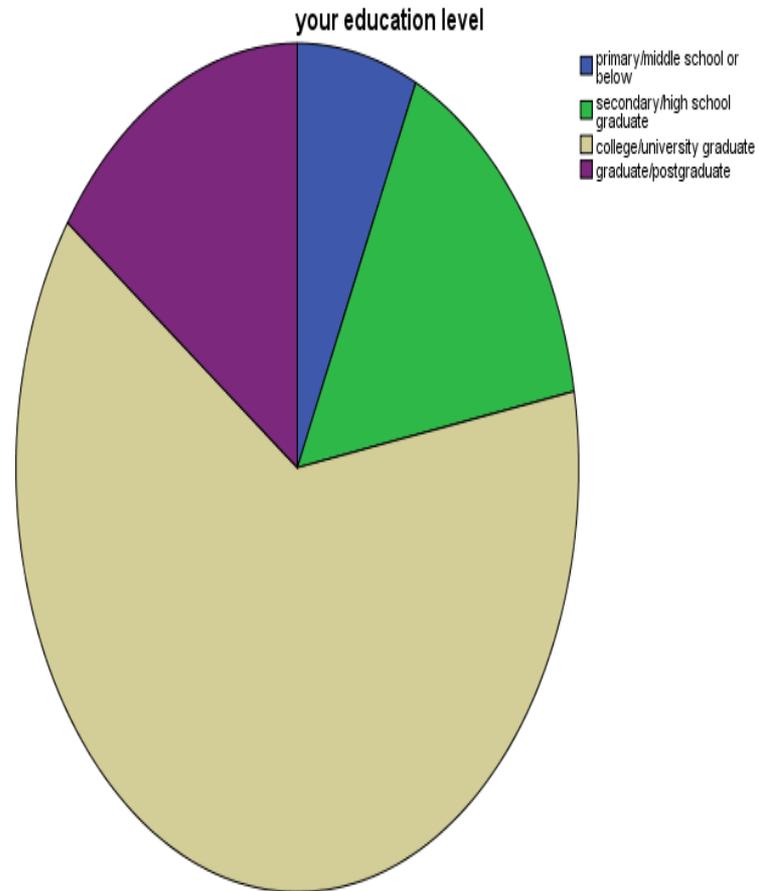
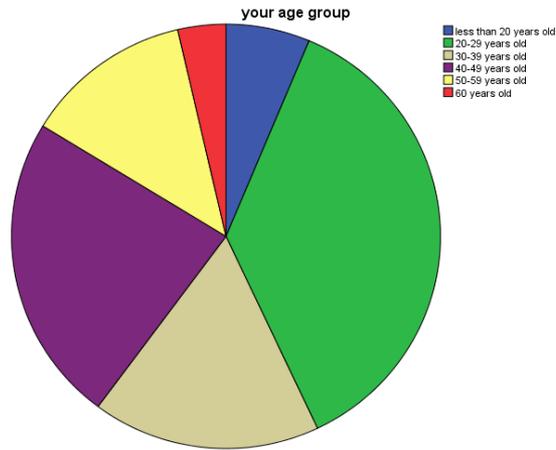
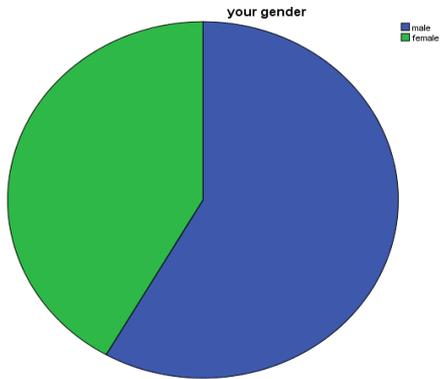




Occupation

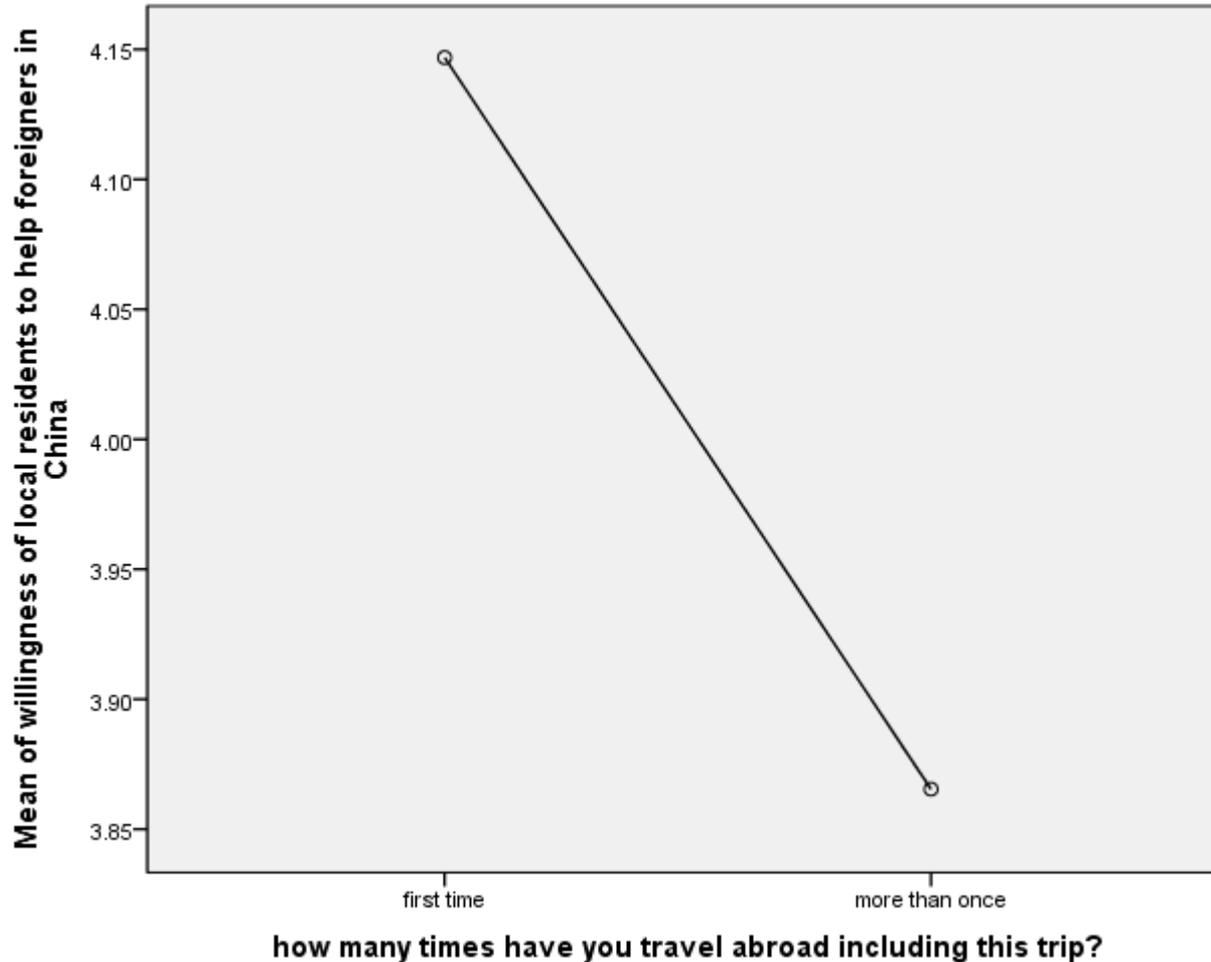


Demographics





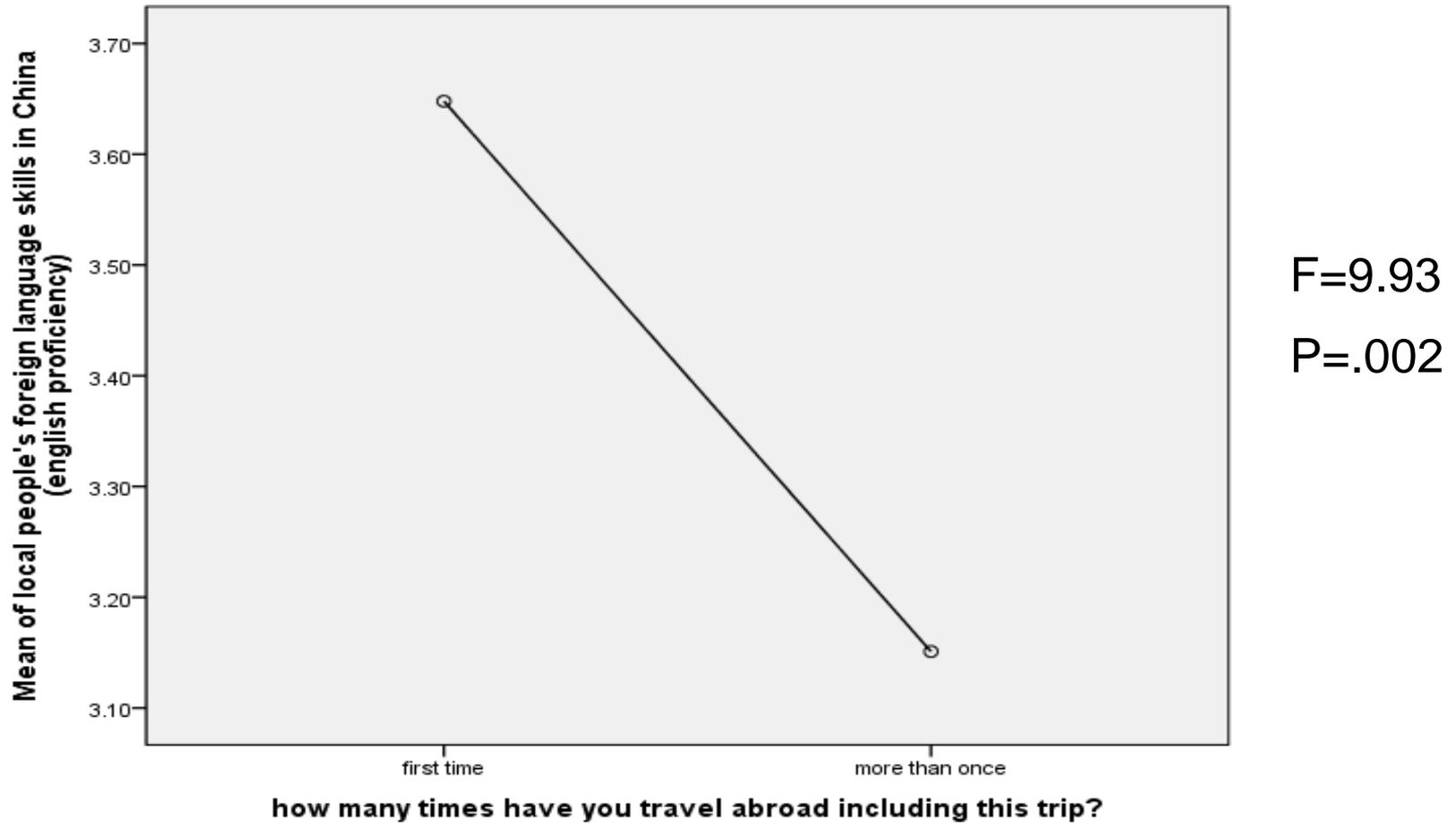
Willingness to help foreigners



$F=3.89,$
 $P=0.5$



Foreign Language Skills





Result

- The ANOVA found significant differences between Thailand and China as a preferred tourist destination. The key issue is that visitors have a negative image of the cleanliness of public restrooms which may deter international tourists to visit China. China must work hard to improve this aspect of their country. Furthermore, with such a large country to deal with, Chinese authorities have a very large task at hand if they wish to sway public perception in the near future.



Result

- By comparison, Thailand has a positive image in relation to the large number of flights from China to Thailand. Because of strategic location of Thailand as an aviation hub of both flagships and low cost air-carriers, Thailand has become the hub for foreign travel in Southeast Asia, thus making it an attractive and accessible destination for Chinese visitors.

Result

- ANOVA found a significant difference between leisure and business tourists on easy to get visa to Thailand ($F=5.662$, $p < 0.018$) and immigration ($F=5.86$, $p < 0.016$) in which leisure Chinese tourists had higher rating.



Implications

- China is a country which values social status, therefore, it is not surprising that Chinese tourists hunt for luxury brands, which are considered as symbols of success. Additionally, in the Asian context, outbound travelers on group tour packages have been found to prefer traveling in groups and taking lots of photos (Kim et al. 2009). Taking photos of famous places appear to be common activities of leisure tourists (Pearce 1982). This may cause difficulties where photographers stray on to private property in their search for the best picture. Finally, since many outbound tourists are inexperienced travelers, they may be unaware of local customs. Their words or gestures in the public may cause misunderstandings which can lead to prejudices.