

Key facts:

Today, 1 in 10 travelers today is Chinese and only 5% of the country has a passport.

In the next three years, the global tourism and hospitality industry expects the following:

- 35 per cent forecast an increase of 1-10%
- 30 per cent say 11-25%
- 17 per cent believe it will be 26-50 per cent

Overall, the statistics coming out of China are even more astonishing:

- By 2020, it's estimated more than **200 million Chinese will go overseas** (some research suggests it could go up to 350million by then)
- In the five years to 2015 the number of airports in China will go from 175 to 230
- There are one million millionaires in China
- And they're the world's biggest overseas spenders; 2013, the average the daily spend, excluding accommodation was \$1086

Why is the Chinese tourist traveling?

- Relaxation
- Enhance status
- Expanding international contacts
- Looking at investment/education
- Self-fulfillment

Where are they staying?

- 57% likely to book 3 or 4 star hotels
- 17% elect 5 star hotels
- 7% prefer all-inclusive resorts
- 11% prefer to stay in a Chinese style hotel

The rise of the FIT traveller

- Group travel competition is about price
- 16 years of outbound leisure travel started producing experienced travellers (that's when ADS or approved destination status started)

- High pressure tactics of group tour leaders off-putting
- Global presence of Chinese service providers
- Rise of middle class and high income consumers
- Seeking status through unique travel experiences and independent control

How do FIT travellers do their research?

- Friends and family
- Online travel forums
- Review sites
- Mobile content apps
- Travel agents – not as important except for visa
- Official destination

Chinese travelers' wish list:

- Union Pay
- Translated material (menus, brochures, guest compendium, emergency procedures, etc)
- Mandarin-speaking staff or UBU
- Chinese menu items
- Chinese newspapers/ TV channels
- Chinese website
- Kettle / slippers

So what do I need translated?

Information cards, guest compendium, menus, laundry/dry cleaning ticket, guest satisfaction survey, promotional material, brochures, signs, and most importantly security information.

Chinese take security when travelling very seriously. So that means you need to have all material related to fire exits and emergency procedures and phone numbers printed in simplified Chinese.

Menus are also important – the Hotels.com survey showed an astonishing 95% of Chinese guests have at least one meal in the hotel restaurant.

Mandarin speakers

Mandarin-speakers need to be available 24 hours a day and they need to be visible. If you can't hire Mandarin speakers, or you don't have them available around the clock, then you need to subscribe to a service like UBU.

One of the most important things to remember is that Chinese guests won't attempt to ask their question unless they can see a Chinese speaker. The reason is, they want to avoid any situation where others can see them making mistakes such as incorrect pronunciation.

So having access to Mandarin-speaking staff is crucial. It gives the visitor security and peace of mind and helps you increase guest satisfaction levels and ultimately revenues.

Union Pay

Travelers see the provision of China Union Pay as the most important Chinese service to be provided by accommodation when travelling internationally (61%).

- In the U.S. 211 million people carry four brand cards (Visa, Mastercard, Amex and Discover). In China, 750 million people carry one brand card, Union Pay.
- It's the only domestic bank card organization so it links all the banks
- There are many types of Union Pay cards, both debit and credit.
- Today, your system may be able to process the Visa and Mastercard cobranded with a Union Pay logo. According to Union Pay, these cards are going to be phased out in 2015.
- And while Union Pay has an agreement with Discover, not all of their cards are accepted.

Numbers

- Guests from China should not be assigned to rooms that include the number four
- Remember Chinese management hierarchy influence room assignments, so managers need to be assigned to a higher floor than their team, or given a higher room number
- No. 8 is regarded as the luckiest number in Chinese culture
- Other Chinese lucky numbers are 0,6,9

The Do's

- Offer warm water or tea, not cold water and certainly never put ice in their glass.

- At auspicious times of the year offer gifts, such as mooncakes during the mid-autumn festival, which is next week
- At Chinese New Year offer hongbao or red packets
- Also during auspicious times of year, use lucky Chinese colours such as gold, red and orange
- Have small orange or mandarin trees in the lobby during Chinese New Year, or put out a bowl of Chinese sweets
- Take note if the guests are celebrating a birthday or anniversary and surprise them with a gift like a bottle of wine or a bag of eight chocolates. Get the GM a sign note written in simplified Chinese

Letters

- Welcome letter: a translation of your standard letter
- Occasions letter: I heard you're celebrating a special occasion. From all of us here, congratulations and please enjoy this small gift
- Apology letter: I heard there was problem earlier. We apologise for the inconvenience. We do hope you enjoy the rest of your stay

Culture, tradition and etiquette

Face or the concept of saving face is very important in China. And understanding how this impacts daily life will help you better serve your Chinese guests.

The concept is a little abstract but it can be described as a combination of:

- Social standing
- Reputation
- Honor
- Influence
- Dignity

How to help a visitor "save face"

- Give sincere compliments when they are due.
- Show extra respect and defer to all elders and people of rank, title, or uniform.
- If there's a problem, always use the passive voice, as in: "IT seems as if there's a problem."
- And always talk privately

- Flattery is very effective too: “I know this isn’t your fault but since you are very smart, what do you say we....
- If you’re offered a gift, politely refuse at first, but always eventually accept the token with both hands
- If a Chinese guest has hung laundry on the balcony; kindly offer the hotel’s laundry service, or better yet – place a tent card in the room describing the hotel’s policies (remember: make it dual language; English/simplified Chinese)

The Don’ts

- Avoid pointing out someone's mistakes openly in front of their peers or strangers.
- Or calling someone out on a lie
- Don’t interrupt someone when talking
- Don’t turn down an invitation immediately
- Don’t comment on someone’s lack of ability or knowledge
- Try to avoid assigning blame

The concept of “face” is also tied to the idea of “guanxi” or relationships. In business the importance of guanxi is seen in various ways:

- When you shake hands, bow your head a little to show respect. Bend from the shoulders not the waist like in Japan.
- When you greet someone start with the most senior or most important person and work your way down. When shaking a woman’s hand be especially gentle.
- When exchanging business cards use both hands and make sure the card is facing the other person.
- When accepting cards, also use both hands. Show respect by studying the card for a little while.
- Never put the card in your back pants pocket – that would be like sitting on someone’s face.
- You can ask what their name literally translates to or where about in China they’re from – this give them the chance to talk about their home province and any special traits

Some other tips:

- The Chinese do not like to be touched, particularly by strangers. Do not hug, back slap or put an arm around someone's shoulder
- No Pointing the index finger--use the open hand instead
- Whistling is considered rude

Language

- Mandarin is the language spoken in mainland China and Taiwan. Cantonese is the official language in Hong Kong and is also spoken in the southern Chinese province of Guangdong that borders Hong Kong.
- For the written language, simplified Chinese is used in mainland China and by the Chinese in Singapore, while traditional Chinese is used in Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Internet and Social Media

China now has [more than 618 million Internet users](#), about 80% access the Web via their smartphones.

Before they go on vacation, they use a range of online sources online:

- 48% accommodation/travel websites
- 47% online review sites
- 36% use online booking methods to reserve accommodation
- 17% book through mobile apps

CITM research shows that going online is a priority for Chinese travellers during all stages of their holiday, whether planning, booking or travelling.

- More than 90 per cent of internet users reportedly have a social media account.
- 84% of travellers share their photos and experiences on social media during their vacation
- Nearly 1/3 under 35 share their experiences on a review site

One of the easiest ways to encourage your guests or visitors to review your property is add text to the bottom of a receipt or to a bill:

“Thanks for visiting, we hope you enjoyed your stay? Please come and see us again soon, and in the meantime, why not tell your family and friends about your time here and review us on your favourite social media site”.

Weibo and WeChat are the two most important social media platforms in China.

Accounts need to be managed by a bilingual professional who is familiar with the style, format and tools of these platforms.

Marketing Goals & KPIs

Short term: the aim of social media or networks marketing is to improve public relations (PR), impressions and promotion.

- PR: the number of retweets.
- Impressions: the number of visits e.g. Weibo / Youku / clicks and video view (if there is any)
- Promotions: the sale of products and customer coverage

Long term: the aim of social media marketing is to build your brand.

The performance of brand building on social media can be measured by:

- The number of followers
- The quality of followers
 - i.e. percentage of active followers (as compared to zombie fan), percentage of Key Opinion Leaders followers, average comments number, and average retweet number.
- (KOLs) are extremely helpful for retweets and help you to achieve your goals.
- They may include celebrities and others seen as industry experts. KOLs will typically blog about a product, its efficiency, why people should use it and what it has done for them.
- KOLs in China are a gateway between the product and the target audience, and are often seen by the Chinese as a trustworthy ‘big brother or big sister’.

- Think about Youku (China's Youtube) as another avenue for professional video uploads to enhance your brand

Conclusions:

- Learn to see beyond the clichés about Chinese tourists
- Think about long-term engagement and commitment to ensure repeat business
- China is not a single market. Understand the regional and demographic identifiers
- Maintain an active presence on China's internet
- Localisation is important and should be delivered appropriately i.e. never using Google translate
- Keep up to date on developments – China changes quickly
- Show respect for Chinese culture

Contact us

For any further information about how your business can become China Ready, please email Diana McDonald at dmd@ubu.travel or on +852 6688 7242 or visit the website at www.ubu.travel.

We provide a range of interpreting and translation services specially designed for the tourism and hospitality industry. We can also assist in the implementation of Union Pay as well as wider marketing strategies through our strategic partners.

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