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## **UNDERSTANDING TRAVEL CONSTRAINTS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF MAINLAND CHINESE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS (MCIS) IN NORWAY**

### **Original research paper**

#### **ABSTRACT**

An exploratory approach using qualitative methodology and 15 in-depth interviews with Mainland Chinese International Students (MCIS) in Norway was employed in the study. The country is experiencing an increasing number of both MCIS and Chinese tourists in general. Passive activities remain as the most popular activities due to travel constraints consisting of lack of information and equipment and the perception of risk due to the lack of perceived skills. Parental disapproval and fear of “losing face” while also wanting to seek independence are specifically relevant for this particular segment. Such phenomenon causes dilemmas which also serve as travel constraints. While constraints influence type of tourism activities, frequency and destination choices, they do not inhibit travel and tourism activity participation all together. Some constraints can be limited by the tourism industry while others are more challenging as they are dependent on individuals’ willingness and motivation to negotiate the constraints.

**Keywords:** Travel constraints, constraint negotiation, international students, Chinese students, destination marketing, Norway

#### **1.0 Introduction**

Travel behaviour including constraints are some of the most studied themes in tourism research (Cohen, Prayag, & Moital, 2014). However, a majority of existing studies are based on quantitative method approaches (Cohen et al., 2014). Thus, there are many topics that are yet to be explored. Mainland Chinese tourists are at present world’s largest outbound tourist market

of approximately 131 million outbound journeys annually (Nielsen, 2017). Such development has been positive for many countries' tourism industries including long-haul destinations in Europe. With a 12% increase in spending from the previous year, this market continues to lead international outbound tourism (UNTWO, 2017). For such reasons, researchers and practitioners are keen to explore this segment. As this market may be difficult to reach due to language issues and restricted itineraries, Mainland Chinese International Students (MCIS) can be considered as a useful group to study in order to further understand such segment (Hughes, Wang, & Shu, 2015; Lantai & Mei, 2017). Although international students are argued to be a distinctive market different from the tourist market, studying MCIS may provide further understanding of an increasingly important segment within the Chinese tourist market which seeks novel and unique experiences. Additionally, existing studies on Chinese nationals and MCIS in general are more focused on travel behaviour, needs, motivations and preferences rather than travel constraints. While many studies have provided sound knowledge of what MCIS' travel constraints consist of (such as Cai, 2015; Hughes et al., 2015; Walker, Deng, & Chapman, 2007; Walker, Jackson, & Deng, 2007), there is a need to explore why such constraints exist in the first place. Moreover, constraints that inhibit travelling cannot be assumed to be the same as why people cease participation in certain tourism activities or refuse participation despite having the desire (Nadirova & Jackson, 2000). Based on the existing research gaps, this study consists of two main research objectives:

- To explore travel constraints experienced by MCIS in Norway and the reasons for experiencing such constraints.
- To understand why some travel constraints are managed, negotiated and overcome while others are not.

An exploratory approach with a qualitative research methodology consisting of semi-structured interviews was employed. This study focused on MCIS in Norway as they are at present a significant group of international students from the Asian region in Norway. In 2017, there were approximately 950 MCIS, which is the fifth largest group of international students in Norway (Database for Statistics on Higher Education, 2018). The mainland Chinese market is also currently the fastest growing inbound tourist market in Norway with approximately 480.000 commercial guest nights in 2017, which is a 21 percent increase from the previous year (Statistics Norway, 2018). With an increasing number of courses and full-degree programs conducted in English, free education system (for both local and international students) as well as the increasing number of inbound mainland Chinese tourists, understanding the behaviour of such segment including their travel constraints is crucial for the Norwegian tourism industry.

## **2.0 Literature review**

### *2.1.1 Travel constraints*

According to Hung (2014), travel constraints are defined as factors that inhibit individuals from travelling on a continual basis by causing inability to travel. Specifically, constraints “result in the inability to maintain or increase frequency of travel, and/or lead to negative impacts on the quality of the travel experience” (Hung, 2014, p. 857). Much of the knowledge on travel constraints is understood from leisure constraint studies (Nadirova & Jackson, 2000). In leisure constraint literatures, constraints are studied based on the three levels of a hierarchy model, consisting of intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural constraints. At the intrapersonal level, individuals’ stress and skill level can be the inhibiting factors in addition to other individual psychological attributes such as fear (Crawford, Jackson, & Godbey, 1991). Only after intrapersonal factors are addressed, individuals will experience the next level of interpersonal constraints, including social interactions with friends and family. The last level, the structural

constraints may consist of cost and accessibility issues such as time, money, facilities and lack of information (Alexandris, Funk, & Prichard, 2011; Son, Kerstetter, & Mowen, 2009). Crawford et al. (1991) argue that intrapersonal constraints are the most powerful factors because if these constraints cannot be overcome, it is less likely for individuals to reach higher order constraints. The hierarchy model was updated by Jackson, Crawford, and Godbey (1993) to include constraints negotiations, which is further discussed.

Hughes et al. (2015) applied a similar approach to the hierarchy model. While similar in many sense due to the hierarchy and sequential approach, Hughes et al. (2015) used the term intrinsic barriers to describe the intrapersonal constraints, extrinsic barriers to explain the interpersonal constraints and control barriers rather than structured constraints. Additionally, they consider lack of companionship as a control barrier rather an intrapersonal constraint. Although the terms constraints and barriers are often used interchangeably, there is a difference between the two (Jackson & Scott, 1999). Jackson (1988) argues that the term barrier does not capture the greater extent of various leisure constraint behaviours as barriers tend to direct researchers toward one type of constraint. Constraints are more complex and typically referred to as “factors that are perceived or experienced by individuals to limit the formation of leisure preferences and to inhibit or prohibit participation and enjoyment in leisure” (Jackson, 1997, p. 461). Additionally, another major difference in Hughes et al. (2015)’s model is that structured constraints or control barriers have to be addressed prior to extrinsic and intrinsic barriers.

While both hierarchy models and the numerous studies (including He, Li, Harrill, & Cardon, 2014; Hughes et al., 2015; Li et al., 2011; Nyaupane, Morais, & Graefe, 2002; Walker, Deng, et al., 2007; Walker, Jackson, et al., 2007) have provided sound knowledge in understanding what travel constraints are, there is also a research gap of why such constraints exist in the first

place. For instance, when individuals indicate lack of companionship as a constraint, it would be interesting to explore why it is considered as a constraint. Moreover, other variables including the desire but inability to participate due to certain constraints is also important to investigate (Nadirova & Jackson, 2000).

This study has attempted to integrate both Hughes et al. (2015)'s and Crawford et al. (1991) and Jackson et al. (1993)'s models. Due to the time MCIS spend in the study country and other characteristics of international students in general, MCIS are usually not considered as tourists. Hence, lessons from general leisure constraint studies are just as important in such context. Furthermore, constraints can also vary largely across contexts. For instance, it is possible to explore constraints before new leisure activities are started (Lyu, Oh, & Lee, 2013; Walker, Deng, et al., 2007), whereas travel constraints can also be studied during travelling and on how they influence tourism activity participation. As this study focuses on MCIS, it was assumed that a majority of this segment would undertake some types of tourism and leisure activities in their study country (Weaver, 2004), it thus concentrates on the latter.

### *2.1.2 Understanding travel constraints among MCIS*

Li et al. (2011) argue that while studies on travel constraints are increasing, only a handful have investigated the MCIS segment. Despite the wide usage, some literatures argue that Crawford et al. (1991) and Jackson et al. (1993)'s hierarchy model is not applicable to all cultural contexts. Chick and Dong (2005) highlight for instance that there is a weakness in the model as it does not incorporate cultural constraints. Moreover, since cultural constraints as well as age, gender, lifecycle, education and financial situation are all determinant factors that can affect both intrapersonal and interpersonal levels in regards to MCIS (He et al., 2014), such factors must be taken into consideration when examining travel constraints. Nevertheless, while a

majority of studies on travel constraints are based on the western context (He et al., 2014), Walker, Deng, et al. (2007) argue that their data supports the general applicability of this framework across two cultures when they examined MCIS and Canadian international students. Furthermore, Godbey, Crawford, and Shen (2010) found Crawford et al. (1991) and Jackson et al. (1993)'s model to be cross cultural relevant. However, the importance of the constraints on each level may vary depending on the cultural context and individuals themselves (Godbey et al., 2010). Some inconsistencies are also found in existing studies. For instance, in a study based on the US context, Walker, Jackson, et al. (2007) discover that MCIS are more intra-and interpersonally constrained and less structurally constrained. On the contrary, in a more recent study of MCIS in Canada, structural constraints were identified as the most problematic followed by interpersonal constraints, which to a certain degree were an issue, and finally intrapersonal skills were not considered as a major issue (Cai, 2015).

As discussed, Hughes et al. (2015)'s model is another key contribution in understanding travel constraints experienced by MCIS. In their study of MCIS in Australia, some of the intrinsic or intrapersonal constraints (barriers) consist of language, safety issues, unfamiliar environment, cultural differences and food, while extrinsic constraints (barriers) include difficulties to find information, lack of transport, far travel distance and not knowing where to travel. Lastly, control or structured constraints (barriers) consist of cost, lack of time and companionship. It was concluded that many MCIS in particular were inhibited to travel due to high costs as well as lack of travel packages and student discounts (Hughes et al., 2015). Similar findings were also supported by Gardiner, King, and Wilkins (2013), although the study did not exclusively focused on MCIS.



Moreover, based on previous studies, it has been assumed that MCIS are mainly interested in passive activities such as sightseeing (Kim & Jogaratnam, 2003; King & Gardiner, 2015; Liao, 2012; Ryan & Xie, 2003; Shanka, Ali-Knight, & Pope, 2002; Xu, Morgan, & Song, 2009). Thus, there are travel constraints that inhibit MCIS from undertaking or seeking alternative tourism activities. For instance, Ryan and Xie (2003), Ryan and Zhang (2006) and the more recent study of Huang and Tian (2013) argue that alternative activities such as adventure tourism are *not* popular among MCIS because their preferred activity was sightseeing. Thus, travel constraints in regards to nature and adventure tourism among Chinese nationals in general have received less attention in the literature. This is because it was assumed that this market displays less interest in such activities in the first place. In regards to the study context of Norway, since Norwegian tourism is dominated by nature and adventure tourism, it was thus also important to explore the possible travel constraints in regards to adventure tourism among MCIS.

### *2.1.3 Negotiating constraints*

With every travel constraint, individuals would arguably adopt certain behaviour such as negotiation in order to overcome some of the constraints (Kay & Jackson, 1991; Scott, 1991; Shaw, Bonen, & McCabe, 1991). Changing travel plans or travelling less frequently for instance are identified as behavioural negotiation strategies (Jackson & Rucks, 1995). Behavioural strategies are related to the actions individuals must take in order to overcome constraints to participation (Gao & Kerstetter, 2016). Hence, although travel constraints may exist in varies levels, they do not necessarily inhibit participation in tourism and leisure activities all together (Jackson, Crawford & Godbey, 1993; Jackson & Rucks, 1995; Lyu et al., 2013; Nadirova & Jackson, 2000). Lye (2012) further argues that an individual's negotiation process is influenced by various psychological factors including motivation, satisfaction and benefits as well as

socio-demographic factors such as age, gender and income. Hence, there are certain constraints that individuals are not keen to negotiate or consider as important to overcome. Cognitive strategies are another type of negotiation behaviour, which on the contrary to behavioural strategies, require more than psychological changes. Cognitive strategies are described as the perceived value that individuals believe they will gain when participating in leisure activities (Gao & Kerstetter, 2016). Individuals would have to push themselves in order to overcome such constraints, as they involve more uncertainty and require stronger motivation (Lee & Scott, 2009). Furthermore, as cognitive strategies precede behavioural strategies, both negotiation strategies are thus interconnected (Kennelly, Moyle, & Lamont, 2013).

Negotiation is also highly dependent on personality traits and one's self-confidence. Hubbard and Mannell (2001) argue that higher motivation to participate in certain tourism activities leads to greater negotiation efforts. This is because higher motivation is likely to encourage individuals to use negotiation strategies to overcome constraints (White, 2008). Hence, when an individual is confident in his or her own ability to negotiate, motivation and negotiation effort will also increase, leading to more willingness to negotiate constraints and increase participation (Lyu et al., 2013).

Essentially, the above discussion indicates that there are research gaps of why travel constraints exist in the first place and why some travel constraints are negotiated while others are not. The following section discusses the research methodology which was employed in order to answer and address the existing research gaps.

### **3.0 Methodology**

This study adopts a qualitative methodology due to its ability to explore a phenomenon in its natural settings. Due to the explorative nature, the goal was to obtain a better understanding of the phenomenon rather than to find conclusive evidence (Mehmtoglu, 2004; Ringdal, 2013). The under-researched segment of MCIS also indicates that an exploratory approach is best suited in such a study. In addition, the researchers adopted an interpretivist view in order to discover and understand the meaning of respondents' thoughts and behaviour (Kvale et al., 2015; Mehmtoglu, 2004).

An interview guide which served as the main research instrument was developed based on themes and topics generated from the literature. Interviews in a qualitative study allow researchers to ask a set of pre-determined questions in a face-to-face interaction (Kumar, 1996). To allow new themes and issues to be generated during the interviews, the interview questions were designed to be semi-structured. The questions consist of general travel preferences and constraint questions including where they have travelled to, where they intend to travel, why participation in certain tourism and leisure activities (including passive and active activities) were chosen. Other questions focused on preferences when travelling including the issue of companionship as well as other commonly known constraints among international students such as cost, travel distance, budget and time.

#### *3.1.1 Method and sampling*

The researchers focused on recruiting participants enrolled in two major higher education institutions in Norway. One is located on the west-side and the other one the east-side of the country. In total, there were 48 MCIS registered at both institutions. The international student recruitment offices in each university were contacted and their assistance were sought in order

to locate potential respondents. Emails to potential respondents were sent out by the international student recruitment offices, however with little response. Subsequently, possible respondents were recruited through a Facebook group consisting of MCIS in Norway. To further ensure an adequate size to be obtained, a snowball sampling approach was also adopted (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). Henderson and Bialeschki (2002) argue that although snowball sampling is a biased approach, it can be applied when there are difficulties in obtaining an adequate sample size. In qualitative studies, sample size varies as it is determined and guided by the information to be gathered. Ideally, information should be collected and analysed until no new information emerge or can be discovered (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). However, it is difficult to determine the saturation point in a qualitative study (Bowen, 2008) as the depth of the collected data is essentially more important than the numbers (Burmeister & Aitken, 2012). Generally, Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) stress that a saturation point would be reached between six and 12 interviews. Based on Francis et al. (2010)'s principles for specifying data saturation, an initial analysis sample of 10 interviews were conducted. The point of data saturation was determined when no new themes emerged after the following interviews. This was tested after three further interviews and another two successive interviews. In total, 15 in-depth interviews were conducted, which is a response rate of 31 percent. A list of respondents is illustrated in table 1. In addition to general demographic information, it was significant to outline the financial situation of the respondents such as funding and voluntary paid work as such situation may affect the time and resources respondents have at disposal to undertake travelling or tourism activities in the country.

[Insert Table 1 here]

The interviews lasted for about 40 to 50 minutes and they were conducted in English. As the respondents were all MCIS enrolled in higher education institutions, it was assumed that they have excellent command of English, which is one of the key requirements for admission to a Norwegian higher education institution. Prior to the interviews, potential respondents were informed about the interview language and they could decline participation if they were uncomfortable being interviewed in English. None of the respondents declined due to such reason. Hence, a translator service was not used, as it was not regarded as necessary. The conversation was recorded using a digital recorder and transcribed into textual data after completion. Participation was strictly voluntary and anonymous and could be terminated at any given time. The researchers were aware that perhaps more potential respondents could have been recruited if the interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese. Nevertheless, this would have required a translation service as well as additional resources. The interviews would also have to be translated to English in order for the researchers to analyse the data. Hence, based on such issues as well as considering that all of the participants were undertaking higher education courses in English, such decision was made.

### *3.1.2 Data analysis*

Qualitative data collection methods often result in large amount of data to be collected. Hence, data had to be systematically organised in order to analyse the content. Thematic analysis is a type of content analysis that focuses on making inferences by constantly comparing the collected data to identify the characteristic of the text (Henderson & Bialeschki, 2002). A software was not used in this study to categorise, code and organise the materials as the data was manageable without the use of a particular software as a tool. Whether or not a software is used, data analysis in qualitative studies is fully dependent on the researchers' ability to interpret and ascertain the meanings about a written phenomenon being studied. The actual

process involves identifying similar patterns of themes and issues as well as categorising the collected data into manageable categories and themes (Neuendorf, 2002). Besides coding and categorising the collected data, new themes, issues and conceptual elements can also be discovered (Jennings, 2001). A list of coded themes is illustrated table 2.

[Insert Table 2 here]

## **4.0 Result and Discussion**

### *4.1.2 Constraints influence chosen travel destinations*

While the study focuses on the travel constraints of MCIS in Norway, issues regarding why Norway was initially chosen as a study country was also raised. Interestingly, the respondents' reasons to choose Norway as a study country were not directly related to tourism purposes. In fact as noted:

I didn't know much about Norway before. I came here because my school has agreement with the school in Norway. That's why I came here. I haven't even heard much about Norway before. More like a coincidence that I ended up here [R3].

However after arrival, all respondents were positively surprised by the beautiful nature and attractions.

I was really amazed by Norway. I mean I've heard about Norway before and seen the pictures. I thought it was only marketing. But it's really beautiful

here. I'm from a big city in China so it's very different here. It's so clean! I

love the air [R1]!

Despite not considering Norway as an attractive tourism destination in the first place, all respondents have undertaken travelling in the country. In regards to destination choices, once they arrive in Norway, the most popular destinations include familiar places such as Oslo, Bergen and Stavanger. Although travel constraints which occurred during travelling and how they influence tourism and leisure activity participation have been the focal point of this study, some constraints that occurred before travelling have also emerged during the data collection stage. This includes travel destination choices in Norway. For instance, while respondents displayed the desire to visit more remote destinations with harsher climate such as Northern Norway, they have not managed to or intend to as explained:

I really wanna see Tromsø and Northern Lights, but I don't know how. Also my money and time is limited, it's just too expensive for me. It's a shame because people have been telling me that if you haven't see Northern Lights then you haven't been to Norway [R3]!

I think Tromsø it's too cold for me. And I don't have the right gear to go there. I don't wanna spend money on buying equipment or clothes just for that one trip [R5].

This indicates that although many respondents do display a desire to visit more remote destinations, they are inhibited to travel due to a combination of factors including unfamiliar environment (extrinsic and intrapersonal), budget and time (control and structural) and lack of

proper equipment (structural and extrinsic). Importantly, while identified as constraints, lack of time and money do not inhibit travelling or tourism activity participation all together. The respondents will negotiate the constraints using behavioural strategies by amending their travel plan and travelling to places within closer proximity, as well as choosing accommodations, and planning other expenses accordingly as suggested by Jackson et al. (1993).

It is not surprising that lack of time and limited budget are considered as constraints as such constraints are common among international students in general (Li & Stoldolska, Gardiner et al., 2013; Hughes et al., 2015; 2006). This study however reveals that lack of time is not only related to their study commitments but also other commitments such as voluntary paid employment. Previous studies have also argued that MCIS in general place greater emphasis on education and strong work ethics, thus less on tourism and leisure (King & Gardiner, 2015; Wang & Stringer, 2000). While such constraints do not inhibit the respondents from travelling all together, the respondents are concerned with balancing their work and study commitment with leisure.

#### *4.1.2 Constraints influence the type of tourism activities*

Although travel constraints do not inhibits travelling and participation in tourism activities all together, constraints do lead to respondents refusing participation in certain tourism activities. Not surprisingly, the most common and popular tourism activity that all respondents state as most appealing was sightseeing, followed by museum attractions.

I like sightseeing and I do a lot of that. Sometimes museums too. I don't think I'll ever stop going on sightseeing. I wanna see something different from China. It's easy and relaxing and I don't have to do a lot of things [R1].



I do a lot of sightseeing. I'm not much into shopping, it's not my preference. Definitely sightseeing and taking photos when I travel [in Norway]. The environment is really nice and I can really enjoy the fresh air [R13].

It is a common perception that Chinese nationals including MCIS are mostly interested in passive activities such as sightseeing and shopping (Choi, Liu, Pang, & Chow, 2008; Kim & Jogaratnam, 2003; King & Gardiner, 2015; Liao, 2012; Ryan & Xie, 2003; Shanka et al., 2002; Xu et al., 2009). Michael, Armstrong, and King (2004) also argue that shopping is considered as a popular activity among international students in general. Although the findings confirm that passive activities remain as the most popular activities, shopping was not. This may be attributed by the study context as Norway is generally considered as a high cost country with high living expenses in combination with budget constraints (control and structural) experienced by the respondents.

While none of the respondents state that they intend to undertake more active tourism activities such as adventure tourism, they did display an interest and desire to participate.

I wanna do the adventure but I don't know how to do it, I'm afraid that I might hurt myself. I don't trust myself. I've never done it before. If I don't know I might hurt myself [R3].

What do I need for that? Do I need some special clothes and shoes? I don't wanna look stupid if I don't have the right equipment. And it's dangerous if I don't have the equipment isn't it [R11]?

It was discovered that a combination of the extrinsic and intrinsic barriers or intrapersonal and structural constraints are inhibiting respondents to seek participation. These include fearing the unknown (intrapersonal) and worrying about safety (intrapersonal and intrinsic), not knowing where to find information about these attractions (structural and extrinsic), lack of equipment (extrinsic and structural) as well as lack of skills (intrapersonal and intrinsic). The findings also indicate that it is necessary to discuss travel constraints from the Chinese cultural perspective where the issues of “saving face” or how they are seen with the eyes of other people is an important concern, especially when the respondents emphasise that they do not want to “look stupid”. This is particular relevant in the Chinese culture as face is intertwined with one’s public image where such image is based on the judgement of the community, rather than individual desires and personal freedom (Kitayama, Duffy, & Uchida, 2007; Shi, 2011). Another culturally relevant constraint is parental disapproval as explained:

I’d love to try, but my parents said no. They said don’t put yourselves in risk when in overseas. Why try something if there’s a good chance that you’re gonna get hurt? I don’t know how the adventure tourism is like here. I mean I’ve seen the pictures. It looks amazing but also dangerous [R7].

Both “losing face” among peers and parental disapproval can be considered as interpersonal constraints, particularly relevant among the respondents. As a result, although the desire and interest in adventure and nature-based tourism do exist, none of the respondents were willing to negotiate such constraints. One of the reasons is that a more cognitive strategy is needed, which involves more effort from the respondents rather than simply changing and rearranging the travel plan and itinerary as required by behavioural negotiation strategies. Subsequently,

the findings indicate that it may be too simplistic to assume that sightseeing is the only or the most popular tourism activity, as low participation in other types of tourism activities does not equal low interest. As explained by some respondents:

I'd like to try adventure tourism. In China we don't have that stuff and most of the time we live in city and there're a lot of people and it's hard to get nature related things. Yes, I'd like to try because I've never tried and in our country it's hard to find it [R13].

It seems very exciting and I really wanna try! But I've never tried it before.

What if I get hurt? [R4]

This also concurs with some of the findings by Lou (2014). While there are discrepancies in regards to adventure tourism, a majority of studies on MCIS do agree that they are keen to experience something new and novel when travelling in their study country (Ryan & Mo, 2001; Schlegelmilch & Ollenburg, 2013). Undertaking adventure and nature-based tourism activities could definitely be categorised as something new and novel, which they cannot experience in their home country.

#### *4.1.3 Companionship and independence when travelling*

Besides destination and tourism activity choices, lack of companionship is also another key constraint identified in many travel and leisure constraint literatures. This is considered as interpersonal constraint by Crawford et al. (1991) and Jackson et al. (1993) and as control barrier by Hughes et al. (2015). Nevertheless, only a few respondents identified such factor as a constraint. In terms of international students in general, it has also been argued that

companionship is even more important among this segment due to the unfamiliar environment (Gmelch, 1997). While Ryan and Xie (2003) stress that MCIS prefer independent travel, many still choose to travel in small groups. The findings of this study somewhat support such claim. However, travelling in small groups is not necessary only due to companionship.

I think travelling alone is good. I don't mind travelling by myself. I can also travel in very small groups. The larger groups are a bit harder. It's just more hassle. Everyone wants to do different things. I mean it's good to travel in groups if you wanna split the cost and things like that. Then it's very good. Sharing accommodation and stuff. Like you're just travelling together to split costs, that's fine. You know it becomes more hassle when you start doing things together. Usually we all wanna do different things and disagreement happens [R6].

If I've to travel in a group, the smaller group the better. I try to avoid a group itinerary, I don't like that particularly. I haven't really experienced anything negative about it, I just prefer a smaller group. It also means that we can share cost, which is good. But I guess I just prefer to be individual. And not having the problem with a group itinerary and do the things that the group is doing. Just wanna do my own thing basically [R7].

Only a few respondents state that they want to travel with someone else due to the unfamiliar environment and safety issues as claimed by Gmelch (1997). For some, there are other reasons as explained:

I don't mind travelling by myself, I've spent some time travelling alone about a week, that was nice and interesting but I felt like something was missing. I do still travel alone, but it'd be nice to have someone else there. I mean I'd love to share my experiences with another person. Afterwards we can talk about the experience you know [R12].

I don't know if this will stop me from travelling. From time to time I do think about safety issues. Especially my parents, they don't trust me travelling alone. Sometimes I just feel like telling them that I'm travelling with others just to satisfy them, but actually I was planning to travel by myself. But then again, I felt bad about lying and ended up travelling with someone else anyway! But I think travelling with another person can also be good. She can help me to take pictures! [R1].

This is also related to the cultural issues of parental disapproval as well as simply seeking companion to share the experience. Additionally, the respondents' independent travel behaviour was also expressed when they emphasise that they were not interested in organised tours.

I want flexibility. I don't wanna be tied up [when travelling]. And I don't want to be seen as a typical tourist...[R10]

These findings contradict Hughes et al. (2015) and Gardiner et al. (2013)'s studies as they identified lack of travel packages as one of the main travel constraints. While it can be argued that such travel constraint depends on the destination and its facilities, the findings further

emphasise on the respondents' independence to explore the destination at their own pace and need. King and Gardiner (2015) explain that young Chinese travellers such as MCIS are increasingly exhibiting independent behaviour due to China's rapid economic transformation and the opening of self-expression through social media. Subsequently, such independence suggests that some of the respondents in the study are straying away from being the average typical tourist. Although there is no clear agreement of what a typical tourist is, being typical is usually judged to be undesirable (Prebensen, Larsen, & Abelsen, 2003). While the study is exploratory in nature, such findings may provide understanding and insight into the future outbound tourist market of China. Nevertheless, further studies should seek to explore the validity of this phenomenon.

#### *4.1.4 MCIS' travel constraints in regards to the two hierarchy models*

Based on the hierarchy models by Jackson et al. (1993) and Hughes et al. (2015), some of the findings are summarised in figure 1 and 2. As discussed, both models share some similarities but also essential differences. Specifically, the findings identified constraints such as stress in regards to particular skills needed to participate in certain tourism activities, worrying about safety as well as fearing the unknown as constraints, which can be found in Level One (intrapersonal) in Jackson et al. (1993)'s model. On the other hand, Hughes et al. (2015) considered these as Level Three (intrinsic), as lack of money and time are categorised in Level One (control) rather than Level Three (structural). Hence, while the constraints are essentially similar, they are placed at different levels of the hierarchy. This is with the exception of Level Two in the middle, where different constraints can be found. For instance, lack of proper equipment and clothing to undertake certain activities are essentially placed in Level Two in Hughes et al (2015)'s model and in Level Three in Jackson et al. (1993)'s model

Additionally, the study also identified another constraint consisting of parental disapproval placed in Level Two (interpersonal) in figure 2. Such phenomenon may be unique among the particular segment of MCIS due to the cultural influences in Chinese culture where respecting parents and elderly as well as living up to others' expectations are highly valued (Gao, 1998). Although such findings may be unique to MCIS in general, it can also be applied to other young Chinese travellers. However, additional studies beyond an exploratory approach is needed in order to investigate further.

[Insert Figure 1 here]

[Insert Figure 2 here]

Finally, while the findings have identified constraints that can be placed in the various levels, they do not clearly support the hierarchy and sequential approach of the two models. This is because this study did not find any factors, which inhibit the respondents from travelling all together and that their refusal to participate in certain activities as well as destination choices are attributed by a combination of several constraints (Scott, 1991). Constraints may however influence the frequency of visits and certain tourist behaviour and choices (Nyaupane et al., 2002; Tan, 2016) or the level of participation as argued by Jackson et al. (1993). Furthermore, Godbey et al. (2010) stress that the reality is that the constraints at each level are interrelated and are thus not necessarily distinctive categories. Hence, the discrepancies between the two models may not be as significant. Moreover, individuals' level of participation in travel and leisure activities and the extent to which they are willing to negotiate the experienced constraints are dependent on their level of motivation. As an individuals' negotiation process is influenced by various psychological factors (Lye, 2012) and cultural factors as identified in

this study, there are certain travel constraints that individuals are not keen to negotiate or consider as important to overcome. Since cognitive strategies require changes that are psychological (Lee & Scott, 2009), the findings indicate that respondents' negotiation behaviour are mainly behavioural negotiation strategies. In terms of constraints that require cognitive negotiation strategies, many of the respondents were reluctant to do so particularly in regards to adventure and nature-based tourism activities.

## **5.0 Conclusion and Implications**

This study has identified why certain several travel constraints exist and that there is a desire to participate in active activities such as adventure tourism among this segment, which is contradictory to previous assumptions. The findings also confirm that constraints do not lead to non-participation but rather influence the levels and types of tourism and leisure participation. The results of this study have thus provided some key insights into travel constraints experienced by MCIS and possibly the younger Chinese tourist market, which have received scant attention in the literature to date. Some issues such as not wanting to be seen as typical tourists and seeking approval from parents may be unique to this segment. Their need for independence while at the same time respect their parents' wishes may cause dilemmas and thus also function as travel constraints. Although such phenomenon needs to be further verified, it is important for the tourism industry to understand such situation when targeting this segment. Constraints such as lack of time and money (control and structural) as well as parental disapproval (interpersonal) are however beyond the control of the tourism industry and operators (Hughes et al., 2015), and must therefore be negotiated based on individuals themselves and their level of motivation. Whilst there are great potentials for countries such as Norway where nature and adventure tourism are the main driver of its tourism industry, the



risk-avoidance element needs to be taken into consideration. In addition, the tourism industry may also seek to reduce some of the constraints by offering adventure tourism activities, which incorporate the education element in order to educate MCIS about this type of activities. Lack of information about certain destinations and activities (structural and extrinsic) are also constraints which the tourism industry can assist MCIS in overcoming. As worrying about safety and risk-avoidance is important among the respondents (intrinsic and intrapersonal), and important among the Chinese nations generally, there should be an emphasis on soft-adventure tourism activities with low risk rather than hard-adventure. Such focus on low risk activities may be more manageable for MCIS to overcome by using the cognitive negotiation strategy. Considering the money and budget issues, there should also be possibilities to rent or hire equipment (structural and extrinsic) including clothing and shoes which are needed to undertake such activities.

As with any studies, certain limitations must be considered. The explorative nature of this study indicates that caution should be made when attempting to generalise the findings to the larger population of MCIS and the general Chinese tourist market. Future studies should investigate the internal factors in the negotiations process and means the tourism industry and operators can further limit certain constraints in order to adopt to the needs and wants of such market. Additionally, as certain travel constraints are dependent on the study country, more studies on MCIS in other study contexts as well as research beyond an exploratory approach should be conducted.

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