



Intelligence Applied
Asia Pacific

Guiding the journey for Chinese travellers

By 2020, an estimated 200 million Chinese people will travel overseas for leisure every year, more than double the number that do so today.

A huge range of players will have an interest in the choices those travellers make: from the destination they choose, to the places they visit on their trip and, of course, what they choose to buy. And Chinese travellers' choices in all of these areas are more open than ever before.

New adventures in shopping

Understanding the New Chinese Traveller, a study from TNS, reveals that China's travel routes are in the process of being redrawn. In 2016, for the first time, most of China's travellers will not automatically be heading for Hong Kong, many will visit Korea, the most popular intended destination in the next few years, and Australia, whose share of Chinese travellers will likely treble in 2016. They are just as likely to find themselves in Japan or Europe as in Hong Kong, and many will also visit New Zealand or the USA.

Buying power is a major driver of this shift, with wealth increasing amongst China's middle class and amongst a post-80s generation with an appetite for more frequent trips abroad. At the same time, currency depreciation elsewhere is making once out-of-reach destinations suddenly affordable. Longer distance air tickets for Chinese travellers represent a huge opportunity for brands, retailers, tourist boards, airline companies, hotel chains and more – provided they understand the unique decision journey that Chinese travellers take.

As confirmed by the TNS study, a large proportion of Chinese people travel in order to shop. Far than simply a by-product of travel, shopping is the thread that ties the entire travel experience together. This gives brands and retailers a hugely significant opportunity. To be successful, they need to market effectively throughout this journey, targeting all of the key moments involved in planning and experiencing a trip abroad:



Before travelling to Hong Kong:

70%

of Chinese had researched the price of goods they were likely to encounter

72%

had looked into the promotions and offers that would be available to them

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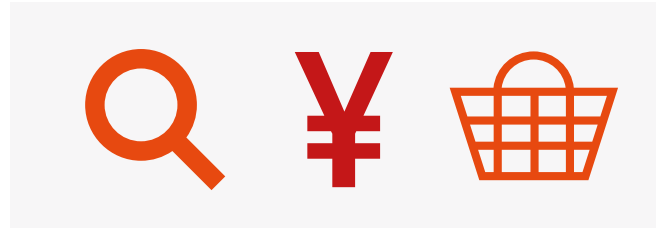
Inspiration: I want to get away



For many Chinese travellers, the anticipation of the shopping experience plays a key role in inspiring these travellers to get away in the first place. The opportunity to buy authentic luxury goods in Europe, or high-quality technology in Korea, forms an important part of the aspirational appeal of these destinations. The key to leveraging this appeal lies in identifying the particular categories that inspire travel to each destination – and associating them with the platforms where Chinese seek travel inspiration.

Chinese social media platform, Weibo has established a specialised travel portal that provides over 400,000 businesses with the opportunity to target travellers who have subscribed to receive updates on popular destinations. The involvement of Alipay enables businesses to help travellers complete impulse purchases in advance, maximising the value of the 'I want to get away' moment.

Research: Where do I want to shop?



As Chinese travellers start the process of exploring destinations, brands and products form an intrinsic part of their research. Before travelling to Hong Kong, for example, 70 per cent of Chinese had researched the price of goods they were likely to encounter there, and 72 per cent had looked into the promotions and offers that would be available to them.

Aligning with key opinion leaders has a key role to play in influencing their choices. Bloggers such as [Maimaijun](#) (a fashion and cosmetics influencer with nearly 2 million followers), and product comparison hubs like [Xiaohongshu](#) are important sources of information during the planning process– and provide an influential touchpoint for those seeking to shape Chinese Travellers' shopping itinerary. The partnership between Tmall and duty free operators Shilla Group and King Power takes things a stage further, enabling Chinese travellers to Korea and Thailand to pre-purchase duty free items online and save both time and money during the trip itself.

Experience: How do I make the most of my trip?



Chinese travellers want shopping experiences that will fit seamlessly within the trip as a whole, enhancing it rather than causing angst or pressure. Empowering them to pre-plan their purchases is one means of achieving this – but brands and retailers can also use technology to make intuitive suggestions as their audience travels from attraction to attraction. Location-based SMS alerts can be used to guide Chinese shoppers around unfamiliar malls or shopping districts, cutting the time spent seeking out purchases. Anticipating the attractions that Chinese travellers are most likely to visit – and the transport links they will use to get there – generates other opportunities as well. Alerts targeted around subway stations or ferry terminals could highlight relevant shopping opportunities that visitors can easily fit into their existing itinerary.

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Sharing: How can I impress others?



Ensuring a trip is well documented on social media is a must for the majority of Chinese travellers. During the average 3.6 days that Chinese visitors spend in Hong Kong, they post on social media about their trips an average of three times. The more exotic the destination, the greater the impetus to share, with a trip to Europe or America typically generating more than six posts.

What's more, the TNS study revealed that the experiences Chinese travellers share on social media channels have a profound effect on those considering a trip, with two out of three Chinese travellers happy to have their travel choices influenced by sharing on social media platforms. Enhancing the shareability of shopping experiences is consequently a valuable strategy for brands and retailers. Providing Chinese travellers not just with the opportunity to buy, but the opportunity to buy in memorable and status-enhancing ways, can provide the inspiration provoking others to travel – and to shop in the same places. Chinese travellers aren't just natural-born shoppers – they are natural-born advocates as well.

Chinese travellers are different; and those differences can add up to huge multi-category opportunities in the markets they choose to visit. Yet the differences inherent in Chinese travel require brands in those markets to adjust in order to capture the opportunity. Providing compelling, shopping-led reasons to travel can make China's taste for more adventurous destinations add up for all concerned.

About the authors



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About the study

TNS interviewed 2,229 frequent Chinese travellers (who travelled in past 12 months and with plans to travel outside of Mainland China for leisure/or for business in the next 12 months) from 14 cities across China tier 1 to 3, in September 2015. The survey covered travel habits and attitudes as well as shopping behavior across multiple industries, including luxury beauty and fashion, infant milk formula, adult milk products, and financial investment.

About TNS

TNS advises clients on specific growth strategies around new market entry, innovation, brand switching and stakeholder management, based on long-established expertise and market-leading solutions. With a presence in over 80 countries, TNS has more conversations with the world's consumers than anyone else and understands individual human behaviours and attitudes across every cultural, economic and political region of the world. TNS is part of Kantar, one of the world's largest insight, information and consultancy groups.

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