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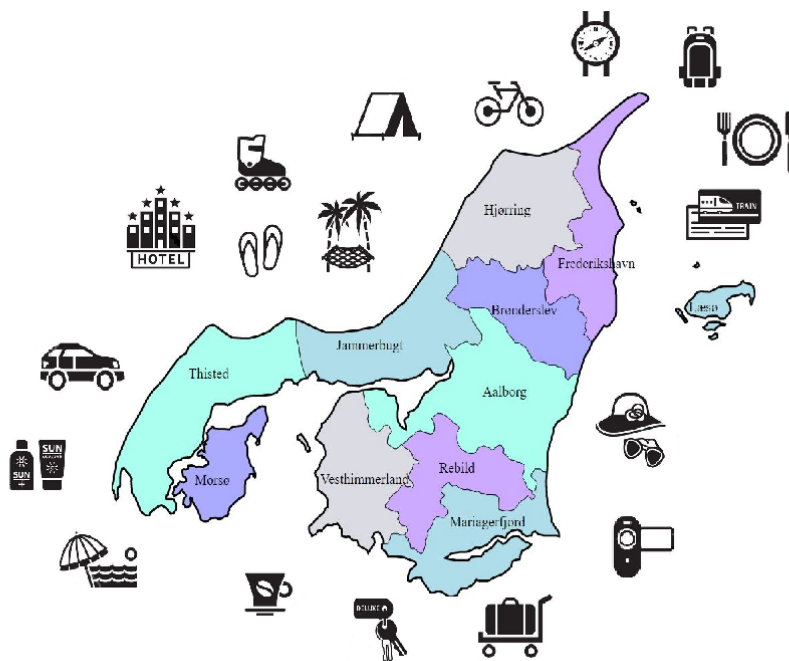
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# Travel preferences and tourism motivations

A comparison between Chinese  
and Romanian students in  
North Jutland

Tourism, May 31, 2017



Author: Maria Cristina Garabet  
Supervisor: Laura James

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# Abstract

**Title:** Travel preferences and tourism motivations - a comparison between Chinese and Romanian students in North Jutland

**Date:** 2017-05-31

**Study programme:** Tourism, Aalborg University

**Author:** Maria-Cristina Garabet

**Supervisor:** Laura James

**Key words:** tourism experiences, Chinese students, Romanian students, international students, travel preferences, nationality based differences, tourism motivations, travel patterns, North Jutland

**Problem formulation:** What are the differences between Chinese and Romanian students studying at AAU and UCN in terms of tourism motivations and travel patterns in North Jutland? Why do they have particular travel preferences?

**Purpose:** My study seeks to uncover why do Chinese and Romanian students studying at AAU and UCN have particular travel preferences. The focus is on the differences in terms of tourism motivations and travel patterns regarding North Jutland

**Methodology:** This thesis is written under the interpretivism paradigm, with a 'subtle realist' ontology and using the abduction research strategy. In this study the relationship between me as the researcher and the social phenomena is interactive, value-mediated and most resonating with the position of 'empathic neutrality'. The research has a mixed methods design with an online survey and in-depth interviews as methods of data collection.

# 1. Introduction

Research in the area of international students as tourists appears to be divided. Mei, Arcodia, & Dickson (2007:120) hold the view that international students seem to be “a growing market for the tourism industry in any country where they study.” Moreover, their travel and tourism visits contribute directly to the local economy and their possible generated visits by friends, family and relatives could represent an indirect contribution for the tourism industry.

Moreover, the international students market segment is characterized by diversity and a variety of different cultural backgrounds which should be taken into consideration when designing an efficient marketing strategy. For example, Field (1999) carried a comparative study of travel behaviors of international and domestic students at a Southeastern university in America. Field (1999) wanted to find out if any differences existed between their vacation travel habits. Foreign students preferred to have some cultural activities such as sightseeing and touring a city while domestic students chose to have activities that are more socially satisfying such as visiting friends and shopping (Field, 1999). Thus, Field’s (1999) anticipations in regards to tailoring the strategy for different segments could indicate the importance of not viewing the international students travel market as a uniform one, but rather a collection of subgroups. Therefore, targeted marketing and tourism product development strategies could influence international students into investing more of their time and budget for travelling and visit various tourism attractions. Accordingly, I argue a focus on international students travel patterns and tourism motivation could play an important role in understanding new ways of growth and tourism development.

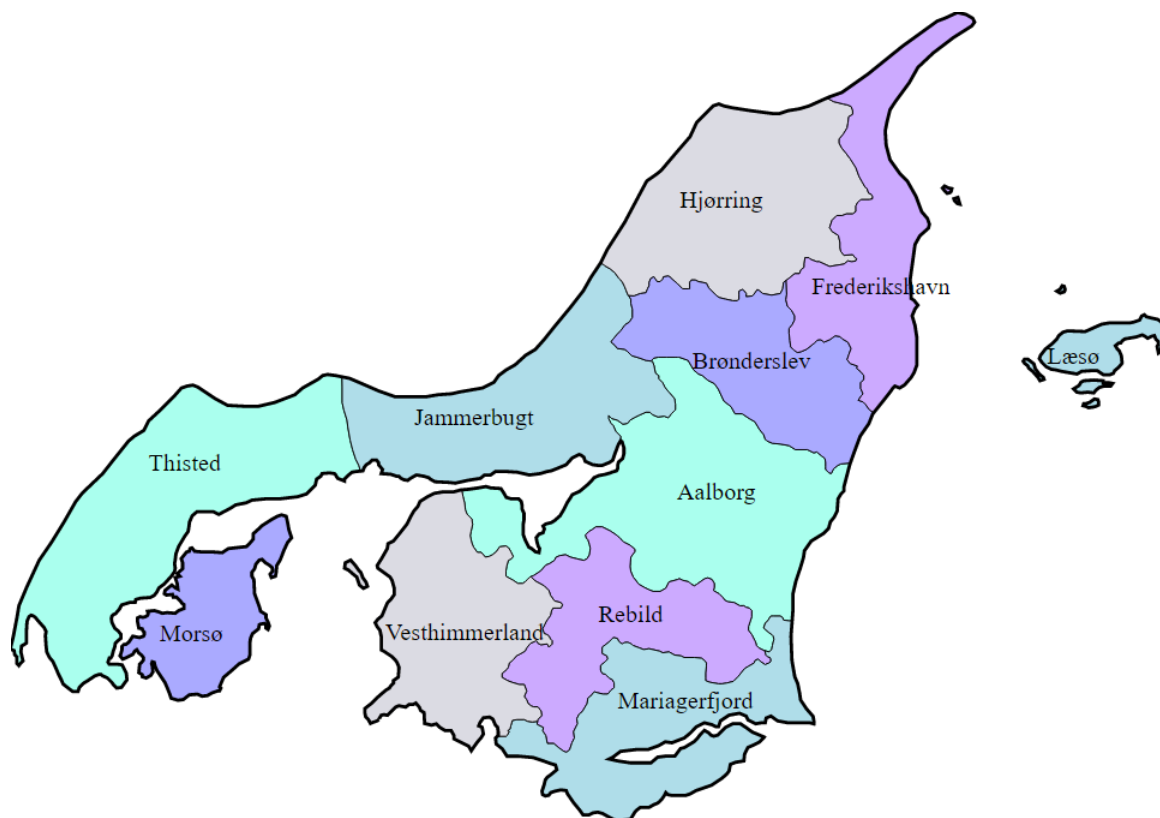
There seems to be a lack of research into what motivates international students to travel in North Jutland and whether these motivations differ on nationality base and from other groups of tourists. This research synthesises some of the main tourism motivation theories and typologies and is aiming at discovering why do Chinese and Romanian students at AAU and UCN have particular travel preferences and focus on the differences in terms of tourism motivations and travel patterns regarding North Jutland under the following research question:

**What are the differences between Chinese and Romanian students studying at AAU and UCN in terms of tourism motivations and travel patterns in North Jutland and why do they have particular travel preferences?**

This might have relevant marketing implications to the region and to further research in the field of international students in Denmark. It could also be relevant to acknowledge the fact that understanding the differences of both cultures can help meet the various needs of international students. Simultaneously, in order to anticipate future travel patterns a more in-depth knowledge of international student's tourism motivation is essential

Special features of the region which I will briefly present bellow have determined me to focus my study on it. One of the reasons I chose to focus my study on North Jutland was because it seems that most tourists who come to Denmark only tend to visit Copenhagen, and as argued bellow, North Jutland is a region that should receive more attention. North Jutland is surrounded by sea from all sides with a maximum distance of 50 km to the coast and this special location also gives it “a very special light and more hours of sunshine than the rest of Denmark.” (VisitDenmark.dk, 2017).

Figure 1 North Jutland. Source: Wikimedia





Halkier et al (2009) outlines that the most popular form of tourism in North Jutland is seaside leisure tourism and the region is known for offering a variety of experiences (natural and cultural related). Moreover, as Halkier et al (2009:4) highlights an important part of the tourism product of North Jutland is represented by “the seaside with wide beaches, cosy towns, and numerous art galleries and restaurants.” North Jutland is a well-developed region with a capacity to accommodate tourist both on the coastal areas and in the city areas. In addition, according to the “Aalborg All In” strategy for VisitAalborg and the tourism development of Aalborg for 2017-2020 development is blooming, together with many opportunities. For example, “in 2006 Aalborg Airport only had 40,000 international passengers. Today, only 10 years later, the number has increased tenfold. Likewise, 10 years ago, not many would have predicted that cruise liners with 1,000 passengers would call into port in Aalborg on a weekly basis, or that Aalborg would have more than 3,000 international students.” However, despite their increasing number, international students do not seem to represent the focus of any of the future “growth and development projects” in the “Aalborg All In” tourism development strategy. Most of the existing research on students travel and tourism preferences and behaviour was conducted in relation to Australia, USA, UK and New Zealand but, as explained above, not much seems to be found in relation to Denmark and North Jutland in particular. However, I argue participants studying in North Jutland might show different characteristics than the ones involved in previous studies, although it is also possible that they reveal similar aspects.

Therefore, my first chapter “Literature review” will highlight several theoretical considerations I found most relevant in relation to my research question. Furthermore, the second part of the “Literature review” will focus on the different aspects of international students travel patterns and motivations. The next chapter, “Methodology,” will present my choices in regards to the research paradigm, expanding on the ontological and epistemological stances, methodology, the research design and methods, together with the reasoning behind all the methods applied. Next, the “Analysis” chapter will be structured in two parts: the first part outlining the most relevant findings from the survey and presenting it in a descriptive way, followed by a second section where I will focus on the data collected from the follow up in-depth interviews under a thematic analysis. Lastly, the main findings will be summed up in the “Conclusions” section together with reflections on future research and suggestions.

## 2.Literature Review

My study seeks to uncover why do Chinese and Romanian students studying at AAU and UCN have particular travel preferences and focus on the differences in terms of tourism motivations and travel patterns regarding North Jutland. As it follows, the research question of my thesis is: “What are the differences between Chinese and Romanian students studying at AAU and UCN in terms of tourism motivations and travel patterns in North Jutland? Why do they have particular travel preferences?”

The structure of this chapter consists of two main sections. The first section highlights “Theoretical considerations”, whereas the second part is focused on “Different aspects of IS travel patterns and motivations”. The theoretical consideration section of this chapter is also divided in three parts: “Cohen’s typology”, “The travel career ladder and the travel career pattern” and “Push and Pull typologies”. To continue, the section “Different aspects of IS travel patterns and motivations” is composed of two subsections: “International students as tourists” and “International students nationality and the cross-cultural role”

### 2.1. Theoretical considerations

Motivation is a main concept for understanding consumer decision-making. It is seen to be “the driving force behind all behaviours” (Van der Walt, 2015) and it is therefore often considered in market segmentation. This section will emphasize on the many attempts of classifying tourism motivations. However, the aim of this research is not to be exhaustive and the some of the most known theoretical considerations are going to be discussed in relation to the research question of this paper. In essence, the bellow presented typologies are conceptual and the following reflection consists on whether they will turn to be relevant for aiding the current research or a movement past defining international students as fitting within these typologies will be necessary. For example, Cohen’s typology might help in the understanding of why respondents have certain preferences and placing them familiarity- strangehood continuum might highlight the nationality based differences. On the other hand, it might not apply for international students, especially if their tourist behaviour that varies over time. In which case, Pearce’s travel career pattern might better point out student’s various goals and help exploring the underlying dimensions of international students motivations and analyse their motivations in relation to the Travel Career Pattern and focuses on the dynamic

nature of travel motivations, which could also outline some cultural differences of the two segments. The push and pull typologies (with Dann, 1977 and Crompton, 1979 as a basis) could also aid into better analysing classifying the various tourism motivations.

However there is a lack of research into what motivates international students to travel in North Jutland and whether these motivations differ on nationality base and from other groups of tourists. This research synthesises the main tourism motivation theories and typologies. It further provides indicators of the reasons why Chinese and Romanian students have particular travel preferences regarding North Jutland and might reveal patterns of international students tourist typology. Thus, as mentioned earlier, this paper attempts to identify motivation factors of foreign tourists in North Jutland, Denmark as their travel preferences are being researched. This might have relevant marketing implications to the region and to further research in the field of international students in Denmark. It could also be relevant to acknowledge the fact that knowing the differences of both cultures can help tourism providers with insights from the various needs of international students.

### 2.1.1.Cohen's typology

Cohen's classification of tourist is founded on the idea that tourism is a combination of a need to explore new experiences and the need for security and familiar reminders of home. According to Smith et al (2016: 90) "most tourists prefer to explore the destinations from a familiar base." However, being an international student might already imply a different relation in regards to the needs for security and needs to explore, as students already left home and they (most probably) already are in a new place. Huang(2008:1006) refers to Cohen notion of "environmental bubble" in which tourists seem to be known to travel into. However, there are different levels of constrain by this bubble and I might reveal some indicators of how much international students are constrained and if there are any nationality-based differences in regards to their level of adaptability.

The tourist is positioned by Cohen's (1972) typology on a familiarity- strangehood continuum, where four different types of tourists are shaped in regards to the position from familiar to strangehood: organised mass tourist, individual mass tourist, explorer; and drifter.

Role	Category	Classification
Organised mass tourists	Institutionalised tourism	The least adventurous type of tourist. They spend most of their time surrounded by a similar living environment to home while abroad. Typically take a guided tour in an air-conditioned bus. The itinerary is decided in advance and all the attractions and stopping points are well fixed and guided. Tourists have almost no decisions on their trip.
Individual mass tourists		Similar to the organised mass tourist, except that the tour is not entirely fixed. The tourist has a certain amount of control over the time and itinerary, and is not bound to a group. However, all the major arrangements are still made through a tour agency. They are still confined by their 'environmental bubble'.
Explorer	Non-institutionalised tourism	They arrange their trips alone. They try to go somewhere unusual, but still look for comfortable sleeping places and reliable means of transportation. They retain some of the basic routines and comforts of their native way of life. They try to mix with the people they visit and also try to speak their language. The explorers dare to leave their 'environmental bubble' more readily but they are still careful about their ventures.
Drifter		This type of tourists goes further away from the 'environmental bubble' and from the accustomed ways of life in their home countries. They keep away from any kind of connection with the tourism establishment, such as hotels and tour coaches. The drifters have no fixed itinerary or timetable. They tend to make their trips wholly on their own, and often live with the local people. They try to live the way the locals live, and to share their houses, food and habits.

Fig 2 Cohen's classification of tourists. Source: "Towards a Sociology of International Tourism", Social Research, vol.39. no.1, 1972

Huang (2008:1006) suggests that based on Cohen's (1972) typology, international students would have the characteristics of explorers (making their own travel arrangements, try to get off the well known route and want to sample local foods, language and culture, while "still requiring certain levels of comfort—as opposed to drifters, who shun all aspects of the tourist trail.") On the other hand, Huang (2008) draws attention on the fact that there are some cases when international students can be classified as organised mass tourist. Consequently, Huang (2008) argues that nowadays, there is an increasing number of agencies who will most likely be chosen to facilitate the above procedures for the students. Hence, Huang (2008:1007) argumentation indicates that Cohen's (1972) typology does not apply for tourist behaviour that varies over time. Much like Huang (2008), Freestone & Geldens (2008) hold the view that Cohen's (1972) theory aids in positioning student exchange as a form of tourism. Thus, the exchange experience best fits within the experiential, experimental and existential modes. Freestone & Geldens (2008:43) argue the nature of the theoretical framework is "overarching, spanning approaches from the sociology of leisure through the sociology of religion" and according to Cohen (2004:81) "the diversity of motivations and experiences needs to be considered.'

On the other hand, Freestone & Geldens (2008:54) argue that student exchange can not be only experiential tourism, nor only experimental tourism. Consequently, student exchange is not representative of one specific mode and "more meaning can be found in analysing and interpreting a plurality of experiences rather than attempting to classify student exchange as representative of a

single point on a linear continuum of tourist modes”. Consequently, Freestone & Geldens (2008:43) argue that in order to fully understand the exchange experience, a move beyond Cohen’s typology is necessary.

### **2.1.2.The travel career ladder (TCL) and the travel career pattern(TCP)**

Pearce(1988) first introduced the travel career ladder (TCL) in the book called “The Ulysses Factor”. Later, in 2005, Pearce updated the TCL in the book “Tourist Behaviour:Themes and Conceptual Schemes”. The idea behind this model is the interpretation of changing tourist motivations. This model was developed by categorizing tourist motivation into five hierarchical levels. More specifically, “a ladder” which would be ascended by the tourist in time. The levels proposed in Pearce’s (1988) model are concerning: “relaxation” needs at the lowest level of the ladder, continuing with “stimulation” level, “relationship”, “self-esteem and development” and “self-actualization/fulfilment” at the top level.

The TCL model proposes the dynamics of tourist, as some may begin at various levels of the ladder, and some might be going up the ladder while others may be going down. People could also have various goals of, some more self-orientated while others could be both self and others-directed. As their experience increases, their goals would adapt from relatively low (relax) to higher ones (self-actualization-fulfilment.)

However, it could also be taken into consideration that some might simply find themselves at the same level, without ascending or descending. Consequently, in 2005, this model has been modified as the travel career pattern. Pearce and Lee adapted it to a different kind of understanding of travel motivation. As opposed to the TCL hierarchical approach, where the tourist is going up a ladder as the travel experiences increase, the TCP model focuses on the dynamic nature of travel motivations. (Pearce, 2005:58). Accordingly, the TCP model places emphasis on patterns of the travel motivations, rather than viewing them as steps of a ladder. In TCP, travel motives are placed into three layers which are no longer influenced by the travelers previous travel experiences.

## Motivation: The Travel Career Pattern Approach

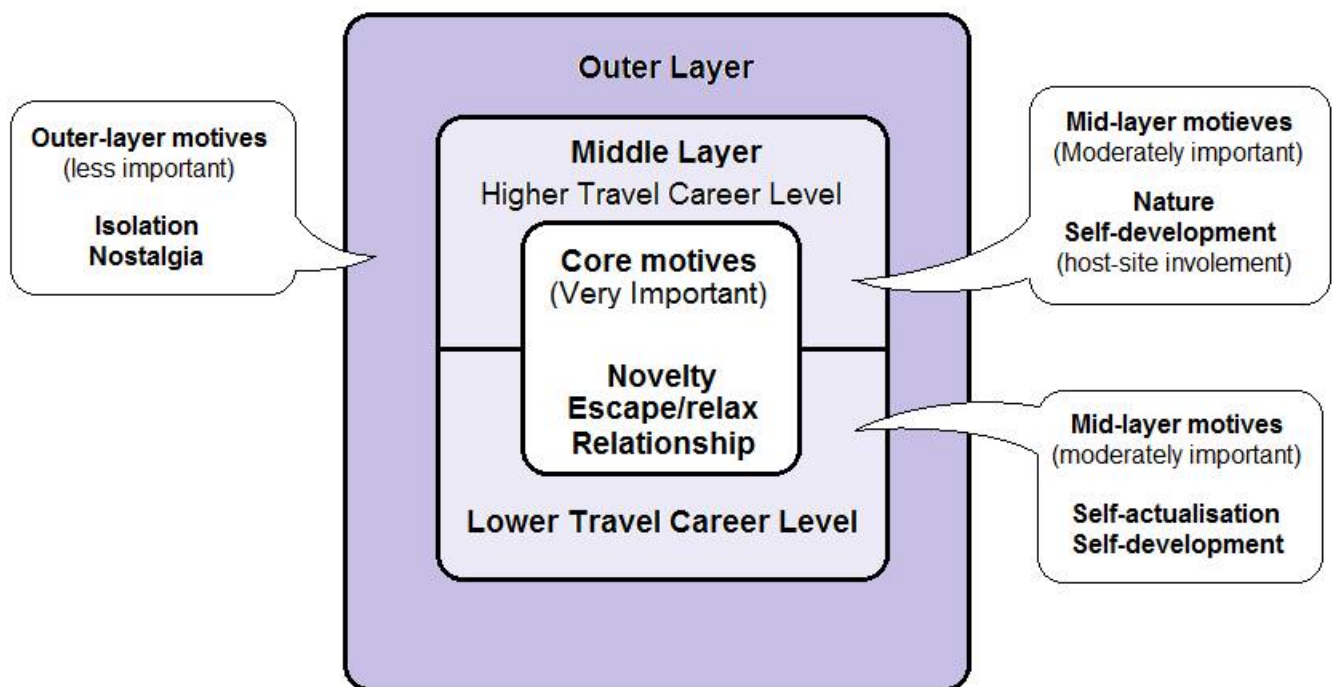


Fig. 3 Pearce, Travel Career Pattern Approach, "Tourist Behaviour: Themes and Conceptual Schemes", 2005, p. 79

According to Pearce (2005:79) in the center of the model are the core motive or the very important ones, such as novelty, escape/relax and enhancing relationships. The moderately-important travel motives are represented in the following layer which is surrounding the core. This layer consist of the motives that "change from inner-directed travel motives (e.g. self-actualization) to externally oriented motives (e.g. nature and host– site involvement) as one's travel career develops." Next, the outer layer stands for the "common and relatively stable travel motives, but these are less-important ones (e.g. nostalgia, isolation, social status)." Furthermore, Pearce (2005:79) suggests that the cross-cultural differences in terms of motivation patterns may vary between cultures at an individual level, the overall patterns seem to be similar. Nonetheless, it is also suggested that more research, especially cross-cultural, could "add to the understanding" of the travel motivations.

This study seeks to address tourism experiences of Chinese and Romanian students at AAU and UCN with the purpose of uncovering why do they have particular travel preferences and focus on the differences in terms of tourism motivations and travel patterns regarding North Jutland within the TCP theory. My thesis set out to explore underlying dimensions of international students motivations and to analyse the motivations in relation to the Travel Career Pattern (Pearce & Lee,

2005). The intention of this research is to move forward from a descriptive examination of students' motivation to developing a more in-depth understanding of Chinese and Romanian students' motivation and the reasons they have them. Applying the concept of travel career to international students' motivations could open the opportunity to find out whether Chinese students and Romanian students have different motivations regarding North Jutland. The concept of travel career is still central to the TCP, as is the idea that travellers will have changing motivational patterns during those travel careers (Pearce & Lee, 2005) and my study could reveal how Chinese and Romanian students at AAU and UCN situate themselves.

### 2.1.3. Push and Pull typologies

Dann (1977) came up with the push-pull theory of travel motivations as he argued that both push factors and pull factors influence travel behaviour. Accordingly, internal, psychological forces “push” people into making travel decisions and external forces of the destination attributes “pull” them. Moreover, tourists influenced by the push factors do not really have a specific choice of destination as long as their need to travel is satisfied (for example, tourists who aim to spend quality time with their families and improve their relationships.) Other examples of push factors are: escape, rest and relax, prestige, health and fitness, adventure, social interaction. On the other hand, pull factors influence where people chose to go travelling and reflect the power of the destination to attract tourists and influence the decision. Pull factors could be represented by factors such as all kinds of good food, transportation, safety, heritage sites.

Much like Dann (1977), Crompton (1979) agreed with the concept of push and pull factors. Crompton (1979) classification included nine motives, from which seven are push motives and two pull motives. Accordingly, the seven socio-psychological or push motives are: escape, self-exploratory, relaxation, prestige, regression, enhancement of kinship relationships and social interaction. The other two cultural or pull motives are represented by novelty and education.



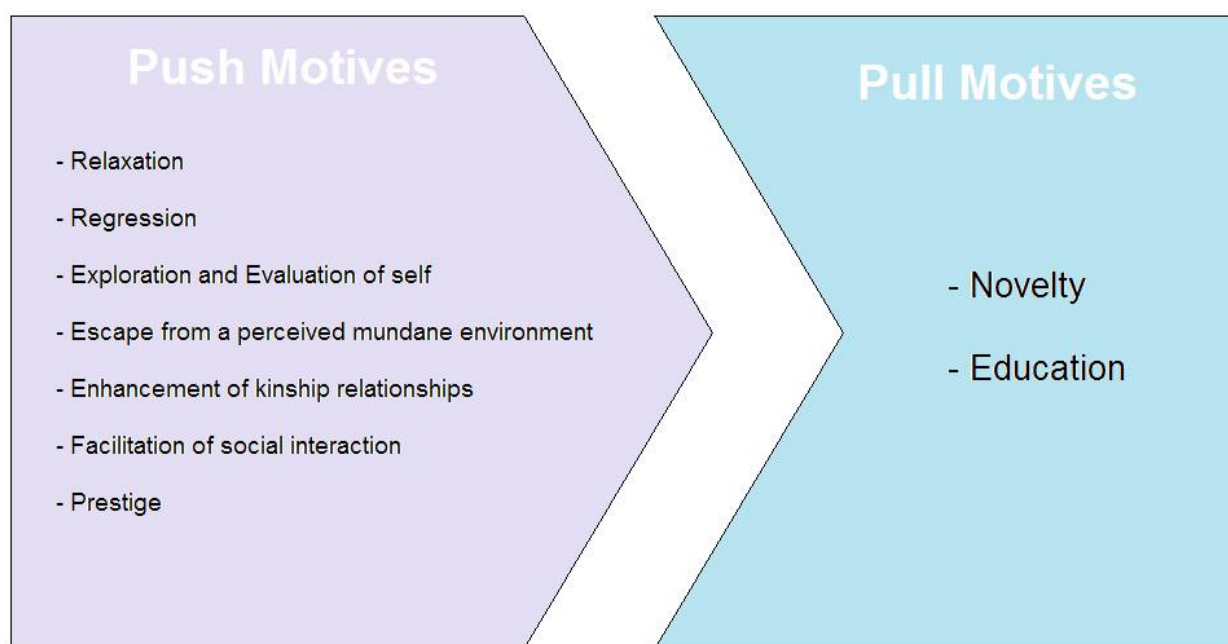


Fig 4, Adapted from Crompton (1979). Source "Motivations for Pleasure Vacations," *Annals of Tourism Research*, October/December 1979, VI (4): 408–424

Apart from Crompton's (1979) empirical research, many other studies have tried an identification of the various push and pull motivational factors. For example, Uysal and Jurowski (1993) also researched the nature of the push and pull factors of motivations for pleasure travel, specifically how tourists are pulled or attracted by a destination attributes. Many studies (among others: Bywater, 1993; Chadee & Cutler, 1996; Field, 1999) have outlined the relevance of the college market (of domestic and international students) and researched their travel behaviors. These studies argue that an understanding of the travel patterns and tourism motivations of this market is required in order to design better tailored marketing products and strategies and for better tourism promotion. Compared to other segments, it is claimed by these studies that students distinguish themselves by the fact that they have more time to travel during spring, summer and winter breaks and have different motivational priorities.

Gardiner et al (2013) study on the travel behaviour of international students highlights international students are distinguishable from domestic leisure visitors through their briefer residency in the destination country and higher propensity to explore the country before returning home. They are also distinguishable from domestic travellers because of their funding sources, their lifestyles (often combining study with work and play) and financial commitments. On this basis, Gardiner et al (2013:288) "the factors that constrain the travel activities of international students may differ from those influencing other travellers." For example, another study based on push and pull typologies



was carried by Llewellyn-Smith and McCabe's (2008) on international students motivation at a university exchange programme in Australia. Llewellyn-Smith and McCabe's (2008:602) main finding is that students consider "destination 'pull' attributes more important than university 'pull' factors." As it follows, destination's characteristics are more satisfying of the needs of students than the university's attributes. The research also pointed out that participants have chosen an exchange programme in Australia mainly because of the tourism and travel opportunities rather than the education opportunities. Further, host country pull factors obtained higher mean scores than university pull factors. More importantly, some students see participating in an exchange program not simply as an opportunity to travel in the host country. Instead, studying overseas simply seems to be the best excuse to travel. Llewellyn-Smith and McCabe's (2008) findings also indicate that Ritchie's (2003) model of a continuum from "education first" to "tourism first" may need to be redressed as it places exchange students in the 'education first' category.

Another recent study using the push and pull model on international students took place in Vietnam where Linh's (2015) researched questions of this study aim at finding the traveling patterns of students, factors motivating students to travel and the importance of factors affecting students' touristic decision making process pointed out that it is mainly push factors which increase the demand for traveling by young people. The first three main push factors which occurred were represented by the reason "to entertain", followed by reasons "to have new experience" and on the third place "to escape from daily life." The findings suggest that "friends and relatives", followed by "the internet" ranks highest in regards to sources of tourism information. Furthermore, "Safety", "Climate & Environment", "Price level at the destination", "Culture" are the main relevant factors in regards to the choice of destination. When it comes to the purchase of a tourism package the most relevant factors are "transportation means", "accommodation", and "food during the trip." However, it seems that the price of the package is not considered that important and promotion factors did not weight as heavily as expected.

## 2.2. Different aspects of IS travel patterns and motivations

### 2.2.1. International students as tourists

Research in the area of students seems to be divided. Gaining an overview of the tourism possibilities could be rather challenging within this global market, despite the emerging body of student and youth travel literature. Nonetheless, as they seem to link education and tourism, the number of international students all over the world is growing. Both tourism and educational industries have been changing and the international students play an important role in understanding new ways of growth and development (Ritchie, Carr and Cooper, 2003.) On the other hand, the majority of youth travel studies have a tendency to disregard the students market segment as a distinct one (among others: Bonvecchio, 1991) and it becomes unclear which are the boundaries of youth and student travel. Much like Carr (1998), in 1996 Morgan predicted these differences. The image of youth travel being associated with adventure was challenged and Morgan (1996) suggested that it actually belongs to student travel patterns who have much more freedom than the employed young individuals.

It seems that the international student market represents a significant opportunity for the tourism industries of host countries. However, international students are generally not seen as a tourist segment due to the definition of tourists. WTO (The World Tourism Organization) acknowledge that international students are a type of tourist. On the other hand, students are being excluded in later tourist definitions as their study duration can sometimes take longer than one year and it is considered that only international student engaged in a period of study for less than one year can be defined as tourists. However, Huang (2008:1009) suggests a conceptualization of the international student experience in relation to different tourist experiences theorized in the existing tourism literature. She argues the conceptualizing of students as a type of tourist will improve their study experience and facilitate better understanding of them. Okorocha (1996) in Huang (2008:1006) defined international students as “people in transition who have come to accomplish an educational goal before returning home.” On the other hand, Huang (2008) suggests that a better approach to international students group would be to consider their full experience, instead of keeping an exclusive focus on their academic experience. Huang (2008:1006) also argues that “it seems clear that international students are not just students for the host countries where they are studying.” Furthermore, studies in the UK, Europe, USA and Australia uncover that international students hold an essential role in attracting friends and relatives as visitors to their place of study (Armstrong et

al, 2003; Hughes et al, 2014). This is adding up to their potential to contribute to the local economy and engage in tourism-related activities.

Among the first to acknowledge the lack of research in regards to the travel preferences of college students were Hobson and Josiam (1993) in their study on US college students in the spring break. Hobson and Josiam (1993) indicated that students were more likely to travel over the summer rather than during the spring break. In 1997, Hsu and Sung also researched international students traveling in the US. Hsu and Sung (1997) findings suggest that international students are more likely to travel than domestic students and also have more free time. Similar to Hsu and Sung (1997), Heung and Leong's (2006) study indicate that the university students market is increasing and suggests that their travel are different from other groups. For example, compared to people who are working full time, students have more time to travel and Heung and Leong (2006) indicate they might prefer flexible itineraries and schedules, as opposed to choosing all-inclusive package tours which might limit them. Also, it seems they are most likely to reduce the traveling costs by reducing their expectations in regards to the level of comfort of accommodation and transportation. Much like Hsu and Sung (1997), Field (1999) carried a comparative study of travel behaviors of international and domestic students at a Southeastern university in America. Field (1999) wanted to find out if any differences existed between their vacation travel habits. For example, foreign students prefer to have some cultural activities such as sightseeing and touring a city while domestic students prefer to have activities that are more socially satisfying such as visiting friends and shopping. The findings of his comparative study indicated both substantial differences and similarities between the two groups. The findings will be presented in greater detail below under the section "International students nationality and the cross-cultural role" of this chapter.

Recently, Richards (2016:10) argued on the value of youth and student travelers as they "are an increasingly important market for destinations around the world. With travelers ages 15 to 29 accounting for an estimated 23% of all international travelers in 2015, many countries and regions are beginning to realize that welcoming youth travelers can translate to high value for their destinations, as young people often travel longer and spend more in total than older travelers."

Despite the recent growth in interest in regards to youth tourism, my focus will concern international students market and I argue on the importance and specifics of this market. The majority of available studies on students (both domestic and international) focus on America, Australia, United Kingdom and New Zealand, with a research gap in regards to Denmark. Furthermore, there seems to be a rather neglected field of research as only a few studies have been devoted to the motivations and travel decision-making processes of international students in regards

to traveling within the host destination. There seems to be a focus on students traveling internationally, but less on the traveling patterns and motivations of international students once they have already started education at the foreign institution. As it follows, few years ago Carr (1998:307) draws attention upon the fact that international students are a part of the young tourist segment but claims they are characterized by a “distinct identity” with different interests and requirements as opposed to adult tourists. Furthermore, Carr (1998) outlines that the engagement in various experiences, such as playing sports, is distinguishing young tourists from the adult ones. To continue, Carr (1998) also argues for the different holiday behaviours between students and youth market(18-30 years.) According to Carr (2005), students have an increased tendency to travel due to having fewer commitments and more free time. Therefore, according to Carr (2005:797) “spending by students on vacations represents a significant proportion of their income.” More specifically, Carr’s (2003a; 2003b; 2003c) study on tourism by university students argue that university level student travellers have a clear preference for independently organised travel and vacation arrangements. Furthermore, Carr’s (2003b) research was focused on the holiday behaviour of New Zealand university students and concluded, among other things, that package tour options were not favoured, showing an increased use and trust of informal sources of information. While these students mainly relied on their own savings, they often gained money from their parents and through loans to help pay for their holidays.

The aim of my research is to provide an insight into the tourism experiences of Chinese and Romanian students at AAU and UCN through an analysis based on their travel preferences and a focus on the differences in terms of motivations and travel patterns regarding North Jutland. This way, the research on the travel-related behavior and tourism motivations patterns of international students in the Northern region of Denmark could be improved.

### **2.2.2.International students nationality and the cross-cultural role**

Furthermore, it seems that research in the area of international students travel and tourism preferences at the host destination remains fragmented and it is difficult to gain an overview of the segment. In my research, attention is paid to the student role and the influence the cultural background might have in determining different travel and tourism patterns.

Several studies of the student market have highlighted segmentation by cultural differences. Among others. The growth of student travel has also caused a number of industry and government-led surveys at a national level, particularly in Australia and New Zealand (Bureau of Tourism Research, 2000). However, most of the information on this market comes from surveys conducted by individual companies (which are often not available to third parties) and sub-analyses of national tourism surveys (Richards & Wilson, 2004a).

The previous tendency of studies to focus on student travellers from 'Western' regions is beginning to change, for example, with research emerging based on travel behaviour and motivations of students of Asian origin (Chadee & Cutler, 1996), and the growth of international student exchanges has also increased attention on the travel behaviour of international exchange students abroad and comparisons of exchange students with domestic students. There is also increasing attention being paid to the cultural impact of travel on students and their hosts. For example, in Freestone & Geldens (2008) study, all participants had previous experience with traveling overseas and the exchange program was seen as an opportunity to fulfil their need for authenticity in regards to experiencing another place or culture. To continue, Freestone & Geldens (2008: 53) mentioned that students were "feeling like their were living in their host society rather than touring it". Participants also mentioned reaching an authentic sense of place and how locals helped with that.

The topic of international students as a tourism market has been focusing on Australia (among others, Gardiner et al 2013; Glover, 2011);, the US (Field, 1999; Hsu & Sung, 1997) the UK (Chadee & Cutler), New Zeland (Carr, 2003). However, as mentioned before, there seems to be a deficit in relation to Denmark, specifically North Jutland region. Some of the suggested findings in Field's (1999) research point out if well positioned the college market may be a profitable target for the leisure travel industry. Another finding illustrates that special attention could be given to cultural subgroups within the segment. As emphasized by Field (1999: 375) "recent research suggests that marketers must appreciate the influence of nationality, age, culture, background, gender, and other classifications and construct their marketing strategies accordingly." Among others, Kotler (1989) stood as ground for Field's (1999) early predictions towards designing tailored strategies for particular markets and the importance behind an efficiently targeted audience. For example, to better understand the target groups, in previous studies (Hsu and Sung, 1997) the focus was on issues concerning transportation, accommodations, meals and demographics.

Nonetheless, Field's (1999) research among college students in the USA found further differences between the two groups of students relating to the use of transportation, the choice of accommodation and the activities undertaken. For example, both domestic and foreign students

preferred to travel by car, however foreign students were much more likely to chose to travel by plane than domestic students. In terms of accommodation, foreign students were more likely to chose to stay at a dorm/hostel than domestic students. Even though, both groups preferred a hotel/motel, it seemed more possible that domestic students were to chose this kind of accommodation. Furthermore, Field (1999) found domestic students to be more likely to be return visitors but less likely to use travel agents to plan their trips. Also, in Field's (1999)'s research the findings suggest there is significantly more travel done by domestic students than foreign students. Number one traveling subgroup of students is from Australia, New Zealand and Latin America, while Indians and Asians seem to travel the least. However, previous studies have indicated that Asians want tailored products when traveling abroad and the lack of efficient marketing might result in this group traveling the least.

Richards & Wilson (2004) researched the international student travel market with a focus on travelstyle, motivations, and activities they engage in. Their study outlined that despite the available literature on student and youth travel is growing (among others, Bywater,1993; Carr, 2003b;) there is still fragmented areas which make it difficult to hold an overview of the global market. The research draws upon Richards & Wilson, (2004a:19) theory of the state of "suspension" and refers to international students who tend to spend less time with people form the host culture and more with other international students. This phenomenon leads to feeding "an international student sub-culture", but non the less one composed out of "eager to experience as much as possible through relatively time-rich, money-poor modes of travel" students

It was concluded that students are "customizing" their travel experience by making use of the growing range of available information sources and for example looking for products online but then making their own travel arrangements. Richards & Wilson's (2004:17) study also indicated that the travel industry might have to develop new products tailored specifically to these needs and draws attention upon the fact that "destinations that currently try and demarket themselves to student and youth travelers (particularly 'backpackers') therefore need to realise that they may be dissuading future repeat visits from today's 'global nomads' who may be keen and highspending independent travelers in the future."

In order to provide students with a more tailored experience it must be taken into consideration what type of experiences are students looking for. The study shows the desire to explore other cultures and searching for excitement as the most often mentioned elements. However, it is also suggested by Richards & Wilson (2004) that traveling is not always fulfilling these desires. Thus, Richards & Wilson (2004:18) indicate that there is "a gap between the ideology and practice of

travel” represented by comparing the motivation with the actual activities. The notion of “suspension” between wanting to escape and a need for familiarity and homely comfort seems to characterize the student traveler.

Gardiner et al (2013) researched the travel behaviors of international students and aimed to determine an elaborate profile of international students for better market understanding and for developing tailored marketing plans. The study explored the nationality-based segments and focused on the cultural diversity of the overall market. The findings suggest that viewing international students as a collection of subgroups instead of a homogeneous category might benefit the tourism industry. Furthermore, empirically it has been shown that behaviors differ by nationality. One of the findings in relation to the lengths of stay confirmed previous findings of Glover (2011) and Weaver (2004) by pointing out that the majority of travels by international students are kind of short, usually consisting of one day excursions or trips which last between one to six nights. Furthermore, it was showed that Chinese and Indians are more likely to travel on day trips and between one to there nights. In comparison, North Americans and Europeans were more likely inclined to take weekly trips.

Both Glover (2011) and Gardiner et al (2013) studies have pointed out that international students mostly travel with friends or with other international students, partners or family. In regards to the travel party it seems most notable that Chinese students prefer the company of other Chinese students, while students from Europe prefer the company of students with other nationalities. In terms of accommodation, it is indicated that North Americans and Europeans opt for cheaper hostel-style backpacker accommodation, whereas Chinese and Indian segments prefer are hotels/motels and apartments. Moreover, according to Gardiner et al (2013), Chinese and Indian students seem, to be the most contained by the perceived lack of travel packages and discounts targeted at international students. To continue, Gardiner et al (2013) highlight that differences could occur when comparing international students with other travelers in terms of constraint factors of the travel activities, as international students tend to combine education with work and fun.

Sakakida et al (2004) conducted a cross-cultural study of college students' travel preferences on Japanese and American college students in order to understand the behaviour of tourists and travel preferences from different cultures. Some of the aims were to determine whether cultural differences existed among Japanese and American college students and whether Japanese and American college students differed in their travel preferences. Sakakida et al (2004:37) point out how in cross-cultural studies, college students are frequently used “as they are considered to have similar demographic characteristics, and when making group comparisons, the differences are more likely due to the variables being examined.” The study confirmed previous findings that Japanese

and American college students have different cultural tendencies and travel preferences. For example, Americans were more likely to travel with a small number of people than Japanese. Moreover, Japanese seemed to prefer individually arranged travel more than Americans. Nonetheless, despite suggestions for the benefits and necessity of more attention being given to this cultural segmentation, there still seems to be a neglected area of research in regards to the nationality based differences of international students. This section of the literature review has pointed out differences in travel behaviour between international and domestic students, as well as the fact that nationality and cultural background should be considered when segmenting the student travel market.



## 3.Methodology

This chapter will outline the methodological process which addresses the means of developing and answering the research problem. Moreover, it will also present the reasoning behind all the methods applied, which will allow the reader to have a better understanding of these specific choices in regards to the way research is conducted. The structure of this section will include discussion about: the research paradigm, expanding on the ontological and epistemological stances, methodology, the research design and methods.

### 3.1.Research paradigms

Different authors and researchers assign different meanings to the concept of paradigms. Guba & Lincoln (1989:80) refer to a paradigm “as a basic set of beliefs, a set of assumptions we are willing to make, which serve as touchstones in guiding our activities.” Furthermore, Lincoln & Guba (1985:15) outline that “our actions in the world, including actions that we take as inquirers, cannot occur without reference to those paradigms: As we think, so do we act.” To continue, according to Patton (2008:267) paradigms can be seen as a “world view built on implicit assumptions, accepted definitions, comfortable habits, values defended as truths and beliefs projected as reality.” Neuman (2011:94) also points out how a paradigm is best described as a whole system of thinking. Among others, Creswell (2007:19) claim that a paradigm is thus “a basic set of beliefs that guide action.” More specifically, a paradigm could be seen as “a model or framework for observation and understanding.” Accordingly, the philosophical approach taken by researchers guides their work and in the following section, I will elaborate on the paradigm that guides my research.

#### 3.1.1.Interpretivism

This thesis is written under the interpretivism paradigm and the following section further elaborates on the development of this paradigm, characteristics and my arguments for choosing this view in relation to the problem formulation.

According to Ritchie & Lewis (2013: 11) a way of knowing about the world is through “understanding” and reflection on the experiences, as opposed to simply living them. This way of

accessing knowledge is in accordance with the aim of this research, as my thesis is focused on different groups of international students. Consequently, the participants will reflect on their tourism experiences in North Jutland. I will place emphasis on their interpretation of the social world along with my understanding of the phenomenon in terms of motivation and travel patterns.

This reflects in my thesis as it has a focus on understanding the differences between different groups of international students in terms of motivation and travel patterns within the context of the material conditions they live in. Ritchie & Lewis (2013: 13) further introduce “the school of thought that stresses the importance of interpretation as well as observation in understanding the social world is known as ‘interpretivism.’ As my research is conducted under the interpretivism paradigm I acknowledge that people’s understanding of their world is shaped by various factors - psychological, social, historical and cultural. To continue, this acknowledgement is in accordance with my research question as I emphasize on the differences between two groups of students with different cultural background – Chinese and Romanian. The cross-cultural aspect in relation to the selection of participants and the focus of this will be elaborated later in this chapter.

Consequently, the purpose of this research under the interpretivism framework is gaining understanding and interpreting what are the differences between Chinese and Romanian students studying at AAU and UCN in terms of their tourism motivations and travel patterns in North Jutland.

Moreover, Gephart (1999:5) argues that interpretivism is focused on understanding the interactions between social actors and on the different meaning that people give to their experiences. My thesis might point out the different meanings that Chinese and Romanian students attribute to their tourism experiences in North Jutland, by focusing on their motivations and travel characteristics and preferences. Smith (1993:5) builds on the idea that advocates of interpretivism do not accept the existence of universal standards for research, instead the standards guiding research are “products of a particular group or culture.” According to interpretivist approach, much like Smith (1993), Saunders et al (2012) argue on the importance for the researcher to acknowledge differences between people. Furthermore, alike Smith(1993) and Saunders et al (2012), Dudovski (2016) argues that in interpretivism studies, areas such as cross-cultural differences in organizations (in this case cross-cultural differences at university students), can be researched more in depth.

Furthermore, Willis (2007:4) argues that for interpretivists, an understanding of the context in which the research is carried is essential to the interpretation of data gathered. According to Willis (2007), interpretivism usually look for understanding a particular context. Thus, Willis’s (2007) argument supports the choice of interpretation for my thesis with the purpose to investigate the two

group of students of the two universities, specifically in North Jutland region. In order to explore understandings of participants, an interpretive approach provides a context that allows me to examine what the participants in my study have to say about their motivations and travel experiences in the region

Willis (2007) also points out how interpretivism stands for the fact that different individuals from different groups could have multiple viewpoints. Willis (2007:197) further elaborates that “different people and different groups have different perceptions of the world” and this could lead to better understanding of the overall situation. As applied to my thesis and drawing from the previous chapter of Literature Review, it supports the idea of not viewing international students as one big homogenous group, but stands for taking into consideration the different segments with various cultural backgrounds.

Furthermore, this will facilitate gathering a more profound insight on the researched subject, instead of limiting the research to numbers and statistics. Along the lines of these views, my study is seeking to explore the experiences of Chinese and Romanian students studying at two Danish universities with the purpose of uncovering why do these international students have particular preferences regarding travel in North Jutland and the differences in terms of tourism motivations and travel patterns. I am collecting data for my research from these two groups of students who not only come from different cultures but from different educational, social and economic backgrounds to obtain data diversity and for a multifaceted research. Diversity and multifaceted aspects of research will be further argued in the ontology section below. As a paradigm can best be outlined by addressing ontological, epistemological and methodological questions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) the “Methodology” chapter will continue accordingly.

### 3.1.2.Ontology

Lincoln & Guba (1994) argue ontology is concerned with matters of existence and what it is possible to know about the world. Furthermore, Denzin & Lincoln (2005:183) point out ontology is concerned with “basic questions about the nature of reality and the nature of the human being in the world.” Consequently, ontologically speaking or in terms of what I believe it is possible to know about the world, I most closely belong to what Hammersley (1992) depicts as 'subtle realism'. Thus, I argue that an external reality exists but is only known to me through the human mind and through the respondents' interpretations. I also align with the view that their interpretations could further be interpreted by me as a researcher.

Moreover, as a subtle realist, I stress out on the importance of respondents' own interpretations and accept that their different views might lead to different types of understanding. However, I argue that acknowledging diversity and various perspectives does not mean that an external reality which can be captured is non-existent. Instead I believe that “external reality is itself diverse and multifaceted” (Ritchie & Lewis’s, 2013:19). As I mentioned earlier, diversity of views is enriching my understanding. Plus, together with the different ways in which reality could have been experienced contribute to a more in-depth understanding of this external multifaceted reality.

### 3.1.3.Epistemology

Epistemology is concerned with ways of knowing and learning about the world and focuses on issues such as how we can learn about reality and what forms the basis of our knowledge. According to Guba & Lincoln (1989:83) epistemology is concerned with issues of knowledge and it “deals with the origin, nature and limits of human knowledge.” Klotz & Lynch (2007:11) argue epistemology is concerned with “how do researchers know what they know?”. Furthermore, Denzin & Lincoln (2011:12) outline epistemology explores what is the relationship between the inquirer and the known. Accordingly, my epistemological stance or in terms of how I believe it is possible to find out about the world I will argue my position in regards to what Ritchie & Lewis (2013:6) refer as “several key issues dominate epistemological debates in social research”: how is knowledge acquired, the relationship between the researcher and researched together with the facts-value relation and the nature of ‘truth’.

In regards to the first epistemological issues, on the way in which knowledge is best acquired, I best aligned myself with the abduction research strategy. As explained by Ritchie & Lewis (2013:7) depicting qualitative research as an inductive process is a “rather misleading simplification” because for example, even when conducting an inductive study, researchers can not approach the data collection and interpretation with “a blank mind.” Additionally, Blaikie (2007) in Ritchie & Lewis (2013:6), among others, claims that ‘pure’ induction or ‘pure’ deduction do not exist. Thus, abduction is a further research strategy introduced by Blaikie (2007). According to Blaikie (2007:19) this abductive research strategy “has a very different logic to the other three”(inductive, deductive, reductive.) The goal of this kind of research is to reveal concepts and meanings that participants give to their social world and everyday activities, ideas, or beliefs which are described using participants’ language and meaning. As it follows, I as a researcher have to enter the world of the participants and discover the motives and reasons why they seem have certain travel preferences. Blaikie (2007:19) further elaborates how “the task is then to re-describe these actions

and motives, and the situations in which they occur, in the technical language of social scientific discourse. Individual motives and actions have to be abstracted into typical motives for typical actions in typical situations.”

Thus, by offering an understanding of these activities, they may then become ‘ingredients’ in a more systematic explanatory report. Additional, I argue my research question fits best within this research strategy as it can be used to answer both ‘what’ and ‘why’ questions.

Secondly, I am going to outline my choices in regards to the other key epistemological issue within my thesis. More specifically, I argue my approach in the relationship between the researcher and the researched and how this influences the connection between ‘facts’ and ‘values’ following Ritchie & Lewis’s (2013:7) description of epistemological positions.

In this study the relationship between me as the researcher and the social phenomena is interactive. In accordance with my paradigm and epistemology I reason “in the social world people are affected by the process of being studied.” (Ritchie & Lewis, 2013:8) Moreover, the findings are value-mediated through me as researcher.

Ritchie & Lewis (2013:8) suggest the position of ‘empathic neutrality’ and this was considered in the conduct of my research. In other words, as Ritchie & Lewis recommend, I found most fit to strive to be “as neutral as possible in the collection, interpretation and presentation of data.” However, according to the same authors, ‘empathic neutrality’ or being between these two positions (objective observation and value-mediated observations) means that, even though research cannot be value free, researchers should try to make their assumptions, biases and values transparent. Also, researchers should try as far as possible to be neutral and non-judgemental in their approach. But, Ritchie and Lewis (2003:22) also recognise that the research can never fully meet the aspiration of being completely ‘neutral’ or ‘objective’ and ultimately, “all research will be influenced by the researcher.”

Consequently, I am striving to be more neutral, rather than subjective in the collection of data, but in the same time I acknowledge my different positionally in relation to the sample. This means I did try to avoid leading or judging the participants in anyway. However, as part of my research means exploring differences in regards to cross-cultural aspects, I also had to consider and reflect on my position as a research and how it is different in relation to the Romanian and Chinese students. Even though I did not deliberately try to influence the participants, my personal background (a Romanian student) might have influenced the interviews and my interpretation. First, coming from the same cultural background might have influenced my understanding of what the other Romanian students meant during the interviews, as I could relate more to their experiences. Secondly, it also facilitated the availability and willingness of other Romanian students to be interviewed face to face as

opposed to Chinese students. Next, the majority of my interviewees were found through my network. Furthermore, I had a broader network consisting of Romanians, and Romanian students, as opposed to only knowing one Chinese student. This will be further explained in the “Methods” section of this chapter.

The third epistemological issue in my thesis is emphasizing on what can be accepted as accurate or ‘true’ in social science. Ritchie and Lewis (2003:7) show how as opposed to natural sciences where the truth theory is one of correspondence, an alternative view is proposed for social studies -the ‘intersubjective’ or coherence theory of truth. In the present research I align myself with this intersubjective view as “it suggest that ‘independent’ reality can only be measured in a consensual rather than an absolute way.”

## 3.2.Methodology

This section deals with the choice of research design, together with a detailed representation of the characteristics of this design (timing, weight, mixing decisions), providing argumentation for my choices, as well as pointing out the strengths and challenges of this design, methods for the data collection and methodological limitations.

To begin, Denzin & Lincoln (2005) outline methodology focuses on finding the best way to gain knowledge about the world. Furthermore, Guba, (1990:18) explains methodology is concerned with questions such as “how should the inquirer go about finding out knowledge?” To continue, Klotz & Lynch (2007:16) point out methodology is also answering questions like:“how do researchers select their tools?”Additionally, Kothari (2004) argues methodology illustrates the research methods and the rationale behind them.

### 3.2.1.Research design

This section of the “Methodology” chapter will focus on my choices regarding the research design of this study based on Creswell’s & Clark’s (2007:59-88) recommendations on opting for a mixed methods design. First of all I will present the type of mixed methods design I identify my thesis with. Next, I will present the defining characteristics of this design and discuss its timing, weighting and my mixing decisions in relation to the problem formulation. Third, I will explain the rationale for using this specific design in my thesis. Finally, I will point out the strengths and challenges of such design.

### 3.2.1.1.Mixed methods design

Creswell & Clark (2007:79) point out a specific design should be used by researchers who chose mixed methods. Often, researchers have a desire to use more than one design in their study or to combine different aspects of the designs. However, as it is also recommended by Creswell & Clark (2007:79) I selected one design that seems to best fit my research problem: the mixed methods sequential explanatory design. As further explained by Creswell, Plano Clark, et al (2003) the explanatory design is a two-phase mixed methods design. Consequently, this should “make the study more manageable and simpler to implement and describe.” Another reason for implementing a design to my research is to build a framework and a logic guide for the chosen research methods. When deciding upon the mixed methods sequential explanatory design I considered my problem formulation together with my research paradigm. Plus, I took into account my level of expertise and the quantitative and qualitative skills I have gained working with previous projects. As it follows, given the available resources, like the length of time available to complete my thesis and the fact that I am not working in a team, I chose this design where quantitative is followed by qualitative methods.

### 3.2.1.2.Explanatory design

Creswell, Plano Clark, et al (2003) outline the overall purpose of this design is that qualitative data helps explain or build upon initial quantitative results. In this research, this design is reflected by the qualitative method following the quantitative one and therefore, explaining in greater depth choices from the survey. I wanted to follow up through subsequent qualitative research and connect the second phase, focusing on why do the participants have specific preferences and research the subject in depth, in regards to the important influences and what lies behind their decisions, attitudes, behaviour the meaning these have for them.

#### a.Characteristics

Following this design, I first collected and examined the quantitative data, my survey. Following, the qualitative data, my interviews were collected in order elaborate on the closed answer option questions and further explain the patterns and indications obtained in the first phase from the survey. The two phases are related to each other in this intermediate stage of the project.

To continue, “the decision tree” in Creswell & Clark (2007:80) helped me figure my next choices and I will now elaborate on these defining characteristics:

### **a.1.Timing**

According to Creswell & Clark (2007:81), under the mixed methods approach I had to figure “what will the timing of the quantitative and qualitative methods be?” Thus, the order in which I used the data within my thesis is referred to as “sequential timing”. Creswell & Clark (2007) outline the timing is sequential when the methods are implemented in two distinct phases and one type of data is collected first. However, I still kept the survey open while I was conducting the interviews as I needed more participants for the interviews. Even though in this research the data collection phases distinction is not very clear, I still find the sequential frame fits best with my design. I looked at the individual participants answers to find important indicators and patterns and build up my follow up interview questions in order to gain depth in my qualitative semi-structured interviews. However, I will further elaborate this matters in the “Methods” section of this chapter.

### **a.2.Weighting**

In regards to the second procedural consideration, aside from deciding on the timing of the methods, I also thought of the priority of the two data collection methods in my research. According to Creswell & Clark (2007) the researcher “decides whether both methods will have equal priority or one method will have a greater priority than the other.” Thus, as mentioned before and in accordance with my problem formulation and paradigm (interpretivism calls for qualitative), the qualitative methods will have a greater emphasis. Plus, the survey can not have equal weight as the interviews as it not a generalized model of how students behave and I will only use the data descriptively in the analysis.

Furthermore, when addressing why do students have certain preferences and differences in regards to their tourism motivations and travel patterns I argue it is best suited to give more weight on the qualitative methods as greater depth can be reached and as simply using quantitative methods would probably limit the research to a rather superficial answer.

Creswell & Clark (2007:82) mentions that “practical considerations also influence weighting.” In other words, conducting a study with equal weight to the both methods is not recommended with limited resources and the key for a better overall researcher could be prioritizing one method.

### **a.3.Mixing**

In addition to timing and weighting, Creswell & Clark (2007:83) advises on considering “how the quantitative and qualitative methods will be mixed” and related. Accordingly, I will chose to connect the two data types both in the data collection as in the data analysis. When the indicators and patterns from the survey were followed in the in-depth interviews the data connected and the quantitative results lead to the subsequent collection of qualitative data. This connection occurs also in the way the survey lead to selecting the participants for the interviews.



## **b.Purpose**

The overall purpose of this design is that qualitative data helps explain and build upon initial quantitative findings and patterns and guide into following in greater depth the researched problem.

## **c.Strengths and challenges**

First, in regards to the strengths of the explanatory design Creswell & Clark (2007:74) indicates the explanatory design is “considered the most straightforward of the mixed methods designs.” Thus, for my thesis, the structure is to my advantage as a single researcher. It enabled me to collect one type of data at a time. Moreover, choosing such design can prove helpful for the analysis as it could also be written in two phases.

As for the challenges of this design, I argue reading Creswell’s & Clark’s (2007) recommendations aided me into keeping in mind how it would be best to implement this design. For example, I was aware the qualitative phase will take longer time than the quantitative, even though the qualitative phase might be limited to a few participants. To continue, I also decided that it might be best to use individuals from the same sample for both phases. By connecting the two methods I could follow in greater depth why did participants seem to have certain preferences in the survey.

After explaining the research paradigm, together with the ontological and epistemological considerations and after arguing for my choices in regards to research design, I find it essential to address in more detail the choice of methods and the data collection phase.

First, I will elaborate on the study population of this research and on the cross-cultural aspect in relation to the selection of participants. This refers to group of elements from which the sample is actually selected. For the current research, I chose international students studying at the two main universities in North Jutland, Denmark: Aalborg University( AAU) and University College Nordjylland (UCN). More specifically, drawing from the arguments presented in the “Literature Review chapter”, I decided to conduct my research on two groups international students from different cultural backgrounds. Next, I wanted to find out which are the most representative nationalities enrolled at AAU and UCN because I wanted to focus my research on the differences between the groups in terms of motivation and travel patterns. Even though as an interpretivist I do not emphasize on numbers and quantity, at this stage of my research I wanted to gain some insight and indicators of important issues from the two main representative groups of international at these universities and have. Also, the survey was not designed to give a generalized model of how students behave, but I still wanted to have an idea of what would be an appropriate sample size. Thus, I managed to obtain the secondary data from both AAU and UCN by contacting their

international departments. For both universities Romanian students are on the first position from international students. (will attach Appendix with the numbers and classification). Also, as I am a Romanian international student at AAU, I found even more interesting to research this group.

Furthermore, in order to diversify and enhance my research, I did not want to chose the other group of students also from Europe. Plus, as outlined in the “Literature Review” chapter, previous studies, for example from Australia and America have shown Chinese students who study abroad have their particularities and special needs and I thought it would be interesting to research how would this translate into their current context in terms of motivation and travel patterns. As it follows, I decided to focus on the differences between Romanian students and Chinese students.

### 3.3.Methods

#### 3.3.1.Online survey

According to Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003:19) ambiguity and mistakes could easily be missed when designing a survey. In addition, the response rate, reliability and validity of the data collected can be affected by the way a survey is designed. In order to maximize the results special attention should be given to how individual questions are created. Thus, I tried to keep a clear layout and I offered an explanation of the purpose of the survey either in written or verbal form before completion. Moreover, the survey was designed in accordance with the “Literature review” chapter and the problem formulation of this thesis. A brief outline of the different sections of the survey consists of: demographics, previous experience with traveling for pleasure in North Jutland, preferred length of trips, transportation, single or group travel, budget, accommodation, activities, affiliation with other groups, future holiday plans, VFR tourism and limitations of their tourism experience. (I will insert the detailed survey questions in the Appendix section)

Furthermore, I created the survey with the possibility for the participants of remaining anonymous or leave their email if they had an interest in helping my researched and an availability to be interviewed. By designing the survey with both options, participants did not feel pressured in revealing their identity. On the other hand, the other option gave me the opportunity to reach for participants for the follow up interviews and look for patterns and indicators of important issues in their individual answers.

At first, I distributed the survey on Facebook, on several groups such as: “University College of Northern Denmark (UCN) Online Community”, “Aalborg University” and on my personal profile. Shortly after, I found out that was not the best approach for Chinese students as Facebook platform

is not very familiar among them - it is banned in China. Then, I decided to take action and for a couple of days, I went to the main canteens (both at Aalborg University and UCN), libraries, Studenthouse and even some local Chinese restaurants. This approach was more successful- I could also explain face to face to the participants what the survey is about. Thus, to some extent it was easier to gather more participants for the follow up interviews. Initially, most Chinese students showed their willingness to complete the survey, but because of their own time and study commitments they did not seem to want to participate in the follow up interviews (especially if they were to be conducted face to face). One of the aspects that made a difference in regards to my data collection was the fact that I personally knew one Chinese student who further gave me the student email of one of his friends. The snowball effect (Noy, 2008) was created and it seemed that being recommended had an impact on the Chinese students willingness to complete my survey and to leave their email for further contact. On the other hand, being a Romanian student myself facilitated reaching to other students with the same nationality.

To continue, I thought an online survey would be the most suitable to reach my sample. First, I could gain some indications of patterns that I could follow in depth in qualitative interviews. Secondly, it provided me with the possibility to follow up on the experiences and choices of participants. Furthermore, Bryman (2012) suggests there are several advantages to this method such as: cheap, accessible for respondents and researcher, quick to gather and organize data. The online survey tool used to gather the data of this research was SurveyMonkey.

### 3.3.2. In-depth interviews

Wahyuni (2012:73) suggests "the main feature of an interview is to facilitate the interviewees to share their perspectives, stories and experience regarding a particular social phenomena being observed by the interviewer". As explained previously, the emphasis in regards to my research methods is qualitative, specifically on qualitative interviews which follow on the patterns and essential issues indicated by the survey. As an interpretivist, I aimed for interviews facilitating perspective and story sharing, maybe revealing an undiluted focus on the individual (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Moreover, as Rubin and Rubin (2005: 15) explain "qualitative research is not simply learning about a topic, but also learning what is important to those being studied." Correspondingly, the main purpose of conducting interviews was to follow in greater depth why selected students have particular preferences regarding travel. Therefore, interviewees selected for this research have shown their willingness and interest in participating in the follow up interviews through the survey. Accordingly, interviews were not pre-scheduled, since I was gradually finding my participants.

Supporting the interpretive paradigm, Rubin and Rubin (2005:20) also provide suggestions in designing the interview questions with their ‘responsive interviewing’ model of in-depth qualitative interviewing. Some of these suggestions are reflected in my thesis, such as the flexibility and adaptability of the interview design and in the way I allowed new data to emerge from the very detailed answers of participants. Thus I aimed to gain a more detailed understanding of the differences between Chinese and Romanian students in North Jutland.

The discussion was focused on their overall experience in North Jutland. The interview was held in direct connection to why do they prefer certain options in regards to travelling, exploring more in-depth their perception about transportation options, accommodation choices, preferred tourism related activities, group or single travel, VFR tourism opportunities and so on. Another aspect taken into consideration was their motivation and behaviour when it comes to travelling in North Jutland. Overall, what are the main reasons they have certain preferences- all in relation to their individual answers to the survey.

A semi-structured format was applied to most of the interviews. As it follows, before every interview, I examined the individual answers from the survey and prepared a series of questions based on those answers and extended on the initial survey questions. However, sometimes, new questions were also asked in regards to the direction where the interview was going. This flexibility enabled even more the possibility to explore in greater depth their views. Interviews took place in different locations in accordance with the participants preferences and comfort (for example, sometimes I went to university, other times to their homes.)I also made sure to ask the interviewees if they were comfortable with me using their first name, and if they wanted to be anonymous or not. All the participants, except two, expressed no concern regarding this so their names were changed. Eventually, I held ten interviews with five Romanian students and five Chinese as shown in the table below:

Participant	Nationality	Duration
Anna	Romanian	30 min 08 sec
Buda	Romanian	45 min 07 sec
Cornel	Romanian	31 min 55 sec
Silvana	Romanian	34 min 11 sec
Maria	Romanian	41 min, 06 sec
Jin	Chinese	47 min 06 sec
Mei	Chinese	1 hour 06 min 34 sec
Quian	Chinese	35 min 09 sec

Chen	Chinese	30 min 51 sec
Xen	Chinese	46 min 52 sec

Another aspect of my qualitative interview data collection includes what Harper (2002:13) refers to as “photo elicitation” and it is “based on the simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview.” Before each interview, I handed the respondents a picture (will insert Appendix number with picture) I prepared. It illustrating a map of Denmark, with the region of North Jutland outlined and ten other smaller pictures showing main attractions in North Jutland such as: Grenen, Aalborg Zoo, Farup. The reason behind this was that photographs could facilitate a bound with the participants and aid them in both better understanding the focus of the research and maybe recalling important ‘stories’ in relation to the topic. Lastly, all the interviews were recorded and I made transcriptions for each of them, in order to facilitate the data analysis process.(will insert appendix with transcripts)

## 4. Analysis

### 4.1. Survey

The survey was created containing several different sections: (1) Demographics, (2) Previous experience with traveling for pleasure in North Jutland, (3) Preferred length of trips, (4) Transportation, (5) Travel party, (6) Budget, (7) Accommodation, (8) Activities, (9) Affiliation with other groups, (10) Future holiday plans, (11) VFR tourism and limitations of their tourism experience. The detailed survey report from SurveyMonkey.net can be found in the Appendix section)

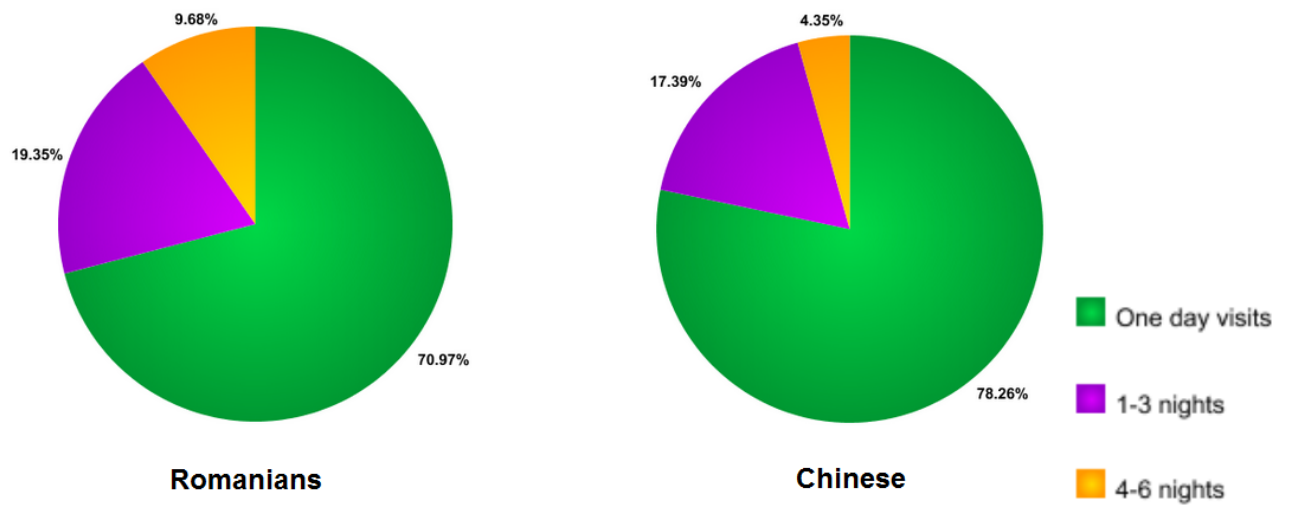
In the following analysis of the survey it must be taken into consideration that this method did not have an equal weight as the interviews. Furthermore, it was not aimed for it to be a generalized model of how students behave. Therefore, I will only use the data descriptively in the analysis focusing on what I find the most relevant patterns and indicators in relation to the research question. In addition, I will attach figures which I graphically designed from the final report in order to better illustrate the findings.

First of all, in regards to (1) Demographics section, Question 1 showed that there was a total of 70 participants who answered the survey, from which 39 were from Romania and 31 from China. In order to insure that students from different nationalities did not complete the survey, I also included the option “Other”, but if that was selected, the survey automatically closed.

Question 2 concerning the age of participants pointed out that Romanian students who participated in the survey are between 19 and 31 years old, whereas Chinese students ages vary from 24- 35. Question 3 was regarding the gender of my participants and for Romanian students 59% were female respondents and 41% male, whereas for Chinese participants there were 65% female and 35% male. Question 4 regarded which University the participants studied at and it showed that, the majority of Chinese students (94%) studied at Aalborg University and only 2% from UCN, whereas for Romanian students, 51% studied at Aalborg University and 49% at UCN. However, the statistics from UCN international office have shown that they currently have enrolled only 6 students from China. In what concerns the rest of the selected questions I will present the graphics for the most illustrative and relevant patterns and indicators.

Question 7 showed that both Romanian and Chinese students have similar preferences in terms of

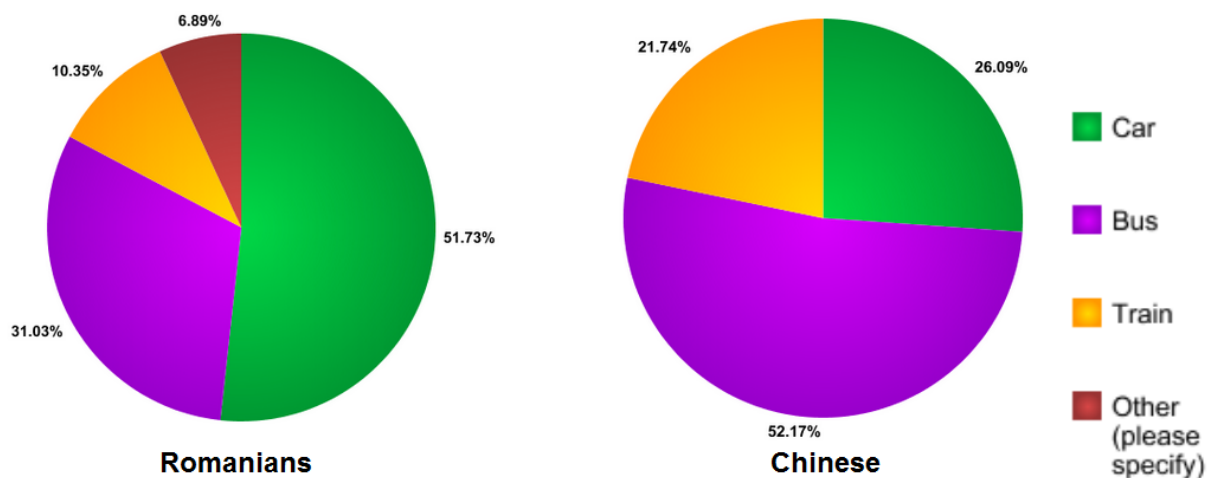
**Q7: For how long do you usually travel in North Jutland?**



length of travel and one day visits was the most representative choice.

Furthermore, question 8 focused on student's transportation preferences when travelling in North Jutland and the main difference here seems to be that the majority of Romanians prefer to travel by car, whereas Chinese chose the go by bus.

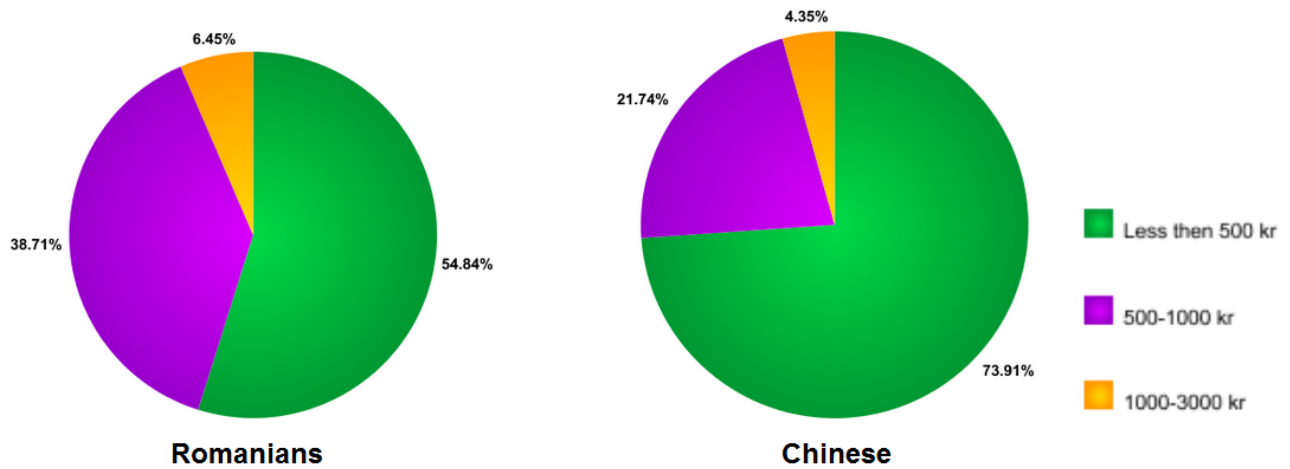
**Q8: What transport do you usually choose when travelling for pleasure in North Jutland?**



Question 9 concerning their preferences for the travel party also showed some different patterns, as the majority of Romanians chose to travel with their partner while Chinese opted for the company of their friends.



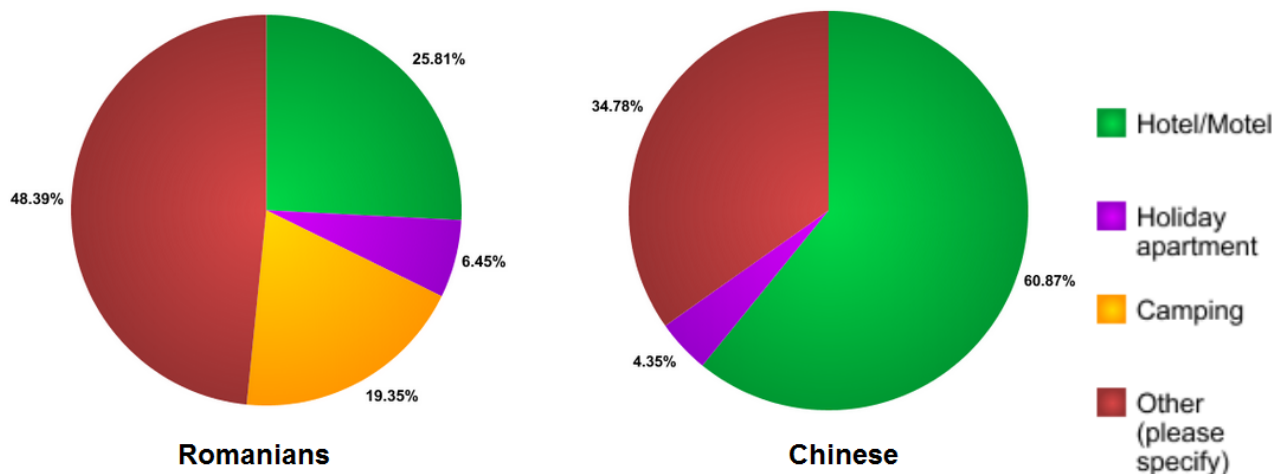
**Q10: How much do you normally spend on your tourism experience in North Jutland?**



Question 10 was regarding their usual budget and how much do they usually spend on their tourism experience. Here both groups indicated similar answers with 55% Romanians and 74% Chinese choosing to spend less then 500 kr

Another difference was indicated by question 11 in regards to the accommodation choices as 48%

**Q11: While travelling in North Jutland you prefer to stay at:**

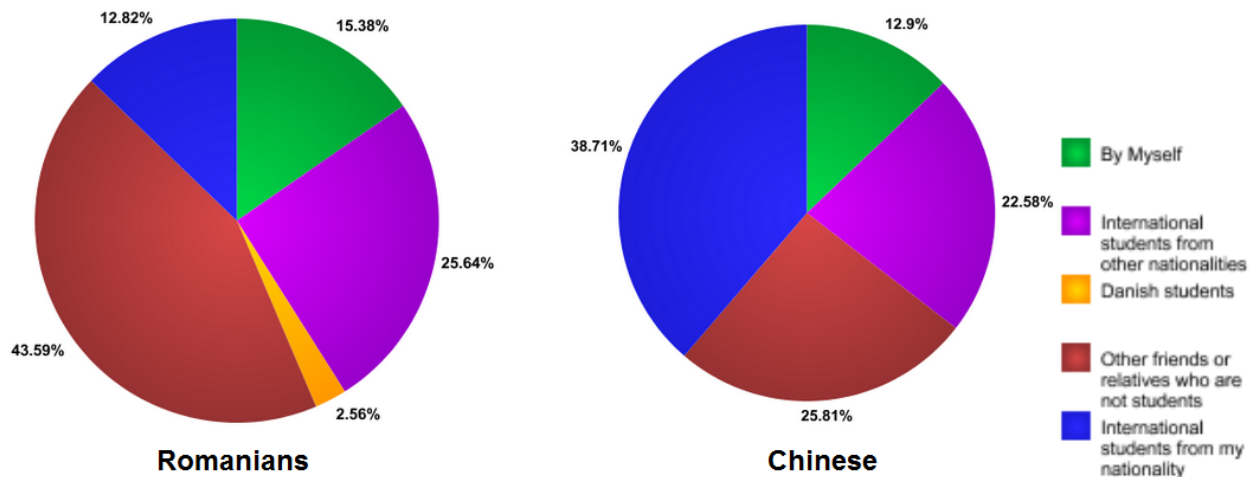


Romanians preferred to stay in Other kinds of accommodation such as Airbnb or with a friend, 61% Chinese students chose Hotel/Motel option.

Furthermore, question 12 asked them to further explain why they have that certain preference and Romanian students justified with answers such as: “getting closer to Danish culture, cheap and comfortable”, whereas Chinese students answers for why they would chose to stay in hotel/motel included: “convenience”, “safety” and “comfortable”.

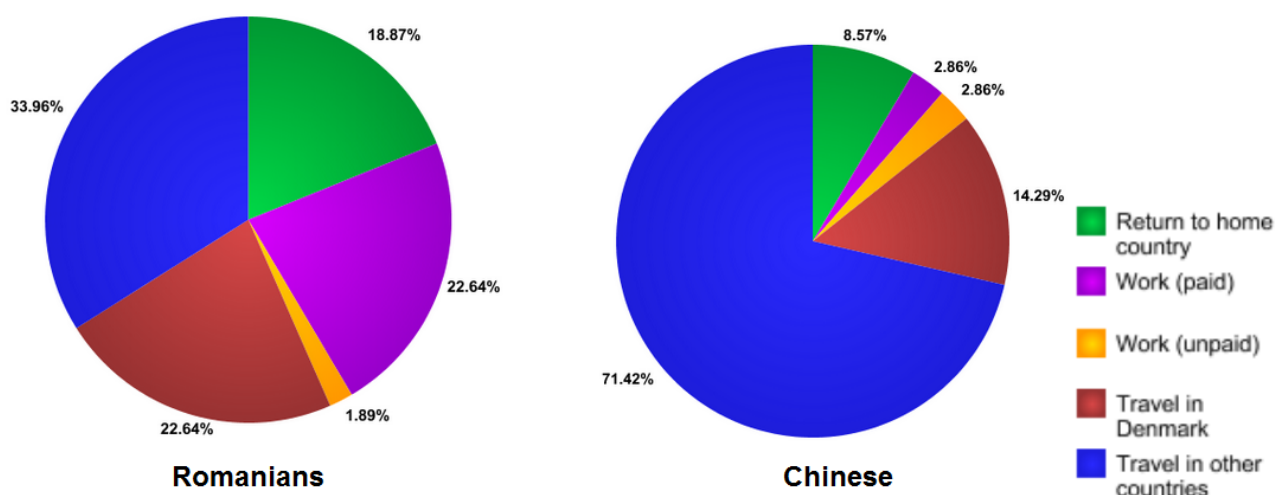
Another question that outlined differences between Romanians and Chinese students was question 14 in regards to their preferred company when participating in different tourism related activities in North Jutland. It is shown that 44% of Romanians prefer the company of other friends or relatives who are not students, whereas 39% Chinese students prefer to participate in these activities with other international students from the same nationality.

**Q14: Who do you usually participate in these activities with?**



Question 16 had multiple answers and it was concerning next holiday break plans and some indicators of different patterns were shown as Romanians answers are more divided with 34% wanting to travel in other countries, followed by 23% who would travel in Denmark. In comparison, a high percentage of Chinese students would travel to other countries.

**Q16: On your next holiday break, you plan to...**



## 4.2. Thematic analysis

The patterns found in the thematic analysis point out some similarities in terms of travel patterns and preferences between the two cultures but also differences, especially in terms of tourism motivations. In regards to Cohen's (1972) classification of tourists it seems that Chinese students present a higher need for security and reminders of home than Romanian students who seem more willing to explore new experiences. On the other hand, Chinese students also present an interest and desire to experience cultural differences, but it could be that they are also more constrained by what Cohen (1972) refers to as an 'environmental bubble'. Accordingly, there seem to be some nationality based differences in terms of their level of adaptability, as Chinese students seem to have lower levels of adaptability than Romanian students. This could mean they are less likely to explore not so popular destinations or less curious to learn more about Danish culture. However, it should be also taken into consideration, that according to the sample, Chinese students have been in Denmark for less time than Romanians.

Furthermore, if Cohen's (1972) classification of the types of tourist were to serve as guiding lines, there are indicators which show that Romanian students tends to have "explorer-drifter" characteristics, whereas Chinese students would not really fit with the "drifter" characteristics and would mainly belong to the "explorer" tourist with more present "organized mass tourist" characteristics. However, even though I argue Cohen's (1972) model is beneficial to the my analysis process by better highlighting the possible cultural differences, the diversity of motivations and experiences needs to be taken into consideration. As Freestone & Geldens (2008:54) argue about students exchange not representative of one specific mode, I also support the idea that "more meaning can be found in analyzing and interpreting a plurality of experiences rather than attempting to classify student exchange as representative of a single point on a linear continuum of tourist modes" and a move beyond Cohen's (1972) typology might be necessary.

Consequently, the travel career pattern model places emphasis on patterns of the travel motivations, rather than viewing them as steps of a ladder or single points on a continuum. Pearce (2005:79) suggests that the cross-cultural differences in terms of motivation patterns may vary between cultures at an individual level, the overall patterns seem to be similar. Nonetheless, it is also suggested that more research, especially cross-cultural, could "add to the understanding" of the travel motivations. In my research, I set out to explore underlying dimensions of international students motivations and to analyze the motivations in relation to the Travel Career Pattern (Pearce

& Lee, 2005). The intention of this research was to move forward from a descriptive examination of students' motivation to developing a more in-depth understanding of Chinese and Romanian students' motivation and the reasons they have them. Accordingly, it seems that in regards to the very important, core motives Chinese students seem to be moved more by Relaxation and Novelty, whereas Romanian students seem more likely to have as a core motive Escape and Relationship building. Chinese students also use traveling because they see it as a way to improve relationships with other Chinese students, but the need to relax seem to be a higher priority and a more outstanding pattern. To continue, in accordance with Pearce's Travel Career Pattern, in regards to the middle layer it seems that both Chinese and Romanian students are motivated by externally oriented motives such as nature and host– site involvement. Nonetheless, the central idea behind the travel career pattern is that travellers will have changing motivational patterns during their travel careers and I find it relevant to acknowledge that some international students motivations might change or some might stay the same.

For a more in-depth analysis I will further classify Chinese and Romanian students travel patterns and tourism motivations from the interviews in accordance to the push and pull factors having as a theoretical base Dan (1997) and Crompton's (1979) models. I argue this classification should help better understand the nationality based differences while highlighting why each group had their preferences. I find this factors better than the ones mentioned above because they aid me into better differentiating the various motivations of my participants. Even though there were some indicators of differences within the two groups, my research will rather focus on finding those patterns and indicators that helped building up the comparison and answering the research question.

<b>Indicators of differences in travel patterns and tourism motivations</b>					
<b>Romanian students</b>			<b>Chinese students</b>		
<b>Push Motives</b>	<b>Pull Motives</b>	<b>Travel patterns</b>	<b>Push Motives</b>	<b>Pull Motives</b>	<b>Travel patterns</b>
(1) Escaping from daily Routine	(1) Events and Activities	Short trips 1-3 days because everything is close, money and time constrains	(1) Seeking relaxation and rest	(1) Natural Resources (beautiful beaches) and sightseeing variety	Short trips 1-3 days because not much to see
(2) Emerged in cultural experience –	(2) Easy access and affordable	More spontaneous	(2) Variety seeking and curiosity to see	(2) Novelty	Planed, woman follow

“Danish Ways”			how people of different cultures live		
(3) Enhancing relation -with partner, family friends	(3)History and culture -but not really interested in food, more in exploring “the Danish ways”	Travel party: Travel with partner, family or students from other nationalities	(3) Enhancing social circle: travel to bound withing group of colleagues	(3) Historic and cultural resources (food)	Travel party: Group travel with other Chinese students
		Accommodation: Airbnb, friends house to be engaged in culture, cheaper	(4) fulfilling prestige: checking in popular attractions		Accommodation: Hotel/Motel because safe and more convenient
		Transport: car -faster			Transport: bus -efficient, cheap
		Next holiday break plans: Plan to travel in other countries (mainly because of the weather), but also return to home country and travel in Denmark			Next holiday break plans: Travel to other countries because they want the full European experience and want variety
		VFR: strong, already visited, will show NJ and everything else			VFR: they recommend it, already visited but most likely will not show NJ

### 4.2.1.Travel motivations

Lwellyn-Smith and McCabe’s (2008) findings on international students motivation at a university exchange programme in Australia. indicated that Ritchie’s (2003) model of a continuum from “education first” to “tourism first” may need to be redressed as it places exchange students in the ‘education first’ category. However, my research supports Ritchie’s (2003) model as both Chinese and Romanian students seem to fit in the “education first” category. The patterns indicated both groups of students had little to no previous knowledge of the tourism opportunities in Aalborg and

their choice was based on the educational opportunities. Both groups mentioned time and study commitments and this finding could contradict Carr's (2005), argument that students have an increased tendency to travel due to having fewer commitments and more free time. However, my research suggest it is also a matter of prioritizing or keeping a balance and once they reached the destination, both groups of students try to combine studies with travel and not miss on tourism opportunities for various motives which will further be analyzed below.

When it comes to Romanian students, it seems there are some similarities with Chinese students but also some indicators of nationality based differences. The main push motives for Romanian students seem to be: (1) Escaping from daily routine, followed by (2) emerging in cultural experience and learning the Danish ways and (3) enhancing relation with their partner, family or friends. In comparison, the most outstanding push motives for Chinese students seem to be: (1) Seeking relaxation and rest, followed by (2) Variety seeking and curiosity to see how people of different cultures live, (3) Enhancing social circle: travel to bound withing group of colleagues and (4) fulfilling prestige: checking in popular attractions.

Furthermore, the main pull motives indicated by my study for Romanian students were: (1)Events and Activities, (2)Easy access and affordable, (3)History and culture -but not really interested in food, more in exploring "the Danish ways" compared to Chinese students who indicated as main pull motives: (1) Natural Resources (beautiful beaches) and sightseeing variety, (2) Novelty and (3) Historic and cultural resources (food).

One of the most recurrent push motive for some of the Romanian students was (1) escaping from daily routine, especially because as Maria describes it, study life can become a routine: "At some point it's just work, university, work, university, work, university, work, university. It's a routine." Much like Mariana, both Anna and Silvia value the spontaneity that comes with such escape As Anna explains "if we are both free and it's a sunny day then we take off to the first bus that goes somewhere that's max 100 km away and we just go." Enjoying their free time or simply getting away from the daily commitments seems to be one of the main patterns for some of the Romanian participants.

(2) Emerging in cultural experience and learning the Danish ways seemed to be a recurrent push motive as adapting to Danish culture seem to be important and travel could be initiated to get closer to this by fully engaging in the experience and not simply gazing over it from the side. Anna explains that in her travels in North Jutland another reason consists in exploring smaller, less know places: "I think it's awesome to see these big places that everyone sees, like Skagen and so on. But it's really nice to see[...]Those places that you expect to be clean and so but then you get to see these [other] smaller

places that not that many people visits and if you find and get the same experiences in the smaller places it means that it's fucking awesome.”. Much like Anna, Buda also talks about his interest for emerging in the local culture and suggests how he tries to learn “at bars, at the restaurants, how they eat, how they speak, how they cheer when they have a beer and stuff like that.” and also implies that travelling around Aalborg gave him “more appreciation and understanding the Danish culture and especially how Aalborg is organised compared to Aarhus.” Alike Anna and Buda, Mariana feels that a part of her travels implies that “these things [cultural aspects] needs to be learned” and suggests her learning experience that “you have to adapt and to learn how to talk with everybody. Little by little you learn”

(3) Enhancing relation with their partner, family or friends is another relevant push motive that seemed to be repeating in the answers of my interviewees. Simply being in the company of their parents, partners and friends and bound with them appeared to be a factor that pushed them to travel more and even re-visit places.

On the other hand, one of the main push motives for Chinese students is (1) Seeking relaxation and rest as some participants indicated they seem more interested in simply relaxing, without an active need to be engaged in any activity, in Chen’s words “just to enjoy the nature. And to relax, because we are working hard.” Much like Chen, Jin explains how relaxation is very important after working hard at the University: “As a PHD student we work most of the time in the office, so we need to relax. If we don't we will get some psychology disease or feel stressed.” Smilar to Chen and Jin, Quian opts to go to destinations like Skagen “ to relax. Because I like the sea. You can lay down on the seaside. You can think everything you want to think. And also you can think nothing, let you mind go blank.”

Another push motive that was predominant at several Chinese students was (2) variety seeking and curiosity to see how people of different cultures live, but compared to Romanian students they also seemed to want to keep a distance and not fully emerge and learn about the Danish culture. Furthermore, their need for variety was expressed as they seemed less willing to re-visit the same place and as Quian highlights, sometimes other destinations seemed more appealing: “because Aalborg is so small, I just went to Copenhagen. I visited a culture at the seaside and also some old buildings. But being there once, I won’t go back visiting the second time.” Much like Quian explained, for Mei, the need for variety also pushed her to travel and find more about the culture in Denmark: “traveling for me is, that I want to get something exotic from what I experience in China. That is why I chose to live in Denmark. I have an expectation.”

Furthermore, compared to some Romanian students, who were pushed by simply being in the company of their parents, partners and friends and bound with them, some Chinese students were pushed to travel and visit tourism attraction to (3) enhance their social circle, more specifically travel to bond within their group of students from the University. As they spent a lot of time together working at their University projects, Chinese students preferred to meet with other fellow students from the same country and explore the region together. Quian shared that “for most of the activities we participate in, we would go with 5-6 colleges. Once we have found an interesting place, we would soon go there together.”

Additionally, in comparison with finding no indicators from Romanian students for this, a part of the Chinese students suggested that (4) fulfilling prestige, specifically checking in popular attractions, could be a push factor among them. For example, Mei suggested it was important to visit Copenhagen because “is very international” and she already knew that it will be “very different from what I saw in China. So for me it was very new.” Like other Chinese participants, Quian mentioned how important it was for her to get to take a picture with the Little mermaid and go to Copenhagen first, because it was very famous. Even though this findings are not directly about North Jutland, I think possibly finding one of the reasons some Chinese students would rather go to Copenhagen could be relevant for future marketing strategies. For example, Xen explained that “for my friends and most Chinese people, the impression they have about Denmark is the little mermaid and the ferry tales, because of H.C. Andersen. So I think they just want to see the little mermaid.” This suggest that a potential story-telling marketing strategy could determine Chinese students to feel like they are fulfilling prestige by visiting famous North Jutland sceneries.

When it comes to the main pull motives indicated by Romanian students, the possibility to engage in different (1) events and activities seemed like a relevant factor, as well as having some sort of interaction with the tourism attraction. As Buda’s answer further suggested, he chose to be actively involved and one of the reasons he visited some natural attractions were “mostly because it’s not a passive experience and we were actually doing something [refers to going to shops and taking pictures.]” This pull factor is also reflected in Cornel’s answers when he talks about the Nordsøen Oceanarium: “I love that because it was so interactive. You had many buttons to push and things.” For some of the participants from Romania another possible pull factor could be the (2) easy access around North Jutland and the fact that they find it affordable. This finding is for example illustrated by Anna’s view: “there are some nice, free stuff that you can visit. Skagen, for instance, it doesn't



cost you anything but the transportation there so I guess that's one of the reasons we travel a lot around. You can just take a day trip.”

Despite the fact that (2) emerging in cultural experience and learning the Danish ways seemed to be a recurrent push motive for Romanian students, their interest in (3) history and culture could also be indicating pull factor as well. However, compared to Chinese students they do not seem to be so much interested in food options and restaurant, but rather seem attracted by the discovery of “the Danish ways” at the destination.

When it comes to the main pull motives for Chinese students the (1) natural resources (beautiful beaches) and sightseeing variety seemed the most indicated factor. For Mei: “the nature scenery is the first” reason she travels in North Jutland and going to the beach. Compared to Romanian students who indicated they need to be engaged in various activities, even when at the beach, Chinese students seem to have a special view on the sea and appear to have found it an important pull factor. Simply taking long walks by the beach and enjoying the view seems to be of great value for some of the Chinese students. Mei elaborates on her special relation with the sea: “I really love the sea because I lived along a coast city in China. It makes it have relation to my childhood. Every time I see the sea, I can feel the peace, and it makes me feel better.” Much like Mei, Xen explains how in “China you can't just go to the seas from every city” and how going to sea in North Jutland helps her better focus on her studies when she goes back to university.

As previously mentioned, variety seeking and curiosity to see how people of different cultures live was indicated as a push factor for some students from China. Even though they seem more reticent to leaving their comfort-zone, (2) novelty was indicated as a pull factor among them. This means that they are interested in what is new and different about the destination compared to their home country, but not necessary because they want to change and adapt to that novelty, but simply out of curiosity which appears to pull them to travel. However, for North Jutland, this could also represent an obstacle in determining them to re-visit a specific location they already saw.

Another pull factor that was indicated by Chinese students seems to be the (3) historic and cultural resources with an interest for food offers. One of the reasons they are attracted to by is experiencing what the place has to offer in terms of history and food. Mei's answer exemplifies elaborates how this pull factor could manifest in relation to history for some: “there is for example a big fish in Blokhus, which we really wanted to know the history about. But there is not many ways for us to

learn more about it. If someone could be there speaking English telling some interesting stories about the fish, I think that would help. “

#### 4.2.2.Travel patterns

For example, both groups of students prefer short trips of 1-3 days. This finding confirms Weaver's (2004) and confirmed previous findings of Glover's(2011) studies pointing out that the majority of travels by international students are kind of short, usually consisting of one day excursions or trips which last between one to six nights. Furthermore, both Chinese and Romanian students find Denmark a rather small country, however this seems to translate in different travel behaviors. Chinese students find it rather boring, whereas Romanians find it interesting and because of the rather small size easier to see as many things as possible.

Moreover, it is also indicated that Romanian students tend to be more spontaneous and invest less time in planning their trips as opposed to Chinese who seem more likely to prefer planned, especially women who have a tendency to follow other members of the group or their husbands.

Both Glover (2011) and Gardiner et al (2013) studies have pointed out that international students mostly travel with friends or with other international students, partners or family. Gardiner et al (2013) study showed that in regards to the travel party it seems most notable that Chinese students prefer the company of other Chinese students, while students from Europe prefer the company of students with other nationalities. My thesis indicates that this could be a nationality-based difference as Chinese students did prefer to travel with other Chinese students, whereas Romanian students chose to company of their partner or students of different nationalities.

Another finding is showing that compared to Romanian students who seem to want to experience danish culture to get closer to the danish ways, emerge in it and understand it, Chinese students seem to want to experience as a part of the different other cultures they want to explore and not to become more Danish, but simply to learn about it from a more distant position because it's new and different. For Chinese students it seems that Richards & Wilson's (2004a:19) theory of the state of "suspension" is confirmed as they tend to spend less time with people form the host culture and more with other international students. Accordingly, Chinese students could lead to feeding "an international student sub-culture", but non the less one composed out of "eager to experience as much as possible through relatively time-rich, money-poor modes of travel" students.

In terms of accommodation, my findings point out different preferences and support Gardiner et al (2013) findings that Chinese segments prefer hotels/motels and apartments. My thesis highlights some of the reasons they might prefer that is convenience and comfort. However, as opposed to Gardiner et al (2013) study where Europeans opt for cheaper hostel-style backpacker accommodation, in my study Romanians prefer other kinds of accommodations such as: Airbnb or staying with friends because they can be more immersed in the Danish culture and because it is cheaper. Compared to Chinese students who still value their comfort, this finding about Romanian students supports Heung and Leong (2006) argument concerning university students who are most likely to reduce the traveling costs by reducing their expectations in regards to the level of comfort of accommodation and transportation.

In terms of transportation, there seems to be a difference in the fact that Romanians prefer to travel by car, mainly because it is much faster and suitable for their rather spontaneous decisions. Even though they sometimes would take the bus or train because it is cheaper, it seems, if given the opportunity, they would still prefer to go by car. Romanian students' preferences support Heung and Leong's (2006) claim that students might prefer flexible itineraries and schedules, as opposed to choosing all-inclusive package tours which might limit them. As opposed to Romanian students, Chinese students' main choice in regards to transportation seems to be the bus because it is efficient and cheap and they do not have to worry about someone driving. Despite the fact that Romanians have shown a willingness to be as close as possible to Danes and Chinese's need for extra comfort when traveling, another interesting pattern in regards to transportation seems to be the fact that Chinese students would be more willing to go on bike trips than Romanian students. However, Chinese students mentioned they would go on bike trips in accordance with their Enhancing social circle: travel to bond with group of colleagues motive, because they would also go with other fellow Chinese students and to be closer to nature.

Studies (Bywater, 1993; Chadee & Cutler, 1996; Field, 1999) have suggested that compared to other segments students distinguish themselves by the fact that they have more time to travel during spring, summer and winter breaks and have different motivational priorities. According to my research students could distinguish themselves when it comes to next holiday break plans (summer) as there seems to be a difference between Chinese students, who plan to travel to other countries – mainly because they want to the full European experience and need variety and Romanian students who, even though they also plan to travel in other countries or return to home country, seem to be more interested in the possibility of traveling in North Jutland and in Denmark.

Moreover in what concerns the potential VFR travel generated by Romanian and Chinese students studying in North Jutland, it is suggested that both groups recommend North Jutland to their friends and families. However, Romanian students seem to have more planned visits by family and friends and they also seem more willing to show the region of North Jutland to their relatives and friend. In opposition, Chinese students would rather take their families to Copenhagen, and only if there is more time left they would be willing to take their families to visit North Jutland. Plus, another difference seems to be that for Romanian students, the visits of their families and friends would represent an extra reason to revisit attractions such as Aalborg Zoo, Skagen, Blokhus, whereas Chinese students are less likely to re-visit something for the sake of their families.

## 5. Conclusions

My study aimed to uncover why do Chinese and Romanian students studying at AAU and UCN have particular travel preferences and focus on the differences in terms of tourism motivations and travel patterns regarding North Jutland. Following, the research question of my thesis was: “What are the differences between Chinese and Romanian students studying at AAU and UCN in terms of tourism motivations and travel patterns in North Jutland and why do they have particular travel preferences?” The patterns found in the thematic analysis outlined some similarities in terms of travel patterns and preferences between the two cultures but also differences, especially in terms of tourism motivation.

My research’s empirical findings show that Romanian students seem to have similarities with Chinese students but also some indicators of nationality based differences. The main push motives for Romanian students seemed to be: (1) escaping from daily routine, followed by (2) emerging in cultural experience and learning the Danish ways and (3) enhancing relation with their partner, family or friends. In comparison, the most outstanding push motives for Chinese students seem to be: (1) seeking relaxation and rest, followed by (2) variety seeking and curiosity to see how people of different cultures live, (3) enhancing social circle: travel to bound within group of colleagues and (4) fulfilling prestige: checking in the most popular attractions. Furthermore, the main pull motives indicated by my study for Romanian students were: (1) Events and Activities, (2) Easy access and affordable, (3) History and culture -but not really interested in food, more in exploring “the Danish ways” compared to Chinese students who indicated as main pull motives: (1) Natural Resources (beautiful beaches) and sightseeing variety, (2) Novelty and (3) historic and cultural resources (food).

In order to better understand the target groups, in previous studies (Field, 1999; Hsu and Sung, 1997) the focus was on issues concerning transportation, accommodations, meals and demographics. Therefore, apart from the already presented findings in terms of travel patterns, I focused on what seemed to be some differences in terms of trip planning, travel party, accommodation and transportation preferences, next holiday break plans and VFR tourism generated by the international students. Moreover, as Rubin and Rubin (2005: 19) explained “qualitative research is not simply learning about a topic, but also learning what is important to those being studied.” Consequently, the main findings are reflected by the selected student’s

answers which were followed in greater depth in the interviews in regards to why they have particular preferences regarding travel. The focus was on the data collected from the interviews, as the survey did not have equal weight as the interviews and I only used the data from the survey in a descriptive manner in the analysis. Nonetheless, it should be acknowledge that generalizing on behalf of all students not the aim of this study and when I refer to findings about the “groups” I mean the most relevant patterns and indicators that came up for those particular groups from each student’s individual experiences, views and thought and my interpretations. Even though there were some indicators of differences within the two groups, my research focused rather on finding those patterns and indicators that helped building up the comparison.

**Education first:** The patterns which came up from my participants answers seem to support Ritchie’s (2003) earlier model of a continuum from “education first” to “tourism first, as findings indicated students from both groups had little to no previous knowledge of the tourism opportunities in Aalborg and their choice was mainly based on the educational opportunities. Yet, my research also found indicators which suggested participants from both groups try to combine studies with travel and not miss on tourism opportunities once they reached their study destination. However some Chinese participants seemed to view study constrains as very time consuming, while others talked about the importance of finding a balance. On the other hand, some Romanians also mentioned their attempts to finding a balance whereas for some, it was simply a matter of prioritizing.

**Short trips:** Another finding seems to be that both groups of students preferred short trips of 1-3 days which supports Weaver’s (2004) and Glover’s (2011) studies which have been pointing out that the majority of travels by international students are kind of short, usually consisting of one day excursions or trips which last between one to six nights. **Same size, different perspectives:** Another finding indicated that both Chinese and Romanian students found Denmark a rather small country. Nonetheless, this finding suggested a different travel behaviour: Chinese students seem easily bored by the size and available touristic options available, whereas Romanians find it interesting and easier to see as many things as possible. The same different tourism behaviour applied in regards to the Northern region of Denmark. **Trip planning:** Moreover, my research indicated that Romanian students tend to be more spontaneous and invest less time in planning their trips as opposed to Chinese who seem more likely to prefer planed trips, especially women who have a tendency to follow other members of the group or their husbands. Furthermore, my thesis indicates that the travel party preferences could also be a nationality-based difference as Chinese

students preferred to travel with other Chinese students, whereas Romanian students chose to company of their partner or students of different nationalities. **In or outside the bubble:** Another finding is showing that compared to Romanian students who seemed to want to experience Danish culture in order to get closer to the “Danish ways” and understand it, Chinese students seemed to want to experience it simply as another part of the many different other European cultures they want to explore. As opposed to Romanians, Chinese students did not seem to want and not to become more Danish, but merely to learn about Danish culture from a more distant position (mainly for the new and different aspects.) Richards & Wilson’s (2004a:19) theory of the state of “suspension” is confirmed for Chinese students as it seems that they tend to spend less time with people from the host culture and more with other Chinese students. Consequently, my findings suggest that Chinese students could lead to feeding “an international student sub-culture” while Romanian students are more likely to adapt to the Danish culture and could even start behaving similarly to domestic students. **Accommodation preferences:** This research also pointed out some differences in terms of accommodation preferences and thus support Gardiner et al (2013) previous findings about Chinese segments who prefer hotels/motels and apartments. It was indicated that some of the reasons Chinese students prefer to stay in hotels/motels and apartments are safety, convenience and comfort. However, as opposed to Chinese students, Romanian’s preferences indicated other kinds of accommodations such as: Airbnb or staying with friends. These preferences align with Romanians desire to be more emerged in the Danish culture but also suggest their financial concerns. **Transportation:** Even though Romanians seemed more willing to sacrifice their comfort in regards to the accommodation, there were indicators which suggested a preference to travel by car due to the enabled possibility to control the trip and spontaneity. As opposed to Romanian students, Chinese students seemed to prefer to travel mainly by bus because no one had to be responsible and concern with driving. **Future holiday break plans:** Both Chinese and Romanian students plan to travel to other countries, but they seemed to have different motivators. Chinese students want to the full European experience and are moved by their need for variety, whereas Romanian students plan to travel to other countries to visit their friends and relatives. Compared to Chinese student, they also seem to be more interested traveling again in North Jutland and exploring more of Denmark. **VFR:** The findings suggest that even though both groups would recommend North Jutland to their friends and families, Romanian students seemed more motivated to show the region of North Jutland to their relatives and friends. Moreover, as opposed to Chinese students, the visits of their families and friends would represent for Romanian students additional reasons to revisit places of tourism attractions.

My thesis findings are supporting the arguments in Field's (1999) study, which claims that special attention could be given to cultural subgroups within the international students segment. More specifically, it should be taken into consideration that students who want to study abroad could be wanting more than just the education opportunities and emphasise on their motivations to travel and discover their host country. Field (1999: 381) suggested that "cities with major sightseeing, shopping, and cultural attractions should promote their attributes, particularly to foreign students." Moreover, as Field (1999) suggested marketers must appreciate the influence of factors such as nationality, age, culture, background, gender and their marketing strategies should be constructed accordingly. As illustrated above, Field's (1999) early predictions towards designing tailored strategies for particular markets and the importance behind an efficiently targeted audience are also outlined by some of the findings of my thesis. Studies such as the ones carried by Sakakida et al (2004) and Gardiner et al (2013), among others who researched the travel behaviors of international students, aimed to determine an elaborate profile of international students for better market understanding and for developing tailored marketing plans. Much like those studies, my research explored two nationality-based segments with a focus on the cultural diversity of international students market. It has been previously suggested that viewing international students as a collection of subgroups instead of a homogeneous category might benefit the tourism industry. The findings of my research seem to support this argument and the current study could contribute to filling the gap into finding what motivates international students to travel in North Jutland and how their motivations seem to differ on a nationality base, with an emphasis on the importance of their cultural backgrounds.

This research synthesized some of the main tourism motivation theories and typologies. It further provided indicators of the reasons why Chinese and Romanian students have particular travel preferences regarding North Jutland and revealed patterns of international students tourist typology. Thus, as mentioned earlier, this paper attempted to identify motivation factors of Chinese and Romanian students in North Jutland, Denmark, as their travel preferences were researched.

This might have provided some indicators of marketing implications and for further research in the field of international students in Denmark. It could also be relevant to acknowledge the fact that knowing the differences of both cultures can help tourism providers meet the different desired needs of international students and by working together with DMO's, reach a more tailored promotion. Moreover, in order to anticipate future travel patterns a more in-depth knowledge of international student's tourism motivation is essential and it could possible determine change of their current



choice to travel to other countries in their holiday breaks. It must also be acknowledge that this research could bring some contributions to the study of international students travel preferences in relation to travel patterns and tourism motivations in North Jutland. However, the main limitation of this project is the fact that it is a study on a relatively small sample. Thus, while the findings of my study could have revealed themes which may have wider implications for understanding international students and their cultural differences, I acknowledge that these findings do not speak to for all international students of Chinese and Romanian nationality. Even though I chose a variate sample with students from different programs at different educational levels, the fact that they all study in Aalborg could translate into different findings for students from other regions. Nonetheless, my study might have a contribution to what seems to be at very limited literature on international students travel preferences in regards to tourism motivations in North Jutland and their nationality-based differences. The patterns found indicate the need for further research, maybe maintaining the focus on subcultural segments but expanding the regional focus. Nevertheless, the findings of my thesis might be useful for further research, also with a wider sample, in the same area of inquiry. By creating a more detailed knowledge of the international students tourism and travel experience in Denmark, both tourism industry actors and universities could improve their marketing strategies in the eventuality of leading to an increase in regional tourism.

## 6.Bibliography

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