

Chinese outbound tourism to the Danish provinces

A single case study of Chinese FITs travelling to Vejle municipality

Aalborg University

Culture, Communication & Globalization

Master thesis

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Date: June 2nd 2020



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STANDARD TITLE PAGE FOR PROJECTS

To be completed by the student(s)

Subjects: (tick box)	Project :	Thesis: X	Written Assignment:
Study programme:	Culture, Communication & Globalization		
Semester:	10 th semester		
Exam Title:	Master thesis		
Group Number:			
Names + Student Nos of group member(s):	Name(s)	Student Number(s)	
	Anna Kirstine Lunders	20172364	
Submission date:	June 2 nd , 2020		
Project Title /Thesis Title	Chinese outbound tourism to the Danish provinces		
According to module description, maximum number of characters/words/pages of the paper	80 pages/192,000 characters		
Number of characters/words/pages <small>(Standard page = 2400 characters including Tables and Figures, excluding References, Appendices, Front Page, Table of Contents)</small>	176,122 characters		
Supervisor (project/thesis):	Karina Madsen Smed		
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Abstract

China's strong economic development has resulted in a rise in Chinese outbound tourism, which accounts for one fifth of the total international tourism receipts and spending. This has made Chinese outbound tourism an interesting market to target for many tourist destinations including Denmark, which acknowledges the potential of the segment. In 2018 the Chinese tourist made 235,000 overnight stays in Denmark, a four-time increase since 2008, which generated DKK 855 million in tourism revenue.

Travelling outside of China is relatively new for the Chinese citizens because of a restrictive governmental outbound tourism policy. The literature within Chinese outbound tourism has grown from scarce to numerous, but there is a lack on destination related studies focusing on Europe. Further, the literature review shows a need for adaption in order to cater to the needs and preferences of the Chinese tourist when visiting Western countries. .

As the Chinese tourist is gaining more travel experience, it has resulted in a new generation of Chinese tourist travelling independently without a guide to lesser known destinations in the search for authentic experiences. This segment is called Free Independent Travellers (FITs). This change in travelling behaviour is evident in statistics showing that FITs doubled its share from 2010 and is now accounting for 54% of all travel. Yet, the literature shows a tendency for generalizing the Chinese tourist when describing them as group package tourists, which is an outdated version. This thesis is investigating the segment of Chinese FITs travelling to smaller destinations in Denmark. The smaller destinations are represented by Vejle municipality as a case, as the municipality has visibly initiated different strategies toward attracting the Chinese tourist, herein the FITs.

In order to investigate both the source market of China and the host market of Denmark and Vejle municipality, the Push-Pull framework was utilized. The framework is used to identify factors influencing the Chinese tourists to travel along with destination attributes attracting the Chinese tourists to visit Vejle municipality. Further, within the push factors, the travel motivations of the Chinese tourist was analysed through the Travel Career Pattern. The primary data contributing to the analysis consisted of six interviews with representatives all connected to the case of Vejle municipality. The respondents were divided in two groups of tourism support providers and tourist service and product providers. The data collected from the interviews provided insight in the different strategies towards attracting Chinese tourists along with perspectives on the Chinese tourists along with challenges and opportunities in regards to this segment.

The analysis of push factors found a different version of FITs in the municipality, than the one described in the literature, as it shows that the tourists are less individual and flexible in their behaviour. It further shows that most travels are planned beforehand with the help from tour operators. Through the theory of Travel Career Pattern the core travel motivations were found to be novelty, autonomy and self-development (host-site involvement).

When it comes to pull factors, statistics show that the current strategy has already increased the number of Chinese tourists visiting, but it is acknowledged that it takes a very long time for a new tourist market to flourish. Further, the municipality does offer attractions, nature and gastronomy, which are attributes requested by the Chinese tourists. However, these attributes could be developed further. Additionally, the data shows different perspectives and initiatives towards becoming China ready. Yet, the initiatives taken by Vejle municipality are found to be an advantage as compared to other smaller destinations in Denmark. Another finding show a generally negative mentality among the tourism service and product providers towards the Chinese tourists, compiled of factors such as expectations, prejudices and the press. This negative mentality is hindering the development of Vejle municipality as a destination for Chinese tourists, which will only change the day more Chinese tourists visit the destination. It is argued to be difficult to become truly China ready due to lack of experience, as the interdependent factors of number of Chinese tourists, level of experience and China readiness to engage in a vicious circle.

The findings of the overall push and pull framework shows that the destination attributes cohere with the core motives of the FITs of novelty and self-development (host-site involvement). However, the core motive of autonomy is not being fulfilled by the destination due to a lack of online booking options, knowledge and language skills and visa-regulations. It is suggested to pursue a more narrow strategy towards attracting the Chinese tourists, by focussing on the tour operators, as they play a vital part in the tourist decision-making process. In order to fulfil the unfulfilled motive of autonomy, online booking of activities and pre-planned packages along with a higher level of cooperation across the Visit-organisation and other Nordic destinations is suggested. As it was found that the Chinese FITs travel to the Nordic countries as one collected destination, and in order to promote travels to Vejle municipality it requires a higher level of cooperation.

Preface

I would like to thank several people who contributed to this thesis. A special thanks to my supervisor and to the six respondents from different organisations and companies, who contributed with their time, insights and knowledge and assisted me in finding additional relevant respondents.

The thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 1 will introduce the thesis and provide basis for the research questions. In chapter 2 the methodological reflections, research design and introduction to the case will be presented along with the approaches of how data is collection. Chapter 3 will present a literature review discussing the literature within the topic of Chinese outbound tourism. In the following chapter 4, a contextual background of data based on other research studies will be presented. Chapter 5 will present and discuss the theoretical considerations of the thesis including the Push and Pull framework and the Travel Career Pattern. The analytical findings of the primary data will be presented in chapter 6 and followed by a discussion of the findings and conclusion in chapter 7.

The interviews were all audio-recorded and the transcriptions hereof are included as appendixes. The sound-files of the recoded interviews are available upon request.

The chosen method of referencing is APA style.

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1. Introduction

As the second largest economy in the world, the strong economic growth, a rise in average income and a more permissive outbound tourism policy has made China the top tourism source market in the world. This is evident both in terms of number of outbound trips and in tourism spending. In 2018, 150 million Chinese outbound trips were made with a total tourism expenditure reaching \$277 billion. Thereby, China's outbound tourism accounts for one fifth of the total international tourism receipts and spending (Tse, 2015; World Tourism Organization and Global Tourism Economy Research Centre, 2019). Today only around 10% of China's 1.4 billion inhabitants travel internationally. The World Tourism Organization (2019) estimates, that by 2027 20% of the Chinese population, equivalent to 300 million people, will own a passport (p. 15).

As the Chinese tourists have become more experienced travellers, a new generation of Chinese tourists is on the rise. The traveling behaviour of the Chinese outbound tourists used to be mainly characterized as all-inclusive package tours. Until the late 1990's a group package tour was the only way of travelling to Europe for the Chinese outbound tourists (Xiang, 2013, p. 135). The group package tours are still a popular way of travelling, however, several authors have noted a change in the travelling behaviour and travel motivations, as several of destinations notice an increase in tourists traveling independently (Ma et al., 2015). This change in travelling behaviour is evident in statistics from The World Tourism Organization and Global Tourism Economy Research Centre (2018). In 2017 the Chinese tourist's way of travel was 46% package tours and Free Independent Travellers (hereafter FITs) doubled its share from 2010 to now accounting for 54%. The package tours are particularly popular for senior citizens, while the younger generation prefers independent travel (p. 10). This rise is coinciding with the large rise in members of the Chinese tourism consultant website Qyer, serving independent outbound tourists exclusively. Qyer has gained 80 million users since its establishment in 2004 (Marketing to China, 2019). The new generations of Chinese independent travellers are described as travellers with higher education, wealthier and with previous travel experience. These self-organizing tourists, who are rich in money, but poor in time, look for authentic experiences rather than monuments (Arlt, 2013). This new generation, often referred to as "Free Independent Travellers", are interesting because they are likely to stay longer in one destination and their average spending is considerably higher, compared to the traditional group package tours and other tourist markets (The Nordics, 2018, p. 12).

The growth in the Chinese outbound tourism is also evident in Denmark, even though Chinese tourism is still a relatively small tourist segment accounting for a total of 235,000 Chinese overnight stays in 2018, a four-time increase since 2008, which in 2018 generated DKK 855 million in tourism revenue (VisitDenmark, 2019a, p. 4). Chinese tourists in Denmark are few in numbers, but when it comes to spending they are more generous than German tourists for example. Chinese tourists in metropolitan areas of Denmark spend DKK2,550 per day on average compared to a daily spending of DKK1,450 by German tourists (VisitDenmark, 2019a, p. 4; VisitDenmark, 2019b, p. 4).

The Danish government presented a national strategy for Danish tourism in 2016, the government wants to strengthen efforts for Danish tourism towards 2025 (Erhvervs- og Vækstministeriet, 2015). This strategy included a strategic alignment with China on a Danish-Chinese tourism year in 2017, in order to attract significantly more Chinese tourists to Denmark (Erhvervsministeriet, 2017). However, as China is a relatively new and different market, Denmark is still adapting and learning how to target the Chinese tourists and thus many initiatives have been initiated to get Denmark “China ready”, a term often used by many destination management organisations (DMO). However, the definition of this and how to succeed is yet not clear.

The Danish-Chinese tourism year led to an increased interest and new initiatives in small and medium sized cities in Denmark, who have started to target the Chinese tourists too. More specifically, they target the segment of high-spending tourists who are used to travelling and seek authentic experiences. Especially the initiatives and activities in the municipality of Vejle have gained attention from in the media. The municipality is intensely working towards becoming China ready with a concrete strategy focusing on two segments of the Chinese outbound tourists. VisitVejle is working towards the goal of generating visits from 50,000 Chinese tourists by 2025 (Turisme.nu, 2018). China expert, Casper Tollerud too sees the potential in the area, as it consists of Billund airport, LEGOLAND, UNESCO heritage sites as well as hotel and shopping facilities (Rahbek et al., 2018). This thesis will be working with the municipality of Vejle as an unique case, because the municipality has visible presented initiatives towards attracting Chinese tourists, especially the FIT segment including their “Kina klar/China ready” courses, which they were the second municipality to introduce after Copenhagen.

This thesis will investigate Chinese outbound tourism to Denmark by focusing on the new generation of FITs to smaller destinations in Denmark, represented by the case of the municipality

of Vejle. The overall framework is the Push-Pull theory which will identify factors in the tourist decision-making process. The push and pull factors will be identified through both primary data from semi-structured interviews with tourism support providers and tourism service and product providers associated with the case and from secondary data. The push factors of outbound tourism by FITs from China will be analysed by identifying the main travel motivations presented in a Travel Career Pattern along with identifying pull factors of destination attributes in the municipality of Vejle. Finally the connection between the push and pull factors, and the challenges and opportunities it presents, will be discussed.

1.1 Research questions

In accordance to the introduction presented above, the aim of this thesis is to answer the following research questions:

How can the Chinese FITs be attracted to smaller destination in Denmark?

- *What characterises the travel motives of the new generation of Chinese tourists?*
- *Which initiatives has been taking and which initiatives should be taken when attracting the Chinese tourist to the smaller destinations?*
- *Which challenges and opportunities appear when attracting the Chinese tourists?*

1.2 Definitions

This section will define some of the main terms relevant for this thesis. As the terms are referred to various times throughout the thesis, the definitions will provide insight to how the terms should be understood.

Tourism: According to the World Tourism Organization (n.d.) tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon. Tourism is the movement of people to places outside their usual environment for less than a year. Being a tourist includes an overnight stay at the destination and purpose of the travel can either be business or leisure. This thesis focuses on travels for leisure purposes.

Forms of tourism: Tourism can be further divided into three basic forms of tourism: domestic tourism, inbound tourism or outbound tourism. This thesis focuses on Chinese outbound tourists, which can be defined as the activities of a tourist travelling outside their country of residence (World Tourism Organization, n.d.).

FITs: This thesis focuses on a specific segment of Chinese tourists, the FITs. This segment is defined differently both in terms of the abbreviation itself and the segment in general. FIT is an abbreviation of Free Independent Traveller, Frequent Independent traveller or Fully Individual Traveller. Hyde & Lawson (2003) define independent travellers as those “*who have flexibility in their itinerary and some degree of freedom in where they choose to travel within a destination region*” (p. 13). Additionally, the Nordics (2018) describe them as: ... *those who take their trips in all forms that are NOT “package group tours”. FITs are all forms of tours for a fixed group of people who travel with or without the partial or complete help of tour operators or travel agents and know each other before departure and travel together for the whole trip and can freely decide on changes of the itinerary on the spot without having to follow the command of a tour guide or the fixed programme of a tour operator*” (The Nordics, 2018, p. 11). Finally, VisitDenmark (2019a) describe the FITs as travellers who travel for 7 to 10 days, visit new and trendy destinations, do homework online, but book through a travel service and focuses on authentic and local experiences (VisitDenmark, 2019a, p. 5).

In this thesis FIT is an abbreviation of Free Independent Traveller. The FITs are defined as travellers travelling for leisure purposes without a guide and without a fixed program of activities.

The FITs travel in groups with known companions and the trip is planned with or without the help of a tour agency.

Actors in the tourism industry: There are several ways of defining the actors participating in the tourism industry. This thesis divides them into two categories of **tourism support providers** and **tourism service and product providers**. The first category is those providing support services to tourists before, during and after the travel. These include information services such as websites and guidebooks, travel agencies/tour operators and destination management organisations (DMO). This is defined as **tourism support providers**. The other category of actors is providing direct tourism products and services at the destination and includes attractions, transport, accommodation and food or drink facilities. This is defined as **tourism service and product providers**.

2. Methodology

The aim of the thesis is to answer the research questions, thus this section will present the approaches taken to fulfil this aim. This section of the methodology of the thesis will provide the reader with an overview of the philosophical considerations and the methodological approaches used. This section will argue for the consideration and implications of the specific stances and approaches chosen. Firstly, the ontological and epistemological positions will be presented to clearly outline how the social world and knowledge is regarded. Further, the research design will be presented and the methodological approaches to collecting and analysing data are presented.

2.1 Philosophy of science

2.1.1 Ontology

Ontology seeks to describe how the researcher views the world. A researcher will view topics differently depending on his or her values and background, and preferences will therefore be filtered according to one's view of the world. The central issue of ontology is how the social world is composed (Bryman, 2012, p. 32). According to Bryman (2012) these views are referred to as the position of either objectivism or constructionism. In an objectivist perspective, the social world is viewed as something external to the actors in it, meaning the social world is governed by a set of universal laws and it is independent of the people in it and thereby it can be measured. Whereas constructionists believe that the actors compose the social world. Thereby the reality is dependent on the eye of the beholder and is influenced by individual's belief, values and social backgrounds. This means that knowledge cannot be measured, but only observed (Bryman 2012, pp. 19 & 32). As this thesis is investigating Chinese outbound tourism to Denmark, the cultural factor is also important, as the thesis discusses the interaction between two different cultures, the one of China and of Denmark. As argued by Díaz de Rada (2011) the concept of culture is incorporated in ontology, as the individual in it will continuously interpret reality and construct it based on a set of conventions, thereby knowledge can only be created by acknowledging the limitations the conventions enforce (Díaz de Rada, 2011, p. 267). In relation to objectivism, culture is viewed as an external reality to the individual that constrains people and determines how they act, whereas constructivism views it as a reality in a constant state of construction and reconstruction (Bryman, 2012, p. 34).

The ontological perspective in this thesis will be constructivism, as the study recognizes individuals as affected by their pre-understanding and personal experiences, which influences their view of the social world they act in. The social world is produced through social interaction and is constantly changing. Thereby, this thesis can only present a current version of the social world and not one that is definitive (Bryman 2012, p. 32). The kind of data collected for this thesis will be different depending on the respondent, as each respondent is presenting their view of the reality. This means that the respondents will reply differently to identical question as they are influenced by their background. Further the data collected can only be observed and not measured. The data will be observed, analysed and discussed in order to conclude the reality as it is presented by the respondents.

2.1.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is about the theory of knowledge and what kind of knowledge is appropriate to provide answers and how the knowledge is collected and later interpreted (Bryman 2012, pp. 19 & 27). There are two major positions of epistemology of positivism and interpretation, which to a large extent is either objective or subjective. In research with a positivistic approach the aim is to gather objective and value-free facts to test theories in order to provide basis for laws, as positivism advocates that the reality can be explained by observations and measures, if the researcher remains objective (Bryman 2012, p. 28). Contrasting is the interpretivist approach which aims at explaining and understanding human behaviour by gaining access to people's experiences and understanding of the social world in which they act, the researcher can interpret the individual actions and their personal view of the social world (Bryman 2012, pp. 28-30). According to Denzin & Lincoln (2005) the interpretivist approach believes human behaviour and action is meaningful, but the meaning of the action can only be interpreted in regards to the system of meanings to which it belongs (p. 296). Further, the interpretivist approach suggests that it is possible to understand the subjective meaning of an action of for example the actor's beliefs and desires in an objective way. In order to objectively understand the actions, the researcher must consider the original meaning of the action when it is interpreted, in order not to misinterpret the original meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 298). The formation of the epistemology position of interpretivist was influenced by the approach of hermeneutics which is mainly used for understanding or interpretation of text (Bryman, 2012, p. 560). In hermeneutics it is argued that the individual has a pre-understanding which is influencing how the individual perceive the social world and how actions are interpreted (Schmidt, 2006, p. 100– 101).

This thesis will take an interpretivist approach as it sees human behaviour as something dynamic. In terms of investigating the travel motivations of Chinese outbound tourists, this thesis views consumer behaviour and motives as something dynamic which changes over time, when individuals interact and gain experience and knowledge. This thesis will aim at comprehending meaning through the primary data from the respondents by understanding how they view the world. For example the literature and secondary data might present one version of the typical Chinese tourist, but by investigation a specific case, the researcher might uncover a different understanding, as the individuals are in a different context. Further the aim of this thesis is not to determine specific universal laws applicable for the social world of investigation or to generalize its findings, rather the aim is to highlight one specific case and context and the individuals in it. Moreover, as interpretivists usually focus on meaning, I can employ multiple methods in order to comprehend the reality in question.

The primary data collected from the respondents will be influenced by the respondent's pre-understanding and previous experiences. Some of the respondents have worked professionally with Chinese tourists for many years, whereas others have "only" participated in an educational course and interacted with the Chinese tourists on few occasions. Thereby the level of knowledge and experience differs from respondent to respondent. This means that external influences like information from the press or social media is comprehended differently by the respondents. As respondents with more hands-on experience with the Chinese tourists might be more capable of distinguishing between what the realities are and what is true or false. Just as individuals are influenced by pre-understand and prior experiences, so is a researcher. It is essential to be aware of one's prior knowledge, understanding and subjective meaning and how to reduce the impact of this. Before the process of writing the thesis started, I already had a pre-understanding of the topic and this pre-understanding grew throughout the process. This is also referred to as the hermeneutical circle, which suggests that in order to understand the whole, one must understand each individual part which makes up the whole (Schmidt, 2006, p. 103). Further, in terms of interpretation, it is the ongoing process of gaining knowledge which adds to one's pre-understanding and the ability to use this new knowledge to further investigate. However, it is not possible to be completely unbiased with the pre-understanding, but this pre-understanding will be utilized when going through different layers of knowledge in order to reach the truth. Though, having pre-existing knowledge makes it possible to question and discuss the findings in the analysis.

To sum up, the overall approach of this thesis can be described as qualitative interpretivist approach based on constructivist ontology. The approaches of constructivism and interpretivist are both based on pre-understanding and interpretations. Both approaches believe in a more dynamic structure of the social worlds which is dependent on the actors in it. This thesis aims at understanding the reality from the individual's point of view to uncover their reality. Further, these approaches are allowing me to be aware of my own pre-understanding and the fact that it may impact my interpretation of the individual's experiences and perception of reality.

2.2 Research design

This thesis is a single case study which will investigate Chinese outbound tourism to Denmark from two perspectives of the source market (China) and host market (Denmark). More specifically the thesis will focus on the new segment of Chinese FITs travelling to smaller destinations in Denmark. The smaller destinations are represented by the municipality of Vejle.

The overall framework will be the Push-Pull theory which will identify factors in the tourist decision-making process. The push factors of outbound tourism by FITs from China will be analysed by including the theory of Travel Career Pattern, where primary data from semi-structured interviews and secondary data from reports and studies on FITs will be analysed in order to identify travel motivations. The pull factors of destination attributes in the municipality Vejle will be analysed through primary data from semi-structured interviews with respondents associated with the case. By analysing the collected data through meaning condensation and coding, the push and pull factors will be identified and presented. Finally the presented connection between the push and pull factors will be discussed. Figure 1 below show a visual of the research design.

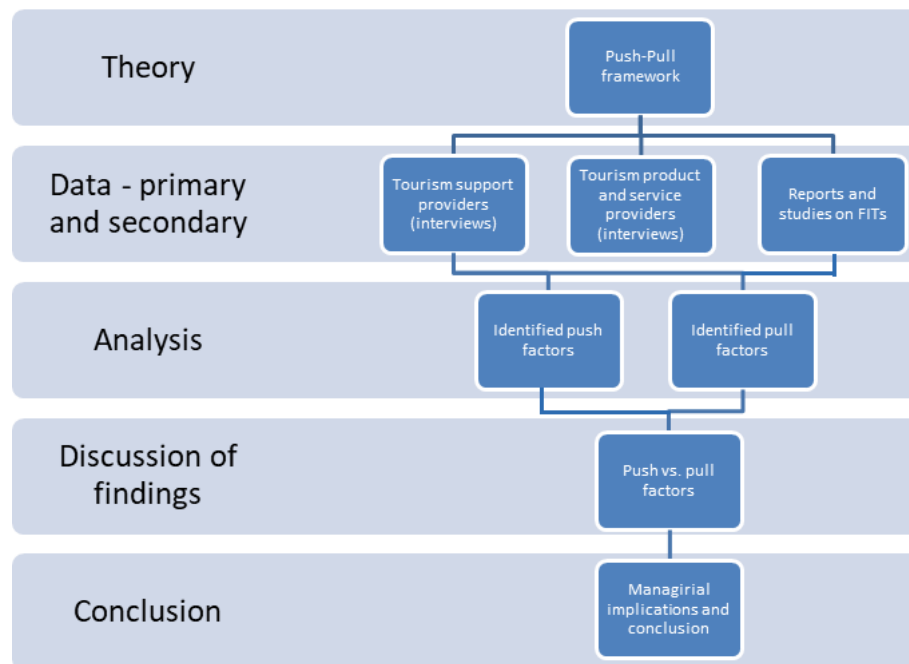


Figure 1: Research design (own design)

2.3 Case study

This thesis will be a single case study. According to Bryman (2012) a case study involves a detailed and comprehensive analysis of the settings in a single case (p. 66). Further, the term case is often associated with a location of for example a community, organisation or company and the type of case can be the following five types: the critical case, the extreme or unique, the representative or typical case, the revelatory case or the longitudinal case (pp. 67 & 70). The case study has received criticism such as that the findings from the studies cannot be generalized. However, it is argued by Bryman (2012), that the crucial question is not whether the findings are generalizable to a greater extent, rather the focus should be on how well the researcher is able to generate theory out of the findings (p. 71). Further, as mentioned above the aim is not to generalize the findings, rather to highlight a specific case based on interpretation by the actors associated with the case.

The municipality of Vejle is chosen as a case because the municipality were the first smaller destination in Denmark to introduce courses to make their actors “China ready”. Further, the municipality has initiated many initiatives directly aimed at the Chinese tourists and lastly, these initiatives have resulted in an increase in Chinese tourists to the destination. This thesis will be working with the municipality of Vejle as a unique case, because the municipality has visibly presented initiatives towards attracting Chinese tourists, especially the FIT segment. These

initiatives include their “Kina klar/China ready” courses, which they were the second municipality to introduce after Copenhagen.

2.3.1 Case introduction – Vejle municipality

The municipality of Vejle is located in Southern Denmark. With it over 115.000 inhabitants in 2020, it is the fifth largest municipality in Denmark (Vejle Kommune, 2020). The municipality has experienced growth in the last decades, both in term of population, workforce and employment rate along with a rise in new business establishments (Vejle Kommune, 2020). The municipality is a destination for tourists, as report from VisitDenmark in 2017 shows a yearly turnover of DKK2,0 billion from tourist activities. This placed the municipality as the sixth largest tourism generating municipality in Denmark and thus reaching the same level as the larger municipality of Odense (Bertelsen, 2018). Unfortunately, in 2019, they fell to a 10th place, though still ahead of Odense (VisitDenmark, 2019c, p. 14). In terms of overnight stays in the municipality, Visit Denmark (n.d.) presented a statistic of overnight stays in holiday homes, hotels, holiday centres, campsites, hostels and marinas distributed from 2017 to 2019. The statistics show a growth of close to 6% in the total number of overnight stays from 2017-2019 and in terms of Chinese tourists exclusively a growth of over 190%. However, it is important to note that accommodations such as Airbnb and Bed & Breakfasts are not included. In 2019 116,050 Chinese guests booked accommodation through Airbnb in Denmark (VisitDenmark, 2020, p. 8). Table 1 below show the number of overnight stays by tourists in Vejle municipality from 2017-2019, divided by nationality.

	2017	2018	2019
Total number of tourist	720.432	722.154	762.884
Total number of Danish tourists	477.824	482.373	514.462
Total number of tourists excluding Danish	242.608	239.781	248.422
Total number of Chinese tourists	649	640	1.891

Table 1: Number of overnight stays in Vejle municipality (VisitDenmark, n.d.b)

The municipality offer different types of accommodation such as city hotels, spa hotels, hostels, small bed & breakfasts and campsites (VisitVejle, n.d.). In terms of attractions, the area offers cultural museums and an UNESCO world heritage site, zoo's, the theme park LEGOLAND, theatres, shopping and nature among others (Oplev Vejle, n.d.). According to head of business in Vejle municipality, Morten Damgaard Nielsen, Vejle possesses different attributes which is attractive for the Chinese tourists. These attributes include “Kongernes Jelling”, a Viking heritage

site, as the Vikings are popular in China, shopping in Vejle, the nature and the theme park LEGOLAND in Billund (Turisme.nu, 2018).

VisitVejle is a local destination management organisation and a branch under the national DMO of VisitDenmark. The primary purpose of VisitDenmark is to promote Denmark as a tourist destination. Promoting Denmark includes launching and coordination of international marketing and branding activities in collaboration with tourism actors, as well as collecting data for analysis in order to communicate knowledge to the Danish tourism industry and local DMO's, among others (VisitDenmark, n.d.a). The overall goal presented by VisitVejle is to reach 50,000 Chinese tourists a year by 2025 to "Trekantsområdet" (Vejle, Fredericia and Kolding). The strategy is for Vejle to be the first choice when it comes to accommodations and for the Chinese tourist to arrive in Billund airport, to spend a few days in Vejle and continue their trip further North (Turisme.nu, 2018). In order to reach this goal, VisitVejle and the municipality have initiated several initiatives for the tourists and some specifically for the Chinese tourists. An initiative created as a part of the strategy was a course designed to make the tourism service and product providers ready to receive Chinese tourists. In collaboration with an educational institution and with support from the EU, the municipality of Vejle has created a "Get China Ready" course. The course is arranged for hotels, tourist attractions and retail stores in Vejle municipality who receive Chinese tourists (Turisme.nu, 2018). Additionally a product has been created specifically for the FIT segment. The "The Vejle Survival Guide" is a QR-code designed to inspire and help Chinese tourists exploring Vejle on their own with information such as Danish etiquette (Aarhus University, 2019). Lastly the municipality has several friendship cities, among others Nantong in China. This collaboration includes sending and receiving delegations of academics or students and knowledge and experience sharing (Vejle Kommune, 2019).

2.4 Data collection

The collection of data for the thesis consists of both primary data from interviews with tourism actors associated to the case and secondary data from reports and other studies on Chinese outbound tourism. The data collected is primarily qualitative and some are quantitative data based on statistics. By using different types of data from different sources, it is possible to view the research questions from different perspectives. This section will describe the sampling strategies when sampling units within the case, the characteristic of the sample unit along with the methods used to collect the data.

2.4.1 Primary data

The primary data for the thesis consist of qualitative interviews with representatives from tourism support providers and tourism service and product providers, in order to gain knowledge and perspectives from different actors in the tourism industry. In qualitative interviews there is often a greater interest in the point of view, personal experiences and perspectives of the interviewee (Bryman, 2012, p. 470). Similar to the philosophical stances, the interviews should aim at providing insight in the interviewee's meanings and interpretation of reality. Thus qualitative interviewing tends to be flexible, allowing the researcher to change direction or adjust in responding to what the interviewee is saying. The sample unit representing actors in the tourism industry in the municipality of Vejle will be sampled by different approaches.

According to Bryman (2012), sampling on two different levels is particularly relevant for qualitative research based on a single or multiple case studies. Within a research design of a single case study, the researcher will first choose the context or case and subsequently sample units within the case (p. 417). The first level of sampling is choosing the case, which is the municipality of Vejle, as mentioned above, and the second level is sampling units or respondents within the case. The second level of sampling respondents will be described below.

2.4.1.1 Sampling methods

According to Bryman (2012), qualitative researchers rarely use random samples when using qualitative interviews. The researchers are most often aiming at accessing a wide range of perspectives and respondents relevant to their research questions (p. 416). In this thesis the aim is to answer the research questions and that means that respondents cannot be chosen randomly. The thesis will therefore use purposive sampling. The approach of purposive sampling is closely related to the research questions. The sample units are chosen strategically, based on inclusion and

exclusion criteria allowing the research questions to be answered. The researcher should ensure a great deal of variety in the sample, however it does not allow for generalizations to a population or nation (Bryman, 2012, p. 418). According to Bryman (2012) and Jones et al. (2013) there are various types of sampling approaches, which can be combined in a single case study. Snowball sampling is very often used as the second sampling approach. In such a process, initial participants will be sampled with one approach and afterwards, the initial participants will nominate others with knowledge of the topic in order to broaden out the sample, especially in cases when participants are not easily accessed (Jones et al., 2013, p. 38; Bryman, 2012, p. 427). In this thesis, two approaches of purposive sampling will be used: **Criterion sampling** and **snowball sampling**.

With the approach of criterion sampling, the initial group of respondents will be chosen based on whether they meet the particular criterions (Bryman, 2012, p. 419). As the thesis is investigation the case of the municipality Vejle, the respondents should all possess a connection to the case, either through the organisation or company they present, their job description or their location. All of the respondents for the interviews were chosen based on their relevance for the thesis. The first respondent was found through desk research regarding to the case, where the respondent appeared several times. In order to find more respondents, the sampling method of snowballing was used. However, the respondents found through the snowballing method where also evaluated based on the criteria mentioned above, in order to ensure relevance. Snowball sampling is the technique of first sampling an initial group of relevant respondents who can refer the researcher to other relevant respondents (Jones et al., 2013, p. 38). An advantage of the snowballing sampling is that it can reveal a how the individuals are connected in a network (Bryman, 2012, p. 424). Contrarily a disadvantage is that it might involve some bias from the initial participant, as they will probably nominate participants who share a similar opinion or goals as them. A way to avoid this bias is to make sure that the nominated respondents also meet the criteria set for the initial interviewees. A table with an overview of the respondents can be seen below (cf. table 2 and table 3)

2.4.1.2 Sample groups

The sample unit within the case of Vejle municipality consist of two sample groups. The sample groups of tourism support providers and tourism service and product providers will be described below.

Respondent group 1 – tourism support providers

Three respondents were chosen to present the respondents group of tourism support providers. One of the respondents represents the municipality of Vejle and has been the main initiator of the strategy towards attracting Chinese outbound tourists to the municipality. The other two are tour operators, who are professionally working with attracting the Chinese FIT segment to destinations in the Nordics and these two respondents have contributed to the “China ready” course in the municipality of Vejle. Together these respondents will provide knowledge of both the strategic approaches chosen by the municipality of Vejle as well as providing insight to initiatives towards attracting the Chinese tourists to the municipality. The tour operators will provide insight in current approaches of attraction as well as knowledge on the motives and demands of the segments. As this respondent group consists of public and private organisations or companies, it will indicate whether there are strategic differences between public and private establishments. DMO1 is employed by Vejle municipality’s DMO of VisitVejle in their meeting department and was the main initiator of the China ready course and the other initiatives taking by the municipality towards attracting Chinese tourists. TO1 owns the private tour operator “VisitNordics”, located in Vejle, which is promoting Nordic destinations to Chinese travellers, especially focusing on FITs. Lastly, TO2 also owns a private tour operator “Beiou365” with offices located in both China and Denmark. Beiou365 offer trips to alternative destinations in the Nordics to the segment of Chinese FITs.

Organisation/ company	Organisation/company type and location and synonym	Representative	Method of interview
Meeting Vejle	Public DMO. (DMO1) Vejle, Denmark	Business tourism and MEGA events	Telephone
VisitNordic	Private tour operator. (TO1) Vejle, Denmark	CEO of VisitNordic	Telephone
Beiou360.	Private tour operator. (TO2) Shanghai, China	CEO of Beiou365	Skype

Table 2: Respondent group 1 – tourism support providers

Respondent group 2 - tourism service and product providers

Three respondents represent the group of tourism service and product providers. The group consist of respondents representing private or public companies located in the municipality of Vejle, offering different products and services. The respondents are representing an attraction, café and accommodation. The interviews will provide more practical insight and knowledge about the Chinese tourists at the destination. The respondents have all participated in the “China ready” course and offer different services to the visiting Chinese tourists. The respondents will provide insight on their perspectives and initiatives towards Chinese tourists visiting their companies. MUS is employed by Kongernes Jelling, which is a UNESCO heritage site. Located near Kongernes Jelling is a private café and shop owned by CAF, very much inspired by the historical perspectives, the café offer both Nordic food and drinks along with tales of the Vikings. Lastly, HOT is the hotel manager of Cabinn located in the centre of Vejle, an old, historical hotel offering both cheap accommodations of rooms with bunkbeds to more luxurious family suites.

Organisation/ company	Organisation/company type and location and synonym	Representative	Method of interview
Kongernes Jelling	Attraction - public museum. (MUS) Jelling, Denmark	Cultural mediator	Telephone
Café Sejd	Amenity - private café and shop. (CAF) Jelling, Denmark	Owner	Telephone
Cabinn Vejle	Accommodation – private hotel. (HOT) Vejle, Denmark.	Hotel manager	Telephone

Table 3: Respondent group 2 - tourism service and product providers

2.4.1.3 Structure of interviews

In the following section the methodology of the interviews will be presented as interviews can be conducted and structured in many different ways. Further, the purpose of the interview guide is described along with a reflection of the setup of the interviews, as the surroundings have an impact on the interview.

Qualitative interviews are often less structured than quantitative ones, as it allows the researcher to adjust during the interviews in order to get more insight into the perceptions made by the interviewee (Bryman, 2012, p. 470). This thesis will use a semi-structured interviewing in order to get detailed and personalized answers and to provide an insight to what the interviewee finds relevant or important. This choice of semi-structured interviews was chosen as the thesis sought answers to certain topics but at the same time the personal insights and perspectives along with new topics from the respondents are important too, as some unforeseen topics can arise during the interviews.

Interview guide

In semi-structured interviews, an interview guide will be followed in order to provide structure and to make sure the questions will be answered. However the interview is semi-structured, meaning that both the researcher and interviewee can ask questions not listed in the guide or go “off track” during the interview if other topics appear. Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to make slight detours from the guide by asking new questions, following up on the answers from the interviewee and by varying the order of the question listed in the guide (Bryman, 2012, p. 470)

Two interview guides will be developed, one for each sample groups, as the two sample groups consist of different actors in the tourism industry. The tourism support providers will provide knowledge about strategic issues when attracting Chinese tourists, whereas the tourism service and product providers will provide knowledge about more practical issues such as specialized services towards attracting Chinese tourists.

Kvale (2007) suggest the interview questions to have both a thematic and dynamic dimension. As any interview question should thematically contribute to producing knowledge and dynamically to promote a good interaction between the participants in the interview situation (p. 58). Thereby the interview guide will have two layers of both research and interview questions. The research questions are developed based on the overall research questions for the thesis as well as ideas and thoughts from the theoretical framework and the literature review. One research question can lead to several interview questions and thus approaching a topic from several angles and gaining rich information. At the same time one interview questions might answer several research questions. As research questions are usually formulated in a theoretical language, the interview questions should be clear, understandable and expressed in an everyday language (Kvale, 2007, p. 58). The research questions behind the interview question are formulated with different purposes. The purpose of the

interviews is to understand the general perspectives of Chinese outbound tourism to Denmark from the interviewee's perspective and how relevant this segment of tourist is for the organisation or company. Further the interviews should provide knowledge about strategies taken by the organisation or the company towards attracting Chinese tourists including whether they cooperate with other DMO's, organisations or companies. With the purpose of characterizing the Chinese tourist in Vejle municipality, the interviewee will be asked to describe the typical Chinese tourist visiting along with providing knowledge about the challenges and opportunities within this segment. Additionally, the interviews should provide insight in the destination attributes of Vejle municipality and lastly insights on the future potential of the destination and the Chinese tourists.

After the research questions are formulated, the interview question can be created. When writing the interview questions, I will pay attention to asking open-ended questions in order to get the most insightful answers. Even though I have some pre-existing knowledge, it is important not to be leading the interviewee to answer in a certain directing. By asking open-ended questions, it allows the interviewee to speak their point of view, which makes it possible to get useful and detailed answers. Further, I must be flexible and follow the direction the interviewee takes the interview. The research questions behind the interview guide can be found in appendix 1 and the final interview guide can be found in appendix 2.

Interview setup

Qualitative interviews often take place face-to-face, which is preferred. However due to current governmental restrictions; the interview will be conducted from a distance through telephone or Skype. The interviews differed in length and lasted from 20 minutes to over one hour. There are some differences in conducting interviews face-to-face compared to over the telephone. Some of the advantages of face-to-face are that the researcher can observe the body language of the interviewee and the interviews often last longer. However, when conducting interview by telephone it is more effective to ask sensitive questions and it is less time consuming and costly (Bryman, 2012, p. 488).

According to Kvale (2007) interviews should always start with a briefing and be followed up by a debriefing in the end (p. 56). All of the respondents were contacted prior to the interview in order to set up an appointment. The respondents were contacted either through e-mail or by telephone, in which a short version of the purpose of the thesis and interview was presented. Additionally, each interview will begin with a short introduction and briefing of the interviewee. The briefing will explain the purpose of the thesis in details along with some formalities. In reference to the

formalities of conducting an interview, the interviewee is asked to accept the recoding and transcription of the interview for the purpose of this thesis. Further, the interviewee will be asked whether they want to be anonymous. The respondents will each be given a synonym to secure anonymity. At the end of the interview, the interviewee will be debriefed by formally ending the interview and thus giving the interviewee a chance to add additional information. Further, they will be asked if they can be contacted for additional questions. See appendix 2 for the briefing and table 2 and 3 for the interview setup of each interview.

The interviews will be conducted in Danish, as this is the native language of both the researcher and all the interviewees. When statements are used in the analysis, these will be translated to English. Thus there is a risk that meanings can be lost in the translations. All of the interview will all be recorded and transcribed to ease the upcoming process of analysing.

2.4.1.4 Transcription of interview

In order to process the data from the interviews, the audio-recordings will be transcribed. According to Bryman (2012), there are both advantages and disadvantages when transcribing interviews (p. 482). The main advantage is knowledge creations, as it refreshes the researcher's memory and provides a deeper understanding of statements, as the researcher thoroughly and repeatedly investigates them. A disadvantage of transcribing is mainly that it is a very time-consuming process and that some interviewees might see the recording as off-putting (Bryman, 2012, p. 482). A way to avoid those disadvantages is to plan ahead and to let the interviewees decide whether they want to be recorded or not.

In the interview situation it is common to experience interviewees making verbal mistakes, fragments of sentences, false starts or interruptions and overlaps. When transcribing the interview, the research must conduct meaning from these verbal mistakes and other happenings. This means that the researchers must listen repeatedly to the recordings in order to produce a correct transcription useful for further analysis (Bernard, 2006). Further, if the interviews were conducted face-to-face, a facial expression or a nod could indicate that the researcher is for example listening, acknowledging the interviewee or agreeing to the statements presented. However, as the interviews are conducted at a distance, it was not possible to observe or show any type of body language, meaning that the audio-recordings includes many acknowledging words or sounds such as "yes" and "mmh". Such words will be left out in the transcriptions, as they are often interrupting or happening in the mid if a statement by the interviewee. Each sentence in the transcription will be

marked with a letter, referring to who is making the statement as well as time-stamps and line numbers, in order to prepare for analysis. See the table 4 below for codes used in the transcriptions. The full interview transcriptions can be found in appendix 3.

Code	Description
R	Researcher
I	Interviewee
unclear	Word or sentence, which is not understandable
(xxx)	Mispronunciation – what is meant according to the understanding of the researcher
00:00	Time-stamp referring to the exact minutes and seconds in the recording
l. x-x	Reference to specific lines in the transcript

Table 4: Transcription codes

2.4.2 Data analysis

The above section has described how the respondents were sampled and a description of the six respondents and further how the primary data is gathered. This section will describe different approaches of analysing data collected from interviews and the chosen method of data analysis will be presented.

When analysing data from a transcription, the researcher can either focus on meaning or on language (Kvale, 2007, p. 103). This thesis will analyse the interviews focusing on meaning, as the aim is to gain personal insights and views of the interviewees, which is more concerned with how they make sense of the world and not how they express it linguistically. When analysing interviews focusing on meaning, Kvale (2007) suggests different approaches when analysing: meaning coding, meaning condensation and meaning interpretation (p. 104). Coding or categorization involves labelling and categorizing text segments and constantly revise and compare these. With meaning condensation, the researcher reduces statements into shorter formulations. For both coding and condensation, it is important to obtain rich and detailed statements from the interviewee; however these approaches can quickly become very subjective. Coding involves many decisions by the researcher, thus it works well as an analytical tool when researchers are developing theories. In

condensation the researcher is condensing meaning from subject's viewpoint as it is understood by the researcher. As a contrast to the approaches of text reduction techniques of coding and condensation, meaning interpretations often lead to expanding the text. When interpreting meaning, the researcher goes beyond what is said directly to deeply and critically interpreting the meaning. In order to do this, the researcher must ask critical, interpretative questions during the interview (Kvale, 2007, pp. 104-109).

As I wish to interpret and understand the viewpoints and meanings expressed by the interviewees, I will utilize the technique of text reduction through the two approaches of meaning condensation and coding. By meaning condensing, the data becomes more manageable and by labelling the units with codes, it becomes easier to identify categories and to identify either similarities or difference across the collected data. These approaches will also allow the theoretical framework to be incorporated when analysing. As Kvale's (2007) description of meaning condensation is very basic, I will supplement it by using the descriptions of the approach by Erlingsson & Brysiewicz (2017) and Hsieh & Shannon (2005). The goal and the main strength of this approach are to either validate or extend the theoretical framework (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1281). The approaches consist of developing condensed meaning units, labelling these with a code and further divide them into categories determined by the theoretical framework.

First, the transcription is read through several times with the research aim and questions in mind and the interview is divided into meaning units. The researcher determines the meanings expressed by the interviewee in the meaning units by shortening the text while keeping the core meaning intact (Kvale, 2007, p. 107; Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017, p. 96). Following this, the next step is to label the meaning units with codes that describe the condensed meaning units and these codes will ease the process of identifying connections between meaning units (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017, p. 96). Then the meaning units and codes are incorporated in the purpose of the study, by incorporating the theories as categories or themes (Kvale, 2007, p. 107). Using the existing framework, the researchers will identify key concepts as initial coding categories and themes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1281). For this thesis the predetermined themes will be either push or pull factors, and the categories will be divided under each theme. If some meaning units or codes cannot be categorized, they will be given a new category or theme (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1281). Finally, the framework will be used to guide the analysis and discussion of findings as this will be divided based on the theme of either push or pull and arranged according the categories. The

findings from the data analysis will either offer support or non-supporting evidence for the framework. Newly identified categories will be either contradictory or further refined, extend, and enrich the theoretical framework (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1281). In appendix 4, the full list meaning units and meaning condensation hereof can be found, along with codes, categories and themes.

2.4.3 Secondary data

Secondary data is collected to in order to supplement the primary data, as the primary data provide the perspective of the actors in the tourism industry in the municipality of Vejle. However it does not include primary data or perspectives of Chinese tourists themselves. The secondary data will consist of a report on Chinese tourism in Denmark by VisitDenmark and studies on Chinese FITs by tourism researchers published in tourism journals. This will supplement the primary data and provide further insight and knowledge about the FITs in terms of their travel motivations. The primary and secondary will supplement each other when identifying push factors and travel motivations. The secondary data is presented in the following section of “contextual data”.

3. Literature review

In the following section, the existing literature on the topic of Chinese outbound tourism will be investigated. The aim of the literature review is to provide an overview of the literature both in terms of themes and tendencies, which can lead to identifying knowledge gaps in the existing literature worth exploring further.

Travelling outside of China is relatively new for the Chinese citizens. Zhang & Heung (2002) describes the development of Chinese outbound tourism in terms of the ripple effect. Meaning a drop in the water will generate expanding ripples, just as the tourism is expanding geographically (p. 8). The first ripple consists of the growth in inbound tourism within China. The second ripple is when the Chinese government allowed travels to Hong Kong and Macau for visiting relatives beginning in 1983. The third ripple is outbound tourism to Asian countries beginning in 1990 and the fourth ripple is travel to New Zealand and Australia in 1999 marking the interest in travels outside of Asia (Zhang & Heung, 2002, p. 8). When the article was written in 2002 the Chinese had just begun to travel outside of Asia to New Zealand and Australia, so outbound tourism to Europe and the United States of America (The US) was not included. It can be discussed whether the West such as the US and Europe is the fifth ripple. According to Zhang & Heung (2002) the Chinese tourist need two things in order to travel abroad: a suitable income and an official permission. The middleclass in China is growing, providing more citizens with the financial ability to travel. Thereby, it is the government's official permission which determines whether they can travel internationally (Zhang & Heung, 2002, p. 8). In 2004 almost all EU member countries gained approval from the Chinese government when being provided the Approved Destination Status (ADS) and the latest update from 2014, states a total of 146 countries with ADS (Liu & McKercher, 2016, p. 603).

Following the development in growth of the Chinese outbound tourism, the literature on this topic has grown from scarce and sketchy in the 1990's (Cai et al., 1999) to numerous in the last two decades. The extensive literature on the subject has been reviewed by many scholars. The most recent literature reviews include Keating, Huang, Kriz & Heung (2015), who have investigated the evolution of the literature on Chinese outbound tourism in the period from 1983-2012 by reviewing 148 articles published in the three leading tourism journals. Second is Tse's (2015) systematic literature review covering 80 research papers in 21 English academic tourism journals from 1995 to 2013. Lastly, Jørgensen, Law & King (2016), who reviewed 106 peer-reviewed studies on China

outbound tourism published between 2003 and 2015. These three reviews will be discussed following a three-stage historical overview provided by Keating et al. (2015).

The review by Keating et al. (2015) divides the literature into a three-stage historical overview using an evolutionary metaphor: crawling out (1983-1992), scurrying about (1993-2002) and walking erect (2003-2012) (Keating et al., 2015, p. 2). By dividing the literature into three historical stages, it provides a good overview for the reader, but it also shows how the social political changes in China have influenced the literature.

In the first stage “Crawling out” (1983–1992), the scholarly interest in Chinese outbound tourism emerges. In this period China experiences massive socio-political changes, when the country in 1978 decides to open up (Keating et al., 2015, pp. 2-3).

In the following stage of “Scurrying about” (1993–2002), the interest in Chinese outbound tourism is increasing. The literature in the first half of the period is primarily describing the potential of the market and in the second half there is a shift towards developing an understanding of the needs and motivations of the outbound tourists. In the end of the period the first destination specific literature appears, focusing mainly on Hong Kong, just in line with the approval to travel to neighbouring Asian destinations in 1990. Tse (2015) also observes a pattern in the destinations of focus, as it has expanded from first Asian countries to Australia and now the US and Europe, which mirrors the development in approved destination status. Further, Tse (2015) also detect the theme of profiling travel motivation and behaviours of the tourists to visit specific destinations and further argue that tourist related studies complements the destination related when trying to understand the Chinese outbound tourism (Tse, 2015, p. 8).

The last stage “Walking erect” (2003–2012) consist of an increased popularity in the topic of Chinese outbound tourism. The majority of the articles aim at providing a better understanding of the behaviour of the tourists, tourism economics and forecasting demand as well as the opportunities for destination management organisations (DMOs). Jørgensen (2016) agrees with popularity of the theme of tourism behaviour as the authors detect the main themes in the literature to be motivations, attitudes, image/expectations, satisfaction, decision-making, behaviours and culture (p. 883). Additionally, Tse (2015) detect a relatively new approach in research focusing on the macro policy and government issues in relation to tourism. According to Tse (2015) Chinese outbound tourism is so unique that conventional destination-related and tourist-related research

cannot sufficiently explain the phenomenon, which is why the source market related issues must be taking into consideration (p. 11).

Following the historical overview based on a systematic review, the authors observe that the existing literature can be categorized as is either very descriptive or to be applying already existing tourism theories without regard to the efficiency or limitations of these (Keating, 2015, p. 8). In line with Keating et al.'s (2015) observation of the literature reusing existing tourism theories, Tse (2015) and Jørgensen (2016) both agree that there is a lot of similarity across the literature along with a reuse of similar methods (dominantly quantitative 70%) and theories in the field which only provides more replication and less innovation (Jørgensen et al., 2016, p. 884).

To sum up, in literature on Chinese outbound tourism, the destinations in focus are following the pattern of the ADS. The literature often uses similar methods and theories and the main themes are destination or tourist related, with a new research stream appearing to be source market related. Now this review will investigate the two main themes closer, to investigate both how the Chinese outbound tourist travel and where they travel to.

3.1 How does the Chinese tourist travel?

Jørgensen et al. (2016) argues that studies on destinations outside of Asia, show a shift in the behaviour of the Chinese tourist – from group package traveller to a more adventurous, individual and young traveller (pp. 882-883). Following this shift in behaviour of the Chinese tourists outside of Asia, both Tse (2011) and Jørgensen (2016) observe that the Chinese tourist is exposed to a type of stereotyping as many researchers sees the Chinese tourist as one big homogeneous group. Jørgensen et al. (2016) and Tse (2011) both observe the problem of the perceived Chinese tourist in singular, where the studies approach the Chinese tourists as one homogeneous group. Tse (2011) states that the researchers in tourism tend to take a management orientation in which they focus on creating a “recipe for success” by segmenting and describing the needs and motives of the tourists collectively as one group. The researchers suggest that future research should emphasize a more nuanced perspective by recognizing the Chinese tourist as many subgroups with many distinctions rather than on large group (Jørgensen et al., 2016, pp. 884-885). In a more recent article by Jørgensen et al. (2018) states that importance is put on factors of motivations and culture which provide a simplistic view of the behaviour of the Chinese tourist. The Chinese tourist is thus in the

literature characterized as: “*young/middle aged, urban, (upper) middle class, group traveller, with language difficulties and a need for familiar food, who travels to well-known destinations in near markets, Europe and the USA*” (Jørgensen et al., 2018, p. 489).

As the Chinese outbound tourism keeps growing in numbers and developing, so will the tourist also personally develop. Arlt (2013) provided a broad distinction between China outbound tourists by describing a series of “waves”. Arlt argues that the second wave of Chinese outbound tourism is underway. The second wave of tourists is travellers with higher education, money and previous travel experience. These self-organizing tourists, who are rich in money, but poor in time, look for authentic experiences rather than monuments. Arlt (2013) emphasize that DMO’s and tourism must make their product attractive and prestigious to the new Chinese tourists in order to allow a niche market and notes that a niche in China results in very big numbers (Arlt, 2013, p. 113). This second wave was further described more recently by Arlt in 2016, where he also introduced the third wave of Chinese outbound tourists. According to Arlt (2016) the third wave of Chinese outbound travellers will widening the age gap of the travellers to include both children and retirees. Further, the author states that DMO’s and service providers have to invest time and effort into both understanding and preparing for the needs and expectations of the different segments of the outbound tourists. Additionally endorsements by Chinese celebrities and travel bloggers as well as Chinese social media play an important part in hyping a destination. At the same time the new wave of tourists require Wi-Fi connection both to gain knowledge about the destination and to be able to share with their peers (Arlt, 2016, p. 16).

There are many reasons for the large amount of studies generalizing the Chinese tourists. Some practical explanations of this could be that group travellers are easily accessible through tour operators or that most studies are quantitative and are generalizing the findings, as described above. This topic has also got the attention of several researchers. King and Tang (2009) have argued that the current theories do not accommodate the differences in China’s large population living in provinces ranging from high to less developed (p. 31).

The above shows that the literature is often portraying an outdated version of the Chinese tourist, which does not cohere with the development in reality. This leaves a gap in the literature of up-to-date literature on the Chinese tourist in this century.

As mentioned, the literature is often generalizing the Chinese tourist into one homogeneous group, mostly based on data collected on package group travellers. More recently, researchers have been focusing on the second wave of Chinese tourists, as described by Arlt (2013). These independent travellers, who are more experienced, higher educated and seek authentic experiences. The large segment of independent travellers of FITs consist of multiple sub-segments such as backpackers (Hyde & Lawson, 2003, p. 15; Chen et al., 2014), students abroad (King & Gardiner, 2013) and often young people (Bui et al. 2013; Prayag et al., 2015). This means that researchers have focused on the large segment of independent travellers as well as on the sub-segments. Just as in the literature collected above, the literature on independent travellers have been conducted on travellers in general and potential travellers as well as travellers in certain destination, where again there is a lack of studies related to Europe.

3.2 Where does the Chinese tourist travel?

In terms of which destinations are being researched in relation to Chinese outbound tourism, there is a dominance of Asian destinations in the literature (Tse, 2015; Jørgensen et al., 2016). Only recently studies on destinations in Europe and the US have appeared according to Tse (2015), and Jørgensen et al. (2016) only detect 6 out of 106 papers focus specifically on travellers to Europe (Tse, 2015, p. 7; Jørgensen et al., 2016, pp. 882-883). This results in an overweight of studies focusing on Hong Kong, next on Asian countries, thirdly on Australia and hereafter Europe and the US (Tse, 2015, p. 3). The authors argue that the research across destinations is basic and descriptive resulting in quite similar findings across destinations. Additionally, Tse (2015) argues that the findings related to a specific destination may quickly change over time as the market matures and thereby making the studies limited as they are being very circumstantial and time specific (p. 7). Jørgensen et al. (2016) and Tse (2015) both conclude that very few studies take the cultural, political and legislative dimensions of Chinese outbound tourism into consideration.

An article by Andreu, Claver & Quer (2014) analyses which destination attributes in European countries that influence the number of tourists received. They find the main attributes to be cultural distance, heritage wealth, the existence of a large Chinese community and the availability of flight connections. Further, they analyse the travel motivation of Chinese outbound tourists in Europe to be gaining first-hand experiences, involvement in local customs or visiting historic and natural heritage sites, but only if a good flight connection is available. A report by The Nordics (2018) argue that more Chinese tourists are looking towards the lesser travelled European destinations in

Northern Europe, Central and Eastern Europe, and with the increasingly aggressive destination marketing efforts made by Nordic DMOs, this shift is further enhanced (The Nordics, 2018, p. 26). Following this trend Jørgensen et al. (2018) have observed differences between Chinese outbound tourists to first and second tier¹ destinations in Europe. Based on 52 in-depth interviews with suppliers, intermediaries and tourists, the opportunities that Chinese tourists offer to second tier destinations in Scandinavia was investigated (p. 488). The study finds that Chinese tourists travelling to second-tier destinations are more mature compared to those first time travellers to first-tier destinations. This result in great potential for the second-tier destinations, as they avoid the negative side effects of inexperienced Chinese tourists and the second-tier destination can better cater to the developing needs and preferences in the experienced tourists. The preferences were found to be more special experiences, safety, nature and clean environments. The paper highlights advantages offered by the Chinese tourists to second-tier destination besides numbers and spending. Such as the Chinese tourists are more open-minded, as they have little knowledge of Scandinavia. Additionally, the Chinese tourists visit outside the regular tourist-season and their consumptions patterns differ too where hotels focusing on business customers could also sell to Chinese leisure tourists (Jørgensen et al., 2018, pp. 494-495).

The above show that there is a lack of studies of Chinese outbound tourism in Europe and the US. The development in Chinese outbound tourism and preferred destinations is changing faster than the literature can follow. Additionally, the basic and descriptive retrospective data can quickly become irrelevant during this rapid development. As the Chinese outbound tourists gain more travel experience, they will seek to new destinations, which could be second-tier destinations in Europe, as argued by Jørgensen et al. (2018).

3.3 Becoming China ready

With the rising number of Chinese outbound tourists, some researchers have discussed whether the destination is capable of receiving tourists who are culturally different and with other needs and preferences, which is also referred to as the term of becoming “China ready” (Li et al., 2011; Guo et al., 2007; Jørgensen & Ren, 2015). Li et al. (2011) argue that because of limited experiences with

¹ Cities in China are often referred to in a city-tier classification ranked by the cities GDP, political administration and population. Tier 1 cities hold a GDP of over USD300 billion and a population of more than 15 million people. Tier 2 cities hold a GDP of USD68-299 billion and a population of 3-15 million people (China Briefing, 2019).

Chinese customers, the conventional Western marketing may not apply to the Chinese tourists (p. 742). Additionally, Guo et al. (2007) argues that the rapid development in numbers of Chinese outbound tourists has implications for the host countries, which will have to train their cross-cultural understanding and Chinese language abilities, among others (p. 330).

In regards to Europe, Li (2016) states that the current situation is not perfect, however it has a lot of potential. Li (2016) argues that currently European destinations are expecting the Chinese tourists to learn to behave as Western tourists, which is a not a long-term commitment. Li (2016) suggest the European destination to cater products and services to suit the Chinese tourists' need instead (Li, p. 165). The same type of behaviour is observed in Scandinavia. An article by Jørgensen and Ren (2015) argues that Scandinavian tourism practitioners, such as hotels, flight crew and attractions, take a practice oriented stance and is treating the Chinese tourist as any other customer (p. 19). Contrarily, the article finds that Scandinavian DMO's are characterizing the Chinese tourist as radically different from Western tourists and much emphasis is put on the cultural difference and nationality (Jørgensen & Ren, 2015, p. 20). However, the article further argues that tourism practitioners may lack necessary understanding in order to engage with the tourists in a culturally sensitive way and by ignoring the differences they might miss out on growth opportunities (p. 31). Finally, the article proposes an approach between the two configurations. Suggesting DMO's and practitioners see beyond perceived differences and focus developing products suited to the Chinese market based local qualities and characteristics (Jørgensen & Ren, 2015, p. 32).

Summary of the literature review

The above literature review on Chinese outbound tourism shows the tourist destination being studied are following the pattern of the ADS, meaning that most studies are focusing on Asian tourist destinations and less on Western destination such the United states and Europe. Further, when the Chinese tourist is being studied in terms of behaviour and motivations, the Chinese tourist is being portrayed to be a group package tourist. This is an outdated version of the Chinese tourists, as a tendency for more individual travellers is appearing. Thereby there is a lack of up-to-date literature on the Chinese tourists. As noted by Arlt (2013; 2016), the Chinese tourist is gaining experience and developing travelling motives and behaviour resulting in a second and third wave of tourists who are described as self-organizing, wealthier, higher educated and are looking for authentic experiences. Further Arlt (2013) argues that it requires effort to understand and prepare for the needs and expectations of the new waves of outbound tourists. Jørgensen et al. (2018)

argued that these new waves of tourist will seek to new destinations such as second-tier destinations in Europe. Additionally, the literature review shows a need for adaption in order to cater to the needs and preferences of the Chinese tourists when visiting Western countries. As the literature on the FITs is relatively new, meaning that there is a lack of studies on FITs and just like the literature on the Chinese outbound tourists, there is a lack of studies related to Europe. Lastly, the review shows a tendency for a certain mentality in Europe of treating Chinese tourists as regular customers, even though the literature suggest that adaption is needed in order to fully profit from the Chinese tourists visiting.

The next section will describe some reports on the Chinese tourists in Denmark along with studies on the Chinese FITs and the segments there are divided into. These report and studies will focus on the gaps in the literature along with focusing on the theme of FITs.

4. Contextual data

This contextual data is found on basis of the gaps and tendencies in the literature review. This section introduces secondary data and knowledge, which will later supplement the primary data when analysing the push factors. This secondary data should be relevant for the thesis and the research questions and has been chosen based on their relevance. Further, the data should contribute with knowledge about the Chinese tourists in Denmark and the FITs described in terms of characterization and travel motives. As the literature review shows, there is a general lack of relevant studies on the Chinese FITs in Europe and even less on the FITs in Denmark.

4.1 Denmark as a destination for Chinese tourists

VisitDenmark characterizes the Chinese tourists as living in tier 1 or tier 2 cities or Hong Kong, with a medium to high household income and educational level. VisitDenmark defines two types of travel companions of couples or families. The age of the couples range from 25-65 years old and the families are parents from 25-45 years old with children of 6-18 years old. Both types of travel formations prefer to stay at hotels and are visiting Denmark as a part of a tour of the Nordic countries. Further, the tourists visiting Denmark are divided into the groups of new travellers and experienced travellers (VisitDenmark, 2019a, p. 5). The report “Markedsprofil Kina” by VisitDenmark (2019a) analyses the general Chinese tourist in Denmark. However, it should be noted that a majority of the Chinese travellers in the report prefer to travel individually and visit several destinations during a trip. This shows by the fact that more than half of the sample group are independent tourists or are experienced travellers, as 63% of the Chinese travellers who have already visited Denmark prefer individual rather than group travel (VisitDenmark, 2019a, p. 31). Because over 60% of the respondents prefer individual travel, this report will be used to describe the FITs.

According to VisitDenmark (2019a), the experienced travellers visit new and trendy destination for 7-10 days, they will do homework online, but book through a travel agency or tour operator and focus on authentic and local experiences (p. 5). VisitDenmark (2019a) argue that several factors make Denmark unique as a destination for Chinese tourists. These are factors of a happy, eco-friendly and healthy country, “liveable” cities with low pollution, bike tourism, royal experiences, Hans Christian Andersen, shopping and tax refund, interesting history and culture (VisitDenmark, 2019a, p. 5). This coincides with the association made by the Chinese tourists, who associates Denmark with hospitable and friendly people, unique nature, peace and historical and archaeological sites, eco-conscious and H.C. Andersen's fairy tales (VisitDenmark, 2019a, pp. 33-

34). When visiting Denmark, the Chinese tourists like to explore foreign cultures and ways of living by getting acquainted with the local culture and experience the local traditions. Other important motives are learning new things and trying different foods like local food specialties (VisitDenmark, 2019a, pp. 30 & 35). Besides experiencing different cultures, resting and relaxing as well as disconnecting are also a high motivational factor. Among Chinese who are interested in Denmark, but have yet to visit, six out of ten or more travel motives mention experiencing different cultures, seeing the landscape, being close to nature and experiencing something new (VisitDenmark, 2019a, p. 29).

4.2 The FITs and their travel motives

The FITs will be described in general with the use of a study by Xiang (2013). The respondents are mainly male with at least a bachelor's degree, 25 to 44 years old and classified as middle class, living in cities with high living cost, such as Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou and prefer to travel to Europe, the US and other diversified destination (pp. 136-137). Xiang (2013) characterizes the independent Chinese outbound tourists and compares them to traditional outbound tourists

According to Xiang (2013) there are two aspects of why tourists choose independent travel. One aspect is that many independent travellers see this as the only acceptable way of travelling and value both the flexibility and uncertainty it provides. Another aspect is found when comparing package group tours to independent tours. It is widely agreed that tourists lose control and decision making when travelling on a package group tour. However, when travelling with groups there are advantages of visa application and cost. Travelling independently will provide the tourists with problem-solving skills and will improve their social prestige and cultural capital. Yet, independent travellers require a lot of preparation, potential safety risks and higher travel expenses than a group tour (pp. 138-139).

In the study by Xiang (2013) the main motivator of travelling for independent travellers is sightseeing with 71.8 % and leisure/holiday 11%. Compared to Chinese outbound tourists as a whole, sightseeing is a motivator for 51% and leisure/holiday 38% (pp. 137-138). Further, the motivation for tourists making outbound independent travels can be characterized in four aspects (Xiang, 2013, p. 138): The first one is the exotic cultural image of destinations that is shaped by literature, media and online travelogues. For example, they might have read the fairy tales of Hans Christian Andersen and want to experience his house in Odense, Denmark. Such cultural

imagination of destinations forms tourists' expectations of destinations and leads to a motivation to personally experience culture beyond words. The second aspect is disappointment with domestic destinations that have damaged the natural environment, and an atmosphere being over-commercialized. The third is related to the former travel experience of the independent travellers. One third of independent outbound tourists consider themselves as sophisticated tourists, having visited more than 15 Chinese destinations. A foreign destination seems a natural next step for their travel career. They are looking for achievement, mental stimulation, self-development, growth and even self-actualization through independent outbound travel, which is widely observed from their travelogues. The last motivator is the new convenience of outbound tourism as a direct result of governmental deregulation and instructions and advice offered by travelogues, which boost a formerly depressed demand.

The key behavioural difference between independent and group travellers is the decision-making process. Independent travellers do a lot of homework before travelling they will study the destination in up to several months in advance. By doing homework it means that the tourists gain control, but lose some of the flexibility. For group tourists they will settle on a destination first and then book the transportation. Whereas it is the transportation budget that decides the destination for independent tourists (Xiang, 2013, p. 139-141). The biggest cost for the independent tourists is transportation and next the accommodation (p. 145). Xiang (2013) also argues for differences in terms of length of the holiday and destination. The duration of a package group tour, which is usually one or two weeks, is much less than that of an independent tour and they stay twice as long in each destination. The independent visit multiple destinations in one trip and they visit more diverse places, but they do not go off the beaten track. However during the visit they are explorers and go to unplanned places mainly to avoid other tourists but also because they want to interact with the locals. (p. 144)

4.2.1 Segments within the FITs

Many divide the independent tourists into sub-segments based on income and travel expenses. Xiang (2013) argued for three sub-segments of frugal, hedonistic and mixed based on consumer patterns.

The segment of frugal FITs can in short be characterized as travellers who spend less and visit more. According to Xiang (2013) this frugal segment of the FITs tends to be very cheap and stay in hostels. They prefer to eat at the hostel and walk instead of public transportation. Additionally, they

will visit high-level attractions, but are interested in sites with free entrance are interested and they do not shop much in terms of e.g. souvenirs or luxury items (Xiang, 2013, p. 145). Contrary is the hedonistic segment. This hedonistic segment is characterized as big spenders who like to eat at high-end or even Michelins restaurants. They are staying at luxury hotels or resorts and fly with airlines known for their services level. Further, they like to shop e.g. souvenirs and tax-free luxury items (Xiang, 2013, p. 145). The last category is a mix of the two former. They prefer budget airlines and public transport. They stay at budget hotels and medium-priced hotels are acceptable, but can indulge in a short stay in luxury hotels. At least once a day they enjoy a formal meal in a restaurant and they will shop souvenirs and tax-free goods. They are not price-conscious when it comes to visiting attractions (Xiang, 2013, p. 145-146). The above shows that there are differences in terms of purchasing transportation, accommodation and shopping between the frugal and hedonic, yet Xiang (2013) argues that their consumption pattern is similar, as the biggest travel expense will always be transportation and accommodation. The author thereby argues, that it does not matter to which category the independent tourists belong (Xiang, 2012, p. 146).

A report by The Nordics (2018) also notice several segments among the FIT's and focus on the high-spenders visiting the Nordics. The "High Spending FITs" are described as travellers who spend a considerably higher amount in a destination compared to the average of Chinese outbound travellers spending and are staying in longer in each destination (The Nordics, 2018, p. 11). These High Spending FITs are further profiled as interested in novelties with a preference for local services and local special goods. Further, shopping is not included as a required element of spending, however, they are willing to pay extra on travel services (The Nordics, 2018, p. 12).

Even though Xiang (2013) argues that most FITs belongs to the mixed segment and that a categorization does not matter, the rise in studies on younger FITs states otherwise and has been in focus in the recent literature, in which some different motives appear. Below are two examples of studies on the young Chinese travellers to Europe.

4.2.2 The young FITs

Prayag et al. (2015) studies potential, young Chinese travellers to Western Europe. Based on 403 questionnaires the article segments the respondents based on motives and service expectations. The sample of respondents is mainly female, single and less than 26 years old with a university/college degree and a full-time job and 77% of them were first-time visitors to Western Europe. (p. 730). Additionally, Chen et al. (2014) studies the Chinese backpacker segment based on a web-based

content analysis, in-depth interviews and 416 questionnaires. The respondents were mainly male and between 21 to 35 years old. Half of the respondents had an undergraduate education and one third was working full time (p. 360).

Prayag et al. (2015) finds that most young FITs organize their trip with pre-planned arrangements for accommodation and some tourism activities and travel mainly for holiday or recreational purpose. The findings of the study are that the young Chinese travellers want more flexibility in their travel and are interested in flexible transport options like rail travel pass and hop on and off bus. They travel with significant others such as family or friends and emphasizes on shopping. Some important motives are self-fulfilment, socialization and relaxation. However, socialization is no longer physical, as virtual online communities are important. Virtual socialization with other travellers can become more important than socializing at the destination. The young Chinese traveller expects their accommodation to be part of a recognized international chain with a good reputation. They prefer hotels with day tour options and accommodation close to public transport and attractions. At the accommodation they want 24-hour access to the reception, facilities in the room such as kettle for hot water, linen and towels and internet. Further, they prefer multi-bed configurations (3-5 beds) to fit the travelling group of friends or family. It is argued that language is a barrier and they expect Chinese speaking staff at accommodation and destination information available in Chinese (Prayag et al., 2015, pp. 737-740).

Chen et al. (2014) identify four motivation factors driving backpacker travels: social interaction, self-actualization, destination experience and escape & relaxation (pp. 361-362). The first motivation factor is social interaction. This means that backpackers like to be part of social interactions, such as communicating and learning from others and making new friends. The second motivational factor is self-actualization, which is about knowing, understanding and improving one self. The third motivation is destination experience and includes understanding the destination's culture, history and society, communicating with and experiencing the locals and their lifestyle. The last motivation is escape and relaxation which is about escaping daily life to find relaxation physically and mentally (Chen et al., 2014, pp. 361-362).

5. Theories

This section will discuss the theories related to tourism research and discuss their relevance for this thesis. The theories chosen will be used to analyse the data and thus, the theories should be relevant to the research questions. This section will introduce relevant theories when studying the both the tourism host and source market and travel motivations.

Understanding and predicting consumer behaviour and travel motivations have been studied by many tourism researchers in order to answer the question of “Why do people travel? (Crompton 1979; Pearce, 1988) Which might seem like a basic question, but it has many layers to it. The question relates to the dynamic process based on a basic need and desire evolving to forming a motivation to visit a certain destination or to take part in a tourism activity (Ballantyne et al., 2017, p. 26) The dynamic process is produced from a tension within an individual caused by an unsatisfied need. The individual will aim at satisfying the need in order to relieve the tension, by for example taking part in a tourism activity (Chen et al, 2014, p. 355).

The process of purchasing a good or the one of travelling will often start long before the purchase or the time of departure and this process can be referred to as the decision-making process. According to Ballantyne et al. (2017), the starting point of the decision making process is often the consumer recognizing a need. Once a need is recognized, the consumer will engage in the tension relieving or problem solving stage. A need can be triggered by many stimuli, both internal and external (Ballantyne et al., 2017, p. 26). Abraham Maslow (1943) introduced his theory “Hierarchy of Needs”. The triangle has categorized five levels of human needs, ranked from the bottom up, after importance. When one need is satisfied, a person will become motivated to fulfil a new and higher need, thereby the main motivator is the lowest unsatisfied need. Maslow’s thereby created a fundamental understanding of human behaviour and many theories are based on the ideas of Maslow (Maslow, 1945, p. 395).

After the need is recognized, a motivation for fulfilling this need arises. A popular definition of travel motivation is the definition of tourist motivation as “*the global integrating network of biological and cultural forces which gives value and direction to travel choices, behavior and experience*” (Pearce & Caltabiano, 1983 in Chetthamrongchai, 2017, p. 2).

5.1 Push and pull factors

Many researchers distinguish tourism motivations between push factors, which are individual motives “pushing” the tourist to travel and pull factors, which are destination specific attributes and marketing which is “pulling” the tourist to visit a certain destination (Dann, 1977; Crompton 1979; Iso-Ahola & Allen, 1982). In 1977 Dann argued that the motivation for travelling is either the concept of anomie or ego-enhancement. The first concept is tourists who travel to escape daily routines and the other concept is tourists who want to enhance their knowledge about the world. Thereby Dann (1977) argued that travelling is dependent on the tourist’s internal motivations, or push factors, rather than destination attributes. Contrarily Crompton (1979) presented his push-pull framework which argues that the destination attributes, pull factors, are equally as important as the push factors. Crompton identifies two types of motives among pleasure vacationers of socio-psychological and cultural each with underlying factor of motivation (Crompton, 1979). Following these two frameworks, Iso-Ahola & Allen (1982) presented another framework focusing on the push factors. The escaping-seeking dichotomy divides internal motivation into either interpersonal of making new friends or interpersonal of seeking new things. Many studies follow this push-pull approach, making the push-pull framework a widely accepted approach for studying tourism motivations. Yet, some criticism of the framework has appeared. The framework does not explain the complex tourism motivation as a whole as it can be different in every context. Further, motivations change over time and it thereby fails to capture the dynamic (Chen, Mak & McKercher, 2011) As the push and pull theories are concerned with answering the question of why people travel, they do not consider why some people do not travel.

The push and pull framework presented by Crompton (1979) will be used as the overall framework for this thesis, as it focuses both on the host and source site of tourism and argues that these are equally important. Crompton (1979) found that the value, benefits and satisfactions received from a vacation were not related to the particular destination's attributes. Rather the satisfactions were related to social and psychological factors unique to the traveller (Crompton, 1979, pp. 415-416). The cultural motives were on the other hand concerned with destination attributes and most travellers will explain their reason for travelling in terms of cultural motives (Crompton, 1979, p. 419. When applying this framework, I will focus on the two types of motives among pleasure vacationers of socio-psychological and cultural as identified by Crompton and the not the nine factors.

5.2 Travel motivations

As mentioned above the push and pull theories have raised criticism such as not being dynamic enough and not capturing the complex context of tourism. As I want to analyse the travel motivations of the Chinese FITs and hence my ontological stance, I need a theory that can identify travel motivations while acknowledges that motivation and human behaviour is dynamic and change over time.

Among others, Plog (2001), Pearce (1988) and Cohen (1973), developed theories incorporating the concepts of why some travel and others do not as well as the dynamics of motivations. Plog (2001) proposed a framework of different travel personalities. The model is based on individual's psychological characteristics and divides travellers into five different personality types. Plog (2001) argued that people who do not travel are non-adventurers. With Maslow's hierarchy of needs as a starting point, Pearce (1988) introduced the Travel Career Ladder showing how tourists' motivations change over time. The travel Career Ladder followed Maslow needs and was organized in a hierarchical order. The main finding of the theory is that people's motivation change in line with their travel experience. Further, the theory suggest that individuals possess a travel career, which is a pattern of travel motives that change over the span of life and when new travel experience is gained (Pearce & Lee, 2005, p. 227). The motivations are divided into five steps and people pursue higher goals/steps when they get more travel experience. This model has been criticized and as a result been modified into the Travel Career Pattern, which is not so hierarchical but rather dynamic (Pearce & Lee, 2005). Lastly, Cohen (1973) argues to dismiss the notion that travelling is about satisfying physical needs. In his Strangeness-Familiarity theory, it is argued that the authenticity of the destination is more important and that tourism is a social phenomenon. Cohen identifies four types of tourists: the "organized mass tourist," "individual mass tourist," "explorer," and "drifter" (Cohen, 1973).

This thesis will use the modified framework by Pearce & Lee (2005), the Travel Career Pattern (TCP), as the theory acknowledges travel motives as dynamic according to the traveller's level of travel experience.

5.2.1 Travel career pattern

As mentioned, the Travel Career Pattern (TCP) is a modification of the Travel Career Ladder. Especially the term ladder in the theory has drawn attention and been criticized of being too hierarchical and multileveled as other researchers interpreted it as an ascending of one step at a time (Ryan 1998; Kim et al. 1996). The new version is based on the travel career theory and proposes a travel career pattern. It is proposed that pleasure travellers will exhibit changing motivational patterns over their life stages and with travel experience thereby the modification of the travel career ladder theory answers to some of the critical challenges in developing a travel motivation theory (Pearce & Lee, 2005, p. 227).

The research by Pearce and Lee (2005) consisted of two phases and at the end a total of 14 motivational factors were found (p. 228). The TCP has been tested first on Australian and Western countries and later on Asian (Korea) and this proved a cross-cultural applicability of the theory (Pearce, 2005, p. 71). The results of the Korean study shows that the factors of escape/relax, novelty, kinship and self-actualisation are the core travel motivation for all respondents. However, the study shows a difference in important factors in connection to the level of travel experience. The overall results suggested that externally-oriented motives of host-site-involvement (e.g. experiencing different cultures) and nature-related motivation (e.g. being close to nature) were more important factors to the more experienced travellers. Whereas inner-directed motivation factors such as self-enhancement, romance, kinship (belonging), and autonomy had a higher priority for the less experienced ones (Pearce 2005, p. 78).

The theory suggests that travel motivations can be identified as a pattern and combinations of multiple motives that are influenced by previous travel experience and age. The TCP is further divided into three layers of a core, a middle layer and an outer layer. The core is the skeleton of travel motivations as it shows the most important and common motives. Surrounding the core is the moderately important travel motives that change according to the development of the travellers travel career. Below in figure 2 are the result of the Korean sample.

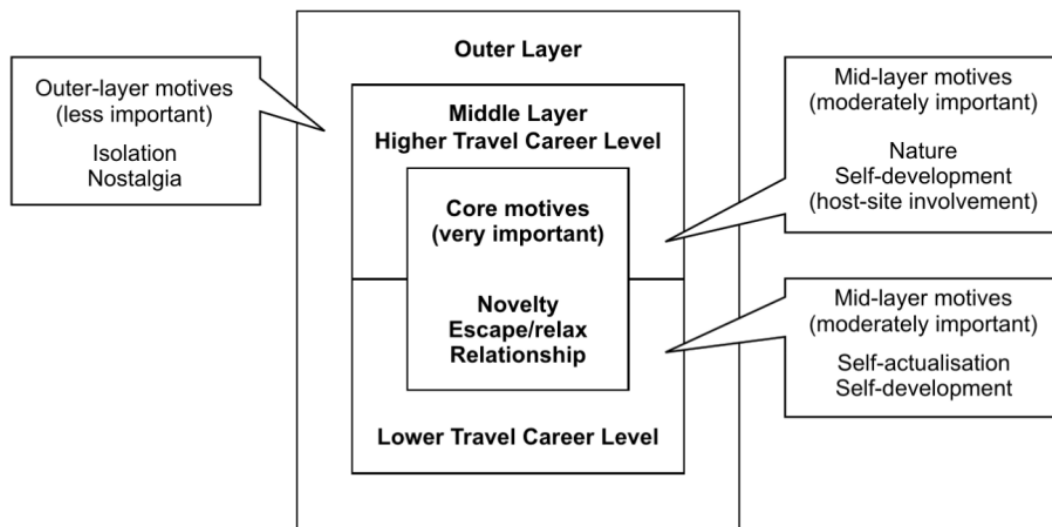


Figure 2: Travel Career Pattern (Pearce, 2005, p. 79).

It has been proposed that the TCL can be used as a blueprint to design motivational studies. Even Pearce, who introduced the theory, has used it as a blueprint first on Australian tourists (Pearce & Lee, 2005) and later Korean tourists (Pearce, 2005). For example, TCP has also been used as a tool for special markets such as eco-tourists and for theme park patrons (Blamey 1998; Pearce and Rutledge 1994). As the travel career pattern is a theory describing the behaviour of pleasure tourist, it caters to a large segment of tourists. In order to make it more specific and fitted to the independent travellers, the theory will be used as a blueprint. It will take the key concepts and findings from the travel career pattern of the three layers and a difference in motives depending of travel experience. The 14 found motives were very similar across cultures, however, I will use the 14 motives found in the Korean sample to modify the model for the independent tourists. The 14 motives are: *novelty*, *escape/relax*, *self-actualisation*, *nature*, *kinship*, *self-enhancement*, *romance*, *kinship (belonging)*, *autonomy*, *self-development (host-site)*, *nostalgia*, *stimulation*, *isolation* and *social status* (Pearce, 2005, p. 72). The full description of each of the 14 motives can be found in appendix 5.

6. Analysis

In this section, the analysed data from the interviews will be presented and discussed. The data from each interview was analysed through meaning condensation and labelled with codes. By comparing the different interviews and the codes hereof to find differences and similarities, categories were created and finally organized after the themes of push or pull in reference to the overall theoretical framework. These categories provide basis for this analysis of the push and pull factors. The analysis will consist of two parts of push and pull factors. The findings of each part will be summarized and collectively discussed in the following section of discussion.

6.1 Push factors

The push factors focus on the source market and are individual motives “pushing” the tourists to travel. Within the theme of push factors, the categories of characterization and motives were found.

6.1.1 Characterization of the typical Chinese tourist in Vejle municipality

The data from the interviews shows that it was difficult for the respondents to characterize the typical Chinese tourist visiting the municipality of Vejle. As some had only met a few tourists in the municipality of Vejle (CAF, MUS & TO1) whereas others could not describe one specific type, as they encountered many different (DMO1, TO2 & HOT).

The data shows a tendency for smaller groups, as all of the tourism service and product providers have noticed smaller groups of 10-15 people. HOT describes the tourists visiting in smaller groups up to 10 people, which is also noticed by MUS who describes the tourists visiting as small groups of 10-15 people and further explains: *“We have not had those huge, big crowds. So it has been some relatively small groups when they have been here.”* (MUS, 1. 47-48). Further MUS has noticed a few, who according to him were “something special” with VIP treatment as they had a private chauffeur. Besides the groups, HOT also described hosting individual Chinese tourists with a travel purpose of either studying, business or leisure. Besides the small groups travelling with a guide, CAF has also encountered friends and families travelling individually. CAF has noticed a big difference in the segments depending on whether they are travelling with a guide or not. CAF experiences that is a very controlled context when there is a guide involved, whereas the encounter with the individuals was a completely different experience, as he explains:

“..because I often experience when the guide is present, there is a large control management. And that is with a schedule and etc. And what I experienced with the three young women, who were very

modern in their whole behaviour, like attitude and the like, that it was a completely different experience. And there they were caught up in the moment and wanted to engage in a dialogue”. (CAF, l. 139-142)

TO1 have met both a young couple, looking for experiences that were planning activities day to day as well as families with children who had already planned some activities and researched the area. These two segments described by TO1 correlated with the one of TO2. The type of tourists TO2 is planning a trip for differs depending on the product, but most of their customers are under the age of 40. According to TO2, if the trip focuses in children it is mostly just the mother and child travelling and if the product is an experience tour with focus on gastronomy, the segment is often young couples travelling with or without children. The company of TO2 focuses on a specific segment of the Chinese tourists who are interested in visiting the Danish provincial cities. TO2 describes this segment as “young, white-collar workers” whose lifestyle makes them interested in destination attributes like clean air and gastronomic travels. TO2 refers to the young segments as “education tours”, which he describes as a segment that is: “..easy to work with and they are attractive because they typically stay longer at a destination.” (TO2, l. 29-30). Further, this younger and more quality conscious segment has often not visited Copenhagen before and they have primarily planned everything beforehand like accommodation and transport. DMO1 also notice the two segments of couples and families, and argues for a third one, a segment within corporate travel. The couples are characterized as:

“..they often stay at Danhostel in Givskud simply because they are going to LEGOLAND and LegoHouse, which is the primary. And then they go out and eat in Vejle and sometimes they also visit Kongernes Jelling and something like that and our nature. (DMO1, l. 145-147).

The other type of Chinese tourists is according to DMO1 “very atypical Chinese” (DMO1, l. 149), as the Bed & Breakfasts experience three generations of one family travelling together and staying up to three weeks learning to cook and experiencing the nature. Lastly, DMO1 describes a rise in corporate travel, in which Chinese companies offer their employees an outbound travel. The company will for example send a total of 300 employees in smaller groups of 10 people at a time.

The FITs are often described in as a segment spending a considerable higher amount during the trip as compared to other tourist segment. The data shows two opposing sites to the matter of spending. In MUS and CAF's experience, the Chinese tourists do not spend a large amount of money when visiting. CAF adds that they are often accompanied by a guide who pays for the food and drinks. However, the higher daily spending by the Chinese tourists is noted by DMO1 and TO2 as one of the main factors why FITs is an interesting segment. DMO1 and TO2 further compare the spending of the Chinese tourists to one of Denmark's largest tourism source market, Germany. Where DMO1 states: *"...they spend 9 to 12 times as much as a German tourist"* (DMO1, l. 41). The considerable higher daily spending is also noted as an asset when compared to the German tourists by TO2, who states:

"But with our Chinese, we will reach something between DKK3- and 4000 per night. Which is 8-10 times more than the Germans .. So even though the volume will probably always be below the Germans, by having them staying at your hotel for a day and if they buy something in the minibar and... in the shops in the local area and so on. It will provide much more than a German tourist would." (TO2, l. 274-277)

From the data gathered it is difficult to generalize the typical Chinese tourist visiting the municipality of Vejle. MUS, CAF and HOT describe smaller groups of up to 15 people with or without a guide and DMO1, CAF, TO1 and TO2 describe families and couples or friends. As this thesis is focusing on the FITs, I will focus on the characterized Chinese tourists travelling as couples/friends or families without a guide, as explained by the respondents. When comparing this characterization to the definition of the FITs used in this thesis, only some of the segments appear to be a type of FITs. The segments that are closest to the definition are those of friends/couples and families. However, according to the data, these segments seem to have a rather fixed program. Further, these two segments of couple/friends and families match the ones described by VisitDenmark (2019a), which is 25-65 years old couples and families composed of 25-45 years old parents with 6-18 years old children. However, the couples described by VisitDenmark (2019a) involves a larger age gap, whereas the couples characterized from the above characterization, based on the data from the interviews, describes the segment of couples and friends as younger and less than 40 years old.

The motivation of the FITs will be analysed based on the two segments of:

- 1) *Couples/friends – less than 40 years old*
- 2) *Families with children– parents approx. 25-45 years old.*

6.1.2 Travel motives among Chinese FITs

The push motives will be analysed using the theory of Travel Career Pattern. As I do not have primary data on Chinese tourists, I will discuss the primary data from the tourism service and product providers and the tourism support providers and with the secondary data, in order to investigate the travel motivations of the Chinese FITs. Pearce (2005) found 14 motivational factors for Korean leisure tourists, which I will use to modify the model for the Chinese FITs. The 14 motives are: novelty, escape/relax, self-actualisation, nature, kinship, self-enhancement, romance, kinship (belonging), autonomy, self-development (host-site involvement), nostalgia, stimulation, isolation and social status.

The general motivation of the FITs will be supplemented with data from VisitDenmark (20019a). The segment of families will be supplemented by Xiang's (2013) study and the segment of couples/friends with the study by Prayag (2015). However, firstly the level of travel career for the two segments based on both primary and secondary data has to be defined, as this is an important factor of the TCP.

Level of travel experience

As mentioned earlier Pearce & Lee (2005) measured the level of travel experience by three variables of domestic travel experience, international travel experience and age (p. 232). In the study on Korean pleasure travellers it resulted in two clusters respectively a lower or higher travel career (Pearce, 2005, p. 75). The one labelled as having a low travel career included people under 26 years old with a lower life-stage and less travel experience. The other one labelled as having a higher travel career was people of 41-50 years old with a higher life-stage and more travel experience.

The FIT segment families resemble the segment studied in the study of Xiang (2013) of the general independent traveller. In the study by Xiang (2013) the respondents had at least a bachelor's degree, were 25 to 44 years old and classified as middle class, living in cities with high living costs.

Additionally, one third considers themselves as sophisticated tourists, having visited more than 15 Chinese destinations. I will argue that the respondents in Xiang's (2013) study can be characterized as having a medium to high travel career because of their age of 25-44 years old, that they are characterized as middleclass living in bigger cities and have visited multiple destinations in China, which also argues for a higher life-stage. Contrarily the couples/friends are younger, thereby in a lower life-stage. They are also in a lower travel career as TO2 describes most of his clients to not have visited Copenhagen before. The segment of couples/friends resembles the studies of young travellers in the study by Prayag et al. (2015). In this study the respondents were younger than 26 years old, primarily single and with a university or college degree and a full-time job, Further, most of them were first-time visitors to Western Europe. These can be categorized as having a medium to lower travel career and a lower life-stage than in the study of Xiang (2013), because of their age, relationship status and career.

This means that when categorizing the motives in the middle layer of the TCP, I will distinguish between a lower (couples/friends) and a higher travel career (families). In order to see if the motivations are either the same, as argued by Xiang or different as the other studies suggest.

6.1.2.1 Core motives

According to the tourism support providers, the Chinese tourists are seeking to experience new places with authentic experiences and this also includes less visited destinations, as explained by DMO1: *"To a greater extend, they want the smaller destinations. And those (destinations) which their parents have not experienced. Today they want a place where no one else has been, right?"* (DMO, l. 45-47). Similarly TO2 finds that they are asking to experience something special and TO1 states that it is the authentic experiences which they are requesting. Further, TO2 noticed that they are asking for experiences, rather than a specific destination, as he explains: *"So it is not that they specifically say that they want to go to Vejle. They will say they want to try something new. And then we can offer them the many different prospects we have, including Vejle."* (TO2, l. 80-81). This show that experiencing something different and new is more important than the destination it selves. This correlates with the secondary data on FITs, as Xiang (2013) describes sightseeing as the main motivator and a desire to for example experience the culture beyond the words read in literature. This is also argued by VisitDenmark (2019a), that state that the Chinese tourists want to experience something new, and destination experiences is also mentioned by Prayag et al. (2015). This leads me to define it as the motive **novelty** because it is mentioned by the tourism support providers and the secondary data this is defined as a core motive.

In the definition of the FITs it is clear that they value their independence and the flexibility in planning their own trip. However, the data from the interviews shows that the tourist is not as individual or flexible as portrayed in the literature and in other studies, as the travel is often planned by a tour operator. Yet, the fact that they will have done some homework before they contact the tour operator and because they travel on their own and without a guide argues for the behaviour of an individual tourist. But the flexibility is often lost, as they will have a pre-planned programme with accommodation, transport and activities, as TO2 and HOT notes that they rarely have gaps in their programme for other activities. Compared to the groups travelling with a guide, CAF noticed a big difference, as the smaller groups without a guide were not in a controlled context with a tight schedule. Compared to the secondary data, Xiang (2013) explains that the FITs gain control through their homework and self-organisation, in which they value the flexibility, which is also argued by Prayag et al. (2015), as the young travellers are described as desiring flexibility in their travel. This is defined as the motive of **autonomy** as they Chinese tourists are independent in their decision making process, and this is a core motive.

Most of the respondents refer to World heritage site Kongernes Jelling and the historical perspectives which the tales of the Vikings provide, as a motive for visiting the area. As explained by CAF: *“Well they know about the concept of the Vikings and the like. I think that is one of the reasons why they visit.”* (CAF, l. 199). This statement shows that the Chinese tourists are aware of some of the local history. Further, both CAF and MUS agree that Kongernes Jelling is an important attraction in the area, which attract many tourists. Additionally, most of the respondents mention gastronomy as a motive for visiting the municipality, which shows a motive for tasting local dishes and specialities, which has proven to be a success in the café of CAF. TO1 describes the possibility of serving small local appetizer as: *“It is really something they like, right? Like possible ordering 6 different dishes and then they will get a plate and they can taste all 6 things. That will be a great experience for them”* (TO1, l. 206-207).

Being involved in the destination and the local experiences is also evident throughout the secondary data. Xiang (2013) explains it as gaining cultural capital when they are experiencing new and local experiences, which are also investigated through the homework and adds that the FITs visits diverse places and interact with the locals. VisitDenmark (2019a) also emphasizes that the travellers wish to explore the country by experiencing and becoming acquainted with different cultures and local traditions. Lastly, the young travellers also want to understand the destinations culture, but

according to Prayag et al. (2015) they prioritize virtual communication with friends rather than locals. This interest in the destinations history and local traditions is defined as the motive **self-development (host-site involvement)** and is a core motive.

There by the above argues that the core travel motives of the Chinese FITs are novelty, autonomy and self-development (host-site).

6.1.2.2 Middle layer motives

VisitDenmark (2019a) explains the motives of seeing the landscape and being close to nature, but they also mention resting, relax and disconnecting as motives. However, the other studies in the secondary data show a division between the two motives of **nature** and **escape/relax**.

Xiang (2013) explains the motive of **nature**, as belonging to those with a higher travel career, and it is defined as a desire to experience the clean air and a natural environment which is not damaged, as it might be in domestic destinations. Whereas the younger travellers show a higher preference for travelling for a recreational purpose, relaxation and to escape everyday life, which can be defined as the motive of **escape/relax**. Further nature as a motive for young travellers is not mentioned by Prayag et al. (2015). From the interviews, it shows that TO2's tours planned for families are referred to as educational, whereas with couples there is more focus on for example gastronomy. Additionally, the observation from TO1 was that the families had planned a full program, whereas the young couple was planning day to day.

Most of the respondents describe the nature of Vejle municipality and the Danish nature consisting of oceans, beaches, blue sky and clean air as a motive for visiting. As explained by CAF:

“And I believe that we should be aware of the fact that these city-Chinese, they are used to city, city, city, massive urban areas, right? And here the Danish nature and the freshness that sometimes it sometimes has offers... It is something special..” (CAF, 289-291).

Hereby it could be argued that the families seek to experience a lot when visiting along with educating themselves and their children. According to VisitDenmark (2019a) the FITs will learn new thing and come home with new inspirations. Additionally Xiang (2013) describe that the FITs gain problem-solving skills, social prestige, growth, self-development and a sense of achievement when travelling. This is defined as the motive **self-enhancement** and is a motive for those of higher travel experience.

Whereas the young couples/friends are more relaxed, enjoys good food and value the company of their significant other. For the young travellers they gain social interaction when they communicate and learn from others and a sense of self-fulfilment. Even though the segment of families travels with known companions, they also like to explore and socialize with locals (Xiang, 2013; VisitDenmark, 2019a). The young travellers show higher preference for the motives of **escape/relax** and **kinship (belonging)**, as the secondary data describes the importance of travelling with a significant other and socializing, especially virtual socializing in online communities with other travellers (Prayag et al., 2015).

The middle layer motives those of a higher travel career are found to be nature and self-enhancement and escape/relax and kinship (belonging) for those with a lower travel career.

6.1.2.3 Outer layer motives

When travelling, the tourists might gain a new perspective on life, as explained by TO2 with the term “quality in life” when referring to the future potential. *“So there will be a much greater focus on being aware of these things and I believe that will be good for Denmark, long term..”* (TO2, 1. 316-317). This is also noted by CAF when talking about creating concepts like cooking classes, he expresses the development of the concept as: *“...how could you for example create some products where people say okay we did not really know that about Denmark, but they are obviously also able to do that.”* (CAF, 339-341). Further, gaining a new perspective on life, **self-actualisation** as a motive is mentioned by Xiang (2013) and Prayag et al. (2015). It is thereby relevant for all segments, but not as a core motive.

Travelling with people you are familiar with can provide a sense of security. As the segments are both experiencing new destination with known companions, it is defined as an outer motive of **kinship**. Especially feeling personally safe and secure is mentioned as a motivation to choose certain destinations by TO1, TO2 and CAF, and from the interviews it shows that the motive of feeling safe and secure with influence the travel destination in the coming years. TO1 calls the Chinese “security addicts”. This is agreed with by TO2, who explains:

“But as long as the Chinese feel it is unsafe to for example travel to France, well then they will not travel. We have seen a million, what is it called, examples of earlier e.g. the migrant crisis in Europe which caused tourism to be pushed from Italy and Spain and to the North. Such things as we have seen earlier, that is what is going to happen. The Chinese do not travel to dangerous places typically and that will stay the same.” (TO2, 1. 336-340).

However, in the original TCP study on Western leisure tourists, the motive of kinship was defined as relationship (security) and included factors such as feeling personally safe and secure, but it is not a part of the kinship motive. As this is an important motive when choosing a destination, I will modify the motive and label it as **kinship (security)**.

Thereby the outer layer motives are identified as the travel motives of self-actualisation and kinship (security)

The remaining five motives of the original 14 are nostalgia, romance, social status, isolation and stimulation and these are regarded as irrelevant motives, as there is little or no mention of these. However, the motive for **isolation** could be relevant for one segment described by DMO1, in which three generations of a family were staying for quite a long time at a Bed & Breakfast. This could be described as isolation as they also prefer to cook at the accommodation and not eat out. Additionally, the motive of **stimulation** is described in the secondary data by Xiang (2013) and explains experiences with risks involved, being explorers and gaining mental stimulation. However, as the data from the interviews show, the FITs are not very spontaneous or unpredictable as their accommodation and activities are mostly pre-planned there is less risk involved. Further, it can be argued, that the FITs experience the motive of **nostalgia** when visiting for examples LEGOLAND, as the FITs might know LEGO from their childhood and thereby it will bring back memories from the past.

The travel motives of the FITs are summarized and visualized in figure 3 below.

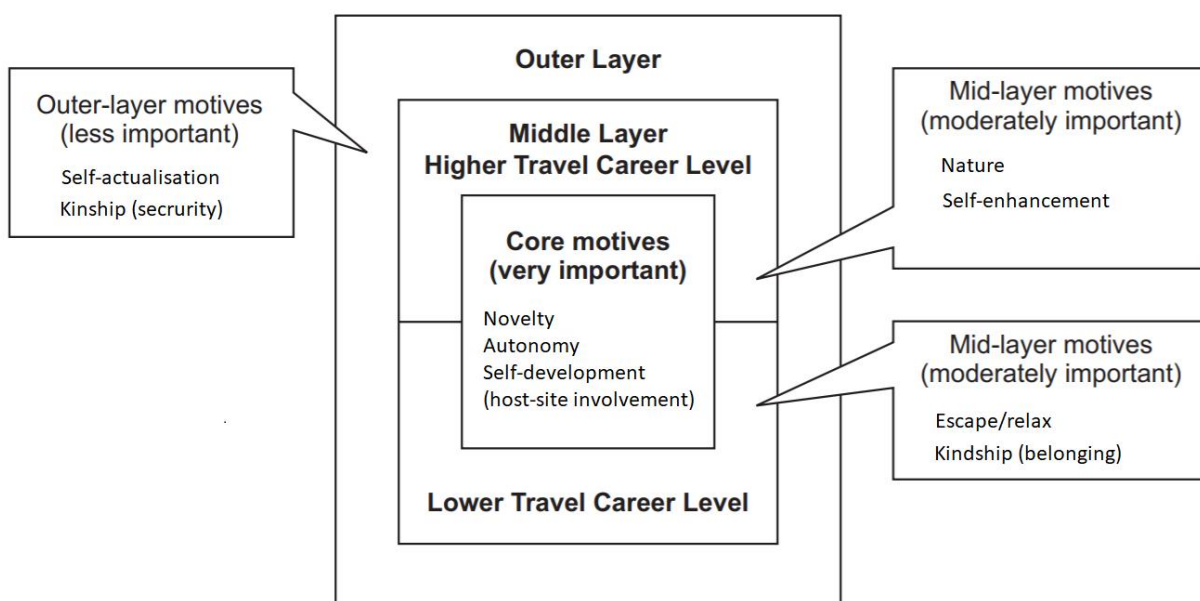


Figure 3: Modified Travel Career Pattern (own design).

6.2 Pull factors

The pull factors are defined as destination specific attributes and marketing which is “pulling” the tourist to visit a certain destination. This section will analyse the data collected from the interviews in order to find the pull factors attracting the outbound Chinese tourists to the municipality of Vejle. Within the theme of pull factors, five categories were found of attributes, strategy, getting China ready, opportunities and challenges.

6.2.1 Destination attributes of Vejle municipality

In reference to the municipality of Vejle as a destination for Chinese tourists, the respondents are somewhat agreeing on the attributes of the destination.

HOT mentions LEGOLAND as the primary destination attribute, which is interesting for both adults and children. LEGOLAND is also mentioned by DMO1 as an attraction for couples, whereas TO1 mentions it as an attraction for families. CAF, TO1, DMO1, MUS all agree that the UNESCO heritage site of Kongernes Jelling along with the historical perspective and the Vikings are attracting the tourists. CAF and MUS, whose business is centred on the historical perspective and the Vikings, believe it is the main attraction, which attracts tourists from all over the world. CAF adds that visiting UNESCO world heritage sites is a specific tourism type, just like gastro or nature tourism, where tourists travel to experience world heritage sites. However, according to TO2, the attractions or monuments like Kongernes Jelling cannot be the main destination attribute, as Jutland does not have any big monuments compared to the ones in other European cities. According to TO2, Jutland can offer other attributes which is: “*..what we have, what the Chinese are starting to inquire now, is the "slow living", like gastronomy, quality of food, quality nature experiences and so on.*” (TO2, l. 257-258). DMO1 and CAF too mention the nature, authenticity and food as attributes. TO1 also acknowledges “slow-travel” such the nature, forests and beaches, however in TO1’s opinion, “slow-travel” is a potential attributes, which has yet to be further developed.

This shows that the destination attributes of Vejle municipality are LEGOLAND and Kongernes Jelling. Along with attributes of nature experiences and gastronomy, which could be futures developed to reach its full potential

6.2.2 Strategies towards attracting Chinese tourists

The tourism service and product providers does not have a specific strategy towards the Chinese tourists, as they all state that tourists from all over the world are welcome and that they do not prioritize the Chinese tourists more than other nationalities. In regard to the strategical initiatives taken by the municipality to develop destination attributes and to attract the Chinese tourists, the tourism support providers have different opinions of the best strategy to develop a destination and to attract Chinese tourists.

As stated by DMO1 and TO1, Vejle was the second municipality in Denmark to start an initiative like the China ready course. Wonderful Copenhagen developed a “China kit” course with a checklist of 5-6 things for hotels and restaurants to become China ready, but they did not develop a certificate. Besides the China ready course, the municipality created the QR code “Survival guide to Vejle” containing information on for example Danish etiquette, participated in a tourism fair in Nantong in China and focused on Chinese social media. Becoming visible in Chinese social media was an essential part of the strategy and the topic was also part of the curriculum in the China ready course. DMO1 explained the strategy concerning social media, which was executed by TO1:

*“We have spent a lot of time with Gitte on making ourselves visible on Chinese social media such as Dianping or * unclear * and something like that and we see that it has been effective. That it is the increased number that comes here and something else that is interesting. It is actually something we had not anticipated or had actually not seen coming. It is that they receive more and more inquiries from corporate travels.” (DMO1, l. 152-156)*

However, according to TO2, using Chinese social media is not the right strategy when trying to reach the quality-conscious Chinese tourists. The company owned by TO2 work with small and medium sized travel agents, schools and is developing Danish centres in China. According to TO2, using social media as a strategy is doomed to fail when it comes to this segment of tourists, as a strategy like that has a too wide aim. TO2 continues:

“..that is why, this strategy which has been discussed a lot in Denmark, the one of going out and getting the masses by being on “C Trip” and on “Beidu” .. and all those big portals is a failed strategy, which we are trying to get away from.” (TO2, l. 52-55)

TO2 further explains why using Chinese social media is specifically not relevant for a municipality like Vejle because the municipality should not advertise to the masses; rather they should focus on specific segments. According to TO2 advertising to 100 million Chinese at a time is:

“..an idiotic argument to present. Because a city like Vejle do not need 100 million customers from the Chinese tourism market. They will need selected ones, maybe 50 a week, who can fill in the gaps the capacity of the hotels, among other things, which is what Vejle needs” (TO2, l. 49-52).

It seems that VisitVejle is initiating different strategies. Another initiative and strategy presented by DMO1, could resemble the one which TO2 views as the correct one. When participating in the tourism fair in Nantong in China, they had a meeting about a possible collaboration with one of the biggest tour operators in the city in order to have a more focused strategy. TO2 sees the tour operators as very important when trying to attract Chinese tourists, as the most of the Chinese tourists will use a travel agency when travelling abroad. TO2 argues:

“..a large part of the trip will still be planned by a travel agency and this makes it far more important that the Chinese travel agencies get the information, than to share it on WeChat or the internet in some way... And it is our job is to make sure that the agents are equipped to provide them information about Vejle or whatever they may need.” (TO2, l. 178-180 & 201-203)

Additionally, TO2 states that most Chinese tourists to the Nordics are using a tour operator and letting them plan the trip for them, as most of them do not ask for specific destinations, rather they will ask to experience concepts like the Nordic “clean-take”, healthy lifestyle etc. This means that the tourist is relying on the tour operator, whose job becomes to “push” different destination. Thus the more information provided to the tour operators, the higher the chances are that they will suggest a place like Jutland.

The above show different strategies as presented by the tourism support providers, as DMO1 and TO1 argues for a broad strategy including Chinese social media, whereas TO2 argues for a more narrow strategy focusing on chosen tour operators. As it is argued that the strategy should focus on a selected segment of the Chinese tourists and not the masses.

6.2.3 Becoming China ready

The China ready course appears in the interviews several times, as it is a popular concept and it is one of the main initiatives taking by the municipality to attract the Chinese tourists along with being an initiative which is separating the municipality from others destinations in Denmark. However, when asked about the definition of the concept and when China readiness is achieved, the answers and attitude towards the concepts were very different.

According to DMO1, the China ready course was created as a way to show respect to the incoming Chinese tourists. DMO1 explains:

“It was a respect for the Chinese too, for us to host the Chinese guests properly when they come to Vejle. So we are very aware of the respect and hosting. And want to be known as this city where one is recognized as a Chinese tourist...” (DMO1, l. 248-249)

TO1 shares the same view and adds that respect is closely related to the Chinese culture, as TO1 argues:

“Translation might not just be for it to be in English, it is just as much about showing respect to them.. Because, for them, the respect means a lot. So it is not just the practicality, it is more the cultural.” (TO1, l. 498-504)

Concerning when China readiness is achieved, DMO1 believes that a company is China ready after the course is finished and argues that most of the tourist service and product providers in the municipality are China ready in terms of service and sales and how to approach and deal with Chinese tourists. Whereas TO1 and CAF argue that it takes more than a course or any certificate to become China ready. CAF explains that being China ready is a process of learning. The café owned by CAF is offering a special menu to the Chinese tourists, but the kind of food they serve has been changed according to the feedback from the tourists. CAF started out with serving tapas but noticed that the cheese was often left uneaten and this resulted in a change of menu. CAF explains his version of becoming China ready as:

“..it is about learning from the process when someone visits. I do not think you can just get an education and then you get a chromed diploma on the wall where it says China ready. And then you can, then you are ready to receive all Chinese, that is not how it works. For me, it is much more

about having a sense of sensitivity towards what is happening in the moment and then you can navigate after it.” (CAF, l. 267-271)

Additionally, CAF adds that when trying to become China ready, one must be careful in order to not become too specialized by cooking noodles and the like, as CAF believes that showing the local Danish traditions are important too. CAF argues: *“Because that is exactly why they are travelling to foreign places, they want have something different.”* (CAF, l. 218-219). However, HOT argues that it is important to understand the cultural differences and adjust to them and argues for offering the Chinese specific facilities in order to please the visitors and explains:

“.. That you just take those things into consideration, and if they (Chinese tourist) want to cook some noodles and such, well then they that should be available and that you have a microwave available and stuff like that so they do not have to get annoyed about it..” (HOT, l. 93-95)

Further all of the respondents mention the different initiatives of specializing services towards the Chinese tourists. These are services such translation of brochures, signs and menu cards, creating QR codes with information, offering hot water at restaurants and providing an electric kettle and slippers in the hotel room. TO2 finds it important to provide an electric kettle and slipper at the hotel, but when it comes to other services like translation of brochures, TO2 argues that brochures are hopeless as, the trip is planned tightly as he explains: *“...you can have all the brochures you want, in any language you want.. but the customers will only use it if they have gaps in the program for it. And they rarely have that”* (TO2, l. 150-152). What really is important with the concept of China ready is not offering all these services, as TO2 is of a different opinion, than those of the other respondents when it comes to concept of China ready. According to TO2 the concept of China ready is very misunderstood in Denmark, where the focus is on training the chef to cook noodles or teaching the receptionist to say “Ni hao”, which according to TO2 is not China ready and TO2 states that this version is *“..some clownery which looks good in the newspaper but does not lead to anything”* (TO2, l. 117-118). What TO2 believes should be emphasized in the concept of China ready is rather: *“..the speed of the market over here, among other things. If we get a request from a customer, then we should be able to respond within 12 to 24 hours.”* (TO2, l. 119-120). TO2 continues:

“And that means that the preparedness that the Chinese market expects, we are not ready for that in Denmark. And I think that a lot more energy should be spend getting China ready in that regard,

rather than teaching the chef how to cook noodles. It is a gimmick that does not do any good, it is not used in sales or marketing over here. And it is not something that leads to anything, except for of course some of the customers might thinking alright it was nice just to get noodles this morning, right? But it is not something that brands you or promotes you in any way. China ready should be to be able to answer the market's inquiries and there are very, very few in Denmark, also in Copenhagen and the other big cities that are capable of that. It is also something we work very hard on to get developed.” (TO2, l. 122-130)

The view by TO2 on the fast pace and preparedness expected by the Chinese market, does not appear in the other interviews. Yet it could be related to online booking solutions or developing pre-packaged concepts, which will be introduced later. Two other issues relevant in reference to becoming China ready appeared in the interviews, these were about implementing Chinese payments methods and the service level in Denmark.

The above shows that there are different opinions on when and how China readiness is achieved, but this is understandable as no official certificates for being China ready exists. DMO1 and TO2 argue that China ready course is about showing respect to the Chinese tourists, whereas other respondents emphasise offering specialized services to the tourists. TO2 is the only one who expresses a need for a faster pace and preparedness as more important than offering services, as it is argued that the Chinese tourists expect a quick response when requesting a trip. Additionally, several respondents found the implementation of Chinese payment method to be important as well perspectives on the current and expected service level Denmark. These issues are described below.

6.2.3.1 Implementations of payments methods and the service level

DMO1, TO1 and TO2 agree on the importance of implementing Chinese payment methods as it can raise sales. DMO1 and TO1 believe that implementing a Chinese payment solution is a part of being China ready. However, it seems that Café Sejd was the only one of the participants in the course who implemented a Chinese Payments solution, even though it is simple to implement as argued by TO1: “.. it is free to get and at the time a Chinese enters, you have the QR code that you can use and then it works.” (TO1, l. 165-166). Despite the benefits, TO1 argues that many companies do not realize the potential or a need for it and it is often one of the last things implemented when it comes to being China ready as compared to other Nordic destinations like

Finland, where it was one of the first things the tourism service and product providers implemented as a part of a public initiative. TO1 continues: *"Because when one implements Chinese payment, then you will sell at least 20-30 percent more and can also attract more. But when it comes to Chinese payment, my experience is that one has to realize the need for it, because it is often some of the last thing."* (TO1, l. 93-95). Further, TO1 argues that experiences in other European metropolitan cities, it makes the Chinese tourist expect Chinese payments options when they shop. TO2 also believes that implementing payment solutions can boost sales, however, TO2 argues that it requires a certain amount of Chinese visitors in order for an implementation to make sense as TO2 states:

".. an opportunity to "boost" consumption is of course to make sure that they can pay with WeChat in the hotel minibar and the like. And we know that from countless studies, that it works. So it is something we suggest. But it should of course be seen in the context of whether Vejle will receive 500 Chinese tourists next year." (TO2, l. 156-159)

The general level of service in the tourism industry was also mentioned as an important part of becoming China ready by TO1, TO2 and HOT. TO1, who was part of creating the China ready course, was also responsible for visiting the participants afterwards to help them in creating specialized services. Especially in clothing stores, TO1 emphasizes the importance of greeting and showing the Chinese tourists attention. TO2 also finds a high service level to be important. Especially in restaurants, TO2 considers the current level of service as a problem and a lack of cultural understanding. As TO2 argues:

"It is more that they expect a high level of service because they have spent so much money on a trip. And honestly, sometimes we are not especially good at providing service in Denmark. So we have had problems with, for example, the restaurants they think it is very strange to serve hot water. It is not because they are trying to save DKK40, it is because they want hot water with their food, and we have struggled a lot with that." (TO2, l. 222-228)

Further, TO2 express that information is the key to solve this problem. HOT is of a different opinion, as she does not consider the service level to be a problem, as long as you try your best, as she argues: *"..you just have to be open and friendly and service minded, then it works out fine and I in my opinion they are grateful for everything that is done when trying to accommodate them."* (HOT, l. 97-99).

No matter how the concept of China readiness is understood or whether the participants are truly China ready, it can be argued that because of the course and because of the initiatives taking, the municipality is ahead of others. DMO1 argues that initiating the course has been an advantage, as it has positively separated the municipality from others. TO1 also sees it an advantage and explains:

".. hopefully it can develop faster in Vejle rather than the other places with regards to China ready. Because one has a basic awareness of this is something of importance, who do we contact. So I would say that this is the value Vejle has gained from it now, that is that everyone who has participated in this course, they know that there is at least something we can activate here. Where I believe that Kolding, Fredericia and the West Coast and so on, they first have to say what is this and maybe the awareness of whether they are ready, it is not there. .. I would say that is a big advantage for Vejle." (TO1, l. 223-229)

As described above, there are several advantages of implementing Chinese payment methods, however it is also argued that it is often the last thing implemented. It further shows that the current service level in Denmark does not meet the preferences of the Chinese tourists, due to a lack of cultural understanding. Lastly, it shows that initiating the China ready course has been an advantage for the municipality, as it is separating them from other smaller destinations. Besides challenges with the level of service in Denmark, other factors are negatively influencing the development of Vejle municipality as a destination for Chinese tourists. These other challenges are described below.

6.2.4 Challenges

These following challenges are on different levels, some are locally and some are nationally. Thus some of these challenges can be handled by the municipality and the tourism service and product providers in it, whereas others are on a more national level and can be very difficult to change.

6.2.4.1 Nordic travels

It is argued by TO1, TO2 and CAF that when the Chinese tourists visit the municipality of Vejle it is often not their primary destination, but a part of a bigger trip to the Nordics. The tour operators TO1 and TO2 specifically work with Scandinavian and Nordic travel, in which a trip mostly include visits to several countries. TO2 present a typical example of a trip as: *...a 14 day trip where they visit Denmark and Sweden or Denmark and Norway for example. Here we will plan 7 or 8 days in Denmark, where we typically plan one or two nights in Copenhagen... And then we have 4-5-6*

nights in Jutland...” (TO2, l. 88-91). From TO1’s experience, the Chinese will visit the Nordics as a collected destination and here the municipality is well placed infrastructural wise. Further, CAF explains that his Chinese visitors are on a two to three weeks’ vacation including different Nordic countries. CAF further argues that Denmark is too small to be promoted as a destination, which is why Scandinavia or the Nordics are promoted as a collected destination, and the providers in it has to be aware of that. CAF explains: “.. *Jelling and Denmark, is part of something bigger, right? ..I believe we have to avoid getting megalomania*” (CAF, l. 317-318).

This show that it is difficult to promote the municipality of Vejle alone and in order to promote Denmark as one destination, it requires collaborations across municipalities and regions. TO1 acknowledges the importance of such collaboration, but finds collaboration across the Visit-organisations as a challenge. TO1 explains:

“If they (Chinese tourists) are going to West Jutland, then they (Chinese tourists) are going to West Jutland, then they (Visit-organisations) will not collaborate if they (Chinese tourists) are going to East Jutland too... Denmark is so small, the Chinese they (Chinese tourists) will say Denmark is the whole thing, so they (Visit-organisations) must be able to collaborate and do something across the entire organisation .. So I see a little bit of a disadvantage there that each stay in their small municipality and offer something.” (TO1. l. 349-353)

According to TO1, the different Visit-organisation are very focused on the specific region or municipality in which they operate and rarely cooperate across regions. Above, it was mentioned that the Chinese visit Denmark as one destination during a longer travel across the Nordics and further as Denmark can be perceived as a small destination in the eyes of a Chinese tourist, which they try to cover and experience in a few days. Thereby it shows that when the Visit-organisations do not collaborate, it does not cohere with the travel patterns of the Chinese tourists.

6.2.4.2 Disadvantages of public institutions

As explained in the case introduction, the main purpose of VisitDenmark is to promote Denmark, DMO1 and TO2 argue that VisitDenmark is very focused on just promoting Copenhagen. Further DMO1 explains that there is a lack of information provided by VisitDenmark about the Chinese tourist by DMO1:

“..it is not like the Germans, where we have, only God will know how many... reports made about German tourists throughout the years to VisitDenmark. So there is very little about the Chinese and very little especially within the groups which we work with. And then there is also a tendency, that when it is made by VisitDenmark, it is incredibly centered around Copenhagen .. which we hardly can use in the provinces.” (DMO1, l. 237-241)

Additionally, being a public institution is a challenge in terms of both finances, but also innovation. Some of the challenges of working in a municipality is that VisitVejle needs to ask for permission by the city's council. As expressed by DMO1: *“that is how it is when you work in a municipality, then there will be a lot to consider politically .. So sometimes what I believe is a good idea, the city council does not agree.. And that is also something to consider, that you are working within a political setting.”* (DMO, l. 298-301). Additionally, the China ready course was funded by “Global Vækst Kompetence”, however when this fund was closed down, the courses could not continue, as explained by DMO1: *“..we cannot do something like this if people have to pay for it. It has to be for free. And when that opportunity disappeared, then we had to drop it, unfortunately”* (DMO1, l. 98-99). Even though VisitVejle is a public institution, many of the tourism service and product providers in the municipality are private companies. Further, as the activities and the China ready course are based on voluntary participation, an opportunity 55 participants made use of. Within the 55 participants, there were some differences in initiatives taking by the participants afterwards, as argued by DMO1 and TO1, as some of the private providers had limited resources and the public providers were held back by corporate regulations. By dropping the course, it also means that not every tourism service and product provider in the municipality were able to participate.

According to TO1 private DMO's have certain advantages compared to public ones, like the Visit-organisations. As TO1 explains:

“The difficulty in the tourism industry is actually to be innovative. Because being innovative is costly... And someone has to dare to take a chance .. So that is why, at least what I have figured out, is that a lot of development in tourism starts with someone who takes the lead and take a chance” (TO1, 373-377)

Further, TO1 argues that private DMO's are willing to take to risk by being innovative which is pushing the development. As other Nordic destinations are not as heavily controlled by public organisation, they will have that as an advantage over Denmark as TO1 argues: *“that is where I*

notice a big challenge compared to the rest of the Nordics, that is that we are governed by public organisations, which is fine. It is not a criticism at all, but it hinders the innovation.” (TO1, l. 387-389). These indications made by TO1 resemble the views of TO2 in reference to the hindering mentality and wrongful strategy, as mentioned earlier.

6.2.4.3 The mentality towards Chinese tourism

Some of the other issues appearing from the interviews suggest a certain mentality in Denmark and in the municipality of Vejle which are viewed to be a challenge by holding the municipality back from becoming truly China ready. The factors contributing to creating this certain mentality towards the incoming Chinese tourists can be regarded as a mix of expectations, prejudices and the press.

The data show some differences when it comes to expectations, and these can hinder the development. During the China ready course, the issues of expectations and prejudices was discussed. From the perspective of the tourism support providers (DMO1, TO1 & TO2) it should be obvious that it takes a long time to develop a new market, especially when it is a remote market. DMO1 states: “.. *I know that it is a marathon and it takes a long time.. it is a remote market, it takes at least five years to develop. And I have always made that clear.*” (DMO1, l. 294-297). However, VisitVejle remains aware of the different expectations and expresses: “*People .. had this idea that when we started these initiatives, that suddenly 250,000 Chinese would arrive, out in Billund (airport)*” (DMO1, l. 109-110).

Even though DMO1 argues that it has been clear, that the municipality is still in the development phase, this is not how it is perceived by MUS & CAF. As stated by MUS “*I think what we made, we had a lot of focus on it then .. if a lot of Chinese people showed up right after, we might have been really good at welcoming them. But it just did not..*” (MUS, l. 64-66). CAF also comments on the lack of tourist compared to what was expected as CAF states:

“And I must say, it is not overwhelming how many people have visited us, unfortunately. I do not have the exact numbers, but it has not been a lot. So compared to the expectations we might have had, not much has happened.” (CAF, l. 73-75)

Most of the tourism service and product providers (MUS, CAF, HOT) only experience few or no challenges when dealing with Chinese tourists, but they are very aware of the many prejudices and

stories of bad behaviour connected to the Chinese tourists. In the interviews with CAF, it seemed that this type of bad behaviour was almost expected and not experiencing this made CAF pleasantly surprised. According to TO1 these prejudices and stories will stay until a significant amount of tourist visit and proofs otherwise. TO1 argues: *"..there are some prejudices in Denmark, and it draws attention when talking about Chinese tourism"* (TO1, l. 484-485) and *"..such stories that just stick and will only change the day you see them right yourself"* (TO1, l. 492-493). The prejudices were also attended to in the course, as explained by DMO1:

"So we did a lot in order to dispel several myths and to emphasize that these types of tourist may have been here in the past, or they might be in Copenhagen, but that is not the kind of tourists we want to attract. That is a completely other group" (DMO1, l. 72-75)

This shows that even though most of the respondents know that prejudices are untrue, it is still appearing the back of their mind.

Additionally, the prejudices that all the respondents seem to be very aware of are further nourished through the Danish press coverage of Chinese outbound tourism, which according to DMO1, TO1 and TO2 is untruthful. TO1 argues for a negative spin in the press, when it comes to China and argues: *"..the press has not been particularly positive for the past six months when it comes to China... And that means that anything where China is presented negatively, they will publish."* (TO1, l. 463 & 466-467). And the primary focus of the Danish press is according to DMO1 as follows: *"they have a tendency to .. focus on how many people visit. They do not care about everything else"* (DMO, l. 120-121). TO2 too argues that the press focusing on number of visitors, which is wrongfully promoting a strategy as TO2 states: *"..we are not pursuing or posting on WeChat, hoping for 100 million tourists at a time.. Which is the method advertised in Denmark or presented in the press as the right one"*. (TO2, l. 248-250). TO2 further explains that the narrative and focus on an over exaggerated number of visitors in Denmark can cause two scenarios of behaviour among locals as TO2 argues:

"that as long as we, in Denmark, are talking about that how the Chinese are coming in masses and that 10 -20,000 more will come now. Then people in Jutland will think .. either they will get scared or they will think gold is pouring down from China and we hardly have to do any work for it to come." (TO2, l. 262-265)

This shows that what is published by the press is very closely related to expectations, which makes it difficult for the tourism support providers to balance expectations, as they are competing with the press and old stories of bad behaviour.

Thereby the expectations, prejudices and press are creating a certain mentality towards Chinese tourists in Denmark. TO2 explains: *“So we have to go beyond that mentality before we can get really far with China”* (TO2, l. 265-266). Thereby TO2 believes that this mentality is hindering the development in Denmark. This is acknowledged by TO1, who believes that this mentality is a hindrance that is leading tourism service and product providers to having a reactive strategy. As TO1 explains: *“when we (tourism service and product providers) see someone coming, we are ready, then we will know where to go. So it was kind of this .. reactive reaction .. we do not need to be proactive here..”* (TO1, l. 33-35). However, TO1 adds that this mentality could have something to do with the size of a municipality like Vejle. This mentality is also seen in the interviews with the tourism service and product providers, where it can be argued that some of them are reactive, when it comes to initiatives towards attracting Chinese tourists. For example when asked about the possibility of offering additional services in the future, it was stated by MUS: *“as long as there is not more than this, then I can hardly imagine that we will get Chinese guides...Many more would have to come, because otherwise I find it difficult to imagine what else we would do.”* (MUS, l. 59-62). CAF, who believes becoming China ready is based on experiences and the process of trying and learning from the mistakes, is lacking these experiences and CAF states: *“And then of course we have gained some experiences when we have had Chinese tourists here. And I must say, it is not overwhelming how many people have been with us, unfortunately.”* (CAF, l. 72-73).

Additionally, TO1 and TO2 mentioned some other challenges. TO1 mentioned the importance of flight connections, which is restrained due to the need for getting permission from Russia, when flying in their airspace. Thus TO1 argues that the Danish airlines are relying on Chinese airlines to make new routes, as they have a better relationship with Russia. TO2 mentioned the strict visa regulations as a challenge. Accordingly to TO2, it is currently very difficult for the Chinese tourists to get a visa granted and this pushes the tourists to the travel agencies, who help them in applying for a visa.

Some of the challenges mentioned above can be revised to produce some opportunities for the municipality as a destination for Chinese tourists. From the interviews some opportunities appeared.

These are some that could be developed in order to make the municipality of Vejle a destination even more attractive for the Chinese tourists.

Summing up, there are different challenges in Vejle municipality, which is hindering the development. The data shows, that when the Chinese tourists are visiting the municipality is part of a bigger Nordic travel. This means that when promoting the destination it should be viewed as a part of a bigger destination, which requires more regional and even Nordic cooperation. Further, as VisitVejle is a part of the public institution VisitDenmark and this result in challenges with funding and innovations. DMO1, and TO1 argues that VisitDenmark is very focused on Copenhagen, making most of the information irrelevant for smaller destinations and additionally it is argued that there is not enough information published in the Chinese tourists. Lastly, it was argued that there is a negative mentality towards the Chinese tourists visiting the municipality. It shows that the expectations are quite different and the prejudices and publicity in the press are negatively affecting these expectations and thereby the whole mentality in the municipality. This mentality can further negatively affect the development of the destination for Chinese tourists. The reason why it is so difficult to become truly China ready could be due to lack of experience. This can be visualized in a circle including the factors of experience, China readiness and number of tourists, who are all dependent on each other. In order to become familiar with the Chinese tourists and learn how to adjust, more experiences and tourists are needed. In the current situation with a low number of tourists will be keeping many tourism services and product providers from taking initiatives and creating specialized services. On the other hand, a rise in the number of tourists will provide more experience and more adjustments, whereas less tourists result in less experience, less practice, less knowledge and less adjustments.

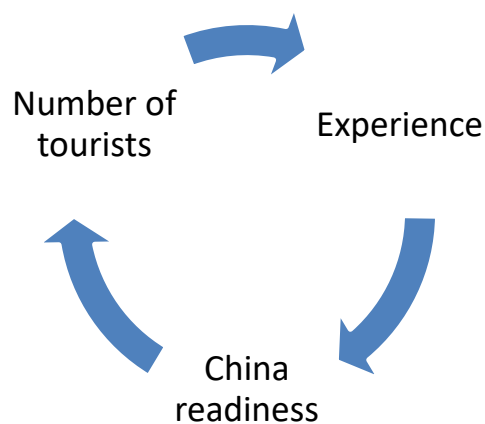


Figure 4: Circle of mentality (own design)

6.2.5 Opportunities

As mentioned previously in destination attributes, some specific types of travel are on the rise and could be exploited by the municipality in attracting the Chinese tourists. TO2 and TO1 mentioned “slow-living/slow-travel” as a potential concept which is including gastronomy and nature experiences. Specifically when it comes to “gastro-tourism”, this is mentioned by CAF, who is already planning on initiating Danish cooking classes. TO1 too mention the gastro-tourism as interesting, as they are currently looking into the topic, which they believe to be an upcoming trend and explains the relevance: *“That could be a thing for Chinese, or for Asians. Because tasting local items, it means a lot to them too.”* (TO1, l. 224-225). The other attributes mentioned were the historical perspective and the nature, which could be sold as an authentic experience. TO1 propose the idea of selling is as a concept. When talking about a Danakilde Bed & Breakfast in Give, she argues that: *“..for the Chinese it is not enough just to say that they can plan 3 days in this cottage, there must be something they can buy, a finished concept.”* (TO1, l. 342-343). She continues with suggesting an example of a pre-planned package containing accommodation and activities like visits to LEGOLAND and Kongernes Jelling. According to TO1, this would be more appealing to the Chinese tourists, as this package could be sold through tour operator. This idea of offering a pre-planned package fits well with the opinion expressed by TO2, who states that most Chinese tourists are using a tour operator when planning a trip. Further, TO2 expressed that the Chinese tourists requires their inquiries to be answered at a much faster speed, which the tourism industry in Denmark is not prepared to do right now. By offering pre-planned packaged concepts, the tour operator will be better equipped to answer the inquiries. However, offering packaged concept might require a greater cooperation across the different tourism service and product providers, DMO’s and even municipalities.

As previously mentioned, there is a lack of cooperation across the Visit-organisation. The data from the interview does not show a lot of cooperation at the moment. According to DMO1, other cities in Denmark such as Odense have copied the concept of China ready. DMO1 stated that the municipality is advocating cooperation across municipalities and destinations and for the other cities working with Chinese tourism DMO1 states: *“if the people want to work with it, then I think it is really good. Because the better the service we can offer the Chinese visitors and tourists this year, the better in my view.”* (DMO1, l. 261-263). DMO1 further mentioned that the municipality suggested a cooperation with LEGOLAND, but LEGOLAND denied. Another example of this is between the UNESCO heritage site Kongernes Jelling and Café Sejd, where CAF explains: *“Well,*

we have a super good collaboration with the Kongernes Jelling.. But we are not specifically working on attracting specific groups of tourist or developing package concepts or anything like that.” (CAF, l. 276-278). CAF further explains that it has something to do with the fact that Kongernes Jelling is a public institution and they have a strict policy on cooperation. HOT is cooperating with some local shops, who also participated in the China ready course. HOT explains that the hotel provides goodie bags for the Chinese tourists that include advertisement from local shops and the hotel will sometimes call in advance before sending a group of tourists out shopping in a specific shop. By calling beforehand, HOT argues that: “*..it is good service and it also profits .. or both for the city and the merchants and provide a good experience for the guest*” HOT, l. 30-31).

The above show different opportunities which could further develop Vejle municipality as a destination for Chinese tourists. The concept of “slow-living/Slow-travel” including experiences like nature and gastronomy could future be developed by creating and pre-planned packages and activities to be offered online. However, this would require a higher level of cooperation.

Summary of pull factors

The municipality offers attractions, nature and gastronomy, which is requested by the Chinese tourists, however these attributes could be developed further. Additionally the participation in the China ready course can be an advantage; however as no official certificates for being China ready exists, it is understandable that there is different opinions on when and how China readiness is achieved. It is argued that the attitudes towards the Chinese tourists should be attended to, as it can hinder the development, as the above show a generally negative mentality which is partly because of different expectation, the press and prejudices. Further, the lack of experiences with Chinese tourist is making it difficult for the tourism service and product providers to become truly China ready. It is argued that the mentality will only change when more Chinese tourists will visit Vejle municipality.

7. Discussion of findings

This section will discuss the findings from analysing the push factors and motivations of the Chinese FITs in connection to the pull factors of destination attributes of the municipality of Vejle. By comparing the push and pull factors to one another, it will be discussed whether or not these cohere. Further, the findings of the analysis will be put into perspective by discussing them with the original theory of Travel Career Pattern, which was used to identify travel motivations of the FITs. Additionally, the findings will be discussed with other research studies within the topic along with some perspectives made by the respondents. Lastly, the managerial implication of the thesis will be discussed.

Factors influencing the Chinese FITs to travel were found through analysing the push factors and the motives for travelling. Through the theory of Travel Career Pattern the motivations of novelty, autonomy and self-development (host-site involvement) were found to be core motives. The core motives can be seen as the skeleton in travel motivation and for travel career patterns, according to Pearce (2005). Pearce (2005) further argues that:

“these core motivations may not change to any degree. It can be argued, however, that a change in or alteration of other less-dominant motives do transform to overall travel motivation pattern. Similar to a human body undergoing maturation, the physical appearance may change but the skeleton does not.” (Pearce, 2005, p. 67)

Thereby it can be argued that the three core motives will stay constant, however, the outer-layer consisting of the motives of self-actualisation & kinship (security) may develop and become more important as the Chinese FITs mature. Pearce's (2005) study of Korean pleasure travellers found novelty, escape/relax and relationship to be core factors and the mid-layer motives to change from internally-oriented to externally-oriented motives as the traveller grows older and gain more travel experience (p. 79). This shift from inner-directed to externally-oriented motives also shows in this analysis, as the motive of kinship (belonging) is regarded important for the young FITs of couple/friends, with less travel experience, whereas the motive of nature is important for the FITs of families with more travel experience. It is important to note the difference between the original TCP and the adjusted one in this analysis. The original study presenting the Travel Career Pattern focussed on travel motives among pleasure vacationers, whereas the analysis in this thesis focused on the travel motivation of the Chinese FITs. The FITs have, according to the characterization and definition, more travel experience than other tourism segments. Thereby they will not only travel to

relax or escape daily routines, as they have already done that in their previous travel career, which is why they travel for mainly novelty and host-site involvement motives, as they are motivated by experiencing new things and places and the authentic experiences. This is why the young FIT couple/friends with a lower travel career find it important to escape/relax and strengthen the relationship with their companions, however when they grow older and gain more travel experience, they will shift to becoming more interested in both the nature but also their personal development.

With the push and pull theory, these two opposing factors should be compatible. Meaning the identified pull factors should cohere with the identified push factors. The attributes of the municipality of Vejle identified in the analysis of pull factors, where found to be the destination's attractions of Kongernes Jelling and LEGOLAND along with destination attributes of "slow-living" such as nature and gastronomy. It can be argued that the abovementioned attractions and attributes supplement the core motives of novelty and self-development (host-site involvement) and the mid-layer motive of nature and self-enhancement for those with a higher travel career, as these attributes will allow the Chinese FITs to experience something new and the local culture along with being close to nature and learning new things.

In order for the Chinese FITs fulfil the motive of autonomy in the destination of Vejle municipality, several things are complicating this and forcing the FITs to use a tour operator when planning a trip. As suggested by TO1, the municipality should not only offer booking of accommodation online but also include activities and pre-planned packages. A way to sell this pre-planned packaged concept can be found when looking to our Nordic neighbours, who are offering booking of activities online. Today the municipality's Chinese site offers booking of accommodation but does not have any activities online. Contrary to countries like Norway and Iceland who offer activities online and have plenty of Chinese tourists according to TO1:

"They (Icelanders) are incredibly innovative and are drowning in tourists, but that is because Icelanders have a different culture, they are much more, seeking private actors .. the public sector up there is not that big. That means, when looking at Iceland and Chinese tourism, they have so many online booking solutions for them. Because Iceland is driven by activities, like Northern Norway, and they know that for tourism to be profitable, then we need online booking solutions, we must have online tours and it just has to work." (TO1, l. 381-385).

However, this would require a higher level of cooperation. The data shows few examples of cooperation, both within the municipality as well as regionally across the Visit-organisation. Cooperation across the Nordic countries could also be necessary, as the data shows that the Chinese tourists are visiting the Nordics as a collected destination. The data does not indicate a change or more cooperation in the coming years, which is why it could be useful for the municipality to strategically focus on the tour operators, as the data suggest that it is the tour operator who are mainly planning the trips as well as suggesting destinations.

7.1 Is Vejle municipality China ready?

When it comes to being China ready, it can be argued that the level of China readiness is only relevant, when the tourist is already at the destination. However, being China ready is considered as a pull factor, as it provides the municipality with an advantage as compared to other municipalities. It can further be argued that a higher level of China readiness will probably lead to a higher satisfaction among the visitors and result in more recommendations. However, the strategy towards attracting Chinese tourists and how highly this segment is prioritized will undoubtedly be influenced by the mentality towards it. Thus, if the general mentality is negative, it will influence the strategy of municipality, as it is the tourism service and product providers who are visual and most often will be the primary people to interact with the Chinese tourists. The mentality was visualized in a so called “vicious circle”, as the number of Chinese tourists visiting leads to either more or fewer experiences, which is needed in order to become China ready. As the tourism service and product providers are currently not experiencing the amount of Chinese tourists they expected, they will stay reactive. Additional with the cancellation of a second round of the China ready course, it can be argued that the current level of China readiness will not change until the number of Chinese tourists visiting the municipality of Vejle dramatically increases.

In the article by Jørgensen and Ren (2015) presented in the literature review, it was argued that tourism service and product providers would hold back on initiating specialized service towards the Chinese tourists, as these were treated as any other customer. In this analysis, this is partly true, as all of the tourism services and product providers state that the Chinese tourists are not of a higher priority than other tourist segments. However, the tourism service and product providers have all initiated few or several specialized services to the Chinese tourists. This shows that the tourism service and product providers are aware of adapting to the needs and preferences of the Chinese tourists visiting. Further, some of the suggested product development of gastro-tours and “slow-

living” pre-packaged concepts suggest that the municipality is ready to develop products suited for the Chinese tourists based on local characteristics and attributes, though this is yet to be fully implemented.

7.2 Are they really FITs?

The two segments found in the data of couples/friends and families are argued to be FITs as they appear to be quite similar to the characterization made by VisitDenmark (2019a) and partly fulfil the thesis’ definition. Still, TO2 questions whether those we describe as FITs in Denmark, really are FITs. TO2 argues that the statistics on FITs in Denmark are not correct due to Chinese visa restrictions, as TO2 explains: *“the Chinese system is that if you are 9 "pax." (persons) or less, i.e. under 10 (persons), you are applying as an individual tourist, even if you are traveling in a group.”* (TO2, l. 143-144). TO2 continues and states that what we believe to be FITs is a very, very small fraction of China’s population and expresses a frustration by the fact that Denmark is pursuing this segment, which according to TO2 is not relevant. Further, TO2 argues that the Chinese Tourism Administration states that only 2-3 % of outbound Chinese tourists to Europe are FITs. This is in contrast to the statistics and numbers presented by for example the World tourism Organization and VisitDenmark, as mentioned in the introduction and in the report by VisitDenmark. These numbers of FITs presented earlier also show a rise in independent travel in the future. However, TO2 argues for a rise in group packaged tours, rather than in FITs. TO2 further argues:

“Especially because the new wave of travellers will be those from the second or third tier cities. We are already seeing that. They are out there, they know even less English than those from Beijing and Shanghai and Guangzhou and what else. So that means that instead of seeing a huge wave of FITs, I believe, and many others in the industry, that we are actually going to see even more group packaged travels” (TO2, l. 197-201).

TO2 bases his argument on the fact that very few people are capable of travelling independently. TO2 argues that in order for the Chinese tourists to travel independently they need more knowledge: *“Because they have to have some rather good ..English skills and knowledge about foreign countries”* (TO2, 172-172) and *“So they do not travel on a 20-day trip to Europe where they barely can speak the language and cannot fully understand what the culture is, what is happening”* (TO2, l. 186-187). Thereby TO2 argues that most of the Chinese FITs will only travel to known and visa-free destination near China such as Thailand and Taiwan. CAF also noticed a different kind of tourist than what was expected, as CAF explains:

“Because a lot of them are not good at speaking English, although that was very much what was stated during the course when we participated in it in Vejle. That those who would be coming now, this was a kind of "second generation" tourists. Those who had been in Europe before in a huge group and now wanted to act on their own and experience things and they can speak English and they are wealthier..” (CAF, l. 120-124)

Based on the primary data it is difficult to either agree or disagree with TO2, as the European and Danish reports and statistics show very different numbers. Yet, most of the respondent acknowledges the fact that the Chinese tourists travel with pre-arranged activities and accommodation which could be related to the challenge of limited options for online booking and non-existing pre-planned packages. Thereby the FITs visiting the municipality might not be the same as those Chinese FITs visiting Asian countries. As this could be a result of visa restrictions, low English skills along with limited information and online booking options, which is holding them back from fulfilling the core motive of autonomy. However the thesis will not dismiss the idea of Chinese FITs in the municipality of Vejle, as those visiting can be described as an European version of the Chinese FITs. This does clearly show that more information is needed, as argued by DMO1, there is not a lot of information on Chinese tourists in Denmark.

7.3 Managerial implications

The research design of this thesis of a case study does not offer grounds for generalizability of the data. Thus by using a case study it provides specific insights on the Chinese FITs to the municipality, which may be applicable to other smaller destinations in Denmark. Meaning the findings could be interesting for other tourism support providers as well as tourism service and product providers or as a foundation for further research. Further, this thesis does not include any primary data on Chinese tourists visiting Denmark or the municipality of Vejle. If this kind of data was included, the findings might have been very different especially when analysing push factors. Originally, the theory of Travel Career Pattern suggest to first provide the respondents with over 70 different motivational factors and according to their answers it is narrowed down to the 14 most important ones. However, this step of the theory was skipped in this thesis and had it been included, the 14 selected motives could have been different. Additionally, it would have been possible to measure the travel career level more accurately.

Another factor which has influenced the data collection is the current circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has influenced the primary data collected in this thesis. Firstly, the interviews were conducted at a distance over either telephone or Skype because of governmental restrictions. Secondly, as all of the respondents belong to the tourism industry, has unarguably influenced the respondents. As the Danish borders have been closed there has been a shortage of international tourists. The circumstantial influence was present in all of the interviews, even though most of the interview guide focused on past events and initiatives. As the interviews were affected by the circumstances, this led to categories and a theme when coding the meaning units in the interviews. This was labelled as the theme of “future perspectives”, as it was not relevant for the theoretical framework of push and pull. It would be interesting to further investigate the consequences this global pandemic has on the Danish tourism industry. More specifically, whether the municipality of Vejle will experience consequences hereof, that will influence their strategy and initiatives towards attracting Chinese tourists.

7.4 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to investigate how the Chinese FITs can be attracted to smaller destination in Denmark in the case of Vejle Municipality. The findings of the overall push and pull framework shows that the destination attributes cohere with the core motives of the FITs of novelty, self-development (host-site involvement), however, lack of online booking options, knowledge and language skills and visa-regulations are making it difficult for the Chinese FITs to fulfil the core motive of autonomy.

The push factors found a different version of FITs in the municipality, than the one described in the literature, as it shows that the visitors are less individual and flexible in their behaviour, because most of the travel is planned beforehand with the help from tour operators. The broad strategy towards attracting the Chinese tourists should be changed to focus on these tour operators, as they play a vital part in the tourist decision-making process. Statistics show that the strategy has already increased the number of Chinese tourists visiting, but there is a general agreement on the fact that it takes a very long time for a new tourist market to flourish. When the Chinese tourists are in the municipality, the level of China readiness is an advantage, however the findings shows a generally negative mentality among the tourism service and product providers towards the Chinese tourists. This negative mentality is compiled of factors such as expectations, prejudices and the press. This negative mentality is hindering the development of Vejle municipality as a destination for Chinese tourists. Yet, it is argued that the mentality will only change the day the number of Chinese tourists in the destination grows, thereby leaving the factors of number of Chinese tourists, level of experience and China readiness to engage in a vicious circle. The findings from the pull factors further show challenges when it comes to private institutions in terms of funding and innovation, and advantages of offering the FITs online booking of pre-planned package. Additionally, the findings are that the Chinese FITs travel to the Nordic countries as one collected destination, and in order to promote travels to Vejle municipality it requires a higher level of cooperation both within Danish regions and the Nordic countries.

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