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Wei Wei

*University of Central Florida*

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## A Research on Chinese Visitors' Souvenir Purchase in Shanghai Disney

### **Need to understand contemporary Chinese consumers' purchase behaviors and experience**

What might Chinese consumer preferences be for souvenir purchases at regional theme parks? Travel marketers have been called upon to better understand tourists' souvenir purchase behaviors and experience in a fast-emerging world region, China. The gradual transformation in economics, social beliefs, and cultural values in the contemporary Chinese society likely has reshaped Chinese consumption behaviors in today's tourism marketplace (1). It is of critical significance to consider Chinese cultural characteristics when understanding Chinese consumer behaviors in the modern business environment. To dissect contemporary Chinese consumers' purchase behaviors and experiences, this research explored the motivations, experiences, and behavioral intentions associated with theme park souvenir purchase among Chinese domestic tourists. Shanghai Disneyland Park was chosen as the study context to offer an interesting angle to unveil Chinese consumers' purchase behaviors and experiences toward a Western brand.

### **Interviews findings: Motivations, purchase experience and repurchase intention at Shanghai Disney**

A total of 32 personal interviews were conducted during fall and winter of 2017. The age of the 32 interviewees ranged from 18 to 49; 15 were married; 26 had a college or above educational degree. Interviewees were randomly intercepted at a Starbucks store right outside Shanghai Disney main entrance and a subway station that acts a major transportation hub for tourists arriving and departing Shanghai Disney.

Based on the interviews, this research found that Chinese consumers' intention to purchase Disney souvenir is influenced by both internal and external motivations. Internally, Chinese consumers are motivated by their *fondness of Disney brand and characters, impulsiveness aroused by the park atmosphere, and need to collect memory of the trip, as well as gift-giving*. Externally, Chinese consumers are attracted by both the utilitarian benefits (i.e., *quality, practicality, and price value*) and experiential features (i.e., *esthetics and sentimental meanings*)

of Disney souvenirs. With regards to Chinese consumers' purchase experience, the majority had a positive experience because of the attentive service and satisfying souvenir products. In these situations, certain emotions were expressed by interviewees, led by *happy, achieved, filled with "young girl heart", relaxed, immersed, proud, and transcendent*. For a few interviewees who reported unpleasant experiences, they referred to causes related to *expensive price, lack of souvenir variety for adults, crowded shopping environment, and service providers who lacked service passion*. Concerning repurchase intention, all interviewees unanimously reported their willingness to purchase Disney souvenirs again in the future. The reasons behind their repurchase intention fell under four major themes, encompassing *affective factors* (e.g., likeness, attachment to Disney brand/characters, desire for "young girl heart", sentimental meanings of theme park souvenirs), *cognitive factors* (e.g., longing for new product version, practicality, cost/performance ratio, souvenir quality), *interpersonal factors* (e.g., children's likeness), and *situational factors* (e.g., shopping atmosphere).

### **Implications for DMOs and souvenir retailers**

The findings of this research urged Western tourism and hospitality practitioners to adjust their strategic design and promotion of both souvenir products and shopping experience to better accommodate Chinese tourists' expectations for authentic well-known Western brands and reasonable price value. This research is also valuable for retailers and destination marketers as they strategize their promotional events for attracting Chinese souvenir consumers. For instance, marketing approaches to Chinese market should focus on both the inward, sentimental value (i.e., *attachment to Disney brand/characters, desire for "young girl heart", sentimental meanings of theme park souvenirs*) and the outward, utilitarian benefits (i.e., *practicality, cost/performance ratio, quality*) of souvenir products. Given the importance of shopping atmosphere in one's repurchase intention, destination marketing organizations (DMOs) and souvenir retailers are recommended to stage pleasant shopping environment (e.g., lighting, seating, color, décor, space arrangement) for tourists as a vehicle of promoting positive purchase experiences at a destination. Finally, this research encourages theme park souvenir

designers and retailers to gain competitive advantages through implementing innovation strategies. This can be done by innovations of creative, themed souvenir products for both children and adults as well as by transforming the traditional marketing and distributing methods using emergent technology innovations such as augmented reality, virtual reality, and self-service technologies.

In all, this research represents a unique investigation of modern Chinese consumers' behaviors and experience related to theme park souvenir purchase at Shanghai Disney. Tourists frequently acquire reminders of their special life events through the purchase of souvenirs (2). The findings of this research revealed why contemporary Chinese consumers purchased Disney souvenirs, how they evaluated their purchase experience, and whether and why they would repurchase Disney souvenirs in the future. DMOs and tourism souvenir marketers are called upon to reexamine their current marketing strategies and to promote souvenirs with full consideration of their target market's culture characteristics.

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