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Zhang Mingli
College of Literature Law and Economics, Wuhan University of Science and Technology

You Kun
College of Literature Law and Economics, Wuhan University of Science and Technology

Li Xinyi
School of Management, Huazhong University of Science and Technology

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The Exploration and Analysis on the Operation of E-commerce in Chinese University Students' Tourism Market

Mingli Zhang[1] , *Kun You*[2] , *Xinyi Li*[3⌐]

[1] College of Literature Law and Economics, Wuhan University of Science and Technology, Wuhan, 430081, China

[2] College of Literature Law and Economics, Wuhan University of Science and Technology, Wuhan, 430081, China

[3] School of Management, Huazhong University of Science and Technology, Wuhan, 430074, China

Abstract: With China's economic development and the improvement of people's living standards, the university students' tourism market has gradually become an important segment and showed great vigor. Through the investigation of China's university students, this article illustrates the status quo on the operation of E-commerce in university students' tourism market, analyzes the problems existing in the process of its rapid development, and finds out the demand characteristics of university students' tourism market. Combined with the existing tourism business models on E-commerce, this article also proposes the new operation mode of E-commerce which fits the demand characteristics of university students. It hopes to promote the long-term development of E-commerce in tourism industry.

Keywords: university students' tourism market, E-commerce, operation mode

1. THE ANALYSIS OF THE STATUS QUO ON THE OPERATION OF E-COMMERCE IN CHINESE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' TOURISM MARKET

1.1 The quick development of Chinese E-commerce tourism market

With the development of tourism E-commerce, more and more Chinese internet users start to consult and book tourism products online. More and more university students would like to walk out of colleges and conduct various tour activities. Meanwhile they get used to doing everything on the internet. Therefore, it will arouse great concern if we link university students' tourism market with E-commerce. According to the 31st Internet Report in CNNIC (China Internet Network Information Center) [1], the number of internet users in China had reached 564 million, in which mobile phone internet users had reached 420 million at the end of December 2012. In the occupational structure of internet users, students accounted for 25.1%, which were higher than the other groups significantly. In the report of "iResearch China Online Travel Sector Research 2011-2012" [2], iResearch pointed out that the scale of transactions on China's online tourism market amounted to 131.39 billion Yuan, with increasing by 38.5%. From the long point of view, the growth trend is expected to remain at about 30%. According to the report, the market penetration rate of online tourism deal was only 6% in the year of 2011, which showed that this online tourism market still had great potential and broad market prospects.

1.2 The strong willingness on travel of Chinese University students

As the young consuming group, university students are active in thinking, energetic and favorite in surfing on the internet. At the age of the development on information now, the university students group constitutes the main body of domestic internet users and E-commerce users. They are likely to accept new things and are more familiar with the software operation and network applications. In the report of "The Survey of National

⌐ mingli-zhang@wust.edu.cn (Mingli Zhang) , ykykun@gmail.com(Kun You) , 541820988@qq.com (Xinyi Li)

Undergraduate Travel Intentions in 2012" [3], it showed that nearly 90% of the university students' respondents love to travel. The survey also showed that only 8.02% of university students' respondents never travel in 2012, which indicted that the majority of university students were positive about tourism and had strong willingness to travel.

1.3 The lack of use on application of E-commerce tourism market

At present, China's tourism enterprises are mostly small and medium-sized enterprises, in which most of them are less likely to have the online application of E-commerce. There are only outdated offline travel products shown on the websites of traditional tourism enterprises. The design of websites is relatively inflexible, which is lack of interaction with customers and simple structure of tourism products. The domestic E-commerce tourism enterprises such as Ctrip.com, Qunar.com, Mangocity.com do better E-commerce integration and focus more on customer services, but the E-commerce services often targeted on business travel customers, which are rarely involved in university students. Of course, there are some E-commerce businesses that focus on university students' tourism market, for example the Qmango.com, which is developed for youth and university students [4]. But its development is only on the basis for the use of online travel market, which has no further development in-depth. In reality, university students are more likely to get information from self-travel information websites. Therefore, to some extent, there are fixed gap between the applications of E-commerce and the expectations of the university students.

2.   THE ANALYSIS OF THE DEMAND CHARACTERISTICS OF CHINESE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' TOURISM MARKET

Young people is the main body of traveling group, in which the university students make up the most dynamic and potential market. University students are easy to accept new things and prefer to obtain information from the network resources because they get high level of education and their knowledge of various aspects of literacy is relatively high. And also their willingness to travel is very strong. In the report of "The Survey of National Undergraduate Travel Intentions in 2012", the survey conducts its investigation in 23 colleges and universities. Nearly 90% of respondents expressed their love to travel. The survey also shows that 47.91% of the respondents travel out once a semester, 28.56% university students go on a tour once a year, and 15.36% of them travel around three times a year. From the investigation, we can see that tourism is one of most favorite leisure entertainment for the university students. Therefore, the survey reflects the demand characteristics of university students when tourism enterprises apply E-commerce in the university students' tourism market. Those characteristics are shown as following.

2.1 The pursuit of higher cost performance

Through the survey, most university students' respondents thought that the factor "lack of funds" was the biggest factor that hindered them to travel out, and the ratio reached 64.39%. Figure 1 showed that 60.64% of the respondents were funded by their parents, 23.01% of the respondents saved the cost of living to accumulate travel funds and 11.7% of the respondents earned the money by doing part-time jobs. Meanwhile, 39.45% of the respondents were willing to spend the money on travel from the budget of 10% to 20% of the living of cost; 28.29% of respondents were willing to spend 20% to 30% of the cost of living on tourism and only 10.75% of the respondents were willing to spend more than 30% of the living expense on traveling, which could be seen in Table 1. Therefore, we could estimate that university students were not able to accept a luxury holiday for they had no fixed revenue. They were sensitive in price and pursued the higher cost-effective tourist products. That was why they were more concerned about tourism E-commerce. In order to get a higher cost-effective tourist product, they could obtain and gather information from the network by spending more time and efforts and get the greatest satisfaction through repeated comparisons on accommodation, transportation, entertainment, dining

and other projects [5].
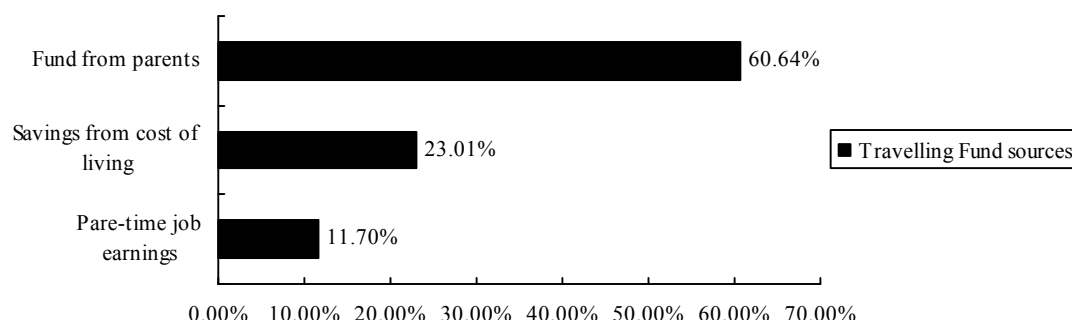
Figure 1.   The fund sources of traveling expenses

Table 1. The proportion of travel expenses of cost of living

10%~20% of cost of living	20%~30% of cost of living	Above 30% of cost of living
39.45%	28.29%	10.75%

2.2 The strong sense of time control

Through the survey, the factor "lack of time" was rated as the second biggest factor that hindered university students to go out for tourism. 56.77% of students' respondents selected short travel of 3 days to one week, in which only 6.66% of them were inclined to spend more than one week to travel. Summer vacation was the best time for students, so there were 63.85% of the overall number of students select this option. The proportion of selecting other holidays was lower than summer vacation, which could be seen in Figure 2. In addition, for the choice of "the preparation time on travel", 55.27% of the respondents indicated that they would like to have two weeks in advance for preparation, and 30.07% of the respondents selected "one month in advance" before going out. It could be seen that university students had a strong sense of time control for tourism although they had more leisure time to handle. They were more accustomed to make a complete arrangement and make full use of holidays and leisure time at weekends. Due to economic constraints, most university students chose short-distance trip for the purpose of saving time and quick arrival to the destination.
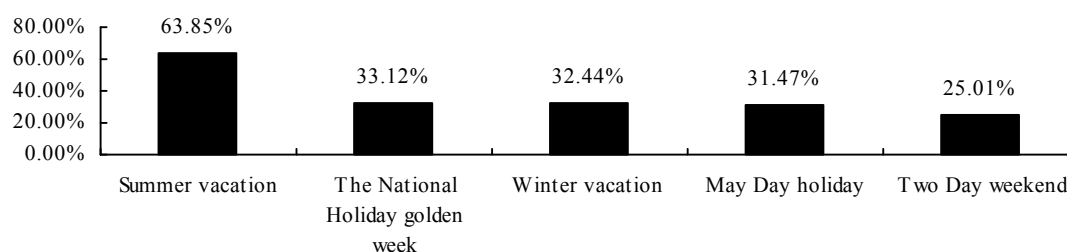
Figure 2.   The choices of travel time

2.3 The highlight of the unique personality

In the survey, there are 73.17% of respondents chose DIY (do-it-yourself) tour, only 14.91% and 6.28% selected travel agents and community tourism respectively, which indicated that the university students had a

strong sense of independence and self-awareness. They did not want to be restricted to the current fixed line and tour arrangements provided by travel agencies. The tourist mode "sleeping in bus, photographing off bus" was not welcomed by university students. They preferred DIY tour to taste the culture of tourist attractions, which called "insight vacation". They tended to control the time of the travel process with a relaxed and free environment, touch the cultural perception of the history and explore the mysterious growth experiences. Through the contact and exchanges with the local community and the public, they had more time and opportunities to read materials of local customs and daily life, and to experience local cultural characteristics and living habits. They were keener to learn by looking and found every tourist attraction instead of reciting explanation given by tour guide.

2.4 The concern on travel comfort level

Figure 3 showed that "the comfort level on travel" was the first and foremost consideration factor when the university students chose a travel destination. In the investigation of "The dissatisfactory factors during traveling", 'accommodation' and 'traffic' were most easily dissatisfied factors, which accounted for 39.06% and 32.38% respectively. All these showed that university students regarded "the comfort level on travel" as a particularly important factor. They focused on the quality of the tourism project, the relaxation and enjoyment during the tourist process.
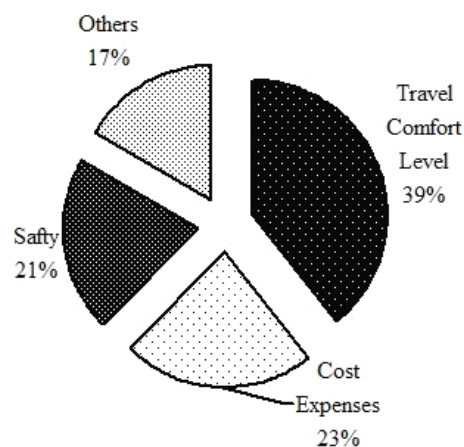

Figure 3.   The consideration factors of choosing travel destination

2.5 The eager to social contact and joy sharing

Figure 4 showed that "close friends" occupied the first place in the choice of traveling companions, reaching 39.86%. From the data, it could be found that university students preferred to travel together with their close friends. The reason was that as the special group with semi-integration into the social status, they were eager to be recognized as the growing self-awareness and the continuous improvement of the degrees of freedom. They hoped to get a better opportunity to show them, get respect and realize self-worth through the travel with their peers and friends. Therefore, the university students were not only satisfied with the simple sightseeing, but also pay attention to deepen the friendship between friends or get to know a lot of new friends while touring the scenery [6]. In table 2, we saw that university students liked to choose 'microblog', "social networking sites" and 'blog' to share tourism information and experiences. Through the survey, we found that university students paid more attention on travel records than the ordinary tourist. They recorded the customs, local food and tourism feelings on the journey process. They were often happy to share this information with others and expected to gain other people's attention and recognition by the spread of sharing. In the way of sharing the travel experiences, university students were most inclined to choose 'blog' and "social networking sites" to share experiences instead of traditional methods such as exchanging photos, MMS(Multimedia Messaging Service) etc.
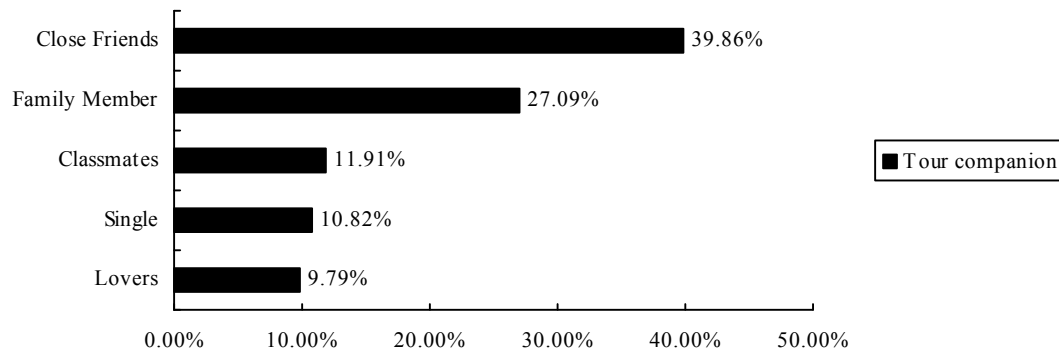
Figure 4.   The choices of tour companion

Table 2.   The way on sharing tourism information

Blog	Social networking sites	Micro blog
54.25%	48.32%	30. 5%

2.6 The tendency to search tourism information on internet

Through the survey, we found that 61.56% of university students' respondents searched information about destination on internet, while 65.1% of them chose the Internet to compare traveling price. This indicated that university students tended to search information on internet when obtaining tourist products and channels of services. They were more likely to search this kind of information by themselves on websites instead of friend's recommendation. Searching on internet becomes the main channel for university students when they wanted to get tourism information.

3.   THE NEW APPROACH ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF E-COMMERCE IN CHINESE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' TOURISM MARKET

Facing the diversification of demand from the university students, we could see that traditional E-commerce model could not satisfy the needs of the market. It is urgent to upgrade tourism E-commerce model so as to develop a new travel E-commerce mode in university students' tourism market.

3.1 To realize the integration between SNS sites and tourism E-commerce by SNS mechanism

SNS(Social Network Sites) are social networking sites, which is the Internet platform to help users who have the same interests and activities to create a social network relationships. Now, SNS is being developed rapidly, which has achieved great success to all networks, such as Renren.com, Kaixin001.com, Pengyou.com. At the same time, these SNS sites also accumulate a large number of university students. Many university students log in these SNS sites to explore the information they are concerned about. The application of E-commerce needs SNS sharing mechanism to promote university students tourism market. Tourism E-commerce websites provide richer information pages by opening a community channel or implanting SNS module [7]. The SNS website users can share their travel experiences and expertise in the form of texts, pictures, photo albums, maps. The users can choose the comfortable hotel, convenient transportation, and enjoyable scenic spots according to the comments from the others, while figure 5 states how the integrated platform works. The comments affect the impression and reputation of the travel website.
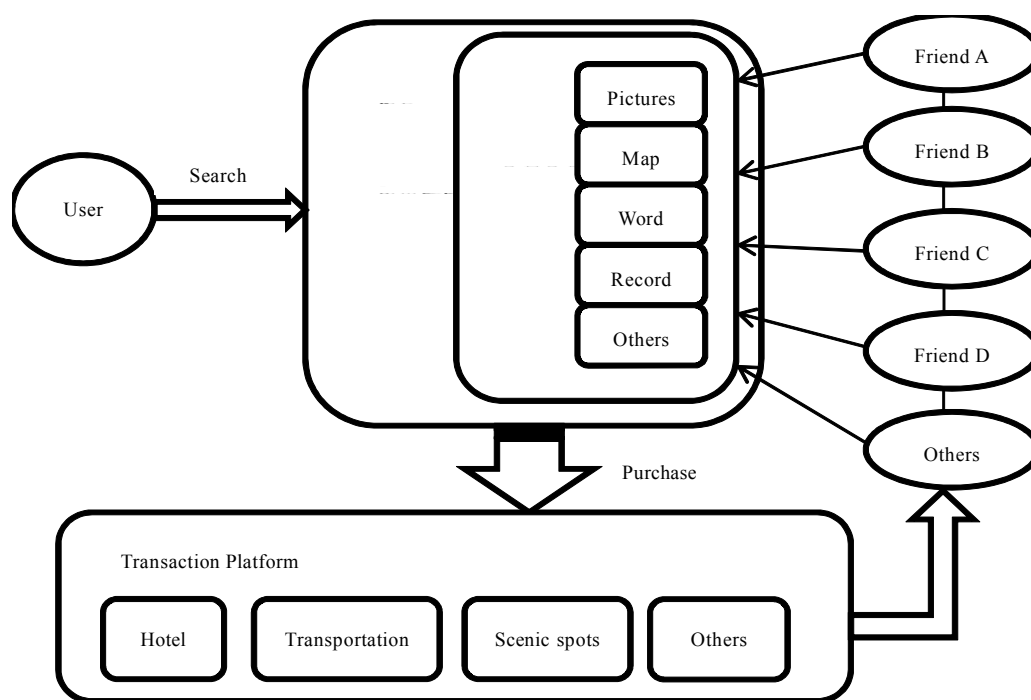
Figure 5. The Integrated Platform between SNS Module and Tourism E-commerce

The establishment of this fusion between tourism E-commerce sites and SNS sites can achieve a win-win situation. Due to its large number of users and a wide range of distribution, SNS sites can get a lot of hits and gather more popularity. Tourism E-commerce can provide a fresh topic for SNS sites, which achieve the breakthrough of the profit model. The complementary advantages of both travel E-commerce and SNS sites are an important breakthrough for the use of E-commerce in university students' tourism market.

3.2 To provide more flexible product mix aiming at university consumer characteristics

University students are active in thinking, diversified in tourism motivation and pursue their own characteristics, which have a great demand to explore the more flexible and excited travel E-commerce site in the development of college students. Firstly, the tourism portfolio should be more flexible by providing free combination of users' experiences. Food, housing, transportation, travel, entertainment, shopping, and other projects are presented separately so that college students can choose freely according to their own selection and combination. For example, according to the survey on consuming willingness, 80.23% of the students are willing to spend money on food. So the travel E-commerce site can provide a more quick and convenient product portfolio based on this situation in cooperation with the relevant group purchase sites [8]. In this survey, 56.38% university students chose "enjoying scenery" for the purpose of travelling, while 48.71% of the students regarded "increasing knowledge" as their second choice. Secondly, the diversification of travel modes should be designed to a variety of alternative forms of tourism according to the various demands of university students [9], such as hiking, bicycle, ships, trains, etc., which can also be combined. Furthermore, the tour products such as university students camping, ecological tourism can be developed according to their eager to explore and experience the life of nature. Thirdly, group tour should be mobile and flexible. Most of university students need to find travelers who have common goals before traveling, especially for girls. Tourism enterprises can implement free ride in line with their characteristics from the group tours [10]. If they get pleasant purchasing experiences through travel E-commerce sites, university students can share their experiences and widely spread by SNS platform. It can arouse more concern and promote tourism E-commerce marketing by travel E-commerce sites.

3.3 To develop mobile client and integrate online into offline services

With the development of network communication technology, more and more university students try to use smart phones in recent years. Tourism E-commerce sites can treat smart phones as the users' terminal, combined with SNS features, which can have better communication in real time among the websites, customers and friends. At the same time, combined with customer preferences, the site can promote its tourist information which the customer is interested in and improve tourism freedom and complete individual customization. For example, android iphone of Ctrip.com has these functions. It can not only provide the latest tour information at the first time, but also can help the customers choose tourist products at any time, so far as to check and book hotels. This will not only be able to achieve the purpose of publicity of marketing, but also to strengthen the links between the sites and users [11]. Tourism is a service industry, so selling products does not mean the end of the service process. In traditional tourism industry, complaints for aftermarket products services had been the focus of claim. The integration of online and offline service will also become competitive points of tourism E-commerce, which will be the important measures to enhance customers' trust.

3.4 To establish an open evaluation system and introduce monitoring mechanism

According to the characteristics of obtaining information on website from university students [12], travel E-commerce sites should pay attention to the word-of-mouth marketing effect, establish an open evaluation system and exchange platform. However, when establishing the open evaluation system, the supervision mechanism should be introduced. Through the introduction of third-party of monitoring system guided by the government, it is certain that the impartiality of the evaluation system and coordination can deal with various problems encountered by consumers. From the investigation, we also found that university students have higher requirements for the quality of tourism. They are favor in sharing and assessing the quality of tourism through better traveling experiences. By establishing such an assessment and monitoring system, it can help university students tourist market and travel E-commerce sites grow healthily and develop efficiently.

4. CONCLUSION

Chinese university tourism market has great potential, which gives the opportunity to the application of tourism E-commerce. China's tourism enterprises should be active to meet the change of demand of customers' characteristics and provide the services of products that are more suitable for users' needs so as to promote the prosperity of the tourism market for university students as well as to better promote the continuous development of tourism E-commerce.

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