

1 **The Roles of Outbound Educational Tourism in China:** 2 **A Historical Perspective**

3
4 *This paper discussed the various roles of outbound educational tourism in China. To*
5 *provide a thorough understanding, it first surveyed the origins and philosophy of*
6 *travel as an educational device as well as educational travelers' motivations in*
7 *Chinese history from the first pioneers in the Confucian era to the late 20th century.*
8 *Then, it elaborated key events and factors that have stimulated the development of the*
9 *outbound educational tourism in modern China and made it into a major driving*
10 *force behind the explosive growth in educational tourism in 21st-century tourism. The*
11 *findings of the study have significant implications for academics, practitioners, and*
12 *governmental policy-making agencies.*

13
14 **Keywords:** Chinese students, learning, motivation, educational tourism, travel,
15 study-abroad

16 17 18 **Introduction**

19
20 Traveling abroad to study, which falls under the definition of *education*
21 *tourism* by Ritchie, Carr, and Cooper (2003), has become a new sensation in
22 China's outbound tourism market. Indeed, since the start of the 21st century,
23 top colleges and universities around the world have found themselves
24 welcoming more and more Chinese students, who are becoming the largest
25 group of international students across campuses. Most of these students are
26 self-financing and pay full tuition and fees, thus every year contributing
27 billions of dollars to destination countries such as the United States, the United
28 Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Germany, France, and Singapore. This single
29 fact is sufficient in highlighting the importance of this market. Nevertheless,
30 this market has not received much attention from the angle of tourism.
31 Although there is growing interest in educational tourism in general, much of
32 the existing work discusses such tourism as it pertains to Europe and America.
33 For instance, Brodsky-Porges (1981) traced the roots of Europe's Grand Tour
34 of the 17th and 18th centuries and its impact on society, while Falk,
35 Ballantyne, Packer, and Benckendorff (2012) examined Aristotle's concepts of
36 phronesis, techne, and episteme as a framework for understanding how tourism
37 contributes to learning. These Western concepts, however, do not suffice to
38 explain the Chinese market, which has its own travel origins, philosophies, and
39 motives.

40 This study was thus designed to fill this void. Specifically, the study
41 strived to answer this research question: what roles did education tourism play
42 in different periods in the long history of China? To achieve this, the paper first
43 reviewed the origins and philosophy of travel in China as an educational device
44 and evaluating educational travelers' motives in Chinese history from the
45 Confucian era to the late 20th century, then described key events and factors

that had stimulated the development of outbound educational tourism in modern China and ultimately made it into a major driving force behind the explosive growth in leisure tourism in the 21st-century.

China has a history of more than five thousand years, in which educational tourism has evolved and played different roles. The roles of education tourism were thus interwoven with the literature review. The final section of the paper communicated the limitations, key findings, implications, and future studies of this research line.

Ancient and Imperial Times

The impetus for educational tourism in China in the ancient and imperial times was to improve individual knowledge and cultivate personal character. The elites of society, those with education, wealth, or power, traveled within the country to experience different customs and view diverse natural attractions in order to broaden their minds or integrate their own ideas and concepts with literature and reality.

Enrichment of Knowledge and Cultivation of Personal Character

Tourism in China dates back to ancient times, in which travel was considered an integral part of education. Recorded documents show that Kongzi or Master Kong (551–479 BC), who is known as Confucius in the West, and his students were some of China's earliest educational tourists. As described in the ancient texts, in 497 BC Confucius, followed by his students, left his own country to start a 14-year tour covering multiple lands in central Asia. His original motive for this endeavor was to share with various rulers his thoughts for managing people through moral values instead of violence. After experiencing great hardships, Confucius was finally welcomed back to his own land. Although few rulers adopted Confucius' views, it was during this long journey that Confucius synthesized his reflections and personal experiences and finally formed his own theories. Many of the scenarios and conversations Confucius had with his students during this journey were later recorded in the *Analects*, the content of which formed the essence of Chinese culture, while Confucius became the greatest philosopher and educator in Chinese society.

The Master's saying "Isn't it a pleasure after all to practice and experience frequently what one has learned?" is regarded as the earliest endorsement of the relationship between travel and education. A scan of China's long history shows that this philosophy was practiced widely and repeatedly throughout the generations, including by many highly regarded historical figures whose work and words have been influential in Chinese history.

Travel and Outstanding Poems and Essays

As Mengzi (372–289 BC), known as Mencius in English, said, "To see once is better than to read a hundred times." A principal interpreter of Confucianism, Mencius spent 40 years traveling China to offer advice to rulers about reform. During his travels, he developed his own theories and became another great philosopher in Chinese history. It was during the most prosperous era in Chinese history, the Tang Dynasty (618–907), considered China's Golden Age when the nation was rich, strong, and peaceful, that China produced many highly regarded poets, among them Li Bai (701–762) and Du Fu (712–770), both of whom traveled extensively and wove their travel experiences into their poems. Some of these have been greatly esteemed from their lifetime down to the present in the Chinese cultural area and other parts of the world, and were included in the canonical 18th-century anthology *Three Hundred Tang Poems*. The popular saying "To attain wisdom, one must read thousands of books as well as travel thousands of miles" created by a group of elites in this dynasty continues to be included in Chinese textbooks for elementary schools and is one of the most inspirational quotations that encourage people to pursue learning and experience through extensive travel in modern China.

Another influential figure who endorsed the relationship between learning and travel was Su Shi, also known as Dong Po (1037–1101). A Chinese writer, poet, painter, calligrapher, pharmacologist, gastronome, and statesman of the Song Dynasty (960–1279), Su was a major personality of this era and an important figure in Song politics. He was also famed as an essayist, and his prose writings have lucidly contributed to our understanding of 11th-century Chinese travel literature on topics such as the contemporaneous Chinese iron industry. His poetry has long been popular and influential in China, Japan, and other nearby areas, and is well known in the English-speaking world through translations by Arthur Waley and others. In talking about the importance of personal experience in learning, Su asked, "If a person has not experienced a situation but jumps to agree with it, is that all right?" Su traveled extensively and wrote of his travel experiences in so-called daytrip essays, which belong to the popular Song literary category of travel literature, the main purpose of which was to use a setting and event to convey a philosophical or moral argument. This writing style was extended and pushed to its peak by Xu Xiake (1587–1641), a Chinese travel writer and geographer of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644). Xu traveled throughout China for more than 30 years, documenting his travel experiences extensively in his work *Xu Xiake's Travel Diaries*, which has remained inspirational reading for numerous Chinese. The period from the early 1600s to the mid-1800s, when the Grand Tour was taking place in Europe, coincided with the first half of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) in Chinese history, when China again experienced a period of relative peace and prosperity and elites of the society were free to travel throughout the country for learning and writing purposes.

Contemporary Era

The educational tourism in the contemporary era of China had several distinct characteristics. First, it was "outbound." That is, Chinese young people traveled to more advanced countries, especially those countries that were stronger than China. Secondly, the educational travelers were focused on learning about subjects, such as economy, military, science, and politics, that might strengthen China as an independent country. Thirdly, outbound educational tourism activities were limited to a minority of people who were considered the elites of the society and who were either selected and supported by the government or could afford to volunteer with their own resources. And last but not least, these educational travelers were all motivated by the same goal, "to seek the right path to advance China" in turbulent times.

Travel and Path to Peace

As shown in contemporary history texts, it was during the Qing Dynasty that China began experiencing more contact with the rest of the world, Europeans in particular, beginning with the Portuguese in the mid-16th century. But unhappy with the restrictions imposed by China on trade with foreigners, Europeans pressed for more access, and by the 18th century the knocking brick they were using to open Chinese doors was opium. Despite Chinese government prohibitions, Britain in particular continued to increase imports of this commodity into China throughout the 18th and into the 19th centuries, leading to addiction by millions of people and the draining of silver from the Chinese economy. Finally in response, the Chinese government ordered the confiscation of all opium and a halt to further imports; this in turn set off the Opium Wars (1839–1842, 1856–1860) with Britain and later France. China's eventual defeat and humiliation in these wars at the hands of European powers marked the start of a massive invasion of Western products and ideas into the Chinese market.

In response to its losses, the Chinese government undertook a series of reforms amounting to a Western-style industrialization movement, also known as the Self-Strengthening Movement, which among other reforms initiated outbound educational tourism. As Zhang and Liu (2005) have described, this era was marked by five waves of studying abroad, each of which reflected the unique characteristics of the corresponding period. The first wave occurred between 1872 and 1896, during which the Chinese government sent more than 200 bright adolescents to France, Germany, Britain, and other European countries to study advanced natural science, military technology, and other subjects. The slogan for this wave was that "to be strong, Chinese must learn advanced knowledge and technology" (Zhang and Liu, 2005).

The second wave began in 1901 after China's defeat in the first Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), followed by a violent reaction against foreign influence known as the Boxer Rebellion (1897–1901) and military intervention

by the West to put it down. As China came to realize, its neighbor Japan was far ahead in acquiring new knowledge and technology and was a much more convenient and inexpensive destination for Chinese young people to extend their learning rather than traveling far away to Europe. As a result, over the next several years thousands of Chinese traveled to Japan to study many subjects, but military technology in particular (Zhang & Liu 2005). This educational wave, however, made the Americans uneasy. In their eyes, Japan's influence on Chinese students put the US in a less favorable position as becoming a world leader. Therefore, in 1908 the U.S. Congress passed a bill returning half of China's compensation to the US for the Boxer Rebellion to help pay expenses for Chinese students to study in America. This ultimately led to the third wave of educational tourism beginning in 1911, as Chinese students traveled to the US to study such subjects as engineering, agriculture, medicine, physics, chemistry, and business management, which were considered important for advancing China's economy and society (Zhang & Liu, 2005).

The fourth wave of educational tourism was greatly influenced by several major events, including the Chinese Revolution of 1911 that overthrew the last emperor and ushered in modern China, the start of World War I in 1914, the New Culture Movement that began in China in 1915, and the Russian Revolution in 1917 (Zhang & Liu, 2005). In this wave, working and studying in France became a trend in the early 1910s among young people who were greatly influenced by the works of Karl Marx and who aggressively sought the best future for China. For the same reason, the 1920s were marked by the fifth wave of educational tourism, as patriotic Chinese were sent to Russia to study the Russian model of establishing a strong nation based on the working class. This wave, however, was soon interrupted by the Chinese Civil War (1927–1950) and World War II (Zhang & Liu, 2005).

New China

Outbound educational tourism development in the People's Republic of China (also called "New China"), which was formed in 1949 by the victorious Communist Party after the Civil War, can be divided into two distinct periods. The first period, from 1949 to 1999, showed that outbound educational travel primarily served the politics. The second period, starting at the turn of the new millennium, showed that outbound educational tourism was a by-product of leisure tourism.

Travel and Politics

After the Chinese Communist Party assumed leadership of the country in 1949, some limited educational tourism occurred for a short period during which the new Chinese government sent a number of compatriots to the Soviet Union to study both technology and theories of communism. But this ceased in

the late 1950s when the relationship between the two countries grew strained. Indeed, from that time tourism itself completely disappeared in China until the late 1970s, when the government decided to shift its focus from politics to economic reform. At that time some people were sent abroad to acquire advanced knowledge in various fields. Eventually in the early 1990s, studying overseas to achieve a better life became something of a fad among the country's young people, but the high obstacles of obtaining a private passport, visa, and financial support gave opportunities only to those who were considered outstanding and who scored high enough on all kinds of exams to secure a scholarship from graduate schools in other countries. A majority of these students finished their undergraduate studies in China and continued on to graduate school in a foreign country for a master's or doctoral degree. Most of those students not sent by the government chose to remain permanently abroad after finishing their studies, mainly for the greater opportunities for a better life. As the new millennium approached, however, this picture was undergoing a complete change.

Blowout of Outbound Educational Tourism

Entering the 21st century, the outbound educational tourism market in China was starting to reveal a very different landscape; indeed, the changes indicated not simply a revitalization but a revolution in the market. As Education Online (eol.cn, 2012) reported, the number of students traveling abroad to study suddenly rose in 2000 and has since continued growing at an average rate of about 20% a year. In 2012, more than 400,000 students obtained visas and traveled to a foreign country to study, while the cumulative number of Chinese students studying overseas between 1978 and 2012 approached 2 million (EOL.cn, 2012). As the Canadian newspaper *The Globe and Mail* (2008) and the Australian newspaper *Daily Telegraph* (2013) have reported, this trend will increase over the next 10 years, so that by 2020, more than 600 million Chinese are expected to achieve middle class status, with the money and the ambition to obtain for their children an education with foreign-label cachet. At the same time, *Daily Telegraph* (2013) reported that a recent survey conducted by HSBC found that among 1000 Chinese respondents, 68% indicated an intention to send their children overseas to study in the next 5 to 10 years.

As further reported in large media such as the *South Morning China Post* (2013), *USA Today* (2013), and the *International Herald Tribune* (2013) in the past 10 years Chinese students have made up the largest overseas group in their top 10 study destinations, namely, the US, Australia, Japan, Britain, South Korea, Canada, Singapore, France, Germany, and Russia. Thus, it is clear that Chinese students have become a major driving force behind the explosive growth in outbound educational tourism in the 21st-century tourism industry.

Another noticeable change in China's outbound educational tourism has been a demographic shift in students. Before the turn of the new millennium,

the market was dominated by older students seeking postgraduate degrees. Most of these were described as the brightest young people in China who went overseas with partial or full scholarships. But since then this picture has changed. In 2001, 90% of outbound students were self-financing, and by 2012 more than 93% of students were self-funding their own studies overseas (EOL.cn, 2012). The academic structure has also changed, such that more than half of overseas students are pursuing undergraduate studies or high school education. This also means that the average age of this market has turned much younger while the economic contributions to the destination countries are higher. Currently, the Chinese outbound student market means an annually increasing multiple-billion dollar business to each of the top education export countries in the world (e.g., *Daily South Morning China Post*, *USA Today*, & *the International Herald Tribune*, 2013).

The biggest revolution taking place in this market, however, is its increasing diversity. That is, this market is no longer dominated by students who travel abroad to study specifically for a college degree. The number of students who travel overseas to attend study camps during summer and winter break has also boomed. These camps last anywhere from 10 days to 1 month, during which students take courses, participate in school activities, live with local families, travel to major attraction sites, visit top university campuses, and so on in the destination country. Most of these students are high school and college students who want to check out the place they might be attending for an undergraduate or postgraduate degree. As reported by *USA Today* (2013), "US summer camps are increasingly popular in countries such as China, where [a] rising middle class can send their children to experience American life—and possibly set the stage for going to college in the USA."

Another new sector consists of students who obtain overseas internships. Since the turn of the 21st century, study, work, and travel (SWT) programs have become popular among current college and graduate students in China, inspired in part by the US Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961 (better known as the Fulbright-Hays Act), which according to its preamble sought "to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries by means of educational and cultural exchanges." Compared with the numbers of those students studying for a degree or attending study camps, the size of this sector is relatively small, but is growing as fast as the others.

Travel and New Lifestyle

China's economy undoubtedly plays a critical role in the nation's booming outbound educational tourism. With an average growth rate of over 10%, the Chinese economy had created a middle class of approximately 300 million Chinese by 2012 (CNNMoney, 2012), which was predicted to reach 600 million by 2020 (e.g., *Globe and Mail*, 2008; *Daily Telegraph*, 2013). In addition, politics has also had a major effect on overseas travel. The open-door

1 policy announced by the Chinese government in 1978 has encouraged greater
2 interaction between China and foreign countries.

3 Indeed, through all of Chinese history, the Chinese government has never
4 been as open as today in granting permission to its average citizens to travel
5 overseas; and the Chinese society has shown much harmony, peace and
6 stability since the creation of New China. All these have resulted in the
7 prosperity of the nation's leisure tourism, which used to be either a "forbidden"
8 activity for the public or a "luxury" activity only for a minority of people.
9 Leisure travel in New China has greatly enhanced Chinese people's knowledge
10 and understanding of other countries. With increasing disposable incomes,
11 Chinese families, many of whom have only a single child as a result of the
12 Chinese government's one-child policy, do not hesitate to send their children to
13 countries they believe offer high-quality education that will make these young
14 people internationally competitive in the future job market.

15 Nevertheless, some people partially credit the fast growth in overseas
16 educational tourism to the overly strict and stressful national college entrance
17 exam (*International Herald Tribune*, 2011). As of 1977, when formal
18 admission to college through the open National College Entrance Examination
19 was resumed in China, students in China's test-centric culture spend most of
20 their high school years studying for the exam, which is the sole determining
21 factor in whether a high school graduate will be accepted by one of the nation's
22 oversubscribed universities. With more financial resources as well as the new
23 freedom to travel abroad, now more and more parents let their children skip
24 this exam and send them to colleges in foreign countries. As InsideHigherEd
25 (2013) reported, 1.4 million high school students in China skipped the national
26 entrance exam in 2012; and among those students, more than 20% went
27 directly to foreign colleges. It predicted that more high school students plan to
28 bypass the exam in the coming decade and travel abroad to further their
29 education.

30 And of course technology, the Internet in particular, has only added
31 tremendous fuel to this market. But this is also an important issue concerning
32 China, where all websites are under strict censorship by the government.
33 Because the government considers educational websites "clean," its people
34 have free access to them and are able to explore their options. Such media as
35 color photos and video clips on the Internet make tangible what they have read
36 and heard about Western education, culture, and society, thus greatly
37 stimulating their desire to travel abroad to experience it all.

38 This ultimate impetus behind outbound travel can be explained by Chinese
39 parents' strong belief in the value of education. For the average Chinese,
40 attending college has long been an official way to change a family's status. A
41 college degree, especially one obtained from an advanced country, means good
42 job opportunities and a path to success. For elite families, a college degree
43 from an "Ivy" school in the world is more a symbol than anything else.
44 Studying abroad helps fulfill the Chinese ancient maxim that to attain wisdom,
45 a person must read thousands of books and travel thousands of miles, and no

doubt helps realize every Chinese parent's dream for their child by integrating education and learning through travel. In addition, to many Chinese parents, the Western teaching style seems more relaxed and more focused on developing practical knowledge and skills than on taking tests, and so is appealing to those who work hard to give their children a good life.

Together, these factors have created fertile ground for the growth of China's outbound educational tourism, such that the practice of middle-class families sending their children abroad as part of their education has become pervasive. Considering the growth rate of this market, it may not be too bold to say that studying abroad has become a new lifestyle for many young people in China and will soon become a cultural norm in China's future.

Conclusion

This part of the text addressed the limitations, key findings, implications, and future studies of this research line. This study was qualitative in nature. As part of the research project that was conducted in response to the phenomenal growth in education tourism as a viable outbound tourism segment in China, it evaluated and reviewed relevant literature information published in both Chinese and English. The study surveyed the origins and philosophy of travel as an educational device, as well as educational travelers' motives throughout China's history from the Confucian era to China today. This resulted in several significant findings. First, throughout the long history of China, traveling played a significant role in Chinese people's acquirement of new knowledge, cultivation of personal character, and inspiration in creation outstanding literature. In turbulent times while China was invaded by other countries, traveling abroad became a path for Chinese patriots to seek ways to build up a strong and peaceful country. In the People's Republic of China, i.e., New China, traveling abroad to study seemed to have become a "lifestyle" for young people to see and to learn about the world.

The key findings of this paper have multiple implications. First and most importantly, it offers both academics and practitioners a view of the origins and history of educational tourism in China, which in turn explains the deeply rooted motivation for young Chinese people today to explore the world. Specifically, international academics engaged in studies of Chinese educational tourists can use this information to develop learning activities and course structures suitable for a Chinese audience. Since tourism marketers are eager to embrace this market as well, they can apply these background factors to effectively refine marketing and service strategies and to sustain the long-term success in this market. The paper presents an urgent call to the Chinese government for establishing relevant policies and regulations, which were very limited at the time of this article's composition, to guide the market growth and to protect their own young citizens studying abroad. This paper also presents a good foundation for future studies in outbound education tourism. For instance,

empirical data could be collected to identify and validate the underlying dimensions that reflect the specific expectations of current students in traveling abroad to study; and the origins and history of education tourism in different cultures could be discussed and compared to reveal cultural differences.

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