

A Study of Foreign Visitors' Motivation to Visit Guangzhou in China

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Abstract: The aim of this research is to examine the relationship between business activities held in Guangzhou and foreign tourists' travel motivation. As there is little information documented about travel motivations to Guangzhou, this study adopts the push and pull theory to identify motivation factors of foreign tourists to visit Guangzhou in China. A total of 200 foreigners selected randomly from three districts in Guangzhou were surveyed between February 2014 and May 2014. The responses were then categorized in various units (e.g. push-factors and pull factors, travel purpose, travel behavioural preferences, etc.) and then analyzed for any patterns. The result shows that there is a positive relationship between the business activities held in Guangzhou and foreign tourists' travel motivation.

Key words: Motivation, push and pull, Guangzhou, travel behavioural preferences, travel purpose.

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Introduction

Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world, many countries' economies strongly depend on tourism. Knowing the travel motivations of foreign tourists visiting a destination can help the country to promote and develop the destination to meet foreign tourists' expectations. By knowing the tourists' travel motivations, it would help the destination organizers to design and position the destination to be more attractive in the tourism market. In other words, it is the same as any other product marketing, it is important to understand the fundamental characteristics, needs and wants of the customers before designing and positioning the product in the market. According to Mathieson and Wall (1982), tourism is the temporary movement of people to destinations outside their normal places of work and residence, the activities undertaken during their stay in those destinations, and the facilities created to cater to their needs. Horner and Swarbrooke (1996) has defined tourism as a short-term movement of people to places that are distant from their normal residence to indulge in pleasurable activities. It might also involve travel for business purposes (Horner & Swarbrooke, 1996). Owing to the improvement of people's living standard, many people prefer to travel from their usual habitats to a new environment in order to experience different activities to refresh mentally and physically. Meanwhile, the increasing number of tourists

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arrivals stimulates the development of tourist destinations. It creates and improves awareness concerning the importance of developing tourism industry.

Guangzhou, also known as Canton, located in the south-east of China, is the capital of Guangdong province. Guangzhou was once the only legal port for trade between China and the world. Thus, the local Cantonese culture was infused with the foreign and the modern. Owing to its favourable geographical environment and history, Guangzhou is one of the most developed cities in China. According to the Guangzhou International press release (Press Conference on Guangzhou's Tourism, 2010), Guangzhou recorded 1.602 million overseas tourist arrivals in the first three quarters of 2010. This number excluded the tourists from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan (Press Conference on Guangzhou's Tourism, 2010). According to China Tourism Statistics in 2012, as regards inbound tourism, Guangzhou were placed at the fourth position in top 20 China destinations for overseas tourists, just after Beijing, Shanghai and Xian (China Tourism, 2012). Although Guangzhou has been ranked as the fourth most popular destination in China, there are still many foreigners that have not heard about Guangzhou. Thus, for the future promotion of Guangzhou, it is still worthwhile to investigate in-depth the motivation factors of foreign to visit Guangzhou. In this study, the push and pull theory will be applied to investigate the factors that motivate foreigners to visit Guangzhou.

In addition, the tourism slogan of Guangzhou "understands two thousand years in a day" aims to promote Guangzhou as a city that houses an abundance of culture and history. Moreover, Guangzhou also aims to promote the Cantonese cuisine as one of the pull factors, because Cantonese cuisine is one of the eight regional cuisines in China. Hence, this research intends to evaluate the current direction of the promotion from the result of analyzing foreign visitors' tourism motivation factors as well. Knowing the push-pull factors of overseas tourists visiting a destination can help a destination to promote and meet the expectation of tourists. This research attempts to study foreign tourists' motivation to visit Guangzhou, which may have important value on helping destination designers and organizers to determine Guangzhou's position and its direction of development in the tourism field. Therefore, this study will identify whether there is a relationship between Guangzhou cultures and foreign tourists' travel motivation. Hypotheses of the study state that there is a positive relationship between business activities held in Guangzhou related to foreign tourists' travel motivation.

Literature Review

Romando (2007) has defined motivation as a basic inner drive that activates people to take action when the desire of meeting their needs has set up within people's mind and draws direction in order to achieve their set goals and sustain a particular behaviour. Moreover, Mackay (2010) has also mentioned that motivation could be defined in two ways. Firstly, motivation causes a person to act or behave in a particular way; secondly, motivation is something that a person uses as a motive for doing particular things. Motivation theory describes that the inner psychological factors causes people to take certain action in order to meet their needs. Hence, tourism motivation refers to encouraging people to participate in or conduct a certain kind of tourism activities to meet their psychological or physiological needs (Wang & Qu, 2013). Furthermore, tourism motivation is a motive that drives people to satisfy their needs and wants through traveling (Mill & Morrison, 1985). Therefore, those needs and wants that an individual holds have efforts on motivating one to travel to a destination where these needs and wants can be fulfilled.

According to Todd (1999), tourism motivation has been a main subject chosen to investigate what drives people to leave their usual habitat and visit a particular destination away from home. From the perspective of psychology, tourism motivation can be divided into three aspects, namely, natural motivation, spiritual motivation and social motivation (Yang, 2002). Besides the social motivation, Guo and Zhang (2002) argue that relaxation motivation and knowledge motivation can be considered as the tourist motivation factors. Hence, tourism motivation is complex and diverse; it contains multiple co-existing factors (Huang, Qi, & Zhao, 2003). Furthermore, Robinson's (2011) Research Themes for Tourism, tourists' decision-making processes and tourists' typologies were studied in detail to find out why people travel. Robinson (2011) has mentioned that there is a constant interaction between sociological and psychological tourist motivations. According to the sociological perspective, tourists' behaviour and tourism motivation can be influenced by the extrinsic motivations from tourists' social environment. On the other hand, psychological perspective varies with each individual. Hence, most of tourists' motivators can be hidden and subliminal (Robinson, Heitmann & Dieke, 2011).

Additionally, Baloglu's (1999) A Path Analytic Model of Visitation Intention Involving Information Sources and Socio-Psychological Motivations explored the relationship between tourists' behavioural intention and the three main factors which are information sources, socio-psychological motivations and destination image. The author stated that tourists' behavioural intention can be influenced by the tourism motivations and different motivation elements have different impacts on tourists' behavioural intention (Baloglu, 1999). As travel motivation is an important topic in tourism researches, there are many studies dedicated on this topic. In the study of international tourist's motivations, Rittichainuwat (2008) has investigated and analyzed the factors that caused international tourists travel to Thailand such as religion, natural attractions, food, shopping and special interests. These were the main motivations that drive overseas tourists' desire of revisiting Thailand (Rittichainuwat, 2008). Furthermore, Kozak (2002) explored the difference of tourists travel motivations by comparing British and German tourists visiting Mallorca and Turkey. The author found out that different nationalities and places visit have different travel motivations. However, there is a common motivation factor between British and German tourists, namely, they travel for pleasure purpose (Kozak & Baloglu, 2011).

In general, motivation comes from an individual's needs and wants. When there are certain ways for satisfying these needs and wants, people will be motivated to take part in or take action in order to achieve personal satisfaction. Understanding the basis of tourists' travel motivation can help destination operators to develop and maintain a destination to achieve the objective of attracting more tourists, otherwise, it may result in the destination being developed in a manner that is inconsistent with cause the needs and wants of tourists. This may cause a decrease in the number of tourist arrivals (Phan, 2010). Push and pull theory is one of the important theories about motivation. Reviewing past literature in tourism research, push and pull theory has been accepted and widely applied to understand the motivational factors of tourists (Kim & Lee, 2002). Based on the concept of push and pull factors, Decrop (2006) has analyzed travel motivations in detail in his book *Vacation Decision Making*. In addition, in Baloglu and Uysal (1996) *Market Segments of Push and Pull Motivations: A Canonical Correlation Approach*, push and pull factors were applied to explain how people are pushed by the motivational factors to travel and how the destinations attract people to visit. They proposed that people travel because of the force of push and pull. In the same way, Uysal and Hagan (1993) has explained how push motivation affects on tourists' travel

decision-making and how a destination attract or pull tourists to travel. In simple terms, push force is related to the desire and needs of an individual, for example, escaping from a daily routine. On the other hand, pull force is about the attributes of destination that attract tourists to visit, such as services, currency rate, culture etc. (Uysal & Hagan, 1993). In sum, push force is usually related to tourists' decision making aspect, whereas pull force is associated with the attributes or features of destination.

In Tolman's (1932) view, motivation can be divided into internal and external. Internal motivation is built on the drive of emotion (push) while the external motivation depends on the cognition that a person holds. Dann (1977) applied Tolman's opinion in tourism field and proposed the theory of push and pull in investigating travel motivation (Dann, 1977). Dann (1977) claimed that the primary cause of travelling is based on the conception of anomie and ego-enhancement. In Crompton's (1979) research of push and pull factors, escaping from a monotonous life as one of the push factors in travelling has been mentioned and agreed with as well. In addition, Crompton (1979) aimed to discover a conceptual framework to link up the motivation from the selection of destination and pleasure travel. Thus, motivation has been classified into two main aspects by Crompton based on push and pull factors. Push factors are the factors that drive an individual to travel – this is known as the internal drives concept. By contrast, pull factors are the factors of a certain destination that attract tourists to visit which is driven by the external force (Crompton, 1979). Moreover, Crompton (1979) argues that the socio-psychological can be the primary push factor of a person to travel and has potential force to predispose an individual to a particular destination. In Crompton's (1979) *Motivation for Pleasure Vacation*, motivation was divided into two levels from the aspect of socio-psychological and these two levels formed a causal relationship. Firstly, the desire of traveling, and secondly, the destination decision-making. In another word, as long as an individual has the desire of traveling, this will have an effect on selecting the destination. Based on Crompton's work, push and pull motivations have been analyzed in different aspects such as nationalities, events and destinations etc. in many tourism researches. The methods of Crompton's researches could be as good references for this research on investigating the push and pull factors of foreign tourists choose Guangzhou as their travel destination other than the other parts of China.

In the field of tourism motivation studies, many scholars have applied push and pull theory on their researchers and to identify the motivation factors of tourist. Furthermore, Bashar and Ahmad (2010) have analyzed the travel motivations of foreign tourists travel to Jordan based on push and pull factors and identified eight push factors and eight pull factors. Among the eight push factors, prestige satisfaction and relation enhancement were the most important factors that drives people to visit Jordan; whereas, in the eight pull motives, affordability, events, access and activities were the most important pull factors. As a result of this research, heritage, food, culture and natural attractions of Jordan were suggested to be utilized for further development in tourism industry (Bashar & Ahmad, 2010). Kao and Chung's (2007) study focused on and investigated the travel motivations of Taiwanese visit Australia by applying push and pull theory. The study found that the main push factors of Taiwanese travel motivations were the strong desire of traveling away from their own country; whereas the core pull factors could be summarized as the good value of visiting Australia which the result contributed to destination loyalty and tourists satisfaction aspects as well. Hence, by using push and pull theory in the study of travel motivation could help the destination planner to understand better the demands from tourists, as well as to improve the existing tourism marketing strategies.

In addition, Cohen (1972) has mentioned that all tourists are interested in and looking for something novel to experience; by the time they want to experience some elements of novelty, they still expect to preserve something common as well (Cohen, 1972). In other words, the terms of novelty and common are co-existent at the same time. Furthermore, Iso-Ahola (1982) considered motivation as escape-seeking. He argued that individuals perceive a leisure activity as a potential satisfaction-producer for two major reasons. The activity may provide certain intrinsic rewards, such as a feeling of mastery and competence, and it may provide an escape from the routine environment (Iso-ahola, 1982). In other words, individuals are easily motivated to have desire of going away when they are in a routine environment for long. In simple terms, the main cause that motivates people to travel is escaping from regular atmosphere. In fact, most of the tourists want to just get away from the daily routine and seek activities that could provide them new experience to refresh their minds. These two motivations could occur even before a person makes a decision of traveling. Hence, tourist motivation is generally self-oriented (Krippendorf, 1987). Additionally, Goeldner and Ritchie (2009) has mentioned that cultural expressions of the people in a destination could be as one of the pull factors that attracted tourists to visit a particular destination. Examples of cultural expressions are fine arts, language, education, food and drinks, industry and business, agriculture and history etc. They argued that a destination which has well planned and developed facilities that allow or invite tourists' access to cultural expressions could increase tourists' desire of travelling to the destination (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2009). Thus, a destination with well-planned and developed on its culture sides and present to tourists could increase the number of tourist arrivals.

To sum up, push motivations are more inclined to the internal which is an individual's emotion, such as needs of relaxation, escaping monotonous place, desire of exploring new places and strengthening social relationships etc. Conversely, the pull motivations are more predispose to the external which are the attributes of a destination, such as services, cuisines, cultures, histories, shopping, trades etc. In short, push factors are considered as launch the desire for traveling whereas pull factors are thought to interpret the choice of actual destination. Furthermore, understanding tourist behaviour can help the destination organizers to comprehend the decision-making process and market the destination in a right direction as well. However, tourist behaviour is a complex subject. Moreover, travel behaviour and marketing strategy can be influenced by the changes of demand and communication technology development (Kozak & Baloglu, 2011).

Methodology

Reviewing from the past literatures, Crompton's Model has been mentioned often in the study of motivation. Crompton's Model identifies two categories of motives among pleasure vacationers namely socio-psychological and cultural motives (Crompton, 1979). The author links these motives to push and pull factors by arguing that push factors for a vacation are socio-psychological motives while pull factors are cultural motives. This theory has been adopted into tourism research. The studies done in this research would be able to conclude whether the push-pull factors are really important to increase the foreign visitors' motivations to visit Guangzhou, China. In recognizing the fact that knowing the importance of both push and pull factors can help the country meet the desired needs of foreign tourists from various markets; this research has carefully selected Guangzhou as the primary case study site. The objectives and research hypotheses of this study are as stated below:

Table 1. Frequencies of respondents visited Guangzhou

Revisit for business purpose	Number of respondents	Sample %
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	0	0
Neutral	20	10
Agree	52	26
Strongly agree	128	64
Total	200	100%

Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between business activities held in Guangzhou and foreign tourists' travel motivations.
2. To identify if there is a relationship between the infrastructure in Guangzhou and foreign tourists' revisit.

Research Hypotheses

1. There is a relationship between business activities held in Guangzhou and foreign tourists' travel motivations.
2. There is a relationship between infrastructure in Guangzhou and foreign tourists' revisit.

A total of 200 international travelers were surveyed and interviewed for this study. The respondents were randomly selected from three districts in Guangzhou (i.e. Baiyun, Yuexiu and Tianhe) which also served as the 'Sampling Frame' of the study. Due to restrictions and limitations in time and resources, and in view of the relatively large geographic scope of the research area, a non-probability sampling technique (i.e. stratified quota sampling) was used to set the criteria or limits for each identified respondent group (or strata) – and each strata was conveniently determined by the researcher. A structured questionnaire consisting of 35 questions (divided in three parts) was used to solicit information from travelers regarding their attitude and perceptions toward Guangzhou as a tourist destination. The questionnaire was also designed to obtain information about the travel patterns and travel behaviour of respondents.

Academic journals, the internet and other verifiable secondary data sources were used to design the theoretical and conceptual framework of this study, as well as to validate and support its findings.

Findings and Discussion

Table 1 shows the frequencies of respondents' visit to Guangzhou. Nearly four (4) out of five (5) visitors or 79% of total respondents have visited Guangzhou 'at least 3 times' over the past 5 years. In contrast, only 7% total respondents are first time visitors. The relatively high incidence of 'repeat visits' to Guangzhou is an indication of the positive brand image that Guangzhou has developed with tourists, particularly among the Free Independent Travelers which comprise of 42% of all visitors in Guangzhou.

Traveler's Assessment of their Experience

The high rate of repeat visitors in Guangzhou is evident of the positive approval ratings given to it by its visitors. On average, tourists' primary interest or purpose of visit to Guangzhou

Table 2. Purpose and travelling companions of respondents

Traveling	Number of	Sample	Traveling	Number	Sample
Companions	Respondents	%	Purpose	of Each Item	%
Family	22	11	Leisure/Holiday	41	8
Friends	38	19	Business	103	21
Alone (FIT)	83	42	Attending Canton Fair	116	24
Work Colleagues	54	27	Jobs	49	10
Spouse	0	0	Visiting friends/relatives	35	7
Tour groups	3	1	Education	60	12
			Shopping/ sightseeing	56	11
			Other	33	7
Total	200	100%	Total	493	100%

is concentrated on 2 to 3 types of activities only – i.e. Business, Attending Canton Fair, and Shopping/ Sightseeing. These three activities comprise 57% of all reported tourist activities in Guangzhou.

Table 2 shows that most of the respondents are Free Independent Travelers (42%) traveling either for business or work-related purposes (e.g. attending business fairs and conventions). While it has been established that two out of five tourists prefers to travel to Guangzhou alone, however, those that travel with a companion – travel with a work colleague (27%). Apparently, Guangzhou is not as popular with couples or as a Family holiday destination – either for leisure or shopping destination. Only one out of ten visitors to Guangzhou traveled with a family member. On average, two out of ten travelers travel with friends or join tour groups. ‘Attending Canton Fair’ appears to be the single largest and most popular activity and reason to visit Guangzhou. This biennial event is regarded as the largest trade and business exposition event in the province of Guangzhou. Considering that nearly a quarter of all respondents or one in every four visits the province to attend the ‘Canton Fair,’ then one can assume that the influx of tourist is seasonal and highly concentrated in two specific periods of the year. The seasonality of tourism in Guangzhou is perfectly reflected in the frequency distribution of the ‘purpose of visit’ of travelers (see Table 2), where business-related activities top the list of reason for visit to Guangzhou – with leisure/ holiday activities tailing behind.

The top three motivators of travel are: Business (17%), Favorable Currency (14%), and Time (13%) – together, they represent 44% of all reported motivation for travel. These primary ‘Drivers of Travel’ all happen to be ‘Push Factors’, that is, the motivation to travel is internally driven often by necessity or need, and the drive to travel is independent of the inherent character or features of the destination. The next three motivators of travel are: Cultures (11%), Cuisines (11%), and Distance (9%) – together, they represent one-third of all reported motivation for travel. Except for ‘Distance’, the other two factors are considered ‘Pull Factors’ of travel, that is, they represent the destination’s characteristics that pulls (or attracts) people to travel to a destination. ‘Pull Factors’ are often considered as the ‘Primary Attraction’ of tourist destination, whereas, ‘Push Factors’ are often regarded as ‘Secondary Attractions.’

The data displayed in Table 2 are reflected in Figure 1. There are over a half of the respondents (64%) strongly agree to visit Guangzhou again for business purpose and fifty-two persons (26%) agree as well. Twenty persons (10%) remain neutral.

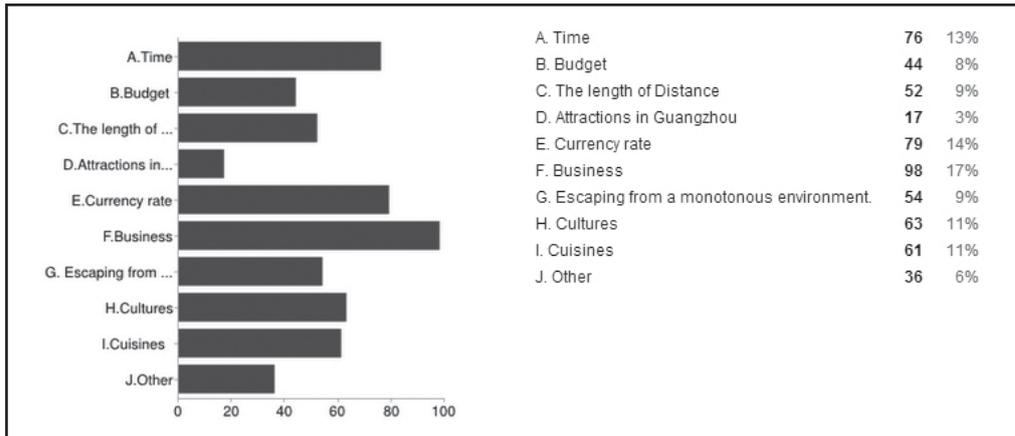


Figure 1. Travelling factors of respondents (n = 200)

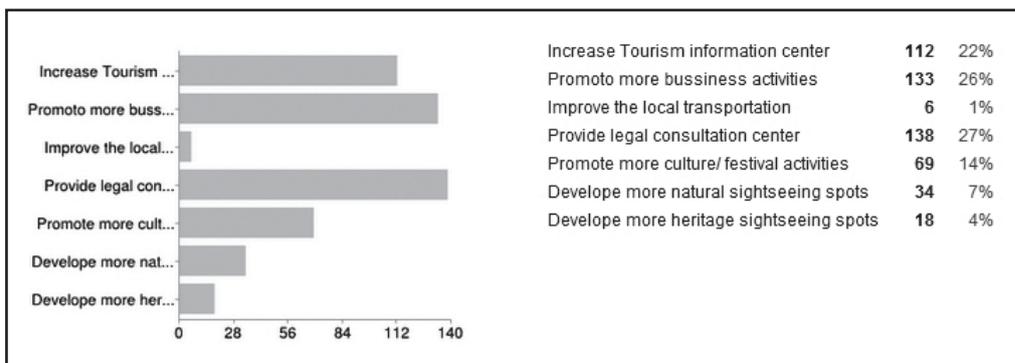


Figure 2. Items that should be improved in Guangzhou (n=200)

From Figure 1, it is evident that both hypotheses are accepted. There is a positive relationship between business activities and cultures related to foreign tourists' travel motivation.

Figure 2 represents the findings from this question: "What do you suggest to help Guangzhou to improve in tourism field?" The respondents were allowed to select more than one item. As the data shown in Figure 2, there were three items have been selected over one hundred times, namely, increase tourism information centre (22%), promote more business activities (26%) and provide legal consultation centre (27%). Secondly, the item of promote more culture/ festival activities (14%) was selected sixty-nine times. The rest of the items such as improve the local transportation (1%), develop more natural sightseeing spots (7%) and develop more heritages sightseeing spots (4%) are lower than 10%. As a result, the majority of the respondents would like to have tourism information centre while they are staying in Guangzhou and for the business part, most of the respondents would like to have more business activities and provide them legal consultation centre for business matters. Regarding to the sightseeing aspect, there is still space for improvement as well.

Recommendations

Guangzhou should build more Tourism Information Centres for providing oversea tourists the information of Guangzhou such as the location of the attractions, distinctive restaurants

and the Cantonese cultures. This would not only be convenient to the oversea visitors when they want to explore the places while they are staying in Guangzhou, but also help to promote more tourism sector in Guangzhou and increase the rate of revisiting.

One of the respondent of the survey pointed out that most of the foreign businessmen want to protect their legal right while they are doing business in Guangzhou, but it is difficult for them to find a legal consultation centre that provides consultation in English. Thus, Guangzhou should provide such service to the foreign businessmen by setting up a group of legal consultation centers that offers in English language. Furthermore, Guangzhou should come up with more business activities for attracting more business tourists.

For the cultures part, Guangzhou should review the current promotion approaches and marketing strategies. Guangzhou should promote more cultural events to overseas tourists. In this regard, Guangzhou can learn from the events of cultures that Thailand held. As the results of travel factors stated in the part of data analysis and finding, Guangzhou should focus on promoting the destination for business tourist since most of the respondents are businessman and come to Guangzhou for business purpose. At the same time, the city should promote more sightseeing spots as a form of byproducts for business travelers to entice them to increase their length of stay.

Conclusion

As a conclusion, most of the foreign tourists visit Guangzhou for business purpose and the majority of these tourists are from Europe, Africa and Asia. The majority of the tourists come for attending the Canton Fair. This indicates that there is a positive relationship between the business activities held in Guangzhou and the tourist travel motivations. Canton Fair as a main pull factor that motivate foreign tourist travel to Guangzhou. In addition, the promotion of cultures in Guangzhou is effective because 11% of the respondents were interested in Cantonese cultures. It indirectly shows there is relationship between Guangzhou cultures and tourists travel motivation. Therefore, the promotion of Guangzhou cultures has an impact on travel motivation.

Moreover, Guangzhou is more suitable to be promoted as a business destination rather than heritage or educational destination since there is more business tourists than other types of tourists. However, Guangzhou can promote more cultural activities as a means to increase the length of stay and revisit rate.

This research contributes by identifying areas for further development and improvement in Guangzhou's tourism sector. In addition, this research helps Guangzhou to evaluate the services and infrastructure conditions in the city. However, the number of samples should be increased and the methods of research should apply both quantitative and qualitative in order to understand in depth regarding to the investigation of tourism development in Guangzhou.

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