

# Travel Motivations of Generation Y Chinese and Taiwanese Tourists Visiting Thailand: The Application of the Travel Career Pattern Approach

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## Abstract

This study explores the travel motivations of Chinese and Taiwanese Gen Y tourists visiting Thailand. The concept of travel career pattern (TCP) was applied to identify the motivation patterns of these two tourist groups. Using the in-depth interview, thirty Chinese and Taiwanese Gen Y tourists disclosed their perceptions and motivations for their visit. The results reveal the differences in travel motivation and the levels of motives underpinned by the Travel Career Pattern framework. The core motives are common and crucial motivations, while the interplayed combination between the core motives and the middle-layer motives is different between the two groups. The finding offers new insights to the tourist motivation literature under the Thailand context, and illuminates tourism segmentation marketing in respect to the Chinese and Taiwanese Gen Y tourists visiting Thailand, especially during the time of the tourism recovery period.

**Keywords:** Travel career pattern; travel motivations; Generation Y tourists; Chinese outbound tourist; Taiwanese outbound tourist

## Introduction

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the tourism industry had significantly contributed to Thailand's economy. The constant growth of the tourism industry contributed approximately to over 20 per cent of its total contribution to Thailand's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC], 2020). The tourism industry benefits society by creating jobs, reducing poverty, and promoting infrastructure and development in many destinations. Hence, the number of international tourist arrivals plays a crucial role in a tourism destination's economic and social development, including Thailand.

In the past decade, the number of Chinese tourists has increased and shown constant growth in terms of international tourist arrivals to Thailand. In 2019, approximately 12 million Chinese tourists visited the country (Statista, 2022a), contributing to nearly one-third of international tourist arrivals. The Chinese spending on Thailand's tourism was approximately THB 543 billion in 2019 (Statista, 2022b), more significant than any other tourist nations. Even though the flow of the Chinese tourists has been suspended during the Covid-19 pandemic, it is expected that at least in 2023, the Chinese government will lift the restriction on the zero-Covid policy for international travel bans (Nature, 2022; South China Morning Post, 2022), and the number of Chinese tourists will return to those popular destinations they once visited.

Along a similar vein, Taiwan (Republic of China) is another country where the number of tourist arrivals has been increasing for nearly a decade. The number of Taiwanese tourists visiting Thailand in 2019 was nearly 800,000 in number, with overall tourism receipts of THB 33 billion (Ministry of Tourism and Sport, 2019). Although the arrival figures are not yet comparable to those of Chinese tourists, the average spending per head of the two nations is quite similar. Taiwanese tourists are often regarded as a potential market. The Taiwanese also share a long history with their Chinese counterpart (BBC, 2021), which may bring about common traits or travel motivation to a certain degree. Therefore, developing more profound insights into the Chinese and the Taiwanese tourists will better clarify these two potential markets and provide a meaningful contribution to the destination marketing of Thailand.

De Vrieze-McBean (2016) reports that Gen Y (defined as those born from 1981 to 1990) represents around 31% of China's total population. Generally, this generation is commonly known for seeking freedom and meaningful yet adventurous and exciting experiences. They are also tech-savvy, trend-followers, and have strong desires for experiential consumption, including tourism (Chen & Li, 2020). Although several studies were conducted to shed light on the travel motivation of this generation, the paucity of research is still found on the travel motivation between Chinese and Taiwanese Gen Y tourists, especially in the context of Thailand. The rising research has recommended that a better understanding of consumers' travel motivation and the ability to respond well to the market will benefit the destination in its economic development.

The previous tourism studies have long introduced vital concepts to understand travel motivation (see Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977, 1981; Iso-Ahola, 1982; Pearce, 1982), which have been witnessed in a constant array of research. In this study, the researchers will examine the travel motivation of Gen Y Chinese and Gen Y Taiwanese tourists visiting Thailand by applying the "Travel Career Pattern" concept (Pearce, 2005).

The travel career pattern (TCP) approach is the dynamic, multilevel motivational structure that is seen as critical in understanding travel motivation on an individual and social level. Using TCP as a theoretical concept, this study aims to:

- 1) *Explore the psychological motivation of Gen Y Chinese and Gen Y Taiwanese tourist groups visiting Thailand*
- 2) *Examine similarities and differences in the travel motivation between Gen Y Chinese and Gen Y Taiwanese tourist groups when they visit Thailand*

The layout of this article is as follows: First, the literature review will be portrayed, followed by the methodology section, then findings and discussion. The study ends with research contributions, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

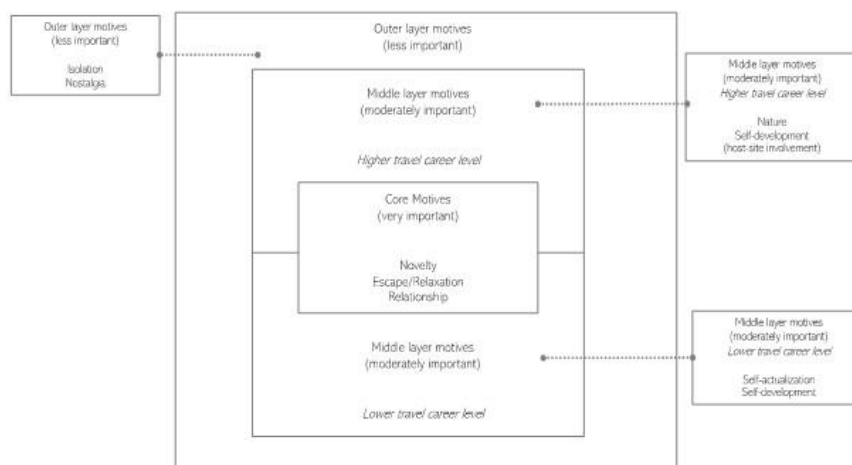
## Literature Review

### The Travel Career Pattern Approach

Owing to the heterogeneity of tourists, attempts to develop a better insight into travel motivations continuously captivate tourism practitioners and researchers. Motivations are perceived reasons or driving forces for participation in activities, including travel (Iso-Ahola & Allen, 1982; Pearce, 2005). Moreover, travel motivations are suggested to be seen as dynamic and changing qualities rather than as static and stable concepts, which are likely to be changed over different stages of the life cycle as well as across various situations (Iso-Ahola & Allen, 1982; Wu, Law, Fong, & Liu, 2019). A motivational framework proposed by Pearce (2005) developed an approach to assess travel motivation in connection with life cycle and previous experience measures.

The travel career pattern (TCP), is a development concept from the travel career ladder (TCL), which describes travel motivation through five hierarchical levels of needs and motives concerning travel career levels, giving a sense of stage in travel experiences and life stage (Pearce & Lee, 2005). The TCP was further developed to emphasize the pattern of motivations that combines multiple motives rather than a single dominant force (Pearce, 2005). It places importance on multidimensional construct comprising various motives, rather than viewing them as steps of a ladder.

The TCP suggests that people are likely to have specific dominant and constant travel motivations acting as a common backbone to travel regardless of their travel experience level. These central motivation factors are perceived as the “*core motives*” of travel career patterns, driving people to travel. The next layer, the “*middle-layer motives*”, includes moderately-important travel motives that potentially change from internally-oriented to externally oriented motives as one’s travel career level develops or grows older. The less-important motives remain in the “*outer layer*” for both high and low levels of travel career. Figure 1 hereunder elaborates on the Travel Career Pattern framework proposed by Pearce (2005).



**Figure 1.** Travel Career Pattern (Adapted from Pearce, 2005)

According to Pearce and Lee (2005), the older people in the higher life stage with more travel experience are considered the higher-travel-experience tourists. The latter focuses more on externally-oriented motivations. At the same time, the younger people in the lower life stage with less travel experience are categorized as the lower-travel-experience tourists, emphasizing internally-oriented motivation factors. The approach provides a dynamic travel pattern as the development of travel experience and a connection between the motivation factors, life-stage factors, and previous experience measures to form a travel motive pattern (Pearce, 2005; Pearce & Lee, 2005).

The TCP study established fourteen travel motives. Escape-seeking and relaxation motive is a need to get away from daily routine and everyday psychological and physical stress/pressure. Strengthening relationships is a desire to associate and socially interact through vacation travel with family and friends. Autonomy's motive reflects a desire to be independent and do things in one's way. Seeking nature is an aim to appreciate nature and scenery. Self-development motives can be classified into personal growth and the desire to learn and interact with host cultures and communities. Personal development is concerned with developing or using skills and abilities, while the host-site involvement focuses on experiencing or learning local culture and interacting with local people. Stimulation is to gain a feeling of excitement or having an adventuresome experience. Relationship (security) is explained by being with respectful people and feeling personally safe and secure. Self-actualization is understanding more about oneself and gaining a new perspective on life. Isolation is a need to be away from people's crowds and experience peace and calm. Nostalgia intends to reflect on memories and think about good times in the past. Romance is described as being with people of the opposite sex or having romantic relationships. Lastly, recognition is a desire to have others know about the trip. The fourteen motives above were classified into three layers: the degree of importance in the multilevel and the national structure.

Moreover, the travel motivation and behavioral patterns are likely to change according to the changing context (Wu et al., 2019). Given a dynamic and changing environment, a pattern of travel motivation may also be altered due to cultural changes, social grouping, and economic development. Age and nationality are frequently used as demographic descriptors in tourism studies as proxy variables for activity levels, interests, and previous travel experiences. The age group is often indicated as a generation, and the generation cohort theory underpins the members of each generation sharing a unique experience during a particular period (Gardier & Kwek, 2017). The nationality is helpful to comprehend an insight into the tourist's cultural roots and the motivation assessment (Pearce, 2005). Hence, two specific demographic factors, Gen Y and a comparison of Chinese and Taiwanese tourists are considered in this study.

### **Generation Y Chinese and Taiwanese Tourists**

Generation theory looks for ways to understand and differentiate the cohort of people consistent with their association with a generation by identifying it concerning the year of birth (Moscardo & Benckendorff, 2010). Glover (2010) remarked that Gen Y is an imperative customer grouping in tourism because of its amount and its purchasing authority, even though Gen Y's morals and manners might be more diverse than the values and manners of the previous generation. According to Choi and Kim (2018), the understanding of Asian youth travellers regarding their perception and behavioural characteristics and their cultural values is still rare and requires further investigation. Therefore, this comparative study explores the travel motivation of Chinese and Taiwanese tourists visiting Thailand. Considering the long

history, these two nationalities are similarly originated. However, the changes in economic development, politics, and social environment may affect the behaviour and motivation of Chinese and Taiwanese tourists.

Given the significant growth of Chinese outbound tourists, the number and the outbound expenditure have remarkably increased since the last decade due to various supporting circumstances, such as the rise of the Chinese middle-class and the relaxation of travel regulations and visa policies (Johnson, Xu, & Arlt, 2020; Zhu, Airey, & Siriphon, 2021). The significant changes in outbound tourism were started in 1997 by the Chinese government, and the tourism was used as a critical driver to fulfil the people's growing need for leisure and tourism as well as to form a modern Chinese-style governance system (UNWTO, 2013; Zhu et al., 2021). This generation was born in 1981 when China rushed up the modernization process resulting in economic and social reforms, and they are motivated to travel overseas as they decisively desire to enhance their self-development with the formation of cultural beliefs and family obligations (Gardier & Kwek, 2017; Quer & Peng, 2021).

Taiwanese tourist is one of the dominant outbound tourist groups that play a significant role in international tourism as their large economic contributions to host countries. Considering the development of Taiwan's outbound travel, the tourism industry was developed in 1979 by the relaxation of the government's long-standing ban on overseas travel as well as the effort of the government to negotiate visa-free entry to facilitate the overseas-travel purpose (Huang, Yung, & Huang, 1996). As the Taiwanese outbound market has developed, they are considered sophisticated and demanding tourists who are well capable of managing their trips, shifting toward niche travel experiences, and diversified travel products (American Institute in Taiwan, 2017; Huang et al., 1996). Moreover, the rapid growth of economic development and increasing disposable personal income also stimulate Taiwanese people to seek more leisure activities and enjoyment, especially travelling (Park, Hsieh, & McNally, 2010; Tsai & Sakulsinlapakorn, 2016).

## Methodology

This research applies a qualitative methodology to explore the travel motivations of Chinese and Taiwanese Generation Y (Gen Y) tourists visiting Thailand underpinned by the Travel Career Pattern framework. As the objective of this study is to develop more insights into the underlying motivations of these two tourist groups who, from the outer surface, share a lot of common cultural characteristics, and the degree of interpretation will be required for the comprehension of the content. Hence, qualitative research is deemed appropriate for the study.

In this study, the researchers choose an in-depth interview as a research method. Due to the nature of the interview, it allows the researchers to gain in-depth knowledge from respondents regarding their particular ideas, perceptions, and experiences in respondents' own words (Creswell, 2013; DeMarrais & Lapan, 2004). The in-depth interview allows the researchers to identify travel motivation and motivation patterns of Gen Y Chinese and Gen Y Taiwanese tourist groups.

The purposive sampling method was used to select respondents based on the characteristic criteria, namely nationalities – Chinese and Taiwanese, and the age range - generation Y category (1981 to 1990). Finally, 30 respondents (15 interviewees of each

nationality) who visited Thailand from January to April 2020 agreed to reflect on their thoughts about their motives to travel overseas.

The semi-structured interview guideline was employed during the interview process. Its nature allows the flexibility and freedom for respondents to express their opinions without being framed to a particular structure. Each interview lasted around 30 minutes, and data saturation was reached after the investigation of each tourist group. In a later stage, the content analysis was carried out by two researchers who separately coded the content. Results are cross-validated between researchers to ensure that the trustworthiness has been met.

## Results

### Core Motives from Travel Motivation Patterns of Gen Y Chinese and Gen Y Taiwanese Tourists

The findings reveal the similarities and differences in motivations between the Gen Y Chinese and Gen Y Taiwanese tourists who visited Thailand. According to Travel Career Patterns (TCP), the three core motives, namely novelty, escape/relaxation, and enhanced relationship, which generally appear in all tourists (Pearce, 2005; Song & Bae, 2018) are found in both Chinese and Taiwanese Gen Y. However, details of activities show some degree of differences as elaborated below:

For “novelty”, which is explained by experiencing something different and having fun (Pearce, 2005), the Gen Y Taiwanese tourists are encouraged to travel abroad to visit places with different architecture, buildings, and decoration than a destination can offer. The settings of a destination which are unique and different from their home countries make the Taiwanese tourists feel excited about the new environment, while this aspect is not addressed much by the Gen Y Chinese tourists. Moreover, both groups agreed that various entertainment and leisure activities during the trip brought them enjoyment. Both Gen Y Chinese and Gen Y Taiwanese tourists mentioned that visiting popular nightlife and famous entertainment places in Thailand is one of the essential purposes of visits. They would expect to have fun and enjoy the feeling of the unique atmosphere of the vacation destination. Interview excerpts here elaborate on the perceptions of Chinese and Taiwanese Gen Y tourists under the novelty experience:

*Novelty:*

“I love *the style of old houses, and they mix with the high buildings. I think this is unique* and hide the meaning of these beautiful things.” (*Taiwanese interviewee 5*)

“*I am not focusing on the cultural things in Thailand* as the main reason to come here.” (*Chinese interviewee 1*)

“I just came here because *Thailand is the similarity to China...I do not think that the culture is a difference to China much*” (*Chinese interviewee 8*)

“Thailand is so unique in the case of *nightlife. Khaosan road is one of the first places that our group wants to visit*. I expected to have fun that along this road has *so many pubs and bars that we can choose*, and so many people from around the world will have fun there.” (*Taiwanese interviewee 10*)

“The only one thing that I want to do is *join the full-moon party.*” (Chinese interviewee 8)

In addition to the nightlife entertainment, purchasing products and enjoying local food are also considered as main activities of enjoyment. Both tourist groups mentioned that they enjoyed spending money on shopping. Travelling abroad is perceived as an opportunity for Gen Y Chinese and Gen Y Taiwanese tourists to buy products that might not be available at their home country, or they could get a better price at the travel destination, together with seeing a variety of products (e.g., brand-name (luxury products), local products, and souvenirs).

However, the interviews indicate the difference between the nature of products as the Chinese Gen Y often mentioned luxury products while the Taiwanese focused more on the local night market. Moreover, the two tourist groups also indicated an intention to gain an experience with local food as a part of their travel motivation to Thailand. Interview excerpts here elaborate on the perceptions of Chinese and Taiwanese Gen Y tourists under the novelty experience:

“My best relaxation is just shopping for things. Thailand is the country that can offer my desire. Thailand is the *best country for me to shop for all kinds of products, such as brand-name products, local Thai products, and souvenirs.*” (Chinese interviewee 15)

“I preferred *to shop at the night market. It was like I can shop a variety of goods and not that expensive* as in the shopping malls.” (Taiwanese interviewee 2)

“The main reason to travel is *eating and shopping...* It is about food and fruits.” (Chinese interviewee 1)

“I want to go *to the flea market where food stalls and street food are available.*” (Taiwanese interviewee 14)

The novelty motive plays a significant role in stimulating Gen Y Chinese and Gen Y Taiwanese tourists to travel abroad, including to Thailand. Various motive items, for instance, experiencing something different, visiting famous places, shopping for products, and eating local food, are disclosed as mutual motivation.

The “escape/relaxation” motive, meaning getting away from everyday stress, both psychologically and physically, is also part of a reason to travel. Respondents reflected their desire to escape from their living environment and daily routine for a certain period. Hence, seeking a place where they could give their mind a rest is another motivation pattern that is found among Gen Y Chinese and Gen Y Taiwanese tourists.

*Escape/relaxation:*

“I just want to *seek for a place that quiet and fewer people* than China.” (Chinese interviewee 6)

“I just want *to feel relaxed and get away from my daily life.*” (Chinese interviewee 10)

“I want to experience how to travel abroad alone. *Going to the places that no one knows me. I just want to get away from the people.*” (Taiwanese interviewee 4)

“My friend and I just graduated; *we just want to take a rest from our study* before us finding the job.” (Taiwanese interviewee 7)

The final core motive amongst Gen Y Chinese and Gen Y Taiwanese tourists is the relationship. The Gen Y Chinese tourists mentioned their travel plans relating to their family and friends, while Gen Y Taiwanese tourists only stated about spending time or having a good quality of time with their friends. Strengthening relationships with friends and family is found in both segments as travelling with friends and family could reflect a positive interpersonal development with their kins or close circles. These relationships focus on tightening the bond within close circles rather than creating a sense of shared values or feeling safe and secure (Pearce, 2005). Interview excerpts here elaborate on the perceptions of Chinese and Taiwanese Gen Y tourists on the relationship experience:

*Relationship:*

“My friends and I want to find some group *activities to do together.*” (Chinese interviewee 5)

“My friend and I just graduated. *We just want to take a rest from our study before finding a job...* We all need to work at the different places. So, *we need to spend time together.*” (Taiwanese interviewee 7)

“I bring my father and my mother for this trip. It is easy for me to *take care of all of our members in the family.*” (Chinese interviewee 5)

The three motives, novelty, escape/relaxation, and relationship, are similarly shared as the central motivation for travelling abroad among Gen Y Chinese and Gen Y Taiwanese tourists visiting Thailand. However, other motives are only indicated by either Gen Y Chinese tourists or Gen Y Taiwanese tourists, which can be considered as particular motives that make these two segments distinctive.

### **Middle-Layer Motives from Travel Motivation Patterns of Gen Y Chinese and Gen Y Taiwanese Tourists**

Besides the three core motives, the study also found that middle-layer motives under the Travel Career Pattern that can explain the motives of the interview participants. Those motives include self-development/self-actualization, autonomy, and recognition (social status). These motives are all regarded as internal motivation, reflecting the lower-travel-career level. Most of the motivations suggest personal fulfilment rather than the self-development that involves interaction with others as part of the learning process (host-site involvement or meeting locals). Under these middle-layer motives, the findings reveal that most Taiwanese Gen Y respondents expressed all the three motives above as their travel motivations to Thailand. At the same time, the Chinese Gen Y tourists emphasized only autonomy and recognition. Interview excerpts here elaborate on the perceptions of Chinese and Taiwanese Gen Y tourists on the lower-travel-career level:



“I want to *experience things I have not seen in my daily[life]*, so I will do not regret it later. To let myself feel less regret when I am going to die, *I need to experience more of what I have never seen or never done it before. See another corner of the world and gain the basic knowledge to myself*” (Taiwanese interviewee 4) - *Self-development/self-actualization.*

“Actually, I just saw my friend’s Instagram post., And then I saw the picture of Wat Arun temple. I just think that if I were there, *I must get the nice picture to post on my Instagram too*” (Taiwanese interviewee 15) – *Recognition.*

“Thailand is very popular for Chinese. Most of my friends have never visited Thailand before, and someone also revisits. So, I think I would be here as well. *It makes me feel do not out of the trend*” (Chinese interviewee 6) – *Recognition.*

“*I also want to travel on my own.* I mean, I can do everything that I want to. Because when I am with my parents, I can’t make my own decision. As I saw many reviews on social media posted, so I think it is quite a safety to travel alone.” (Chinese interviewee 10) – *Autonomy.*

“*I want to experience how to travel abroad alone.* Going to places no one knows me.” (Taiwanese interviewee 4) - *Autonomy.*

Interview excerpts elaborate on the perceptions of Chinese and Taiwanese Gen Y tourists on the higher-travel-career level. Furthermore, when exploring the higher-career level or external motivation of the middle-layer level motives, it turns out that only the Gen Y Taiwanese respondents mentioned the motivation to visit Thailand that relates to this category. The self-development under experiencing different cultures and developing knowledge from the new cultural environments are among the motives of Gen Y Taiwanese tourists, and yet not found in the Gen Y Chinese. Most Gen Y Taiwanese tourists show their firm intention to experience a new culture. In contrast, the Chinese respondents did not show the same interest because they did not see that there were significant cultural differences between China and Thailand.

“I choose Thailand as the destination because I think *Thai’s culture is so unique*... There are many activities that I can do...” (Taiwanese interviewee 7)

“Thailand is *a fascinating country reminding as cultural.* I plan to go to many temples in Bangkok and Ayutthaya during the trip. I felt surprised by the temples, especially *the temples in Ayutthaya. They are so attractive, and I enjoy hidden stories beside each temple.* I think *no country in the world will have the town of historical sites like Ayutthaya.*” (Taiwanese interviewee 14)

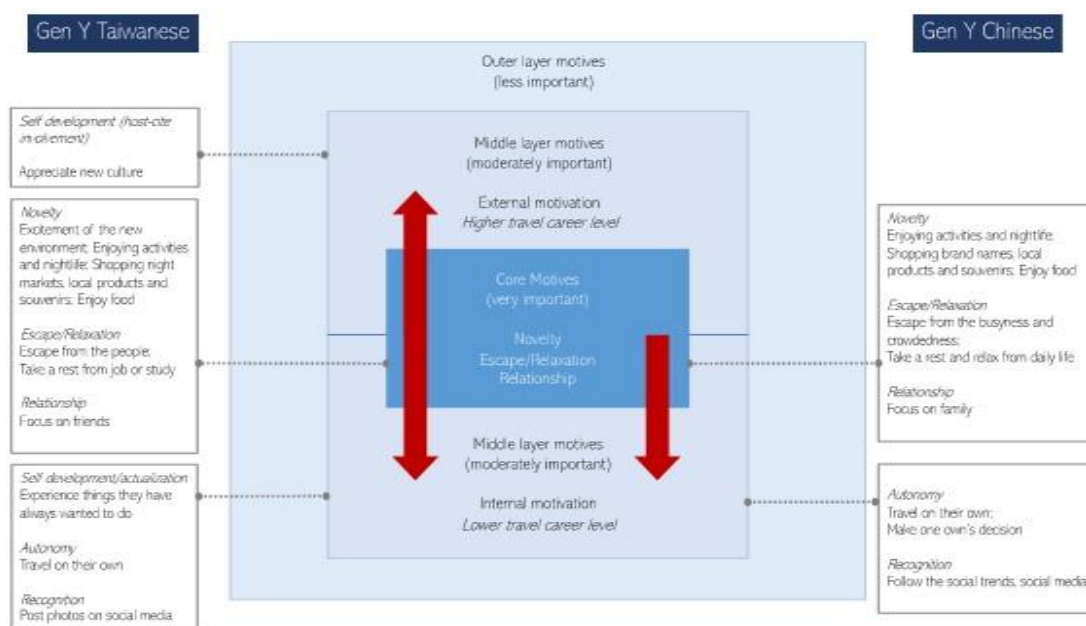
“*The decoration of the temple is only one of its kinds.* And Thailand also has many interesting things about the culture.” (Taiwanese interviewee 15)

*“I am not focusing on the cultural things in Thailand as the main reason to come here. I just was focusing on the other things such as eating and shopping... For this trip, I have no plan to go for those places like temples or palace” (Chinese interviewee 1)*

*“I just came here because Thailand is the similarity to China. So, I just came here alone 2-3 times a month. I am just living normally like what I did in China. But I don’t think that the culture is the different to China much.” (Chinese interviewee 8)*

### The Concurrent Motivations from Travel Career Pattern Between the Gen Y Chinese and Taiwanese Tourists

Based on the aforementioned sections, the findings reveal that although the two tourist groups have shared similar core motives of their visit to Thailand to a large extent, the multiple combinations interplaying between the core motives and the middle-layer motives have some different angles which given a better insight of the Gen Y motivations to visit Thailand of both groups. The Travel Career Pattern (TCP) diagram that represents the motivations of both tourist groups is shown here in Figure 2:



**Figure 2.** TCP of Gen Y Taiwanese and Chinese Tourists Visiting Thailand (Adapted from Pearce, 2005; Song & Bae, 2018)

While Thailand has shown to be a destination where the three core motives of the Taiwanese tourists have been met, the destination can also fulfil the middle-layer motive in this group’s lower- and higher- levels. The interview results reflect the interplay between the core motive of novelty (excitement with the new setting and environment displayed in different architectures and heritages) and the higher-travel career level of middle-layer motive on self-development. For the Gen Y Taiwanese Tourist, the cultural representation of a destination like

Thailand can trigger both a sense of excitement and interest in the cultural knowledge of this tourist group at the same time. In contrast, a similar interplay is not found in the Gen Y Chinese tourists who find Thailand, not a destination for a cultural experience or cultural exploration but more of a destination that fulfils other important needs of tourists (e.g., fun activities, rest & relaxation, family bonding). The interplay between the core and middle-layer motives is single-directional and points down to the lower-travel career level.

Furthermore, the two groups of Gen Y tourists do not come to Thailand for the outer-layer motive, comprising isolation and nostalgia. These types of motivations have not been addressed by these two tourist groups. Figure 2 elaborates the results of the travel motives of both tourist groups under the TCP framework.

## Discussion and Conclusions

This study aims to explore the psychological motivation of Gen Y Chinese and Gen Y Taiwanese tourists and identify the similarities and differences in these motivations. By applying the concept of Travel Career Pattern by Pearce (2005), the commonalities and the discrepancies in motivations between Gen Y Chinese and Gen Y Taiwanese tourists visiting Thailand are found.

For the core motives, the three components (i.e., novelty, escape/relaxation, and strengthening relationships) are found as common and crucial motivations of the two tourist groups. Fun and excitement are addressed as the common reasons under novelty motive when they visit Thailand. Given Gen Y tourists' age and travel experience, most of them are at the beginning stage of gaining travel experiences (Khoo-Lattimore & Yang, 2018). Exploring new places and engaging in different experiences are primary motives inspiring people to travel to overseas destinations that allow them to experience something different from their usual environment. Aspects such as enjoying the nightlife, shopping and eating are everyday activities of these two tourist groups visiting Thailand.

As mentioned by Taecharungroj & Mathayomchan (2019), the destination image shown on the internet and on social media platforms plays a significant role in motivating internet users or netizens to visit a destination. More specifically, both Gen Y Taiwanese and Chinese tourists are influenced by the images of Thailand's nightlife being posted on social media. Images such as cultural festivals, walking streets, food & dining are the common activities on Khaosan Road (one of the famous night streets in Bangkok), which highly attracts younger tourists who seek fun and enjoyment of nightlife in their travel experiences.

Moreover, although both Chinese and Taiwanese Gen Y are similar in their desire for fun and enjoyment, Chinese tourists are highly motivated by shopping activity, especially luxury products. This shopping behavior is not found prevalent among the Taiwanese Gen Y tourists. China's socio-economic development stage can explain the difference in the shopping behavior of the two tourist groups. According to McKinsey & Company (2019), as China's economy and an explosion in upper-middle-class households are surging, Chinese consumers have developed a much higher spending power and led the consumer demands for luxury goods and services globally. More specifically, Gen Y Chinese consumers tend to spend their money on luxury shopping to demonstrate their individualism and success and are expected to be the dominant force in global luxury (Bain & Company, 2021).

Apart from the novelty (fun and excitement), escape and relaxation and relationships are commonly addressed by the two tourist groups. Combining three core motives is relevant to various findings from previous studies regardless of nationalities (see Pearce, 2005; Pearce & Lee, 2005 on the western motivation context and Oktadiana, 2017 on Indonesian and Malaysian Muslim tourists).

Moreover, the middle layer motives are dynamically influenced by the level of travel experiences. The inner-directed travel motives (self-actualization, personal development, recognition, and autonomy) influence Chinese and Taiwanese Gen Y tourists as they are in the initial life stage with less travel experience (Pearce & Lee, 2005). However, the internally-oriented motivation factors are likely to develop into externally-oriented motivation as their travel career develops or grows older, as reflected in the case of the Taiwanese tourists. Hence, the differences between Gen Y Chinese and Gen Y Taiwanese are found to be more distinct in the middle-layer motive, on the higher travel career level. The self-development, especially in appreciating cultural heritage and learning new cultural knowledge, is mainly found in the Gen Y Taiwanese. The Gen Y Chinese do not associate Thailand with cultural exploration destinations. Even though Chinese and Taiwanese used to be in the same country historically and speak the same language, the separate development of the two territories affects people's behavioral and cultural aspects. From the study, the Gen Y Taiwanese tourists are interested in appreciating and learning the local culture and historical attractions and having more local interaction. This kind of involvement is considered an approach to self-development, a new style of intelligent tourists (Horne, 1992), which is reflected more in the Gen Y Taiwanese. The differences can be explained from the Travel Career Pattern (TCP) by Pearce (2005) in the sense that the motive of the Taiwanese is prejudiced by a more mature stage of economic and level of social development; therefore, this can affect the way tourists in general regard higher value on education and knowledge.

An interesting notion is also found in this point as considering that Taiwan and China have a closer cultural connection, the perception of these two tourist groups on the cultural representation of Thailand, together with their nature of cultural consumption, should not be too different. Nevertheless, whilst the Taiwanese found much of Thai architecture and heritage unique, unfamiliar, and engaging, the Chinese counterparts perceived otherwise. They emphasized more on the commonalities of the Chinese and the Thai cultures. Although the concrete explanation and clear evidence to explicate on this contradiction is beyond the study scope and could not be rigidly given in this study, nevertheless it can be inferred that the cultural connection between Thailand and China have been made stronger through media and various forms of cultural expositions (e.g. films and destination marketing campaigns), all of which slowly enhance the degree of familiarity between the two cultures; whilst for the Taiwanese, the degree of exposition of Thai culture and destination image appears to be not as strong.

From the travel motivation pattern of the Gen Y Taiwanese and Chinese tourists, their motivation for travel pattern has reflected that they are in the early stage of the travel life cycle (Wu et al., 2019). The fact that many of the key motives under TCP are related to self-actualization, self-development (also covering recognition and autonomy) of the internal motivation indicates that these two tourist groups are regarded as lower-level experienced tourists (Pearce, 2005; Pearce & Lee, 2005), who tend join the number of tourist activities, visit many destinations or have several travel purposes (Song & Bae, 2018). However, although the

Taiwanese have developed a higher degree of travel motivation in their travel experiences as they have shown more interest in culture and knowledge, the degree of richness on the high-level motives is still low, indicating that they are not yet high-experience travellers as described in the TCP framework.

This study contributes to the current literature on travel motivations by applying the concept of Travel Career Pattern to explain the travel motivation of Generation Y Taiwanese and Chinese tourists visiting Thailand. The study provides new insights into the similarities and differences in travel motivations of these two tourist groups and complements the previous motivational research in Thailand. In particular, the study indicates that the Gen Y Taiwanese tourists exhibit a higher degree of travel experience than their Gen Y Chinese counterparts. This notion is derived from evidence of a higher degree of motivation in TCP. However, the two tourist groups share similar common motives when visiting Thailand.

For the practical contribution, this study benefits destination marketing organizations and tourism businesses by providing deeper insights into the psychological motivation of Gen Y Chinese and Taiwanese tourists. The destination marketing organizations could design content strategies and communication messages that fit the specific markets better. The marketing communication could emphasize the destination attributes that meet the needs of and capture the interest of Gen Y Chinese and Gen Y Taiwanese tourists. The better clarity of these two potential markets regarding their travel motivation and patterns would be a meaningful contribution to the destination marketing of Thailand, especially during the tourism recovery period. In alignment with the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), which aims to re-stimulate demand and support the country's tourism recovery by 2023 (Bangkok Post, 2022), this study can help tourism service providers to better understand and prepare desirable tourism products and attributes that entice the core and middle-layer internal motives of the Chinese Gen Y segment.

Given that the time of data collection was in the early stage of COVID-19, the situation in Thailand was not critical. Hence, the mental stage of the respondents did not reflect the psychological fear or any regulatory pressure when they visited the country and had to give interviews about their travel motivations. Therefore, this research has its limitation in shedding light on the motivation of the Chinese and Taiwanese Gen Y tourists. They perceived Thailand as in the middle of the COVID-19 crisis and were substantially influenced by the number of travel restrictions in their home countries and Thailand. Moreover, given language limitations, the interviews were conducted using an interpreter because the respondents could not respond fluently in English. In such cases, all questions and answers were parsed through the interpreter and then communicated to the interviewee. The restriction of original wording has to be taken into consideration. Future research may consider conducting a qualitative study on these two tourist groups but delving into where COVID-19 has affected the psychological motivation and travel fear. The confirmation of the results by applying the quantitative study is also recommended. More research that broadens the study context to other nationalities (e.g. Japanese and Korean tourists or among ASEAN tourists) will apply to the tourism industry. These nationalities are key tourist segments of Thailand during the COVID-19 recovery. These countries may share some cultural backgrounds to a certain degree. However, various factors might make them differ in their travel motives, and understanding these facets will be beneficial to the tourism of Thailand.

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