

Turning International Students into Active Sport Tourists

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ABSTRACT

According to International Consultants for Education and Fairs (ICEF) (2018), education export has become the fourth largest export industry in New Zealand. According to statistics from the export education industry, of the 54,865 international paying students enrolled in New Zealand universities, polytechnics, or private training institutions in 2018, 30,230 studied in the Auckland region (Education Counts, 2019). Of these Auckland based international students, 20,820 were Chinese citizens (Education Counts, 2019). Although there are plenty of support services available for international students in New Zealand, little is currently known about how or where they like to spend their weekends. While tourism has become New Zealand's largest foreign exchange earning industry and the largest export industry, a surprising lack of literature exists on the tourism experiences of international students.

New Zealand's geographical conditions provide excellent natural conditions for a variety of active sport and leisure activities. Sports tourism is a kind of special interest tourism, which is a social phenomenon resulting from the integration of sports and tourism-related activities. It is now widely considered to be the fastest growing sector of the global travel industry. After New Zealand was first recognised as an "official approved destination" by China in 1999, Chinese tourists were as a research subject of interest to tourism industry and academia in New Zealand. Chinese students' attitude towards active sports tourism has, however, received no academic attention. This study seeks to fill some of this knowledge gap, focusing specifically on the niche and special interest field of active sports tourism. The aim of this research was to gather Auckland-based Chinese International Students' opinions and observations of New Zealand's active sports tourism industry. Through interpretive phenomenological analysis of focus group interviews, this research found that the reason why active sports tourism is not attractive to Chinese students currently living in New Zealand is due to the lack of awareness and accessibility.

ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

“I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a submission extent has been accepted for the qualification for any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the acknowledgements”

SIGNATURE:

DATE: 26/11/2020

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Sports tourism is a type of special interest tourism and describes travel that is centered around the desire to take part in and watch sports. It is a social phenomenon produced by the integration of sports and tourism-related activity and has a long history (Zauhar, 2004, Higham, 2005). The first sports tourism event may very well have been when residents of various city-states went to Greece to participate in and watch the very first Olympic Games (Finley & Pleket, 1976). In the 19th century, the establishment of outdoor sports clubs in Britain, Norway, Switzerland, France, and Germany provided various services to locals wanting to travel to engage in hiking, mountaineering, skiing, and a range of water-based leisure activities (Keller, 2018; Zauhar, 2004).

Since the middle of the 20th century, with the development of international travel and tourism, the popularity of sport(s) tourism has grown rapidly (Higham, 2005). Sports tourism is now widely considered to be the fastest growing sector of tourism, the world's largest export industry (Hinch & Higham, 2018). Sports tourism brings millions or even billions of dollars in income and employment opportunities to the local economy. Thus, the 2018 Football World Cup in Russia created a revenue of US\$26-31 billion in a month, and the Russian Winter Olympics in 2014 added 220,000 jobs (The World Financial Review, 2019). Similarly, the Atlanta Super Bowl in 2019 also injected \$400 million into the local economy (The World Financial Review, 2019).

Tourism has now become New Zealand's largest foreign exchange earning industry and the largest export industry, accounting for 21% of its foreign exchange earnings (Tourism New Zealand, 2020). The number of people directly employed in tourism within New Zealand is about 230,000, accounting for 8.4% of the national

labor market (Tourism New Zealand, 2020). In other words, the tourism industry has made a great contribution to the New Zealand economy (Tourism Infrastructure Study, 2016).

When New Zealand was first recognised as an "official approved destination" by China in 1999 (Tse, 2015), it resulted in a stark increase of research on the tourism motivation of Chinese tourists (Cai, et al., 1999; Cai et al., 2007; Li et al., 2010; Lu, 2011;). Therefore, Chinese tourists were as a research subject of interest to tourism industry and academia in New Zealand (Fountain, et al., 2010). Yun and Joppe (2011) found that Chinese tourists regard "local culture" and "natural scenery" as the most important activity/experience factors in destinations. And "sightseeing" is the most important travel motivation factor (Hsu & Lam, 2003). The analysis of 235 interviews with Chinese tourists in Queenstown, Sun, Zhang and Ryan (2015) showed that the green, fresh air, the natural environment were the main reasons for tourists to choose New Zealand as a tourist destination.

The number of studies on Chinese tourists' motivations and activities is surprisingly limited. The motivations of Chinese tourists to New Zealand specifically have not been explored in detail in the past 20 years and their attitudes towards and of sports tourism, in particular by Chinese international students, have hardly received any academic attention. In one of the few studies on this topic, Ryan and Zhang (2007) found that what attract Chinese students to study in New Zealand are employment and study opportunities in New Zealand while famous traditional outdoor adventures in New Zealand have limited appeal to many of these students. A search on the Auckland University of Technology library database, for 'Chinese outbound tourism' and 'tourist motivation' research published between 1999 and 2020, generated 2,058 results. When narrowing the search down further, by adding 'New Zealand' as an extra keyword, 794 texts were identified. Only three texts were found that investigated Chinese outbound tourist motivation to visit New Zealand to engage in sport tourism. The lack of research seems strange considering the large

number of international Chinese students makes them a potentially interesting target group. The current research seeks to address this research gap.

Immediately prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, about 500,000 Chinese tourists were visiting New Zealand each year, making China the second largest source of tourists to New Zealand after Australia (Stats, 2019). Per capita, however, Chinese visitors spent twice as much on tourism activities and tourism adjacent services as Australians (Stats, 2019). With the global spread of COVID-19, travel to New Zealand has become impossible since New Zealand declared a lockdown on 19 March (Hollingsworth & Sharma, 2020). Cropp (2020) reported that those New Zealand companies that have received the Approved Destination Status (ADS) qualification, 18,271 travel orders were cancelled worth between 45,000 to 3 million NZ dollars, and bookings decreased from fifty percent to zero percent.

The rationale for this dissertation is presented within the following section, along with its aim and the objectives of the study. An overview of the theoretical and methodological frameworks adopted is also provided. Finally, the chapter offers an overview of the dissertation's structure.

1.2 Background/Rationale for the research

New Zealand's geographical conditions provide excellent natural conditions for a variety of active sport and leisure activities (Leiper, 1992). New Zealanders' adventurous nature and creative thinking have spawned many of the world's most unique New Zealand original and active outdoor sports tourism projects (Roberts, et al., 2015). New Zealand has brought several innovative travel experiences to the world, including jet boating, and bungee jumping, providing visitors with countless top outdoor experiences-from exciting adventure activities to hiking, cycling, golf, water, and snow sports as well as sporting events such as the Southern Traverse, Coast to Coast, or the Taupo Ironman (Williams, 2015).

Active sports tourism is as a special area of study, especially in New Zealand (Wright, 2018). Queenstown is widely promoted as being New Zealand's "Adventure Capital", a world-famous "outdoor sports paradise" and an internationally recognised alpine resort (Queenstown, 2015). It is also referred to as the birthplace of extreme sports, diving, bungee jumping, and skydiving (Queenstown, 2015). As a result, active sports have gradually become the focus of tourism in Queenstown, forming a symbiotic development model between sports and tourism.

The chief executive of Tourism Industry Aotearoa (TIA), Chris Roberts, said that the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on the tourism industry is difficult to quantify (Cropp, 2020). It is gratifying that New Zealand's outbreak control capabilities are leading the world, but the isolated island nation's tourism industry has taken a major hit and the recovery will have to be built on domestic tourists, including those who are in New Zealand on international work, migrant and study visas.

The economic value of New Zealand's international education sector in 2018 was \$5.1 billion (Hipkins, 2018,). According to International Consultants for Education and Fairs (ICEF) (2018), which is the world leader in providing professional development and support to international education, education exports have become New Zealand fourth largest export industry. According to statistics from the export education industry, of the 54,865 international paying students enrolled in New Zealand universities, polytechnics, or private training institutions in 2018, 30,230 studied in the Auckland region (Education Counts, 2019). Of these Auckland based international students, 20,820 were Chinese citizens (Education Counts, 2019). There were over 22,200 full-time Chinese student enrolments in all of New Zealand in 2017 (Education Counts, 2019) and China contributed the largest share of international students to New Zealand that year (32% of total enrolments).

With the above in mind, it is particularly important to grasp a deeper phenomenological understanding of the lived (tourism) experiences and

expectations of Chinese international students currently living in New Zealand. More specifically, in an attempt to fill a gap in the field, the study is going to focus on one particular aspect of niche tourism that is known to be popular with free independent travellers and those under the age of thirty: the active sports tourism sector (Gibson, 1998b; Hinch & Higham, 2001; Weed & Bull, 2009). Active sports tourism is most commonly defined as travel that is primarily motivated by the active consumption of a sport or recreation activity (Gibson, 1998b). It differs from tourism which focuses on travel to attend a sporting event as a spectator or travel to visit a famous sporting venue or museum. Thus, the aim of this research is to gather Auckland-based Chinese international students' opinions and observations of New Zealand's active sports tourism industry.

In order to achieve the overall research aim outlined above, the study was guided by the following research objectives.

1. To critically review the literature on sports tourism development with a special focus on active sports tourism involving the international student market.
2. To capture the perceptions (expectations and experiences) of a small number of Auckland-based international students of Chinese origin, regarding New Zealand as an active sports tourist destination.
3. To develop a series of conclusions and recommendations based on the themes that emerge from the interpretive phenomenological analysis process.

1.3 Theoretical Framework: an introduction to sports tourism

Although sport-related tourism has been in development for a long time, scholars have various interpretations of sports tourism due to their different understandings or perspectives. The following definitions provide a solid platform upon which this study has been built. A more comprehensive review of the sports tourism literature is presented within the following chapter.

Hall (1992), for example, defined sports tourism as non-commercial tourism that leaves the scope of daily life in order to participate in or visit sports activities. Gibson (1998a) pointed out that sports tourism is for the purpose of leisure vacation, sightseeing, and adventure, fitness, and entertainment. In a certain natural environment, it is engaged in tourism activities with sports as the main content. In addition, Gibson (1998b) believed that sports tourism is tourism in which tourists meet various sports needs through sports organizations or travel agencies and other intermediary agencies. Standeven and De Knop (1999) defined sports tourism as a kind of tourism activity where tourists leave their homes to spontaneously or passively engage in sports activities for non-commercial reasons. Weed and Bull (2004) regarded sports tourism to be a social, economic, and cultural phenomenon that results from the interaction of activities, people, and places.

Hinch and Higham (2011) suggested that sports tourism is an activity based on sports and travels within a limited time. Furthermore, Hinch and Higham (2011) also proposed that sports tourism is a form of tourism activity that people participate in or watch sports event as the purposes; in other words, tourism activities that focus on sports. Similarly, Zhang (2011) pointed out that sport tourism refers to tourism with the main purpose of participating or watching all kinds of fitness and entertainment, sports competitions, sports exchanges, such as forest tourism, mountain climbing, rock climbing, adventure, and some traditional national sports events. More recently, Kapur (2018) defined it as a professional service industry integrating sports, entertainment, adventure, and sightseeing.

1.4 Methodological Framework: Introducing Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

This study adopted an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach to generate new knowledge from a small qualitative dataset (Smith, 2004). IPA is a qualitative research method that focuses on the experience of participants and their

interpretations of their own lives. IPA, seeks to explore the essence of a phenomenon from its appearance through inductive and explanatory methods (Smith, 2007). This method pays attention to how individuals perceive their experiences in life (Smith et al., 2009). IPA is an appropriate methodological framework for research that targets a small number of participants and invites them to share their personal thoughts and feelings about the experience of a particular social phenomenon (Palmer et al., 2010; Smith, 2004). To achieve the objectives of the research as well as the research aim, the researcher facilitated three online focus groups with between six and eight participants from the University of Auckland and Auckland University of Technology (AUT). Each participant was an international student from China aged 18 or over. A more detailed overview of the study's methodology and methods adopted is presented in Chapter Three.

1.5 Contents of the dissertation

This paper is divided into five chapters. Following the introduction, an in-depth literature review on sports tourism and active sports tourism is presented in Chapter Two. Chapter Three describes the methodology used in the study, including the theoretical basis of using IPA, the method used in the data collection, participants and data analysis. Chapter Four discusses the findings generated by the data analysis and presents suggestions to local and sports tourism related practitioners. Finally, Chapter Five discusses the limitations of this study and the implications for the future research that aim to build up a deeper understanding of international students' active sports tourism market.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The study of sports tourism can be traced back to the 1960s and the British scholar Don Anthony. This chapter provides a critical review of the key themes that have emerged in sports tourism research over the past six decades. Sports tourism research can be divided into four phases, namely "Sporadic Exploration" (1960-1989), "Special Interest" (1990-1999), "Significant Growth" (2000-2009), and finally "Strategic Development" (2010-2019). The chapter's conclusion highlights the gaps identified throughout the review process.

2.2 Sporadic exploration (1960-1989)

For the first two decades after the first mention of sport tourism, the field remained relatively quiet, as barely more than a handful of studies were conducted that addressed the role of sports in tourism. However, research interest increased substantially during the 1980s. Although Glyptis (1982) and De Knop (1987) are widely credited as being the first sports tourism scholars, it was Anthony (1966) who first explored the relationship between sports and tourism, laying the first foundation for all future research in this area. This was followed by Wonneberger (1968), who presented a research study that explored the perceived benefits of active holidays, citing his belief that promoting hiking holidays in the summer and skiing trips in winter would result in an increase in the number of German women participating in regular sport and exercise during their leisure time. Similarly, Zurn's (1973) survey of Cracow residents also emphasized the importance of travel to engage in sports-related activities. Moreover, the findings noted how students and highly educated people with higher per capita income were the most likely to engage in sport during their travels (Zurn, 1973). The authors concluded that health-oriented (sports) tourism should be valued because it is more conducive to people's active

rest and true relaxation, helping eliminate fatigue and change the monotonous rhythm of daily work (Zurn, 1973).

As noted above, Glyptis' (1982) observations of tourists participating in sports activities in five European countries is commonly regarded as the beginning of the development of sports tourism research. Similarly, in 1986, the Recreation Management Seminar, which was organised by the British Sports Commission, was the first to feature "sports tourism" in the seminar theme (Hinch & Higham, 2011). A year later, De Knop's (1987) study revealed a growing demand for active vacations and outdoor sports tourism that could have positive and negative impacts for the local residents and the local environment. Rodriguez (1987) and Tuppen (1988) both studied the impact of winter sports tourism on the host destination, uncovering issues and opportunities related to sustainable development, resource allocation, strategic competition, institutional coordination, image communication, and environmental management. Moreover, Pyo et al. (1988) studied the incentives and obstacles that influence tourist motivations and behaviours at six Summer Olympic Games from 1964 to 1984.

2.3 Special Interest (1990-1999)

The studies noted in phase one were amongst the first to link sports and tourism together. It was during the 1990s that scholars from within the fields of sport and tourism started to develop the first theoretical frameworks and models that separated the study of sports tourism from the study of sport and/or tourism. Over 5,000 different research outputs were published or presented at conferences during this period, many of which noted the emergence of large-scale sports events (Glyptis, 1991; Gibson, 1998a, 1998b; Getz, 1998; Gammon & Robinson, 1999; Hall, 1992a). Glyptis (1991) identified that the combination of tourism and sports was regarded as the direction of tourism development, and claimed that sports tourism had become a research hotspot.

Jackson and Glyptis (1992) explained the importance of sports as a producer of tourism and identified the need for more empirical research, having produced one of the first literature reviews on the interrelationship of sport and tourism. Hall (1992a) viewed sport and adventure as being a part of special interest tourism, but also proposed a framework for analysing the nature, characteristics, and impact of iconic events. His paper on the positive and negative impacts tourism generated by iconic sports events such as the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup was later described as a landmark document on the theme of sports event tourism (Dowling, 1993). He defined sports tourism as non-commercial tourism that leaves the scope of daily life in order to participate in or visit sports activities (Hall, 1992b). In the same year, Hall's (1992b) examination of the travel motivation and social value of participants in adventure, sports, and health tourism led to the conclusion that the demand for experience-oriented active participation in outdoor activities was going to increase dramatically as more and more people started to pay greater attention to the quality of their lives.

Weed and Bull (1997) reviewed the policy documents on the integration of sports and tourism by various regulatory agencies (such as the Sports Commission, Sports and Recreation Commission, UK National/Regional Tourism Authority, etc.) and found that there was no substantive communication between these agencies, highlighting a lack of cooperation. Getz (1998) discussed the issues related to tourism in sports events through the supply-demand system model, whereas Standeven (1998) believed that the potential of sports tourism would only be realised if it was presented as a special interest/niche market. In 1998, Gibson classified and explained sports tourism from perspective of the diversity of research disciplines based on a review of sports tourism literature (Gibson, 1998c), and proposed a future research direction (Gibson, 1998a, b).

Gibson (1998a) argued that sports tourism needed to be integrated into the fields of policy, research and education. Gibson studied active sport tourists in the

United States and categorised the participation model of sports tourism based on three social variables: gender, race, and social class (Gibson, 1998b). Gibson (1998a) identified three types of sport tourists, namely those travelling specifically to watch sports events, those travelling to actively participate in sport and recreational activities, including events, and those travelling to places and spaces made famous as a result of a specific sports team, athlete, or event. This classification method was revisited in 2006 and has been widely adopted by her peers (Wright, 2018). Unlike some of the earlier and later attempts, this simple classification method can cover all types of sports tourism activity. To test the model, Gibson et al. (1998) conducted a questionnaire survey on New England residents of different genders, ages, active sports interests, and psychological needs on vacation. The survey responses showed that young people preferred active sports. The people surveyed had the following characteristics: they were healthy, well-educated, and able to afford sports-oriented vacations. The study also identified that young tourists tend to engage in active sports they like on vacation (Gibson et al., 1998). She later concluded that sports tourism had developed as a research field in Europe and the United States, but still lacked consistency (Gibson, 1999).

Pigeassou et al. (1999) discussed the boundaries of sports tourism research from an epistemological perspective, noting the relationship between sports tourism and other related activities as well as , and the economics and sociological mechanisms of sports tourism. The author proposed that economy and society determine the output of sports tourism, but the development of sports tourism output has the characteristics of innovation, popularization, and diversification. Gammon and Robinson (1999) pointed out that sports tourism, as a new research field, needed to establish special higher education courses that allowed researchers and students to apply marketing and management concepts to the development of sports tourism products and services. According to Getz (2008), sports event tourism was first established as an interdisciplinary research theme in the 1990s. Higham (1999) supported Hall's earlier observation that staging sports events represented a

major opportunity for regional, national, and international destination development, whilst Standeven and De Knop's (1999) in-depth analysis of the nature of sports and tourism and the symbiotic relationship between the two helped them clarify the interaction between sports tourism and a number of interlinked concepts, including the economy, social culture, health, environment, urban development, and public policy.

Standeven and De Knop (1999) proposed that sports tourism is a kind of tourism activity related to sports activities, which clients engage in spontaneously or passively for non-commercial reasons by leaving home or workplace. In addition, they argued that sports tourism also includes participation in passive sports activities, such as watching sport events or going to a sports expo, as well as active sports activities such as diving, cycling, and mountaineering. The third category consists of themed activities between sports and tourism. This classification is based on whether or not to participate in body exercise (Standeven & De Knop, 1999). Their book was the first academic monograph dedicated to the subject of sports tourism. The next decade witnessed the arrival of many others. In fact, in the early 21st century, the focus of the research on sports tourism shifted from largely descriptive accounts of sport and tourism industry professionals towards the in-depth study of theoretical and conceptual aspects of research by improving research methods (Ritchie & Adair, 2004).

2.4 Significant Growth (2000-2009)

The first Sports Tourism Symposium was held in Australia in 2000, with the main topics of the conference focusing on how sports promotes tourism and the relevance of sports and tourism (Huggins, 2013). The ten years that followed this conference represented a coming of age for sports tourism scholarship and generated a small library of sports tourism research outputs (over 50,000 literatures according to the AUT library database). The focus of these studies included the history of sports

tourism development, the classification and identification of prominent characteristics of sports tourism and sport tourists, the establishment of the professional factors of sports tourism, the development of sports tourism destinations, the economic impact of sports tourism, the emergence of sport event tourism, and the appeal of sports tourism attractions.

Hinch and Higham (2001) explained the composition of sports from the perspective of sports tourism, and then explained the concept of tourism on the basis of Leiper's (1990) tourism attraction framework theory. Whilst Kurtzman and Zauhar (2003) constructed the first sports tourism phenomenon model from the two dimensions of sports tourism classification (attractions, resorts, cruises, tours, events) and sports tourism environment (cultural, natural, man-made, social, and economic).

Gammon and Robinson (2003) produced one of the most cited publications of the decade that classified sports tourism participants as being either "hard" or "soft", based on their active participation in the sport experience. According to Gammon and Robinson (2003), hard sports tourism refers to a journey of active or passive participation in competitive sports. This type is also referred to as competitive sports tourism. This subcategory focuses on the travel activities of athletes, coaches, and persons closely related to the competition who stay in local or foreign places for a period of time in order to participate in some kind of sports competition. Competitive sports tourism generally requires certain sports skills. Competitive sports tourists are interested in participating in the sporting event, but they are also concerned collecting points to improving their ranking, such as directional crossing, cross-country driving, sailing, and skiing (Gammon & Robinson, 2003). Soft sports tourism refers to the traveller's experience of entertainment and leisure, not for competitive sports and includes two categories: participation and watching (Gammon & Robinson, 2003). Participation means that tourists are the direct participants in the sports tourism process. Such tourists often pursue the feeling in the process and do not care about the competition or ranking. Viewing sports

tourism means that tourists stay away from their usual place of residence to watch sports activities, sports building venues, sports art attractions, and various unique sports culture experience processes, such as watching the Olympic Games, World Cup, other large sports events.

Zauhar (2004) argued that sports tourism refers to the sum of the relations between various sports and entertainment, fitness and competition, rehabilitation, adventure, watching sports events that tourists engage in during their travels and the tourism destinations, tourism enterprises, and the wider society. In other words, sports tourism products refer to the sum of sports utility, tourism utility, and consumption and services to meet the needs of tourists in the process of tourism. It is a unique tourism product, which only requires the two prerequisites of sports and tourism. Deery et al. (2004) disputed this, however, suggesting that sports tourism is essentially a form of event tourism, whilst Gibson (2005) interpreted sports tourism from the perspectives of social culture, tourism role, destination brand, seasonality, relationship between host and guest, urban renewal, marketing, service quality, economics, policy and management, all of which combine to provide a better theoretical outline of research and practice.

Kurtzman's (2005) refinement of the existing classifications of sports tourism focused on the supply factors. His classification is based on the type of sports tourism supply in the vertical direction, and horizontally considering both the factors of the destination of sports tourism and the factors of the form of participation in sports tourism. It is divided into five categories: sports tourism attractions, sports tourism resorts, sports tourism cruises, sports tourism tours, and sports tourism events (Kurtzman, 2005). The contribution of this comprehensive classification is division of sports tourism activities according to the site supply, including land (mountain) sports, water sports, air sports, as well as ice and snow sports. However, there are also some problems with this approach. First of all, the classification type is too comprehensive which caused the intersection between types. Thus, both tourism

tours and event tourism both include cases of sports event spectator tourism. Secondly, the division of subcategories is vague. For example, the two subcategories of "attractions" and "resorts" are divided according to different sports tourism supply destinations. The mobile nature of "cruise tourism" is difficult to attribute to the destination. "Adventure tourism" is more irrelevant to the destination and is according to the type of sensory experience (Kurtzman, 2005).

According to Gibson (2006), sports tourism refers to people temporarily leaving their regular living communities to participate in sports (active sports tourism), to watch sports competitions (event sports tourism), or to visit old spots related settings (nostalgic sports tourism). In 2007, active sports tourism was further defined as tourism that focuses on active consumption of sports or recreation activities (Weed, 2008). Shipway and Jones (2007) applied the concept of serious leisure to describe the behaviour of active sports tourists committed to long-distance running. They found that active sports tourists have a strong sense of identity and belonging through participating in activities.

Weed (2008) conducted a comprehensive review and summary of leading international scholars' literatures, providing a valuable theoretical basis for those studying the emergent field. At the conclusion of his review, Weed (2008) proposed that western sports tourism research was heavily focused on descriptive behavioural research, and re-emphasized the importance of more in-depth research looking at the sports tourism experience. Weed and Bull (2009), like many of the authors mentioned above, also emphasized the importance of active sports participation and event spectating. They explored the links between sport and tourism by evaluating the interests of sports participants and tourists and studying the negative effects of sports tourism. Having done so, they defined sports tourism more broadly than many of those mentioned elsewhere in this review, referring to it simply as a social, economic, and cultural phenomenon that results from the interaction of activities, people, and places.

2.5 Strategic development (2010-2019)

In recent decades, the majority of the sports tourism literature has documented and debated the socio-economic impacts attached to producing and consuming international events (Muller, 2015). As the number of people participating in sports continues to increase, the combination of sports and tourism has spawned a huge market space. Sport and tourism scholars have also expanded the scope of research to the integration of sports tourism theories with other disciplines. The solid foundations first laid during the 1990s and early 2000s have been continuously tested and strengthened over the past through the application of new as well as established theoretical knowledge from within the fields of sport, tourism, events, leisure, ecology, environmental science, geography, marketing, and many other related disciplines.

In 2017, Gibson marked the 20th anniversary of the *Journal of Sport and Tourism* by conducting a systematic review of sports tourism research, within which she repeated her call for the integration of theories from other academic disciplines into the theories used by sport and tourism scholars engaging in sports tourism research. A year later, Gibson (2017) illustrated how the Event Travel Careers (ETC) model first proposed by Getz (2008) had been widely used in the active sports tourism field to explore a new research framework for intrinsic motivation to participate in activities (see, for example, Buning & Gibson, 2015, 2016; Getz & Andersson, 2010; Getz & McConnell, 2011; Lamont et al., 2012; Patterson, et al., 2016). In the past ten years, the development of amateur participatory sports events, such as various marathon competitions held by various cities, has stimulated more scholars to study the tourists who actively participate in sports activities and travel. Hinch and Kono (2018), for example, explored the sports travel of extreme marathon runners and found that the natural environment of the participating venues affected the way participants evaluated the event and their interest to visit the site again at a later stage.

When revisiting her notion of the active sport tourist, Gibson et al. (2018) noted how it can be divided into two types: leisure fitness and adventure stimulation. Leisure and fitness sports tourism generally includes activities with not too much exercise, less dangerous and guaranteed safety. It can also be divided into three types: leisure, vacation, and fitness. Fishing, golfing, and dancing are leisure sports tourism (Gibson et al., 2018). The main purpose of vacation-based sports tourism is to eliminate fatigue, to adjust body and mind, and to relieve stress and involves activities, such as swimming and fitness activities in resort hotels. Fitness sports tourism refers to physical activities, such as playing tennis, badminton, and hiking (Gibson et al., 2018). The main purpose of this type of sports tourism is to exercise muscles, and to relax body and mind. The focuses with these activities are not on sports skills or the pursuit of a particular, and will not deliberately pursue ranking. Another kind of adventure-stimulating sports tourism is to challenge oneself through thrilling and exciting sports and to achieve oneself in overcoming oneself (Gibson et al., 2018). Adventure-stimulating sports tourism can be further divided into extreme and traditional activities. Extreme sports tourism refers to engagement in dangerous activities, such as rock climbing, rafting, adventure, bungee jumping, or flying in hot air balloons. Traditional sports tourism mainly refers to tourism that involves mass sports activities, such as sailing or skiing (Gibson et al., 2018).

Hinch and Higham (2011) have also revisited their initial sports tourism development research on two separate occasions, further expanding their discussions from the perspective of culture and society, technological progress, economic and political influence, and consumption patterns. In their most recent collaboration, the authors concluded that the consumption and development of sports tourism has benefitted greatly from the forces of globalisation, democratisation, economic and political forces, changing social attitudes and values, and the power of the media (Hinch & Higham, 2011). Looking to the future, they touch upon the importance of establishing authenticity and sustainability. One thing that has not changed, however, is their definition of sports tourism. They still believe

that it is an activity based on sports and travels away from home within a limited time (Hinch & Higham, 2011).

Within the past couple of years, Kapur (2018) referred to sports tourism as a professional tourism service industry integrating sports, entertainment, adventure, and sightseeing. Therefore, in a broad sense, the sports tourism market refers to the sum of the economic behaviour and economic relations of sports tourism commodities in the exchange process; in a narrow sense, the sports tourism market refers to the place where sports tourism commodities are exchanged. Newland and Aicher (2018) used the push-pull theory to explore the relationship between the participants' travel motivation (push) and the event and destination (pull) for those pursuing running, cycling, or triathlon events. They found that the sports tourist motivations and the attributes of destinations that attract them to participate in competitions are not the same, which led them to suggest that the planning of amateur events should be consistent with the expectations of the target market. Participating in active sports tourism has also been found to have a positive impact on fitness, friendship, socializing, and identity (Gibson, 2018).

Wright (2018) employed autoethnography to capture the increased awareness, attraction, attachment, and allegiance of active sports tourism amongst active ageing amateur athletes, whilst Ndayisenga and Tomoliyus (2019) produced a descriptive study using correlation and linear regression based on interviews with 51 international students from 45 countries. Both studies showed that to increase the economy, job opportunities, and income of local communities in host countries through sports event tourism, local infrastructure, environment, and tourism facilities should be improved to encourage tourists interested in sports to spend more money and stay longer, thus stimulating tourism. Earlier this year, Nyikana and Tichaawal (2020) published the outcome of a survey on participants of four large sports tourism activities in Cameroon that concluded that a country's policies and planning as well as its social and political environment have a great impact on the

development of the country's sports tourism.

2.6 Conclusion and summary

Sports tourism is now widely regarded as an economic activity based on certain sports resources and sports facilities and provides tourists with various sports-related services in the form of tourism commodities (Mason, 2016). As noted in the previous section, there have been many studies published on the different types of sports tourism activities and the impacts caused by the development of sports tourism destinations over the past twenty years. Much of the interdisciplinary analysis has been conducted from multiple perspectives, including psychology, sociology, and economics. There has also been a plethora of literature written on the different characteristics of those who engage in sports tourism behaviour (the sports tourist). A search of the key phrase "active sports tourism" through the Auckland University of Technology's library database revealed 2,158 texts.

Active sports tourism provides tourists with extensive participation opportunities, which is related to the direct physical participation of tourists (Hinch & Higham, 2011). Research on active sports tourism in the 1990s was still in its infancy, and the research focus was mainly on the general behaviour and preferences of mass sports enthusiasts. The theoretical foundation of sports tourism as a unique form of tourism has not been further developed (Gibson, 2005; Weed, 2008). It can be seen that physical participation in sports is the most important feature of active sports tourism, and social identity, social participation, and sports experience are the main components of active sports tourism (Gibson, 2018). Active sports tourism research has been carried out in a wide range of fields, but there are still many areas and facets that remain unexplored. In terms of active sports tourism in New Zealand, the focus of the sports management literature has always been on older consumers engaged in serious leisure active aging activities (Wright, 2018).

Although international students were included in all three of Gibson's typologies, they have rarely been the primary focus of the researcher's gaze (Ndayisenga & Tomoliyus, 2019). Adding "international students" to the previous search term revealed 415 results, none of which were sports tourism related. When "Chinese" was added, the search revealed 0 results. This demonstrates that there is a lack of literature on the positive sports tourism experiences or expectations of international students, especially the thousands of young Chinese scholars who choose to complete higher education in New Zealand. Gaining an understanding of the characteristics of university students' sports tourism is necessary to study sports tourism and the development of sports tourism market. To date, no one has paid attention to the attractiveness of New Zealand's sports tourism industry from the perspective of international students of Chinese nationality. Studying the views of Chinese international students in Auckland on the attractiveness of New Zealand's active sports tourism would provide business owners and destination marketers with new insights into the expectations and experiences of Chinese students (and their families). It will also help universities better understand what attracts Chinese students to study in New Zealand and how they like to spend the weekend/holiday. This study attempts to fill the knowledge gap in this area.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this research is to gather Auckland-based Chinese International Students' opinions and observations of New Zealand's active sports tourism industry. To achieve this goal, the researcher collected the views and observations of Chinese students in Auckland, and provided Chinese students studying in Auckland with the opportunity to share their views in a safe environment. Having provided a comprehensive review of the active sports tourism literature in the previous chapter, this chapter provides an overview of the chosen methodology and the methods used to collect and analyse the data.

3.2 Methodology

This study uses the research method of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA combines three complex philosophies: phenomenology, hermeneutics, and ideography (Smith, 2004). At the same time, it is also a qualitative research method to explore the essence of a problem using an inductive and descriptive method. In other words, IPA focuses on the exploration of individual experience and essence (Giorgi, 2009). This method is devoted to the study of how people perceive their life experiences and pays special attention to those life experiences that are important and special to individuals (Smith et al., 2009). Participants can express their opinions and share their experiences and this allows researchers to collect extensive information about a phenomenon (Sandelowski, 2000).

IPA aims to conduct detailed and systematic reflections on daily life experiences, focusing on the embodied, cognitive, emotional, and existential problems of people being-in-the-world (Smith et al., 2009). The analysis in the use of IPA always includes

interpretation, emphasizing that the researcher understands the feelings of the life experience of the research objects through his own life experience (Smith, 2004; Smith & Osborn, 2004). In addition, IPA emphasizes the ideography of research, and believes that the primary value of research lies in the detailed analysis of unique examples of life experience. Only in this way can the complexity of human psychology be revealed (Smith et al., 2009). Phenomenology does not attempt to construct or presume what it will discover (van Manen, 2017). Smith (2011) suggested that IPA is the most suitable method when paying attention to the complex process of individual cognition, language, emotion, and physiological state. Therefore, if a research wants to pay attention to the experience of a specific phenomenon by a specific group using smaller groups and higher homogeneity of samples, then IPA may be a more appropriate method.

The purpose of this research is to gain insights into the perspectives of Chinese international students studying in Auckland with active sports tourism in New Zealand. The study is based on a small sample size (18 students) with high homogeneity (full-time Auckland based Chinese international university students). The experience of active sports tourism in New Zealand shared by each student is an important and special life experience for them. The first step in the analysis process is an examination of each participant's conversation on a micro level (what does that mean?). This involves the identification of important themes from the data and an exploration of the relationship between each element and between each element and the surrounding situation. Finally, through detailed analysis of their attitudes towards and experiences of New Zealand's active sports tourism the purpose of research is achieved. Therefore, IPA is most suitable method for this research.

3.3 Data collection

A qualified IPA study requires a clear and transparent data collection process (Hou et al., 2019). IPA has no strict rules on sample size (Hou et al., 2019) so that IPA

researchers mostly follow the principle of “how much data is available to answer research questions” (Hou et al., 2019) to determine their sample size. Smith (2011) suggested that IPA research should focus on smaller samples to allow for a richer, deeper, and more sensitive analysis. The characteristics of IPA research require that a purposeful sampling approach is adopted as much as possible to ensure the sample is as homogenous as possible. A homogenous sample would ensure that the data is more comparable, allowing the researcher to draw more meaningful conclusions (Smith, 2011).

3.4 Participants

The participants in the interview for this study had common or similar backgrounds or characteristics. Participants were interviewed about their sports preferences and their travel experiences, allowing the researcher to gain a better understanding and instructive data of the subject of this research. The data obtained through this interaction are often unattainable by other data collection methods (Doody et al., 2013). Smith et al. (2009) suggested that a reasonable sample size is between three and six participants, which suffice to show meaningful similarities and differences between the research subjects. Smith (2004) pointed out that this type of data most likely requires two data analyses: "Once for group patterns and dynamics and subsequently, for idiographic accounts" (Smith, 2004, p. 50).

International students of Chinese nationality in Auckland were invited to be part of this study. Participants were recruited through a combination of purposeful sampling and snowball sampling. Social media advertising was used to promote and recruit international students from China, aged 18 and over, at the Auckland campuses of the University of Auckland (UoA), Auckland University of Technology (AUT), and Massey University. After a period of recruitment, we received feedback from more than 40 students who had indicated interest in participating in the study. Of these forty participants, thirty-two participants fully met the requirements

regarding age, nationality, and current study status listed in the advertisement (see Appendix A). The researcher then contacted the thirty-two participants by phone and email to arrange a time for a one-on-one interview. Six participants withdrew because they could not be contacted or because they did not find a suitable time for the interview. Subsequently, due to the Covid-19 related lockdown in Auckland, eight more asked to withdraw from the interview. Ultimately, eighteen participants confirmed that they were able to participate in any form of interview (due to COVID-19, the one-on-one interviews were also changed to focus group interviews). The researcher divided the eighteen participants into three focus groups based on their university, major, and related personal information shown in the advertisement registration information (see Table 3.1). The reason for this grouping is to expect to see different experiences and expectations of Chinese international students to New Zealand's active sports tourism under different economic conditions.

Table 3.1: the participants (all the names shown are their WeChat nicknames, not their real names):

Group A	Group B	Group C
Mr. Zhang	Bilin100:	Han
Mushroom	Kevin	Eagle
Kate Liu	Rita	Howard
Winnie	912453140	Rambo
Boyle	Khua007	Ann
593764861	Lily	Frank

Group A consisted of six full-time students under the age of 25. They had no full-time work experience, having enrolled at university straight after completing their school qualifications. All their living and study-related expenses were being paid by their families. Four of the six people, however, had part-time jobs to supplement

the living expenses provided by their families. Group B included six full-time postgraduate students aged 28-35 who had been in full-time employment prior to becoming an international student. Their study and living expenses were paid by their own savings and the money earned from part-time work during the study period. Group C volunteers were between 35 and 45 years old, and they were all executives of well-known companies, such as Alibaba. All six people were studying on the same MBA programme. The high salaries during their working life afforded them financial freedom and put them in a much better financial position compared to Group A or Group B participants.

Face-to-face interviews and/or focus group were not permitted at the time of data collection due to the three-month long COVID-19 related lockdown that took place in New Zealand during March, April, and May 2020. Three fully online focus groups were formed through WeChat; the most commonly used social application among Chinese, and completed using Zoom. A total of three focus group interviews were conducted, with six participants in each session. The approximate duration of each session was 60 minutes. An information sheet (Appendix B) and consent form (Appendix C) were distributed to all the participants prior to the hosting of the focus group interviews.

The focus group interviews were conducted in English, although the participants were given the opportunity to use Mandarin to help clarify terminologies used in the study. In order to enrol as international students in New Zealand, all participants needed to achieve a high level of English proficiency, which meant that they were able to clearly express their ideas in English during the focus groups. The first 15 minutes were taken up with introductions. Four questions were created to help the researcher guide the group discussion from a broad conversation about the participants' past experiences towards a more narrow and specific discussion relating to their expectations and opinions of active sports tourism opportunities in New Zealand. The semi-structured approach to focus group facilitation allowed the

participants the freedom to fully express themselves without going off topic (Smith & Osborn, 2004).

The researcher's discourse was non-directional and followed the participant's own discourse route, centering on topics of interest. The participants of the focus groups were encouraged to take ownership of the one-hour sessions and speak openly and freely about their personal experiences and expectations of sports tourism in New Zealand, including their perceptions regarding its potential appeal to other Auckland-based Chinese international students. Their active involvement is fully acknowledged in the dissertation and any other research output that was generated as a consequence of their participation. The researcher acted honourably at all times, and ensured that all involved treated each other with mutual respect (Langdridge, 2007; Smith, 2004).

3.5 Data analysis

The focus group data was analysed in four steps (Smith, 2004), ensuring that the participants' opinions were reflected in the results of the research. Firstly, the researcher transcribed and then repeatedly read the focus group data on active sports tourism collected from Chinese students on, making notes of potentially important content in the form of annotations. Secondly, the researcher set out to identify more specific topics and phrases from initial notes and ideas to generate primary topics (subtopics). Thirdly, the researcher rigorously refined, condensed, and verified the correlation between the primary topics, classifying them within the generation of two main topics (Smith et al., 2009). Finally, the searcher presented the results in the form of narratives, describing the data and acknowledging the researcher's role within the process.

According to the group discussion, the two prominent subthemes to emerge were summarised as follows:

1. Chinese students' lack of active sports tourism awareness.
2. Chinese students' lack of active sports tourism accessibility.

3.6 Ethical issues

The researcher obtained AUT's ethical approval before recruiting and collecting data. In this study, participants received sufficient information from the beginning of recruitment till the end of the focus group interview. Before conducting the focus group interviews with the researchers, the participants were provided with a written explanation of the study (see Appendix 2). After deciding to participate, each of them signed a consent form (see Appendix 3).

There was no obligation for students to participate in this research, and the right to withdraw from the research at any time was also made clear from the outset. There was minimal risk in the questions asked and participants were assured that their identities would not be disclosed in the dissemination of the research findings. This information was made clear in the participant information sheet and explained before commencing the focus group recordings.

Participants were given the opportunity to have a pseudonym, as that is what it said in my ethical application, but that they were happy for me to use their nicknames. WeChat nicknames are not their real names.

Qualitative data collection is participant driven (Willig, 2013). Research methods and data collection methods can affect the reliability and validity of data. Reliability refers to the consistency of the data, and validity is concerned with the accuracy of the data (Howitt & Cramer, 2017). For this research, focus groups were used to collect the data, following the suggestions of Smith et al. (2009), Pre-prepared questions ensured that participants were asked the same questions, prompting the participants to share their honest opinions during the focus groups.

3.7 Limitations

There are two major limitations in this study that could be carried out in future research. Firstly, due to the two lockdowns of COVID-19, one-on-one interviews could not be conducted and instead were changed to online focus group interviews, so that the time limitation made it impossible to conduct more in-depth interviews. At the same time, the lockdown also restricted the researcher from going to universities outside of Auckland to conduct more interviews with Chinese students and obtain more research data. Therefore, the current study does not capture the different perspectives of Chinese international students in different New Zealand regions. Secondly, the scope of the data collection was also limited by the limitations on length imposed by the guidelines for the dissertation.

3.8 Summary

This chapter has described the entire data collection process. IPA was identified as the most suitable approach because it enables participants to relate their feelings. IPA can focus on the feelings of participants at a micro level and allows for a thorough examination of the problem through inductive and explanatory analyses. Focus groups were chosen because they allow participants to fully express their views and feelings. The following chapter will present and discuss the findings from the focus group interviews.

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this research is to gain opinions and observations of New Zealand's active sports tourism industry by Chinese international students currently living in New Zealand. To achieve this goal, the expectations and experiences of eighteen Chinese international students who were over 18 years old were gathered via three online focus groups. This chapter presents the findings and conclusions drawn from the interpretative phenomenological analysis process that followed the collection of the qualitative data. Two prominent themes emerged from the conversations that occurred within the focus groups. These themes are presented under the following headings: lack of awareness and lack of accessibility. The following section reveals some of the comments shared, along with the researcher's interpretative analysis of these expectations and experiences.

4.2 A lack of awareness

"New Zealand has abundant resources for the sport and recreation activities. But I don't know where to learn the skills to participate in these activities" (Group C: Eagle)

The majority of the participants were willing to share their love of being physically active and talk about their past experiences of participating in sports and recreation in Auckland and on their travels. One area of contention and confusion in the discussions related to the distance that one had to travel to be considered "a tourist". Several of the participants expressed an interest in experiencing active sports tourism without leaving the Auckland region. Some argued that this was still a form of tourism as they and their fellow international students were not full time

residents of New Zealand. Whilst some considered Auckland to be their home, or a home away from home, others considered themselves to be tourists.

The first theme to emerge from the focus groups was a lack of knowledge and awareness regarding what did and did not constitute active sports tourism. Despite each participant being provided with a definition, along with plenty of examples, many, including Eagle, were unable to connect their past travel experiences with the term 'active sports tourism'. Many of the participants spoke about sports events that they had previously attended prior to their move to Auckland. Others spoke about events in New Zealand that they would like to attend (but could not afford as students). Others revealed an expectation that active sports tourism involved competing in events or engaging in high intensity activity whilst on holiday.

Kate Liu in the Group A talked at length about her love of hiking and her numerous experiences of travelling to New Zealand's South Island to complete some of the nation's 'great walks'. Similarly, Rambo and Han talked about their enjoyable experiences of taking hiking trips with friends, whilst 593764861 noted how she liked to "travel with friends and family, walking in parks or beach and hiking in the bush". Rita revealed that she loved "the outdoors in Queenstown, Rotorua. But I don't like adventure sports [sic]". 912453140 initially said that she had not engaged in active sports tourism, but then spoke of her trips to participate in dancing events located out of Auckland. Interestingly, none of the aforementioned participants considered these past trips to fall within the realms of active sports tourism, despite the recreational activities mentioned being their primary reason for travel. They were not alone.

As captured above, many of the participants struggled to see their day or weekend trips out of Auckland as being evidence of them engaging in active sports tourism, despite them travelling to play sports such as football or badminton or to take part in active recreational activities such as mountaineering, cycling, fishing,

surfing, or sailing. Mushroom in the Group A, for example, revealed that “I have no relevant experience [of active sports tourism]. I only enjoy trying different gyms in different hotels” . Mr. Zhang (Group A) claimed to do “a lot of fishing in New Zealand”, whereas Frank in the Group C concluded that “New Zealand is great for marathons, golf, and ski [sic]. I tried activities such as paraglider, helicopter through glacier in NZ [sic]”.

The researcher enjoyed listening to the participants’ debate about the characteristics and parameters of active sports tourism, prior to sharing the definitions and differences discussed in the academic literature (refer to 2.5). Mushroom’s comment led to a discussion regarding the use of “free” gyms and engaging in other forms of fitness-related activities (e.g. running) whilst on holiday. Questions were asked as to whether going to the hotel gym or swimming pool constituted active sports tourism, considering that it was not the primary reason for travel.

In another session, following a similar discussion, Lily (Group B) noted how “I don’t really participate in any sports. [but] I sometimes go with my partner when he is participating in Half Marathons”.

Overall, the participants demonstrated a positive attitude towards active sports tourism in New Zealand. At the end of the sessions, many of the respondents noted that they had learned a lot from the experience and had also obtained a better understanding of the connections between their sports and tourism experiences. They listed the following four characteristics as being a part of active sports tourism: fitness, entertainment, experience, and challenge. Some also indicated at the end that they had now understood that active sports tourism is not only about exercising their bodies or broadening their horizons, but also about enriching their lives and making friends (expanding their social network). Many shared their desire to learn more; whilst some shared their belief that the creation of affordable active sports

tourism experiences would broaden their horizons and deepen friendships between domestic and international students enrolled at the same institution, if not in the same degree programme. Others expressed an interest in engaging in active sports tourism experiences with their family the next time they came to visit. Some spoke of their desire to temporarily escape or relieve the pressure of being in full time study and part-time employment.

4.3 A lack of accessibility

“the preferred destinations are accessible by convenient transportation” (Group B: Rita)

The second most prominent theme to emerge from the focus group data was the perception that engaging in active sports tourism was an expensive pursuit and something that was beyond the reach of students from China, many of whom were operating on a limited and strictly controlled weekly budget.

Winnie and Boyle (Group A), for example, were most concerned about the costs. Like many of the other participants, they noted that the costs of studying and living in Auckland were very high and that their money came mainly from their family back in China. Whilst some of the participants claimed to have wealthy parents and grandparents, they were not financially independent and still lacked a stable source of income. This was something that they, along with other participants, assumed was also the case for the majority of international students located in Auckland. Their non-study-related activities, including sports and leisure, were therefore largely restricted by their family’s economic situation overseas.

Some of the participants added to the money provided by their families by working part-time. Some mentioned the limited number of scholarships and grants available and the difficulty in getting one, especially if your family’s financial situation was deemed too healthy. Winnie, for example, suggested that more sport

events and active recreation facilities should offer international student discounts and special offers. Boyle suggested that a reduction in the costs of international tuition fees would provide students with more money to spend on being active and engaging in active sports tourism activities. He also thought that students paying international fees should have “free access to sports fields, badminton hall, swimming pools, gym, and so on” to encourage them to be more physically active and better engaged with the local community.

Although they did not mention the need for "discounts" or "student prices", Billin100 and Rita's (Group B) active sports tourism experiences were also limited by the direct and indirect costs associated with travelling to participate in physical activity. Unlike Winnie and Boyle (Group A), these two students had savings obtained from having worked full-time prior to commencing their studies in Auckland. Billin100 revealed that he engaged in short 2-3 day trips a couple of times a year, each of which would typically involve some form of recreational sports activity. To reduce the costs, however, he tended to visit the regions surrounding Auckland.

Howard (Group C) admitted that he had little idea or concern regarding the costs involved but could imagine that it would be a barrier for many of his fellow Chinese international students. Whilst he could afford to engage in some active sports tourism, he was unlikely to do it unless he was able to travel with likeminded others. His expectation was that the cost of a single sports tour was beyond what most students could afford. For Ann (Group C), the costs of engaging in active sports tourism was not an issue. She revealed that “[price was] Not a big deal for me. I expected to try skiing, surfing and fishing trip during my study”.

Ann's response provided a poignant reminder that one cannot and should not place all international students into the same box. Furthermore, what is viewed as being too expensive or unaffordable to some international students may be viewed

as a reasonable price by others. What was apparent, however, from the many discussions that took place within the focus groups was that engaging in active sports tourism was an expense that they would struggle to justify to others, especially their families living in China. Likewise, those who had engaged in active sports tourism experiences elsewhere in New Zealand were of the consensus that the costs of travelling to and from the sites were likely to prevent many others from doing the same. Rita explained how she, like many of her fellow international students, was solely reliant upon public transportation, which limited the places that she could travel to engage in sports and active recreation.

Billin100 (Group B) was one of several participants to note that the cheapest way to engage in active sports tourism whilst studying was to shop around, stay as close to home as possible, and only go away for a couple of nights at a time. Most of the participants expressed an interest in exploring the sports tourism opportunities available within the Auckland region, especially those close to their place of study. These were not only seen as being more affordable but also more accessible. Participants noted their desire to make full use of the weekends, noting a lack of time during the week. Participating in active sports tourism near their place of residence was seen as a way of removing and reducing costs (catering, accommodation, transportation, etc.). In addition to weekends, students also noted their desire to travel during the semester breaks and holidays.

Although some participants spoke of wanting to visit more distant attractions, such as the lakes and mountains of New Zealand's South Island, many appeared to accept that such an adventure would have to wait until they were no longer operating on a student budget. Package trips/tours that included travel and accommodation were quickly dismissed as being too expensive and time restrictive for the student market, especially those from overseas. It was recommended that anyone wanting to attract international students needed to develop products that

offered affordable physical exercise, stress relief, and a chance to broaden their horizons.

The participants were also asked to provide some suggestions as to how those working in the sector should or could target international students from China. Communication between classmates and friends was listed as an important way in which they obtain information about future events and potential travel-related opportunities. The participants also noted how Chinese students typically spent much of their time online. Kevin therefore recommended tourism providers to “use apps and websites commonly used by Chinese students”, whilst Khua007 suggested that they “hire famous Chinese celebrities”. This increases the attractiveness of active sports to Chinese students through celebrity effects. As noted within the previous section, a number of the students shared the belief that discount promotions would be an effective marketing tool.

4.4 Discussion

The Chinese students who participated in this study demonstrated an obvious enthusiasm for active sports tourism, despite their apparent lack of prior knowledge or understanding of what it involves. Some mistakenly assumed that it must be a high-intensity activity, accessible only to those with good physical fitness and certain skills. Others confused it with the pursuit of high risk or hard adventure-based recreational activities according to Rantala’s definition (Rantala, et al., 2018). All tourists are active participants in the sports tourism process (Weed & Bull, 2004). According to the degree of participation, sports tourism does not only include hard sports tourism that requires certain sports skills and participation in competitive sports such as the marathons, but also soft sports tourism activities that target tourists’ recreation and leisure experience (Gammon & Robinson, 2003).

The students' selections of tourism activities were influenced by collectiveness, uniqueness, and a sense of exploration (Cohen et al., 2014). They were motivated by the desire to be active and to maintain their physical fitness. Gibson (1998b) and other scholars identified both fitness and leisure-based activities as being examples of active sports tourism. These sports are all with the characteristics of the amount of exercise is not much, low risk, and safety. In sum, participation is one of the important characteristics of active sports tourism. As captured above, the following eight international students have all engaged in sports or active recreation whilst away from home. Kate Liu (Group A), Rambo, and Han (Group C) travelled specifically to go hiking, whilst 593764861 (Group A) spend many of his holidays walking in parks or on beaches with friends and family. Mushroom (Group A) discussed his experience of trying different gyms in different hotels, whilst 91245140 (Group B) discussed his love of dancing. Similarly, Mr. Zhang (Group A) noted his fishing activities. The paragliding and helicopter crossing glaciers activities mentioned by Ann (Group C) offer yet another example of an active sports tourism pursuit. None of the above, however, considered themselves to be active sports tourists.

Lily (Group B) accompanied her partner who participated in a half marathon, which complies with what Gibson (1998a) referred to as event sports tourism, that is, tourism promoted by the passive consumption of sports events. Lily's partner took the initiative to directly participate in the marathon during the sports tour, and the operation of the marathon also attracted sports fans like Lily to watch the event during the sports tourism. It can be seen that the active sports tourism consumed by Lily's partner led to other forms of tourism activities around the host city, thereby developing the local tourism economy. Their sports tourism behaviour is not only a manifestation of hard (participating in marathon competitions) and soft (watching games) sports tourism related to sports participation, but also of the definition by Standeven and De Knop (1999), who proposed that sports tourism includes

participation in both active sports activities (participants' direct participation in the competition) and passive sports activities (Lily watching) are in line.

According to the eighteen participants involved in this study, there are many socio-economic and socio-cultural factors that affect an international students' ability to access existing active sports tourism destinations and attractions, including the students' poor economic status, a lack of transportation (public or private), a lack of travel companions, a lack of time, and a lack of information about what is available. The expectation amongst the group was that, in addition to purchasing food, accommodation, and transportation an active sports tourist would also need to have the money to buy or hire equipment, pay for tickets, and/or the services of a qualified instructor/guide. As result, the costs attached to active sports tourism were perceived as being too high for most, if not all, international students. Winnie and Boyle (Group A), for example, claimed that they could only participate in low-cost active recreational experiences. Similarly, Billin100 and Rita (Group B) gave priority to sport and leisure activities that were both close to where they live and easily accessible via public transportation.

4.5 Summary

In sum, there is a clear relationship between (lack of) awareness and (lack of) accessibility. Those involved in the active sports tourism sector in New Zealand need to improve the accessibility of their products if they wish to target Chinese students living in Auckland. Having presented the findings obtained through IPA, the following chapter will offer a conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER 5 CONTRIBUTIONS & CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

International students represent a special/niche tourism market for New Zealand operators, especially those based within the Auckland region. At present, however, there is a lack of sports tourism products specifically targeting international students. Thus, it is difficult to find sports tourism advertisements aimed at Chinese university students, despite the large number of them living in Auckland, New Zealand's largest city. Whilst the travel agencies show images of New Zealand's natural landscape (e.g. mountains, rivers, lakes, beaches etc.), they rarely label the activities undertaken at these locations as being a form of active sports tourism. In fact, active sports tourism remains a sleeping giant within the New Zealand sport, events, and tourism sectors (Wright, 2019).

The aim of this research was to gather Auckland-based Chinese international students' opinions and observations of New Zealand's active sports tourism industry. The following related research objectives were used to help guide the completion of this research project.

1. To critically review the literature on sports tourism development, particularly literature focused on active sports tourism involving the international student market.
2. To capture the perceptions (expectations and experiences) of a small number of Auckland-based international students of Chinese origin, regarding New Zealand as an active sports tourist destination.
3. To develop a series of conclusions and recommendations based on the themes that emerge from the interpretive phenomenological analysis process.

This final chapter reveals the conclusions and recommendations drawn from the findings of this dissertation. The limitations noted in chapter three are also revisited.

5.2 Concluding thoughts

This is the first study to investigate Chinese students' expectations and experiences of New Zealand as an active sports tourism destination. The findings reveal that Chinese students lack awareness of and access to the offerings that target other overseas visitors to New Zealand, including the "domestic" backpacker/budget market. This lack of awareness and access prevent the students from fully participating in active sports tourism. By developing products and promotional activities that are more in line with the wants and needs of the Asian international student market, New Zealand's tourism operators could see an increase in exposure to the family and friends located overseas, and to those considering Auckland as a place to study once the international borders reopen (after Covid-19).

Based on the critical review of the literature of sports tourism presented in Chapter 2, it is known that sports tourism research has evolved from simply linking sports and tourism together, but still lacks cross-disciplinary strategic analysis from multiple perspectives, ranging from psychology to social science and economics. In terms of capturing the expectations and experiences of tourists, the majority of academic and industry experts adopt a quantitative methodology that collects information from tourists via a questionnaire. The use of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is not commonly used in this area, and so the opinions of potential tourists are rarely heard. There is also a lack of research on the holiday habits of Chinese students living in New Zealand.

The findings of this study showed that most of the participants enjoyed watching and participating in sports and recreational activities at the weekends and during the holidays. Most had participated in various active sports tourism activities whilst living and studying in New Zealand. Furthermore, they also think of themselves as being tourists, even though they were not in possession of a return flight back to China. However, they were confused about the term 'active sports

tourism'. When given a clear definition of what active sports tourism means, they all showed strong interest and active enthusiasm. However, they also expressed that due to academic and economic reasons, they were more willing to participate in active sports tourism within the Auckland region. It can be seen that, once their awareness of active sports tourism had improved, the development of various convenient sports tourism products with leisure and entertainment elements around the Auckland area became of greater interest to the group.

New Zealand's international student market is expected to reach record highs once the borders are opened and this market has considerable development potential, especially in terms of active sports tourism. Further research is needed, however, including studies that analyse the motivation of international students. This study uncovered a complex, occasionally contradictory, series of motivations amongst a small cohort of Chinese students living in Auckland. The findings suggest that their ability and willingness to actively participate in sports tourism is generated by a combination of internal factors (awareness) and external factors (accessibility). In sum, developing marketable products in a targeted manner would promote new economic growth points in the development of the domestic tourism industry.

5.3 Limitations and Future research

Due to the impact of COVID-19, a one-hour one-on-one interview for each participant was not possible and therefore the data collection method was changed to three one-hour focus groups. This meant that participants had less time to talk about their expectations and personal experiences of active sports tourism in New Zealand compared to one-on-one interviews. In the meantime, participants may also have been less willing to disclose personal experiences in group discussion; however, these experiences may more reflect some unknown reasons that affect participation in active sports tourism. Furthermore, due to the due date for the master's dissertation and the limit of the number of words, the sample was limited to three

universities which were all located in Auckland and the size of sample was relatively small. As a result, the researcher adopted the IPA qualitative research method. This method focuses on smaller samples and invites a small number of participants to express their personal thoughts and feelings about their experiences of a particular phenomenon (Smith, 2004; Williams, 2007). This is precisely the opportunity for future researchers to conduct further research. The final section of this dissertation offer a series of recommendations based on the findings.

5.4 Final recommendations

This small study identified a lack of awareness and understanding of what active sports tourism is amongst a small cohort of international students of Chinese origin, all of whom were based in Auckland. The findings revealed that the factors affecting this lack of awareness were not singular but composed of multiple socio-economic and socio-cultural factors. If the New Zealand active sports tourism market wanted to attract more international student of Chinese origin, it must develop products and promotional campaigns that are more in line with the wants and needs of this niche market. It can be seen from the findings that the Chinese students involved in the three focus groups shared a love of sports, recreation, and tourism. In fact, they often participated in sports tourism activities without realising it.

The findings revealed that the Chinese students involved in this study obtain the majority of their tourism-related information from the Internet. Classmates, work colleagues, and teachers were also identified as being trustworthy sources of advice. The Chinese Student Association was also mentioned as a place where the students were able to get information about what to do on weekends or during the university holidays. With the above in mind, operators should be looking to market their products and promotions through established groups set up by and for international students. In particular, they need to make full or better use of popular social media platforms used by Chinese students (e.g. WeChat). The Internet has become an

essential part of people's lives. Under the influence of the internet, Chinese students can participate in sports tourism online. Whether it is watching sports events online or experiencing active sports tourism through virtual tourism, active sports tourism is increasingly connected to the internet.

There are abundant sports tourism resources in and around Auckland. There are not only various watersport clubs, such as Long Bay Surf Club or Royal Akarana Yacht Club. There are also indoor venues suitable for four-season sports, such as Snowplanet and Extreme Edge Rock Climbing. Those who like adventure sports can choose Kartsport or the Skycity jump and walk. There are also Cornwall Park, Mount Eden, and Rangitoto trails that are popular among hikers. Entering the Royal Akarana Yacht Club or Snowplanet website, it can be seen that there are many training courses for different ages. However, there is no product category that is suitable for university students. The findings indicate that the students questioned were interested in visiting sports tourism attractions and operators based in Auckland and the surrounding region (ones that they could visit without needing to pay for flights or more than one night accommodation). Therefore, it is recommended that tourism operators and destination marketing agencies do more to target international students already based within the local region. This is naturally more attractive to students with limited overall financial resources, especially those who still consider their home to be overseas and for their educational experience to be a form of tourism in itself. Through the real understanding of the needs of Chinese international students, they could be transformed into loyal users with and repeat customers.

Thus, Snowplanet may wish to consider organising ski-themed day trips in cooperation with the Chinese Student Union of AUT. Similarly, the Royal Akarana Yacht Club could organise one or two day trips on the water. In addition, active sports and tourism related companies should take full advantage of the unique advantages of Waiheke Island to organise day trips on the island with sailing (sea), jungle

ziplining (land), and helicopter experience (air). These companies could design preferential package prices, and have certain participation and value tourism products to attract the attention of international students. This would not only allow students to fully enjoy the beautiful natural scenery of Auckland, but also inject some local culture. At the same time, the universities could also use these new business relationships to attract more international students. Kotler and Armstrong (2012) showed that forming unique value-added active sports tourism brands is a very effective marketing method for active sports tourists.

The most popular sport in New Zealand is rugby and yet the Chinese students involved in this study knew very little about it. Rugby was full of mystery to them. According to Hinch and Higham (2005), sports tourists look for authentic experiences through participating in sports as part of their quest for active sports tourism fun. Therefore, Auckland's professional rugby team, the Blues, could hold rugby training camps during winter and summer holidays, or short-term training classes on weekends. This would give students who loved Rugby the opportunity to experience rugby under the guidance of rugby star coaches and allow them to meet their heroes. The 2021 Women's Rugby World Cup will also be held in Auckland. This will be the first time that New Zealand will host the Women's Rugby World Cup. Eden Park could use the occasion and design various day trips around this theme.

The 2021 America's Cup Regatta is an important event in New Zealand, and economic benefits from it have been hit hard by New Zealand's border closure. The Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron announced that the 2021 Youth America's Cup Regatta was cancelled due to the COVID-19 (Sport, 2020). Yachtingnz.org.nz shows that there are 38 yacht clubs in Auckland. These clubs could organise a short-day trip to the America's Cup for university students in collaboration with Chinese Student Union in Universities in Auckland. Such a trip would give the hard-hit America's Cup sailing economy a much-needed boost. The purpose of the proposed activities would not only be to let university students experience the dynamics and vitality of sailing

sports, but also promote sailing among students. The water focused active sports tourism may also expose Chinese students to the unique charm of the city of sails where they live. Once the epidemic is over, these students can become the best urban promoters of Auckland, summoning more relatives and friends to visit the city.

For Chinese students such as Howard and Ann, who have good financial resources; can attract their interest through personalised and customised products. This type of group is not worried about the price, but instead is more concerned about being able to participate in active sports tourism with like-minded friends. Therefore, more distant attractions, such as paragliding, helicopter flights through glaciers in the South Island of New Zealand, or some mini sports trip customised products are more in line with their needs. Future research should extend the research sample to include various universities in New Zealand and adopt a quantitative research method to collect more answers from Chinese students from different universities in order to test hypotheses and make more general meanings. Therefore, the contribution of this research to the literature is not in the research results themselves, but in providing a direction for future research. After all, once the New Zealand border opens for international students, Chinese international students will continue to be a growing source for New Zealand universities.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Advertisement



Nǐ hǎo!
Can you help?
Are you 18 or over?
Are you a Chinese Citizen?
Are you an International Student?
Are you @ AUT, UoA or Massey University?

Focus Group Participants needed!

**Assessing the appeal of
New Zealand's active sport
tourism sector amongst
Auckland-based Chinese
International students**

For more information, or to sign up,
please contact Ying Zhu (aka Judy) via text or email:
021-0585581 or yingjudy@hotmail.com

Appendix B: Information Sheet



Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:

02 March 2020

Project Title: Turning International Students into Active Sport Tourists

An Invitation

Hello, my name is Ying Zhu (my English name is Judy), and I am a Masters of Business student with the AUT Business School. I would like to invite Auckland-based International Students of Chinese citizenship to be part of this research. Participation is voluntary, and participants may withdraw at any time prior to or during the research.

What is the purpose of this research?

The aim of this research is to gather Auckland-based Chinese International Students' opinions and observations of New Zealand's active sports tourism industry. Active sport tourism is most commonly defined as travel that is primarily motivated by the active consumption of a sport or recreation activity. It differs from tourism which focuses on travel to attend a sporting event/fixtures as a spectator or travel to visit a famous sporting venue/museum.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You have identified yourself as being an international students of Chinese citizenship enrolled at one of Auckland's three biggest universities.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

You will be given a choice of times, dates and locations in which the researcher will be running focus groups. To participate in this research you will need to pick one of these sessions. On the day, you will be asked to complete a consent form before the start of the focus group. Your participation is 100% voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

What will happen in this research?

The focus groups will take place in Auckland, on a university campus, during the months of April and May. The focus group will be recorded, and the data transcribed. The findings of the research will be presented in a Masters dissertation and, potentially, in a conference presentation. The theme of the focus groups is active sports tourism opportunities in New Zealand. You will be asked to share your experiences of traveling to engage in physical activity (e.g. tramping, mountain-biking, sailing, rafting, skiing/snowboarding, running, swimming etc). If you have no experiences, then you will be asked to talk about your expectations and perceptions around the likely appeal of these types of holiday activities/attractions amongst your fellow international students from China.

What are the discomforts and risks?

It is anticipated that there will be no discomfort or risk in taking part in the focus groups. Should you feel uncomfortable during or after a focus group, you may wish to contact an AUT counsellor on <http://www.aut.ac.nz/being-a-student/current-postgraduates/your-health-and-wellbeing/counselling>.

What are the benefits?

By sharing your thoughts, the researcher will be able to generate some findings and recommendations aimed at helping sports tourism businesses operators, destination marketers and New Zealand universities gain a better understanding of what Auckland-based international students of Chinese citizenship look for when leaving the city during the weekends or university holidays.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

There are no financial costs associated with this research. The cost will be your time as the focus group will take approximately 60 minutes. Food and beverages will be provided at the focus group.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

Participants will be given 3 weeks to consider this invitation.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

You are welcome to receive a summary of the research results. If you would like to receive this information please indicate on the consent form and fill in your address/email. We will send a research summary out to you when the project is completed. We anticipate this will be sometime next year.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the primary supervisor of this research study, Dr Richard Wright, richard.wright@aut.ac.nz, x7312

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEK, ethics@aut.ac.nz , (+649) 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details:

Ying Zhu, yingjudy@hotmail.com, 021 058 5581

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Dr Richard Wright, richard.wright@aut.ac.nz, (+649) 921 9999 ext 7312.

Appendix C: Consent Form



Consent Form

Project title: Turning International Students into Active Sport Tourists

Researcher: Ying Zhu

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 02, 03, 20.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that identity of my fellow participants and our discussions in the focus group is confidential to the group and I agree to keep this information confidential.
- I understand that notes will be taken during the focus group and that it will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- I understand that if I withdraw from the study then, while it may not be possible to destroy all records of the focus group discussion of which I was part, I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- I agree to take part in this research.
- I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes No
Email Letter

Participant's signature:

Participant's name:

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

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.....
.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on..., AUTEK Reference number.....

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.