

UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AS HOSTS FOR VISITING FRIENDS AND RELATIVES (VFR) TOURISM: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN HONG KONG AND INNSBRUCK

PIKKEMAAT Birgit Mag. Dr. Ass.-Prof., Leopold Franzens Universität Innsbruck
CHUNG Shing Chan Dr. Research Ass.-Prof.

Under this collaborative background, this research will compare a range of socio-cultural and travel characteristics between international university students in the two cities. This comparison will be measured by variables including travel characteristics, mutual care, friends-relatives differentiation based on the responses by VFR student hosts. The study assumes a diverse cultural and behavioral pattern that drives the VFR markets between Asian and European locations, as well as the dominance of the east (Chinese) and the west (European or German) incoming students (Mok & Defranco, 2000; Li, 2008; Xu, Ding & Packer, 2008; Leung et al., 2014). Inter-group comparison will be performed between students of diverse country-of-origin and destination, which is in turn important to know more about forms of VFR travelers (Moscardo et al., 2000). More in detail, the following objectives arise:

1. To identify the demographic, socio-economic and travel characteristics of VFR travelers to Hong Kong induced by international university students;
2. To characterize the market segments of VFR travelers to Hong Kong induced by international university students, based on tourism geographies and host perceptions; and
3. To compare the socio-cultural and travel characteristics of international university students as VFR hosts between Hong Kong and Innsbruck

To achieve these goals, the following activities are planned for December 2019- December 2020:

1. A detailed project working program will be defined at a first meeting in Innsbruck in spring 2019. At this date it is assumed that empirical data will be gathered both in Hong Kong and in Austria.
2. The results of the empirical survey will be analyzed in terms of the research objectives stated above.

The results of the data analysis will be discussed together in Hong Kong in summer/autumn 2020 as the aim of this project is to publish a research paper in a highly SSCI ranked tourism journal.