

Perceiving the Tourism Image of Italy: A Study of the Destination Image Framework of Italy in the Chinese Market

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Abstract

Italy, a world class tourist destination, attracts countless tourists and was listed among the top destinations in terms of international arrivals. In recent years, the number of Chinese tourists visiting Italy has increased at an annual growth rate of 18% and Italy was listed as the favorite destination among Chinese outbound tourists. This study conducted a survey of Chinese market to understand the perception of Italy as a tourist destination. A destination image framework was developed on the basis of the data analysis. By the analysis of variance together with a multivariate linear regression analysis, the authors explored the Chinese residents' reasons for choosing Italy as a tourist destination and the relevant related factors. The findings of this study could have implications for the country's image marketing.

Keywords: image perception, destination image framework, Chinese outbound tourism

1. Introduction

Italy, a world class tourist destination, has been listed as one of the most popular destinations among Chinese outbound tourists. In 2016, the number of tourists from China to Italy reached 5.4 million. China was Italy's top 10th source market in 2016.

This paper conducted a survey on the three major Chinese markets for outbound tourism: Beijing (Beijing, Tianjin & Hebei), Shanghai (Jiangsu, Zhejiang & Shanghai) and Guangzhou (Pearl River Delta). The perception elements of the Italian tourism image and the influencing mechanism of the image perception of Italy on Chinese tourists were studied. This provides targeted marketing recommendations and marketing strategies which could enhance the image of the Italian tourism in the Chinese market.

2. Literature Review

2.1 *The Tourism Image of a Country*

Research of the concept "tourism image" has gone through the process of 'single cognitive dimension', 'cognitive and emotional two dimensions' to 'three dimensions of cognition, emotion and action / behavior'. Among these, the country image research also experienced a similar research process. The country image is an important concept in the field of international business and international marketing. It is the development of the image concept 'country of origin'. Schooler (1965) first defined the concept of 'country of origin', and then followed with the development of 'Country of Origin Image (COI)'. Researchers pay more and more attention to the impact on 'consumer behavior' and 'marketing' aspects. The country tourism image and the country image are two related concepts. The country tourism image is not only a part of the overall image of the country, but is also influenced by it. The country tourism image is the sub-brand of the country image, which affects the shaping and formation of the overall image of the destination by influencing the three components: cognitive, emotion and intentions.

2.2 *Destination Image on Social Media*

With the rapid development of Internet technology, social media is increasingly affecting the way people communicate with each other: people to people or people to society. Social media has strong interpersonal and

sharing qualities. It can stimulate tourists' interest in tourism, and also guide tourists' consumer psychology. Combined with appropriate marketing tools and methods, and by making full use of social media for interactive marketing with visitors, it can enhance the participation and compactness of tourists. Gretzel (2006), Wang Y (2006), Hudson (2013) argue that "social media fundamentally changes individual travel plans and consumption patterns." Xiang (2010) and Zehrer (2012) argues that social media, in addition to enhancing the "exchange efficiency of information" and reducing "uncertainty", can also provide users with the "sense of belonging" in a virtual tourism space, to promote intuitive growth in visiting.

2.3 Dimensions of Destination Image

The questionnaire is based on the impact of social media on life today and references articles published by the Spanish scholars Asunción Beerli and Josefa D. Martín (2004). The study is comprehensive in the subjective analysis of tourism destination image perception factors. The dimensions are 'Italy's natural environment tourism resources', 'Italy's economic and social environment', 'Italy's tourism social environment and facilities', 'Italy's cultural history and art', 'Italy style festival activities' and 'influencing factors of social media'.

3. Methodology

3.1 Questionnaire Design

The first part is the main body of the questionnaire. The title was designed to show the Italian impression of tourism. There are six dimensions. They are 'Italy's natural environment tourism resources', 'Italy's economic and social environment', 'Italy's tourism social environment and facilities', 'Italy's cultural history and art', 'Italy's style festival activities' and 'influencing factors of social media'. This part uses the Likert 7 scale, and asks respondents whether or not they are willing to visit Italy., and to score to their actual situation and real feelings, with the degree of consent of each subject(7 = full consent; 5 = neutral or general; 1 = totally disagree;).

The second part is based on the individual situation of the respondents and some open or semi-open issues, including the sex, age, education, marital status, occupation, monthly income, source area and other demographic information,as well as some semi-open issues such as "the most influential social media in decision-making", "the most impressive Italian city, people", "travel purpose" and other information.

3.2 Data Collection

The questionnaire was released on WeChat through the snowball sampling method from December to January 2015. This survey is mainly for WeChat users in Beijing (Beijing Jin Ji), Shanghai (Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Shanghai), Guangzhou (Pearl River Delta). Twenty documents were predicted by SPSS before the official release of the questionnaire, after a re-test, the final questionnaires removed the ineffective question, and accuracy increased substantially. A total of 691 questionnaires were finally collected. The effective rate was 100%.

3.3 Reliability Test

This survey is a research on Italian tourism image perception of Chinese residents. And the study uses "Likert 7 scale" to exam the reliability of the dimensions of the questionnaire according to Cronbach's alpha coefficients to detect.

Using SPSS 20.0 software to carry out the reliability test of the main part of the Italian tourism image perception of Chinese residents in the questionnaire. As it is shown in Table 1, the results of the Cronbach's alpha values for each dimension of the six dimensions are each higher than 0.6 which is within statistical standard. Except for the 'religious and cultural events', Cronbach's Alpha of other dimensions exceeds 0.8. We can see that the degree of reliability in the scale is sufficiently high. Chinese residents have a high degree of reliability in the first part of the Italian tourism image perception questionnaire, with a total Cronbach's alpha value of 0.889.

Table 1. Test results of reliability of the Italian tourism image perception questionnaire for Chinese residents

Dimension	Number of Effective Sample	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Natural environment and tourism resources	691	5	0.873
Economic and social environment, facilities	691	16	0.951
Shopping and consumption	691	2	0.850
Cultural history and art	691	6	0.929
Religion and style festival activities	691	4	0.785
Influence of social media	691	10	0.951

4. Results and Findings

4.1 Demographic Analysis

The demographic characteristics of the survey conducted by the Chinese tourists' perception of Italian tourism image were analyzed. The results are shown in Table 2:

Table 2. Social Demographic Characteristics of Chinese Residents' Perceptions of Italian Tourism Image (N=691)

Variable	Category	Respondents who have visited Italy		Respondents who have not visited Italy		All respondents	
		Valid samples	Proportion (%)	Valid samples	Proportion (%)	Valid samples	Proportion (%)
Gender	Male	141	35.52%	109	37.07%	250	36.18%
	Female	256	64.48%	185	62.93%	441	63.82%
	Total	397	100%	294	100%	691	100%
Marital status	Single	161	40.55%	125	42.52%	286	41.39%
	married	236	59.45%	169	57.48%	405	58.61%
	Total	397	100%	294	100%	691	100%
Age	Under the age of 22	4	1.01%	20	6.80%	24	3.47%
	22-30 years old	112	28.21%	91	30.95%	203	29.38%
	31-40 years old	196	49.37%	145	49.32%	341	49.35%
	41-50 years old	59	14.86%	21	7.14%	80	11.58%
	51-60 years old	20	5.04%	15	5.10%	35	5.07%
	61 years old and above	6	1.51%	2	0.68%	8	1.16%
	Total	397	100%	294	100%	691	100%
Occupation	Government, public office staff	61	15.37%	67	22.79%	128	18.52%
	Staff	200	50.38%	157	53.40%	357	51.66%
	Freelancer	46	11.59%	19	6.46%	65	9.41%
	Private owner	38	9.57%	8	2.72%	46	6.66%
	Student	15	3.78%	20	6.80%	35	5.07%
	Housewife	6	1.51%	4	1.36%	10	1.45%
	Retiree	13	3.27%	10	3.40%	23	3.33%
	Other	18	4.53%	9	3.06%	27	3.91%
Total	397	100%	294	100%	691	100%	
Education	Junior high school or below	5	1.26%	6	2.04%	11	1.73%
	High school	7	1.76%	5	1.70%	12	1.74%
	College or undergraduate	285	71.79%	216	73.47%	501	71.78%
	Master	94	23.68%	65	22.11%	159	23.01%
	Doctor or above	6	1.51%	2	0.68%	8	1.16%
	Total	397	100%	294	100%	691	100%
Income	5000 or less	40	10.07%	78	26.53%	118	17.07%
	5000-10000	131	33.00%	117	39.80%	248	35.89%
	10000-20000	131	33.00%	70	23.81%	201	29.09%
	20000-50000	70	17.63%	23	7.82%	93	13.46%
	50000 or more	25	6.30%	6	2.04%	31	4.49%
	Total	397	100%	294	100%	691	100%
Region	Beijing (Beijing Jin Ji)	80	20.15%	50	17.01%	130	18.81%
	Shanghai (Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Shanghai)	240	60.45%	151	51.36%	391	56.58%
	Guangzhou (Pearl River Delta)	48	12.09%	59	20.07%	107	15.48%
	Other	29	7.30%	34	11.56%	63	9.12%
	Total	397	100%	294	100%	691	100%
Number of days of travel in Italy	Unwilling to visit Italy						
	sub-total	5	1.26%	13	4.42%	18	2.60%
	The total percentage	397	100%	294	100%	691	100%
	Willing to visit Italy						
	4-7 days	85	21.68%	57	20.28%	142	21.10%
	8-15days	195	49.75%	173	61.57%	368	54.68%
	15 days or more	112	28.57%	51	18.15%	163	24.22%
	sub-total	392	100%	281	100%	673	100%

4.2 Group Differences in Information Perception

According to the results of the survey, other Respondents' tourist perception information of the survey is shown in Table 3:

Table 3. Other Tourist Perception Information Tables for Chinese Residents

Respondents who have visited Italy			Respondents who have not visited Italy		
The most influential three social media or websites on travel decisions					
Sequence	social media or website	Number of samples	Sequence	social media or website	Number of samples
1	Wechat	309	1	Wechat	250
2	Ctrip	207	2	Ctrip	198
3	Qyer	180	3	Microblog	124
4	Microblog	154	4	Qyer	77
5	TripAdvisor	121	5	Lvmama	53
6	Blog	58	6	Blog	42
7	Other	58	7	Other	40
8	Facebook	55	8	QQ space	37
9	Lvmama	34	9	TripAdvisor	33
10	QQ space	15	10	Facebook	28
The main source of tourism information					
Sequence	Source of tourist information	Number of samples	Sequence	Source of tourist information	Number of samples
1	The internet	282	1	The internet	190
2	Television movie	199	2	Television movie	154
3	Recommended from friends and family	153	3	Recommended from friends and family	135
4	Newspaper magazine advertisement	148	4	Newspaper magazine advertisement	118
5	New media/social media	137	5	New media/social media	91
6	Travel agency	51	6	Travel agency	64
7	Other	19	7	Other	2
Three of the most impressive Italian cities or regions					
Sequence	City or region	Number of samples	Sequence	City or region	Number of samples
1	Rome	303	1	Rome	247
2	Florence	278	2	Venice	212
3	Venice	253	3	Milan	167
4	Milan	119	4	Florence	121
5	Sicily	74	5	Sicily	77
6	Naples	45	6	Turin	14
7	Cinque Terre	41	7	Cinque Terre	13
8	Other	20	8	Naples	13
9	Sardinia	15	9	Pisa	10
10	Bologna	13	10	Genoa	4
11	Turin	11	11	Sardinia	3
12	Genoa	11	12	Other	1
13	Pisa	8	13	Bologna	0
Respondents who have visited Italy			Respondents who have not visited Italy		
Three of the most impressive Italian cities or regions					
Sequence	Italian character	Number of samples	Sequence	Italian character	Number of samples
1	Da Vinci	346	1	Da Vinci	254
2	Marco Polo	219	2	Marco Polo	197
3	Julius Caesar	163	3	Julius Caesar	161
4	Monica Bellucci	95	4	Monica Bellucci	51
5	Giorgio Armani	61	5	Mussolini	49
6	Berlusconi	59	6	Giorgio Armani	35
7	Roberto Baggio	51	7	Roberto Baggio	32
8	Andrea Bocelli	44	8	Matteo Ricci	27
9	Matteo Ricci	38	9	Lang Shining	22
10	Mussolini	38	10	Buffon	18
11	Federico Fellini	18	11	Andrea Bocelli	14
12	Lang Shining	16	12	Berlusconi	13
13	Other	16	13	Federico Fellini	4

14	Buffon	14	14	Beneto Bertolucci	4
15	Beneto Bertolucci	11	15	Other	1

The main purpose of travelling to Italy

Sequence	Purpose of travel	Number of samples	Sequence	Purpose of travel	Number of samples
1	Leisure vacation	315	1	Visit the landscape or scenery	228
2	Visit the landscape or scenery	294	2	Leisure vacation	227
3	Experience and growth	150	3	Experience and growth	148
4	Shopping	140	4	Shopping	68
5	Honeymoon or cultivate feelings	39	5	Honeymoon or cultivate feelings	31
6	Exciting Adventure	4	6	Exciting Adventure	10

4.3 Group Differences in Image Perception

Table 4. Variance Analysis of the Italian Tourism Image Perception of Chinese Residents

Perceived factors of tourism in Italy	Have you visited Italy	Mean value	standard deviation	Variance homogeneity test results		t-test results		
				F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (bilateral)
Q1 You feel that Italy has a good climate for tourism	Yes	6.15	1.128	11.831	0.001	5.154	564.241	0.000*
	No	5.65	1.346					
Q2 You feel that Italy has a variety of natural scenery as a tourist destination	Yes	6.18	1.170	3.212	0.074	3.548	689.000	0.000*
	No	5.84	1.311					
Q3 You feel that Italy is a tourist destination with biodiversity and uniqueness	Yes	5.32	1.518	0.761	0.383	0.804	689.000	0.422
	No	5.22	1.482					
Q4 You feel that Italy has beautiful scenery as a tourist destination	Yes	6.34	0.976	5.863	0.016	4.256	541.077	0.000*
	No	5.97	1.235					
Q5 You think Italy has blue skies, white clouds, clean air, less pollution	Yes	6.18	1.066	2.074	0.150	2.780	689.000	0.006*
	No	5.94	1.246					
Q6 You think the degree of traffic congestion in Italy tolerable	Yes	5.46	1.213	0.442	0.506	3.146	689.000	0.002*
	No	5.16	1.308					
Q7 You think the political situation in Italy is stable	Yes	5.05	1.383	0.262	0.609	0.154	689.000	0.878
	No	5.03	1.387					
Q8 You think Italy has a higher degree of economic development	Yes	4.77	1.232	2.035	0.154	-4.458	689.000	0.000*
	No	5.20	1.322					
Q9 You think prices are stable in Italy	Yes	5.18	1.212	0.238	0.626	1.064	689.000	0.287
	No	5.07	1.275					
Q10 You think Italy is a safe tourist destination	Yes	4.50	1.412	1.961	0.162	-0.920	689.000	0.358
	No	4.60	1.519					
Q11 You think Italy has a good transport infrastructure	Yes	5.40	1.175	1.926	0.166	-0.172	689.000	0.864
	No	5.41	1.271					
Q12 You think Italy has good medical facilities and services	No	5.13	1.141	12.674	0.000	-2.276	581.073	0.023*
	Yes	5.35	1.305					

Q13 You think Italy has good public transport	No	5.28	1.133	4.502	0.034	-0.174	586.749	0.862																																																																																																																																																																		
	Yes	5.30	1.276						Q14 You think Italy has good business service facilities	No	5.41	1.137	4.502	0.034	-0.840	584.980	0.401	Yes	5.49	1.287	Q15 You think Italy has good communication facilities	No	5.38	1.171	1.358	0.244	-1.350	689.000	0.177	Yes	5.50	1.239	Q16 You think the local people of Italy are friendly to the tourists	No	5.54	1.190	0.085	0.771	2.475	689.000	0.014*	Yes	5.30	1.277	Q17 You think the quality of life in Italy is high and the lifestyle is relaxed and enjoyable	No	5.60	1.207	0.124	0.725	-0.575	689.000	0.565	Yes	5.66	1.262	Q18 You think that Italy has a large number of tourist information centers or visitor centers	No	5.41	1.221	0.569	0.451	1.188	689.000	0.235	Yes	5.29	1.320	Q19 You think that Italy has a wide range of hotels and guesthouses	No	5.88	1.077	13.161	0.000	3.689	561.026	0.000*	Yes	5.53	1.295	Q20 You think the hotel facilities and services in Italy can meet needs	No	5.68	1.177	3.242	0.072	1.497	689.000	0.135	Yes	5.54	1.318	Q21 You think Italy has a good reputation as a tourist destination	No	5.54	1.268	0.369	0.544	0.067	689.000	0.947	Yes	5.54	1.341	Q22 You think Italy is suitable for shopping	No	5.96	1.180	15.601	0.000	5.039	559.497	0.000*	Yes	5.45	1.425	Q23 You think Italy is a destination with luxury and fashionable consumer goods	No	6.04	1.237	2.658	0.104	2.983	689.000	0.003*	Yes	5.76	1.275	Q24 You think Italian cities or towns are very attractive	Yes	6.39	0.980	9.664	0.002	3.965	535.108	0.000*	No	6.04	1.259	Q25 You feel that Italy has many well-preserved ancient cities	Yes	6.60	0.818	31.171	0.000	4.919	485.123	0.000*	No	6.20	1.205	Q26 Your travel to Italy is largely influenced by the ancient culture of Italy and its long history	Yes	6.52	0.934	19.348	0.000	4.049	517.422	0.000*	No	6.17	1.257	Q27 Your travel to Italy is largely influenced by the world's cultural and natural heritage	Yes	6.48	0.957	16.951	0.000
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	Yes	5.30	1.277						Q17 You think the quality of life in Italy is high and the lifestyle is relaxed and enjoyable	No	5.60	1.207	0.124	0.725	-0.575	689.000	0.565	Yes	5.66	1.262	Q18 You think that Italy has a large number of tourist information centers or visitor centers	No	5.41	1.221	0.569	0.451	1.188	689.000	0.235	Yes	5.29	1.320	Q19 You think that Italy has a wide range of hotels and guesthouses	No	5.88	1.077	13.161	0.000	3.689	561.026	0.000*	Yes	5.53	1.295	Q20 You think the hotel facilities and services in Italy can meet needs	No	5.68	1.177	3.242	0.072	1.497	689.000	0.135	Yes	5.54	1.318	Q21 You think Italy has a good reputation as a tourist destination	No	5.54	1.268	0.369	0.544	0.067	689.000	0.947	Yes	5.54	1.341	Q22 You think Italy is suitable for shopping	No	5.96	1.180	15.601	0.000	5.039	559.497	0.000*	Yes	5.45	1.425	Q23 You think Italy is a destination with luxury and fashionable consumer goods	No	6.04	1.237	2.658	0.104	2.983	689.000	0.003*	Yes	5.76	1.275	Q24 You think Italian cities or towns are very attractive	Yes	6.39	0.980	9.664	0.002	3.965	535.108	0.000*	No	6.04	1.259	Q25 You feel that Italy has many well-preserved ancient cities	Yes	6.60	0.818	31.171	0.000	4.919	485.123	0.000*	No	6.20	1.205	Q26 Your travel to Italy is largely influenced by the ancient culture of Italy and its long history	Yes	6.52	0.934	19.348	0.000	4.049	517.422	0.000*	No	6.17	1.257	Q27 Your travel to Italy is largely influenced by the world's cultural and natural heritage	Yes	6.48	0.957	16.951	0.000	4.575	513.309	0.000*	No	6.06	1.303																														
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	Yes	5.76	1.275						Q24 You think Italian cities or towns are very attractive	Yes	6.39	0.980	9.664	0.002	3.965	535.108	0.000*	No	6.04	1.259	Q25 You feel that Italy has many well-preserved ancient cities	Yes	6.60	0.818	31.171	0.000	4.919	485.123	0.000*	No	6.20	1.205	Q26 Your travel to Italy is largely influenced by the ancient culture of Italy and its long history	Yes	6.52	0.934	19.348	0.000	4.049	517.422	0.000*	No	6.17	1.257	Q27 Your travel to Italy is largely influenced by the world's cultural and natural heritage	Yes	6.48	0.957	16.951	0.000	4.575	513.309	0.000*	No	6.06	1.303																																																																																																																		
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Q25 You feel that Italy has many well-preserved ancient cities	Yes	6.60	0.818	31.171	0.000	4.919	485.123	0.000*																																																																																																																																																																		
	No	6.20	1.205						Q26 Your travel to Italy is largely influenced by the ancient culture of Italy and its long history	Yes	6.52	0.934	19.348	0.000	4.049	517.422	0.000*	No	6.17	1.257	Q27 Your travel to Italy is largely influenced by the world's cultural and natural heritage	Yes	6.48	0.957	16.951	0.000	4.575	513.309	0.000*	No	6.06	1.303																																																																																																																																										
Q26 Your travel to Italy is largely influenced by the ancient culture of Italy and its long history	Yes	6.52	0.934	19.348	0.000	4.049	517.422	0.000*																																																																																																																																																																		
	No	6.17	1.257						Q27 Your travel to Italy is largely influenced by the world's cultural and natural heritage	Yes	6.48	0.957	16.951	0.000	4.575	513.309	0.000*	No	6.06	1.303																																																																																																																																																						
Q27 Your travel to Italy is largely influenced by the world's cultural and natural heritage	Yes	6.48	0.957	16.951	0.000	4.575	513.309	0.000*																																																																																																																																																																		
	No	6.06	1.303																																																																																																																																																																							

Q28 Your travel to Italy is largely influenced by Italian architecture, museums, palaces, sculptures, paintings, etc	Yes	6.49	0.981						
	No	6.20	1.266	14.289	0.000	3.206	533.453	0.001*	
Q29 You think Italy is exotic as a tourist destination	Yes	6.14	1.028						
	No	5.94	1.224	1.857	0.173	2.298	689.000	0.022*	
Q30 Your travel to Italy is largely influenced by Italian cultural film and television works	Yes	5.45	1.616						
	No	5.60	1.490	2.397	0.122	-1.179	689.000	0.239	
Q31 Your travel to Italy is largely influenced by Italian religious culture and religious sanctuaries	Yes	5.70	1.545						
	No	5.55	1.630	1.254	0.263	1.247	689.000	0.213	
Q32 Your travel to Italy is largely influenced by stylistic activities	Yes	5.29	1.544						
	No	5.54	1.500	0.001	0.974	-2.118	689.000	0.035*	
Q33 Your travel to Italy is largely influenced by the Italian 2015 Milan World Expo	Yes	3.94	1.949						
	No	4.85	1.732	4.773	0.029	-6.476	666.473	0.000*	
Q34 WeChat friends circle information has good effects on your travel to Italy	Yes	4.69	1.764						
	No	5.17	1.685	0.947	0.331	-3.628	689.000	0.000*	
Q35 Microblog information has good effect on your travel to Italy	Yes	4.33	1.855						
	No	4.91	1.737	3.291	0.070	-4.169	689.000	0.000*	
Q36 Italian fashion shopping information on social media has an impact on your travel to Italy	Yes	4.76	1.746						
	No	5.18	1.606	2.13	0.145	-3.237	689.000	0.001*	
Q37 Italian food and wine on social media has an impact on your travel to Italy	Yes	5.00	1.658						
	No	5.25	1.577	0.003	0.954	-1.967	689.000	0.050*	
Q38 The Italian tourist attractions on social media has an impact on your travel to Italy	Yes	5.48	1.546						
	No	5.73	1.384	3.588	0.059	-2.250	689.000	0.025*	
Q39 Italian historical and cultural information on social media has an impact on your travel to Italy	Yes	5.39	1.610						
	No	5.59	1.403	5.129	0.024	-1.795	670.880	0.073	

Q40 The Italian events on social media have an impact on your travel to Italy	Yes	4.76	1.651	3.888	0.049	-3.438	663.592	0.001*
	No	5.17	1.484					
Q41 Italian travel discount information on social media has an impact on your travel to Italy	Yes	4.91	1.702	0.382	0.537	-2.276	689.000	0.023*
	No	5.20	1.612					
Q42 Friends' travel pictures of Italy on social media have an impact on your travel to Italy	Yes	5.21	1.633	2.228	0.136	-2.021	689.000	0.044*
	No	5.46	1.481					
Q43 Travel experts' travel strategy on social media has an impact on your travel to Italy	Yes	5.10	1.725	4.061	0.044	-2.556	669.803	0.011*
	No	5.41	1.511					

Note. * indicates a significant difference at $p < 0.05$ levels

According to Table 4, we can see the factors that affect residents' perception of the Italian tourism image. The following are the factors which have significant differences.

- Tourist destination has a good climate
- Tourist destination has a variety of natural scenery
- Tourist destination has beautiful scenery
- Blue sky and white clouds, clean air, less pollution
- Cities or towns are very attractive
- The degree of traffic congestion can be tolerated
- Degree of economic development is high
- Local people are friendly to tourists
- Tourist destination has good medical facilities and services
- There are a lot of well-preserved ancient cities
- There are a wide range of hotels and hotel facilities
- It is suitable for shopping
- A destination with luxury and fashion consumer goods
- Be influenced by ancient Italian culture and long history
- Be influenced by the Italian world culture and natural heritage
- Be influenced by Italian architecture, museums, palaces, sculptures, paintings, etc
- Be influenced by stylistic activities
- Be influenced by the 2015 Milan World Expo in Italy
- Tourist destination is exotic
- WeChat friends circle information has good effects on your travel to Italy
- Microblog information has good effects on your travel to Italy
- Italian fashion shopping information on social media has an impact on your travel to Italy
- Italian food and wine on social media has an impact on your travel to Italy
- The Italian tourist attractions on social media have an impact on your travel to Italy
- Italian events on social media have an impact on your travel to Italy
- Italian travel discount information on social media has an impact on your travel to Italy
- Friends' travel pictures of Italy on social media have an impact on your travel to Italy
- Travel experts' travel strategy on social media has an impact on your travel to Italy

4.4 Factor Analysis of Image Perception

Through the principal factor analysis, Table 5, Table 6 can be obtained. It can be seen that the percentage of cumulative variance contribution rate of the selected six common factors was 69.274%. It is shown that more than 50% of the factor information, the results of public factor extraction are ideal. Among them, the common factor 'F1 political economic social environment and facilities,' whose variance contribution rate is 20.613%. This is the highest factor and includes the largest number of multi-information, so it is the most important. The

variance contribution rate of 'F2 social media influence' is 17.591%. The variance contribution rate of 'F3 culture history and art' is 11.752%. These two major factors also have important representations. The variance contribution rate of 'F4 natural environment and natural tourism resources' is 9.060%. The variance contribution rate of 'F5 shopping and consumption' is 5.620%. The variance contribution rate for the F6 religious and stylistic festival activities is 4.638%, These three common factors are weakly relative.

Table 5. Comparison on the Meanings of Main Factors of Chinese Residents' Perceptions of Italian Tourism Image

Common factor	Minimum value	Maximum value	Mean value	Standard deviation	Cronbach's α
F1 Political, economic, social, environmental and facilities	1	7	5.319	0.95527	0.951
F2 The impact of social media	1	7	5.110	1.36985	0.951
F3 Culture, history and art	1	7	6.294	0.94722	0.929
F4 Natural environment and natural tourism resources	1	7	5.902	1.02447	0.873
F5 Shopping and consumption	1	7	5.831	1.20066	0.850
F6 Religious and stylistic events	1	7	5.219	1.29017	0.785

Table 6. Analysis on the Main Factors of Chinese Residents' Perceptions of Italian Tourism Image

Common factor	Variable item	Load factor	characteristic value	Variance contribution rate (%)	Cumulative variance contribution rate(%)
F1 Political, economic, social, environmental and facilities	Italy has good public transport	0.805	8.864	20.613%	20.613%
	Italy has a good transportation infrastructure	0.779			
	Italy has good commercial service facilities	0.759			
	Italy has a high level of economic development	0.751			
	Italy has good communication facilities	0.750			
	Italy has good medical facilities and services	0.727			
	Prices are stable in Italy	0.706			
	Politics are stable in Italy	0.703			
	Italy is a safe tourist destination	0.699			
	Italy has a high quality of life and a relaxed lifestyle	0.626			
	Italy has a good reputation as a tourist destination	0.594			
	Italy's hotel and hotel facilities and services can meet the demand	0.592			
	The local people in Italy are friendly and hospitable to visitors	0.586			
	Italy has a large variety of hotel and hotel facilities	0.573			
	Italy has many tourist information centers or visitor centers	0.567			
The traffic congestion in Italy is tolerable	0.531				
F2 The impact of social media	Italian fashion shopping information on social media has an impact on your travel to Italy	0.851	7.564	17.591%	38.204%
	Italian food and wine on social media has an impact on your travel to Italy	0.831			
	Friends' travel pictures of Italy on social media have an impact on your travel to Italy	0.815			
	WeChat friends circle information has a good effect on	0.796			

	your travel to Italy				
	Travel experts' travel strategy on social media has an impact on your travel to Italy	0.795			
	Italian events on social media have an impact on your travel to Italy	0.794			
	Italian travel discount information on social media has an impact on your travel to Italy	0.772			
	Microblog information has good effect on your travel to Italy	0.769			
	The Italian tourist attractions on social media have an impact on you	0.766			
	Italian historical and cultural information on social media have an impact on your travel to Italy	0.755			
	Your travel to Italy is largely influenced by the ancient culture of Italy and its long history	0.853			
	Your travel to Italy is largely influenced by the world's cultural and natural heritage	0.836			
F3 Cultural history and art	Your travel to Italy is largely influenced by Italian architecture, museums, palaces, sculptures, paintings, etc	0.836	5.053	11.752%	49.956%
	You feel that Italy has many well-preserved ancient cities	0.668			
	You think the Italian cities or towns are very attractive	0.549			
	You think Italy is exotic as a tourist destination	0.543			
F4 Natural environment and natural tourism resources	Italy has a variety of natural scenery as a tourist destination	0.756			
	Italy has a good climate as a tourist destination	0.698			
	Italy is a tourist destination with biodiversity and uniqueness	0.690	3.896	9.060%	59.016%
	Italy has beautiful scenery as a tourist destination	0.686			
	Italy has blue skies, white clouds, clean air, and low pollution	0.639			
F5 Shopping and consumption	You think Italy is suitable for shopping	0.737			
	You think Italy is a destination with luxury and fashionable consumer goods	0.730	2.417	5.620%	64.636%
F6 Religious and cultural events	Your travel to Italy is largely influenced by stylistic activities	0.683	1.994	4.638%	69.274%
	Your travel to Italy is largely influenced by the Italian 2015 Milan World Expo	0.654			
	Your travel to Italy is largely influenced by Italian cultural film and television works	0.573			
	Your travel to Italy is largely influenced by Italian religious culture and religious sanctuary	0.572			

From the comparison of the mean values of the principal factors, the top three factors of the most important perception factors of Italian tourism image in Chinese residents' minds are 'cultural history and art', 'natural environment and natural tourism resources', 'shopping and consumption'. The mean values were 6.294, 5.902, 5.831 respectively.

4.5 Variance Analysis of Image Perception

Table 7. Difference analysis of the Italian tourism image perception research on the Chinese residents in different groups of respondents (whether they have visited Italy)

Common factor	Mean value		F value	t value	Sig
	Respondents who have visited Italy	Respondents who have not visited Italy			
F1 Political, economic, social, environmental and facilities	5.325	5.311	9.476	0.178	0.859
F2 The impact of social media	4.962	5.308	0.475	-3.301	0.001*
F3 Cultural history and art	6.435	6.103	26.202	4.381	0.000*
F4 Natural environment and natural tourism resources	6.033	5.725	6.408	3.844	0.000*
F5 Shopping and consumption	6.001	5.600	3.378	4.397	0.000*
F6 Religious and cultural events	5.097	5.384	0.646	-2.911	0.004*

Note. *P=Sig < 0.05

All the survey samples were divided into two separate samples, 'Visited Italy' and 'Not Visited Italy'. The T test was conducted from the perspective of the variables of the six dimensions. It was observed whether the two independent samples had significant differences. Through the independent sample T test, we can obtain Table 6 by statistics. There are no significant differences in the common factor F1 'political economy and social environment and facilities', elsewhere there are significant differences in the remaining five common factors 'F2 social media influence', 'F3 cultural history and art', 'F4 natural environment and natural tourism resources' and 'F5 shopping and consumption'.

Table 8. Difference Analysis of Chinese Residents' Perceptions of Italian Tourism Image in Respondents of Different sexes

Common factor	Mean value		F value	T value	Sig
	male	female			
F1 Political, economic, social, environmental and facilities	5.335	5.311	0.710	0.317	0.751
F2 The impact of social media	4.924	5.215	1.462	-2.689	0.007*
F3 Cultural history and art	6.273	6.306	0.629	-0.441	0.659
F4 Natural environment and natural tourism resources	5.813	5.951	0.345	-1.677	0.094
F5 Shopping and consumption	5.752	5.875	1.000	-1.298	0.195
F6 Religious and cultural events	5.177	5.243	0.335	-0.648	0.517

Note. *P=Sig < 0.05

Through the independent sample T test, we can obtain Table 8 by statistics, There are significant differences of respondents of different sexes in the common factor F2 'social media'.

Table 9. Difference Analysis of Chinese Residents' Perceptions of Italian Tourism Image in Respondents with Different Marital Status

Common factor 公因子	Mean value		F value	t value	Sig
	Single	Married			
F1 Political, economic, social, environmental and facilities	5.276	5.349	0.596	-0.989	0.323
F2 The impact of social media	5.069	5.138	1.223	-0.652	0.514
F3 Cultural history and art	6.191	6.366	11.259	-2.314	0.021*
F4 Natural environment and natural tourism resources	5.870	5.924	0.019	-0.689	0.491
F5 Shopping and consumption	5.834	5.828	0.224	0.059	0.953
F6 Religious and cultural events	5.147	5.270	2.551	-1.240	0.215

Note. *P=Sig < 0.05

Through the independent sample T test, we obtain Table 9 by statistics. As it can be seen from the data in this table, there are significant differences of respondents with different marital status in the common factor F3 'Cultural history and art'.

Table 10. Difference Analysis of Chinese Residents' Perceptions of Italian Tourism Image in Respondents of Different Ages

Common factor	Mean value						F value	Sig
	Under 22 years old	22-30years old	31-40years old	41-50years old	51-60years old	61 years old and above		
F1 Political, economic, environmental and facilities	4.964	5.233	5.324	5.449	5.598	5.859	2.432	0.034*
F2 The impact of social media	4.600	5.090	5.212	4.894	5.106	4.938	1.484	0.193
F3 Cultural history and art	5.694	6.217	6.322	6.496	6.338	6.646	3.136	0.015*
F4 Natural environment and natural tourism resources	5.350	5.848	5.894	6.118	6.040	6.475	2.883	0.014*
F5 Shopping and consumption	5.521	5.818	5.872	5.819	5.829	5.438	0.578	0.717
F6 Religious and cultural events	5.104	5.166	5.259	5.116	5.421	5.375	0.467	0.801

Note. *P=Sig < 0.05

Table 10 can be obtained by single factor variance ANOVA analysis. There are significant differences of respondents of different ages in the common factors F1 ‘political economy and social environment and facilities’, F3 ‘cultural history and art’ and F4 ‘natural environment and natural tourism resources’.

Table 11. Difference Analysis of Chinese Residents' Perceptions of Italian Tourism Image in Respondents in different occupations

Common factor	Mean value								F value	Sig
	Government, public office staff	Staff	Freelancer	Private owner	Student	Housewife	Retiree	Other		
F1 Political, economic, environmental and facilities	5.339	5.285	5.473	5.302	5.098	5.088	5.856	5.252	1.737	0.097
F2 The impact of social media	5.116	5.162	5.266	4.996	4.720	4.860	5.052	4.856	0.830	0.562
F3 Cultural history and art	6.289	6.301	6.385	6.417	5.938	5.967	6.522	6.185	1.215	0.304
F4 Natural environment and natural tourism resources	5.992	5.842	6.089	5.861	5.737	5.680	6.365	5.793	1.562	0.144
F5 Shopping and consumption	5.797	5.867	5.977	5.804	5.843	5.650	5.696	5.370	0.842	0.553
F6 Religious and cultural events	5.289	5.182	5.346	5.103	5.064	5.125	5.380	5.370	0.420	0.890

Note. *P=Sig < 0.05

Table 11 can be obtained by single factor variance ANOVA analysis. As it can be seen from the data in this table, there are no significant differences of respondents in different occupations.

Table 12. Difference Analysis of Chinese Residents' Perceptions of Italian Tourism Image in Respondents with Different Education

Common factor	Mean value					F value	Sig
	Junior high school or below	High school	College or undergraduate	Master	Doctor or above		
F1 Political, economic, social, environmental and facilities	5.063	5.766	5.294	5.359	5.789	1.495	0.202
F2 The impact of social media	4.600	5.233	5.052	5.303	5.400	1.515	0.196
F3 Cultural history and art	5.636	6.156	6.263	6.403	6.604	2.507	0.045*
F4 Natural environment and natural tourism resources	5.309	6.350	5.874	5.993	6.000	1.928	0.104
F5 Shopping and consumption	5.091	5.542	5.732	6.138	6.625	9.916	0.000*
F6 Religious and cultural events	5.068	5.479	5.194	5.296	5.125	0.357	0.839

Note. *P=Sig < 0.05

Table 12 can be obtained by single factor variance ANOVA analysis. As it can be seen from the data in this table, there are significant differences of respondents with different education background in common factors F3 'cultural history and art' and F5 'shopping and consumption'.

Table 13. Difference Analysis of Chinese Residents' Perceptions of Italian Tourism Image in Respondents with Different Incomes

Common factor	Mean value					F value	Sig
	5000 or less	5000-9000 yuan	10000-20000 yuan	20000-50000 yuan	50000yuan or more		
F1 Political, economic, social, environmental and facilities	5.307	5.381	5.223	5.356	5.391	0.852	0.492
F2 The impact of social media	5.248	5.172	5.092	4.973	4.610	1.708	0.146
F3 Cultural history and art	6.088	6.300	6.354	6.380	6.382	1.440	0.223
F4 Natural environment and natural tourism resources	5.836	5.906	5.910	5.908	6.058	0.307	0.874
F5 Shopping and consumption	5.627	5.738	6.003	5.876	6.097	2.687	0.030*
F6 Religious and cultural events	5.350	5.372	5.175	4.882	4.798	3.701	0.005*

Note. *P=Sig < 0.05

Table 13 can be obtained by single factor variance ANOVA analysis. As it can be seen from the data in this table, there are significant differences of respondents with different incomes in common factors F5 'shopping and consumption' and F6 'religious and cultural stylistic activities'.

Table 14. Difference Analysis of Chinese Residents' Perceptions of Italian Tourism Image in Respondents from different regions

Common factor	Mean value				F value	Sig
	Beijing (Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei)	Shanghai (Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Shanghai)	Guangzhou (Pearl River Delta)	Other provinces		
F1 Political, economic, social, environmental and facilities	5.372	5.300	5.254	5.440	0.682	0.563
F2 The impact of social media	5.197	5.025	5.253	5.210	1.174	0.319
F3 Cultural history and art	6.304	6.296	6.199	6.418	0.720	0.540
F4 Natural environment and natural tourism resources	5.979	5.946	5.714	5.791	1.937	0.122
F5 Shopping and consumption	5.673	5.937	5.818	5.516	2.923	0.035*
F6 Religious and cultural events	5.377	5.152	5.187	5.365	1.292	0.276

Note. *P=Sig < 0.05

Table 14 can be obtained by single factor variance ANOVA analysis. As it can be seen from the data in this table, there are significant differences of respondents from different regions in common factor F5 'shopping and consumption'.

4.6 Correlation Analysis of Image Perception

Table 15. Correlation Analysis of Chinese respondents Residents of the Italian tourism image perception

Common factor correlation comparison	Your interest in Italy as a tourist destination	
	Pearson correlation	Sig significance (bilateral)
F1 Political, economic, social, environmental and facilities	0.532**	0.000
F2 The impact of social media	0.295**	0.000
F3 Cultural history and art	0.534**	0.000
F4 Natural environment and natural tourism resources	0.504**	0.000
F5 Shopping and consumption	0.454**	0.000
F6 Religious and cultural events	0.351**	0.000

Note. ** Significant correlations at 0.01 level (bilateral)

Through the study of correlation analysis we can find ‘political economy and social environment and facilities’, ‘cultural history and art’, ‘natural environment and natural tourism resources’ show a weak correlation with ‘Italy as a tourist destination interest’.

4.7 Regression Analysis of Image Perception

Table 16. Multiple linear regression analysis of Chinese respondents Residents of the Italian Tourism Image Perception

Model	Coefficient a				Collinearity statistics		
	Non - standardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
	B	Standard error	trial version				
(constant)	1.710	.228		7.503	.000		
F1 Political, economic, social, environmental and facilities	.244	.052	.221	4.733	.000	.424	2.361
F2 The impact of social media	-.017	.031	-.023	-.567	.571	.578	1.731
F3 Cultural history and art	.238	.052	.213	4.617	.000	.433	2.312
F4 Natural environment and natural tourism resources	.145	.046	.141	3.156	.002	.463	2.160
F5 Shopping and consumption	.125	.034	.142	3.648	.000	.608	1.644
F6 Religious and cultural events	.025	.034	.031	.730	.466	.525	1.906

a. Dependent variable: your interest in Italy as a tourist destination

Note. *P=Sig < 0.05

According to the results of analysis in Table 16, it is shown that under the significant level of 0.05, only the four factors ‘political economy and social environment and facilities’, ‘cultural history and art’, ‘natural environment and natural tourism resources’, ‘Shopping and consumption’, can significantly affect the respondents’ degree of interest of travelling the Italy. Their regression coefficients are 0.244, 0.238, 0.145, 0.125 respectively, ‘political economy and social environment and facilities’ has the most important degree of influence, followed by ‘cultural history and art’ and ‘natural environment and natural tourism resources’, and finally ‘shopping and consumption.’

5. Conclusion and Implication

5.1 Conclusions

The conclusions of this paper are as follows:

(a) The respondents were interested in travelling to Italy. This study found that, in the 691 respondents of the questionnaire, only 18 respondents said they were not interested in traveling to Italy, accounting for only 2.6%. The vast majority of Chinese residents have a definite impression of Italy in their mind. At the same time, according to the survey, we find that Italy has high popularity in the tourism resources for Chinese residents. As the eternal city of Rome, the city of Venice, the fashion capital of Milan, the origin of the Renaissance of Florence, these four cities have a certain reputation in the surveyed population, the majority of Chinese people are familiar with these four Italy cities.

(b) It clearly the main perception factors that influence the degree of respondents' interest in Italy tourism. For Chinese residents, according to the questionnaire survey, ‘Political economic and social environment and facilities’, ‘cultural history and art’, ‘natural environment and natural tourism resources’ and ‘shopping and consumption’ can significantly affect the level of respondents’ interest in travelling to Italy; in particular the

factors 'political economy and social environment and facilities', 'cultural history and art', and 'natural environment and natural tourism resources'.

The correlation analysis shows that there is a strong correlation in the degree of interest for the Chinese residents in the tourist destination of Italy. It is not difficult to find that the combination of human and natural elements is the high spot which attracts Chinese residents to Italy.

(c) In the factors 'Visited Italy' and 'not visited Italy', there are both common and significant differences between these two groups of respondents in factors that impact Italian tourism perception. There were significant differences between the two groups. The perception factors have no significant differences between the two groups of respondents. They were mainly obtained by means of second-hand information. The four perception factors which have significant differences were mainly experienced by first-hand information.

(d) There are new trends of influencing Chinese residents' perception factors in Italian tourism image. From the analysis of the results of the questionnaire, we will find that social media is increasingly important in the tourism industry. Social media has had a significantly underestimated status in marketing and promotion of the tourism industry. 'Shopping consumption' is becoming an increasingly important factor that influences the choice of Chinese tourists in travelling to destinations or tourist attractions. Whether the tourist destination has the full range of desired shopping products, various payment methods and suitable services or not, is becoming another special 'tourism resources' criteria for tourist destinations for Chinese tourists.

5.2 Marketing Implications

According to the study of Chinese residents' perception of tourism in Italy, the following marketing suggestions can be put forward for the tourism marketing of Chinese residents travelling to Italy.

(a) Optimize and deepen the marketing of tourism elements with traditional advantages. In view of China's rapid urbanization development, which is slowly affecting the natural environment (especially the atmosphere with the 'smog' problem becoming prominent), introducing Italy's natural scenery advantage would be timely. Strengthening and deepening the Chinese tourists' awareness of tourism resources, such as snow-capped mountains, hot springs, villages, seaside, ancient architecture, ancient cities in Italy, would give full play to the tourism elements of 'leisure', 'tour and sightseeing' and other traditional advantages. Whilst emphasizing the diversity of types of Italian tourism and the comparison of tourist destinations in other countries, Italy has tourism resources that are suitable for different seasons. For example, on the one hand, Italy which has held the Olympic Games with its winter tourism resources can compete with Switzerland and France. On the other hand, its hot spring tourism can also be compared with its European neighbors.

(b) Focus on humanistic core marketing like 'history, culture, art'. With the continued growth of Chinese residents' income, outbound tourism is not only satisfied by pure leisure and sightseeing, but also by experiencing and broadening knowledge or spiritual awareness. It is therefore necessary to enrich tourism marketing with humanistic content as its core on the basis of traditional single sightseeing. In view of the characteristics of historical art cultural tourism resources, there are more and more tourists who respect art and focus their appreciation on the arts and crafts masters, so types of trips such as tracing-roots tours or history and culture tours could be designed to attract tourists. The tourism consumption with humanities as the core can also be reflected in the marketing of tourism souvenirs. The success of tourism and marketing of history, culture and art would also promote the consumption of tourism, and thus promote the consumption of tourist souvenirs or related arts and cultural industries.

(c) Increase experiential consumption and interactive tourism marketing of innovative forms. Italy is the world's leading fashion country, a place rich in luxury brands, of which most of the visitors appreciate from personal experience. Therefore in the future, tourism marketing could regard Italy as a fashion and luxury brand gathering place, and emphasize the shopping experience. So experiential consumption is likely to become the future development trend with products that are more suitable for Chinese or Asian tourists, especially co-ordinated to Chinese holidays, grouping products that Chinese tourists most often buy in one area to facilitate the tourists selection. Combining innovative creative marketing tools, expressed by innovative forms through the new high-tech means, using the relevant tourism products APP as its display to increase experience and exchange interaction with the visitors, and also designing related tourism products that have more attraction and intrinsic value through innovation and creativity is the way forward.

(d) Enrich and improve mouth marketing with social media as the main means. Current social media has been more and more important in the promotion of tourism. Social media will involve more people than traditional advertising marketing does. Credible reputation building through soft advertising and properly sharing and

expressing the experience of visitors through the marketing process can indirectly highlight the characteristics of the tourism destination. Through this analysis, it was found that women are more concerned about social media than men and therefore social media content which has an approach geared to the female group platform would make it easier to spread and share experiences. In this way if a good reputation for tourist destinations or tourism products can be established, then the marketing audience could be extended. Building good reputation through social media has a great role in promoting tourism destination marketing.

(e) Strengthen the differentiated and personalized segment marketing of Chinese tourists. Whether highly educated or less educated, Chinese tourists have a common character, that is, they tend to have an interest in the simple, easy and accessible forms which lead to consumer impulse. When planning the marketing, it is a good idea to use simple and clear Chinese sentences to introduce the brand culture and history, and to tell the brand story. So brand awareness and products will be clear for customers. Using a soft advertising form to gear potential to the market is also a good choice. When tourism enterprises are dealing with multi-level tour groups, covering all structural levels of the tourists is actually very difficult: massive team organisation if necessary to support and design appropriate tourism products for different levels of groups. So if the marketing coverage and capacity are limited, differentiated marketing also leads to outstanding product features to improve marketing effectiveness.

(f) Enrich marketing of event activities in which females are the main audience. At present, the status of women is increasing year by year in China's big cities. Compared with men, women tend to have higher shopping desires linked to fashionable and luxury goods. Italy is the fashion capital. so in tourism marketing, cosmetics, luggage, shoes and jewelry are attractive elements. Combining such elements such as the women's shopping festival and Mother's Day with marketing are good strategies. At the same time, with the rise of parent-child tourism, this is led by a large number of women. The mother is an important decision participant in parent-child travel. Therefore, in the process of tourism marketing, enriching tourism festivals to attract women would be a breakthrough point. Enriching also the content and extension of tourism products to expand the coverage of cultural art and history in Italian tourism by way of family education, which suits refined and popular tastes.

5.3 Limitations

Firstly, due to the limit of time and ability, there are some limitations in the quantity and the scope of the sampling of the survey. The quantity of this survey's data collection questionnaire has a total of 691 participants, which does not meet sufficient scientific criteria to illustrate the overall level of Chinese residents.

Secondly, the distribution channels of the questionnaire have limitations in the collection area and the scope of the crowd of the data. Since the issue of this questionnaire is based on 'Sojump' and the social media site 'WeChat', the area and scope of the questionnaire will be affected.

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