

The Characteristics of Chinese Tourists in Indonesia and Its Performance in 2013–2017

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to identify the characteristics and performance of Chinese tourists in Indonesia. To understand the characteristics of Chinese tourists, data were obtained from Passenger Exit Survey (PES) in 2016. Meanwhile, to know the performance of Chinese tourists, data were derived from monthly reports of Inbound Tourist Arrival from 2013-2017. Data and information were mostly obtained through literature studies and unstructured interviews with stakeholders and researchers at the Ministry of Tourism. This research finds several characteristics of Chinese tourists in Indonesia. Most of them are between 25-44 age group and work as professionals, managers, and employees. They like to come in groups with around seven days of stay. Moreover, they choose star hotels as the primary choice for accommodation. On average, they spend USD1.018 during their visit to Indonesia. Most of them get information about Indonesian tourism and destinations from friends/family and social media. However, the number of Chinese tourist to Indonesia has doubled in the last four years. The high penetration of the Chinese tourists takes place in Bali while the massive growth occurs in Manado.

Keywords: Chinese tourist, tourist characteristics, tourist visit performance

INTRODUCTION

The rise of China's economy has had an impact on the rise of the middle class in that country. Iskryan (2016) reported that the number of Chinese middle class was 68% in 2012. By 2022, the middle class is predicted to reach 76% with 54% for upper middle class and 22% for the mass middle. With China's total population nearly 1.379 billion, there were 930 million people classified as middle class with an income of USD9.000 – USD35.000 in 2016. The increase in personal income affects the pattern and size of consumption of the Chinese, including their consumption for travel. Thus, the economic factor affects the number of Chinese outbound (Dai, Jiang, Yang, & Ma, 2017).

The number of Chinese outbound travelers continues to grow and becomes one of the largest markets in the world. The Government of the Republic of Indonesia sets 20 million foreign tourists as a target

in 2019 and enacts China to be one of the potential markets. From 1983 to 1992, the motive of Chinese tourists was Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) who were mostly in Hong Kong and Macau (Guo, Seongseop Kim, & Timothy, 2007; Xie & Li, 2009). In 1988, the Government of China had set Thailand to become an approved-state as a tourist destination for Chinese tourists. Two years later, Malaysia, Philippines, and Singapore followed to be the destination for Chinese tourists. Meanwhile, in 1999, through the Approved Destination Status (ADS) system, the Government of China established cooperation with Australia and New Zealand (Jørgensen, Law, & King, 2017). Through the ADS system, the Government of China can determine which destinations/countries are approved or prohibited and determine which travel companies are allowed to operate in China (Keating & Kriz, 2008; Xie & Li, 2009). Until 2004, China opened up with Africa and Europe which resulted in the visit of foreign tourists in both continents jumping to nine-fold (Xie & Li, 2009).

Travelchinaguide (2017) reported that the number of Chinese outbound tourists was 22 million in 2016. That number rose by 4,3% from 2015. Meanwhile, in mid-2017, the number of outbound tourists reach 62,03 million and could reach 127 million by the end of the year. Looking back to ten years ago, the number of outbound Chinese tourists was 20 million, much lower than today (Li, 2016; Travelchinaguide, 2017). On the other hand, a model using econometric approach created by Lin, Liu, and Song (2015), predicts the total number of Chinese outbound tourist that will reach 138,7 million by 2020.

The growing number of Chinese outbound tourists is inseparable from visa policy changes in various countries. In 2017, China received a visa waiver policy from 51 countries. The Henley & Partner (2017) stated that with visa restrictions index 2017, the ease of Chinese tourists in the 51 countries made China the 85th rank of a total of 219 countries in the world. Moreover, some countries that provide visa waivers for Chinese tourists include Thailand, Vietnam, South Korea, and Indonesia. Thailand grants visa-free to Chinese travelers for 15 days. Indonesia and Vietnam provide visa-free for 30 days. Meanwhile, South Korea grants visa-free to Chinese tourists who visit Jeju Island for 30 days, but other areas in South Korea are granted visa freedom for 15 days. Ease and openness through the visa waivers policy increase the number of Chinese tourists (UNWTO, 2014). For example, when China received visa ease to visit Jeju Island from South Korea in 2006. After the enactment of the policy until 2009, the growth of Chinese tourist arrivals grew by 18,9 percent (UNWTO, 2013).

The Government of the Republic of Indonesia also provides ease of visa for Chinese travelers through the visa-free policy. The policy is contained in Peraturan Presiden Republik Indonesia (Presidential Decree) No. 69 of 2015 which was released on June 10, 2015. China is granted visa-free waivers with other 29 countries (Republik Indonesia, 2015). Through the policy, the government expects a positive impact from the visit of Chinese tourists in Indonesia. The government expects an increase in the country's foreign exchange and the indirect decrease of the unemployment rate.

However, the government's efforts to bring Chinese tourists do not always bring a positive impact. The increasing number of Chinese tourists visiting Indonesia has also brought a negative side. Based on data from the Director General of Immigration (2016), some Chinese citizens who became tourists were known to abuse the visa-free visit. The majority of cases of abuse of the visa-free policy are related to employment. Some tourism actors in Bali also complains about the behavior of Chinese tourists that they consider unethical.

The proper consideration by The Government of the Republic of Indonesia is necessary to attract as many Chinese tourists as possible. On the other hand, the increasing number of Chinese tourists brings an impact on the economy of society. For example, on

June 2017, the direct flights from China to Manado managed to increase the number of foreign tourist arrivals in North Sulawesi by 252,64% (Asdep Litbangjakpar Kementrian Pariwisata, 2017b). The increasing number of visits caused accommodation in Manado often filled with Chinese tourists.

Nevertheless, as China's tourist potentially rises in Indonesia, research on Chinese tourists is relatively deficient. In other words, the rising of Chinese tourists to Indonesia has not been supported by research especially on the characteristics and performance of Chinese tourists to Indonesia.

Purwanto and Ling (2016) tried to identify the behavior of Chinese tourists abroad. Their research was done by literature study. Unfortunately, they did not use Indonesian report and the most recent data. Similarly, Nasolomampionona (2014) analyzed the trend of Chinese tourists by identifying their motivation, historical circumstances, and economic politics. The research used descriptive method. Unlike Purwanto and Ling (2016), he explained the global phenomenon of Chinese tourist. Moreover, Pratama, Mananda, and Sudiarta (2016) attempted to recognize the characteristics and motivations of Asian tourists, one of which involves visiting Chinese tourists visiting Ubud. They used questionnaire to Asian tourists in Ubud. They had not been able to profile the Chinese tourist in Indonesia generally. However, based on the previous researches, it has not shown the characteristics of Chinese tourists in Indonesia specifically.

As mentioned, no research has attempted to analyze and understand the performance and characteristic of Chinese tourist visits in Indonesia. In this research, the researcher has two primary objectives. First, it is to find out how the characteristics of Chinese tourists in Indonesia are. Second, it is to see how the performance of Chinese tourists until 2017 is. The result is expected to give some suggestion to the government.

METHODS

This research uses descriptive statistics method. In this method, tables or graphs are used to present numerical facts or data. The method is expected to provide a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the data to address the main issues in this research. To determine the performance of Chinese tourist, the researcher uses secondary data from monthly tourist visit report compiled by Ministry of Tourism in 2013-2016. The researcher also uses secondary data from tourism statistic agency of Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia to compare the performance among these nations. Meanwhile, to understand the characteristics of Chinese tourists in Indonesia, the researcher utilizes the secondary data from inbound tourist statistic profile report issued by Asdep Litbangjakpar (2016b) in Ministry of Tourism. The report is the result of Passenger Exit Survey (PES) held by Asdep Litbangjakpar and later it is known as

PES report. The researcher selects the variables such as the source of information, demography, length of stay, accommodation preference, and spending money to describe the characteristics of Chinese tourist. This research also uses quantitative data for percentage regarding instance number of tourist visits, the amount of spending money, demography, and source of information. Hence, the quantitative data are described simultaneously with theoretical background and phenomenon founded by other researchers.

PES is a field survey using questionnaires. Respondents of the survey are foreign tourists who are in the exit-doors of immigration. By 2016, PES is implemented at 13 international entrances including airports, ports and cross-border posts. In this PES report, around 25.000 respondents scattered in the entire exit-doors are selected as sample. The survey was held for two times, namely April-May and August-September. The survey successfully acquired the data 1.993 Chinese tourists.

To strengthen the discussion, mainly on the characteristics of Chinese tourists in Indonesia, researcher conducts an unstructured interview with stakeholders and researchers at the Ministry of Tourism.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The number of Chinese tourists in Indonesia from 2013 until 2016 experiences a positive trend. In 2013, the number of Chinese tourists visiting Indonesia was 747.921 visits, and it increased 28,2% in the following year. Until 2016, the number of Chinese tourists was doubled compared to 2013, which had reached 1,45 million visits (Asdep Litbangjakpar Kementerian Pariwisata, 2017a). Recorded until October 2017, the number of Chinese tourists has reached 1,7 million visits. One predicted that the number of Chinese tourists would reach 2 million by the end of 2017. Based on the results of PES 2016, in general, as many as 66% of Chinese tourists intend to have a vacation. Nevertheless, 20% of Chinese tourists also want to conduct business activities or Meeting Incentive Convention and Exhibition (MICE) activity.

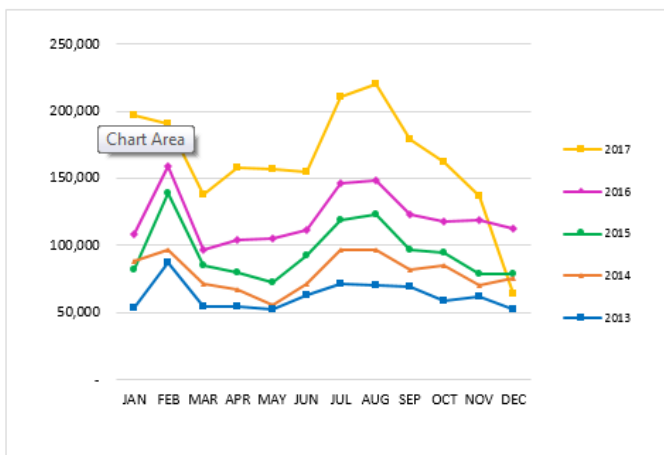


Figure 1 Chinese Tourist in Indonesia in 2013-2017
(Source: Asdep Litbangjakpar Kementerian Pariwisata, 2017a)

Based on the visits of Chinese tourists in the last four years, it appears to have a similar pattern in every year as seen in Figure 1. One of the highest Chinese tourists' peak season occurs in February. The high number of Chinese tourists in February is due to a national holiday called Golden Week in mid-February (Arlt, 2006; Nasolomampionona, 2014; Qiao, Chen, Guan, & Kim, 2008). Chinese citizens take advantage of Golden Week to travel abroad. One consideration for Chinese tourists to travel abroad besides the availability of disposable income is the availability of holiday time (Guo, Seongseop Kim, & Timothy, 2007; Nasolomampionona, 2014).

Meanwhile, low season occurs in March or May. After May, the number of Chinese tourists slowly increases until August that reaches the highest point. According to Nasolomampionona (2014), in a survey by the Familien in 2003, most Chinese tourists traveled abroad during the summer months of July and August. In that season, they tended to travel a long distance (long-haul) such as to Europe, United States, and Canada. Compared to Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand (see Figure 2–Figure 4), it is likely to have a similar pattern of the visit.

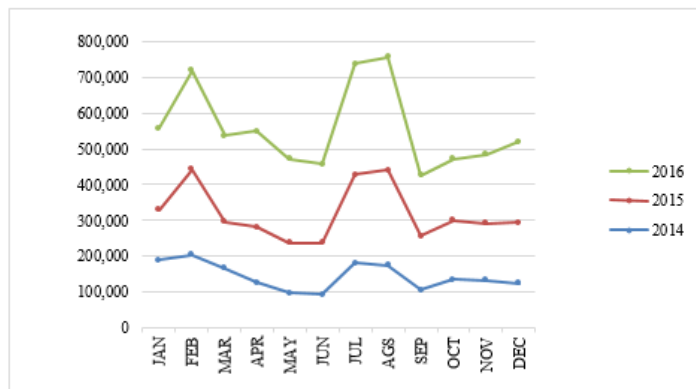


Figure 2 Chinese Tourists in Singapura in 2014-2016
(Source: www.stb.gov.sg)

One of the highest peaks of Chinese tourists to those countries is in August. Just like in Indonesia, in Singapore and Thailand, there is also an increase in the number of Chinese tourists in February. However, in Malaysia, this is not similar. During 2014 to 2016, there was no peak season in February. Meanwhile, the pattern of Chinese tourists visiting Indonesia and Singapore tends to be the same in that period.

The most prominent tourist destination of Chinese tourists in Indonesia is Bali. By 2016, Chinese tourists in Bali were 965.061 tourists or 66% of all Chinese tourists in Indonesia. The following tourist destination was Jakarta and Batam. The penetration of Chinese tourists in Jakarta in 2016 was 23%. Meanwhile, in Batam, it was 3%.

Unfortunately, the visit of Chinese tourists to Jakarta and Batam tend to decline compared to data in 2015. Meanwhile, the increase of Chinese tourists

in Indonesia happens in Manado. Since the opening of direct flights from China to Manado and massive promotions held by the stakeholders, Chinese tourists who entered Manado grew exponentially up to 263% during 2015 to 2016 (Asdep Litbangjakpar Kementerian Pariwisata, 2016a).

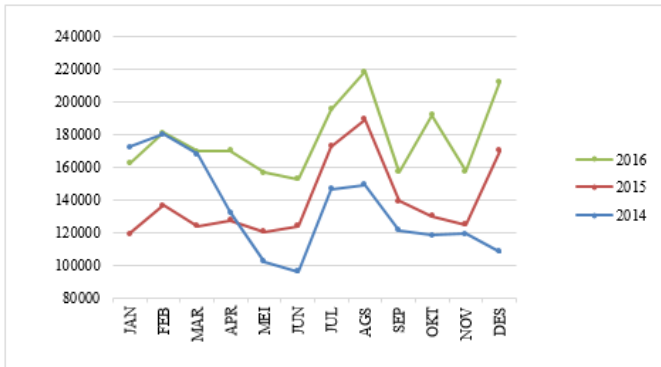


Figure 3 Chinese Tourists in Malaysia in 2014-2016 (Source: <http://mytourismdata.tourism.gov.my>)

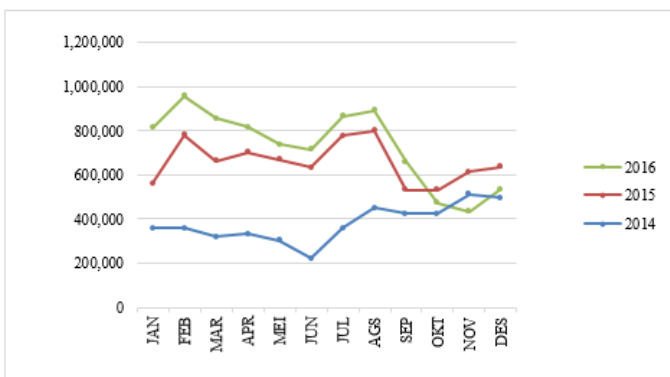


Figure 4 Chinese Tourist Visits to Thailand in 2014-2016 (Source: www.mots.go.th)

As seen in Figure 5, Chinese tourists who come to Indonesia get more information about Indonesian tourism mostly through friends/relatives (53,6%). Moreover, they also get information from the internet (41,4%) and social media (31,7%). In short, information from friends/relatives is the main source of Chinese tourists. This finding is the same as Amonhaemanon and Amornhaymanon (2015). They found that Chinese tourist had information regarding nature and beach tourism in Thailand from their friends/relatives.

In consuming tourism products, Chinese tourists impose a ‘three-phase cycle’. Those are anticipation and preparation; travel and activity; and ultimately recall and communicate experiences gained to others (Arlt, 2006). The experience gained by friends/relatives from tourist destinations forms an image and perceived value for tourists who will travel

(Amonhaemanon & Amornhaymanon, 2015; Yang, Jing, & Nguyen, 2016). Information or values shared are related to quality, experience, and feelings (Yang, Jing, & Nguyen, 2016).

Moreover, Chinese tourists who have visited specific tourist destinations will convey information directly and through social media such as blogs and Youtube (Kim, Penny Wan, and Pan, 2015). Any information and experience of travelers who have finished the tour will be used as anticipation and preparation by others to travel. It proves that the power of word of mouth among Chinese society is still strong enough.

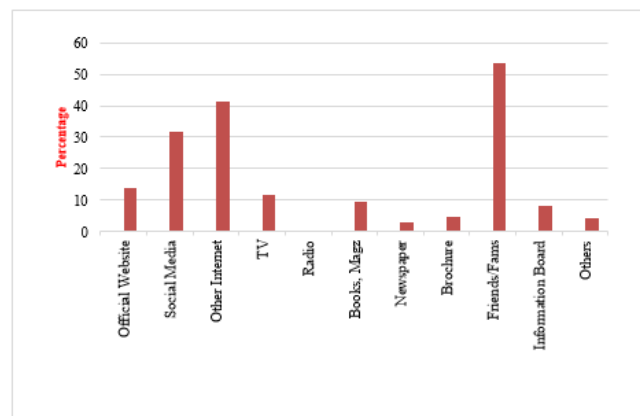


Figure 5 Chinese Tourist Information Source Graph (Source: Asdep Litbangjakpar Kementerian Pariwisata, 2016b)

For the gender, Chinese tourists who come to Indonesia are male predominantly. In 2015, the number of male Chinese tourists visiting was 56,04%. In 2016, it increased to 57,63%. According to Nasolomampionona (2014), male Chinese tourists in Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia in 2000 reached 43,9%. There was a similarity between Germans and Canadians tourists (Arlt, 2006). Nevertheless, men do not always dominate Chinese tourists. For example, in Macau and Hong Kong, the majority of visitors are female. This phenomenon happens due to the location of Macau and Hong Kong which are relatively close to China and its cultural similarity (Arlt, 2006; Li, 2016; Dai et al., 2017).

According to a report in Catalyst (2017), in the Chinese population, the male is 51,6% of the total population. This can be reasons for the high male Chinese tourists visiting Indonesia. Furthermore, the Chinese male tourists want to do business (MICE). Meanwhile, the female tourists tend to choose shopping tours.

Based on the data in Table 1, there are 72,7% of 25-44-year-old Chinese tourists. This range of age is the highest compared to the others. Nasolomampionona (2014) also mentioned that generally, Chinese tourists aged around 25-44 years and dominated outbound tourists around 65%.

Table 1 Chinese Tourist Distribution According to the Gender and Age

Age	Percentage	Gender Percentage	
		Male	Female
15 - 24	14,48	44,01	55,99
25 – 34	48,09	56,4	43,6
35 – 44	24,62	69,48	30,52
45 – 54	9,31	71,5	28,5
55 – 64	2,77	71,38	28,62
> 64	0,74	70,33	29,67

(Source: PES, 2016)

Chinese tourists whose ages are 25-34 years have a motivation for a vacation about 41,1%. Meanwhile, tourists over 55 tend to be inferior. This is because they choose to save their money than to spend it. It may be the pension funds they receive are low, and the low standard of living that makes travel agents unable to take massive profits from them (Guo, Seongseop Kim, & Timothy, 2007).

On the other hand, as seen in Figure 6, Chinese tourists who visit Indonesia mostly work as professionals, managers, and employees. Around 71% of tourists who work as professionals set holiday as their main agenda in Indonesia. As explained previously, the retiree is the smallest number of Chinese tourists with only 2%. This result is slightly different with Chinese tourists who visited Thailand. They worked as an entrepreneur or business owner (Amonhaemanon and Amornhaymanon, 2015).

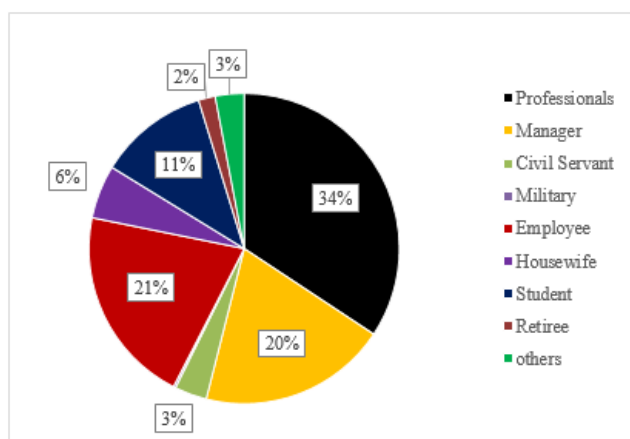


Figure 6 Chinese Tourists' Occupation
(Source: Asdep Litbangjakpar Kementerian Pariwisata, 2016b)

Based on observation in Bali, Manado, and Batam, Chinese tourists choose to visit Indonesia in groups through travel agents. Based on the information from the immigration of Batam, Manado, and Bali using interview, Chinese tourists come to Indonesia

in groups containing 10 to 30 people and even more. They tend to choose to travel in the group because it is considered more secure and comfortable, especially if they use a professional travel agent (Lo & Lam, 2004). Nasolomampionona (2014) mentioned that the reason they preferred to travel in the group was the limitations of English, the fear for adventure (especially first-time traveler), and efficient traveling.

Table 2 Chinese Tourist's Preference in Travel Arrangements

Travel Arrangements	Gender Percentage	
	Male	Female
With Package (In Group)	46,75	53,25
Individual (Without Group)	63	37

(Source: PES, 2016)

Furthermore, male tourists prefer traveling alone to in groups. In contrast, female tourists like to be in groups. The reason is that the female tourists are more concerned with the security obtained by a tour in the group (Jin, Lin, & Hung, 2014, Prayag, Cohen, and Yan, 2015). Therefore, by joining a group tour, female tourists feel more secure rather than traveling alone. There result is in line with a survey conducted by Ivy Alliance Tourism Consulting in 2010 (Jin, Lin, & Hung, 2014). They agreed that 48,9% of Chinese tourists choose tour packages in group. Nevertheless, Jin, Lin, and Hung (2014) suggested that the millennial generation or "Generation Y" of China, liked traveling alone. This is similar based on observation at immigration doors in Jakarta and Surabaya. Chinese tourists come alone rather than in a group.

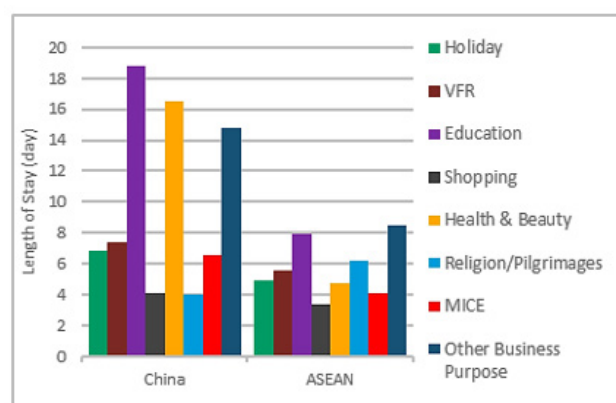


Figure 7 Chinese Tourists' Length of Stay in Indonesia Compared to ASEAN Tourist

(Source: Asdep Litbangjakpar Kementerian Pariwisata, 2016b)

Moreover, the average length of stay of Chinese tourists in Indonesia is seven days. However, the length of stay of Chinese tourists who have a vacation in Indonesia is six days. The length of stay of Chinese tourists is longer than the length stay of tourists from ASEAN countries with five days as the average length of stay. According to Arlt (2006), the length of stay of Chinese tourists varies in various countries. For example, Chinese tourists stayed in Thailand for six days, while in Germany for only two days in 2004.

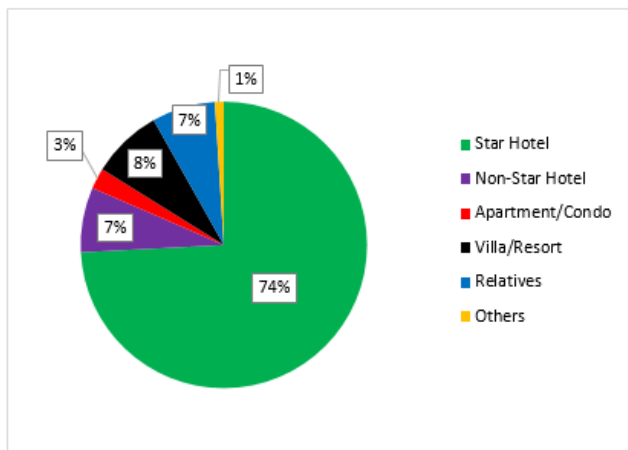


Figure 8 Chinese Tourists' Accommodation Preferences (Source: Asdep Litbangjakpar Kementerian Pariwisata, 2016b)

For the accommodation, the majority of Chinese tourists who come to Indonesia choose star hotels in Indonesia. According to Li, Lai, Harrill, Kline, & Wang (2011), Chinese tourists consider USD50–USD100 for hotels is a reasonable price. They are willing to pay it. They prefer three or more star hotels as their temporary residence. Meanwhile, for the millennial generation, they choose accommodation such as hotels with international reputation or chain hotels (Prayag, Cohen, & Yan, 2015). Based on data, the average length of stay of Chinese tourists in Indonesia who stay in star hotels is six days. Furthermore, according to Bradley (2017), in a survey conducted by hotel.com, Chinese tourists need hotel staff and Chinese-language guides, non-cash payment facilities such as UnionPay, and TV channels airing Chinese events.

Moreover, the average spending money of Chinese tourists in Indonesia is USD1.018 per visit. Compared to Singapore and Malaysia tourists who come to Indonesia, Chinese tourists spending is significantly higher. Singapore tourist expenditures amount to USD680, while Malaysian tourists are USD663. The amount of Chinese tourist spending is also higher than the average expenditure of tourists from ASEAN countries. Then, Chinese tourists often bring souvenirs to families in China. Chinese tourists tend to purchase souvenirs such as Indonesian or local goods like traditional food and *batik/tenun*. About 52% of expenditures are spent on purchasing a souvenir.

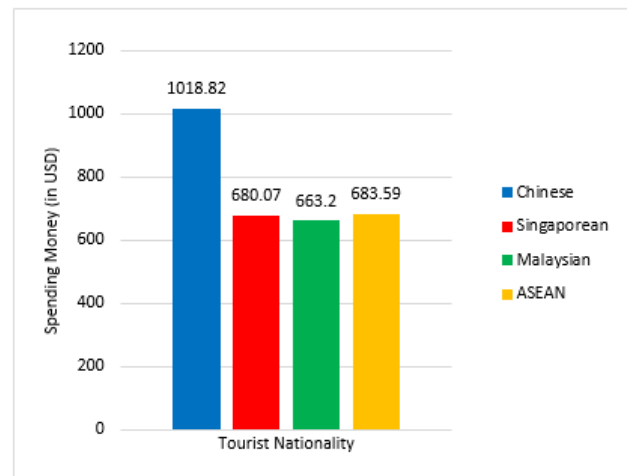


Figure 9 Chinese Tourists' Spending Money (Source: Asdep Litbangjakpar Kementerian Pariwisata, 2016b)

By the various types of nature tourism in Indonesia, 53% of Chinese tourists like and visit the marine-themed nature tourism. Li (2016) stated that island tours in Southeast Asia and South Asia were very popular among Chinese tourists, especially young people. They are more interested in tourism which is characterized by beautiful sunshine and beach. Furthermore, natural resources are the biggest demand for Chinese tourists (Qiao, Chen, Guan, & Kim, 2008; Ruhanen, Whitford, & McLennan, 2015). This characteristic of Chinese tourists is the same when they visit Thailand. However, only a small part of them likes adventure (Amonhaemanon and Amornhaymanon, 2015).

Meanwhile, from various cultural tourism offerings in Indonesia, Chinese tourists tend to like urban and rural tourism. It is due to the urban tourism shopping activities for friends and family which are the main characteristics of Chinese tourists. Compared to the natural and cultural tourism, Chinese tourists also like artificial tourism less. The result is in Figure 7.

The government can respond these characteristics through marketing policies and programs; human resource development; and the development of tourism destinations and industries. For example from the preferences of Chinese tourists who prefer natural and cultural tourism, the government should do more campaigns and marketing with the theme of nature tourism, especially beaches and culture in Indonesia. Regarding tourism industry development, the Government needs to set up star hotels that meet the expectations of Chinese tourists. The tourism industry actors should also give more attention to the Chinese tourists because of their booming outbound travel trends. The existence of language and culture barrier when Chinese tourists come to Indonesia can be managed from human resource development. For example, it can be by training the guides to speak Mandarin. Based on the

characteristics and performance of Chinese tourists, the government can also determine long-term plans in bringing Chinese tourists in the future.

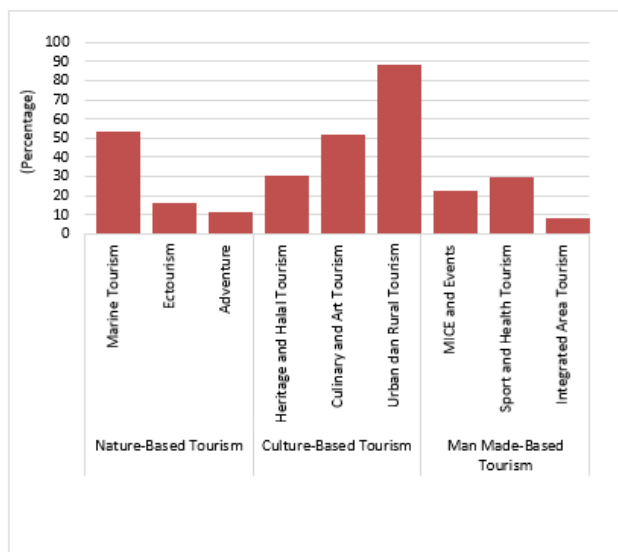


Figure 10 Types of Tourism Preference by Chinese Tourist
(Source: Asdep Litbangjakpar Kementerian Pariwisata, 2016b)

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the result, over the past four years, the number of Chinese tourists has grown positive. Bali is still the prima donna for Chinese tourists. Around 66% of Chinese tourists still make Bali as a primary destination in Indonesia. It is predicted to be visited continuously more by Chinese tourists in the coming years. Bali tourism stakeholders and actors including the Government need to maintain the image of Bali in the eyes of Chinese tourists as they will share their vacation experience with their family and friends in China.

Chinese tourists who come to Indonesia are 25-44 years whom 75% of the tourists are working as managers, professionals, and employees. The majority of Chinese tourists visit in a group, especially women. Meanwhile, from the gender, most of the tourists are male. Their average expenditure is USD1.018 with an average seven days as the length of visit in Indonesia and makes star hotels as the primary choice of temporary residence. Nature tourism and culture is the demand of Chinese tourists in Indonesia, especially for young tourists. Meanwhile, the peak season of Chinese tourist visit to Indonesia occurs in February because of Golden Week and August which is summer.

This research has presented a brief description and explanation about the characteristics of Chinese tourist and its performance in Indonesia. The main limitation of this research is that it mainly focus only on literature study of tourism statistical report and academics paper. Some questions have already been answered in this research. However, the researcher

suggests that the future research should done by using qualitative method by applying deep interview to Chinese tourist in several destination in Indonesia. Although it will take time and money, the researcher presumes that this method will explain more detail and solid findings, especially regarding Chinese tourist profile. Other than the theory, the future researchers should also focus on how tourism industry in Indonesia deals with the booming of Chinese tourist and its profile.

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