

UNDERSTANDING CHINESE GIRLFRIEND GETAWAYS' TRAVEL MOTIVATION AND TRAVEL PREFERENCES: FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF FEMINIST AND NON-FEMINIST

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INTRODUCTION

The girlfriend getaway (GGA) refers to females traveling with other female friends and relatives for holiday purposes (Khoo-Lattimore & Prayag, 2018), gaining popularity among women. Although GGA started to get academics' attention (Chen & Mak, 2020; Berdychevsky et al., 2016), previous scholars neglected the influence of females' self-awareness on feminism on their motivations and travel preferences during GGA. In conjunction with the application of feminist theory in the tourism industry, this study explores the different stages of GGA tourists' self-awareness on feminism, their motivation, and their travel preference. This will contribute to a more complete understanding of the relationship between GGA tourist travel behaviors and feminist ideas, fill the gap of feminism in this field of tourism, as well as revise the various studies that have been conducted on female tourists and their behaviors.

METHOD

In this study, we adopted the qualitative method of in-depth interviews. The interview outline focused on 3 main categories: self-awareness on feminism, motivation, and travel preferences. From November 2022, purposive sampling was used at the beginning based on our best judgment. Snowball sampling was adopted later as a supplement to reach more GGA tourists. The interviewees in our study were females aged between 18 and 31 who have recently experienced GGA. We used VooV Meeting to conduct online interviews. In addition, based on the data saturation rule (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), a total of 21 interviews continued until April 2023 when the interviewees' responses grew stale and no fresh information surfaced. Textual data from the in-depth interviews were analyzed using inductive thematic analysis by refining into abstract categories and themes (Creswell, 2014). The examples of the coding process are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Examples of the Process of Coding

Data Extracts	Initial codes	Subcategories	Main Category
The reason why I traveled with my bestie was mainly to help her relieve the pressure. She was under great study pressure when she took the postgraduate entrance examination. I hoped that traveling could help her relax. I thought it would be more relaxing for her to travel with me because we both know each other well and were familiar with each other's living habits and preferences. We were all very happy on this trip and enhanced our friendship.	Help each other; relieve the pressure; postgraduate entrance exam; study pressure; relax; get to know each other well; familiar; living habits; preferences; happy; friendship.	To bond with friends To escape pressures To have fun	Motivation
I prefer traveling with my family to traveling alone with my bestie. I also enjoy traveling with my bestie's family. Maybe I'm lazy. I hope I'm the one to be taken care of during the trip. I rely on my bestie very much, although I thought I was an independent female. But when my bestie wanted me to work such as planning a route, I am fully capable of being the head of the tour. I am willing to compromise because I can be different for my bestie.	Lazy; be taken care of; rely on my bestie; independent female; planning a route; capable of being head of the tour; compromise.	Consciousness germination	Self-awareness on feminism

FINDINGS

21 interviewees' self-awareness on feminism can be divided into 3 stages: consciousness germination, awakening, and subject generation.

The 11 interviewees who fall into the consciousness germination stage do not perceive themselves as feminists, though they may have learned feminist thoughts to a certain degree (N19, N20). They preferred a neutral position (N19), defining some feminists as "too extreme" (N21). While sometimes they have to take responsibility, they prefer to be taken care of and be spoiled by others (N18, N20). 3 interviewees are in the awakening stage. They have accepted their identity as feminists, but cannot tell what kind of feminists (e.g., radical, liberal, etc.) they are currently. They agree with some radical feminist thoughts (N17), and have a strong negative view towards all males, embracing celibacy (N5). As for the 7 interviewees who enter the subject generation stage, they not only perceive themselves as feminists but have an explicit recognition of their genre. Though one of them recognizes herself as a liberal feminist and admits sometimes compromising to social pressure (N15), most of them consider themselves as radical feminists, supporting and practicing 6B4T idea (a set of radical feminism ideas from Korea) in daily life (N4, N6, N13, N14, N16). They are not satisfied with merely fighting for women's equal rights (N13), but wish to establish a matriarchy Utopia (N16). What they are most interested in is enhancing their competitiveness in society (N6, N13). They also criticize wearing makeup as pandering to

patriarchal culture (N13).

Although some scholars have pointed out that the motives of GGA were refined into 13 categories (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2019), the interviewees' main motives in this study were as follows. To bond with friends is the most mentioned motivation to join GGA at every stage. Many described their female friends as soul mates and "wish to have an emotional attachment with them" (N11). Some of the interviewees were motivated by celebrating milestone such as "for my graduation" (N18), while some participated in GGA to socialize with friends in an attempt to "seek sister in arms to fight against patriarchy" (N1). Furthermore, interviewees also seek to escape from pressure, especially from "political depression generated from social media content every day" (N1). Only interviewees in the consciousness germination stage were pushed by traveling in the safety of numbers to "gain a sense of security" (N18). In addition, some would participate in GGA in order to find support in difficult times. For instance, one respondent stated: "I sought comfort from my besties after a really difficult situation" (N13). Interviewees were also driven by experiencing something new, one interviewee noted: "I just want to immerse in the brand new local culture" (N7). Several interviewees aimed at increasing knowledge about destinations or places that is "related to feminist and matriarchal culture" (N16). Another motivation is to seek adventure, including experiences like "cycling and bamboo rafting" (N14). A number of interviewees join GGA merely to have fun, as one indicated that "I can finally be myself" (N4). Being emotionally and

physically refreshed is another motivation as some described the precious experience of “restoring energy in nature” (N6). The last motivation is to be spoiled, which is more mentioned by the consciousness germination stage. An interviewee said that “I just want to follow my friends and be taken care of without thinking” (N21).

As for travel preferences, most of the interviewees are attracted by natural scenery as “feeling a sense of harmony and strength” (N13). Meanwhile, heritage sites are also very popular, “I go to museums once I visit a new city, as they represent the history of it”, as one interviewee stated (N15). Local culture and customs are another hit, many interviewees would like to “live in a local homestay, and pretend to be a local” (N17). Not surprisingly, many interviewees travel for gastronomy, especially “those hole-in-the-wall diners providing traditional cuisine” (N14). Interestingly, some interviewees prefer art exhibitions, particularly those “embody feminist and sisterhood ideas” (N17).

IMPLICATIONS or CONCLUSION

By filling in the gaps left by earlier studies and enhancing the content of GGA tourism research, this study advances the investigation into whether diverse female travelers’ self-awareness on feminism can vary their motivation and travel preferences during GGA. It offers fresh insight and equips the tourism industry with knowledge of the traits of feminists, and the commonness and

otherness of the demands of females in different stages of feminist awareness. GGA is more in demand due to the rising status of women, and this study will help tourism businesses to identify different strands within their female clientele and offer more customized tourism products.

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