



# A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO PROVIDING SERVICE TO CHINESE VISITORS TO TASMANIA

## RETAIL



### Chinese Shoppers

A large proportion of the money spent in Australia by Chinese visitors is used to buy things to take back to China rather than on tourist experiences here. This presents a big opportunity for Tasmanian retailers.

#### THE GRASS IS ALWAYS GREENER...

In China many people joke that foreigners come to China to buy fake goods cheaply while Chinese people travel abroad to buy genuine goods to bring home. They have a jaundiced view of fake brands and low quality products and seek genuine quality travel mementos.

It is traditional for Chinese people to take gifts back for family, friends and colleagues. They also often buy significant items for themselves. They prefer to buy iconic Australian items and health products. A clear theme in their shopping preferences is to buy genuine quality items.



**Much money is spent shopping**

### Attracting Chinese Customers

To attract Chinese customers into your shop:

- Have some signage translated into Standard Modern Chinese. Translated signage provides important information but it also says 'you are welcome'. There does not need to be a lot of signage, just enough to be seen by a passer by.
- Prominently display high quality Tasmanian, or at least Australian, products that are made from local materials, have local design features or health benefits.

- ◇ Tasmanian specialty wood items.
- ◇ Pure fine wool garments, blankets etc.
- ◇ Tasmanian essential oils and the like.
- ◇ Local works of art, craft or design.
- ◇ Gourmet or health food products.
- ◇ Quality Tasmanian souvenirs.

#### WELCOME!

The adjacent sign hangs outside a roadside teahouse in rural China; feel the 'welcome' to English speaking travelers who pass by. Our Chinese visitors feel the same!



- Goods purchased in Tasmania must be transported back to China, therefore small lightweight items are preferred .



**A very welcome sign!**

- If you have an attractive product that is large or heavy it is a good idea to offer a 'post to China' service or at least offer to help prospective purchasers with packaging and postal instructions.
- By far the most common Chinese credit card is Union Pay. Your Chinese customers will only be able to spend the cash they are carrying unless you accept Union Pay cards. You can arrange that through Union Pay or some Australian banks. Not taking Union Pay credit cards is a serious handicap to a retail business dealing with Chinese tourists. Taking union pay also indicates you welcome Chinese visitors' business.

### Serving Chinese Customers

- Acknowledge customers as soon as you see them, 'welcome'.
- If the visitor has to wait say 'welcome, please wait a moment'.
- The main thing to remember is to be friendly to Chinese customers and show you want to help.
- Do not be nervous about acknowledging that a customer is Chinese, it will be fine with them.
- Make small talk about where customers are from, about their visit to Tasmania and so on.
- Just like here, avoid politics, religion and sex as conversation topics.
- To get body language right:
  - ◇ Stand still and let the customer stand at the distance he or she is comfortable
  - ◇ If they express friendship by touching your arm or shoulder, copy what they do. You should not initiate touching but if you do reciprocate they will think you have rebuffed their friendly gesture.



**Friendly service in China**

## Saving Face and Avoiding Embarrassment

Chinese customers will often :

- Be very concerned about avoid embarrassing either themselves or you. That means that often they will not ask for what they want if they are not sure whether it is OK.
- Are reluctant say they do not understand, or to ask questions about products.
- Give positive feedback about suggestions regardless of their real opinion. If they are not happy they will complain to each other later. This makes it difficult for you to get constructive feedback about your service or products.
- Give 'yes' as their default answer to questions they do not understand.
- Not want to say something is too expensive for them.
- Not ask for what they want if they are not sure whether it is OK.
- Not risk ordering or buying something they are not sure of.



***Chinese people have been taught to hide their thoughts***

You can help customers to make decisions by giving them alternatives, with information about them, and letting them choose.

## Bargaining and Discount



***In China bargaining is expected***

In China it is normal for customers to try to bargain prices down by asking for discounts. They can be persistent in this and may initially assume you are playing the haggling game if you say that discounts are not possible. Do not take offence, bargaining is expected in China and is played quite hard but people remain friendly underneath the tough veneer. Be patient, remain polite and friendly and be like a broken record repeating your discount policy.

If you do offer discounts, note that in China a 25% discount means that the price is reduced to 25% of the original, that is 75% off! It is a good idea to write the new price or show it on a calculator to avoid confusion.

## Language and Communication

The differences between Chinese and Australian culture and language present difficulties. Some Chinese people learned English at school but their reading and writing is usually much better than their speaking and listening. Ways to increase understanding are:

- Write down important points. They are more likely to understand writing than speech. If they do not understand they can translate at their leisure. They will have a record to refer to.
- When you write, lower case printing is the easiest for Chinese people to understand.
- When you speak choose simple words, speak slowly and avoid slang and local expressions.
- If you have a computer available 'google translate' allows you to converse with customers.
- If you are dealing with a customer through an interpreter look at and speak to the customer, do not have a discussion with the interpreter and ignore the actual visitor.



***Write down important points***

### TIPS ABOUT CHINESE CULTURE

- Even if they speak some English, Chinese people will talk to each other in Chinese. They can communicate so much better in Chinese. Do not take offence they probably are not talking about you.
- 'Please' and 'thank you' are used much less in China than in Australia, saying them too much is actually seen as being rather unfriendly because it is treating the other person too formally. The closer friends are the less polite they are to each other. Do not expect to hear please and thank you much.
- Chinese people stand much closer to each other than Australians do, it can feel overwhelming.

