Tourism Experiences of Young Travellers:

The Chinese Students of Wageningen, the Netherlands

Experience Bicycle Clean Flat Boring Weed Fast Tourist Travel Beautiful Liberation Sunflower Grass Farm Red-light-Streets Expensive Train Fries Different Tidy Weather Small Convenient Windmill Amsterdam

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Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Abstract

Despite an increased interest in the research field of the Chinese Outbound Tourism, little actual research has been done into exploring the significance that is concealed behind the travel experiences of Chinese students in the Netherlands. Combining two separate types of tourism, Youth and Chinese, it is especially important to explore how travel experiences of students are formed. Modes of experiences and authentic approaches are discussed and applied in this study to examine the phenomenon of the tourist experiences. This study shows that Cohen's (1976) notion of tourism experiences and Wang's (1999) view of authenticity, both illustrate a useful approach for understanding the travel experience. Thus, this paper examines the tourism behaviour and cultural background of Chinese students who have been living in a non-Asian environment, significantly culturally different than their own. Focus group interviews with members of the Wageningen University Chinese community, was the main method of data collection for this study. This thesis concludes that in this research population the student is an independent traveller in the making and that travel experiences can be various regardless the nationality of the tourist. The author suggests that looking at the experiences of education with leisure is a topic in academic tourism literature that is recommended to be further analysed.

Keywords: Authenticity, Chinese Outbound Tourism, Experiences, Students, Tourist behaviour, Youth Tourism.

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1. Introduction

Nowadays, one of the newest methods of travel includes international students touring and exploring the country that they are studying in. Students have fewer responsibilities and more leisure time and opportunities to visit nearby cities and countries. Although, they are not considered as 'serious' tourists (Richard &Wilson, 2004; Huang & Tian, 2013) this does not mean, they are not able to afford the same level of quality for their holidays, like other types of tourists do. Therefore, the notion to consider students as only low budget travellers needs to change. Eventually, students will be situated in another category as travellers. In the travel market, only the last 10 years, researchers have turned the spotlight of their interest towards young travellers (Richards, 2005).

In Europe and more specifically in the Netherlands, a student as a tourist has the advantage of gaining travel experiences. Having a 'home base' residence in a centre place, is an ideal way of discovering Europe.

Wageningen, also known as the 'city of life sciences', attracts more and more students from outside of Europe every year. According to statements and statistical records of the Wageningen University, students from Eastern countries, such as China have a significant high number of people that are being accepted in the Netherlands for Master studies (Annual report Wageningen UR, 2013).

While the field of tourism research, for Chinese outbound tourism is still trying to attract the interest of many academics (Arlt, 2006, p.60). Back in 1999, when Arlt Wolfgang stated the well known phrase: 'The Chinese are coming' (COT, 2015) his expertise in Chinese outbound tourism indicated that the tourism industry needs to be aware of the upcoming Asian travellers who are visiting Europe.

The current situation of the Chinese market shows that these travellers are becoming more experienced and prefer to visit lesser known destinations. By 2020, it is expected to have one million visitors moving across international borders coming from China (Arlt, May, 2015).

The future trends of this market show that tourists feel safer during their trips not only because they can get a visa faster and more easily, but also because shopping has become a main travel activity, due to the low taxes outside China. This has led their economy to be the world's highest in spending revenues. As tourism spenders Chinese tourists have been spending billions every year. Regarding the Netherlands, in the top 15 international spenders of 2012, the country was placed last with US$20.2 billion (UNWTO, 2013).

Youth tourism and Chinese tourism have a lot of room for more research to be done. Those fields lack an understanding of how the young traveller (i.e. student) and Chinese in

nationality belong to a profitable segment of tourists. To summarize, moving from the financial part of this topic, travelling is about experiences and vice versa. The act of travelling needs to be pointed out how important is to be researched to be able to understand the pattern of experiences.

For tourism purposes, seeking to leave the country of origin and travel around the world, documentation has been developed. It is significant to specify how the travel documents are approved in order to allow citizens to cross international borders.

ADS (Approved Destination Status)

The ADS stands for the Approved Destination Status (Scheme) and was formed in the mid 90's (Arita et al., 2012). It is an agreement between China and the overseas destinations where Asian tourists visit (Keating & Kriz, 2008). In 1999, the Chinese government in collaboration with the Australian government established the ADS to grant permission for Chinese tourists to visit Australia (Arita et al, 2012). Paving the way for China to begin developing the ADS to other countries worldwide, Australia was the first country that was awarded with the scheme. Countries which would like to promote the Chinese tourism market, needed to sign the ADS agreement. This was the beginning to facilitate the documentation for Chinese residents to travel to other countries outside Asia.

The ADS contract gave the Chinese government the power of control (Tse, 2013). Until the year 2011, there were 140 countries that have signed the ADS arrangement (Prayag et al, 2013). These countries are part of the ADS system and are considered to be tourism destinations by the Chinese government. The Netherlands signed the bilateral agreement in 2004 and joined the ADS system (Arlt, 2006, p.49).

Politics and the policies of China related to other destination countries where Chinese nationals wanted to travel were very essential and integrated to the system or travel market. The seriousness of ADS can be seen by the fact that China has managed not to ask for permission at the places where its citizens can travel, but to allow permission and set limits for Chinese nationals towards the destinations countries that they could visit (Tse, 2013). The government has also managed to come to terms with the visited destinations, with regards to the economic expenses and payments (Keating & Kriz, 2008). Unfortunately this system includes only people who travel for specific reasons and the category of students is not included. This indicates that initially Chinese citizens were leaving their hometown to visit other countries for different reasons.

With this knowledge in mind, citizens whose nationality is not part of the European Union, as travellers need more requirements (such as letters of invitation or Visa's, etc.) to visit the Netherlands. China is one of the countries, for which tourists require a visa to visit

Europe. In the 21ˢᵗ century, the process to obtain a visa is easier, faster and fewer requirements are needed (UNWTO, November, 2014). The time frame that was needed during the 90's including all the necessary documents to get a visa was up to six months (Arlt, p.45). Nowadays, the formalities have been simplified and reduced. A Visa to the Schengen countries can now be approved in less than three months (Netherlands Embassy and Consulates, China, 2015). The facilitation of the visa process has changed, so as to make the entire process of travelling less time consuming and much more efficient.

With regards to university studies, Chinese student need to apply for the Nuffic certificate which stands for the higher education association for international exchange before coming to the Netherlands on a student Visa (EMN, 2012).

Once they are accepted into a university or higher educational program, they are able to apply for a Regular Provisional Residence Permit (MVV) and upon arrival for their studies they can apply for a residence permit. This is mandatory if they want to stay longer than three months (EMN, 2012). The length of a Master program in Wageningen is minimum two years. Therefore, students along with studying, they are given the advantage to travel while living in another continent for minimum of 24 months.

Problem statement

In tourism studies, over the past three decades the value of travelling for young adults has been increasingly acknowledged, while limited attempts have been made to understand the experiences in the field of leisure and tourism. The same implies for the research on Chinese students which is hardly focused on experiences. Most of the Chinese research in tourism is published in the field of marketing. While extensive research to explore and develop an understanding for the reasons of travelling has led to place the individual tourist in specific types of groups (Cohen 1974; Arlt, 2006). There are quite a number of studies conducted regarding the motives of travel, without taking into account that behind the travel incentives is actually the identity of the individual that triggers the tourist to travel. Based on the culture of the traveller, which gives meaning to the tourist identity, there are many definitions and terms found on travel choices and preferences (Wearing, 2010, p.1).

The void that this study is attempting to bridge is that no matter the culture of the tourist, the identity is socially constructed while based on a combination of influences such as cultural background, living environment, spoken language and nationality. When these are linked together, they culturally shape and socially construct the way that each individual is experiencing travelling, where he/she chooses to travel and how he/she behaves as a tourist. So, the focal point of this study is Chinese young backpackers students, because as single

terms, 'Chinese', 'Student', 'Young' and 'Backpackers', have all been researched and described separately, but not as a whole.

In response to this problem, this paper proposes to explore the experiences of young travellers, when they have to rebuild their lives in a different country, exclusively for educational reasons. For this to be done there are five modes of tourist experiences that will be used.

In spite of the fact that, separately there is enough academic research of the Chinese outbound tourism (Arlt, 2006) and the youth tourism (Richards, 2005) an attempt is made to give more insights for a specific study that combines youth and Chinese tourism together. Experiences and tourists can be much easier understood by exploring and analysing the extent the cultural background affects students during their early adolescents' years.

The significance of exploring the Chinese outbound tourism is emphasized to be developed further in detail in the above stated problem. Following the relation of tourism experiences and Chinese students, the scientific objectives indicate the reason why this research can add value both to Chinese outbound tourism and youth tourism. This chapter concludes with the main research questions, sub-questions and an overview of the entire thesis.

Scientific objective and research questions

The central goal of the study is to examine the tourist experiences of Chinese youth whom study in the Netherlands and classify in which of the five modes of tourist experiences their travel experiences fit in. There are three research objectives to be achieved:

1. *To trace how culture and behaviour influence the choices of students during the quality time of their leisure travel.*

2. *To find out what intrigues them (or not) during their stay in a Dutch environment.*

3. *To identify the distance from the spiritual centre the young Chinese has based on the type(s) of experiences.*

The central research question the study sought to answer is:

How can the travel experiences of a young Chinese student be categorized in a specific mode of experience, based on cultural background and travel preferences?

To be able to give an answer for the main research question, there are a few sub-questions that were stated:

1. How do they choose their travel companions? What kind of relation they have with other travellers in tourist groups?
2. In which tourism activities Chinese students participate when travelling? How do students feel when they visit a tourist place?
3. How important the action of travelling is for students? How do Chinese students experience their day trips in Dutch cities?

The way these questions are formed help to understand the relevance between the experiences of the students and how students' perceptions of unfamiliar environments complete the whole travel experience.

Overview of the thesis

The design of this paper consists of five chapters. In Chapter 2 the literature is critically reviewed for the two main types of tourism that are being examined: Chinese and youth tourism, along with backpackers and tourism behaviour. Next, from a combination of these general terms and definitions, the conceptual framework is outlined. This Chapter reflects on explaining, comparing and discussing main theories and relevant concepts. These relevant theories and concepts are part of the theoretical presented framework.

In Chapter 3 the methodology section is indicated. It initiates with a general description of the method that was chosen, the research design that was made, the procedure of selecting participants, data analysis and collection are provided on how they were developed and finally limitations that occurred during focus group discussions. Additionally, the results of this study have been summarized and separated in themes relevant to the conceptual model.

In Chapter 4, the findings of this study are presented and reviews regarding the modes of travelling are addressed. The basis to underpin the discussion is drawn from the findings. The discussion is related to the concepts and theories from the theoretical framework.

Finally, in Chapter 5 an overall conclusion is made concerning whether the students' experiences are able to justify answers for the research questions and scientific objectives. It closes with implications, contributions and a brief evaluation of the research. It concludes by responding to the researched questions, followed by recommendations for future work in the field of youth and Chinese tourism.

2. Literature Review

Introduction & Overview

This chapter reviews the literature concerning concepts, models and theories. The academic focus is to explain, discuss and compare them, and ultimately bring them all together to present a conceptual model. To be able to examine how components as culture and behaviour can be influential for Chinese students. It is crucial to elaborate on modes of experiences and approaches of authenticity. There are four main sections involving an overview of the research topic examined.

Beginning with the history of the Chinese outbound tourism and the current situation of youth tourism, general background information is provided for these categories. Other terms that have been mentioned, such as nationality and behaviour, need further explanation since understanding the notion of experience in tourism studies can shine new light in the knowledge of understanding the notion of the traveller.

The last section includes the theoretical framework showing how the questions posed for this research are associated with the study. The below mention paragraphs are summarized to comprise all the information needed for the design of a conceptual model. The model presented assists in looking in detail how it can be used to examine the way experiences of travellers are shaped, gained and linked with the entire aspects of this study.

2.1. Chinese Outbound Tourism

Since 2000 the Chinese border crossing has increased from 10.5 million to 46 million in 2008 and to 135 million in 2014 (COTRI, CTA). According to the predictions that have been done by Arlt Wolfgang this number is estimated to increase. By 2020, China will represent the fourth largest international tourist flow in the tourism market (Keating & Kriz, 2008; Xu et al., 2011).

In addition, the level of education of the Chinese tourists increased as a result of the faster mobility of information. The fast pace of travel information has made more tourism destinations known to the general public of China. The development of technology including better internet access in combination with the possibility of online payments, the consumption and purchase of products and services has become easier (Corigliano, 2011, p.397). All these reasons, by the end of 2006, led China to rank from the 40th place to the 7th place at the global tourism market of outbound visitors (Xu et al., 2011, p.664).

The permission to travel in China for non-diplomatic reasons commenced in the beginning of the 70's. (Chon et al., 2013, p.14). The increase in these numbers started to rise

after the death of the communist Mao Tse-Tung in 1976. Two years later, China declared that it will make the country accessible to the rest of the World (Chon et al., 2013, p.14). The policies regarding travelling inside and outside of the country started to change and the political restrictions were reduced for Chinese outbound tourism. Countries which aim to attract Chinese Tourists usually face political and policy problems in the tourism business cooperation (Tse, 2013).

Still, this phenomenon of Tourism is tightly supervised (Ong & Du Cros, p.749, 2012) and on account of the relations between countries, China is aware that tourism can be used as 'power' (Tse, 2013). In order to have excellent diplomatic relations with foreigners, the Chinese government manages to use Chinese outbound tourism as a 'tool' which can dominate and have an effect on the opinion of the diplomats at the travel destination country and China itself. The tourism policies were adapted in such a way that not only aimed to make the country a powerful and successful nation, but also develop its social and economic status (Chon et al., 2013, p.24).

During the 80's the system of how the tourism market of Chinese outbound tourism operated was reformed (Tse, 2013). There were three initial stages of the outbound tourism (Keating & Kriz, 2008, p.7). In 1983, the first group of tourists started to travel and their reasons for travelling were mainly to visit friends and relatives (VFR). In the beginning of the '90's, the tourists were able to fund their own trips to the countries they visited, but circa 1995 the ADS policy commenced and started to be signed by a significant amount of countries. This is when the third stage made its appearance where travelling to the countries that have signed the ADS facilitated the mobility of travellers to non-Asian countries. First were New Zealand and Australia, and those destinations were the first for Chinese nationals to gain travel experiences in Westernized countries (Keating & Kriz, 2008, p.7).

The evolution and diversity of changes that occurred in the social and economic status of tourists was an after-effect, due to the escalation of Chinese outbound tourism. This can be also seen at the article of Prayag, Cohen & Yan (2013): 'Potential Chinese travellers to Western Europe: segmenting motivations and service expectations'. The homogenisation of group travellers and tourists who travel with a package tour has a huge and extensive variety on the tourist behaviour and has changed the type of Chinese outbound tourism. Arlt (2006) also agrees with that opinion. Due to existence of modification, there are more heterogeneous groups of travellers. Richards and Wilson conducted a survey in 2003 and claimed that students in the tourism market are recommended not to be viewed as a group of homogeneity (Xu et al, 2011).

According to Arlt, in his book Chinese Outbound Tourism (2006) the evolution in China is much faster compared to Europe, a result of not only to China's rapidly expanding population but also due to Chinese culture having plenty of verses and sayings that emphasize

the importance of travelling worldwide and exploring unknown lands. Travel is seen as object in Chinese literature (Tse & Hobson, 2010), as a way of learning (Arlt, 2006, p.26). This was mainly a concept of inbound tourism to discover oneself via travelling. Over the years it has become a concept of outbound tourism too.

In connection with expanding travelling outside Asia, specifically the Chinese outbound tourism towards the Netherlands had an increase of 10% higher in the number of visitors for the year 2014 compared to 2013 (NBTC, 2015). It was calculated that there were over 250,000 Chinese Tourists that year who visited the country. Likewise, 20% of all international travellers to the Netherlands do not originate from European Countries (NBTC, 2015).

Chinese Students (of Wageningen)

The Dutch culture is an important factor for the decisions to be a student at a Dutch university. Many Chinese students that have completed their Bachelor studies outside of China prefer to come and study in an international environment to continue their master studies. In the Netherlands, as foreign students, they are considered to be highly skilled immigrants (Wolf et al, 2011). Current Chinese students who have been born in the Netherlands, as being part of the second generation Chinese immigrants continue their studies to higher education compared to the Dutch students. Statistics show that the rate of Chinese immigrant students who obtain a master degree in higher education is 85% vs. 59% for the Dutch students (Deng, 2011).

The educational system in the Netherlands is well-known for offering good quality master programs with courses and lectures being offered in English language (Wolf et al, 2011). Wageningen University is renowned for accepting students from Asian countries. This town in the Netherlands is considered to have one of the highest percentages of international students in the country, since it has residents from more than 110 countries (Annual report, 2013, p.22). Therefore, for Chinese students willing to relocate and study in a country, which is situated in the Western part of Europe, Wageningen has a unique opportunity to combine studies with travelling.

Moreover, for students it is relatively easy to travel within Europe, since they are able to make use of student discounts and there where nationality no longer restricts them to visit a country. During their foreign studying experience, students are given the opportunity to travel around Dutch cities. As visitors they can become 'Mindful' (Moscardo, 1996) during their university time since their educational level is improving and their cultural knowledge is enriching.

After the 80's, there were more than 700,000 Chinese students that have been studying abroad (Arlt, 2006, p.115). The education level of people younger than 40 years old is supposed to be better in understanding general knowledge in English language. Nowadays, the youth has the privilege to gain access to information concerning 'sensitive' issues much easier. Therefore, they have already become acquainted with the idea of 'sex' and 'drug' tourism, for which Netherlands has been known for its liberal attitude. Amsterdam is popular among Chinese students, not for the museums and art galleries (i.e. Van Gogh, Rijksmuseum), but for the prostitution that seems to attract students and for the easily availability to drugs, both of which are illegal in China (Arlt, 2004, p.178).

Younger generations and especially those who were born after the 80's are more aware in China with values and cultural traits of the West. They perceive the world differently than their parents, even grandparents. There is even a term for them called the 'post80s' to separate them from other Chinese groups (Xu et al., 2011).

2.2. Youth Tourism and Backpackers

The main purpose to travel for education, develops one's personality, while retaining your own culture, is considered to be one of the most significant reasons to be looking at (Cohen, p.30, 2004). Chinese backpacking research has been focused mainly on how social the trips are and how long they last, instead of focusing on how the travel experiences can influence the self-transformation of the tourist (Ong & Du Cros, p.736, 2012).

Pearce in his book 'Tourist Behaviour, themes and conceptual schemes', (2005, p.30) talks about backpackers and gives a brief history regarding that definition. There are three waves of backpackers (2005, p.30). The first one made its appearance after the Grand tour and includes adults who mainly travel for educational reasons, the second wave consists of young tourists who seek work experiences, dating back to the 17th and 18th century. The last one which was formed during the 60's and 70's consist of the young travellers who were quite often confused as being hippies (Pearce, 2005, p.30).

However, for this study is not the case. As Pearce puts it: *'Backpackers are the next emerging flow of young traveller's movement from the drifter syndrome'*, (2005, p.30). The distinction between the developments of the hippie to a backpacker is the economic status. Unlike the hippie who will spend a specific limited low cost for accommodation, the backpackers are willing to invest in a more overpriced experience (2005, p.30). The research of Ryan & Xie (2003) for Chinese students confirms that they are willing to spend 'lavishly' a certain amount of money for their accommodation.

Backpackers are young travellers aged from 18- 35 years old, who are travelling individual and have a certain economic budget to spend (Pearce, 2005, p.30). Backpackers are

luxury hippies with a living style that combines both the glamour attitude of high class society and the gypsy travel style of a long-term trip (Pearce, 2005, p.30). The fact that young students use backpacking facilities such as hostels, it is because they would prefer to spend the night at a place that could be affordable.

In terms of growing alone, the One-Child Policy that exists in China is linked with backpacking. The policy was made to control the growth population of China and explains why the Chinese citizen has the need to share his journey experiences with someone else. Backpacking works as a channel to socialize people and increase their chances to discover new places with a co-traveller (Ong& du Cros, 2012, p.748). Nationality of the tourist is another factor to inquire backpacking. Pearce mentions that the ethnic minorities which exist in Asian countries, such as China are the ones whose number of tourists exists to a large scale (p.32).

2.3. Tourism Behaviour

Tourism behaviour plays also an important role within the trips of young travellers. According to Pearce (2005, p.2) depending on the type of research of the individual there are different approaches to look at the tourism behaviour. Based on the method of how the interviews were conducted for this paper, the approach that was used for this specific group of students is Emic (p.3). The researcher as an outsider is looking at the behaviour of the tourist student from a different perspective. The Emic approach was used to be able to understand, from the writers' point of view the social and cultural identity of the student (Pearce, 2005, p.3).

The dimensions that the tourism behaviour can have in the travel experience is based on the ability the tourist has to change the facts of the trip, during the narration that occurs and how the experience is reshaped by interpreting it in a different way (Pearce, 2005, p.3). Adolescence is the phase of the life of a young traveller, which is important to look at the tourism behaviour. That specific period of time, the tourism behaviour is characterized and is part of the frame of the individual's identity. The choices and preferences of the first travels of students determine their future options of their tourism activities, which lead to the way travel experiences are gained.

Furthermore, in their article 'does nationality affect tourism behaviour?' Pizam and Sussmann examine whether someone's cultural characteristics and nationality can affects the tourist behaviour. Many studies mentioned nationalities like: Americans, Arabs, Greeks, Japanese, and Canadians, but not for the Chinese. There is not enough research for Chinese behaviour (Xu et al., 2011; Huang & Tian, 2013) Presenting findings from previous researches which show that there is a relationship between tourism behaviour and nationality,

one cannot disagree (Pizam & Sussmann, 2005; Xu et al., 2011). The question is to what extent this influence exists? There are diverse factors that influence a person's behaviour.

Nationality is just one of them. This impact needs to be examined with other variables also, so as to understand why the tourists behave in a certain way (Pizam & Sussmann, 2005).

Language barrier and geographical origin are factors that are equally important to be taken into consideration. Specifically, Wageningen city and Dutch language are two main key components also to be noted.

2.4. Travel and Tourism Experiences Studies

Travel and tourism experiences have been part of the tourism research in social sciences, for more than 50 years (Jennings, 2009). They have long intrigued the interest of academics (Boorstin, 1964; Cohen 1973; MacCannell, 1979; Lengkeek, 2001; Cutler & Carmichael, 2010) and have been given different definitions. Tourism experiences have been analyzed from different perspectives in relation to the tourist.

During the '70s, Erik Cohen was one of the first social scientists who looked at travel experiences, he was one of the first to analyse and categorize them. In 1975 thanks to MacCannell publication, Cohen decided to do a more in-depth research into travel experiences.

Ideally, he introduced five modes of experience in which the 'centre' of the tourist is compared with the centre of the 'other' in the society the individual lives (Cohen, 1979, p.181). Some of the modes of experiences from Cohen have been developed based on 'religious' views (Cohen, 1979, p.193). While the need to look at them from the perspective of 'leisure' is also a fundamental starting point to explore further the context of experiences (Cohen, 1979, p.193). Based on his research, other scientists have tried to frame, define and categorize tourism experiences.

Pine & Gilmore looked at the term 'experience' from an economic point of view in the market industry (1998) by naming it the 'Experience Economy'. However, experiences of tourists are much more complicated to give an accurate definition. In the sociology of tourism there are many concepts that have been stated since tourism studies started to be analysed. The one's from Erik Cohen have been discusses in literature studies more often than anyone else's, not only because they were the first, but also due to Cohen's unparalleled accurate concepts for the discourse of the tourist experience.

The whole concept of the tourist and experience is being created and shaped from a complete combined set of different realms and dimensions (Cutler &Carmichael, 2010). The identity of the tourist is socially constructed, but also this structure is on a constant change. Especially in the environment where the experiences are being produced, the identity is being

influenced, created and re-created over and over again. It can have a temporary or permanent, long-term or short-term, change and can define the personal preferences of the future travel choices of the tourist.

With these modes in mind, knowing that the more we travel the more (travel) experiences we gain, and that everyone begins as a novice tourist who likes to visit places and see the world. Real places where the environment is different than the one he/she already lives or has grow up can provide real or fake traits of experiences. In the next section, the researcher introduces the idea of a conceptual framework.

2.5. Theoretical Framework

To be able to continue with the remaining literature review, the concepts of' authenticity' and 'experience' are described and explained. These concepts are discussed how they can be applied to the present research.

On the grounds of cultural identity, tourism behaviour is also added in this study, it aims to contribute by offering to travel companies or other tourism researchers an understanding of tourists and their experiences. Having sufficient knowledge on how people behave when they travel is an important factor. Especially, to explore how young travellers' identity and behaviour is being influenced within a European social network.

Tourists have been situated in a variety of categories and typologies' making the phenomenon of travel experiences more complex (MacCannell, 1979; Cohen 1988; Mckercher & Du Cros, 2003; Holden, 2007). Consequently, categorizing experiences is somehow connected with Categorizing tourists. It is fundamental to discover how the tourists' experiences can be separated in different types of modes and how someone's cultural and educational background can influence their travel decisions and perceptions which are part of the construction of the whole travel experience.

There are a few cases where previous research had been done that combine both Chinese students and youth travelling. Hughes, Wang & Shu (2015) seek patterns for the travel preferences of travellers, but not for the synthesis of the experience. Huang & Tian (2013) make an attempt to examine experiences by exploring travel motivations and tourism behaviour.

2.5.1. Conceptual model of the experience modes.

Jaap Lengkeek has done his research in tourism experiences and imagination, using Eric's Cohen modes. On account for contribution to the literature review Lengkeek has reviewed Erik's phenomenology of travel experiences. He states that the concepts of travel experiences have not drawn much attention the past 15 years. He then attempts to simplify

them and gives a brief explanation of the modes of travel experiences as they could be understood from a non-social scientist.

Pine and Gilmore look at the experience from an economy point of view and see it as a service, an offering that can be a good, a commodified object or a commodified concept (Pine & Gilmore, 1998, p.98). Travellers are seen as consumers from their side and when the experience happens it has to include deliberately services (Pine & Gilmore, 1998, p.99). In this study, activities such as shopping, sightseeing and eating are services, while trains are used by students as goods that facilitate their mobility to places.

Apart from the economic mind-set, even if two people have the same experience simultaneously, still the experience is not the same (Pine & Gilmore, 1998, p.99). Pine & Gilmore claim that there are different levels for each individual. Experiences are private and the state of mind that they are engaging includes emotions, spirit, physical and mental state of mind (Pine & Gilmore, 1998, p.99).

Experience channels from how the occurred events are accepted from the consciousness of the mind (Bruner, 1991, p.242). How the perception of what has the person experienced, and how he has translated the fact in his own mind. It involves the way the self is receiving the occurred events that have happened at the surrounded environment of the tourist, how he is realizing them into his mind and how he translates them through narration and behaviour.

Tourism experiences consist of three levels which interact with each other. There is the level of the novice tourist and the level of his/her familiarity with the surrounded environment, the level of keeping daily habits when travelling and the level in which he/she is willing to change them or not (Cohen, 2004, p. 38).

Hence, there is a fundamental relationship between the modes of the tourist experiences. Erik Cohen has titled them as followed: 1) Recreational 2) Diversionary 3) Experiential 4) Experimental 5) Existential. Individuals give different meanings to their actions during their trips and each mode has a different level of expressiveness for the importance of travelling (Cutler & Carmichael, 2010, p.4). Below there is a brief explanation of the five modes of experiences:

1) Recreational mode

The Oxford dictionary defines the word 'recreation' as: 'Activity done for enjoyment when one is not working' (Oxford dictionary). The tourist is looking for doing activities in his leisure time that will offer him a sense of relaxation and a break from the quotidian responsibilities of his life (Cohen, 1979, p. 185). Thus, the pleasure of the trip does not matter if it is has authentic elements or not (Cohen, 1979, p.185). Because the traveller is looking for

entertainment he either does not see his experiences to be personally significant, nor does he seek to identify himself (Lengkeek, 2001, p.175). The tourism experience happening in this mode resembles Boorstins' mocking of the cultural perspective as being empty and sketchy (1964).

2) Diversionary mode

The need for getting out of the ordinary, doing activities that are not part of the daily routine is what diversional experiences are about. When the everyday livelihood starts to become boring, meaningless and overwhelms people with stress, then the human being has the need to escape from the daily reality and has the need to travel (Cohen, 1979, p.185). These types of holidays can be joyful and entertaining but they do not manage to contribute to creation or recreation of firstly, the self-identity of the tourist and secondly do not provide a meaningful construction of the personality itself (Cohen, 1979, p.185). This mode is similar to the recreational mode, but the only difference is the absence of giving a meaning to the quest of the centre. The actions of the tourist still provide him/her with pleasure and entertainment by continue to do so without a glimpse of meaningfulness.

3) Experiential mode

This mode includes the ''otherness' of the state of being. The meaning of the 'other' is dominant and the identity of the tourist cannot be found in his hometown. There is the quest for 'experiencing life'. The tourist is looking for the meaning of life and seeks to discover his own culture by travelling. The tourist has lost his own centre and tries to discover himself via travelling and the lives and culture of other people (Cohen, 1979, p.187). Though, he chooses to travel to a different environment than the familiar one, while he is still aware of his own culture and social life, it is possible to separate the state of being from the 'otherness' in this quest (Cohen, 1979, p.187). Authenticity is still not present at this type of mode. It needs to be sought differently (Lengkeek, 2001, p.175), in a modern society. It can be said that there are partial elements that are considered to be authentic.

4) Experimental mode

There are tourists that would like to get involved in activities during day trips but up to a certain extent. They are looking for activities that even though they can be authentic, the need to satisfy their own desires and travel preferences can be done by searching for different kind of activities away from the spiritual centre (Cohen, 1979, p.189). The search for spirituality is obvious and the changes for dissatisfaction of authenticity are more likely to be

distinguished. The difference between this mode and the experiential is that the tourists actually engage and take part in activities, instead of finding pleasure by observing other people's authentic lives (Cohen, 1979, p.189). They are 'experimenting' themselves by searching how to satisfying their needs and desires. For instance, students in this experiential phase, in their early adolescent years are in a quest for ''search of themselves', as Cohen calls it (p.189), they are looking for experiments, rediscovering oneself identity in different context, but their quests are not quite clear and specific (Cohen, 1979, p.189), since they are not aware of how they can discover themselves through experiences, they are more actively participating than just being only observers.

5) Existential mode

As the word defines it, it is about the existence of the human being. Knowing where someone stands and who he/she is. The traveller craves to be close to nature, close to his inner state of being by having a modest attitude (Cohen, 1979, p.190). The centre of the self as it was previously mentioned, in this mode is very important for the existential experience. Existential mode includes the tourists whose purpose is to travel and discover their own spiritual centre. In order to seek a personal realm it is believed that the realm is situated in a place far beyond from the permanent residence (Lengkeek, 2001, p.175). The travellers feel that they are not in the right place, nor at the right time. The travellers try to 'go native' and explore themselves within the society they live (Cohen, 1979, p.190). There is the belief that out there, at the travel location, an exceptional world exist which is better than the one they are currently live (Lengkeek, 2001, p.175).A world where there can be a connection with the spiritual self and discover a deeper meaning for the self-centre (Cohen, 1979, p.190).

2.6.2. Authenticity

Authenticity is claimed to be part of the experience. Together with experiences people look also for authenticity (Boorstin 1964; MacCannell 1973; Cohen 1988; Wang 1999; Wearing, 2010). For this reason, it is important to know that the concept of authenticity cannot be easily defined (Cohen, 1988; Wang, 1999; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Frochot & Batat, 2013). Throughout the years there have been many debates about the term authenticity in tourism studies (Wang, 1999; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Wearing, 2010).

Authenticity is an essential component to understand the construction of travel experiences (Frochot & Batat, 2013, p.132). Dean Mac Cannell is the first who mentioned authenticity as a concept in the studies of tourism. Supporting the idea that tourists when they travel want to seek authenticity at various locations different than the ones they already live.

But this quest of exploring authenticity is hard for the tourists to be accomplished, because they are not able to experience the authenticity of a culture, the local attractions or understand the originality of tourist products from the place visited (MacCannell, 1973, p.597).

Therefore, he named authenticity as being 'staged' (1973, p.597) which means that the tourists have the belief that during their experiences, there are authentic things involved to the visited places. The staged authenticity facilitates the satisfaction of the tourist to make him believe that, what the tourists actually see and what they buy is authentic, but in reality tourists are doomed because they are not able to actually experience the real authenticity (Wang, 1999; Frochot & Batat, 2013; Wearing et al, 2010).

With regards to the topic of this study, one of the reasons why it is important to include authenticity is that the procedure on the tourist experience can be scientifically and more empirically examined while a deeper meaning can be explored.

Tourists, depending on what they expect from their travels and what their actions and perceptions are when visiting a tourism destination, then authenticity is understood, seen and perceived from them as objective, constructive or existential (Wang, 1999;Cutler & Carmichael, 2010). The search for authenticity in travel experiences and the position of the spiritual centre of the tourist needs to be understood to figure out how Chinese students make decisions and perceive the visited places.

Moreover, examining staged and existential authenticity, gives a better understanding of the travel experience. In 1964, Boorstin pointed out his critical opinion for authenticity which was rather negative (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Wearing, 2010). He argued that the tourists are not able to experience authenticity of local cultures. Since they prefer to visit tourist destinations where everyone goes, they are surrounded by an environment which includes inauthentic 'attractions' and participate in 'pseudo-events' (Boorstin, 1964; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Wearing, 2010). The term 'pseudo –events' is defined when sceneries, tourists attractions begin to be commodified, while the tourist does not care for the authentic of the product and begins to have low expectations on what is culturally presented as being real (Boorstin ,1964, p. 106).

Ning Wang believes that there are many types of tourism that are related with authenticity. He is of the opinion that authenticity should be seen in a more detailed way (Wang, 1999, p.351). Hence, he categorized authenticity in two aspects: Firstly he talks about the existential authenticity and secondly the authenticity of toured objects. The second category of objects is divided in three approaches: objective, constructive and postmodernism (Wang, 1999).

In order to have an absolute definition, authenticity has a strong relation with the past. As a result, Wang's work was based on the staged authenticity of MacCannell from which he proposed the following:

A) Existential authenticity

Authenticity involves the presence of the originality, the real, the true existence (Bruner, 1991, p.241). Existential authenticity includes any type of activities that will grant the traveller with the chance to find the 'true self' (Wearing, 2010, p.27) and it has the capacity to explain tourist experience better than any other type of authenticity (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006, p.68). Existential authenticity is the one which is closest to explain tourist experiences (Wang, 1999; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). According to Wang what people feel when they are on a quest for search, they are looking for authenticity for themselves.

I) Objective Approach

This approach is object-related (Wearing et al, 2010). Historic, ethnic or cultural objects, whether they are authentic or not, are contrary to the staged authenticity of MacCannell, since they are not recognized as authentic toured objects (Wang, 1999, p.353). The reason why they are inauthentic is that tourist products are constructed in such a way to be part of the commodification of cultural tourism. Thus, they are no longer part of the authentic experience. What Wang means is that the meaning of the objet changes, therefore the meaning of the experience also changes, which implies for MacCannell, that the experience includes staged authenticity no matter what.

Reisinger & Steiner delve in depth object authenticity in their article' Reconceptualising object authenticity' (2006). The objects of the tourist experiences cannot be told with certainty if there are actually authentic or not. The tourist might consider them authentic, but there is always the possibility to be an imitation, a fake simulation (2006, p.69). Reisinger & Steiner refer to object authenticity, including objects, such as clothes or gastronomy plates, where no one can doubt their genuineness (2006, p.69).

II) Constructive approach

This approach is about the construction of authenticity from the way the toured objects are being presented and projected to the tourists. They are considered to be symbols that come from the social construction of the tourists when they are seeking authenticity (Wang, 1999). The toured objects that are commodified, according to this approach, they are considered to be authentic and are characterized as 'symbols' of authenticity in the tourism market. For instance, souvenirs of small windmills and wooden shoes that can be found in tourist shops in big cities like Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht, etc. All are part of a constructive commodified authentic product which is part of a constructive authentic experience.

The genuineness of the tourist object consists of perspectives or beliefs (Wang, 1999) and it depends on the expectation and interpretation that the tourists have for the tourist object (Bruner 1991; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). What is authentic for the tourist can be inauthentic for the local, what is real depends on the individual's interpretations (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006, p.70). In the constructivist approach what the tourists believe, expect or prefer is envisaged on the objects that are marketed for them.

For Cohen, constructive authenticity can be relative and emergent (Reisinger & Steiner, p.70). In the beginning tourist products may not being seen as authentic from the tourists, but when the local culture incorporates them to perceive them as authentic, then as time passes by, the objects are considered eventually to be seen as authentic (p.70).

III) Postmodernism approach

Postmodernists are identified for deconstructing authenticity (Wang, 1999). It does not matter whether there is a true of false authenticity, since it can be recreated. The same counts for the toured objects. The cultural object that the tourist will buy, the first time has a meaning for him that will be different from the next time he will purchase a cultural object. Authenticity is meaningless in this approach, since it does not matter if the object of the experience is fake or real. The meaning of the object changes in every reproduction or purchase. It is being given a different meaning, and therefore it cannot actually be said that authenticity is stable and unique (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006, p.72).

B) Staged authenticity and experience

One term that relates experience and authenticity is the one that Dean MacCannell has named as ''staged authenticity'' (MacCannell, 1976; Cohen, 1988; Wearing, 2010). The misconception the tourist has when he travels, by believing he is experiencing authenticity is a set up, it is a 'stage' setting that has been made for tourist to visit attractions (MacCannell, 1973, p.593).

As for commodification and authenticity, MacCannell believes that when the toured objects are being commodified, then there is the loss of authenticity (Cohen, 1988; Frochot & Batat, 2013). The tourists are tricked to believe that tourist attractions are authentic and are led to a 'false touristic consciousness' (Cohen, 1988, p.373). There is no escape or salvation from this fake reality (p.373). What the tourists consume at these attractions is a path that leads to a marketing construction of the local traditions at the tourism destinations.

Cohen considers authenticity to be a concept that it is being understood differently from people when they do various things while travelling in specific times (Frochot & Batat,

2013, p.133). Thus, the definition that Cohen has given for authenticity, as it has been cited by Frochot and Batat is:

'Authenticity is a quality perceived by individuals that emerges from their own experiences'
(p.134).

Cohen sees authenticity as a perception and argues that, it is assumed that commoditization does destroy the meaning of cultural products (Cohen, 1988, p.372).
He also mentions that in touristic local places, the rituals, customs and traditions are being commoditized during events and festivals (Cohen, 1988, p.372). When traditional dances or rituals are being performed identically from a group of locals, this type of activity is being commercialized and as a result it has ended up to be accepted as being part of an authentic experience.

Summary of Literature Review

The literature review shows that it is feasible to draw a design that represents and formulates the relationships among the concepts of the theory that have been described in this chapter. Below Figure 2, illustrates the relationship among theoretical concepts. The major important concepts in the model are the modes of tourist experiences and the approaches of authenticity, along with the experiences of travellers being the core concept. The minor important concepts are the youth and Chinese tourism, tourism behaviour and cultural background. Depending on how these concepts are linked in theory and practice, then the experiences of the traveller are shaped.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
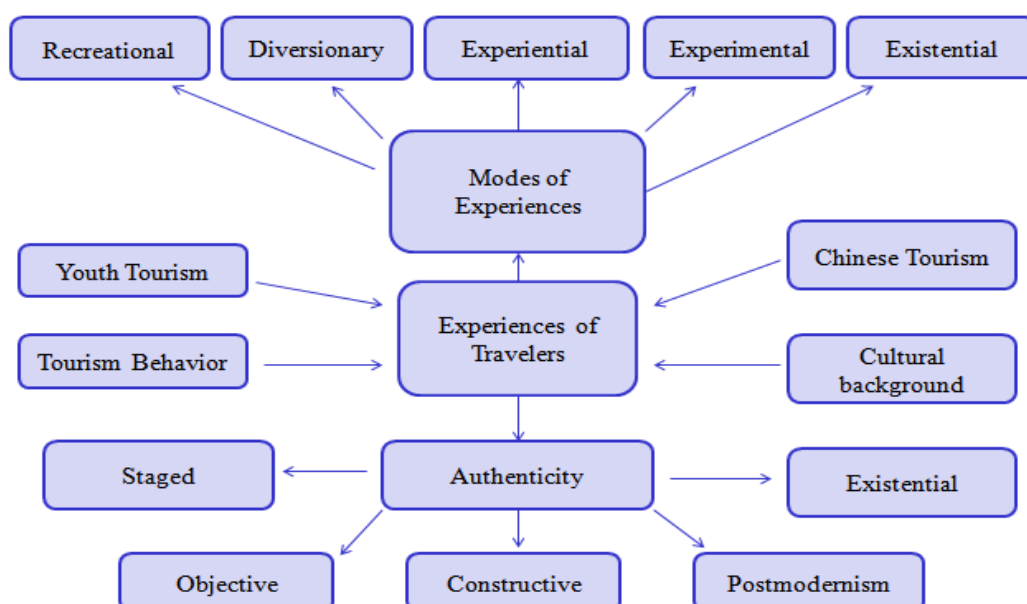
The above illustrated model gives a theoretical overview on how the concepts reviewed have emerged in the design of a framework. The framework presents how is it to look at the five modes and the approaches of authenticity and connects them with four main definitional approaches: proportionally. With this in mind, the framework can be used to highlight how the tourist experiences of the traveller can be perceived influenced and take a wide range of directions. The way these definitional approaches are connected can explore whether the researched main questions can be answered.

3. Methodology

Introduction & Overview

The nature of the research is described, starting with a general description of the method used and how the research procedure was designed. This section is divided in four parts. First, background information is given justifying the reasons for choosing focus group interviews. Second, the recruitment of the sample is explained and how it was selected. Then, it continues with how the data were collected and goes on to describe in detail the stages of coding. Finally, data analysis of the coded data the subdivision of four sub-sections is indicated.

3.1. Research approach

As previously mentioned in Chapter 2, tourism is a complex phenomenon and since travel experiences are part of the tourism phenomenon, to be able to understand the experiences of the students, the interpretivist method can help to develop an understanding by' letting the data to the talking'(Tribe, 2006, p.8). The information collected are explained and commented with the interpretivism approach as the researcher understands them. The nature of this study tends to be exploratory, while for collecting data a qualitative method is employed having the capacity to measure and complement the exploration of the researched phenomenon in a more extensive way (Boeije, 2010, p.158).
Important to be noted, the role of the researcher is also significant, both for the procedure of the study and for the final results. The research was able to relate with the sample selected in terms of also being an international student herself in the same university.

Botterill & Platenkamp's book: 'key concepts in tourism research', suggests that in order to understand travel experiences that result from travelling and holidays, there are certain types and designs that need to be taken into account. To collect desired findings and to explore a phenomenon in social sciences, they recommend focus groups interviews from a variety of methods. Stewart and Shamdasani (1990, p.57) not only contribute deeper knowledge for the researcher, but also offer valuable guidance to this methodological approach.

3.2. Data Collection

Focus groups

Focus groups are a composition of a group of people and are a form to conduct a more in depth group interview expecting to give in depth and more concrete information. The aim of a focus group interview is to give not just only one meaning to the topic of research, but also to create numerous meanings that can derive from shared conversations (Dywer et al., 2012).

Stewart and Shamdasani (1990, p.57) suggest that focus group interviews need to have six to twelve participants and the duration of the interviews should be approximately one and a half to two and a half hours (1990, p.57). But Carl Cater and Tiffany (Smith, 2010) state that having a high number of participants it will not be easy for the moderator to handle the discussions in a specific time frame (Dywer et al., 2012). As for data collection from focus group interviews, one advantage is that the data can give a better insight at the research when the participants meet for the first time. When participants do not know each other it is believed that the interpersonal distance between strangers is bigger compared to the interpersonal distance between acquaintances (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, p.34). This has to do with the group dynamic of a focus group.

Even though, there is the matter of acquaintanceship -to what extent there is a relationship between the participants of each focus group interview-, Stewart and Shamdasani mention that the data of the interviews might be biased in case that the participants know each other (1990, p.35). Every participant has an opinion to express and when the participants are acquainted there might be a case of mixing up the dynamic of the group, leading to limited responses. If they are not strangers, they have no intention to explain in detail, while if they are total strangers, there is a follow up of 'warm-up' or 'get-to-know-each-other'. This increases the chances for every member of the group to discuss and elaborate more at questions asked.

In this research, the second reason why focus group method was chosen is because the participants of the same focus group were highly likely to be also part of the same travel group when visiting cities in the Netherlands. Thus, it was assumed it would be fundamental during the interviews to have for the same travel experience, different narrations, from different people. This could provide the opportunity to have multiple meanings when interpreting the same tourist experience.

Moreover, the spatial arrangement for the interviews was designed in such a way that every participant could be seen from the others. This aimed to make the members of the group not to feel excluded and everyone could participate equally to the discussion (Dywer et al., 2012). It also prevented respondents from showing signs of dominance (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, p.48). Having spatial distance between the participants by leaving them enough space to move, it made it easier to take their time to speak and express opinions,

without feeling excluded from the discussion. For these reasons, focus groups were particularly suitable to study the interaction and integration between travellers.

Recruitment for Focus groups

Between November 2014 and January 2015, six semi-structured qualitative focus groups were conducted, consisting of five to seven students from the Wageningen University. All focus group interviews last approximately 60 to 80 minutes on average. Participants were selected based on several characteristics: a) they needed to have the same nationality and b) all sampled students was necessary to attend their second year of their master studies.

The sample was selected from the personal network of the researcher. The process that was used was snowball sampling (Kumar, 2005, p.179). Students from different nationalities were asked to identify possible participants coming from China. The recruitment was easier because the researcher had access to the University of Wageningen and this simplified the approach of a student network.

The interviewees were reached mainly through social media or in person. Where needed, there was also use of e-mails and phone calls. Upon contact, the purpose of the research was explained to the participants and they were asked to join a group. Once a positive reply for participation was given, interview appointments were arranged (see Appendix A).

Sample Selection & profile of participants

In 2013, Wageningen University accepted 391 Chinese students, as such having the Chinese ranking first at the top five communities of Wageningen. Greek and German communities were followed with 161 and 128 students, respectively, representing the western cultures (Annual report Wageningen UR, 2013). Wageningen is the ideal place to be chosen as a study area because of its globalized acceptance as to the number of students who attend environmental studies.

One of the main reasons why the Chinese community of Wageningen was selected as being part of the research sample is not only because they are the biggest community in Wageningen, but also because the Chinese culture is acknowledged to have more cultural differences with the Dutch culture, than the German or Greek culture.

It is well known that China is a huge country, not only geographically but also demographically. Having homogenous groups with similar characteristics is an intention to improve the interaction between the focus group dynamics (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, p.36). This means that demographic characteristics such as: age, gender, hometown and province of origin were asked from the participants (See Appendix C). They were used as

variables to design the profile of the participants. Likewise, their master studies were also requested for understanding further the background of their general knowledge. For ethical reasons, their English names are being used as code names.

The quantitative part was used to understand how the composition and design of the focus groups can influence the results of this study and if the objective research questions are able to be answered with this research method. At table 1 a detailed synopsis of the participants profile is presented with the shading showing how groups were formed:

Table 1: Profile of Participants

Participants' English Name	Age	Gender	Hometown- Province	Master Studies
1 Coco	24	Female	Shijiazhuang, Hebei	Food Technology
2 Gwen	24	Female	Baotou, Inner Mongolia	Environmental Science
3 Lilly	24	Female	Hebei	Food Technology
4 Sissy	23	Female	Hunan Changsha	Food Quality Management
5 Mia	23	Female	Kunming, Yunnan	Food Quality Management
6 Aqua	26	Female	Tianjin	Food Technology
7 Anna	25	Female	Tangshan, Hebei	Environment Economics and Nature Resource Management
8 Caitlyn	24	Female	Beijing	Plant Science
9 Tie-D	24	Male	Shenyang, Liaoning	Animal Science
10 Louie	24	Male	Shandong	Food Quality Management
11 Mayos	23	Male	Anhui	Management and Economics
12 Hanna	23	Female	Shandong	Animal Science
13 Zoë	24	Female	Ningbo, Zhejiang	Environment Economics and Nature Resource Management
14 Gabor	25	Male	Yunyang, Chongqing	Food Safety
15 Sophie	23	Female	Chongqing	Sustainable Food Process Engineering
16 Wendy	23	Female	Rizhao, Shandong	Food Safety
17 Cassia	26	Female	Shanghai	Food Safety

18 Jean	24	Female	Xining, Qinghai	Food Safety
19 Harry	25	Male	Xi'an, Shaanxi	Environment Economics and Nature Resource Management
20 Kay	23	Male	Shanghai	Food Quality Management
21 Yellow	24	Male	Jiangsu	Animal Science
22 Hank	22	Male	Henan	Animal Science
23 Quake	23	Male	Puyang, Henan	Environmental Technology
24 Lola	25	Female	Chongqing	Environmental Science
25 Sandy	28	Female	Jiangsu	Food Quality Management
26 Jason	27	Male	Shanghai	Animal Science
27 Tin-tin	23	Male	Beijing	Biology
28 Cherrie	22	Female	Beijing	Food Technology
29 Cathy	24	Female	Kunming, Yunnan	Plant Science
30 Arturo	24	Male	Kunming, Yunnan	Plant Science
31 Ciao	25	Male	Beijing	Environmental Science
32 Dennis	25	Male	Lanzhou, Gansu	Climate Studies
33 John	24	Female	Lanzhou, Gansu	Environment Economics and Nature Resource Management
34 Julia	25	Female	Beijing	Urban Environmental Management
35 Zeren	25	Male	Xīnzhōu, Shaanxi	Urban Environmental Management
36 Jasmine	25	Female	Shanghai	Human Nutrition

Previous research has been focused on visitors that come to Europe from main big cities, such as Beijing and Shanghai (Prayan et al, 2013). This study shows that most of the students in Wageningen University are coming from a diversity of provinces. Still most of the students are coming from big cities and mainly from Southeast located provinces. Therefore, a map with the provinces of China is included to demonstrate a better description of the geographical profile and place of origin of the selected sample (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Provinces of China

Source: China tourist maps, 2015.

Preparation and Process of interviews

To be able to conduct the research, it was necessary to develop questions that were analysed in detail. So as to meet the needs and obtain quality information for the answers of the scientific research questions, paper scripts with the interview questions where used. The interviews consisted of minimum nine questions with sub-questions. Some of the sub-questions were made up during the interviews to dig more into depth of what the respondents had to say when expressing opinions or describing incidents from their trips. The questions were developed from the researcher and were open-ended, semi-structured (See Appendix B).

The outline of the main questions made it easier for the respondents to answer in a clockwise rotation, so as to have the maximal opportunity to answer thoroughly. The series of questions that were asked in the interviews derived from a general literature study. The researcher was the moderator and the guide for all the interviews.

Participants were provided with drinks and snacks during the discussions to make the focus groups feel comfortable. Survey took place in the weekends, since the commitment of the students towards their studies was acknowledged. The reason for that was to avoid any

last minute cancellation that might have led to include fewer participants or lead them to rush the discussions (Dywer et al., 2012).

Proceeding the interviews were as followed: The interview begin with an introduction by the researcher explaining the purpose, the content, the procedure of the interview, the use of data and the reasons why the participants were chosen. It was made clear to them that there were no right or wrong answers. Then, participants were asked if it was permitted to record the interviews and assure them that anonymity and confidentiality would be respected. A mobile phone as a recorded device was used to store the data.

For the closure of the interview, the moderator needed to check if all questions were sufficiently answered and asked the participants if there were any additional stories or experiences they would like to mention.

3.3. Data Analysis

After data collection, the unstructured recorded interviews were analyzed with the use of a laptop and software programs. The program Microsoft Word was used to write down the transcribed interviews and their codes. The recorded software program 'Sonal' was used during the transcription of the interviews, to assist with the content analysis of the data.

Both deductive and inductive approach is present (Boeije, 2010, p.5). Inductive approach was used to examine the topic of this study with observation of any patterns within the interviews, by asking the participants to talk about the places they visited within the Netherlands, reasons for choosing a city, their preferences in leisure activities, the time period of travelling and the number of companionship they had (See Appendix B).
In the beginning of this research assumptions were tested as a deductive approach attempting to specific if the theoretical background of the tourist experience can be applied in the context of the current researched experiences (Boeije, 2010, p.6)

According to Kumar (2005) there are four main steps to do a content analysis for a study (p.240). At the first step identification of the main themes was made. The words that were chosen for the main themes were selected based on the topics that the participants discussed during the interviews. Those broad topics attempted to reflect a meaning behind the questions that were asked and were also the basis to start analysing and structuring the text and the context of the interviews (p.241).

At the second step naming the broad themes was done for two reasons. First to be able to reach saturation (Kumar, 2005, p.214) and secondly because there were some of the questions (see Appendix B, question: three and seven) that they rather had a theme already, so there was no identification needed.

The third step of Kumar's process for coding is the meta-analysis. Here, since the main themes have already been identified in the open coding, for the axial coding the interviews were once more overhauled and specific responses were classified to the main themes.

When the third step was finished, the fourth step was to: 'integrate themes and responses' (Kumar, 2005, p.241) into the methodology chapter. The integration of the themes is mentioned below, while there are some verbatim responses used as examples for the phenomenology of experiences in the next chapter. Content analysis was used to analyse the transcribed texts and was integrated in three extensive stages of coding.

The raw data were transcribed data that needed to be segmented and reassembled through the process of coding. There are three coding techniques that were applied: open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Boeije, 2010, p.96). The analysis of the coded data was done manually. This was preferable because the responses were small and it was more convenient to measure the frequencies and to do constant comparison (Kumar, 2005, p.244). On account of the manual analysis, the data were directly coded. For the thematic analysis, the below mentioned steps are part of the process on conducting open coding (p.97).

Since the researcher was forced to do break up paragraphs of texts into themes so as to assign them into the same category (Boeije, p.96). For each documents from the interviews, the steps of the thematic analysis were: 1) Read the whole transcriptions, 2) Ascertain the fragmented texts were meaningful, 3) Judge if the chosen texts were relevant with the research, 4) Give a (broad) name for the fragment, 5) Assign the named fragment into a code, 6) Read again the whole transcription and check if all fragments were coded and finally 7) Compare the fragments in case they are similar and they need to have the same code.

Open Coding

The type of coding that was used is a 'line-by-line coding' or else named 'open coding' (Boeije, 2010, p. 96). This process was adapted to select sentences and paragraphs to be segmented into groups (p. 96). Similar phrases and sentences were grouped into fragments to grasp a meaningful content. Those fragments were compared with each other and those which had the same subject were labelled with a code, so as to group the data into categories (p.96).

For all six interviews the transcribed data were extensively scrutinized so as to get a first idea on understanding how the respondents 'communicated' within the group based on the type of answers they gave to the main questions and their sub-questions. Every time there was a phrase that expressed a concept it was documented and was encompassed in the same

group notes (see table 2). All the data were included there were no exclusions of words or phrases even the irrelevant comments in discussion were kept in the initial transcriptions.

In table 2 some of the participant's statements are given, as examples of the coding. It can be seen how the first stage (open coding) was made for the data analysis. Tables were designed for all the six interviewed transcriptions.

Table 2: Example of Open Coding

Transcribed comments (from the focus group interviews)	Open codes
Is boring because you didn't see a lot of difference in the environment, even in different cities, almost there the houses are similar, a similar distribution, and even the trees are accurate.	Urban and nature landscape
I just went to these two museums the whole day, because I am a big fan of museums.	museums activities
It depends, sometimes I travel alone, and sometimes I travel in a group.	Travel group preferences
We are always two girls and two boys, just keep the balance	Travel group preferences
If you see some wonderful things you want and need to share them with your friends	Moments sharing

Axial Coding

After open coding, the analysis was followed by a second round, the phase of axial coding or 'Meta-analysis' (Smith, 2010) so as to set codes for the already open codes of the transcriptions. During the axial coding there was again a continuous comparison to see how similar or different the open codes of the transcribed comments were with each other and to organize and divide the broad themes into more specific themes (see table 3). Contextual details that derived from the interviews, and also observations are provided with the type of codes formed.

The second stage enabled to reduce the explanatory themes by looking again if from those specific keywords that were mentioned multiple times and how the codes could be identified in more profound themes (Smith, 2010). Consecutively, the transcriptions were categorized in topics by using a reiterative process.

In the second step, all the open codes were grouped together in 'meta-codes'. Hence, in table 3, open codes can be seen that have been coded during axial coding.

Table 3: Example of Axial Coding

Open codes	Meta-codes
Urban and nature landscape.	Need to escape
Moments sharing.	Memory senses
First impressions.	Impressions of Dutch culture
Shopping preferences.	Shopping Therapy
City landscape/architecture.	Go local
Feelings.	Aesthetic feeling
Travel group preferences.	Companions during trips
Memories of the trips (souvenirs pictures).	Experience Photography
Museum Activities.	Cultural Differences and museums
Food preferences.	Food Habits

Selective coding

The last step of coding includes the codes that derived from the axial coding. The aim of selective coding is to combine, ascertain and examine the codes into categories. The selective coding was used to enclose the data analysis phase, so as to proceed in identifying final categories which can serve as concepts of theory (Boeije, 2010, p.115). In the next chapter, based on the students' answers, the findings are discussed in relation to each type of mode.

3.4. Research Limitations

There were some limitations that were identified during the collection of the data. First of all, English is not the native language of the participants and as a result, there were questions were the given answers were limited to a specific English context. It was also stated from the students that in Chinese culture you are not allowed to make mistakes. Thus, to avoid making grammar mistakes in the English language, students might have prevented themselves from talking about their travel activities. Language appears to be quite decisive for collecting data. Probably if the focus group interviews were in their own native language they could elaborate further and more detailed responses could be given.

Secondly, based on the criteria for the sample selection, the number of participants to this survey was limited to 36 respondents. Looking for second year students of master studies

in Wageningen, some of them were relocated for an internship or were unable to join a group because of their limited free time, due to their own thesis research. Also because the time period of Christmas holidays collided with the time period of the interviews, this made it hard to reach more students.

Thirdly, it was expected from groups that have travelled together to have different interpretations of the same experience. It was assumed that when people from one culture interact with other people with the same cultural background (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, p.37) they would feel more comfortable in conversations and would be more open to answer questions or participate in conversations. But this was not achieved. The second group that was interviewed, its participants were friends that have travelled all together around the Netherlands and in most of the questions they were unable to give more examples of what kind of activities they did. They had nothing to add in their narrations of their travels and they agreed constantly with each other when one person was describing their day trips.

From the overall responses during the interviews, it is noted that the moderator should be aware of the Dutch culture and places the students visit. Having inadequate knowledge of the Dutch cities or any local/national cultural events, could possibly have led into not gathering enough data. Some of the probe questions that were asked, they were based on the moderator's knowledge of the visited places and regional activities of the cities. Being aware of the places visited and any kind of information that could be related with the topic plays a pivotal role for the data collection. Hence, adequate knowledge is needed from the side of the moderator regarding the locations or any type of specific information that can facilitate the process of data collection.

Conclusion

This study attempts to explore how travel experiences of Chinese can be categorized in different modes based on the background of their culture and their decisions of travelling. Focus groups interviews with students were made to gather necessary data which are analyzed with the approach of thematic analysis. Concepts of theory are laid out in the findings, as well the use of quotes taken from the interviews. The quotes are verbatim presented and without any changes in grammar or vocabulary. So, they may include spelling or grammar mistakes.

4. Wageningen Chinese Student Travels

Introduction & Overview

In this chapter, findings gathered from the data collection, are described and explained. The main categories, formed from the theme analysis and the coding process are outlined. Then based on these categories the findings are described in the modes of tourist experiences. From the five modes of Erik Cohen, four of them were present in the travel experiences of the students. While for the one, there were no results. Also it was noted that there were a few cases where a combination of two modes was present. This included a mix of recreational with diversionary mode, or experiential with experimental mode. Recreational activities are more common than the rest, since most of the students prefer to travel for leisure and entertainment. Within the categories, certain comments of the students are recognized to indicate a mix of two modes and when noticed, further explanation takes place.

Authenticity also has its presence, but not in all modes. It is important up to a certain extent, depending on the purpose of the trip, the physical setting of the place and the perceptions of the students. There are different types of Chinese student travellers. During their leisure time, they can conduct typical tourism activities or can carry out in specific actions, which are more diverse and more difficult to be characterized as common.

4.1. Recreational Mode

In this mode, the leisure activities that the students are interested in are not for the development of their personality, since there is not a significant meaning for the 'self' within their preferred activities (Cohen, 1979, p.184). Recreational tourism includes activities in which there is an approach of authenticity it is not as important as the form of entertainment has greater significance (Cohen, 1979, p.184). The form of recreational experience has elements of amusement that are able to satisfy and provide pleasure and joy to the tourist. This enjoyment helps to 'restore physical and mental powers' (Cohen, 1979, p.183) by the change of scenery, (i.e. visiting urban and natural locations) or doing activities that are out of the ordinary.

Change of scenery

There were students who during their trips joined specific events, such as going to the theatre to enjoy musical performances or go on a cycling trip. Below are two examples of experiencing the natural landscape on a bike tour:

'Because bicycle is very famous in the Netherlands and when you are travelling you can bring your bicycle with you and you put it on the train, and then you can go to the destination, you can take your bicycle with you and you when you are biking along the road, in different cities you can enjoy different sceneries. Point of view because I think, in Netherlands to me, to cross along the Netherlands, I think they have different styles' (Gwen, 24, female, 21/11/2014).

'Because I can also travel by bike and I like to bike a lot and I cycle a lot around Wageningen, the further place I went by bike from here is Utrecht, I left in the evening from here and I arrived in Utrecht at 3 a.m. I just went out and cycle around with one of my friends just for an hour and then we went to Utrecht. It is also convenient because I can take the bike with me on the train, I have a folding bike, so I think it is convenient and I have more fun' (Gabor, 25, Male, 07/12/2014).

Here, cycling is not referred to as an everyday action, but as an activity which gives the opportunity for the traveller to enjoy various sceneries by going on a biking trip. Even though cycling is very common mean of transportation in the Netherlands, the Chinese students do not see it as 'normal'. For them cycling gives them the chance to 'get away' from Wageningen to take pleasure in cycling along a bike path and enjoy the countryside, amuse themselves while the scenery changes.

Need to 'escape'

The first year of a master program in Wageningen University consists of six academic periods. Therefore, the exam weeks are quite regular and the need for the students to leave Wageningen and enjoy life is needed:

'Sometimes I feel I want to get out of Wageningen, and then I go by train to Utrecht if I don't have enough time. Otherwise I go to Amsterdam, but I also like den Haag, it is too far from here, it takes me two hours to go' (Aqua, 26, Female, 21/11/2014)

Aqua is not the only student that has the need to 'escape' from Wageningen. Like her, most of the students due to the workload, they have the urge to find some 'fun' time for themselves, usually not alone:

'For me the most important thesig is having good time with friends, the weather to be good, be lazy, relax, you don't have this feeling in China. Here most of the time you drink

coffee under the sunshine, in China we usually stay inside. We are not used to go for tea or coffee. Have fun with your friends, this is the most important' (Lola, 25, Female, 14/12/2014).

Lola coming from Chongqing has travelled a lot within China, usually alone. Here, she prefers to travel with friends and she does not care about enriching her knowledge for places or Dutch history:

'I think life is already too hard for us, I mean the master, the study, the travel is to relax, and you do not need to really learn about other things' (Lola, 25, Female,14/12 /2014).

Accepting what is being offered in touristic places and sites, most of the students are not looking for authenticity, especially in trips in this foreign country in which they have relocated. The main core of the mode is to relax and enjoy one's self as a traveller, without a care for authenticity. There is no relation between recreation and authenticity (Cohen, 1979, p.184). What is real does not matter. What matters is for the students to find pleasure in simple activities, from which they can recharge their batteries and after a day of entertainment or a relaxing weekend they can return back to their daily schedule of their courses.

Expectations

In recreational mode exploring further the elements of the personal realm and the construction of self-identity is very difficult. Even with Cohen mentioning that experiences of the trip might intrigue the interest of the tourist, but the quest for the centre of the personal identity is not important (Cohen, 1979, p.184). However, there can be exceptions of travellers in which both, the shape of self-identity and the feeling of enjoyment can occur:

'My first trip was to Rotterdam and that was kind like a festival thing, it was not a music festival, it was about the ships and harbour and I went there and it was crowded like super crowded, I was: 'where am I?'I didn't expect it to be so crowded in the Netherlands, and people were telling me:' ok, they have the highest population in the dense in the whole world'. So yeah, I was like I was facing more people than I was in China. So that was my trip, I saw the building of Jackie Chan' movie, and because in Rotterdam, half of them were destroyed in the 2nd world war, but half of them are kind of like preserved so you can see a really big difference between those two sides of the city, one is really modernized and the other is more like an ancient side. That was kind of interesting for me' (Mia, 23, female, 21/ 11/2014).

Mia explained how the building structure of the city of Rotterdam is partial different than the rest of the cities in the Netherlands and how the landscape has intrigued her to visit the city. Except for the place she wanted to see a specific building where an American movie was filmed with a Chinese actor as protagonist, the main reason she went was because of the music festival and the landscape architecture of the city.

First, Mia was able to think again for a moment where exactly she has placed herself. This means she was able to realize that she was engaging to participate in an activity that was giving her the chance to explore the city and at the same time appreciate the beauty of the city. Secondly, she could enjoy her day trip without looking at any hidden meanings for the quest of 'finding herself'. She was able to enjoy the scenery, the moment she accepted the fact that she could not prevent herself from leaving the crowd. For the recreational part of her trip there is no authentic experience, since the initial purpose was for amusement. However, her interest in the trip changed. For the experiential mode, she 'sinks' into the everyday life of the people of the city, where there is a shallow desire from her side to search her spiritual revolution as a modern tourist (MacCannell, 1976, p.160). Walking in the crow, she is not looking for authenticity within the people lives, but within the landscape of the city. MacCannell would claim that she is trying to break the bonds of an everyday existence (i.e. walking through a crow and start to 'live' in the moment (MacCannell, 1976, p.159).

Toured objects

Dutch culture and its tourist product are commodified to some extremes, but also to a moderate degree. A common example of a moderate commodified Dutch object, that came up to be mentioned in as many as two interviews, is Miffy. Miffy (Nijntje in Dutch) is a rabbit cartoon created by a Dutch designer, Dick Bruna. It is very popular in China and Japan. Many of the students were not aware that the designer comes from the Netherlands, some of the students, when they visited Utrecht, went also to the Dick Bruna Huis museum:

'*My first trip was in Utrecht. Because I am a big fan of museums, and I went there because of that museum. You know there is a museum of Miffy. So, I went there just for the museums and I visited two museums in one day. The central museum Utrecht and the other one is with Miffy. I admire him, because when I went out of the museums I just saw his picture and I just saw an old gentleman looking exactly like him (the designer of Miffy), but I was too shy to go and talk to him. I was a bit scared because it was my first trip and my English was not so good at that moment. And I just saw him pass by. (I should have said hallo)*' *(Coco, 24, female, 21/11/2014).*

The excitement and satisfaction she felt after leaving the museum, led her to have the impression that anyone who might be around could possibly be Dick Bruna. This false impression can be interpreted as accepting the 'concept' of Miffy as a cultural product of the Netherlands. The cartoon is not being commoditized in the same degree like small souvenirs, such as, wooden shoes or windmills. It is mainly the concept of the object that is being 'sold' to the visitors of the museums. The way it is presented as being part of the Dutch history, is how the 'the idea' is sold. So, it cannot be said that it has actually been commodified for marketing reasons. As a result, from the moment a commoditized idea is accepted as authentic, essentially it stops being authentic. The aspect of 'tradition' (Cohen, 1988, p.379) in this case is not authentic anymore, which counts the same also for her experience, to offer her amusement with signs of an objective authenticity. According to Wang the objective authenticity is linked with the authentic toured objects that are exhibited in museums for the tourists (1999, p.351). Coco has perceived Miffy as a toured object to indicate that here there is the case of objective authenticity, Cohen would agree with MacCannell that authenticity is becoming staged and commoditization has its way to change and influence the meaning of the cultural object (Cohen, 1988, p.378). Therefore for Coco the way the image of Miffy is presented within the museum, influenced somewhat her perception of the designer.

Cultural Differences and Museums

Even though the Dick Bruna Huis museum is less well-known as a tourist attraction, there was one student who spent more time in this museum:

'*I went in two museums in Utrecht, we spend too much time in the Miffy museum, we didn't have enough time for the gallery and art things' (Cherrie, 22 female, 17/01/2015).*

This indicates that it was preferred to spend the limited time of her day trip in a museum with familiar exhibits for the Chinese. Showing Chinese appreciate more cultural objects which they understand and they can take more time to enjoy the trip.

All students, if not at their first trip, at least in the next ones have been to cultural popular attractions in Amsterdam (Van Gogh or the Sex museum, Madame Tussauds or Anna's Frank House) or Rotterdam (Pencil tower, the Red and White Bridge) only because they are considered 'mainstream'. Some of the students who have visited these, must –see places, mentioned that they had no interest in the cultural art, since their own cultural background is different than the European one (Arlt, 2004, p.180).

Reason to travel

'I have travelled almost in every famous city of the Netherlands; I always travelled during weekends in period 1 and 2. And after period 2, I finished visiting nearly all the cities in the Netherlands. I went to Amsterdam for the museums. Den Haag for the beautiful scenery and the sea and I also went to Arnhem for food, Utrecht for Shopping, and Maastricht for the ancient roads, I think is the city of history, I just wanted to visited the ancient roads and Rotterdam for the modern buildings, nearly every weekend I was out of Wageningen...and also Delft to buy some souvenirs' (Gwen, 24, Female, 21/11/2015).

Gwen also remarks that:

'*I think along the Netherlands the cities have different styles. In Maastricht you will find the city is more ancient, it is more of historical and in Rotterdam you will see a more modern city. And in Utrecht you will find it full of art, I think it is an artistic city. I mean Wageningen is a city for study'* (Gwen, 24, Female, 21/11/2015).

Gwen apparently is travelling for specific reasons and she does not care about the distance and she prefers to visit places that are famous or that have something special to offer with respect to leisure. She seems to enjoy her life in the Netherlands and restore her 'mental and physical powers' whenever she has the opportunity to travel.

Companions during trips

Usually, students travel their first trip within a group. Typically this is a small group consisting of friends, five to six people they know well.
With respect to nationality, students were perceived most likely to travel within a group of people with the same nationality. Harry, Kay, Jasmine and Lola agreed that 5 to 6 people create the ideal small group to travel:

'It is more comfortable, and you know each other's name' (Lola, 25, Female, 14/12/2014).
'... and convenient to communicate' (Sandy, 28, Female, 14/12/2014).
'...and also convenient to make decisions like where to go, it is easier to manage, reachable' (Harry, 25, Male, 14/12/2014).
'*If you have a big group you have to make a compromise, somewhere want to go here, another one somewhere else, if we have a big group we divide in smaller groups. If you travel with local people is always more interesting to see something better. If you travel with Dutch you definitely get more knowledge and information, but I do think we prefer to travel with Chinese friends, close friends'* (Kay, 23, Male, 14/12/2014).

'It is more convenient, you speak your native language, easier, harmony' (Harry, 25, Male, 14/12/2014).

Harry and Kay prefer to travel with their Chinese friends because it is easier to communicate and eventually enjoy their trips without any problems of misunderstanding due to language barriers.

Food Habits

Harry also mentions that food is the first thing that comes to his mind when travelling:

'When I go travelling the first that I think is what I am eating, so when I think about it, in the Netherlands everybody is eating fries. Everything is fried. So fish, chicken, chips, anything you can fry. First I look for fries to eat when I travel and then everything else' (Harry, 25, Male, 14/12/2014).

Likewise, he prefers to travel with Chinese companions:

'I normally go with good friends and there you can have a lot of interested conversations while we are having a good food. So the good food always brings good conversations and other bunch of other ideas' (Harry, 25, Male, 14/12/2014).

Their recreational trips include the convenience to travel with companions, share common experiences and have positive feelings and spend valuable time with friends.

Memory Senses

Furthermore, one way to remember experiences is to take into consideration three out of the five basic senses. The more intense a taste, vision or a smell can be, the more memorable the experience is (Pine & Gilmore, 1998, p.104). Some of the respondents could actually remember a place or a situation, because they had connected the memory with the smell:

'The first time that I came out of the train station, I smelled some weed, but at that time I didn't know I smelled weed for the first time. But every time that I go to Amsterdam, I know that the smell is weed, I like the smell but I don't smoke weed' (Yellow, 24, Male, 14/12/2014), or a taste: *'We went to the Market, there was an open market, so we try the fish and chips and fries, that were the Belgian fries, that was my first time I tried those. I love those fries! Oh my god, I think Dutch food is so amazing' (Sissy, 23, Female, 21/11/2014).*

4.2. Diversionary Mode

The diversionary experience is about having an experience that can still provide pleasure for the traveller but there is no sign of 'real meaning' (Cohen, 1979,185). Signs of boredom of the everyday life are present. The experience can be dull and the pleasure in the act of travelling has no meaning. Here, the tourist does not go for a quest of authenticity, nor does he/she cares about the self transformation. There is no creation or spiritual development, enlighten of the 'self'. Diversionary mode is different from the recreational mode in the sense that there is no meaning in the experience at all (Cohen, 1979, p. 185). This mode expresses the 'less'. There is meaningless, centre-less and mindlessness (Moscardo, 1996) attitude toward authenticity and experiences (Holden, 2008, p. 49).

Cultural Differences and Museums

The meaning of the cultural painting can offer to 'diversionary' students drive them to the diversion of having no concerns whether authenticity is present in their experiences (Cohen, 1988, p.377):
'*Maybe the museums for those who are not art lovers, we may not understand a painting or something else; we prefer to go to see something like statues, a lot of paintings and stories are related with religion and most of people do not, for us a lot of people do not know about that, or we know it but it is not related to our thinking or emotions, we like the painting itself, but for us is just a painting, there is not a meaning behind it for us*' (Dennis, 25, Male, 23/01/2015).

While the 25 year old Zeren expressed his opinion for the above comment that: '*Is more like enjoying instead of trying to find the meaning*'. They seem to enjoy visiting museums as a way to 'soothe the spirit' (Cohen, 1979, p.186). Museums are not able to offer much for the recreation of the cultural identity, nor do they make them care to understand the meaning behind paintings. Both students opinion towards culture seems to be closely on what Wang claims, that objects like cultural souvenirs which are commoditized, have their exchanged values evaluated and lead to the extent where the meaning and protection of these actions (i.e. the action of thinking and feeling) that a product such as a painting is no longer part of a culture, but it has become part of the commoditized tourism system. Therefore objective authenticity even if is present in diversionary mode, there is no need to worry for genuineness.

Food Habits

The students of Wageningen who live in a Dutch environment, during their trips are looking for familiar tastes similar to Chinese food, or anything that can remind them of home (Holden, 2008, p.49). It was noted that they preferred Asian local restaurants:

'Sometimes I just go to a restaurant Asian style Korean or Japanese, only for the Asian flavour' (Wendy, 23, Female, 07/12/2014).

'Oh, yeah, the food, because for us sometimes we really miss the home taste, so we also check before we go to the city if they have a really nice restaurant' (Sophie, 23, Female, 07/12/2014).

' First time we didn't eat Dutch food, we went to a Japanese restaurant, I only could remember we eat some rice, and I like the atmosphere and the market, and peoples English is very good' (Julia, 25, Female, 23/01/2015)

Cassia and Wendy have known each other for over a year now and when they travel they intend to visit local Asian oriented restaurants. They prefer not to try new flavours. Hence, their pleasure activities have a meaning that there is a doubt if it has trace of authenticity, they do not look for a specific meaning in their trips and they prefer to keep close distance to their spiritual cultural centre. Since gastronomy is one of their main interests and the authenticity of food does not matter if it is real or not, based on Wang (1999, p.357) it can have a postmodernist approach. Here, authenticity and experiences have no real meaning. It doesn't matter what they offer and how they are made, as long as the traveller is happy.

Landscape similarities

 One of the interviewees described the Netherlands as having a landscape architecture that is less cosmopolitan and more environmental friendly.
There was one student though whose first word she expressed opinion about 'travelling within the Netherlands' was that this 'was boring', she justified her word choice:

'I have that for several cities, for Utrecht....But you know the Dutch people, they are really concerned about their whole environment and everything is in the same construction. So, is boring because you did not see a lot of difference in the environment, even in different cities, almost there is similar houses, a similar distribution, and even the trees are accurate to how many meters....they build their trees and all the forest, all the landscape in the Netherlands they are all artificial, there is no nature, so I think is quite boring' (Aqua, 26, Female, 21/11/2014).

Obviously Aqua is not impressed from how the landscape of the Netherlands looks from her point of view, there is no variety between places. At least for the cities that she has visited the urban and natural landscape is designed in such a way that does not actually make her feel that she is visiting a different city every time she travels. As being the oldest in the interviewed group, this indicates that she has travelled a lot around the Netherlands, since she also completed her Bachelor studies in the Netherlands.

What can be stated is the fact that as already being an experienced traveller, the search for entertainment is more difficult to be found. The surrounded environment does not impress her anymore and as a 'diversionary' tourist, who has no concerns if the Dutch landscapes have trace of authentic (Cohen, 1988, p.377). The search for authenticity is absent, just like the meaning in her trips.

'Wageningen' friends and trips

The place of residence of Chinese students often depends on where they plan to study, but also on who they already know before their arrival in The Netherlands (Wolf et al, 2011). This was the case with many students who came to Wageningen to study in most of the trips described they have friends that already live throughout various places in the Netherlands. Their friends (or relatives) were able to give them a tour around a city they visited or join their trips and provide them with all necessary information they needed to know for the Dutch life:

'The first city I visited was Arnhem, before I come here I also knew a Chinese girl that she already studied for four years and she introduced to me, if you want to have a really good shopping, the nearest place near Wageningen is Arnhem, so after two months study after the first period me and my friends went in Arnhem, I think this city is really convenient, because they have IKEA, they have a very big supermarket, I went to the Asian supermarket. For us (Chinese), there is a Chinese big supermarket where you can buy sour or something, Chinese food, and in the centre are many shops, which are really good for shopping. I didn't go a city tour around the city, I didn't go to any other place, just the city centre' (Mia, 23, Female, 21/14/2014).

Here, shopping is the main reason of her trip, to cover basic needs as food and clothing. Even though satisfying needs is part of the experimental mode. This experience fits better in the diversionary mode, because shopping can also be done as part of the everyday life and there are no signs of searching, either authenticity or discovering oneself as in experimental mode (Cohen, 1979, p.189). The purpose of her travel does not include activities of the usual tourist (i.e. sightseeing, visiting museums).

Shopping 'Therapy'

Another point of interest is the shopping activity which is one of the main activities that is done do for pleasure, but also because in other cities they have a large variety of products to choose from:

' I went to Amsterdam a lot because I can find everything I need there'. (Coco, 24, female, 21/11/2014).

Wageningen is too small to offer a variety of products for Chinese students. Except food shopping (a.k.a. foodie), they prefer to go to Arnhem or Utrecht to purchase clothes and furniture from IKEA or any other types of stores in which they can find objects that fascinated them and can offer them a meaningless trip with feelings of fulfilment and contentment.

Trends of Trips

Prayag mentions, that in 2010 the Economist wrote: 'being an independent traveller was a 'trend' within the young Chinese Community'. Chinese students are part of a specific type of tourist who is searching first to see things and places that their friends are talking about or recommend to them. As young travellers the need to be 'mainstream', share and show to their network through social media that they have travelled the world is a part of the construction of the cultural identity:

'I need to go there, I need to saw that I am in Amsterdam. I need to go to some places' (Sissy, 23, Female, 21/11/2014).

As young tourists, students are seeking in their travels to visit as many places as possible just to see what 'mainstream sights' exist at 'mainstream cities'. Hearing from other students about places to visit, they are looking for entertainment that even though their actions are considered to be normal activities (i.e. eating, shopping etc.), they can be easily impressed. Souvenirs and other kind of gadgets (i.e. magnets, key holders) are toured objects that they purchase mainly to prove to other that they have travelled instead of buying them for themselves. This means that there is a meaningless

'Escape from Apathy'

'Sometimes there are special museums I want to go. Sometimes I am bored and want to go in every direction, go in every city, just to go there one time, if it is interesting I will remember

it, if it is not I will by some postcards, otherwise I will not remember it' (Sophie, 23, Female, 07/12/2014).

Sophie mentioned a few times that she is easily tired of having nothing interesting to do in the small city she studies.

Souvenirs habits

'I do not buy postcards or souvenirs. I will try to buy some local food to give my friends as a gift. I do not like buying souvenirs or other things or for collection, I buy for example: candy or honey or a bottle of wine, chocolate or tea' (Julia, 24, Female, 23/01/2014).

Some respondents were more interested in the visited places, than just buying tourist objects, souvenirs or postcards.

4.3. Experiential Mode

MacCannell claims that the direction the traveller might take for the quest of finding a meaning in the society would be to look at the life of the others (MacCannell 1976, p.3). The individual being unable to find the authenticity within his own experiences, he is looking for the authentic in the experiences of other people. This type of experience is more aesthetic, the tourist appreciates life, the life of others in aesthetic way (Cohen, 1979, p.188). They basically enjoy the 'authentic' life of others by interacting with the Dutch culture and at the same time being aware of the 'otherness' (Holden, 2008, p.48). They encounter a much closer interaction with the Dutch culture compared to the other previous mentioned modes, in the sense that they seek for the authenticity of The Netherlands and also at the same time to explore themselves outside their home 'environmental bubble'. There is this conscious belief that locals actually live an authentic life.

Aesthetic Feeling

The first impression of a landscape architecture of the city is completely different from the second visit. The below comment suggest, as Pine & Gilmore state: 'experience can be unpleasant merely because some architectural feature has been overlooked, underappreciated, or uncoordinated (1998, p.103). When visiting a place for a first time, the weather conditions, especially if it is sunny, windy or rainy, it can have an impact on how the visitor is experiencing the landscape environment, from the view of the building to the mobility and pace of the life of the locals. The feeling of aesthesis cannot be provoked when

the traveller seeks to enjoy the appreciation of the beauty (Cohen, 1979, p.187). In this situation there is:

'The first thing I do before I schedule some travel, is to check the weather. The sightseeing will be performed differently or the city or the urban area is the most important thing, in a rainy day you do not to go out, so maybe is also the temperature, the weather temperature, this kind of thinks like in winter, the cold season maybe, I will go to Germany or some further city. Within the Netherlands I prefer to travel in the summer or spring, not in the winter, so weather is the most important thing for me' (Cassia, 26, Female, 07/12/2014).

Ostensibly, since Cassia has been living in the Netherlands for over two years and she has ambitions to do a PhD in Wageningen, the first time she visited a city in this country she was unprepared, meaning that she did not check the weather forecast, which led her to be more organized and learn from this type of experience. Due to the unstable weather conditions, from her first trips, she was not able to experience the aesthesis of the sight (Cohen, 1979, p. 187).

'I like to enjoy the feeling that the city give me, I think for a different city the atmosphere is different and I like to walk around and feel the feeling in the city, to see the buildings the houses, how the natives live, to see the characteristics, I don't like to take too much photos, I like to watch and remember in my mind. I like the feeling that when you go back, you think about that time and you can have memories in that place, like living the moment at the present' (Lilly, 24, Female, 21/11/2014).

Lilly appreciates the environment of the city while she is walking around. This aesthesis that the city gives her by observing the scenery in the environment she is surrounded makes her look for the aesthetic experience Not only does she want to see the beauty, but also desires to 'sink' into the everyday life and rhythms of the city.

Except the activities that the students have portrayed from their day trips, there were also some of their experiences that were quite different when they visited the same place twice.

Travel Gaze

There were some statements that showed signs of Chinese students who actually were looking for authenticity in their experiences, through the lives of others:

'I prefer to hang around in the city and see how really the local people live their life',

One female participant decided to visit Utrecht all by herself. She talked about her experience:

> ' I liked the Dom tower in Utrecht, and I really liked it because I met a Dutch boy and he took me a tour all day and he told me all the history. We went along the old river and then to the new river, having a really long tour and then he told me the history, the story and everything...I was listening to the story he told me...we were walking; we really walked along the city' (Aqua, 26, female, 21/11/2014).

Impressed by how a local has offered her to give her a free personal guided tour, Aqua decided to spend the day with a stranger and listening to his stories, made her first travel experience in The Netherlands a pleasant memorable day trip. She was given the opportunity to 'see' the city from the eyes of the local. Even though she could easily walk around alone and discover the city. She also had a similar experience in a trip to Maastricht:

> 'I went to Maastricht with ISOW and I lost the group from the very beginning of the trip, because I took my time to stay in the church and take really nice photos, but then I met an old German guy, and he was really nice, and he had kind of a free day and we took a tour together in the city, and he is an art teacher in a primary school, so he saw me all the artists in the city'(Aqua, 26, female, 21/11/2014).

As an individual traveller Aqua is not afraid of talking to strangers, to enjoy her trips by spending time with them. At the same time she is interested in learning about the places she visits. This specific experience fits better in the experiential mode instead of the existential mode, because even though Aqua is 'going native', she is embracing the 'other' (Cohen, 1988, p.377).

Indeed Cohen would characterize her as becoming a bit more distant from her 'self-centre' (Cohen, 1979, p.189). But she does not seem to be a step closer to her 'elective' spiritual centre because her decision to travel with a group shows that her criteria to explore the authenticity of the Dutch life are less strict (p.377). While MacCannell would assume that she is unable to find the authenticity of the city by having her own experiences, instead she is looking for the authentic in the experiences of other locals (MacCannell 1976, p.3). Consequently, there is a high change that her rapports with the unknown locals to be an attempt to falsify explore a 'staged' authenticity.

Taking pictures to remember as a memory the life of the others, grasping the moment that is why she prefers to travel with no companions:

'I really like photography, and I will not take pictures and leave. I would talk to the people and take pictures like a journalist. So, photography is a like a travel way to take pictures, that is why I travel alone, to take my time for pictures and talk to the people, and when something surprise me, always happens with the people, something is pumping to the picture, it just happens to be a really funny story, and see how people see you' (Aqua, 26, female, 21/11/2014).

4.4. Experimental Mode

In this mode, the tourist is further away from his spiritual centre and the quest of authenticity and searching from a meaning, can take various directions (Cohen, 1979, p. 189). Since in this type of experience, what is authentic in the Dutch culture does not satisfy the traveller easy (Holden, 2008, p.49). The student keep on searching within the local Dutch culture for authentic elements that they can 'experiment' with, so as to figure out the feeling of having an experienced-oriented centre (Holden, 2008, p.51).

Go 'Local'

In the experimental mode of experience, some students were in search of authenticity of the Dutch culture:

' my first time it was a very normal visit, I went to a normal place, while on the second time I went to a different place, went to see different things. The first time I went to museums and the red light district, like normal travellers, but the second time I went to other special streets, not in the centre. The second time with my friend he is studying in Amsterdam so he know some places, maybe more quite and more beautiful, like the real Amsterdam, approach the local people, because is living there we 'went local' (Jasmine, 25, Female, 23/01/2015).

Cohen argues that the criteria to explore authenticity in the experimental mode are similar with the experiential mode, meaning that here they might be a bit stricter and look for a deeper authentic meaning (p.377). MacCannell claims that if the tourists want to experience authenticity they should travel further away from main tourist streets and attractions (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006, p.68). They should walk further away and explore the city as a local by not following the classic pattern of going at the same spaces and places where other tourists visit. From what Jasmine said

Companion during trips

'*I prefer to travel within a small group or by myself. I really like to travel by myself. In the small group, it is your close friends or people you are committed to, it is already saves sometime to get to know each other and you have more flexibility, you can travel within a small group it is already easier to make common discussions and already make the decisions on where you want to go to a place. But I still prefer to go by myself, because even in a small group there is always some kind of conflict, I want to go to these kind of attractive places, he or she wants to go somewhere else, so you have to split and then it is lost the meaning of travelling together, I don't like that part, the only thing I hate to travel by myself, is to be all by myself*'(Zeren, 25, Male, 23/01/2015).

Regarding social interactions, Zeren has two good friends, a Chinese couple with whom most of the times he travels with. The last sentence of his statement, the feeling of actually being alone, even if he is surrounded by friends indicates that his experiences are experimental. Unlike the experiential traveller who is just an observer, Zeren wants to be part of his trips. He is not satisfied by looking at other people, even if they can be his travel companions. However, in the next category, his actions help to understand what and how he behaves to get the desired outcome from his trips.

Experience photography

'*This is another thing I like travelling with my friends. I can always ask someone to take a picture of me, I like me being in the picture but I do not like take selfies, it is a bit weird for me and if I go by myself I will ask other people nearby to take a picture of me, you always need to be very polite, very picky, if the picture is very nice you can just say thank you, but with my friends when the picture is not good I can take another one*'). He continues: '*I have pictures and I share them on Facebook all the time, and share them directly*' (Zeren, 25, Male, 23/01/2015).

Through the experiences of photography Zeren is able to rediscover himself by actively participating (Cohen, 1979, p.189). Pictures are the desired results of his travels and he is willing to 'experiment' by taking a lot of them in order to be satisfied.

Impressions of Dutch culture

'I don't remember the Dutch name compared to the Belgium, I think it is more or less the same, I think Dutch people and Belgian people eat the same, like with the plastic with the cup, they love it and with the mayo, I love it' (Mia,23, female, 21/11/2014).

When Mia was asked to describe the Dutch way of travelling with one word, she mentioned: 'French Fries'. Apparently, her attempt to try a different food habit, ended up for her to like it from how it was made, and to impress her on how it was eaten (in a plastic or paper cone). For her, it seems like Dutch and Belgians eat from a cup instead of a plate, which this apparently is not common in her culture. Also mentioning the nationality and comparison of two countries, indicates that she has been interested in trying different food taste to find pleasure.

Cohen would agree with the opinion that the student is looking to discover the Dutch culture by actually not being afraid to try something new, even if she is not fully aware of the origin of the French fries (Cohen, 1979, p.189). While Wang will argue that French fries as a tourist object are part of the constructive approach of authenticity (Wang, 1999, p. 355), but MacCannell would not consider this action of actually being authentic, since it can be told from the narration that the student didn't actually care about the originality of the French Fries and she was only looking to satisfy a basic human need.

Commoditization of Dutch objects

The idea of '' authenticity'' is also being commoditized and adapted by the residents, so as to satisfy the needs of the tourists. Gwen was able to spot how an authentic Dutch product was commodified by the locals:

'Sometimes they can see the bus, the tour bus, and these people go to the Cheese Market and buy all the cheese, and that moment the cheese price suddenly went up, and after the people went away, the price of the cheese went down'. (Gwen, 24, Female, 21/11/2014)

The Netherlands is famous for Dutch cheese. Therefore, the commodification of the dairy product can be found in several cities (i.e. Gouda, Amsterdam, etc.). This is an objective approach of authenticity, where for example it is sold as a tourist product to the tourists who visit these cities. A large percentage of students do not care whether the products or experiences of their trips are authentic. They will not argue or doubt whether what they buy or what is offered to them is authentic or not. The main reason they accept what is offered to them as authentic is only because it has been represented and projected as actually being authentic (Cohen, 1988, p.379). Being able to distinguish the difference of inauthentic and authentic in cultural attractions and products depends on the desire of the students and whether they care about authenticity or not.

Nonetheless, some students learned how to recognize fake and real objects (add citation), like Gwen did in Gouda. The more experienced they became the better they were to see elements of fake authenticity during their trips. This is part of another approach of authenticity, the constructive (Wang, 1999, p.354). Another student expressed how important he finds the genuineness of the tourist product:

'*I don't want to buy something made in China and sent it back in China, and I also don't want to spend a lot of money in souvenirs. Sometimes they are made in China, or not, but if I would try to sent a gift to my parents I will try to make it*' *(Ciao, 25, Male, 23/01/2015).*

Drug Experience

While travelling, there are also more ways for the students to find a different way to discover the meaning for search of their spiritual centre. It can be religion, mysticism or even drugs (Cohen, 1979, p.189). Lola who also did her bachelor in The Netherlands, she had a drug experience to share:

'*I was in Amsterdam, and we were planning to go to a party, and I started to do a little bit shopping, and I tried space cake, I have never tried it, it was my first time, and I went to a coffee shop, I smoked a little bit , and then I went to the train station, waiting for my friend to come, and then something happened, I could not do anything like I was so stoned, like I was going to die, I could not control it, because I had a lot of bags, I felt it was dangerous, you know, I was like: 'oh, my god, oh my god', I wanted to take care of my phone and my wallet and my bags and I could not and I was like: 'oh my god I am alone', and then I was like: 'calm down' and then I asked someone to help, so my friend arrive late, and then there was the party and the weed was so strong, I wanted to dance but I couldn't dance*' *(Lola, 25, Female, 14/12/2014).*

The Dutch culture is known also for the tolerance that is shown towards soft-drugs. Chinese culture does not have the same attitude. Thus, Chinese young students are curious to explore and discover themselves by experimenting with legal substances, which are strictly forbidden back in their hometown. Apparently, she did not think that there would be side effects from her decision to smoke marijuana. Because she got bored of waiting on her friend, she wanted to see how marijuana would make her feel.

This was a mixed travel experience from both experiential and experimental modes. Cohen would characterize this as an extreme case of the experimental mode, since she is not quite sure of what she is looking for in her trip, she is also not aware of what she can expect to experience. As an experiential experience this incident would be expected to evolve in an enjoyment of the state of being 'high' (Cohen, 1979, p.189).

4.5. Existential Mode

This mode follows that is the only one where there were not empirical findings resulting from the interviews. It might have been included in the theoretical framework, particularly to provide an overview on how the experiences are separated and to show that these modes can include a scale from low to high level quests for the search of the 'self' (Cohen, 1979, p.190). For the transformation of itself, the existential mode is distant from leisure activities, but closer to religious activities (Cohen, 1979, p.190). Generally, it can be asserted that the presented modes cover the identity of the tourist from the less 'self' focus, to an attachment of a definite 'elective' centre (Cohen, 1979, p.191).

In relation to the findings, in this mode the centre of the students' existence is transferred from the Chinese culture to the Dutch, but just for a while (Holden, 2008, p.51). They feel they are part of the Dutch environment, but it doesn't last long, because when they return back to Wageningen they basically go back to their educational duties. The centre of their self can be completely exterior from their own place of origin and their own culture. Their cultural background and nationality is relevant with the 'elective' centre they choose to have (Cohen, 1979, p.191). The Dutch environment has become part of their quest to help them discover themselves. Travelling in the surrounded cities, even if their centre might be Chinese oriented, it starts gradually to be more alienated from their past, due to the inevitable need to adapt in the Dutch life.

Frequency of modes

Pine & Gilmore state (1998):

> 'Impressions are the 'takeaways' of the experiences', (p. 103).

What is left in the end, after the trip is over, and it can be said with certainty is that the person who has the experience, will always remember the visited places, the surrounded environment and the activities or events that occurred. All these will be in his mind as 'memories'. Moments, those are easy to carry and take with you, even if there is no purchase of souvenirs or pictures taken. Definitely the person is not the same after a trip. The tourist has become 'experienced'. These types of memorable experiences can be found mainly in recreational modes, since they are happening for pleasure and satisfaction of basic needs.

The diversionary mode along with the recreational, have been aggressively criticized from Boorstin (1964) and Turner and Ash (1975). They have argued about the two modes regarding which one has been more frequent present in the experiences of the tourists (Cohen, 1975, p.186). In this study, both of the modes have been present. However the recreational mode has prevailed compared to the diversionary.

All of the students have experienced recreational trips in which the main reason was to find joy in any type of activities. The reason why recreational experience is more common is because most of the students still have a less 'self' focus centre. None of the participants was interested to look for 'an absolute' authenticity in their experiences. They seemed to have accepted cultural events, products and performances as Dutch traditional rituals without doubting or denying their authenticity, while there was less concern for the self transformation. This also explains why they could not be categorized as 'existential' travellers.

Nevertheless, some of the travel experiences of the Chinese students are 'dualistic', meaning that two modes occurred simultaneously. So, this study argues to agree with Cohen and characterize them as 'dualists' (Cohen, 1979, p.193). What is meant with this term is that while there were examples of two modes of experience at the same time, the students were able to switch from one spiritual centre to another. When they realized that they cannot abide to their own 'spiritual' centre anymore, they started to feel uncomfortable. Being estranged from the Chinese centre, then the result was collusion between two worlds, the Chinese and the Dutch (p.193).Thus there is a 'shift' from one mode to another.

The students construct their own experiences of travelling mostly based on a combination of two modes of experience in one single day trip. They can continue to have recreational activities and the more experienced they are becoming, those recreational activities are more likely to be connected with activities that fit mainly to the experimental mode. Students, who have travelled less, had mainly recreational and diversionary experiences. Other students, whom have had more time to travel, because they lived in the Netherlands longer or it was their intention to travel more, also had recreational and diversionary experiences, but their experiences were also experiential and experimental. Thus, there is a variety of tourist modes. The more experienced they became the less planned and structured their trips were. Without having anything planned their tourist experiences could easily be combined. This also indicates the 'displace of the self' from the center to be redirected towards a pursuit of having another 'self', this of 'going to an adventure'.

The usefulness in discussing and using Cohen's phenomenology of tourist experiences can be seen in two ways. First, the modes can be used as a constructive tool. A categorization manages to separate travel activities and preferences of the students in different groups and the attempt to relate them as attributes of the identity of the traveller. Secondly, the five modes are a representation of the theory that supports it. Consequently, it is the theory that explains described the distinction between experiences.

Last but not least, the age in which the traveller obtains the first experiences, their previous tourism experiences are totally different from the current experiences and also from the future ones. The personality and identity of the travellers, each time they travel is shaped

continuously. Consequently, they are able to be prepared for their next trip to decide and look for experiences based on what they have seen, felt, understood in a certain environment, at a certain age, in a certain time of their life. The exact moment that the experience has happened and the exact physical and mental situation that the travellers currently were, this is what helps to categorize experience and sometimes combine two tourist modes in one trip. This also depends on how far the travellers are willing to go and get away from their environmental familiar bubble, for discovering themselves or other cultures, seeking authenticity, finding their spiritual centre and go on a quest of adventure, for a more educational-mindful knowledge or for an unconscious 'staged' pleasure.

Authenticity

Authenticity was argued from Cohen not to exist at least in the first two modes (Recreational and Diversionary) and that is making its presence mainly in the next three modes (Cohen, 1979, p.186). Whereas, finding shown that 'staged authenticity' of MacCannell (1973) is present in the recreational and the diversionary experience. In these modes, just because it is claimed that the tourists are not looking for a spiritual meaning, that does not mean that there is absence of authenticity. Objective, constructive and postmodern approaches can be present in one mode or not present at all.

Without a specific approach of authenticity with which the students comport better with, authenticity is worthy of attention to the degree that is able to assist in placing the travel experiences in a particular tourist mode. This study tends to agree with Cohen that authenticity is not so much of importance as the form of tourist experience (Cohen, 1979, p.184). Because authenticity it is not stable, since it relies on how the students are interpreting the content and setting of their experience, students can have a different approach of authenticity in every travel experience.

All the latter studies that have been made and developed about authenticity are based on MacCannell literature and assumptions. What Cohen claims to be authentic in the travel experience is an upgrade analysis of what MacCannell has already come up with. Cohen is more accurate by categorizing the experiences of the tourist in different modes (Cohen, 1988). With this classification, he claims that this way it is easier to also distinguish the degree of authenticity that the traveller desires in his experiences. For example, the recreational student accepts what is being given and presented to him as authentic, while the existential tourists is fully aware that what he seeks in his experiences needs to be authentic (Cohen,1988).

Back in 1988, Cohen argued that from the specific types of tourists, the extent in which they have a desire to look for authenticity is not priority for all types of travellers (Wearing, 2010, p.28). He has taken one step further the work of MacCannell about

authenticity by stating that not all tourists are the same when it comes for their quest of authenticity. Even though, both Cohen and MacCannell have cited each other's work about authenticity in tourism, and there is a variety of terms and definitions that have been discussed over the past decades. However, the three approaches by Wang were introduced in the tourism studies after 25 years.

Yet, the one who had and still has the most significant role on what authenticity is really about in the tourism industry is the tourist himself. The travel preferences of the tourists are being influence by the environment where the experiences are being produced. The travel activities are various and define the tourism behaviour for the future travel choices of the tourist. The experience of travelling is a combination of many things based on how the network of tourism operates. Cohen has argued that the possibility to have a mix of modes in any individual's travel needs to be further investigate and also it needs to be more specified on what types of modes can be mixed with each other in one day trips, so as to base a research in empirical results (Cohen, 1979, p.192).

In the end, how the tourists, as individuals understand, seek and think what is authentic at their tourism experiences and whether these include authentic or inauthentic activities, places and objects is what determines the overall travel experience they gain while travelling.

5. Conclusions

Introduction & Overview

Based on the findings presented in the previous chapter, this study has examined the tourism experiences of Chinese student from Wageningen and found out that their travel experiences can be categorized in different types of tourism modes. Some of the issues addressed were: the need to escape from daily routine, cultural differences and food habits, tourism trends, impressions and memories of trips. These issues are used to answer the research question(s) and the scientific objectives. This research evaluates the relevance of the theories and concepts from the theoretical framework and their significance in order to understand the theory of the travel experiences. Generally, it needs to be mentioned that the categories that are presented set upon the grounds for discussion and conclusion.

Summary of Findings

Most of the research done on young travellers is based on their motivations, activities and travel destinations. For each student these factors are different only because each individual chooses to study in a specific environment that will provide him/her the travel experience that he/she is looking for to gain during his/her educational years.

In her article 'The Outbound Chinese Tourism in Italy, The new Graduates Generation', Magda Corigliano suggests that based on the length of distance between the residence of the traveller and the chosen visited destination, the desire to visit a place is stronger (2011, p.408). The results of this specific study were quite the opposite. The city of residence partially influenced the choice of visiting a city in The Netherlands.

All participants had been at least to Amsterdam, Utrecht, Arnhem, Rotterdam and Nijmegen. Whereas, students visited more often Utrecht and Arnhem, which are less than an hour from Wageningen, but mainly for shopping or cultural events. On the contrary, very few respondents had travelled to Eindhoven or Groningen because of their greater distance from Wageningen. Therefore, distance for the day trips is a relevant factor.

According to their statements, comparing the distance of travelling in China with the travel distance in the Netherlands, going from one city to another is much faster in Holland. For example, two hours of travel in the Netherlands would be comparable to travelling four hours for the same distance in China. This illustrates that they value more the time they have for their trips and prefer not to waste time on transportation. They do not like waiting primarily for practical reasons (Arlt, 2004, p.113). This is also combined with the fact that they would travel to a specific city, even if it is far away, but they would not go there without

any explicit reason. For instance, Giethoorn is also quite far from Wageningen, but due to its specific natural landscape it can provide to tourists a unique experience. This implies that in cities where pleasure, entertainment, refreshment, relaxation, amusement or edification could be offered, the distance from Wageningen does not matter, as long as the place itself had to offer a cultural event, sightseeing(s) or specific leisure activities. Depending on the particular tourist attractions of a destination, the tourist will be attracted to the popular sites that are well-known to all tourists.

The students are going to places and visit spaces where they get information about them from friends, the internet and how these destinations are promoted to their country within the tourism market. The sources of information where the Chinese participants receive can be from other students that have already been in The Netherlands or they have already graduated and have returned to China.

Most of the students in their personal social network have someone who has been living, studying or travelling in The Netherlands. Through this contact the current students had the opportunity to be informed and have direct access to the already 'live' travel experiences of their friend, relatives or colleagues (Arlt, 2004, p.121).

Not all tourism places can provide the same experience for the young travellers. In order to be able to experience the strange environment, students prefer to travel with familiar faces (family or friends), so as to make the strange environment less strange and take some time to be able to include the unfamiliar side within their safe 'environmental bubble' (Cohen, p.38, 2004).

Depending on how their cultural identity is constructed, whether they are looking for authenticity or not, they make their own decisions and seek for pleasure and common knowledge, to share and experience with friends and family. Travel experiences in tourism studies can be analysed and interpreted by looking at how the communication, travel pattern, motivation and tourism behaviour composes the whole travel experience which is based on the cultural background of the individual.

For Chinese travellers, the difference between the student tourists and the typical tourist is in their behaviour while travelling. This is why students are categorized in the group of *'Westernized travellers'* (Arlt, 2004, p.203). In this group, the young travellers who studies abroad have a higher level of education and have a more internationalized interest for global destinations. A characteristic of this type of travellers is that they travel in small groups (as it was also indicated in the interviews) and that their travel behaviour within Europe is more westernized than being a *'loud, rude and culturally naive Chinese tourist'* as cited by Arlt (2004, p.203).

It is interesting to note that when students were asked to explain with the first word that comes to their mind: 'travelling around the Netherlands', their responses were quite

diverse. The words that were mentioned more than once in a different groups were: Bicycle, Fries, Boring, Amsterdam, Weather, Convenient, Expensive, Red Light Streets and Windmill. What can be said for some of these words is that the Netherlands is known for its capital city and its Red Light Streets. Windmills are a tourist attraction and the bicycle, the most common object of mobility. The Netherlands is less known for the weather conditions that prevail, while fries are more common than the Dutch cheese. Convenient, boring and expensive are specified words to be chosen, probably due to personal opinions for the country. All the words mentioned lead to assume that there is a variety of different views for the act of perceiving travelling around the Netherlands.

For this reason, the students that were interviewed even though they have the same cultural background, their travel preferences and experiences were estimated to be quite diverse, not only because they are coming from different provinces of China, but also because they perceive their experiences individually and give a different meaning in each experience.

What was noticeable is that the interviewees had a different narration of their travel experiences. Those who were 24 years old or older, they had more stories to tell. They were more experienced, since they had travelled a lot within the Netherlands and because of that the cities they travelled for a day trip didn't seem to fascinate them. Unlike the students who were 24 or younger, whom they seemed to be more excited when they were talking about their trips. Presuming they were still not experienced enough with travelling, this explains their travel activities to be typical common for tourists.

Another major difference noticeable is their level of English. As they explained during the focus groups interviews, being confident when speaking a foreign language without making mistakes is taken seriously in the Chinese culture. For those participants who had a better level of English compared to others within groups, they were willing to explain in detail, since they were more confident and did not care about making grammar mistakes.

Contributions and implications of findings

Chinese students of Wageningen were a good example, to understand if the culture affects the formation of experiences. Considering that, the aim of this study was to identify the travel experiences of student tourists in specific modes of travelling, the literature review, the data analysis, and the interview findings all lead to the following conclusions:

- Small groups of students are very common and much more preferred than larger groups with a tour guide, due to factors such as language barrier, avoidance of conflicts, same or different interests, etc. Those types of travelling are expected to be more frequent in the future. Based on some of their responses, students support Peter

Cai's (2014) claim that they prefer to travel independently, rather than being part of the typical Chinese tour group. Yet even become more individualistic. Students are keen to experience trips with different amount of travel companion(s) and based on the smoothness of the trip, they continue to travel with specific co-travellers. What was basically designated is that students and in general young tourists are becoming more and more individual travellers who do not prefer to join large travel guided groups. Admittedly, international students are very much capable of travelling on their own, without the aid of a tour guide. But they would still prefer to join big tour groups, when upon arrival to the tourist destination, they will form smaller groups, of not more than four or six people.

- A study like this one, which also attempted to explore travel experiences from a monoculture perspective (the Chinese), it can facilitate the fact to understand why people when they are young, prefer to travel with fellow travellers of the same nationality. This shows that they feel safer and much keen to communicate easier in their own language.

- Based on what Wolfgang Arlt said for the division of tourists, is that it can be done in two types. Those who are looking for better quality to experience and those who travel in groups (2004). The results, not only indicated that Chinese students are not mass tourists, yet group travellers, but also they can be independent travellers. Revealing that there is diversification of the Chinese outbound tourism. Nowadays, they are more self-assertive and prefer to travel in such a way that they actually enjoy their leisure moments by taking time for pleasure and enriching their knowledge, which helps to transforms themselves and their experiences. The students of this study are travellers who are enriching their experiences in terms of their Chinese expectations.

- The dominant concepts about experiences have been established on current modes that exist for more than 30 years, while at the same time period the Chinese outbound tourism has changed rapidly and continues to do so. The narration of the students' stories would have been differently told if they were asked in an alternative type of interview or different time. It is not mandatory to use focus group interviews as a method of data analysis to expose narrations of more in depth travel experiences. If someone would like to examine and understand the student and especially the Chinese, or any kind of nationality, he or she can conduct individual interviews or use the same study method in any European country to discover that the narrations will be differently told, but deep down there will be similarly created. The story tells of travel experiences are acknowledged individually from the people who experience it. It is

recommended that the data should also be gathered separately instead of having a focus group. This way the information would be totally explained from one person only without the intervention of a companion traveller that might influence how a story is being told.

Again, the focus is not on travellers themselves, but on the construction and development of the tourist experience. While in this paper there are general conclusions, the author has applied a method to Chinese students and her understanding of travel experiences has been accompanied by her own observations and interpretation. Since the sample was specific -born and raised in a different environment than the one in which it was examined- it was limited also to be a specific travel target group, that if it was different, it would possibly have lead to different conclusions.

By all means, the feelings and impressions of the traveller can have a strong influence and a significant role on how the concept of experience is interpreted, with respect to values, qualities, and total amusements of a trip (Corigliano, 2011, p.398). Yet, it is first the knowledge the individual has and how he/she was educated within the culture he/she was raised that combined together create the tourism experiences. All the elements that define the travel experience need first and foremost to be investigated-researched in a specific order.

What was taken into account is the location of the permanent residence, which was important for the choice of the final visited destination. This determines the places the student visits. For this reason, the purpose of this study was first and foremost focused on the trips within the Netherlands and not trips in other countries of Europe. Analysing only one country's specific cities where students have visited made the process of interpretation of the travel experience easier, since the examples given from the participants could be compared. The comparison could be done, because there were different examples given from various students, and for the same places they visited the results of their narrations were similar.

It was surprisingly to see that except the first two focus groups, where all the Chinese students already knew each other, the last two groups were differently formed. The students before accepting to participate in interviews, they were not aware who was going to attend the interview with them. Upon arrival for the interview, at least half of the participants knew each other closely within the Chinese community of Wageningen. This implies two assumptions: First, having a snowball sampling was difficult to be achieved, at least from their side, since it was obvious that they did not inform regarding their decision to be interviewed, and secondly, there might have been slightly some bias during the data collection, because of their acquaintances.

Next, in two out of the six focus groups, there were two participants who indicated that not being acquainted with the moderator of the interview would have prevented them

from participating. Not knowing the person who conducts the interviews is a matter to take into account on how to increase their willingness to take part in surveys.

Further, for a qualitative study, and especially for focus group interviews, participants are more motivated if they are being rewarded for their volunteer assistance (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, p.55). Offering a dinner as a reward was an attempt to make more students to participate (see Appendix A). Even though dinner and drinks were offered, this was not a satisfactory reason to motivate students taking part in an interview, possibly not only for their time constraints, but also because moderator was an unfamiliar person.

To sum up, it would be ideal to travel with a group of Chinese students to observe how they behave and act during travelling. However, this was not feasible due to time and financial constraints of this study. Therefore an academic approach was used to examine their behaviour during their trips in the Netherlands.

Recommendations

Fittingly, based on the finding and some research limitations, there are some suggestions made. Native language as a way of communication should facilitate them to elaborate and narrate in depth when describing or giving examples of their travel experiences Therefore, it is recommended for a future research that the focus group interviews could be conducted in the native language of the participants, so as to give a further insight into the research and simultaneously participants can feel more confident to join more into the discussions.

There could be a more detailed research for young travellers by interviewing first year students that have been living in The Netherlands for a minimum of six months, who are still inexperienced in travelling within the country and synchronously interview second year students who have been living in The Netherlands for more than a year. This can be done for two reasons. Firstly, to increase the sample examined and secondly, to compare the travel experiences of students from first year trips with these from second year trips. Criteria such as, how long they have been living in the country, how much free time they have to dedicate for day trips, can indicate if there are any major changes that occur, before and after students become experienced in travelling.

General Conclusion

This study used Cohen's five modes of tourist experiences to study the travel experiences of the Chinese students at Wageningen University. The scientific objectives of this study were able to be answered with this type of research. The contribution of this research was to find out in which mode the travel experiences of the Chinese students could

be categorized, by examining what kind of leisure activities they do and interpret factors that influence their choices to go to a Dutch city.

Travel experiences are a part of the total transformation of self. They are inevitably connected with how the self is shaped, combination of elements that occur during the process of travelling, will keep influencing the self in the next trips and the next ones after that. It is a continuous influence from the travel experience on the transformation of the identity of the tourist. The bidirectional relation between the concepts of how the students experience the environment they are surrounded by and how they perceive it, lead to understand it in their own personal way. Decisions about next trips are based on what they have seen, what they know and what other people tell them, recommend them. Except from the basic characteristics of the cultural identity (age, gender, language and nationality) visual (pictures) and auditory (stories) from people and places enrich the tourist knowledge and influence the next travel experience, during the decisions made on where to go and what to do next.

Questions in the tourism research have been answered by providing an insight on how Chinese youth combines studies and travelling in the Netherlands. As mentioned before, mixing two specific types of tourists, young travellers and students, in a European country it shows that the tourism concept is much more comprehensible, when the investigating factors are as much precise as possible.

Based on the findings the travel attitude of the Chinese students is quite diverse. They can be food lovers or they have shopping 'urges'. In the latter attitude mainly females are more common, but also male Chinese can be included. Also the cultural student is involved. Usually the preference of visiting museums is bidirectional, in the sense that they visit mainstream famous museums or look to go in less known museums from which they can learn about the Dutch history. Regarding the orientation of their 'centre', what is called to be the 'view on how someone sees the world', what meaning is given to life, cultural or spiritual (Holden, 2008, p.48). The behaviour of the traveller is related to where his 'centre' is situated.

To summarise, there is multiplicity of travel attitudes and because of this variety most likely, this case study might have been a little bit overdone. Only because the students have come to the Netherlands for a specific reason, this does not mean that they should have their experiences categorized based on authenticity and other definitional approaches which might show that experiences are similar between travellers. Apparently, categorizing and setting typologies for travel experiences, is an easy way to distinguish the factors that influence the choices of the students. More research needs to be done with travellers from China, so as to ascertain if the responses they gave are consistent enough to create a profile of the average Chinese young traveller. It is possible that the educational level of the participants does not reflect the regular traveller.

Bearing this in mind, this study hopes that has given an insight at the modes of specific types of experiences, by focusing specifically on travellers from a non-Western society, and their trips within the Netherlands.

After all, the future in the tourism travel industry is based on the forthcoming young visitors who start as inbound tourists and end up being globalized travellers. And as Prayan et al. suggest (2013, p.27), combining travelling and studying is a new form of travel through the main land of China, which European countries should ultimately embrace.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Dinner invitation

My name is Eva and at the moment I am doing my thesis for my master in leisure, tourism and environment. My topic is about the travel experiences of students when visiting different cities of The Netherlands while living and studying in Wageningen.

I am looking for students that are in their second year of their master studies. I would like to interview people preferably from China, since it is the biggest student community in Wageningen.

The interviews will not be individual. Therefore, I need 6-10 people for each group. It will look like a discussion where I would like to know more about your experiences, opinions and activities from cities you have visited in The Netherlands. So if you have travelled as a group with your friends and would like to tell me about your trips you are more than welcome to come over at my place in Haarweg, (first blue building, ground floor, corridor 5) to talk about your trips outside Wageningen but within The Netherlands. In order to thank you for taking time to join a group interview, I will cook Greek food (main dish, salad, dessert) and provide you with some beverages.

If you would like to participate and help me graduate, you can contact me at:

(E-mail) or (telephone number)

In case you are too busy with internship or thesis, it will be appreciated if you could pass this invitation to your friends.

Please let me know which day in the upcoming weekends (Friday-Saturday- Sunday) you are available to come around 19:00.

Kind regards,

Eva

Appendix B: Interview Guide

The main reasons why I invite you here for an interview are:

1. *You have come to study very far away from home to study in a different cultural environment and*
2. *You have been living in the Netherlands for over a year, so I assume you already had the time to travel around the country.*

To get started with the questions I would like you to answer in a clockwise rotation, but feel free to add more in the discussion that it is interesting for you.

1. Can you tell me the first word that comes to your mind when you hear: ''Travelling around The Netherlands''? Why this word reminds you of the Dutch?)

2. Let's talk about your first trip in The Netherlands. Can you describe the first city you visited? What were your first impressions? (Probe: What kind of activities you did there? What did you go to see?)

3. Do you prefer travelling with a big or small group and why? (Probe: have you done day trips with ISOW or IxESN?)

4. Which period of the academic year and which cities you have visited so far? Why you went there?

5. How do you decide (factors) which cities you will visit during your studies? (Probe: What is the first thing you look at the city to have so as to go there?)

6. What are you looking for to do and see when going to other places? What do you know about these places?

7. What do you think is important for you to remember from the places you visited?

8. Can each one of you share a specific memory/event from a Dutch city you visit? Something that happened to you during your trip and it was out of the ordinary?

9. Is there anything else that anyone would like to share and it has not been mentioned?

Appendix C: Demographic Questions

Dear student,

Thank you for participating in this research study!

The topic of my thesis is about the travel experiences of students when visiting different cities of The Netherlands while living and studying in Wageningen.

I invited you here because you are a second year master student and I would like to know more about your experiences and trips within The Netherlands. So, there are no right or wrong answers, just different points of view. Feel free to share your opinions and experiences of travelling.

I will be taking notes during the discussion but I would also like to ask permission if it is ok with you to record the interview, so as to help me continue with my research. Any comments that you will mention will be kept confidential and in case you feel like the discussion needs to be stopped just let me know. The interview will last more or less 60-90 minutes.

Your names will also be kept confidential since I will be the only one using them to facilitate the process of my thesis.

Please fill in below:

Full Name (English name optional):

_____

Age:

_____

Gender:

_____

Hometown and Province:

_____

Title of your Master studies:

_____