



Cultural Theme Park and Tourist Experiences on Leisure and Culture: The Case of Qingming Riverside Landscape Garden

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Abstract

Culture has been identified as a developmental resource in China. As a kind of cultural tourism commodity, cultural theme parks have transformed the abstract term ‘culture’ into tangible entities on display for tourists to experience. This paper focuses on Qingming Riverside Landscape Garden (*QingMingShangHeYuan*), the first and only theme park established based on the renowned and spectacular historical riverscape painting QMSHT. Situated in Kaifeng, an inland millennium city with abundant diachronic cultural heritage, this study investigates the role a cultural theme park plays in projection and consumption of culture in Kaifeng city. Based on extended participant observation of the theme park and in-depth interviews, the paper discusses the ways in which leisure elements rather than cultural ones have been privileged in the experiential programs of the cultural theme park for marketing-oriented reasons and the consequences of this for individual tourism experiences.

Acknowledgement

This thesis explores tourist experiences of leisure and culture in the cultural theme park Qiming Riverside Landscape Garden from a sociological perspective. The fieldwork took place from March to April 2014. My experience as a traveller and a researcher in Qingming Riverside Landscape Garden will always remain as unforgettable experience, as I utilized knowledge learned from the MLE courses with my interested research topic.

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1. Introduction

Since the opening of Disneyland in 1955 in California, consumption on the theme parks has become a favorite mode of mass entertainment in modern society (Milman, 1991; Formica and Olsen, 1998; Milman, 2001; Clavé, 2007; Park *et al.*, 2009). Besides the role as a space for leisure, the historical foundation and the originality of theme park as a cultural creation should not be neglected. Borrowing words from Clavé (2007), ‘a whole world of theme parks beyond Disney’ is at present. Cultural theme park, a kind of tourist attraction that paints a holistic picture of regional culture or represents a specific historical event is belonging to this ‘world’ (Yeoh and Teo, 1996; Hofstadter, 2008). Ideally, this kind of theme park can facilitate cultural promotion, strengthen cultural interest of visitors and stimulate place image redefinition (Moscardo and Pearce, 1986; Clavé, 2007). However, without exclusion from other conventional commodities, cultural theme parks can be marketed and consumed with the simple feature of financial and product exchange in spite of all the uniqueness (Yeoh and Teo, 1996). Hence, the function of the cultural theme park cannot be defined arbitrarily but needs to be discussed under specific issues.

Focusing on the case Qingming Riverside Landscape Garden (QRLG), this thesis analyzes the role this cultural theme park can play in projecting Kaifeng culture, with brief discussion on specific tourist experiences of the themed attractions.

The introduction chapter comprises four sections to provide background information of QRLG as a cultural theme park worthy researching. In the first section, information over QRLG is given, including an introduction of the cultural theme QingMingShangHeTu (QMSHT) and an overview of Kaifeng, in which city the theme park locates, as a millennium city and a tourist destination. The following section demonstrates the problem statement of this thesis. Based on the background information and problem statement, the third section gives the research objectives and research questions of this thesis. The last section outlines the whole structure of this thesis.

1.1. Qingming Riverside Landscape Garden (QRLG)

QRLG is a cultural theme park established based on the spectacular Chinese painting QMSHT. Originated by a North Song artist Zhang Zeduan, the masterpiece QMSHT depicts the peaceful daily life of people and the magnificent landscape in the capital city Bianjing (ancient name of Kaifeng). Among all Chinese paintings, QMSHT is the

most renowned and preeminent artistic work which had been collected, restored and copied over centuries before its official public ownership in 1950s. The painting scroll is 5.25 meters in length and 25.5 centimeters in height. This work is designed with a river meandering throughout the whole length, and the bridge across the river named Rainbow Bridge (*Hong Qiao*) is the center and main focus of the painting. The painting has successfully captured lifestyle of all societal levels in Bianjing by delineating period clothing and different economic activities from rich to poor, as well as architectures from city to rural areas.



Figure 1. Rainbow Bridge across Bian River on QMSHT.



Figure 2. City Gate on QMSHT.

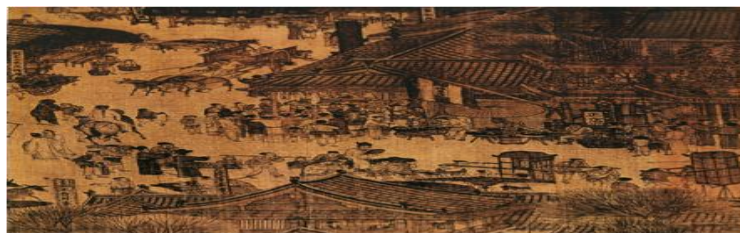


Figure 3. City Street Scene of Bianjing in QMSHT.



Figure 4. Countryside in QMSHT.

Kaifeng in contemporary China is a prefecture-level city administrated by Henan Province, China. This city is identified as one of the Nine Ancient Capitals of China (together with Xi'an, Luoyang, Nanjing, Beijing, Hangzhou, Anyang, Zhengzhou, Datong). Derived from biased national development strategies and unbalanced resource distribution, contemporary Kaifeng is a less developed city in China with lagged transportation system and rare international accessibility. Also due to the geographical characteristics as an inland dry city locating in central China, the destination resources are majorly cultural attractions (e.g. Xiangguo Temple, Ancient Kaifeng Government, Iron Pagoda) but barren of mass leisure resorts such as sun, sea and beach. Furthermore owing to the relatively frequent criminal issues broadcasted by social media, 'a city rife with poverty and unsafety' has overweighed 'an ancient capital full of inherited cultural elements' on the ways in which place image of Kaifeng is thought of. Arising from both geographical and social situations in practice, Kaifeng is not a preferable tourist destination on both national and international level.

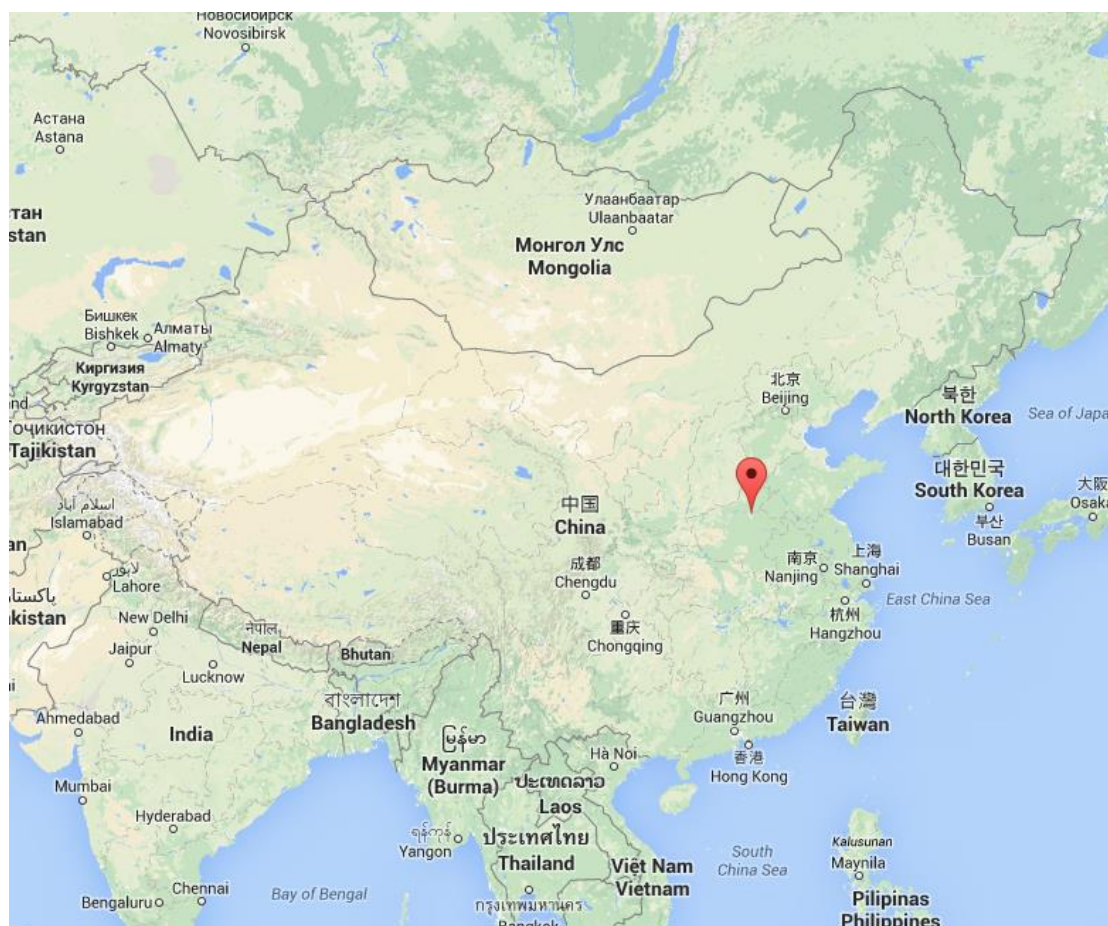


Figure 5. Location of Kaifeng.

However looking back to history, Kaifeng was once one of the largest cities in the world in 11th century with a population of 600,000 to 700,000. QRLG is the theme park, which materialized lively prosperous scenes of Kaifeng during Chinese North Song Dynasty (11th century) when the city reached its peak scale and importance. In reference to QMSHT, QRLG was established in 1992 and opened to public in 1998. This cultural theme park is one of the large-scale theme parks in China, with a total space of 400,000 square meters. QRLG has a local name ‘Millennium City Park’, with the promotional theme as ‘Once You Appreciate the Painting, You can Dream about Scene before 1000 Years’. Grasping mass tourist demand for seeking fun, amusement elements are embraced in cultural exhibition in the theme park. The rarely seen thousand-year inherited local folk-custom cultures are visualized in the action performance shows and interactive amusement programs. The action shows such as Hard Qi Gong and Yuefei Poking Chaigui, interactive experiential programs such as Marriage of Landlord Wang’s Daughter are integrated with the still ancient style architectures. The 3D movie show and the large-scale on-water performance have annotated QMSHT and history of North Song Dynasty as a whole.



Figure 6. Rainbow Bridge across Bian River in QRLG.



Figure 7. City Gate Wall in QRLG.



Figure 8. Countryside scene in QRLG.



Figure 9. Interactive Program Ancient Wedding at Landlord Wang's Home.



Figure 10. Splitting Fire Action Show.



Figure 11. Large-scale on-water Performance Based on Night Scene of QRLG.

1.2. Problem Statement

Tourism in contemporary studies tends to be understood under the sensitivity of scholars to mobility and interactions in global context. Tourist destinations with low level of international accessibility and worldwide promotion are ignored in most cases, Kaifeng is among this kind of destinations. Although as an undeveloped city less known to the globe, Kaifeng is a tourist destination worth investigating in cultural tourism studies since the city contains unique, splendid and irreplaceable Chinese cultural elements.

During the modern historic period from 1949 to 1978 until the time when national authority declared the ‘reform and open policies’, Chinese tourism had been in standstill as a ‘diplomatic activity’ that travelling took place simply for political needs in most occasions (Xiao, 2006). Since the issuing of the national economic reconstruction policy afterwards till today, tourism development has become a strategy for national development in the new epoch (Lew, 2003; Oakes, 2005; Jackson, 2006; Xiao, 2006). Responding to the national privilege on economic growth, domestic tourism studies in China are mostly conducted with marketing and management orientation, but rarely from sociological perspectives.

‘Theme park’ is a relatively new field of academic inquiry in Mainland China, as the first modern theme park, Splendid China was only established in 1988. Ever since then, China has been experiencing a ‘theme park fever’ that hundreds of theme parks have been established in major cities (Ren, 2007, page 100). The upcoming openness of Shanghai Disneyland has brought in another wave of theme park researches in recent years. Nevertheless, a prominent deficit is that these theme park studies have centralized marketing and management objectives from a macro view of national development, but neglected the uniqueness of the cultural themes and the multiplicity of tourist experiences.

1.3. Research Objective and Research Questions

Despite current prevailing discussion about globalization and marketing aspects of tourism development, the author has chosen Kaifeng, an inland millennium city with extremely limited international accessibility as the research target. The research objective of this thesis is thus to fill the knowledge gap of research on domestic cultural theme parks in China, with focus on tourist experiences from a sociological perspective.

Complementary to this research objective, the main research question of this thesis is identified as:

How do visitors to the Qingming Riverside Landscape Garden interpret and make sense of their experiences?

To give a full analysis of tourist experience including stages of pre-visit, on-site and post-visit experiences, the main research question is subdivided into the following sub research questions:

What are the motivations of tourists for participating in the experiential programs in the cultural theme park?

How do tourists consume and negotiate the experiences in the theme park?

To what extent can the artificial cultural theme park construct an authentic cultural experience and shape visitors' imagination of Kaifeng?

1.4. Thesis Structure

This thesis is comprised with six chapters. This introduction chapter has introduced the reader background information of the researched cultural theme park Qingming Riverside Landscape Garden, as well as of Kaifeng where the theme park locates as a millennium city and tourist destination. The research aims and research questions are explicitly stated in this chapter to create an overall understanding of the thesis contents. The second chapter comes the theoretical framework of this thesis. Within this chapter, theories of cultural commodification, authenticity, and tourist experiences are reviewed and reflected. An overview of global theme park industry and tourism studies under Chinese context are also involved in this section. A conceptual framework is founded upon these knowledge bases in reference to tourist experiences in the cultural theme park. Methodology section is covered within the third chapter. In this part, the social constructionism as the philosophy of this thesis is delineated at first. Following, the positionality of the author is reflected. Coming next are the demonstration of the qualitative research design and procedures of data collection. The time, location and participants of the participant observation and narrative interviews are described in this part. Thematic coding as the qualitative data analysis method follows up. The thesis then proceeds to illustrate research results. The research results are subdivided into three themes: pre-visit motivation, on-site experience, and post-visit intention for Kaifeng culture. In order to answer the research questions of this thesis, the fifth chapter comes the discussion section. The last chapter follows as the conclusion. This part involves a summary of the whole thesis, the importance of this research and suggestions for further academic investigations.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Cultural Tourism and Cultural Commodification

Culture is a broad concept, which encompasses all values, beliefs, actions, and material productions associated with a certain place (Meethan, 2003). Defining culture has been an enduringly complex and problematic procedure in contemporary era (Wallerstein, 1990, cited in Meethan, 2003, page 13). Within the process of globalization, increasing mobility of capital, information, commodities and people has eroded the territorial boundaries of places (Sheller and Urry, 2004). Under this stage, theoretical and practical terms of 'flux', 'change', 'hybridity' and 'transformation' have challenged 'sedentarism' and 'essentialism' in the ways of how culture is defined and thought out (Malinowski, 2001; Barker, 2003; Meethan, 2003).

Derived from the complex social attributes of culture, a generally accepted single definition of cultural tourism has not been drawn out in existing literatures. In cases without specific concerns, cultural tourism in a general perspective can take place whenever the movements of visitors towards a cultural attraction happen (Hughes, 2002; Hughes, 1996; Stebbins, 1995). On a critical standpoint, cultural tourism is frequently discussed around 'interest' and 'motivation' of tourists for seeking new and deep cultural experiences (e.g. Hughes, 2002; Stebbins, 1995; Reisinger, 1994). The positioning of cultural tourism in 'serious leisure' proposed by Stebbins (1995) is an illustrative theoretical concept which integrates cultural aims and recreational motives of visitors who stop by cultural sites into a holistic view, convicting that the cultural displays in a particular geographical area can meet the demand of tourists for expressing hobbyist interests and deepening understanding of the associated knowledge.

Although with continuous confusions, debates and criticisms among different scholars focusing on the question of what definitely culture and cultural tourism mean, culture is widely regarded as a beneficial property, which acts as a fundamental resource driving economic revitalization and regional development (MacDonald and Jolliffe, 2003; Santagata, 2002; Hughes, 2002; Alzua *et al.*, 1998; Ray, 1998). Leisure related activities are increasingly commoditized, responding to the global expansion of consuming demands and service sectors (Bunten, 2008; Munar, 2007). An increasing number of national and regional institutions have exploited local historical and traditional culture as a unique selling point to establish specialized and competitive tourist market (Douglas *et al.*, 2001; Wirth and Freestone, 2003; Oakes, 2006). Under the untamed expansion of 'global culture' in the modern era, domestic history, traditions, arts and folk-customs are utilized as an instrument to create and maintain differentiation of the destination image and tourism products in against to homogeneity (Sofield and Li, 1998; Chang *et al.*, 1996). Culture is thus a basic resource, for mainly economic

purpose, to label and maintain difference, from which themes and narratives essential for place image creation processes are arising (Gottdiener, 1997, cited in Richards and Wilson, 2006, page 1209). Cultural forms such as heritage sites, museums, artistic performances and festivals have been shaped into symbolic attractions and aesthetic visiting routes of a region for drawing tourists (Hughes, 2002; Richards and Wilson, 2006). Places in the commoditization phase are branded and marketed as destinations, which are constructed or reformed into desirable products for tourists (Wirth and Freestone, 2003; Munar, 2007). The previous non-market term 'local culture' has been imposed with quantified and monetary value and become goods for tourist consumption with market prices (Bunten, 2008; Mbaiwa, 2011). Cultural products therefore can positively impact regional or national entrepreneurialism, being transformed from an ideological concept into an effective place-based economic growth machine (Oakes, 2006).

The impacts of cultural tourism seem laudable. With no exceptions from other leisure industries, the development of cultural tourism industry contributes to employment opportunity generation, investment attraction and further income achievements (Mbaiwa, 2011). Additionally, the role cultural tourism development plays on improving city image and citizens' well being has been praised by both academic researchers and social public groups over years (Oakes, 2006; Mbaiwa and Stronza, 2010). Furthermore, cultural tourism commodities can contribute to restoring history based traditional cultures that are in decline or become fragile when being struck by the expansion of global culture (Cohen, 1988; Medina, 2003). As explained by MacCannell (1976), cultural productions can serve as a function of sanctifying an original as a model being worthy of copy and inheritance. Within the process of tourist market expansion, the revival of cultural tradition and ethnic identity can be frequently stimulated. Distinctive material, historical and social meanings are possible to be discovered or attributed to a geographical place during the promotion of heritage sites, museums, cultural theme parks and a series of culture related activities (Cohen, 1988; Medina, 2003; Hoffstadter, 2008). However, it has to be admitted that under contemporary market oriented social climate, the idealized cultural promotion or revitalization are mostly or partly replaced by economic exchange and profit motives (Bunten, 2008).

When leisure elements are privileged rather than the original cultural ones in the cultural tourist sites to stimulate consumption, the driven forces lying behind tourist purchases on cultural products or cultural activities cannot be summarized as purely genuine interest in cultural traditions or histories. The aims and interests of the individuals or groups outside the host community for experiencing historical, artistic, or lifestyle offerings of a destination (Silberberg, 1995; Richards, 1996; Mckercher and

du Cros, 2003; Mckercher, 2002; Richards, 2007), are occasionally mixed with or even replaced by the request of possessing a mark of the chosen cultural site, or the demand simply for leisure with random choice on a destination (Kozak, 2002; Shepherd, 2002; Moura *et al.*, 2012). The following part begins with reviewing two major theoretical concepts, authenticity and place image, in association with cultural commodification and cultural tourism.

2.2. Cultural commodification and Authenticity

The relationship between cultural commodification and tourist authenticity has been debated among scholars over decades without a consistent statement. The authenticity theory is a primary principle that is most frequently applied to the studies of cultural and heritage tourism (Fischer, 1999, cited in Chhabra *et al.*, 2003, page 704). Initiated by MacCanell (1973), discussions and debates concentrating on sociocultural issues relating to authenticity in tourism have been continuing without termination from 1970s on (Cole, 2007). The arguments regarding the extent of originality in tourist demand, and the sociocultural factors that construct authentic experience can be found in multiple literatures (e.g. Selwyn, 1996; Getz, 1998; Wang, 1999; Meethan, 2005; Cole, 2007).

The destructing effects exerted by cultural commodification on authentic offers are generally admitted, with emphasis on the question of whether or not the traditional culture is exhibited and sold as genuine origin. MacCanell (1992) points out that commodification leads to the death of cultures and the destruction of authenticity. This statement is explained by Urry (1995), proposing that places are reconstructed and losing the original sociocultural structures for the purpose of meeting tourist requirements. Similarly, Cohen (2001) agrees that performances and arts are oriented towards outsiders during cultural commodification process. Mbaiwa (2011) echoed all the critical viewpoints, convicting that the original meaning of cultural products are destroyed when being commoditized, since they need to be transformed into accepted and enjoyable fake versions to look authentic. It can be thus summarized from an objective standpoint that when culture is packaged as commodity and sold to tourists, a loss of authenticity cannot be avoided although establishing more spectacular exotic attractions since the initial cultural forms need to be shifted to match tourist gaze (Kneafsey, 2001; Wirth and Freestone, 2003; Cole, 2007; Mbaiwa, 2011).

However, these academicians agree that the authentic experience in cultural tourist attractions is not simply based on the originality of the cultural production itself, but is also dependent on differentiated perceptions of tourists (MacCannell, 2001; Cohen, 1998). The acceptance and rejection of tourists towards 'staged authenticity' of tourist

sites differentiate between different social groups, owing to the diversity and complexity of tourist own knowledge and positionalities (Cohen, 1988, MacCannell, 1973). With concerns of such complicatedness, Wang (1999) has integrated the concept of authenticity closely with tourist experiences. In Wang's academic paper, the concept of authenticity is summarized into three types named 'objective authenticity', 'constructive authenticity' and 'existential authenticity' (page 352). The objective authenticity has a clear material criterion for judging the real and fake regarding to the authenticity of originals. The concept 'constructive authenticity' integrated by the theories proposed by Cohen (1988) and Silver (1993) emphasizes tourist points of view, beliefs and powers in constructing authentic experience rather than the inherent (in)-authentic nature of touristic sites. Under this sense of theory, subjective values, relevant knowledge base and pre-visit expectations of tourists towards a certain site all account for the construction of authenticity. The 'existential authenticity' is proposed by Wang (1999) as a distinctive type that the authentic tourism experience is not close to the toured objects but is provoked by tourist state of being and self-expression achieved in cultural related activities.

With these theories in mind, it can be inferred that authentic experience is possible to be possessed in the materially 'fake' tourist sites in accordance of tourist own perceptions. No definite conclusion exists regarding to the relationship between cultural commodification and authenticity erosion. The role of cultural theme parks, one of the main products of cultural tourism industry in strengthening roots of historical and traditional culture, still needs to be further discussed in different cases from different perspectives of tourist experiences.

2.3. Cultural Tourism and Place Image

A widely applied definition for place or tourist destination image was initiated by Crompton (1979), as 'the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has of a destination' (page 18, see also Jenkins, 1999, page 2; Echtner and Ritchie, 2003, page 41). Gunn (1988) illustrated seven phases of tourist experience as 'accumulation of mental images about vacation experiences', 'modification of those images by further information', 'decision to take a vacation trip', 'travel to the destination', 'participation at the destination', 'return home', 'modification of images based on vacation experiences' (see also Echtner and Ritchie, 2003, page 38). From this model, it can be found that place or destination image pervades tourist behaviors during the whole travelling experience, including destination decision-making before a trip, participation and consumption during the trip, and re-thinking of the place after the trip (Jenkins, 1999; Echtner and Ritchie, 2003; Haahti and Yavas, 2004).

The use of cultural commodities in tourism has been closely associated with destination image creation (Richards, 2002; Haahti and Yavas, 2004). The contents of heritage sites, museums, theme parks, festivals and performing arts, mostly for marketing-oriented purposes, are branded to produce unique and favorable destination image (Hughes and Allen, 2005). Encountering the perceived threat of homogeneity in tourism products, local culture is widely used as a strategy to formulate distinctive place image (Richards and Wilson, 2006). The imagery of each tourist towards a certain place is particular, as claimed by Echtner and Ritchie (2003), the destination image in the mind of a person is comprised of one's own memories, experiences and imaginations of the place. This research focuses on how the cultural theme park, as a kind of cultural tourism product can shape or reshape tourist imageries of the host destination.

Before further investigation of tourist theme park experiences in relation to authenticity and place image shaping, the next sections will give an overview of the global theme park industry and existing research focuses in Chinese tourism studies.

2.4. Global Theme Park Industry

With a theme running through all or most of the attractions, theme parks can provide tourists a unique, memorable experience in the themed environment that encompasses entertainment, history and unique culture in a leitmotif (Yeoh and Teo, 1996; Wong and Cheung, 1999). As defined by Mintel Market Research Reports (2006), theme park is an aggregation of themed attractions that can provide tourists with different and interesting experience (cited in Heo and Lee, 2009, page 447). The architecture, landscape, entertainment facilities, costumes of workers, food services and on-live shows in the park all reveal a theme, which is made to represent attractive images of a destination (Richards, 2002; Mintel Market Research Reports, 2006, cited in Heo and Lee, 2009, page 448). In the theme park, the abstract term 'customs', 'culture' and 'lifestyle' become visible and tangible entities on display available for tourists (Hofstadter, 2008).

North America has remained the status of global leader within theme park industry. Dominant theme parks such as Disneyland, Six Flags, Paramount Parks and Premier Parks have substantially influenced the establishment and operation of theme parks overseas throughout past and current decade (Milman, 2001). The first opening of Disneyland in California by the Walt Disney Company in 1955 can be regarded as a starting point of fast booming theme park industry (Gottdiener, 1982; Milman, 2001). Coming with Disneyland was the materialized concept of theme park as a supermarket of leisure productions, a place for consuming free time with a flat-rate price, and a combination of arts and spectacles with advanced technology and modern management

(Lanquar, 1991, cited in Clavé, 2007, page 1). In fact Disneyland is figured out as an ideal recreational theme park, and has been emulated and imitated on a worldwide scale by a quantity of agents and corporations in selling leisure and tourism related commodities and services (Clavé, 2007).

Asia has become a main market of the theme park development since 1990s (Robertson, 1993; cited in Clavé, 2007, page 72). Constructing a theme park has been recognized as a national or regional strategy to increase public awareness of a certain destination, by integrating exotic and elusive local context with leisure elements (Milman and Pizam, 2005). The development process of theme park industry in Asia is usually carried out based on the know-how of North American theme park formats and concepts (Kazdoy, 2005, cited in Clavé, 2007, page 76). A mixture of global and local culture is manifested in numerous cases; the theoretical concepts ‘global consumers’, ‘global-local nexus’, and ‘thinking globally and acting locally’ have attained strong focus in recent researches (e.g. Richards, 2002, the role of theme parks in marketing China overseas; Fung and Lee, 2009, localizing a global amusement park with case of Hong Kong Disneyland).

2.5. Tourism Studies In Chinese Context

Quantities of studies have emerged in China, in association with tourist expenditures, tourism policies and tourism marketing strategies in recent years (e.g. Oakes, 2006; Xiao, 2006; Sofield and Li, 1998). Specifically, rural tourism (typically Farmhouse joy ‘*Nongjiale*’) and heritage tourism (unique form communist heritage tourism or ‘red tourism’) have prevailed domestic research interests (e.g. He *et al.*, 2004, Nongjiale in Chengdu metropolitan area; Zhang *et al.*, 2013, Nongjiale leisure sports and rural development in China; Li and Hu, 2008, red tourism in China; Yan *et al.*, 2007, red tourism development in Hunan).

Theme park however, in comparison with these tourism aspects is not such a popular research target. Among the limited number of existing researches, most of the theme park studies are oriented by marketing and management objectives. For example, the benefits brought by high-tech experiential services, the measurements for promoting Chinese theme parks in global tourism market, and the survey results of tourist preferences are delineated to give suggestions for further operation strategies (e.g. Li *et al.*, 2005; Cheng *et al.*, 2013; Chen and Noci, 2014).

2.6. Tourist Theme Park Experience

2.6.1. Tourist Motivation

Tourist motivation is the main driving force of tourist behaviors. As stated by Parinello (1993), tourist motivation acts as a trigger that sets off all the events involved in travel (cited in Bakir and Baxter, 2011, page 408). On a marketing orientation, it was stated that understanding tourist motivation contributes to product development, image creation and service quality evaluation with the purpose of matching tourist demand (Fodness and Milner, 1992; Wong and Cheung, 1999). On a more theoretical aspect, the analysis of tourist motivation helps to identify types of visitors and thus to lay a knowledge base on tourist needs, wants and expectations (Dann, 1981; Fodness, 1994). As claimed by Witt and Wright (1992), the understanding of expected outcomes inferred in tourist motivation is closely guiding tourist selective performance and trip behavior characteristics (cited in Bakir and Baxter, 2011, page 409). With these statements in mind, this research regards tourist motivation as a prerequisite concept to analyze tourist experience in the theme park.

Over years, academic researchers and theme park marketers frequently adopt survey techniques to measure tourist experiences (e.g. Moutinho, 1988; Fodness and Milner, 1992; Park *et al.*, 2009). Emotional features of visitors such as pleasure and discomfort, excitement and fatigue, satisfaction and disconfirmation therefore can be evaluated on a relatively objective standpoint. However, the existing theme park experience studies have indicated specific concentration on phenomenon of tourist psychologies perspectives. In spite of different standpoints and research purposes, this section takes parts of the generalizable conclusions from previous literatures to frame a theoretical base for tourist motivation for consumption in the theme park.

A classic descriptive definition of tourist motivation is named ‘anomie’ which refers to the desire for escaping everyday inherent isolation, and ‘ego-enhancement’ which refers to the need for social recognition obtained through the status conferred by travel (Dann, 1977, cited in Fodness, 1994, page 557; Bakir and Baxter, 2011, Page 409). These two inherent ‘push motivators’ are echoed and categorized by Crompton (1979) into seven socio-psychological motives named relaxation, escape from a perceived mundane environment, exploration and evaluation of self, prestige, regression, enhancement of kinship relationships, facilitation of interaction, and two ‘alternate cultural’ motives named novelty and education (cited in Fodness, 1994, page 557; Bakir and Baxter, 2011, page 409). MacCannell (1973) linked authenticity and tourist motivation, suggesting that tourists travel for seeking authentic experiences, which they cannot experience in everyday life. Cohen (1979) responded to this view, proposing the reasons for travelling

as recreational, diversionary, experiential, experimental, and existential modes; and tourists who seek authentic lives of others through travelling belong to the experiential mode (cited in Waller and Lea, 1999, page 111).

Without exception from other forms of mass entertainment, leisure vacation seekers are proved enduringly as a large segment composing theme park visitors (McClung, 1991; Bakir and Baxter, 2011). Although being nominated as ‘lowest level’ of travelling need or simple ‘bodily relaxation’ demand by certain psychologists (e.g. Pearce, 1993; Fodness, 1994), the importance of physical facilities and service quality which serve for such motivator is emphasized by marketing-oriented scholars when analyzing the successfulness of a theme park (Wong and Cheung, 1999; Hickman and Mayer, 2003; Milman, 2009). According to the research done by Bakir and Baxter (2011) in Legoland Windsor Theme Park, ‘fun’ is the key motivator in visiting the theme park. It was indicated in this research that the perceived ‘fun’ of the theme park experience is influenced by recommendations from family and friends, brand trustworthiness, new and exciting programs offered such as annually special events, price discount, as well as level of interactivity (page 422).

On a current deeper sight, tourist needs and expectations under the post-Fordism stage have indicated increasing emphasis on the specialism, flexibility and alternative forms of tourism consumption instead of mass packaged holiday (Hjalager, 2007). Increasing visitors in modern society have showed interest and focus on particular subjects of a destination rather than conventional attractions such as sun and beach (Agarwal, 2005). The particularism of ‘theme’ is thus the central competence of a successful theme park to differentiate attractiveness from other tourist resorts (Wong and Cheung, 1999).

2.6.2. Authentic Experiences

Cultural theme park as a kind of cultural tourism commodity is bonded with the concept ‘staged authenticity’, which refers to the tourist-conceived authenticity on the in-fact inauthentic materials (MacCanell, 1973). People’s impression, enjoyment and judgment of authenticity vary based on their own perceptions, needs and demands (Moscardo and Pearce, 1986). The attractions within the theme park for those tourists who are engaged in the staged environment are not simple contemporaneous selling commodities, but are viewed as signifiers of history in past epochs, particular historically inherited culture, and local specific way of life (Zerubavel, 1995, cited in Chhabra, 2003, page 705). Such phenomenon is responsive to the concept ‘second gaze’ within tourist experience, as termed by MacCannell (2001), tourists who are capable of recognizing the inauthenticity of the touristic products still involve themselves in the gaze-shaped environments are mainly motivated by the desire to go beyond touristic

presentation and explore the connoted values indicated by the cultural themes. The 'fake' attractions exhibited in the cultural theme park are possible to create authentic tourist experience; at the simultaneous time the cultural theme park might also shape new imaginations and rethinking process of tourists towards the host destination.

2.6.3. Mindfulness and Imaginative Geographies

The term 'mindful people' is used to describe those individuals or groups who are sensitive to the context and actively process and question information in a setting from new perspectives (Moscardo, 1996). When visitors become mindful, they tend to show desire in learning more from their visit and discovering more about a topic or a place while enjoying their trip (Moscardo, 1996; Christie and Mason, 2003; Mason, 2005). The state of mind 'mindfulness' within tourists is mostly induced when tourists show a high level of interest and do not feel fatigue during the visit in the content area (Moscardo, 1996; Jamal, 2004). Under this context, those who are aware of the so-called authenticity staged for tourist consumption but still enjoy the more or less fake tourist experiences can be regarded as potential mindful tourists who would have intention to explore more on the nature and culture of the host region (MacCannell, 2001; Halewood and Hannam, 2001). The interpretation, interaction, novelty and quality of contents and services in the authentic offers provided for tourists, hence, act as pull factors provoking tourists' mindfulness when visiting the host destination (Moscardo, 1996; Halewood and Hannam, 2001).

In the cultural theme parks, unique national or regional culture and history, traditions and customs are compressed into a themed environment (Yeo and Teo, 1996; Richards, 2001; Hoffsteadter, 2008). In contemporary decade under the expansion of worldwide tourism development, cultural theme parks are mostly established as a promotion tool for unique place image making (Heo and Lee, 2009; Milman, 2001; Richards, 2001). The architecture, landscape, entertainment facilities, costumes of workers, food services and on-live shows in the park all reveal the theme which represents attractive images of a destination (Richards, 2002; Mintel Market Research Reports, 2006, cited in Heo and Lee, 2009, page 448).

Among mindful tourists, the image of a place would not be conjured randomly or stereotyped by the descriptive reputation; but instead, the 'imaginative geographies' is featured that visitors intend to think and affirm, rethink and reaffirm their gazed image from a deeper perspective based on the culture exhibited in the themed environment (Said, 1978, cited in Gregory, 1995, page 447). With reference to this linkage, the cultural theme park, as a resource for both social meaning and economic growth, plays a function of creating a specific theme for the destination to attract tourist attention

(Richards and Wilson, 2006; Wirth and Freestone, 2002).

2.7. Conceptual Framework

This section frames the piecing concepts of authenticity, place image and tourist experiences together to construct a whole theoretical mode of this research. Culter and Carmichael (2010) integrated the multi-phased, multi-influential and multi-outcome nature of tourist experience into a holistic model. The whole tourist experience from the planning to finishing was phased as anticipation, travel to site, on-site activity, return travel and recollection (Clawson and Knetsch, 1966, cited in Culter and Carmichael, page 6 and page 8). The influential factors and outcomes of tourist experiences were identified as personal realm (all the elements within individual including motivations/expectations, knowledge, memory, perception, self-identity) and influential realm (elements outside an individual impacting experience, including physical settings, spatial characteristics, geographical features, social settings, interactions, products and services) (Culter and Carmichael, page 10, page 11). Focusing on the research objectives and research questions proposed in the beginning, this thesis simplifies the experiences phases as pre-visit anticipation, on-site activities, and post-visit experiences. The analysis of the experiences serves for examining the role cultural theme park plays on projecting mindfulness of visitors for local culture. Within this process as shown in the figure 12, the concepts of authenticity and place image are involved in tourist experiences.

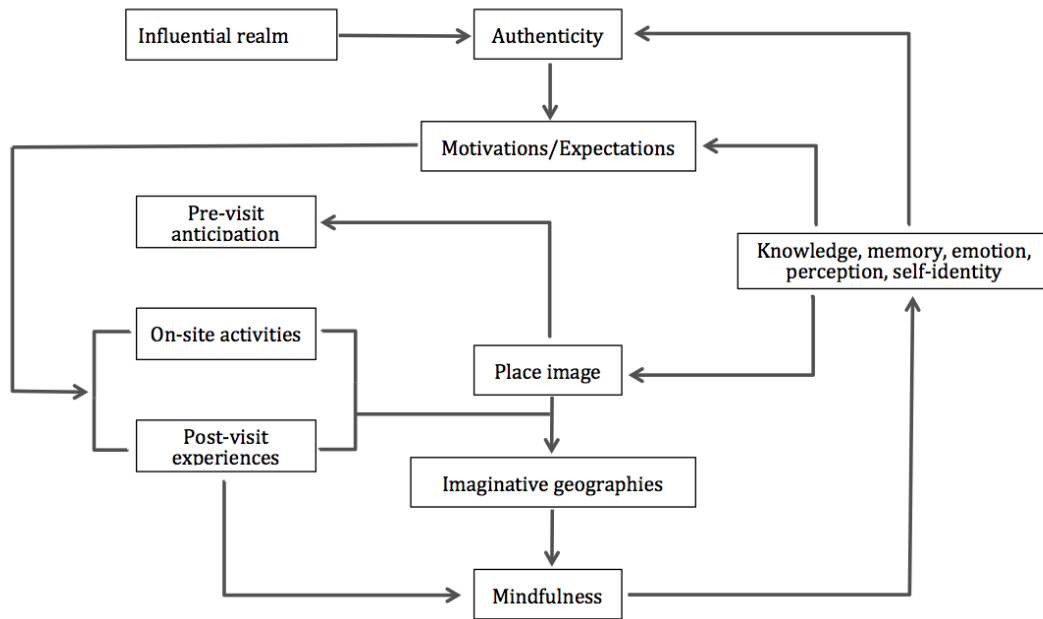


Figure 12. Conceptual Frameworks.

The perceptions of authenticity are socially constructed, being influenced by both personal realms (knowledge, memory, emotion, perception, self-identity) and influential realms (which refer to the reference groups and the attractions in QRLG in this case). The desire for authenticity is a factor that formulates tourist motivations and expectations, and different perspectives of authenticity are thus effective on participation and consumption in the theme park, as well as on post-visit senses and interpretations of the visiting experiences. Place image penetrates the whole visitor experience from pre-visit to post-visit. The place image of Kaifeng can be formulated and re-formulated to the tourists throughout the featuring of ‘imaginative geographies’ and mindfulness to explore Kaifeng.

3. Methodology

This thesis is worked out by applying qualitative research methods. Using the tourists as the main source of information, the research questions are answered based on the investigation of the visiting experiences and the underlying theoretical meanings behind the phenomena. I define my own role being a researcher as a social constructionist that I perceive human nature as socially constructed (Burr, 2003). Hence, my knowledge of this research is obtained from the in-depth analysis on how different thoughts have constructed differentiated experiences within the same theme park. Participant observations and narrative interviews are applied during the fieldwork. Data collected are used to explore visiting experiences associated with leisure, authenticity and

imaginative geographies in QRLG.

This methodology chapter is subdivided into five sections. The first section introduces social-constructionism as the philosophical guide of my research. Secondly, my positionality as a native Chinese researcher with western education background is described. This part serves to provide the readers understanding about the role I play and how my social background has influenced in the whole research. The methodology chapter then proceeds to introduce my research design, to give an overall demonstration of how participant observations and narrative interviews are structured during the fieldwork. The data collection section follows to show demographic characteristics of the chosen participants and the methods used to record information. The measurements of data analysis are illustrated in the fourth section.

3.1. Social Constructionism

This research is shaped based on the philosophy of social constructionism. Being a powerful force in social sciences, the social constructionists have challenged the feasibility of positivism or realism approaches about the objectiveness of reality and science (Burr, 1998; Halling and Lawrence, 1999; Nightingale and Cromby, 2002). ‘Every reality is equally real’, from a social constructionism perspective, no paramount truth exists to directly shape the knowledge of social reality (Mehan and Wood, 1993, cited in Halling and Lawrence, 1999, page 79). Instead, social world in accordance of social constructionism approach is understood based on the analysis of human actions and stories they tell about experiences (Hoffman, 1992, cited in Halling and Lawrence, 1999, page 80). ‘What exists is what we perceive to exist’, as explained by Burr (1995), the nature of the world does not have an exactly true definition, but can be revealed by subjective observations and assumptions on social practices and interactions of people.

I define myself in this research as a social constructionist that I assume tourist experiences as socially constructed. This is not a disembodied research. Theoretical concepts are understood from lived realities observed and interpreted. In this research, the phenomenon is theorized on basis of different tourist stories. Even though the touristic objects are pre-given and fixed in Qingming Riverside Landscape Garden, visitors do not share common interpretations of the theme park experiences owing to their differentiated social backgrounds and perspectives. When ‘globalization’ has permeated through China, analyses and predictions of national tourism development in the internationalized society are prevailing. However, I stick to the point that the realities are not universe or incontrovertible, nor can ‘globalization’ exert uniform effects to different destinations and different tourists. I hold the viewpoint that tourism phenomenon should be studied under different interactive contexts. From this

standpoint, visitors' own social backgrounds, their perceptions and thoughts determine how theme park experiences are constructed. I act as a full participant and a facilitator during the fieldwork. In so doing, information used for further analysis is gathered from different individuals through interactive contacts.

The researcher's subjective viewpoint is not excluded during the process of understanding different tourists' experiences and perspectives. Hence, this paper should be read with an awareness of the researcher's possible biases on the application of existing theoretical literatures and the presentation of the opinions of the researched visitors.

3.2. Positionality

As a Chinese student who has been educated under European curriculum during the past four years, I am curious about how European tourism theories can be used as reference to study Chinese tourist destinations which are less known to the globe. I found that theme parks are not much researched in China. Additionally, economic growth is tends to be a privileged and centralized leitmotiv in domestic tourism studies. Such knowledge gap has aroused my thesis idea of taking 'theme park' as the main focus to study tourism phenomena from a non-marketing perspective. Having experienced the extreme gap between Chinese and western education, I found myself reluctant to accept views and conclusions indicated in domestic researches as I overall perceive the authors overall as unqualified researchers. The theoretical base for this research is thus not easy to formulate, as limited associated domestic literatures can be used for reference.

Since I am not a local citizen of Kaifeng city and it is my first time there, my knowledge about local culture is superficial and somehow stereotyping. When referring to Kaifeng, the image of 'millennium city' and 'a city of poverty and crime' comes out simultaneously, while the latter image overweighs. Derived from my low expectation of the city as a tourist destination, I was much impressed by the 'well-being' of Qingming Riverside Landscape Garden beyond my imagination. Arising from my own perception and my research focus, the pitfalls of the theme park management and operation are neglected during the whole fieldwork.

Alike to most non-artist people, my knowledge of the painting scroll QMSHT is simply its renowned name and contents on surface. Also being a non-historian person, I do not own deep knowledge about ancient Kaifeng and North Song Dynasty. The basic information about the painting, the city and the theme park before the fieldwork is obtained from the introductions on Internet. Hence, I trust the interpretations of my

researched visitors without judging true or false. As a native Chinese speaker, I can easily understand the annotations of visitor behaviors during the participant observations and the visiting experience stories interpreted during the interviews. Besides, I can facilitate my research by encouraging the participants to tell more comprehensively about their stories without communication barriers.

3.3. Research Design

Before in-depth research, I spent two days walking around the theme park to lay a fundamental knowledge of the ‘place-making practices’ of the theme park (Pink, 2009, page 29). On the first day, I acted as a visitor myself with no difference from other tourists. I paid for a tour guide to instruct my visit in case that I missed important sites. On the second day, I acted as a spectator, holding a relatively objective view and observed visitors in general and workers in the theme park. In this round, I paid attention to the action performances one by one following the time schedule near the entrance. During the time gap between one action show and the next, I scanned visitors’ consumption on souvenirs, ancient costume renting and horse-ridden carriage. Additionally, I paid strong focus to the Rainbow Bridge across the Bian River, SunYangZheng Shop, and the City Gate Wall. These sites are attentively noticed for the reason that they are salient contents in *Qing Ming Shang He Tu*. I noticed that every action show is fully surrounded by audiences. Also, I saw people wearing ancient costumes or taking horse-ridden carriages passing by frequently. However, I rarely saw people stop more than one minute in my focused sites. Witnessing such phenomenon, I hypothesized that most visitors privilege leisure over culture during the visit in Qingming Riverside Landscape Garden.

This round of ethnographic research serves an instrument for me to obtain basic knowledge about the theme park, as well as primary forecasting about satisfaction and discomforts that might occur in the researched visitors. Consistent with the positionality described in last subchapter, I perceive that the ethnographic practices are played out diversely in accordance of individual backgrounds and experiences. Hence with an overall impression of the theme park experience, the ethnography is followed up with extended participant observation and narrative interviews. During the participant observation, the author followed the participants closely. The conversations, interactions and actions of the researched visitors in different sites and experiential programs are observed. The post-visit narrative interviews compensate the participatory fieldwork. The stories told by the respondents are used to explain interests, senses, and thoughts lying behind tourist on-site behaviors. With the aim of deeply investigating tourist feelings experiences, the author adopted a less structured interview technique so

that the interviewees were encouraged to tell their own stories in a comfortable atmosphere (Elliot, 2005). Instead of regarding the interviewees as ‘epistemologically passive’ or ‘mere vessels of answers’, I facilitated the participants to elaborate their own visiting experiences comprehensively in order to gather rich textual data from the participants (Elliot, 2005, page 22).

3.4. Data Collection

To ensure the trust and rapport, the participants were intentionally selected from the authors’ family and friends. In so doing, getting their permission to conduct participatory research becomes easier without unfamiliarity or discomfort. In accordance of the research request, 20 people from different social backgrounds are chosen as researched visitors. The researched individuals are between the ages of 21-79, with educational level from primary to master. Although not large in amount, a wide range of social backgrounds are involved in the researched people, including education, technology, agriculture, art, business, management, government (law, tax, police), and senior citizen. The demographic and individual characteristics of the researched visitors will also be discussed in later chapters. Ensuring the diversity, research questions can be answered under the context of multiple visiting experiences in the cultural theme park.

For the narrative interviews, the participants were firstly asked to comment on their experiences when visiting the theme park as a whole, including pre-visit expectation, on-site experience, and post-visit sense. The narrative interview stayed open in informal settings to give space for the interviewees’ interpretive subjectivities. Following the rules of implementing narrative interview, the interviewer did not give any directive episode after a “generative narrative question” (Riemann & Schütze 1987, p. 353, cited in Flick, 1997, page 16) once the narrative started. To aid documentation, notes were taken to collect useful information during the one-to-one interview, such as tourist motivation for participating in different experiential programs, their perspectives of the city image before and after visiting, their changes of interests on the culture represented in the theme park, as well as their intention of visiting other sites related with culture of Song Dynasty. Probes were used when the stories came to the end, in case if important materials relevant to the research questions were missing. The narratives were then transcribed and translated for demonstration and further analysis.

Table 1 Profile of Research Participants.

NO.	Gender	Age	Educational Degree (major area)	Occupation
A	Male	24	MSc (Agriculture)	Student
B	Male	22	Bachelor (Art Design)	Student
C	Female	49	Bachelor (Chinese education)	Teacher
D	Male	49	Bachelor (Politics and Law)	Policeman
E	Female	52	Senior High School	Retired tax officer
F	Female	79	Primary School	Retired Accountant
G	Female	46	Bachelor (Chinese education)	Teacher
H	Male	22	Bachelor (Technology)	Student
I	Female	32	Bachelor (Sectary)	Government Clerk
J	Female	29	Bachelor (Accounting)	Government Accountant
K	Female	31	MBA	PR Manager
L	Male	30	Associate (Law)	Policeman
M	Male	46	Bachelor (Economics)	Government
N	Male	54	Senior High School	Administrator Boss
O	Male	25	Junior High School	Self-employed
P	Female	49	Associate (Management)	Boss
Q	Female	25	Bachelor (Tourism Management)	Clerk
R	Female	25	Bachelor (Early Education)	Teacher
S	Male	30	Bachelor (Computer Science)	Policeman
T	Female	24	Senior High School	Self-employed

3.5. Data Analysis

After the data collection process, notes taken during the participant observations and narrative interviews were repeatedly read and analyzed. Sticking to the research questions that are already listed in the introduction chapter, the collected data are coded into segmented pieces. Thematic analysis, the most common approach to analysis of data in social sciences (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997, cited in Roulston, 2001, page 280) without articulating specific techniques (Boyatzis, 1998) was applied in this thesis for the reason that it provides an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysis of qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The narratives are finally categorized into three main themes: motivation, on-site experience and post-visit sensitivity of local culture.

4. Result Analysis

4.1. Motivation

Narrowly defined, cultural tourism takes place only among mindful tourists who travel with cultural motivations which refer to the desire for exploring and studying culture of a specific place or a historic period of time throughout visits to monuments, cultural events, museums, performing arts and heritage sites (Hughes, 1995; Richards and Wilson, 2006). As aforementioned in the previous chapters, perspectives and driven forces lying behind tourist participation and consumptions in cultural sites and products could not be arbitrarily summarized as interests to explore culture through travelling (Kozak, 2002).

In this case study, intrinsic motivation of researched tourists for participating in different experiential programs in the theme park has been investigated throughout participatory research, since motives which trigger tourists in purchasing and negotiating cultural products are closely related to actualization of cultural tourism aims. In the activities incorporated by cultural tourism, tourists in fact hold a multitude of motivations, in which leisure seeking and personal development are not excluded from cultural interests. The one-to-one in-depth interviews conducted with the 20 participants have revealed that key motivators of the researched people for participating in different experiential programs are revolved around culture, leisure and personal knowledge development throughout visiting. Specifically, *QMSHT*, from which the theme park is established, has become an important factor that triggered tourist interests in the materialized culture demonstrated in the theme park. However another kind of

tourist motivation was also found that the emphasized cultural aim in theoretical cultural tourism is excluded or mostly replaced by the desire for possessing a mark or a simple travelling story of the destination.

4.1.1. 'I participated in, because it looks and sounds interesting'

Leisure cannot be eliminated in tourist motives, in whatever forms of tourism activities. When being asked about the reason of participation and consumption in the chosen experiential programs, all the 20 interviewees mentioned the word 'interesting' frequently. The participants concisely referred to their expectations for pleasure and entertainment, and their answers about 'fun' are sub coded as 'new experience' and 'reference facilitator'.

"This time taking a horse-ridden carriage was my first try, as I was already there, I want to maximize my new experience since travelling is always a luxurious joy for me because of my working time...would never have such opportunity in central city roads, at least I could not take a horse carriage on every day way to my office, or on duty."



Figure 13. Horse-ridden Carriage Service in QRLG.

These words come from Participant D, a police officer who worked for national military

in early years and has been on his current position for over twenty years. Similar views has also been mentioned by another two researched visitors,

"Renting ancient apparel I know is something mostly for younger people, but initially I just thought it was my time to escape from account book, I wanted to do something fun as much as possible..." (Participant E);

"I had never watched a 3D movie before, I always thought it must be interesting...I've been busy with my work in my whole life...I treasure every time I can try something new to me..." (Participant P);

The descriptive words illustrated above have proved that the attractions in QRLG can meet the demand of tourists for experiencing diversity, seeing something new and

exciting, or doing something fun to escape mundane tasks in their daily routine. The eagerness for a memorable recreational experience and escaping from daily duplicated work has acted as an inner facilitator that stimulates tourist consumptions on different commodities and participations in various programs. Even though in the specific cultural theme park, the original tourist pursues for leisure and entertainment cannot be eliminated from tourist motivations of consumption and participation.



Figure 14. Ancient Apparel Renting

Besides the inherent desire for leisure and recreation, the imaginative term called ‘interesting’, which motivates participation and consumption, is also derived from pre-knowledge of visitors on the specific theme, as well as on-site promotion and reference groups.

“...The performances were strongly recommended to me by local people...my family, my friends who have been to the park all speak highly of the performances...I don’t have deep knowledge...I was not interested in the painting scroll or cultural stuff...I thought the performances could make my visit out of boringness...” (Participant A)

“I saw crowded people rushing to ‘Landlord Wang’s home’, I thought the program must contain lots of fun...I’m still single, experiencing an ancient wedding sounds attractive to me...when I saw the interactive program on the tourist brochure, I laughed...” (Participant B)

“...Yue Fei has been my idol since my childhood...the horsemanship Yue Fei Poking Chai Gui with Spear was strongly recommended in the tourist brochure...I thought such on-live action show must be interesting...” (Participant F)

“The large-scale action performance on water at night occupies strongest

recommendation and promotion in local advertisements...the advertisements aroused my initial interest on impressive words of Song Poetry, which I was indulged in when I was young...how could that be such interesting...” (Participant M)

These exemplified narratives have showed the essence of euphoric elements for constructing tourist motivation for participating and consuming different programs in the theme park. The reference groups, including the promotional advertisements, recommendation from family and friends, as well as the on-site information annotated by other tourists have acted as pull factors that shaped the tourist imaginations of interesting elements contained in the cultural theme park.

4.1.2. ‘I want to be involved to experience local tales’

As a millennium city, Kaifeng encompasses abundant ancient handicrafts and historic folk-custom culture. Besides, as the ancient capital city of Chinese North Song Dynasty, the local tales have been rooted into people’s mind. On basis of the contents of QMSHT, QRLG has reproduced prosperous ancient Kaifeng into a themed environment. Modern elements are combined with explored and rescued local ancient arts in the theme park. Under such fundamental situation, the motivation of better understanding local contexts throughout experiential programs in the theme park has been along with the tourists before and during the visit.

‘As soon as I hear of the name ‘Kaifeng’, the first thing came to me was Bao Qing Tian in Kaifeng. I heard, read and watched stories about Bao Gong in many versions...I was impressed in every version. Then of course I don’t want to miss the performance about Bao Gong in the morning although I hate to wake up in the early morning...I also wouldn’t allow myself to miss Spitting Fire Show, Hard Qi Gong, and the Stilt Performance...I was keen on Kung Fu movies and TV dramas when I was a child, those heroes in my mind are from Song Dynasty...those stories showed constructed all my imagination about ancient Chinese history, I thought Kaifeng people must own unbelievable skills...I want to see how such skills are truly like...” (Participant H)

It can be found in the description from Participant H that the legendary stories of the swordsmen broadcasted on media have constructed his historic knowledge and imaginations of Kaifeng city. As a student studying technology, he has limited time and resource to investigate historical events and geographical information of Kaifeng during regular time on campus. However, the city name ‘Kaifeng’ associated with North Song Dynasty has made him recall his memories of the stories about his adored heroes in his childhood. Such memories have motivated him to see and experience how the extraordinary abilities delineated in the legends are truly performed by the actors in the theme park.



Figure 15. Stilt Performance.



Figure 16. Hard Qi Gong Performance in front of Sun Yang Zheng Shop.



Figure 17. Bao Gong on Bian River.

'...My knowledge about Kaifeng is mostly built upon contemporary news and descriptions from other people...my imagination was shaped mostly by negative reports...like other central Chinese cities, Kaifeng was said to be poor, people less educated...I knew nothing about Kaifeng myself, both about the city in ancient time and modern stage...coming first is more like that I want to see how Kaifeng and Kaifeng citizens are truly like instead of how it is like in stereotypes...I want to evaluate and describe the city using my own experience of local geographies...' (Participant K)

Living under high pace of modern life and overweighed working load in Beijing, Participant K has less than a little time to read novels or watch films. Most of her knowledge comes from daily news and paraphrases from people around her. Kaifeng as a less developed city in China in her imagination is undeniably ripe with poverty, less educated people and occasionally crime. In fact, the historic elements have been or mostly forgotten among people outside the city. The negative information about Kaifeng has conflicted with the attractive promotion of the tourist sites, including Qingming Riverside Landscape Garden. Hence, Participant K was motivated by her inner desire to experience the real Kaifeng, both ancient and modern throughout the visit to the theme park. In so doing, her evaluation of the city is shaped by the lived experience, instead of stereotypes.

'...All the workers in the park wear suits in North Song style...the architectures in the park reproduced ancient Bianjing...I took the horse-ridden carriage...I rented suits in Song Dynasty style...I sat in Sun Yang Zheng Shop... I thought I could have an authentic ancient Chinese experience...' (Participant Q)

In response to the promotional theme 'Once You Appreciate the Painting, You can Dream about Scene before 1000 Years', obtaining an authentic experience of ancient China also acts as a key motivator for tourists in different experiential programs. As a completely artificial tourist site, the objective authenticity cannot be achieved. However, tourists still expect an authentic feeling throughout self-experience. Another similar example of motivation is from Participant C,

'...I was interested in how Song Poetries are acted in live-action show...the poetries were created in different era of North Song dynasty...the large scale performance based on those poetries must provide me a vivid visual experience of different periods of North Song Dynasty...'

Viewing the narratives illustrated above, it can be found that immersing in local contexts acts as an important facilitator for visitors to participate in or consume experiential programs in the cultural theme park. Consistent with literature already reviewed in early chapter, authenticity and imaginative place image are closely

associated with cultural themes. Although in the cultural theme park filled with completely contrived attractions, tourists have shown expectation for authentic Kaifeng culture activated by state of being involved throughout various culture-related activities. The researched visitors in the participatory fieldwork have shown a desire for seeing a real Kaifeng, and comparing the real sites with their initial imaginations before visiting. In their mind, QRLG should be a theme park presenting multitudinous culture of Kaifeng city, hence the visit would be an opportunity for them to understand local context of Kaifeng, both in history and in contemporary age.

4.1.3. ‘I want to obtain more knowledge’

As a theme park representing diachronic cultures which might not been aware of by tourists before visit, the opportunity to learn knowledge and enrich self also served as a prompting factor which motivates participation and consumption on different experiential programs.

“...The 3D movies and the large-scale action performance would help me root knowledge of ancient Chinese history...I should enrich myself to teach more fruitful knowledge to the children...” (Participant R)

“...All the ancient style architectures, the on-live action shows, the performance on water are standing for different stories of North Song Dynasty...I can have a better understanding about those stories throughout this visit...the stories can enrich my class when I need to teach something relevant...”(Participant E)

Working as teachers, Participant R and Participant E treasured the visiting experience as a suitable platform to replenish knowledge about North Song Dynasty. In their daily working, self is continually performed at the meantime with benefitting students by teaching. It can be found in their motivation that they expected this trip as an opportunity to obtain new stories to share with fellow students, associated with both knowledge compensated during the trip and self-accomplishment of learning while travelling.

4.1.4. ‘I went there, because it is there’

Reviewing the notes taken down during the one-to-one interviews, another kind of tourist motivation, in which neither culture nor leisure stands out can be concluded.

‘...don’t have concrete expectation...nothing concrete attracted me...I want to participate in every program available in the park, as I am already here, and I already paid for the trip...photos taken in different sites can be showed to others, I also wanted to buy souvenirs, on proof I’ve been here...’ (Participant O)

Attractions in QRLG or Kaifeng City for Participant O from his descriptive words did not show significance from other tourist destination. His motivation was ‘to travel’, despite the specific meanings of different tourist routines. His participation and consumption were motivated by the desire to possess a mark, which refers to the aim to own an individual travelling story for expression.

4.1.5. ‘I am impressed by the painting scroll.’

The spectacular painting scroll QMSHT, on which the establishment of the theme park was based, were referred to with low frequency in the narrative interviews compared with leisure and local tales. Participant B mentioned the painting in the beginning of his narratives,

“The painting QingMingShangHeTu is the outstanding...painting, always referred to in my text book...I’m still not quite familiar with the painting, as understanding of the quintessence cannot be simply derived from the recited notes for exam...hope experiential programs can provide me a dynamic experience of the painting...”

Another example is taken from Participant E,

“...I wanted to embroider QingMingShangHeTu...too complex...I hope the visit can provide me new inspiration...”

QMSHT although as the most splendid painting scroll in Chinese art history, the inner contents and aesthetic values have not been deepened into people’s mind. Participant B as an artist and Participant E who is interested in embroidery showed their motivation inspired by the painting, and it can be found in their narratives that the inspiration of painting scroll is not excluded from tourist expectation for leisure, culture and self-development. Visiting a particular geographical area, the cultural theme park QRLG, was expected to act as an instrument for tourists who own profound skill, knowledge, or amateur interest relevant with QMSHT, like Participant B and Participant E in this research, to express their art-related knowledge or hobby, so as to upgrade their major or hobby required knowledge and skills to a more advanced level.

Values demonstrated in such tourist motivations, nevertheless, borrowing words from Gray and Cambell (2007), ‘represents only one half of the story’ of tourist experiences (page 464). The achievement of cultural aim, which is emphasized in classic cultural tourism theories, should be also evaluated tourist on-site and post-visit performance. In the following sections, I will illustrate the results of on-site experiences and post-visit sense of researched visitors.

4.2. On-Site Experiences

Cultural tourism incorporates a range of activities, which involve special interests of tourists, whether aesthetic, intellectual or psychological, on searching for new and deep cultural experiences (Reinsinger, 1994; Stebbins, 1996; Hughes, 2002). As already illustrated in last section, the inherent cultural interests of tourists can serve as a motivating factor that stimulates participation and consumption in the cultural theme park. On vice versa, cultural interest on a certain place is also possible to be set up by on-site experiences of tourists in the theme park. As reviewed in previous chapters, tourists are more possible to be induced mindful, which refers to the intention to investigate deeper on the culture of Kaifeng in this research, when they feel joyful in the cultural themes (Moscardo, 1996; Jamal, 2004). Hence, the behaviors observed during the visit, as well as the interpretation of the on-site experiences need to be assessed before further analysis about the relationship between cultural themes and tourist experiences of local culture in this case study.

Charging a relatively high price of entrance fee and extra payment for 3D movies, food and beverages, suits renting, horse-ridden carriage, and the large-scale action performance on water at night, visitors hold significant expectation for a new, joyful and memorable experience. The notes taken during the participant observation and the narrative interviews are coded into entertainment, authenticity of local tales and knowledge development. In this section, the author will illustrate typical examples of the translated narrative experiences. Tourist satisfaction and disappointments on different sites and programs will be indicated below for evaluating the relationship between the feelings derived from cultural themes and post-visit mindfulness. Different intrinsic motivations listed above have resulted in multitude of on-site interactions and actions. Besides, tourist negotiations about entertainment and authenticity are closely related to the service and performance quality of workers in the theme park. Meanwhile, occasionally tourist satisfaction is associated with the level of advanced knowledge or skills obtained from the visit.

4.2.1. Entertainment

Tourist physical desires such as relaxation, rest, and psychological demand of pleasure and escaping from mundane environment have acted as push factors, which motivate participation and consumption of tourism activities (Crompton, 1979, cited in Brown, 2005, page 482). When interpreting visiting experiences in the theme park, the evaluation about entertaining elements is included in the narratives of all the twenty researched participants. It can be found that the service quality and the euphoric contents contained in the action performances have influenced the perceived leisure

experiences quality of visitors.

For example Participant D, he smiled during the trip on horse-ridden carriage, looked joyful in the service. When he saw a sheep-ridden carriage with a monkey sitting on the sheep, he laughed and paid for that kind of carriage after the first round of visiting reached the end.

“...The driver of the carriage was enthusiastic and skilled in guiding the tour...I felt happy about my consumption, as I escaped my mundane work, and experienced things look funny...”

During the participatory research following Participant D, he was observed to be lack of interests on investigating cultural elements. In the narrative interview after visiting, pleasure was repeatedly mentioned in his description about the theme park. He was pushed by his inner desire for trying something new and doing something fun, and the attractiveness of the theme park for him was based on his feeling of pleasure.

“I expected more if the performance programs can be more interactive, I would be more satisfied if some exciting games can be involved in the programs in the theme park...the self-paid boat trip, shooting and ancient football are also provided in the parks in my hometown, and nothing new to me...”

It can be found that satisfaction of leisure for Participant D is closely related with his intrinsic desire of searching for difference from daily life.

Participant A for another instance,

“...Unlike the cultural sites in my imagination, the visit was interlaced by amazement and vitality...I did not expect the performance programs to be that awesome, although I heard of some recommendation before the entrance...especially the horsemanship action show Yue Fei Poking Chai Gui with Spear was amazing...the on-live action shows brought a lot of fun to me during the trip...The sugar figure making, monkey playing and flour figure making look interesting, and I can't see them in normal days...”

Participant A as a master student studying agriculture, his education as well as his interests is far from culture and history. However as a person who is interested in watching shows of unique skills, he chased the action performances one by one according to the time schedule. He appraised the skills of the performance shows, as the programs refreshed his understanding about folk unique skills. It needs to be mentioned here, travelling is not among the hobbies of Participant A, hence the folk-custom culture related commodities even though can be found in other tourist sites for him are mostly in his first sight. He bought an embroidered QMSHT and a flour figure-making product as souvenirs to honor this visit. His consumption, borrowing his own

words, *'was prompted by the amazing and interesting action shows'*.

However on the contrary from Participant A, Participant F held different viewpoints towards the same programs,

"...The horsemanship action show Yue Fei Peking Chai Gui was expected most...but I felt it was just a normal horsemanship show without surprise, and the story was monotonous, not that interesting as I know in previous years...and the folk-custom shows like flour figure making, sugar painting, cockfighting are not new to me as relatives in my big family showed them to me when I was young, better than what are showed here..."

As a senior citizen in the age of 79, Participant F is more familiar with traditional Chinese folk-custom compared with other researched participants on basis of the environment in which she grew up in the era when 'global culture' and 'McDonaldization' have not expanded. Derived from such social background, the artificial ancient architecture and commoditized traditional folk-custom culture on display cannot arouse her passion. She kept commenting on the show as 'nothing special', 'nothing surprised', 'nothing new', and 'nothing interesting'.

Her satisfaction about the visit was based on her experience of service quality in the theme park,

"...The workers in the theme park are well-trained...the facilities are well established...and I can enter the park for free...I'm satisfied with the service quality in the theme park, but the contents are not interesting enough to attract me in fact..."

Although with familiarity, Participant F has not got the opportunity to investigate deeply about history, Song Poems or the painting scroll QMSHT within her educational background and her interest. Under this situation, she was travelling without strong intrinsic desire to see materialized elements showed on the painting. Also without freshment on the legendary tales and folk-custom cultures, the performance shows cannot provide her a unique experience in her perspective.

It can be concluded from the participant observation and narrative interview that the service quality has played an essential role in constructing the state of pleasure for tourists. Personal interests and social background affect the sense of entertainment in the theme park in different experiential programs. The expected term 'interesting' revealed in tourist motivation can be achieved when visitors obtain a pleasantly surprised experience. The quality of entertaining experience is socially constructed, mainly based on tourists' experienced new stuff, which has rarely tried in their normal daily life.

4.2.2. Authenticity of local tales

Tourist experience is socially constructed; hence the authentic experience cannot be judged on an objective view. In this case, the authenticity of originals cannot be achieved, as the theme park is completely artificial. With reference to ‘staged authenticity’ proposed by MacCannell (1973), the inherently inauthentic tourist sites in the cultural theme park appear to be authentic owing to tourist points of view, knowledge and perspectives. Hence, the interpretations about authenticity differ from one to each other during the visit in the cultural theme park.

Take Participant C for instance. During the visit in the daytime, Participant C kept comparing the sites and short-time action performances in Qingming Riverside Landscape Garden with attractions in Song Cheng (another theme park delineating Song culture locates in southern China). She showed dissatisfaction about the experiential programs, comments like *“boring here, far away from good quality compared with what I experienced in Song Cheng...I could not feel any ancient atmosphere here with man-made attractions”* went through the whole daytime visit. However, her attitude changed after she watched the large-scale action performance on water named ‘The Great Song Dynasty-Reminiscences of the Eastern Capital’.

“Prosperous Bianjing relived on water...history of North Song Dynasty was lively reproduced with reference to Song Poetries, the utilization of lights and action performances was amazing...My imagination went back to a thousand years ago...I felt I was a part of North Song Dynasty under the lights, dances and songs, and when the light-made time tunnel appeared I had a true feeling that I’m a person who witnessed prosperousness and depression of millennium Kaifeng...”

Unlike Participant C, Participant H showed satisfaction all way through,

“The performance of Bao Gong reminded me of being in Kaifeng...The unique skills showed in the action performances made my imagination about heroic Kaifeng people in legendary tales concrete...The large-scale action performance on water at night constructed my imagination as being in North Song Dynasty, with combination of what I watched or read about that period of history and stories in my childhood...Especially in the ManJiangHong part, my heart was burning when the palace was burned on show...”

With different social status, knowledge, previous travelling experience and interests, Participant C and Participant H hold different viewpoints towards short-time action shows during daytime. Without inherited originals, authentic experience in the artificial cultural theme park is constructed based on tourist own perspectives and previous knowledge about the culture and history. It can be observed here that the educational

background played as a significant factor here. Participant C with background of Chinese has stood on a stricter point on accurate history and folk-customs showed in the theme park, in comparison with Participant H who majors in technology and Kung Fu stories as hobbyist interest. Derived from such difference, the feelings of authenticity level differ from each other. Participant H shows more enjoyment in the artificial attractions, although being aware of the fakeness of the toured objects. Nevertheless despite the different viewpoints showed in the daytime performance programs, the large-scale performance show at night has created ‘staged authenticity’ for both Participant C and Participant H. Their initial understandings of Song Poetries and stories of North Song Dynasty are combined with the on-live performance, and such combination has constructed their feelings as if they passed through the whole North Song Dynasty.

Participant B although with different interests from Participant H yet was also satisfied with constructed authenticity during the trip,

“The architectures are established based on the painting in North Song Dynasty...the Palace Garden looks grand...the ancient life appliances although man-made, the family implements like loom, water wheel, mill also made me feel comfortable...The workers dressed up in ancient suits, they made the shops look antique...the theme park is filled with aesthetic elements, I feel like walking in an ancient picture, a picture what I have seen in the book or on media...”

With strong concentration on aesthetic values of the theme park, Participant B showed passion on assessing and learning from the architecture style. Although being aware that all the elements in the theme park are man-made, he still enjoyed the ‘fakes’ and regarded his trip as an authentic ancient experience. As an artist who was motivated by the painting scroll, he kept referring to the elements in QMSHT during the visit. For example, when he reached the Rainbow Bridge, he imitated the actions of saving the boat drawn in the painting. *“I’m a part of the painting and ancient life here in the elegant scenery”*, the contrived scenes have met his aesthetic demand and are perceived to be authentic presentation of ancient Kaifeng.

However Participant K who was also travelling with motivation to see what Kaifeng is truly like in history and modern era showed an opposite view,

“All the sites are man-made, I know they are fake, I can’t obtain a real understanding about what Kaifeng is truly like...”

Without knowledge and interest basis about both ancient and modern Kaifeng, the artificial cultural theme park failed to construct an authentic feeling for Participant K. The four different narratives have proved that the pre-knowledge, educational

background, living style in normal days and interests have influenced tourists' interpretations of authenticity.

Another kind of authentic feeling described by the researched visitors appeared to be achieved by a state of being involved in tourist activities. This kind of authentic experience, which is named as 'existential authenticity' by Wang (1999), is evaluated based on personal feelings in different experiential programs by tourists themselves.

Participant Q for example,

"I'm a girl from thousand years ago", she was excited when she put on the suits in North Song style during the trip. When she asked other tourists passing by to help her take photos, she kept changing poses in accordance of what she knew and imagined about actions in ancient China. *"Just leave it, boring standing here among the crowded people...Why they don't carry out more programs in which I could be fully involved..."*When she watched the short-time performances, she showed fatigue when she just stood or sat still on distance from the actors. *"Why the so-called Sun Yang Zheng Shop just sells instant noodles with such high price...it was painted in Qing Ming Shang He Tu as a place making and selling wine...it was promoted in the tourist brochure as a high quality restaurant to taste Kaifeng food..."*She kept complaining about the service provided in Sun Yang Zheng Shop, one of the materialized parts of QMSHT because of the gap between the reality and her expected atmosphere in which she could imagine about ancient Bianjing.

Her narratives also included the observed satisfaction and discomforts,

"...I'm really satisfied with the service of suits renting...when I walked around dressing up like that, I felt like I'm a part of QingMingShangHeTu...The service in Sun Yang Zheng Shop disappointed me in fact, they just sold instant noodles and normal beverage with high price...I expected I could have a taste of local wine and particular food...I expected the performances to be more interactive...if more opportunities available for me to be fully involved in the performances, if I could act not just as a motionless audience..."

The words during the visit and the narratives during the in-depth interview about satisfaction and disappointments were enclosed around 'imaginative North Song Dynasty' and 'involvement'. During the participatory research, her strong eagerness for full involvement in the experiential programs was observed. Knowledge Development Knowledge and skills obtained or deepened are enduring benefits for visitors provided by the visit to the theme park. However, only one researched visitor referred to such accomplishment of knowledge development:

“...I came to understand that QingMingShangHeTu is a magnificent painting depicting the whole scene of Bianjing, not just palace life in my previous knowledge...the large-scale action performance on water set up my knowledge of Song Poetries...” (Participant E)

Although with initial motivation as searching for entertainment to escape from daily mundane tasks, participation and consumption of Participant E were also driven by her interest in embroidery. She bought an embroidered QMSHT in the souvenir shop,

“BianXiu is an amazing traditional product; I can learn from this product to improve my embroidery skills...my embroideries will look nicer as gifts...” (Participant E)

It can be seen that the themed attractions in QRLG has offered Participant E new refreshing knowledge about QMSHT and inspiration for embroidering QMSHT after this trip.

4.3. Post-visit Intention for Local Culture

In this case the author observed that more than one visitor tends to become a ‘purposeful cultural tourist’ to explore more about culture in Kaifeng (Mckercher and du Cros, 2002). This group of researched visitors appears to be more highly educated compared with the others in this case. Even though educated from different backgrounds, these visitors were motivated by the artificial displays in the cultural theme park, in reference to MacCannell (2001), to ‘go beyond touristic representation’, which in this research means the desire to investigate thoroughly in the local culture involved within the cultural theme.

“...I bought an enshrined version of QingMingShangHeTu, I want to study about the painting scroll carefully, and compare it with the photos I took for the architectures in the theme park...I will also review the Song Poetries, they are more attractive to me after watching the action performance on water...” (Participant C)

“I want to visit other cultural sites in Kaifeng city. The millennium city must contain abundant cultural elements that I never knew before. I want to explore Kaifeng for another few days, to experience how ancient Bianjing has been changed over years.” (Participant G)

“My interest on QingMingShangHeTu is strengthened after the visit, I came to understand it is a lively picture instead of boring notes I recited from the text book. The painting is always displayed partly in the text book or in public place, I bought a painting scroll myself, and I will study about it carefully, about the painting skills, about its aesthetic mystery, as well as the life in North Song Dynasty it presented.”

(Participant B)

“I feel a bit regretful that I did not read some relevant materials about North Song Dynasty. Growing up in the city not far from Kaifeng, all my impression about the city is its poverty and less educated people...Now my attitude of Kaifeng, and other cultural sites changed, Kaifeng must be a destination worth exploring...The performances showed in the theme park were interesting, I believe I could have a deeper understanding about the inner meanings if I own more knowledge...I will watch some typical movies and read some history books, about Bao Gong, about Yue Fei, about prosperity and declination of North Song Dynasty, and probably revisit Kaifeng again in near future...” (Participant A)

“A pity for me was I could not have a taste of local food in the Dongjing Night Market as the food street is now in fitment...Sun Yang Zheng Shop disappointed me...But I experienced ancient Kaifeng in the park, dressing in ancient style suit, sitting in the horse-ridden carriage...I will spend more time in Kaifeng, to taste local food and experience real modern Kaifeng City. I also want to visit other cultural sites in the city, and go to local shops to experience normal life of local residents. I believe my understanding about this millennium city will be deepened by pretending a local citizen.”(Participant Q)

“I want to visit memorial temple of Bao Gong and Ancient Kaifeng Government...The performance of acted Bao Gong reminded me of being in Kaifeng, then I must go to see the real site which presents the stories I’m most familiar with.” (Participant H)

Reviewing the transcribed narratives, it can be found that the themed attractions in QRLG have facilitated tourists’ further exploration and consumption in Kaifeng by shaping tourist imagination about ancient prosperous Bianjing. Tourist motivation derived from differentiated social status and educational background has influenced the choice of participation and consumption of the experiential programs in the theme park. In most occasions, post-visit intention of tourists for investigating the city is driven by the intrinsic desire to fill in the gap of specialized knowledge found during on-site visiting.

However looking to the interpreted story of Participant A, who was travelling with simple motivation for leisure and pleasure, was also prompted by the on-site cultural displays to deepen the knowledge of Kaifeng and North Song Dynasty. Such context has coincides with the discourse by Moscardo (1996) that euphoric elements can stimulate the mindfulness of visitors. For Participant A, who is relatively barren of theme related knowledge, his mindfulness, which refers to the cultural awareness and interests, have been aroused by the pleasant trip from his perspective.

Nevertheless, the artificial cultural theme park has limitation in constructing place image and cultural interests to visitors. For instance Participant K who is also with relatively high education yet felt the visiting experience boring, showed indifference to travelling around the city. Observing this, it can be concluded that the pleasant feeling of the visit is bonded with personal inherent interest. The term ‘interesting’ which serves as a potential driven force for further consumption and exploration towards a certain place cannot be excluded from the socially and personally constructed tourist gaze.

Also regarding visitors like Participant O, the experience finished when the visit reached the end. For this kind of visitor, the form of the tourist site does not matter in his experience. With the motivation of possessing a mark or simply a travelling story, cultural elements and aesthetic values are much less concentrated in comparison of the purposeful cultural tourists.

5. Discussion

5.1. Cultural commodification and Authenticity

As already summarized from previous academic works in the literature review chapter, the process of cultural commodification derived from tourism development is reasonable to be assumed as a factor which results in the loss of cultural originality (MacCannell, 1992; Urry, 1995; Cohen, 2001; Mbaiwa, 2001). In this case, the visiting experience of Participant F, the senior citizen has proved the destruction of authenticity derived from the commoditized folk-custom culture. The transcription has indicated that when tradition and folk-custom related forms of culture has been reconstructed to match tourist requirements for leisure and enjoyment, the reformed culture has more or less deviated from the initial meaning.

In response to the ‘staged authenticity’ theory drawn from MacCannell (1973), the visit in the absolutely man-made touristic objects and performances in this researched theme park are possible to be perceived as an authentic ancient cultural experience in accordance of tourist subjective viewpoints. Comparing the researched visitors in this case, it can be observed that visitors whose relevant knowledge base about North Song Dynasty and Kaifeng folk-custom culture is mostly founded up from stories or legendary tales embodied in literary novels and on media tend to perceive the experience in the artificial theme park as authentic more than those who possess knowledge from previous self-experience on the reals or literatures which rigorously and accurately demonstrate historical events. Such observed phenomenon is not difficult to explain with application of ‘staged authenticity theory’. As the level of

inherent knowledge possessed by the visitors can lead to diverse perspectives on the same certain place, the ways in which the knowledge is constructed can act as an underlying factor which results in the differentiations. Visitors who are more familiar with ancient history or traditional culture from an objective standing point tend to request more on objective authenticity and demonstration of culture through real heritage, in comparison with those whose knowledge of relevant culture is rooted with more romantic and legendary elements. Observed from Participant H in this case, the commoditized culture, which refers to the toured performances embodied in the theme park, has been perceived as authentic in response to his imagination derived from tales read and watched in his childhood. However the same programs cannot attract Participant C, as she possesses strong request for heritage displayed culture and critical viewpoints on the man-made cultural tourist attractions. Nevertheless, legends and real history does not appear to be two opposite concepts. Especially in Chinese context, the history itself is embodied or even filled with myths and legends, the romantic masterpieces are created originating from the real historic events or specific characteristics of a period of time (Werner, 1994). Hence even though travelling with different perceptions towards the artificial attractions in the theme park in the daytime, the large scale action performance on water in the night based on the Song poems, historical time points of North Song Dynasty and typical tales in ancient Kaifeng is able to construct authentic feelings for the visitors in this research on reliving ancient prosperous Kaifeng.

Most closely relevant with the theme of QRLG, the particular knowledge about the painting scroll QMSHT and aesthetic values of ancient Chinese art is also an irreplaceable factor, which constructs authentic experience. Like Participant B in this research, the specific professional knowledge on technique side and intrinsic interests on exploring the painting contents, in combination with the architecture and experiential programs have constructed his perceived authentic experience. The commoditized culture involved in the theme park, including the toured architecture and action performances, for this kind of tourist who owns specific relevant knowledge and interests on the painting, in fact does not eradicate the authenticity, but acts as an intermediary through which their learned and imagined culture and art are displayed in concrete.

Besides, this research has proved the ‘existential authenticity’ theory proposed by Wang (1999) that the authentic feeling of a certain place can be activated by on site tourist activities. Participant Q in this fieldwork as a typical example, her motivation for participating and consuming, as well as her interpretations about the on-site experience have both revealed around sense of being. Although being aware of ‘fake’, her perception about authenticity and inauthenticity depends on the interaction and

opportunities for involvement offered by the experiential programs. Her satisfaction about costume renting service and the opportunity to visit on the horse-ridden carriage is derived from her feeling of being involved in the painting and ancient lifestyle. The still architectures and action performances simply in fact cannot trigger her feeling of being in authentic ancient and local contexts. For this type of tourist, mostly the ‘self’ creates the authentic experience, however the feeling of being fully involved needs to be facilitated by the interactions in the on-site programs. The word ‘involvement’ which her narrative was revealed around, in this case could be achieved by expressive and interactive activities. Participant Q represents the type of tourist, who seeks ‘symbolic authenticity’ (Culler, 1981, cited in Wang, page 356), that the authentic experience has no relation with originals or reality, but are based on the tourist’s own perception of involving symbols of authenticity. Here, the interactions and involvement for Participant Q are viewed as symbolic requirements of authentic cultural experience.

Cultural commodification does not have to equalize with the death of real culture, in this research of QRLG, the touristic cultural commodities can serve as intermediate entities for certain visitors to see and experience local culture. The extent of authentic feeling is closely associated with tourist inherent knowledge, interests and perceptions in regarding to history, culture and toured objects.

5.2. Cultural theme and Imaginative Geographies

The author has investigated the empirical theories included in existing literatures focusing on the important role a themed environment plays in compressing, displaying and projecting history, traditions and folk-custom culture of a certain place (Yeo and Teo, 1996; Richards, 2001; Hoffsteadter, 2008). From the participatory research, the author observed that the completely ‘fake’ sites in Qingming Riverside Landscape Garden are possible to identify the scene of a millennium city’s past to visitors. Based on the spectacular painting scroll QMSHT, which presents the whole scene of ancient Kaifeng, the theme park is projected with abundant territorial particular cultural elements to shape tourist imagination about the real culture of the city. Undoubtedly, the contents of painting cannot be duplicated completely in the theme park, but can only be imitated by maximally embodying ancient Kaifeng elements. The establishment of ancient style architectures including tourist sites, souvenir shops, restaurants and first-aid agency, the ancient-suited theme park workers, on-live action shows, as well as the self-experiential services such as the horse-ridden carriage, 3D movie and large-scale performance on water at night all reveal the theme indicated in QMSHT, that is to delineate the scenes of ancient Kaifeng, the capital of North Song Dynasty. Most particularly in this case, the large-scale action performance on water ‘The Great Song

Dynasty-Reminiscences of the Eastern Capital’ which was applauded by the visitors who purchased for it in the night has activated their rethinking of Song Poems, the prosperousness and perishing of North Song Dynasty, as well as the ancient and modern development of Kaifeng city. However, not all the researched visitors have chosen to purchase the seat for watching this performance.

The interests of visitors on being an audience of North Song Dynasty culture throughout the can be aroused by their on-site experience in the daytime. Although being the ‘fake’ within the definition boundary of material originality, the cultural theme based on QMSHT can depict an overall image of ancient Kaifeng in tourist imagination by constructing their perceived authentic experience. The imagination of visitors who travel with specific interests on being involved in local tales has gone beyond what they have gazed in the theme park. The entities through which local history and culture are exhibited in the themed environment can feature ‘imaginative geographies’ to visitors, that the cultural theme QMSHT which is a compressed version of the whole scene in Bianjing, has shaped the tourist imagination of Kaifeng city, facilitating their thinking and affirmation, rethinking and reaffirmation about local history, diachronic folk-custom culture and current city image. Witnessing the gap between the ancient capital of North Song Dynasty and current Kaifeng, visitors who possess specific interests and knowledge in relevance with Kaifeng culture also shows intention of exploring more about Kaifeng city to experience what heritage and culture this inland and less developed city, with laggard transportation system and technology has remained as a millennium city. Whether the perception on the toured materials in the theme park is critical or enjoying, the cultural theme park can shape or transform the ways in which visitors view Kaifeng city outside all the stereotypes. The ‘imaginative geographies’, which is featured from the ‘fake’ cultural theme, is able to activate the post-visit intention of tourists to see and experience the real local context and further investigate the city culture.

5.3. From Visitors to Purposeful Cultural Tourists

The theme park has facilitated the reflection of certain visitors on local history and culture, including the traditional customs, diachronic unique arts, literary masterpieces, lifestyle of ancient and modern residents, as well as the prosperousness and depression of the North Song Dynasty. Visitors are more likely to be mindful, when their visiting experience is out of fatigue (Moscardo, 1996). This research has proved that the mindfulness of visitors can be triggered by the perceived interesting elements in the tourist site. Even though the motivation for participation and consumption differentiates from one to another among researched visitors, the post-visit intention for exploring

Kaifeng culture is more closely relevant with tourist satisfaction of on-site experiences. The satisfaction in tourist perspectives cannot be inseparable with the extent of how their motivations and demands for entertainment, authenticity and self-development are met and achieved. In fact, post-visit intention of investigating more on the city is most likely to be stimulated when cultural elements in the theme park have facilitated new thoughts of visitors, yet the demand for authenticity and self-development is not completely realized. The post-visit intention for reading, studying and travelling to other sites in Kaifeng is mostly derived from the desire to see and experience the real context of local culture in compensation for the first glance in the theme park.

The findings of this research have shown that although originated from different social status, educational background, level of relevant knowledge, cultural interests and hobbies, the word ‘interesting’ has not been departed from the narratives among all the twenty participants. Reviewing back to the classic narrow definition of cultural tourism that emphasizes the cultural motivations of tourists (Hughes, 1995), tourist motivation for participation and consumption in different programs seems of great essence to be analyzed for examining the achievement of cultural tourism aims. Nonetheless, the simple motivation for leisure and the achievement of cultural tourism aims do not have to appear as opposite concepts. Participant A in this research appears as a typical example, for his change in attitude towards the cultural theme park and interests in Kaifeng culture before and after visiting. His role has shifted from a visitor who travels simply for fun to a purposeful tourist who intends to investigate in the culture represented in the theme park and Kaifeng city. Attractions in the theme park, especially those on-live action shows have met his interests in folk art and acrobatics, and also have satisfied his request for interesting elements. Hence in this case it can be concluded that a visitor is possible to become a purposeful tourist under the facilitation of cultural exhibition.

6. Conclusion

Through an in-depth study of 20 visitors, this thesis has illustrated findings about tourist experiences of leisure and culture in QRLG. The conclusion chapter begins with main conclusions of this thesis, with summarized answers to the research questions. This chapter then proceeds to highlight the importance of this research, followed by recommendations for future researches.

6.1. Main Conclusions

Despite the wide spread of global popular culture and certain convergence existing in global consumerism, numerous regions in China are less internationalized than they are imagined to be. The inland city Kaifeng is a case among those regions that domestic traditions, customs and beliefs still remain local cultural forms. QRLG as a theme park in reference to QMSHT has displayed the ancient inherited culture of Kaifeng. In the theme park, historic, artistic and folk-custom cultures are materialized to present regional uniqueness. However as a tourist site established with the main function of generating regional economic growth, leisure elements are embraced in cultural exhibition to meet the market demand. The cultural contents are transformed into more lively and understandable forms to meet mass visitor demand for recreation and amusement. In this thesis, how leisure or culture is privileged has been analyzed based on different tourist experiences. The role QRLG plays in the projection and consumption of Kaifeng culture has been discussed following the routine of pre-visit, on-site and post-visit experiences of researched visitors.

From the pre-visit experience, the answer to the sub research question ‘what are the motivations of visitors for participating in the experiential programs in the cultural theme park’ accounts. As already illustrated in the result analysis chapter, motivations were indicated as leisure seeking, experiencing authentic local culture, knowledge development, and possession of a visitation mark. Culture and leisure both account for participating motivation of the researched visitors, since the theme park itself acts as both a cultural creation and an urban place for amusement consumption.

Concerning on-site experiences, how tourists consume experiences and the extent to which the artificial cultural theme park can construct an authentic experience have been discussed. Different kinds of intrinsic motivations and expectations result in differentiated consumption and participation preferences. Although as a ‘fake’ regarding the material authenticity, the factitious scenes in Qingming Riverside Landscape Garden have reified the abstract image of ancient Kaifeng painted in

QMSHT into visible and tangible settings. The cultural theme park and staged authenticity are inseparable in this research. Despite the awareness of 'fake', the authentic experience of Kaifeng culture can be constructed by subjective perceptions of visitors. Visitors tend to perceive the 'fake' touristic objects as authentic exhibition when they feel enjoyed in the settings rarely seen and experienced in their normal life, or when they find concrete entities associated with literary stories and legendary tales they are familiar with.

In terms of post-visit experiences, how visitors make sense of their experiences is investigated. Personal interests and knowledge base related to QMSHT, Chinese North Song Dynasty and folk-custom cultures of Kaifeng are pivotal factors associated with the depth of appreciation and understanding on the cultural themes. For those visitors who consume and participate simply for possessing a travelling story, the experience ends simultaneously with the end of visitation in this research. In the case of this kind of visitors, QRLG is with no difference from other tourist sites in spite of all the particularisms. Nevertheless, the intention for exploring Kaifeng culture is possible to be stimulated by on-site experiences. With the cultural theme 'prosperous Kaifeng' running through, the ancient architectures together with the on-live experiential programs in Qingming Riverside Landscape Garden can shape or reform the place image of Kaifeng in visitors' minds. Visitors in the cultural theme park can become purposeful tourists with specific cultural aims to Kaifeng city. This situation happens mostly when the cultural contents indicated in the experiential programs and on-live performances arouse interests of the visitors. The substantial factor which influences post-visit intention for local culture and customs is tourists themselves, in accordance to their knowledge base, interests and social status.

From the interpreted tourist experiences, it can be concluded that QRLG functions as two roles, a place of leisure and a contrived projection of Kaifeng culture. Leisure and cultural elements in the theme park both adhere to the projection and consumption of Kaifeng culture. Despite all the marketing and management perspectives, cultural contents can be presented in a more acceptable and understandable way with the embracement of well-known stories and interactive programs. However, the painting scroll itself, although famous in name, is not deeply understood by normal non-artist visitors. The involvement of leisure elements in the cultural theme park provides easy and comfortable orientation for visitors to understand ancient Kaifeng. Although attempting to exhibit Kaifeng culture within its constrained space, in most occasions time spent in QRLG is less than five hours; such limited time cannot allow tourists to investigate culture of North Song Dynasty sufficiently. It was found in this research that the consumption on the artificial theme park can trigger visitors to explore Kaifeng, as the respondents have expressed their willing to study QMSHT and North Song poems,

explore Kaifeng history, experience local life and visit real historic sites in Kaifeng after the trip in Qingming Riverside Landscape Garden. Such phenomenon occurs when the perceived entertaining visitation has unlocked visitors' curiosity, memory and interests on certain cultural contents associated.

6.2. Importance of the Research

The concepts of 'authenticity', 'tourist motivation', 'tourist behavior', and 'imaginative geographies' were mostly studied as separate focuses previously. This research has integrated the piecing theories into a whole story of tourist experiences.

It can be found that domestic tourism studies at contemporary stage in China are centralized to destination promotion, management and operation, as well as regional and national development. Most domestic researchers have neglected that tourism is not just a commercial activity within economic development strategy. Unlike the conventional tourism studies in China, this research is constructed from sociological and ethnographical perspectives. Individuals' social backgrounds and their subjective feelings when being visitors are investigated in spite of all the marketing-oriented purposes. Not just within China, theme park experiences are frequently measured under quantitative methodologies, demonstrating objective and generalizable results. However 'theme park' in most of those researches is viewed as just a normal segment in tourism industry. The physical and psychological activities of visitors in the theme park can also take place in other common tourist sites. In this research, the author paid strong attention to 'theme', and linked the contents of the cultural theme closely with tourist experiences.

The inland cities for western researchers are exotic and less understood. This research has unlocked the mystery of theme park issues in a less internationalized city, proved that cultural theme parks in China deserve to be explored.

6.3. Recommendations for Future Studies

The conceptual framework can be applied in future tourism studies, to integrate different stages of tourist experiences into a holistic view. As the cultural theme park has exhibited a whole scene of local unique culture, another research can be conducted more domestically to explore the role Qingming Riverside Landscape Garden plays on projecting local identity. Besides, as the theme park is established in reference to the contents of a painting without concrete archetype, a further research from a post-modernist standpoint can be conducted to investigate how the 'pseudo' can construct visitors' hyper-real experiences.

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