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A Memorable Journey to the North
A Study of the Travel Experiences of Chinese Tourists
in Scandinavia

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Abstract

A memorable journey to the North – A study of the travel experiences of Chinese tourists in Scandinavia

With the increasing number of outbound Chinese tourists, tourism bureaus in Scandinavia are now exploring ways in understanding Chinese tourists as well as to prepare themselves to be more “China-Ready”. The purpose of this thesis is to offer research demonstrating the importance of memory objects like travel photos and souvenirs in studying travel experiences.

This thesis mainly applies ethnographic methods and cultural analysis in studying Chinese tourists’ experiences in materializing their travel memories in Scandinavia. The focus is on what the cultural connections are between the imaginations of Chinese tourists, their actual image of a destination and their resulting memories, and how an understanding behind the mechanism of Chinese tourists’ memories helps Scandinavia’s tourism bureaus become more “China ready”. By focusing on memory objects, the processes of cultural analysis that guide answers to these questions are revealed.

The research presents the influential elements in Chinese tourists’ memories through the analysis of their cultural identity, travel memories and imaginations of destinations. The cultural identity illustrates the image of Chinese tourists, who travel with certain values under the influences of modern technology. Through the study of travel memories in Scandinavia, some particular behaviors and habits that Chinese tourist obtained regarding materialization of travel experiences are extracted. And the analysis of Chinese tourists’ imaginations of Scandinavia focuses on the originalities of imaginations. In the end, some useful applicable suggestions are proposed.

Keyword: memory objects, souvenirs, travel photography, traveling experiences, Scandinavian culture, Chinese tourists, tourism material culture, consumption habits.

中文摘要

一次去北方的难忘之旅—研究中国游客在斯堪的纳维亚地区的旅行经历

随着越来越多的中国游客出国旅行，北欧旅游局开始着眼于理解中国游客的旅游心理，同时调整自身发展，为迎接中国市场做好准备。本文的目的在于研究旅行经历中“纪念性物品”的重要性，包括旅行照片和纪念品等。

本文主要运用了民族学和文化分析的研究方法，旨在探索中国游客在北欧的旅游过程中使其旅行记忆物质化的体现。本文着重于对以下两个问题的分析，即中国游客旅行前对目的地的想像、旅行中的亲身经历以及所形成的旅行记忆，三者之文化联系；讨论对于中国游客形成旅行记忆的过程的理解，如何发展此问题的应用性，以此帮助北欧旅游局在发展中国市场的过程中做好准备工作。通过着重分析纪念性物品，本文揭示了解答上述问题的文化分析过程。

本文的分析过程包含了对中国游客的文化主体、旅行记忆以及对目的地的想像，展示了影响中国游客旅行记忆的一些重要因素。文化主体决定了中国游客的一些特殊习惯，他们的旅行价值观，并随着现代科技的发展而不断变化着。通过被访者旅行记忆的研究，总结了中国游客在物质化旅行记忆的过程中几个显著的行为习惯。目的地的想像的分析则侧重于讨论其想像的来源。最后，本文列举出了一些对旅游局非常实用且可行的建议。

关键词

旅行物件；纪念品；旅行照片；旅行体验；北欧文化；中国游客；旅游物质文化；消费习惯。

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1. Introduction

1.1 Booming market of outbound Chinese tourists

With the rapid economic development of China and the growing wealth of her people, many Chinese nationals now possess higher disposable incomes that enable them to travel abroad. In 2013, China became the world's largest outbound tourism market with approximately 104 million Chinese tourists traveling abroad (The Economist, 2014). This booming market has greatly aroused the interests of tourism bureaus in Scandinavia, promoting them to explore innovative ways to attract Chinese tourists as well as to prepare themselves to be more "China-Ready".

The Danish tourism bureau, in its efforts to promote Denmark and their Scandinavia neighbors as a first choice destination to Chinese tourists, initiated the "Chinavia" project (China and Scandinavia) in 2012. This collaborated project aims to make Scandinavia more appealing and welcoming to ensure the region keeps up in the global competition to attract Chinese visitors (Chinavia, 2015). The project has been running through two phases. The first was a pilot project to develop "a better understanding of the poor Scandinavian market position and to gain better insights into the Chinese traveler in general" (Chinavia, 2015). The second phase, Chinavia II, was launched mainly focusing on the middle age travellers, who came to the regional areas in Scandinavia for business visiting.

In 2014, I interned in the "knowledge and strategy" division of the Chinavia II project. One key finding my internship revealed was that Chinese tourists lacked indelible image associations with Scandinavian cities after visiting them, a huge contrast from the impressionable image forged after visiting other popular destinations in Europe. For example, Chinese tourists commonly associate Paris with the Eiffel Tower, London with the Big Ben and so on. But, when it comes to Scandinavian cities, few Chinese tourists are able to come up with such associations. Another pertinent observation I drew from my internship was that the Danish tourism

bureau seemed to be facing tremendous difficulties in promoting Scandinavia to the Chinese tourists due to issues in language and differences in cultural backgrounds. Therefore, they are hardly able to achieve a deep understanding of cultural impacts on Chinese travellers' experiences and feedbacks. Thus far, the tourism bureau has been concentrating its efforts to improve its service experiences and to lure tourists through lucrative online promotions. However, in order for Scandinavian to become fully China ready, more has to be done.

Being a Chinese who has spent two years in Scandinavia, I have developed a great understanding of its culture, traditions and heritage. Therefore, I am capable of using this knowledge along with my knowledge on Chinese people to explore methods that might help influence Chinese visitors to develop a deep and lasting memory of Scandinavia, so that to build a cultural bridge between China and Scandinavia in terms of the tourism industry and make the memorable journey as a process of mutually exchanging knowledge about both culture.

Tourism and memory intersect in various ways, one such area is in the form of physical representations, like photography and souvenirs. Studies photography and souvenirs in tourism has been abundant, however, the cultural analysis of tourists' experiences associated with these physical objects is often ignored when doing marketing research on tourism.

In this thesis, the focus is to delineate how Chinese tourists shape their perceptions of Scandinavia through the consumption of goods like souvenirs and production of goods like photographs. In addition, this thesis intends to illustrate the usefulness of studying how memories are carried through physical artifacts in both tourism research and tourism industries.

1.2 Aim and overview

This thesis centres on images of Scandinavia in Chinese tourist practices in

today's constantly changing global consumer culture. It specifically investigates how memories are carried through consumption of souvenirs and productions of photographs. It analyses practices of tourists' memory and the cultural meanings attributed to such artefacts among former as well as future Chinese tourists. The analysis aims to generate knowledge for local tourist agencies in Scandinavia to better understand Chinese tourists and make Scandinavia "China-ready".

Firstly, I will discuss the extent Chinese cultural values are embedded in their traveling memories from Scandinavia. Through analyzing tangible memory products like photographs and souvenirs, I will focus on the expectations of family, expectations within one's social circle (in Chinese *Granxi*) and tourism photography in modern times. Second, I will move on to a discussion of the cultural significance behind the Chinese tourists' penchant for collecting memories through souvenirs, the importance of the experience of familiarity and their feelings of freshness and unpleasantness. This will be followed by a section centering on how their images of Scandinavia are shaped through on-going experiences, local branding and modern media advertising. Finally, I will present conclusions and suggestions for how local tourism bureau in Scandinavia can apply these findings. My research questions are as follows:

- 1, In what way are the travel memories of Chinese tourists' intertwined with Chinese culture.
- 2, What mutual effects do the travel memories of Chinese tourists' and their impressions of Scandinavia bring to each other?
- 3, What is the connection between the imaginations of Chinese tourists, their actual image of a destination and their resulting memories?
- 4, How can an understanding behind the mechanism of Chinese tourists' memories help Scandinavia's tourism bureaus become more "China ready"?

1.3 Theoretical framework

According to Miller, “culture is always a process and is never reducible to either its object or its subject form” (1987: 11). Miller has emphasized that material culture is important because “it can be applied to the analysis of the construction and use of the external world of objects, and because it asserts the absolute necessity of culture for the establishment of all human relations, and discredits the idea that the relationship between people and the things they construct in the physical world is separable from some prior form of social relations” (Miller, 1987: 12). Our contemporary lives are strongly connected with the very physicality of the object, “which makes it appear so immediate, sensual and assailable belies its actual nature, and that material culture is one of the most resistant forms of cultural expression in terms of our attempts to comprehend it”.

To study material culture, it is indispensable to study its relationship with the society. However, academic research on the physicality of material goods occurs on relatively abstract terms, while the micro – ethnographic studies of the consumption of objects within the society and its direct social relations with real people in our daily life are neglected (Miller, 1987). According to Miller’s study on some classic sociology theories such as Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit and Marxist analysis, he found that these theories have a very great profundity in their analysis of their respective problems, with which little can compare in the specific area of material culture studies (Miller, 1987). In this thesis, studying relations between Chinese tourists and souvenirs they purchased from Scandinavia would be analyzed using empirical methods. This analysis will help to further discussions in the field of material culture.

Specifically, the analysis of Chinese tourists’ consumption patterns of souvenirs would be conducted under the theoretical umbrella of David Hume’s study on the material culture of tourism within the discourses of contemporary art and cultural anthropology. His study was established on the basis of previous scholars’ categorization of souvenirs, as ‘*Sampled*’ and ‘*Representative*’ (Stewart 1984), and

Hume established a new ‘*Crafted*’ category of souvenirs, “that distinguishes between those artifacts crafted from endemic materials and those produced from generic media” (Hume, 2014: 5) According to Hume, it is only when the artifact is consumed by the tourist that it functions as a souvenir. Most importantly, depending on the type of souvenir, what we want to discover is how differently the narrative is expressed from those three distinct groups of souvenirs (Hume, 2014).

Furthermore, Hume has established a typology on the visual language of souvenirs, which is comprised of five main components: *Medium*, *Maker’s mark*, *Relational*, *Invitational* and *Iconfetish* (Hume, 2014). *Medium* represents the important material constituting the object/artifact, which also plays the important role in its activity as a souvenir. *Maker’s mark* is pointing to the human intervention that the object/artifact has undergone and its importance in functioning as a souvenir. The *Relational* axis of the souvenir refers to the underlying motive behind its collection, gauging the relationship between the tourist and the site. The *Invitational* is referring to the capacity of objects/artifacts in absorbing the tourists’ narrative. And the last component, *Iconfetish* axis, is concerned with the inherent narrative of the object/artifact and the potential development of the sacred quality and value of the souvenir’s features (Hume, 2014).

Hume’s classification of souvenirs (2014) is taking the lead in this thesis to enable the better understanding behind the characteristics of the souvenirs that Chinese tourists have bought in Scandinavia. Through its anthropological approaches in analyzing souvenirs, it benefits in testifying the “knowledge, power and wealth” of collectors, who are the Chinese tourists (Phillips, Steiner, 1999: 3). “Knowledge, power and wealth”, a term quoted by Hume from Phillips and Steiner (1999), are the three elements influencing new owners of exotic objects such as souvenirs. Through a better understanding of material culture in tourism, the study of Chinese tourists’ experiences in Scandinavia would be deeper and more complete.

1.3.1 Tourism and memory

Memory, in the sense of human thinking that recalls, dwells where everything that gives food for thought is kept in safety.

(Heidegger 1954/1968: 151)

As a result of the rapid pace of life in China, people rarely recall their travel experiences. However, memory is an essential factor in choosing a destination, which “impacts on tourists’ experiences at the destination and on the sharing of the experience with others after the trip, notably through photography, and memory objects, such as souvenirs” (Marschall, 2012: 321). It is also argued “tourism drives the memory as much as memory drives tourism (Marschall, 2012: 321)”. In this thesis, the empirical studies that have been conducted will reveal the process in which Chinese tourists recall their travel experiences in Scandinavia, how they store their traveling memories in the form of tangible objects and the reasons behind the choice of tangible objects.

1.3.2 Tourism and photography

The fundamental event of the modern age is the conquest of the world as picture.

(Heidegger, 1952/1977a: 134)

Photographs, one of the main production of memory, produces what Slater describes as “a dialectic of presence and absence” (1995: 222). In other words, all photographs “involves a dialogue with the past, but with a past that is connected to the present through the photography” (Slater, 1995: 222). Based on the analysis of modernity from Heidegger, that tourism and photography, productions of the modern era, are intertwined with each other. By the virtue of modern technology like the camera, a tourists’ world would be revealed (Garlick, 2002: 290). In addition, Urry’s notion of the “tourist gaze” highlights the privileging of the visual nature of tourist

experience, meaning that tourists' visual sensory stands out during traveling from all the other sensual experiences. Photography, to him, "is a paradigmatic of a new mode of visual perception that emerged in the 19th century along with mass tourism" (Urry quoted in Garlick, 2002: 292). In the postmodern world which we now live in, photos are so easily taken in daily life and photographic images are central to all experiences of space today, not just those of the tourist but to everyone who possesses a camera, smartphone, compact camera and so on. For Sontag, "to photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed...it means putting oneself into certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge – and therefore, like power (Sontag, 1977: 4)". Sontag points out that tourists use their cameras as a means of taking controlling of the space, which serves to allay anxieties about their presence in an unfamiliar situation. Tourists and photography rely on each other because the camera functions as a mediator for tourists, as Sontag notes, "it gives shape to his or her experience. It conveys the appearance of participation in the situation – 'having a camera transforms a person into something active, a voyeur'" (1997: 10).

In this thesis, the role photography plays for Chinese tourists shall be discussed. In what situations would they use the camera as a means of power? What pictures did they take in Scandinavia and what are the stories behind them?

1.3.3 Tourism and souvenirs

"They are, finally, makers of identity, of an 'experienced' personhood, bringing the world at home". Man needs material symbols, proofs of his meaningful contact with places/people encountered.

(Graburn, 1984: 51)

Apart from taking photography as proof of their presence at a location, bringing home souvenirs from the journey as 'containers of memory' that trigger narration has been affirmed as an integral component of tourism (Hannabus, 1999; Urry 1990)". A

souvenir is a material object, which “has the power to embed a place, to represent a certain time, in one’s personal history (Bursan: 8). Tourist souvenirs are good representations of a certain place because it makes possible the visualization of another society” (Bursan: 8). Under the social norms of the Chinese culture, the act of giving souvenirs is for the purpose of maintaining social relations with friends, colleagues, and family members. The consumption of souvenirs is also an inevitable process and experience that Chinese tourists would encounter. In the thesis, the cultural analysis will be conducted on the choice of souvenirs Chinese tourists bring home as representations of Scandinavia and how they make the cultural connection in their daily lives.

2. Methodology

In this chapter, I will provide a brief history of my fieldwork, the aspects which make my fieldwork unique and the methodology that was used in obtaining empirical evidence for this thesis. The process of my fieldwork can be divided into two parts. The first part began with my internship, when the fieldwork was mostly designed by the internship leader from Agderforskning research center in Kristiansand, Norway the main stakeholder of tourism organization Visit Southernnorway. During that time, the target audience of my fieldwork was Chinese visitors on business trips to rural areas of Scandinavia. Therefore, most of the participants of interviews are Chinese business traveller currently working in Scandinavia. In this first phase of fieldwork, I applied such methods as autoethnography, interviews and netnography. Based on those experiences, I found out that most of the insights were absorbed from the in-depth interviews and my working partner and I managed to gain main new insights and extracted a lot of information on their thoughts and feeling. However, the primary issue I encountered while conducting these interviews with my informants was the fact that they lacked vibes associated with being at the actual place of interest. To solve this problem, I began the second phase of my fieldwork after my internship. I

visited the Kronborg castle in Denmark in the hope of conducting on-site interviews. However, it was to no avail as I did not meet any Chinese tourists during my trip there. I decided to abandon this method as it was time and energy consuming and was filled with unpredictability. Therefore, conducting off-site interview were the only way for me to efficiently get information about the field.

2.1 Recruiting participants

It is always a daunting task to find tourists to participate in on-site interviews, because Chinese tourists in Scandinavia are “hard to reach”. Defined by Shaghghi, “hard to reach” describes “those sub-groups of the population that are difficult to reach or involve in research” (2011: 86). Tourists are always on their way and it is difficult to stop them for an interview lasting around an hour. The target audience in the second phase of my fieldwork was Chinese tourists who had visited Scandinavia for leisure, had experiences taking photographs at various places of interest and had experience shopping for souvenirs during their trips. Based on what I learned from the internship, I found that a diversity of informants was necessary in obtaining empirical evidence. Thus, I recruited informants with different backgrounds, age range and reasons for traveling to Scandinavia. These elements would contribute to the vast diversity of the Chinese tourists’ experiences in Scandinavia in a more comprehensive manner.

Altogether, I had a total of 18 interviewees: 9 were from the first phase of fieldwork and the remaining 9 interviewees were from the second phase of fieldwork. In the first phase of fieldwork, 6 of interviewees were employees working in Scandinavia while the other 3 were postgraduate students. Among the 9 interviewees from the second phase, there was a student’s parent, a master student, a person on working visit, previous tourists, an on-site tourist, a blogger, a teacher currently working in Denmark and two people visiting their friends. These interviewees had an age range of 26 years old to 50 years old. In the thesis, I will conveniently refer to the

interviewees as Participant 1-18.

I reached them through the “snowball effect”, defined as expanding one’s social network through the people around me. It is argued that this strategy is regarded as “a potential solution to the problem of sampling concealed populations”(Shaghghi, 2011: 88). A majority of the participants were strangers to me and were introduced to me through our mutual friends. The advantage of the snowball effect is that participants can easily develop a sense of trust with the interviewer because of a mutual friend whom we both know. Between Chinese people, ‘*Guanxi*’ (a Chinese word that translates to ‘social network’) is important when you ask someone for a favor, which I will further discuss in section 2.5 “On-site interviews”. According to Shaghghi’s discussion, “the main value of snowball sampling is its usefulness where some degree of trust is needed to initiate study subjects” (2011: 89). Besides that, expressing my professionalism was also beneficial in building up the trust. In the invitation letter I sent out to recruit participants, I included a description of my research and provided some information on the interview in both English and Chinese.

2.2 To make observation happen

“Interviews, visual data production and other qualitative techniques are particularly useful when ethnographic fieldwork closes down opportunities for observation” (Mannay & Morgan, 2014: 5). In order to obtain empirical evidence for this thesis, I conducted “photo-initiated interview” with the participants. This method was mainly inspired from “volunteer-employed photography” (VEP), a popular research tool in the tourism field. In particular, VEP is a method “offering an opportunity to collect data through a process that is essentially participatory, being driven by research subjects themselves” (Garrod, 2008: 381). Garrod asserts that “(VEP) is fundamentally reflexive, encouraging participants to consider their views and experiences in depth, and enabling them to express feelings and ideas they would

find hard to verbalize” (Garrod, 2008: 382). There are also some other similar methods such as “photo-interviewing” (Hurworth, Clark, Martin and Thomsen 2005) and “photo-elicitation” (Harper 2003; Jenkins 1999; Loeffler 2004; Markwell 2000), which refer to “studies in which photographs are selected by the researchers, rather than by the research subjects, and then used as prompts in an interviewing process” (Garrod, 2008: 383).

Inspired from the above mentioned methods of VEP, photo-interviewing and photo-elicitation, my idea of a “photo-initiated interview” has been customized to suit the objectives of this thesis. Prior to the interview, I asked the participants to pick out 5 photographs (from their trip to Scandinavia) which they thought were the ‘best’ and elicited nostalgic feelings. The interviews began with the participants explaining the background to each photo. This was a perfect starting point in activating the informants’ desire to share their experiences and recalling their travel memories.

Visual objects like photographs not only serve as evidence of a participants’ real experience but also instantly awakens their memory of these specific trips. This allows their perceptions of destinations to be examined. I was really intrigued by their experiences and was highly motivated to write a thesis regarding tourism and photographs.

2.3 Qualitative versus quantitative

The interviews conducted were designed to be semi-structured. It is defined that semi-structured interviews are “generally organized around a set of predetermined open-ended questions, with other questions emerging from the dialogue between interviewer and interviewees” (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006: 315). According to DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006), some forms of semi-structured interviews are potentially powerful methods for understanding another person’s story. Every interview I conducted was very distinct and unique in nature. This is because the

information I received from the participants were highly diversified and very individualized based on the stories they shared. By analyzing different stories, the cultural impact and patterns can be summarized from a common phenomenon. Paulson contends that “stories are interpretations of experiences containing an evaluative or moral framework”(2011: 151).

Prior to interviews taking place, I frequently got queried by my participants on whether I could send them the interview questions through e-mails or if I could shorten the duration of the interview. People easily misunderstand my quality study as quantitative study by thinking of the quantitative method like questionnaires.

The semi-structured interviews comprised of discussion topics on photographs, memories and souvenirs. Each sub-question asked was followed by the participant’s answer. The questions were open-ended which encouraged the participants to tell their stories freely with minimal interruption (Paulson, 2011).

Unlike the high structured interviews and questionnaires, “in the less structured interviews the person interviewed is more a participant in meaning making than a conduit from which information is retrieved” (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006: 314). Contrary to the experiments in the sciences, my interview did not have a hypothesis at the beginning because qualitative interviews encourage participants to share rich descriptions of a phenomenon while leaving the interpretation or analysis to the investigators (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

The result was little by little uncovered by the sharing of tourists’ experiences and their memories. The “no-hypothesis” approach enabled participants to share their experiences and memories in a highly comprehensive manner without any limits. Instead of answering questions on “what”, qualitative studies aim to answer questions on “why”. The narrative of each story provided more authenticity and cultural value than obtaining data in questionnaires.

2.4 Online interviews

At the time the interviews were conducted, the large majority of my participants were in China while I was in Sweden. Therefore, I encountered the issue of having a physical distance separating me from my participants. In my invitation letter, I gave the participants an option on the type of interview (video, text, voice) they felt most comfortable with. Most of them chose the method of instant text messaging or voice messaging as they were unfamiliar to a stranger like me. Online messaging has seen rapid uptake in China with the development of smart phones and a more advanced information technology infrastructure. Compared to online video call, instant messaging software is more popular among Chinese. Recently, voice messaging has also been a popular method of communication. Therefore, my informants could accept interviewing by instant messaging and voice messaging instead of video call or phone call.

However, contrary to my previous experiences, such a method of interviewing has been a big challenge for me. Firstly, I was unable to have any eye contact or make any physical observation of my informants' facial expression, which can be important in discovering their first reaction to my questions. Secondly, the conversation was not as smooth as having a face-to-face conversation. It takes time to type and wait for the other party's reply. Sometimes, while waiting for a reply I would be a little confused on whether my informant had finished answering the question or had more things to add on. Thirdly, the information I received was less substantial than having a face-to-face interview. Such a casual way of communication reduced the formality of interview and allowed some of the informants to answer the questions lazily without feeling awkward.

On the other hand, conducting interviews through online messaging had its fair share of advantages. Among them, the most obvious and direct benefit was time saved from having to transcribe the interview as the chat records can be retrieved from the archives. Besides, because of the casual nature of the interview, it permitted me to ask

a few more questions afterward in the event I missed it out during the actual interview.

2.5 On-site interviews

The most unique ‘interview’ I conducted was with a participant in Stockholm. It was an unplanned interview and more akin to having a normal conversation between two tourists meeting for the first time in a hostel.

Due to its fortuity, the interview had no structure and neither of us played the role of questioner or respondent. Instead, the conversation was fluent and smooth in the mutual sharing of travel experiences. In such situations the tourist’s passion in sharing her experiences was very high, making the conversation very spontaneous and yet continuous.

The reason for such a connection was because I played the same role as the tourist, putting us in the same position. Also, as I was a single tourist traveling alone, sharing experiences with a complete stranger would ease the feeling of loneliness, and this was especially the case since this stranger happened to be someone who comes from China and possesses a similar cultural background. To my huge surprise, this natural ‘interview’ was highly successfully as I gained an abundant amount of information.

However, outside of this tourist setting things were dramatically different. As I mentioned in the previous section, *Guanxi* (social network) is important in the Chinese culture in order to build a reciprocal relationship. It is a well-known fact that people tend to trust only people whom they know. The tourist I met in Stockholm was the only participant I was acquainted to without the help of a common friend. Even though we had an enjoyable conversation during the time as tourists, she refused to participate upon contacting her again for a more formal interview. This illustrates the lack of trust built with me and how important the role of a mutual friend is while

doing ethnology-based interviews on Chinese tourists.

Another reason for this cold shoulder phenomenon might have been due to the loss of passion and excitement about being a tourist once they return home to China, where the harsh realities set in. Hence, on-site interviews with Chinese tourists can be described (as the Chinese sayings goes), “some things may come to you by luck and by not searching for it intentionally”.

2.6 Language and time

Using my mother tongue language for interviews enabled me to quickly build rapport with my participants through the use of slangs and popular cyber words. Apart from that advantage, it was effortless when it came to understanding what was being said as I did not have difficulties picking out the important points or interpreting the tone of the various expressions. Such benefits arise by virtue of sharing the same cultural background. However, because this thesis has to be written in English, I encountered problems transferring the exact meanings while translating from Chinese to English. It wasn't necessarily for me to translate everything that was transcribed, but it was still inevitable to summarize them in English.

In the Chinese culture, words that express compliment, curiosity and agreement would cajole the other party's passion to share his/her experience. It was also an effective way of shortening the relationship distance between us. Expressing politeness, however, can be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it shows my respect towards the participant, but on the other hand, it can be a limiting barrier to our relationship because they tend to regard the interview as a favor hence putting the participant and me in unequal positions. Therefore, a balance between being polite and obtaining the research goals had to be struck.

In my invitation letter, I mentioned that the interview would be conducted within 1 hour. However, what I didn't expect was that many of my participants were

reluctant such a long interview. Many of my participants requested that I shorten the interview duration and suggested that if I shortened it, I would be able to attract more participants.

It was rather complicated to explain why my research method would take so long and hence, I decided to change the interview duration to half an hour. Nonetheless, the interviews still lasted about an hour. Most of my informants forget about the time when they actually started talking and sharing. They care more about the duration of interview when they are being recruited.

As I was executing long distance interviews, I had to comply with the time zone in China. It meant having to fit into my participant's available timing and being ready at any time while in Sweden. Typically, there is a 6-hour-difference between China and Sweden. Nighttime in China is afternoon in Sweden.

3. Evoking the memory of being Chinese tourists

The primary issue to investigate in this thesis is the unique ways in which Chinese tourists materialize their traveling memories. In this chapter, the expectations that were embedded within my participants will be discussed and the influences of modern technology on my participants' travel behaviors.

In addition, it is argued that travel is a way to mediate identity, which is why so many people travel in order to "find themselves." They carry their cultural identity with them, interact with others, and make adjustments to or reinforce their cultural identity through the touring experience (Williams, 2008: 100). Through tangible objects like photography and souvenirs, certain behaviors and habits of Chinese tourists and their perceptions of Scandinavia will be revealed.

3.1 Family expectations

I maintained a travel diary not for myself but for sharing with my parents.
(Participant 11)

The ways of recording memories on a holiday trip can vary between individuals. More importantly, the purpose and the intended audience are crucial in understanding the reasons behind a tourists' behavior. Participant 11 (age 26) is a Masters student who has lived in Sweden for almost 2 years. Instead of taking plenty of photos or buying souvenirs, writing a dairy for her parents was the most meaningful way for storing her traveling memories. For Chinese tourists like her, the memories from her trip are highly significant as it can be shared with their families. They are essentially not only traveling for themselves; thoughts of their families are carried along with them during the trip and self-imposed expectations of their families on them are created, thereby motivating them to travel. Such a phenomenon not only occurs to young students like Participant 11. Another example is of a middle age participant (No.10), who also carried thoughts of her family while traveling. In fact, in her case, she travelled to Scandinavia for the purpose of her family as her daughter was studying there. It also gave her a good opportunity to travel around Sweden. When I asked her what methods she would use to record her travel memoirs, she answered:

I made a photo album for my elderly parents. Due to the limitation of weak health, they are unable to travel with us. While looking at our travel photos containing their children and grandchildren can make their pity up (Participant 10).

It is noteworthy that the agenda of producing an album was primarily her family members. For participant 10, her strong family-oriented beliefs, to some extent, motivated her to take traveling photos. This is because, according to Urry & Larsen, photographic practices exist and subsist for most of time by the virtue of its family function, when referring to Bourdieu's discussion about the intricate relations between photography and "family life" (2011: 172). Similarly, Kodak (the company) described traveling photos as unique and full of aura, a result of "showing their 'loved

ones and the world through their eyes” (Urry & Larsen, 2011: 172). Hence, it is pertinent to see find out whom the photographs are being taken for and to what extent are family-oriented sentiments conveyed through these photographs.

Participant 10’s primary purpose of her visits to Scandinavia was to visit her daughter studying in Lund. But, because of the strong motherly bond she possesses with her daughter, she has visited Scandinavia several times. When I asked her about her general impression of the Nordic countries, she said:

Before my daughter came to Lund, I hardly knew anything about the Nordic area because it was far away. But, after my daughter came to this region to pursue higher education, I began to pay more attention to the Nordic area and got to know more about it. After my first trip, I wanted to go back. Since then, I have visit Scandinavia a total of three times! (Participant 10).

In her case, Lund was not purely just another destination; it was also her “personal memory site”. According to Marschall, personal memory sites are “utterly meaningless to others, yet deeply significant for the individual, constituting a potential “attraction” and travel motivation” (2014: 43). Her personal memory site in Lund evoked a pleasant memory of her family reunion and beautified her general impression of the Nordic countries. This is because the context and purpose of our memories would influence the way we remember and how we narrate our past (Marschall, 2014: 43).

Because of that, the meaning of her trips to Scandinavia took a “motivational continuum” from family-centered goals to place-oriented activities, the two extreme situations for tourists who are visiting friends or relatives (Williams & Hall, 2000). The kinship between mother and daughter played a significant role in shaping Scandinavia into a memorable destination for her.

Family-oriented goals are also widely observed in the consumption of souvenirs. The most common souvenir purchased among my participants was postcard. This was unusually the case for participants who were living abroad over a long term.

Until today I retain the routine of sending a postcard to my family whenever I travel to a new destination” (Participant 12).

According to Swanson and Timothy, tourists who are away from their normal environment need something familiar to generate “homelike stability” and shopping for souvenirs, as an “ordinary activity”, can help tourists connect to their daily routines (Swanson & Timothy, 2011: 492). Postcards are containers of memories and enable Chinese tourists to share their experiences vividly with images of the attraction spots. Nowadays, it is increasing less common to handwrite a message on a postcard because technology has made it convenient for someone to send an email instantly or to make an instagram update. This, all the more, makes handwriting postcards a sincere way to express our feelings towards our family or friends. The process of purchasing a postcard, handwriting it and sending it back home while still traveling is one way my participants materialize their traveling experiences and, at the same time, pursue a family-oriented goal.

There are also some type souvenirs bought in Scandinavia that are meant for their family members. The little boy in picture 1 is the son of participant 13. She came to Scandinavia for a very short business trip. Judging from how she would frequently mention her family and her young child during the interview, I inferred that she must be a very family-oriented wife and mother. She wanted to buy a souvenir for her child and sought inspiration from the kids’ fashion style in Nordic countries. After much thought, she bought a trendily designed jumpsuit for her son in Sweden.



Fig.1. A photo provided by participant 13: her son is wearing the jumpsuits she bought in

Sweden.

What impressed a lot are the jumpsuits that all of the kids in Nordic countries are wearing... (Participant 13).

A wide range of factors can influence how a destination image is received. However, it is argued that “the image an individual has of a destination is thought depend on socio demographic factors, such as age, gender, and social status, as well as distance from or familiarity with it” (Swanson & Timothy: 384). Participant 13, as a family-oriented young mother, the Scandinavian culture she perceived was with a special focus on the aspects of family and small kids.

In addition to the examples I highlighted above, most of my interview participants carried family-centered goals while they were travelling. These goals were manifested in their respective agendas for storing their traveling memories, the intended target audience for their photographs and the choice of souvenirs they bought. While in the pursuit of family-centered goals, it influences one’s impression and perception of a destinations’ culture. It can be argued that it is this uniquely Chinese culture of pursuing family-oriented goals that is inherently influencing their whole trip.

3.2 Social network – *Guanxi*

China has long been recognized as a “network society” (Parson 1959) where interpersonal relationships have a significant role in many communities, organizations and systems in the society. As mentioned earlier in chapter 2, *Guanxi* is an essential factor for recruiting research participants who are not acquainted with the researcher. Apart from that, it is also a factor that influences the travel behavior in most of my informants, especially their consumption patterns. Prior to deciphering these consumption patterns, it is first essential to understand the driving force behind them, the in-built culture within the Chinese. Hamilton mentioned that Chinese culture is

“composed of a homogenous of institutionalized value emanating from the ‘Great Tradition’ of Confucianism” (1997: 882).

Largely influenced by Confucianism, Chinese society is “collective and values harmonious human relations”(Guan and Lin, 1963: 255-258). For the Chinese tourists who are from such a collective cultural background, it is difficult for them to forget their social roles even when they are doing something as seemingly personal like traveling, for there is a predominant belief that without *Guanxi*, one is no one (Pellow, 1996: 115).

The essential nature of maintaining trustable personal connections are greatly reflected in the consumption of souvenirs in Scandinavia. Participant 16 mentioned during the interview that,

There are two aims for buying souvenirs: one is for personal purposes; the other is to give as gifts. The latter is a helpless choice that you have to make without your own will. Purchasing these gifts is equivalent to the cost that you have to pay for to maintain your social relations (Participant 16).

Reading from the phrasing and tone of how he made the above statement in Chinese, I inferred that participant 16’s endeavor in bringing home gifts didn’t seem like a pleasant process but an inevitable task for him in order to maintain his *Guanxi* back in China. According to participant 16, gift exchanging in China is regarded as one of the ways of to maintain *Guanxi*. Therefore, purchasing gifts while traveling has developed into a travel norm and a necessary expenditure.

Now, are there any ‘special’ souvenirs that are purchased in order to maintain *Guanxi*? Surprisingly, the answer is no. In fact, the gift that was most commonly mentioned by my participants had nothing to do with Scandinavian culture at all. That common gift was, quite plainly, just chocolates. One participant explained this phenomenon:

We usually buy chocolates for friends. I am unsure whether or not they are made in Sweden but a box of chocolates doesn’t really cost much, hence making it a

good souvenir for friends; for family members we buy more practical items such as shoes (Participant 9).

Based on the above observation, Chinese tourists seem to formed certain rules and habits when purchasing souvenirs for different purposes. Such rules are largely influenced by the different social roles the receivers plays in the giver's network. A box of chocolate has relatively neutral meaning and is simultaneously suitable for both males and females. It is therefore a perfect choice for giving it to people like ordinary friends, relatives, colleagues or bosses.

The natural question to follow up on is why wouldn't my participants purchase a gift that is more related to Scandinavian culture? On questioning my informants on what type of souvenirs they would purchase in other European countries, I got various answers such as cosmetic products from France, whisky from Scotland, salami from Spain and so on. These products seem to be specialties from the respective countries and are essentially cultural productions for tourists to materialize their traveling experiences through. On the other hand, my participant's consumption pattern was drastically different in Scandinavia and is still rather puzzling. It is necessary to reflect more upon the phenomenon and dig up into the reason behind.

Another participant, working and residing permanently in Sweden, shared with me his Chinese colleagues' experiences of purchasing souvenirs when they visited Sweden for business purposes. His statement somewhat revealed the reasons of the "chocolate related phenomenon".

They (the colleagues) do shopping with long lists for their family, friends, colleagues or bosses. They really need additional help in order to accomplish these long lists in a quick and efficient manner. Even for us, we still have no idea what to buy and bring home after living here for 1-2 years, needless to say neither would these tourists (Participant 6).

Therefore, the "chocolate related phenomenon" can be explained as a choice made out of uncertainty. Chocolates in any supermarket resolve this uncertainty as it

is a convenient yet safe option especially when one does not know what and where to buy special local products of Scandinavia. Participant 6 also implied that both he and his colleagues have a strong will to maintain their *Guanxi* in China by purchasing gifts and souvenirs. However, he acknowledges that it is exceptionally difficult to accomplish this in Scandinavia since they lack knowledge about the special local products here. For the tourism boards in Scandinavia, there is certainly room for improvement.

3.3 Influences of modern technology on Chinese tourists

In the previous section, the interdependence between memory and tourism had largely to do with the pursuit of goals for the family and for maintaining *Guanxi*. This relentless pursuit has, to a large extent, to do with the Chinese way of thinking that is embedded into the DNA of the Chinese tourists. In this section, I shall discuss how the travel behavior of Chinese tourists is also influenced from the fact that they live in a modern and technologically advanced society.

Garlick argued “we cannot separate ‘tourism’ off from the broader social and cultural processes that determine its forms” (2002: 292). For example, the ways in which my participants share their memories and their thoughts of traveling are constantly changing with the cultural and technological developments of society. This statement is equally valid for tourists of other nationalities. However, with the keen of materializing their experiences, Chinese tourists may have their particular travel behaviors and ideas. In this section, I would like to take the tourism photography in modern times as an example to extend such discussion upon my informants.

The purpose of photography is changing over time by virtue of the development of technology. The analog camera was substituted by digital camera. This is in turn slowly being substituted by smart phones. With traditional analog photography, “there is an enforced temporal break between the capture and sharing of photographs”, as

Patel proposed (2009: 1049). According to Urry, “digital camera screens show ongoing events right here” and is “being transmitted from person to person”. It can be typified as “instantaneous time” or as the “power of now” (2011: 181). Therefore, Chinese tourists’ attitudes toward photography and the ways they store traveling photos are changing by using digital cameras as opposed to using traditional analog camera.

When I asked my participants how they deal with their traveling photos after they return home, I got the following answers:

I am getting lazier so I rarely develop the photographs now (Participant 16).

I no longer develop my travel photographs; I just leave them in my computer (Participant 11).

Unless there is a particular need to, I normally do not browse through my photos (Participant 18).

Most of my participants tend to be nonchalant about the digital photos they took. It can be asserted that traveling photos are facing a crisis of ignorance in people’s everyday lives. One of my participants shared his views on such phenomenon:

The way of taking photos now is getting easier; this makes the value of photos less precious. In the past, we used a film that had a small limited capacity. This made every photo taken really precious. However, with the introduction of the compact flash memory sticks, one can do continuous shooting and then pick the best one. So this brings up the negative effect on our understanding of natural scenery, and also our ways of keeping memory (Participant 16).

It can be argued, with the advent of digital technology, that hardcopy photographs have been displaced in the lives of the Chinese. I agree with Urry’s notion on the ‘tourist gaze’ (1990), in which he summarized it as being “central to the constitution of the tourist experience itself, highlighting the privilege of the visual, in terms of knowledge production” (2002: 290). Taking photographs while traveling is

still essential for my participants. This is regardless of how they deal with the photos after they return home. The habit of taking photographs indicates that my participants are still keen in materializing their experiences. That's the reason they keep whatever photos they took no matter how unglamorous or unappealing the photo is. Participant 16 voiced his considerations in deleting photos as follow:

Sometimes the decision to delete certain photos is hard to make. Should I delete it or not? Perhaps I should keep them...until my MacBook runs out of storage space. At that point, I start to delete the photos without consideration (Participant 16).

Urry contended that "few tourists express any emotional difficulties about deleting photos even of the loved ones"(2011: 182). However, contrary to his assertion, my participant clearly possessed hesitation in deleting photos. This shows that my participant cherishes his photographs and would love to collect as many as possible. He may not look back at these memories, but the process of collecting them is what he values about most. This is in spite of the fact that he managed and shared his experiences in an absolutely different manner during the age of analog cameras.

In any case, requesting for digital pictures from my participants gave me rich insights since it is a direct approach to research on what they remember through the process of looking back at the pictures. My informants' pictures made a great contribution to my study although the pictures are now obsolete in their daily life.

Nonetheless, some of my participants mentioned that the interview was a pleasant reminder of their good traveling experiences in Scandinavia. They also felt a sense of nostalgia as they started recalling their experiences. Although digital photographs seem to be losing its appeal as an object used to recall memories, they are playing an active role in influencing other potential tourists. In the following few paragraphs, I would like to further the discussion on the impact of digital images arising from the Internet or from social media on my participants.

Urry states that photography in tourism is facing the age of "digitization and

intercalation". This means "photographs are now very widely produced, consumed and circulated upon computers, mobile phones and via internet, especially through social networking sites" (2011: 181).

Meanwhile, "photography travels faster and cheaper" (2011: 185). There are several tourism-related social media tools widely used in China, e.g. Qyer.com and mafengwo.cn, are capable of influencing potential Chinese tourists in selecting a destination to go to. These websites contain lots of information about the destination, a list of places to visit, traveling notes, routes and suggestions, all produced by previous tourists. Many people upload their travel photographs through these social media sites. This easily gains the attention of other Internet users because the visual effect normally has the privilege to create their first impressions of destinations.

I do not always follow the suggestions of others. I am more attracted to the photos they uploaded. If any of the photos interest me, I will do further research on the destination. The photos that have the most powerful influence are those of natural scenery. On the other hand, attractions which are history related like museums or monuments are typically driven by personal interest (Participant 12).

Thanks to the "digitization and internetisation", digital photographs uploaded onto social media sites have now been tied up into the flow of everyday life. This very nature reflects the idea of "instantaneous time". Unlike traditional hardcopy photos, digital pictures on social networks allow people to "share memories as ongoing or recent experiences" (Urry, 2011: 185).

In this way, digital photographs have a much wider audience. When potential tourists search for travel information on the Internet, they are not only influenced by the image of a particular destination on that one website. They are also influenced by the images they have seen on TV, blogs and social networking sites. As Urry argued, "the tourist gaze is largely performed by and within existing mediascapes"(Urry 2011: 179).

In this chapter, I have attempted to dissect the fundamental behavior that governs

Chinese tourists in Scandinavia. As I have discussed above, family-oriented goals, special attention to *Guanxi* and influences from modern technology are embedded in them whenever they go traveling. The extent these factors influence their journey in Scandinavia were also thoroughly discussed. Such discussions are pertinent in developing possible improvements for Scandinavian tourism bureaus.

4. Evoking the memory in Scandinavia

Following the discussion on the motivating factors of Chinese tourists, this chapter aims to find out what information my participants have absorbed on Scandinavian culture and what are their specific consumption behaviors and habits while materializing their experiences into ‘memory products’.

It is beyond doubt that some of the behaviors to be discussed are common among all tourists and not exclusively to the Chinese. However, the governing philosophies behind these behaviors might vary from culture to culture because different cultural backgrounds would bring about different perspectives on Scandinavian culture.

4.1 Collecting experiences

As discussed in the previous chapter, souvenirs are not only playing the role of maintaining a Chinese person’s *Guanxi*, they are equally significantly in being evidence of their traveling experiences. According to Swanson and Timothy (2011), souvenirs can be categorized into 4 types: totality souvenirs, linking souvenirs, life souvenirs, and pilgrimage souvenirs.

Totality souvenirs are commercially logoed objects with strong brand communication or items with strong graphic images. Linking souvenirs are those that help visitors make sense of an attraction by linking it to something common in their lives back home like, for example, household goods. Life souvenirs are objects that

can evoke nostalgic feelings and memories of the past. Some examples include food products or toys that are reminiscent of one's childhood. And lastly, pilgrimage souvenirs are those representing very specific places or sites, such as landmarks and famous icons like the Eiffel Tower or the Grand Canyon.

What type of souvenirs do Chinese tourists buy in Scandinavia? And what does such an experience mean to them? Are their decisions meant to take advantage of the appropriate purchasing moment, as Williams (2008) discussed?

The first common and popular phenomenon revealed by my informants is called "passion for fridge magnets". 6 out of 9 informants from the second phase of fieldwork mentioned their experiences of consuming fridge magnets in Scandinavia.

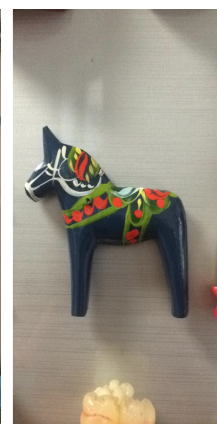
Oh yes, the thing I will definitely buy is fridge magnets! They are small, cheap and special because of local attractions"(Participant 12).

Fridge magnets are a must!... A friend of mine bought a huge fridge specially for collecting fridge magnets. I am not that crazy though (Participant 13).

Although I conducted online messaging interviews, the excitement my participants expressed over fridge magnets was obvious not only through their detailed descriptions but also through the pictures that were shown to me on their own will.



(a)



(b)

Fig. 2. Provided by participant 10: (a) fridge magnets she has collected at her travels and (b) the ones she bought from Sweden and Iceland.



Fig. 3. Provided by participant 13: fridge magnets she bought when traveling.

The images above illustrate the “passion for fridge magnets” among Chinese tourists. Another popular souvenir similar to collectables like fridge magnets and were frequently mentioned among my participants were postcards. According to Swanson and Timothy, postcards are working as a tool to “convey place-bound messages to the outside world” and designed to illustrate “what destination marketer and planners desire to portray to the world about their communities or countries” (2012: 495).

Both postcards and fridge magnets belong to the categories of totality souvenirs and pilgrimage souvenirs. Why then do Chinese tourists have so much enthusiasm when it comes to purchasing souvenirs like fridge magnets and postcards? What motivates the mass fervor over purchasing such souvenirs? One participant explained that one reason is they are “small, cheap and special” (Participant 12). Apart from this, there is a more significant and special pattern in the Chinese way of purchasing souvenirs.

I would buy local and featured pencils because I like collecting small things (Participant 12).

I buy local Starbucks cups for my younger brother because he is collects them (Participant 13).

I am starting to collect books on each city I travel to (Participant 16).

Fridge magnets and postcards are not the only items collected by Chinese tourists. There are other objects collected that have more to do with different personal preferences. Therefore, there isn't only a "passion for fridge magnets"; there is also a "passion for collecting experiences", because whatever the object is, it is the experience of having been to that place that people are collecting. My participants' accounts point to the fact that Chinese tourists are not only consuming the physical product itself, they are also materializing traveling experiences and enjoying the process of collecting.

Souvenirs have a special significance for collection. As Burn and Lester stated, "souvenirs contribute to personal social toolkits essential in placing the touristic experience in shared memory banks" (2003: 16). The reason why Chinese tourists are fond of collecting souvenirs can also be understood through Bursan's definition of collecting souvenirs as "the description of totalizing biography". This refers to the elements of a biographical and social experience that are projected onto a collection of personal possession that signify those experiences (2011).

What Chinese tourists collect are thus not merely the objects but personal biography. Using Miller's main concepts "Objectification" (2011), Bursan pointed that the use of souvenirs is always a sign of something that is beyond its "objectiveness". Objects, like words, can represent or evoke anything, the things we collect will bring information, feeling, subjective realities (Bursan, 2011) Therefore, Chinese tourists enjoy the process of collecting objects, consuming them and collecting symbols, consuming them. Where consuming means assimilation, incorporation, consuming things becomes a matter of dissolving them into intimate features of personality (Bursan, 2011).

Souvenirs, as objects of consumption, hold specific agendas for each tourist purchasing it. Chinese tourists cherish their traveling experiences as much as they cherish the reasons behind consuming these commodities. For outbound Chinese

tourists, this necessary expense amounts to a large sum of money. For example, money is spent on the flight tickets, local train tickets and visa applications. This initial investment enables the tourist to visit the various places of interest. However, if these experiences are not transferred into any commodity goods, the experience itself cannot be proven. Thus, even more money will be spent in order to validate the experience. Participant 13 said:

Since I've come all the way from China, I don't feel worthy if I don't bring back any souvenirs. So I would buy something for sure. ...I'll always buy souvenirs when I travel (Participant 13).

The amount of money paid for a souvenir will not be perceived as being equivalent to its 'real' value. That's because the 'real' value of a souvenir is that the buyer will gain a milestone in his or her biography, which is priceless (Bursan, 2011). Even though some artifacts or other types of souvenirs may not be useful in daily life, buying them is still worth its intangible value. As what participant 14 said:

I typically buy local T- shirts with the patterns similar to 'I love NY' whenever I go traveling. Now, I have lost count on the number of these shirts I've collected. However, I have never worn any of them (Participant 14).

Referring to Hume (2014), the souvenir's key value is in its ability to mark the collector's experience of the site. As long as the souvenir can achieve this goal for visitors, it is not necessary for the product to be practical or useful in their daily life. The souvenirs that tourists consume has varying aesthetic judgment because a person passes a judgment based on his or her own knowledge and understanding of the site (Hume, 2014). As a matter of fact, souvenirs like fridge magnets and postcards are the products my participants came across most.

Compare to the luxury commodities I bought in Western Europe, I bought more cheap souvenirs in Nordic countries, like fridge magnets (Participant 14).

At the tourist attractions in Scandinavia, there are souvenir shops everywhere. However, they only sell souvenirs like fridge magnets, cups and T-shirts

(Participant 14).

Based on my participant's accounts, the "passion for fridge magnets" shares many parallels with the "passion for chocolate" in that the decision to buy them is based on not knowing what else to buy. This section has shown that Chinese tourists tend to purchase very common objects that can easily be found in most souvenir shops. By contrast, when they travel to other European countries, they purchase specialties unique to the country. Therefore, the root cause seems to point to a lack of knowledge about Scandinavian local products that has led my informants to consume such 'common' souvenirs. Despite the commonality of fridge magnets and chocolates, many of my interview participants left positive remarks on the souvenirs products in Scandinavia. They complimented the products as being high in quality and worth the money.

4.2 Sense of familiarity

Besides the fond of collecting, my informants were still trying to make some connections with Scandinavia from their background knowledge of Scandinavia and look for something that is familiar to them, since the sense of familiarity would leave them with pleasant and deep impressions in their traveling memories. When I was listening to the informants' stories of their traveling experiences in Scandinavia, their memories were again highlighted by experiencing a sense of familiarity. This can be compared to Marschall's (2012) discussion about Urry's (1990) argument that tourism is defined by the collection of signs, and tourists, driven by the memory of iconic images, travel in search of familiar sites/sights. Searching for familiarity in Scandinavia for Chinese tourists is connected with a variety of aspects, including familiar objects, familiar food, familiar brands or even familiar people. To a great extent, the sense of familiarity that my informants are searching for is playing a significant role in their memories of destinations. For instance, participant 17 shared with me her story says:

If I am talking about the most impressive and rather the best memory in Stockholm, it should be the moment that I occasionally came across with my college classmate, whom I haven't been contact with for 4 year, in the hall of the hostel (Participant 17).

Participant 17 was an individual tourist coming to Scandinavia mainly for traveling. Due to some unpleasant experiences during her travel there, her memory about the journey in Scandinavia was mostly negative. However, the only exciting and happy moment in her memory was about the familiarity she was embedded when she met her old friend. Although such a coincidence could not be planned before the trip, it is still noteworthy that sense of familiarity is valued and highlighted her traveling memory.

Searching for the familiarity of destination may even become the motivation of traveling, which is happening on the type of tourists, who are visiting friends and families. Besides the culture of family values, the sense of familiarity from kinship or friendship may also be considered as the main motivations of traveling.

I went to Finland mainly for looking for my best friend. Otherwise I won't go there for traveling, because Finland does not have a high reputation of tourism (Participant 11).

One of five selected pictures provided by participant 11 is actually a picture (Fig. 4) taken in Finland with her best friend. The words above indicated the reason why she picked that photo. By virtue of such experience of the reunion with a familiar person, her trip to Finland was regarded as impressive and memorable.

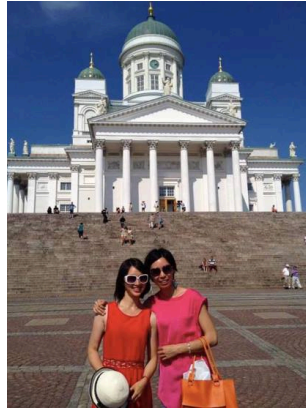


Fig.4. Provided by participant 11: the moment of reunion with her best friend in Finland.

From all the photos collected from my informants, I got pictures with same popular tourists attraction sites from different people like the Nyhavn in Copenhagen and the fjords in Norway. These places, regarded as landmarks, which are already well marketed and perfectly branded, certainly are all familiar to Chinese tourists. Therefore, being there to connect the familiarity is an inevitable experience for them to prove that they have been there and done that, which is why they pick such photos.

Another photo is acting as an even more interesting evidence of the Chinese tourists' searching for the familiarity in Scandinavia.



Fig. 5. (Left) Provided by participant 10: A sculpture in Iceland.



Fig.6. (Right) The university logo of Shanghai Tongji University. Downloaded from <http://www.edu.cn/20051008/3154602.shtml>.

Fig.5 is a picture chosen by participant 10, who works as a university teacher. One of her pictures made me puzzled about the reason why she picked this. Out of confusion, I asked her for the background of this picture. She explained to me that this

sculpture in Iceland reminded her of the logo of the university where she works. It was the feeling of familiarity that made her pick it out from thousands of her traveling photos and showed to me as one of her memorable experience during that trip. The process of searching for familiarity in an unfamiliar destination may drag participant 10 closer to their reality and create an intimacy between home and foreign destinations. The familiarity appearing in the traveling experiences, which generally is filled with fresh and new sights, can make a unique and memorable experience.

Considering the Chinese revisits in Scandinavia, they may look for the places, the objects, food, or even weather that they have experienced from the previous visit, in order to achieve the sense of familiarity and evoke their nostalgia feeling, which is tightly bonded with their understanding and knowledge of Scandinavia.

I like Bergen very much as the mountains and water there remind me of my hometown. It gives me a sense of familiarity... I 've been to Bergen three times. Every time I was there, I expected for the rain, because the first time I came here, it was rainy. So in my memory, Bergen should be rainy. The rain in Bergen becomes a kind of connection linking all my memories there (Participant 16).

A sense of familiarity is thus significant for most of my informants. Experiencing the familiar object or subject at the destination can be a routine. For example, some successful associations can be the Eiffel Tower in France, spaghetti from Italy, the watches from Switzerland and the Ecco shoes from Denmark. The sense of the familiarity can be the motivation to travel, consume and memorize. Based on Chinese ways of collecting, they may transfer the experiences of familiarity into possessions, as their personal milestones. With their values of family and *Guanxi*, they would love to materialize their traveling experiences to a large extent.

My neighbor who is working in Denmark bought 10 pairs of Ecco shoes and brought back (Participant 16).

Such stories happened to a lot of my informants. However, the current situation revealed from my informants' experiences is that except the famous landmarks in

Scandinavia, the familiarity they can sense from or the connection that they can link with Scandinavia is either by visiting their friends or family member or from their previous visit. They hardly know the popular local food, local brands and local culture in general, and not to say what and how can they relate such familiarity with their traveling experience. Therefore, some experiences of sensing familiarity during traveling here was created by themselves, like linking a university logo with an unknown sculpture. The only few facts here that they are familiar with is the cold weather in Scandinavia, the northern light, some industries names like Ikea from Sweden, and a large amount of forests in Norway, but they have difficulties in materializing them into commodities. Successful examples like the shoe brand Ecco is familiar to them, so that it becomes a perfect choice for them to consume.

4.3 Feelings of freshness and unpleasantness

If the sense of familiarity acts as a light spot in Chinese tourists' memory, feelings of also freshness also enriches and broadens tourists' experiences since tourism itself is a process of experiencing cultural difference. Besides collecting souvenirs and finding the familiar, what other experiences have Chinese tourists memorized deeply during their stays in Scandinavia? What image of Scandinavia have they created from experiencing the cultural differences?

First, natural scenery is special in Scandinavia. According to Rosario's (2014) quantitative research about outbound Chinese tourists among all the reasons adduced by Chinese tourists for visiting Europe, beauty and landscape rank as the number one, accounting for 82% of all the answers. Although China also has varied and beautiful natural scenery, the nature view in Scandinavia is still different and attractive for Chinese tourists. From all of the photos I got from informants, the majority of photos are about landscape and scenery. Maybe there are other factors influencing my informants not to provide me photos with their own images, however, still they mentioned a lot about their visual experiences of Scandinavia's nature.

When I first came to the Nordic countries, what shocked me were the fjords in Norway. The natural scenery here is really spectacular. Maybe in Scandinavia, the humanistic connotations are not that rich and abundant, but their natural view is really shocking (Participant 16).

However, tourists experience also depends on what experiences they had before. Like another informant who is a Chinese student living in Australia, she has different opinions upon Scandinavia's natural scenery from her parents who traveled with her to Scandinavia.

Actually I don't have any special feeling about the natural view here. I have been living in Australia for a while, so I am going after the view of landscape. But I guess people who has always been living in China, like my parents, would like the blue sky and fresh air (Participant 14).

Indeed, some big cities in China have been facing the serious issue of heavy pollution. The sky is rarely clear and water hardly appears blue. The green environment in Scandinavia with its blue sky and blue sea is becoming something different from the polluted environment in China, which is why the color blue would leave deep impression in Chinese tourists' memory.

Because of deep impressions from clean natural scenery and clean environment in Scandinavia, some informants would consume some souvenirs like baby products as milk powder or tableware, as the quality of those products in China is controversial and now regarded as not creditable by the public. Therefore, some informants would rather believe that those products in Scandinavia are reliable and healthy for their kids or friends' kids.

Secondly, Scandinavia is seen as a "future world" (Participant 12) according to Chinese tourists' memory. The meaning of "future world" points to a slow living pace, a high standard of education, and organized and modernized with beautiful nature, as summarized from my informants' description. Compared to the life in China, one of my informants concluded,

I more and more realized that the amount of your salary is not in direct proportion to the level of civilization. Now there are too many ‘Tuhao’ in China, which made me even want to run away from places where full of Chinese. That is too messy and disorganized (Participant 10).

The word ‘Tuhao’ she mentioned is a new word, being popular on the Internet. Its original meaning points to the rural bad people who take advantage of their wealth and power to bully people. Now its new meaning is pointing to people who would like to splash out their money and always show off their wealth by consuming irrationally. This phenomenon implies the groups of upstart Chinese rich people who are newly rich and yet not good at controlling their consumption behaviors. Therefore, what participant 10 is expressing is a common phenomenon now in China of a group of rich people who has a high salary without acknowledging a rational way of managing money. She also mentioned that the in China life is “rather fickle”, which may make people adore wealth, impatient, rush for everything without appreciating and enjoying life.

However, the living pace, common high level of civilization and education, and organized society in Scandinavia form the cultural differences from the current living situation in China, which may become the attraction for Chinese tourists. During their days living in Scandinavia, Chinese tourists enjoy the life in such different and peaceful environment. Just as another informant concluded:

It feels like living in the future, feels like the society has highly developed till extreme simplicity...The lifestyle here is so great (Participant 12)!

Most of my informants would highly speak of Scandinavia with those positive impression about the convenient and organized public transportation, the smiling faces from passersby on street, and receiving polite and warmhearted responds from asking the way and the clean and tidy environment, which would bring them a feeling of freshness and favorable impression about Scandinavian society because some phenomenon is rarely happen in China. For example the metro stations are always

crowded and disorganized, and it is not possible seeing the stranger smile to you on streets. Those small details in the daily life of Scandinavian society surprisingly leave most of my informants a deep impression and understanding of Nordic countries.

In addition, the third point is that unpleasant traveling experiences may influence visitors' general impression of the destination. It was mainly reflected by one of my informants.

I had a high expectation of Nordic countries. I chose Nordic countries as my first destination in Europe. I wanted to have a white Christmas in Nordic (Participant 17).

However, her high expectations got clashed with the reality. Some unexpected experiences happened to her, which ruined the beautiful image in her mind. Some examples were the cancelation of her ferry, her luggage being stolen, difficulties in withdrawing cash, and a delayed reply from her hotel. Through these unexpected unpleasant experiences, then what happened to her memory of Scandinavia? She said,

Firstly the weather was so cold and raining all the time, which didn't leave me a cozy feeling of Christmas Eve. Such cold weather made everything inconvenient for me (Participant 17).

Her memory is tightly connected with her high expectations. What she expected was to experience a cozy and beautiful white Christmas in Nordic countries, like in the fairy tales. However, the cold, windy and rainy weather at the Christmas season, which is the reality of Nordic countries, had a huge gap in achieving her expectations, and as a result her memory about Scandinavia' weather and related traveling experiences became more terrible. That is why she mentioned "cold" several times.

Another thing made me really disappointed was the Little Mermaid in Denmark. I looked for it with full of expectations. However, it took me so long to finally find it, and it was so small (Participant 17).

Here comes another example of her experiencing the disappointment. However, the size of Little Mermaid and the weather of Scandinavia are the facts that we cannot change. Participant 17 also mentioned that it was time consuming to finally see the Mermaid, which at some level may enlarge her unpleasant experiences and disappointed emotions. Therefore, the endeavor that can be focused on is about how to reduce the gap between imagination and reality, and to release the feeling of disappointment.

Also when she talked about her favorite traveling destination of Germany, I can feel that through the comparison between two countries she was still revoking the unpleasant memories in Scandinavia.

I prefer traveling in Germany because people are good in English not like in Nordic countries, I can easily withdraw money through my Chinese credit card from any ATM machines, good weather, safe. I had bad impression about Sweden, also because we almost had to sleep outside on the streets because of the delayed e-mail reply (Participant 17).

Through comparison to Germany, it is more obvious to investigate what the factors are that have left her negative impressions in her traveling memory, like weather, quality of service, conveniences and sense of security. Although her memory of Scandinavia is not totally true, especially when she complimented Germany's English level relative to Nordic countries, still some factors are still implying the reality and the possibilities for improvement. Among these factors, the quality of service is more noteworthy and should be mentioned because most of her bad memories were related to the service level in Scandinavia. It has been argued a lot about Chinese tourists' high expectations for destinations' service level, like hotel, restaurant and transportation, which is implying that Chinese tourists have some basic requirement for infrastructure. Too many inconveniences in service infrastructure will to some extent ruin the whole image of the destination in touristic memory. Her experiences about a delayed e-mail reply from hotel, cancelation of her ferry, and difficulties in withdrawing cash are all indicating that Nordic countries are not

welcoming to tourists. That is the reason why she had such impressions of Scandinavia's people as below:

Anyway, Sweden and other Nordic countries leave me an impression that people are not with warm hospitality as other east and west Europe like, France, Italy and Spain. I don't want to use the word cold for describing Scandinavia people, but they are quite calm. People are nice, but not really warm welcoming (Participant 17).

Because of a series of unpleasant experiences happened on her journey, she hardly mentioned her consuming experiences in Scandinavia. When I asked her about it on purpose, she could not even remember what she bought in Sweden because all the negative feelings at that time made her just give up any moods in wandering on streets and shopping in bad weather. She also reflected that with an upsetting mood during traveling she even did not take any pictures. All in all, she was unhappy about the whole trip and blamed everything to her unpleasant experiences from bad weather, poor service and so on.

Hence, keeping traveling memory during the journey is a behavior out of pleasant experiences. Participant 17 experienced too much unexpected and unpleasant incidents during the trip in Scandinavia, which ruined her motion of traveling, not to say any emotions in creating memorable productions like pictures or shopping souvenirs. Smooth quality of service in tourist related industry, considerate and comfortable infrastructure and public security are the prerequisite requirement to express destination's hospitality to tourists. There are more Chinese tourists like participants 17 who would take these experiences into account, which would influence their impressions in total about the trip and certainly all the habits and activities of keeping traveling memory.

5. Evoking memory and imaginations

Founded on some values of being Chinese tourists and their different experiences

and impression from the trip, this chapter will further discuss what imaginations my informants have about Scandinavia before they start the trip and where the imagination got inspired. It is aiming to demonstrate the image that Chinese tourists' develop in their minds about Scandinavia prior to their journey, which may also influence their expectations, experiences and finally the memories of the trip. Before the start of their excursions, certain issues emerge relating to how Chinese travelers perceive the Scandinavia culture as well as the means by which they collect their memories. In this chapter, the discussion about tourism imaginations will be expanded into three aspects, which are touristic memory products, local branding and modern media. "The various contributions pay particular attention to how personal imaginings of tourists, 'locals', and tourism intermediaries interact with", as Salazar purposed (2013: 2). One of the contributions to local tourism bureaus would be the insight extracted from Chinese tourists' imagination of Scandinavia in the issues of improving the local branding.

5.1 Memorable objects on the way

Imaginaries, by its nature, are intangible and one way to make them become tangible is "by focusing on the multiple conduits through which they pass and become visible in the form of images and discourses" (Salazar, 2014: 2). According to Salazar, origins of personal source of imaginaries may come from "ongoing experiences: the tourists' experiences include feedback and reverse gazes from destination communities and tour guide and other mediators" (2013: 7). The same concept as what Bruner defined was not just in the light of ongoing tourist experiences and word of mouth from others, but also in terms of the tourists' life after they back home because people constantly reformulate their imagined world views (2005).

Souvenirs can be both the signs and symbols of imaginaries, in many instances, "which proffered satisfy match with a particulate imaginary"(Salazar, 2013: 12). Tourism photography can "reproduce the imaginary expected and searched for or can

represent a unique experience and thus be the bearer of newly formed imaginaries to be passed on by word of mouth” (Salazar, 2013: 12). Therefore, through such touristic memory products, it is possible to analyze what imaginaries Chinese tourists expected before the journey and what new imageries of Scandinavia they form as feedbacks from their experiences and which in turn influence the imagination of people around them.

Besides Chinese tourists’ consuming habit in collecting specific souvenirs, what they consume in Scandinavia are purportedly items which can be perceived and expected as specialties of Scandinavia based on Chinese’ imaginaries.

For this first time I came to the Nordic countries, I actually more focused on what can be taken for references of indoor designing for my offices (Participant 13).

I have got requested bring back bottled fish oil (Participant 4).

In my informants’ imaginaries, seafood, fish products and Nordic style design, fairy tales and heavy snow are particularly representatives of Scandinavian culture and worth to be experienced and proven as evidences.

It is not difficult to find out what imaginaries Chinese tourists have before traveling to Scandinavia by asking what souvenirs and tourists’ attractions they are interested in. Both informant 11 and informant 14 consider the Santa Claus’s village in Finland to be a good example of their imaginaries of fairy tales countries. Informant 14 with the imaginaries of Nordic fairy tale culture found that her deepest impressions of the trip were from her visit to the Santa Claus Village. In fact, one of the pictures she provided was from there.



Fig. 7. (Left) Picture provided by participant 14: visit to the Santa Claus village in Finland.

Fig.8. (Right) Picture provided by participant 11: her experience with the heavy snow in Kiruna, Sweden.

In terms of some informants who are currently living in Scandinavia, with their increasing understanding and knowledge about Scandinavia, the imaginaries and desired memory products they are consuming are changing. There is a trend for them to either consume something more practical, or perhaps give up shopping here.

In the beginning, I brought home fish oil. Now we also brought home some children's clothes (Participant 9).

Most Chinese I know, who have stayed here for a long time, they take an empty luggage home and bring an overloaded one back... (Participant 9).

Participant 9 is permanently working in Sweden now. From his life experiences in Sweden, he certainly gained more knowledge about Sweden and his imaginaries ought to become richer. However, having more life experience in Scandinavia does not make it easier for those who live there to buy souvenirs for others. Except for items that tourists are likely to purchase for themselves as souvenirs, people identified as half local half tourists, have difficulty picking gifts, which both represent Scandinavian specialties and are practical. For example, participant 9, who is a new father, chose to buy children's clothing, which is not regarded as a local specialty in Scandinavia but rather a normal practical, high quality commodity. As Salazar discussed, "tourists are complicit in creating their own 'proofs' or evidence of tourism imaginaries" (2013: 12). Physical experience is one of the categories invoked when making souvenir purchases and may also reflect ways conveying the sense of having been there (Appelbaum & Jordt). Therefore, it is necessary to argue about the continuity of producing process of tourists' imaginaries and local experiences because people with different levels of perceptions of Scandinavia may have different needs in proving "the sense of having been there". Symbolic artifacts cannot fulfill all the kinds of tourists, especially those people who have local experiences.

The developing process of tourism imaginaries may happen after tourists return back home, when they are recreating traveling experiences, showing off traveling photos, and giving souvenirs to their acquaintances. Orally passing on new imaginaries (Salazar, 2013) plays a significant role in influencing the imaginaries of Scandinavia in the potential Chinese tourists' mind. In general people around my informants obtained very limited knowledge about Scandinavia.

Friends from China... they think I live in Switzerland (Participant 8). People around me hardly have visited Nordic countries. They just sometimes ask me questions like is there cold? Are the breads there hard (Participant 16)? One word concluding my friends' perceptions about Nordic countries: expensive (Participant 17)!

Due to the similar translated country names in Chinese, Switzerland pronounced as "Rui Shi" and Sweden as "Rui Dian", several informants stated that people around them often confuse those two countries. With those limited imaginaries of Scandinavia, Chinese tourists normally need to explain the background knowledge of the gifts they brought back to present receivers through a specialized mode of storytelling as a recreation of their experiences and imaginaries. For example, participant 10 had her special consumption plan in Scandinavia because she got the inspiration from her daughter's knowledge and experiences in Scandinavia. She was informed by her daughter, who is studying in Sweden, of the practicality of Swedish kitchenware. Thus when she became a tourist, she matched such imaginaries by buying teapots and cups.



(a)



(b)



(c)

Fig.9 (a), (b), (c). Provided by participant 10: the teapots and cups she bought in Sweden.

Hence, the recreation of on-going experiences and imaginaries plays a significant role in reforming imaginaries for people around them. However, because of the public Chinese generally lack perceptions of Scandinavia, Chinese tourists are concerned about present receivers' reaction and feedback when they purchase gifts for others. Tourists worry that storytelling cannot increase appreciation of the gifts.

There is another pattern, I can't remember, but I heard that the King gave one to Obama's wife when they were visiting Norway. I also bought one for my mother. They are sold in those yarn stores. Quite expensive though. But the problem is Chinese don't know it's very special. Also, the sweater in China is rather inexpensive (Participant 3).

In this sense, the broader and richer imaginaries of Scandinavia for tourism can be tremendously developed through memorable objects like gifts and souvenirs, which can work as mediators matching tourists' imaginations and meanwhile influencing people in China. Besides, self-imaginaries from locals are also crucial in a way branding its culture in the course of global consumer culture (Alden, 1999).

5.2 Local branding

Mazarella stated, "the global is constructed locally just as much as the local is constructed globally" (2003: 17). Tourism is one of productions of global cultural flow, as Appadurai (1990) discussed and presented the dynamics of globalization. He also highlighted the relation between the global and local by stating that "the work of the imagination ... is neither purely emancipatory nor entirely discipline but a space of contestation in which individuals and groups seek to annex the global into their own practices of the modern" (Appadurai, 1996: 4) How local Scandinavian culture is framed and advertised may influence how Chinese tourists perceive the different culture and create imaginaries in many aspects of their journey. This section is aiming

to prove that some influential aspects of the local Scandinavian culture as brand effects and food culture are significant in influencing Chinese tourists' perceptions and imaginaries, and better local cultural branding of these aspects have potential in attracting Chinese tourists.

Participant 3 stated "some Chinese people like big brands". This can be explained by Hung's study of status-seeking consumers in China (2005: 52), who draw on both global consumer culture positioning (Alden,1999) and perceived brand globanness (Steenkamp,2003). Global brands purposely promote a foreign image when marketing in China in order to make these brands more desirable to Chinese consumers who tend to associate foreignness with higher quality and social status because of the brands' higher price, relative scarcity and higher prestige.

In the tourism field, Chinese tourists' perceptions about the famous brands of destination are intertwined in their imaginaries. Popular brands become associated with importance when Chinese tourists imagine where they came from. For example they often listed Swiss watches, French perfume and Italian leather products. From Chinese perspectives, well-known global brands work as one of the most crucial connections in highlighting the existence of countries in their memory. When talking about their images of Scandinavia with informants, well-known brands often were often the first icons came into their minds.

First thing about Denmark, my younger brother will think of Lego. But people have nothing to think of when talking about Sweden (Participant 7).

They know IKEA and Volvo, but they don't know they are from Sweden. In general, this is just a faraway land (Participant 8).

Speaking of Denmark, I know Ecco. Speaking of Norway... I don't know their brands (Participant 9).

Some Scandinavian brands, like Ikea, Volvo, Ecco, Lego, Absolute Vodka and H&M, are becoming popular and well known in the Chinese market. However, Chinese people lack connections between some of the brands and their countries of

origin. Sometimes, what is viewed as global by a firm is not considered global in the eyes of consumers (Mazarella 2003). One informant strongly suggested that it is necessary for the local company in Scandinavia to have a good brand image in China (Participant 7, August 2014), because these brands may convey Scandinavian culture. For example, participants 8 and 7 perceived Swedish culture from Swedish brands:

I think H&M represents Sweden in a way of its style, which is casual and informal, unlike luxurious brands. Like Volvo, H&M may also represent the culture of Swedish middle class (Participant 8).

Ikea is related to active lifestyle because their furniture is mostly self- assembling, which is an advanced concept (Participant 7).

Some informants concluded Sweden is an industrial country based on known industrial brands. They wondered whether the industrial culture could show something interesting to the tourists. One informant shared his excellent experience visiting the factory of Absolut Vodka, as the most famous factory in that local area. But it was pitiful that he only saw Swedish tourists, rather than any international tourists. Hence, it is obvious that local culture, conveyed by global brands has the potential to be packaged into tourist attractions even if it is an industrial factory. Those brands may still attract tourists' interests by connecting their imaginaries of local culture.

Apart from cultural diffusion, the effects that popular brands have on Chinese consumers are demonstrated by their shopping and consumer behavioral patterns in Scandinavia. As Li (2004) emphasized, the brand effect on Chinese consumer's purchase willingness is considerable. Chinese people can be more interested in reputable brands and track records because consumers sometimes rely on price as a mark of quality as the result of their limited experience with modern marketing. However, recent research shows that Chinese consumers are getting more advanced putting more emphasis on style, quality and workmanship as opposed to brand and advertising, implying their higher expectations from successful brands. Take Ecco

shoes in Denmark as an example, some informants' shopping experiences in Scandinavia were related with it.

Since my mother is here, we bought tens of pairs of Ecco shoes for family in China (Participant 8).

We bought Ecco shoes, which are cheaper and more varieties than those in China (Participant 2).

Li (2004) pointed out the potentiality of specialty stores for Chinese consumers. Purchasing well-known brands during their trips can be a pleasant shopping experience for Chinese tourists as they enjoy the brand information, which may improve their understanding and help them gain a feeling of security about the product in specialty stores. Moreover, these shopping experiences place a connection with the item that was purchased to the country of its origin. These products are the "must-have" products from the country just like shopping for perfume in France and watches in Switzerland. Nonetheless, these products, which are not only portraying the local image but also a global representation of the country's products, can serve as ideal souvenirs and gifts.

Aside from globalization of local well-known brands, another aspect of the local imaginaries of Chinese tourists can be reflected on the local food culture, since eating out on trips can increase their understanding of local society and culture (Long, 2004). Today's Chinese tourists, with the increase in travel experience, have gradually emphasized the importance of not only sightseeing, but dining out as well (Guan & Jones, 2015). Such phenomenon is proven from the increasing amounts of travel photos shared on social media picturing Chinese tourists' tasting local cuisine. Besides, "Chinese have been known for the fact that they are particularly preoccupied with food and eating" (Guan & Jones, 2015: 417).

From the perspective of tourism in Sweden, the first thing that comes to my mind is meatballs (Participant 6).

Speaking of Norway, they have salmons and petrol. What I can think of right now

is mainly about food (Participant 2).

Therefore, Chinese tourists' imaginaries of Scandinavia have a strong connection with how they perceive the local food. Having a better understanding of Chinese tourists' perceptions of local food culture may be crucial to destination tourism, product development and marketing (Guan & Jones, 2015).

Firstly, the overall reflection of Scandinavian food is rather negative among my informants. When talking about the local food of Scandinavia, informants frequently mentioned Swedish meatballs, salmon and cinnamon buns. However they perceive these Nordic cuisines as food with no specialty and also as participant 9 described,

Food in all the places in Scandinavia is more or less the same (Participant 9).

One of the reasons for this perception is that that can be the food culture in the Chinese culture have is generally known for its diversity, flexibility, and adaptability (Chang, 1977). Such famous Nordic food as meatballs, salmon did not surprise them with a distinctive and memorable taste or a special way of cooking. Even when talking about Swedish salmon, what one participant remembered indeed was the salmon in the Japanese sushi rolls here. Especially when people compare the Scandinavia food to other European countries, they concluded that came out the conclusion as "the Nordic countries are not so full of culture background as other countries in Europe"(Participant 8, August 2014), which also implies that Chinese tourists regard local cuisine as, like Fieldhouse (1986) pointed, an important medium for cultural expression and an essential aspect in understanding the culture of a society. Even though the local food here did not leave them a deep impression, "people would like to try after all" (Participant 8, August 2014), because they perceived trying local food as an opportunity to encounter the various facets of the local culture (Chang 2010).

Secondly, some informants had the idea to bring local food as souvenirs, which is a common consuming habit for Chinese tourists. When considering the souvenirs to bring back China, the local food here becomes special, no matter how it taste. Most

commonly the seafood and sea products are regarded as rather representative food from Scandinavia.

I used to bring home some special food, such as canned mackerel and liver pâté, or some baby food (Participant 5).

On the other hand, some practical issues like “not suitable for transport” (Participant 9, August 2014) cannot be solved since those Chinese tourists looked for those food souvenirs in supermarkets. The local souvenir stores do not sell food as souvenirs, which can be well packaged and easy to bring.

According to Rozin (1981), basic foods, cooking techniques and flavor principles, like distinctive seasoning combination, are three major factors that differentiate a cuisine. Among these factors, the freshness of basic foods in Scandinavia is mostly appreciated by informants as a specialty of the food culture of Nordic countries. A shared story from one informant about his friend bought kilos of pork and dozens of boiled eggs from Denmark and brought back to China. In addition, due to food safety issues in China, safe and healthy food in Scandinavia attracts people’s attention. Therefore, surprisingly some informants listed the baby food in Scandinavia, like milk powder, as gifts to bring back to China.

Sure the food in Scandinavia is healthy; otherwise friends in China won’t let us bring back some milk powder. I have brought a lot foodstuff for kids, also fish oil. Food safety is a big issue in China (Participant 7).

Thirdly, Chinese tourists strongly prefer the food with “familiar flavor” (Chang, 2010), which was defined as encompassing a broader connotation including “familiar food items” and “familiar cooking methods”. Western food in general has varieties of differences from Chinese food, therefore, Chinese tourists, especially for those middle aged people with deep rooted Asian dietary habits, often miss the taste of home during traveling. While the food in Scandinavia, according to participant 9’s (August, 2014) definition, is “pure western food”.

My parents preferred the food in Germany, because we had large chunks of meat

and pickled cabbage, and we sat outside, it felt like those food markets in China, which was what they liked (Participant 9).

During traveling in Nordic Europe, I would exchange between western food and Chinese food (Participant 8).

Hence, having some good Chinese restaurants in local Scandinavian culture is important for Chinese tourists to occasionally find their “familiar flavor”, which is argued as an effective means to enhance the local food’s acceptability and palatability for Chinese tourists (Chang, 2010).

Fourthly, with a strong desire to explore local food culture when traveling, Chinese tourists most often would ask their “reference group”, like their friends or the internet, for recommendations (Chang, 2010). Especially on social media, the popularity of the restaurants plays a crucial role when Chinese tourists deciding the places for dining during traveling. The more recommendations and higher rankings on social media, the more trust Chinese tourists will have on the restaurants.

Travelling in Nordic Europe, if we are in town, we may find a more decent restaurant based on Tripadvisor or similar apps (Participant 9).

This was explained by Hofstede (1991) as the reason of the influence of Chinese collectivist culture, which emphasizes group interaction and consensus judgment. In addition, this phenomenon of following reference groups’ recommendation is regarded as in the pursuit of what is in “fashion”(Chang, 2010). The pursuit of “fashionability” could create the motivation for tourists in quest of foreign gastronomic experience (Finkelstein, 1998).

Identifying the value of local cuisine to tourists and mapping the influence of local cuisine on tourists’ perceptions of destinations become critical to product development and marketing of destinations (Guan & Jones, 2015: 416). Chinese tourists have their particular ways in perceiving the local food culture of Scandinavia. They perceived the food in Scandinavia is with no specialty, but as special souvenirs. They prefer the familiar flavor and rely on the reference group in order to better

experience and explore the local food culture. Overall, Chinese tourists' strong interests in experiencing the local food culture emphasizes the need for local tourism bureaus to develop local food as tourism products in Scandinavia. This would create and better perception of the local food spiking an increase interest from Chinese tourists', boosting their overall evaluations of the local cuisine and thus their image of the destination (Guan & Jones, 2015).

5.3 Modern media advertisement

According to Appadurai's propose about presentation of five dimensions of global cultural flow, particular interest in this section will be focused on mediascapes and the cultural forms and meanings that move across cultures through various "image-centered, narrative-based accounts of strips of reality" (1990: 299). Akaka and Alden continued, "Advertising is a key medium for driving this type of culture flow"(2010: 40). Among the complex origins of tourism imaginations, "modern media already plays upon internalized worldviews, directing them to specific destinations. There is a worldwide advertising industry creating these mediated messages" (Salazar & Graburn, 2014: 7).

Based on the discussion in the section 3.3 about the impact of digitization on photography, nowadays people are also framed and fixed by the images on TV, blogs and social networking sites due to mass sharing of digital pictures on the Internet. In this section, I will further discuss upon Chinese tourists' existing cultural perceptions about Scandinavia achieved from modern media and the to what extent Chinese tourists are relying on the social media in terms of creating imaginaries of Scandinavia.

As Urry states "what is sought for in a holiday is a set of photographic images which have already been seen in brochures, TV programmes, blogs and social networking sites" (2011: 179). For example, one informant said:

Because of the amazing pictures of fjords posted on Qyer.com, they are so beautiful and interesting. Then I decided to go there (Participant 11).

The reason why participant 11 chose Norway as destination was mainly because of the pictures on social media, which attracted her very much. The fjords in Norway thus became her main imaginaries of Norway and visiting them turned out to be the most impressive experience through that journey as she concluded, “the natural scenery can be the main attractive point in Scandinavian tourism advertising” (Participant 11). Another example is from another informant who shared her parents’ imaginaries about Sweden:

My parents once asked me to buy the Dala horse. They saw it from a TV programme, which introduced Swedish food and culture such as the soured fish. They were more interested in the wooden horse since it was Swedish and it was red (Participant 8).

Besides Dala horses in Sweden and Fjords in Norway, the images of the Ice hotel, Nyhavn and the Northern Lights are all successfully advertised and considered as the symbols of Scandinavia according to informants’ reflections and their picked best traveling photos as follows:



Fig.10. (Left) Provided by participant 18: Nyhavn in Copenhagen, Denmark.



Fig.11. (Right) Provided by participant 15: Ice Hotel in Kiruna, Sweden.

Participant 18 explained the reason of picking this photo as: “the view of Nyhavn is the one I have frequently seen through postcards and social media. Then I finally got there and saw it through my own eyes”. For the photo of Ice hotel, participant 15

explained: “I was firstly attracted by a picture of Ice Hotel posted by my friend on WeChat. He also went there in winter and the view was gorgeous. Besides, Ice hotel is famous, isn’ it”?

According to Akaka and Alden’s discussions about global consumer culture, that “firms’ cultural positioning strategies, often executed via international advertising, and consumers’ existing cultural perceptions play key roles in the emergence of shared symbols (e.g. brands)” (2010: 41). These examples are all indicating the increasing impacts of visualized media on Chinese people’s imaginaries of Scandinavia. Therefore, the images that local tourism bureaus have advertised internationally through modern media are to a great extent influencing Chinese tourists in choosing destinations, traveling behaviors and product satisfaction (Garrod, 2008).

6. Conclusion

In the chapter of conclusion, I would like to firstly summarize the findings from each chapter and secondly it will be followed by some applicable suggestions based on the findings.

6.1 Summary

This thesis investigated Chinese tourists’ traveling memory in Scandinavia through the process of their materializing traveling experiences. Based on the research material such as souvenirs and traveling photos from informants, the analysis was conducted from three perspectives, which are respectively the memory of being Chinese tourists, the traveling memory in Scandinavia, and the imaginations of Scandinavia. Three chapters of analysis were categorized in a chronological order of the whole journey, starting from the values Chinese tourists already obtained before

the trip, their traveling experiences during the trip and the imagination for the future with impacts from past experiences. During the journey, as a cultural exchange process between China and Scandinavia, some influential elements in tourists' memory were also analyzed and embedded throughout those three chapters.

In chapter 3, the study of Chinese tourists extracted some certain values from my informants that are most remarkably influencing their traveling behaviors, which are family expectations, special attention to *Guanxi* and influences of modern technology on Chinese tourists.

The study found that firstly family expectations that impulse my informants' motivation in creating memory objects like taking traveling photos and materializing their experience into commodities like souvenirs. Besides, different family status also differs the impact of family-oriented values on perceiving the culture of Scandinavia.

Secondly, my informant's special attention to *Guanxi*, meaning as taking the maintaining of social network for granted, made them unintentionally but always carry an inevitable task of bringing gifts and souvenirs back to their social circle. During their trip in Scandinavia, their desires in this respect ended up with the "chocolate phenomenon" instead of consuming the special local products. As a result, it was lack of knowledge and understanding of Scandinavia which caused that most of my informants, who had strong desires of consuming memory products here with their considering values of *Guanxi*, could not fulfill this important task in an ideal way with bringing Scandinavian culture back.

The third section analyzed the changings of Chinese tourists' traveling behaviors and ideas upon the tourism photography, as one of the most common way of materializing traveling experiences. Under the era of digital times, traveling photos in the digital formats has been shifting its influence from my informants' daily life to the mass "mediascape" (Urry 2011). Digital photos are now playing a more active role in framing the images of the destination through various media, which may attract potential Chinese tourists.

Through analyzing informants' traveling and consumption experiences in Scandinavia, chapter 4 extracted three elements and characteristics as the fond of collecting, the sense of familiarity and the feeling of freshness and unpleasantness, which as a result, reflected some issues from which some ideas of future improvement for the tourism bureau can be generated.

The fond of collecting was founded as Chinese tourists' common consuming habits during traveling. No matter what souvenirs they consumed and collected, it is the process of collecting traveling experiences that matters. On one hand, collecting traveling souvenirs is a way of describing personal totalizing biography. On the other hand, it is not worthy for them not to materialize any experiences since they come from far away. However, the species of souvenirs they bought in Scandinavia are limited, which again revealed the issue of their lacking knowledge of Scandinavia.

The sense of familiarity was reflected on many aspects about the whole trip, as it can influence the motivation of choosing destinations by kinship or friendship, choosing tourists attractions through well-known landmarks and consuming products from well-known brands. The sense of familiarity not only might construct a rapport between my informants and Scandinavia, it also built the trust for my informants to believe on their experiences and positive expectation.

The feeling of freshness and unpleasantness has been highlighted in the memory throughout my informants' traveling experiences in Scandinavia. My informants' feeling of freshness of Scandinavia was mainly generated from the special natural scenery, the clean environment, and healthy, balanced and organized lifestyle in Scandinavia, impressed as a "future world". The only way my informants found in materializing those experiences is consuming baby products. In terms of the unpleasantness, it tightly related with my informants' expectation of Scandinavia. When the high expectation crush on the inhospitable service, inconsiderate infrastructure and incomplete security control, Scandinavia was regarded by informants as a destination, which is not welcoming tourists. Meanwhile, those unpleasant experiences also affected their motion in keeping traveling memory and

consuming memory products.

Chapter 5 revealed the originalities of Chinese tourists' imaginations about Scandinavia, which were categorized into the memorable objects on the way, local branding and modern media advertisement. The analysis involved the impression my informants had about Scandinavia before they started the trip, the impact on their traveling expectations, and their ways of influencing the people around them.

The section "Memorable objects on the way" discussed the developing of informants' consuming process. According to informants' shopping plan before the journey, it was analyzed that their imagination about Scandinavia was mainly about Nordic fairy tales, sea products and the interior design. With the increasing life experiences in Scandinavia, Chinese people who permanently live here tend to consume more practical commodities and bring them back home. Besides, their descriptions and storytelling of the presents from Scandinavia play the remarkable role in developing the knowledge and creating imaginations of Scandinavia for the potential tourists around them.

The analysis in the section "local branding" was conducted through two aspects, which is about local well-known brands and local cuisine. Based on informants' memory recalling from interviews, their strong interests in consuming the local well-known brands and trying popular local cuisine can be on their "must to do" lists during traveling. The reason for famous brands was because brands are playing the remarkable role for Chinese people in creating the cultural image of the origin countries with the development of globalization. Chinese tourists build up their imaginations about Scandinavia to a great extent based on their knowledge of local brands. Out of trust, consuming them here is regarded as a valuable experience. In terms of the food culture, informants did not leave a deep impression about the local food from Scandinavia, however their habits in experiencing the local food, looking for recommendations for popular restaurants and consuming local food as souvenirs were all indicating that better branding of the local cuisine would be an attractive point for Chinese tourists.

Also, modern media has been playing a more and more important role in pre-forming images of Scandinavia for Chinese tourists. People tend to seek for the specific scenes they obtained from TV programs or other media, and take photos of them, as evidence that they have been to this “pre-known” place. As modern media is an indispensable part of most Chinese tourists’ life, Scandinavian tourism bureaus can think about utilizing the media properly, to boost the market and attract more tourists.

6.2 Applicable suggestions

To conclude, the thesis extracted some general and applicable suggestions from all the points of analysis above for the local tourism bureaus to be implemented and applied in the future.

Firstly, souvenirs in Scandinavia have high potential to be more localized and better packaged. Considering with Chinese tourists’ family-oriented and *Guanxi* values, deeply digging into the local culture and delicately packaging the local products with specialties into souvenirs, which for example could be commodities like sea products, baby food, household items and local food products, would fulfill Chinese tourists’ desires of materializing and collecting their traveling experiences in Scandinavia into memorable objects. Meanwhile those souvenirs, working as the mediators, can acknowledge more potential Chinese tourists of Scandinavian culture.

Secondly, Scandinavian culture could be better branded to the Chinese market by fully taking advantage of modern media. Considering the active mutual relationship between Chinese tourists and modern media in terms of tourism, local tourism bureaus may consider taking advantage of the power from social media, cooperating with some Chinese TV program or celebrity shows to acknowledge potential tourists of Scandinavian culture by advertising it. Frequent interactions on social media between Scandinavian tourism bureaus and Chinese cyber citizens, for example launching traveling photos competitions, would familiarize tourists with some aspects of Scandinavian culture and enrich their imaginations of Scandinavia.

Thirdly, according to informants' experiences and their impressions of Scandinavia, the tourists' attractions here have high potential to be specially packaged with its natural scenery, clean environment and healthy lifestyle. There are more places of interests in the rural areas of Scandinavia that can be specially packaged into tourist attractions, which can be suitable for relaxing family tours. The healthy lifestyle in Scandinavia can to a great extent be experienced during a journey in Scandinavia and commodities related to healthy life be packaged into souvenirs as well.

Fourthly, the development of the service level is inevitably to be improved so as to express Scandinavian hospitality to tourists. The public infrastructures for example, hotel service, public transportations, ATM machines with at least an English service on them would be much more helpful for tourists, which is also a way of building better integration with tourists from foreign countries. If tourists can to the greatest extent experience local citizens' daily life and at the same time experience the freshness from different culture of Scandinavia, the journey in Scandinavia would be convenient and memorable.

Fifthly, Scandinavian culture could be branded by taking fully advantage of the international recognition of local brands. Some popular Scandinavian brands like Ikea, Volvo, Ecco, Lego are to some extent representing Scandinavian culture in foreign countries, which normally constitutes tourists' basic knowledge and understanding of Scandinavia. In other words, Scandinavian industrial culture actually is popular around the world. Therefore, on the one hand, to develop museums based on those industries culture and brand them into tourists' attractions would build the connection with tourists' sense of familiarity. On the other hand, visitors would be interested to consume the commodities from these brands after visiting and experience products. This is just one way of branding local culture and making the connections with tourists.

References

Ethnographic material

a) List of Figures

Fig.1. Picture provided by participant 13: her son wearing the souvenir she bought in Sweden.

Fig. 2. Pictures provided by participant 10: (a) fridge magnets she has collected at her travels and (b) the ones she bought from Sweden and Iceland.

Fig. 3. Picture provided by participant 13: fridge magnets she bought when traveling.

Fig.4. Picture provided by participant 11: the moment of reunion with her best friend in Finland.

Fig. 5. Picture provided by participant 10: a sculpture in Iceland.

Fig. 6. Picture of the university logo of Shanghai Tongji University. Downloaded from <http://www.edu.cn/20051008/3154602.shtml>.

Fig. 7. Picture provided by participant 14: the Saint Claus village in Finland.

Fig.8. Picture provided by participant 11: her experience in the heavy snow in Kiruna, Sweden.

Fig.9 (a), (b), (c). Pictures provided by participant 10: the teapots and cups she bought from Sweden.

Fig.10. Picture provided by participant 18: Nyhavn in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Fig.11. Picture provided by participant 15: Ice Hotel in Kiruna, Sweden.

b) Interviews

Participant 1-4 Group interview, June 2014

Participant 5-7 Group interview, August 2014

Participant 8 Individual interview, October 2014

Participant 9 Individual interview, October 2014

Participant 10-15 Individual interviews, March 2015

Participant 16-18 Individual interviews, April 2015

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