

**Understanding Chinese Travellers' Travel Experiences  
in the UK: a Critical Analysis of an Online Community**

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**PhD**

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# **Understanding Chinese Travellers' Travel Experiences in the UK: a Critical Analysis of an Online Community**

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## Abstract

This study seeks to deepen our understanding of Chinese travellers' travel experience and the meanings they derived from their holiday in the UK by critically analysing the largest online travel community in China, namely [www.go2eu.com](http://www.go2eu.com). This is an online community created by travellers themselves, hence the traveller-generated content are rich.

Despite the growing importance of Chinese outbound travel market, a qualitative understanding of what it is like to be a Chinese traveller in the UK is still an under-researched area. In addition, with the advancement of Internet technology and the emergence of online communities, our social world has been increasingly influenced by online communities. Using the literature on experiential theory, tourism studies and online cultures, this study offers a qualitative understanding of this phenomenon.

This study adopts ethnography to research Chinese travellers' travel experience in the UK. The main data collection is based on a non-participant netnography in a chosen website [www.go2eu.com](http://www.go2eu.com). It is found that their travel experiences are very diverse. They prefer independent and immersive travel experience. They are interested in knowing about the UK culture, history and how the locals live their lives. They are experience-seekers whose experiences are dotted with moments of imaginative states, emotional responses and culturally rooted meanings. In total, the findings of the study identified five main themes, namely language and self-identity, experience of holiday time, experience of holiday space, bodily feelings and emotions.

A key contribution to new knowledge is the offering of rich qualitative insights and a theoretical framework for understanding Chinese travellers' travel experience in the UK, which can be generalised in future studies. Such qualitative insights can not only be of great value to those designing marketing communication and memorable experiences and precipitates effective tourism management but also useful for academic studies seeking to understand the differences between the behaviour and experiences of travellers from different cultures. As well as their experience of travelling in local tour groups, this study especially offers rich insights about what it is like to be a non-all-inclusive package tourist travelling from developing countries to developed countries. Moreover, this study adds understanding about the experience of holiday time, which is a relatively under-discussed area in the literature. The experience of poetic space and the active aesthetic experience of highest absorption also add new lights to existing tourism literature. Further, this study address the influence of online community plays on Chinese travellers' self-identities and language, experience of holiday time, holiday space and bodily

emotions, which is seldom touched upon. On top of that, the methodology of this study also enriches the newly emerged literature on online qualitative methods.

**Key words:** Chinese travellers, Chinese culture, Online culture, Netnography, Ethnography, Self-identity, Experience of time, Experience of Space, Bodily Feelings and Emotions

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## Chapter 1

# Introduction

## 1.1 Background

### 1.1.1 The Experience Economy

*Economists have typically lumped experiences in with services, but experiences are a distinct economic offering, as different from services as services are from goods. Today we can identify and describe this fourth economic offering because consumers unquestionably desire experiences, and more and more businesses are responding by explicitly designing and promoting them. (Pine and Gilmore, 1998, p97)*

During the past decade, followed by Pine and Gilmore's (1998; 1999) ground-breaking article and book on the 'experience economy', consumer experiences have gained increasing attention. The concept of an 'experience economy' comes about in an era where technological advancement has led to higher productivity and richer commodity supply. As such, competition among businesses is becoming increasingly intensified. The Internet has been used ever more intensively allowing for instant price comparison. As a result, goods and services tend to be exchanged on price and availability alone (Schmitt, 2003). Pine and Gilmore (1998; 1999) notes the progress into the fourth economic stage; that is 'the experience economy' especially in affluent developed economies where there is clearly an increasing demand for personalised experiences. In an 'experience economy', products and services alone can no longer serve as the differentiating factors that provide businesses with competitive advantage (Pine and Gilmore, 1998; 1999). In such an economic stage, the creation of memorable consumer experiences involving using goods as the 'props' and services as the 'stages' adds economic values centred on the staging of memorable experiences that engage consumers in a personal way (Pine and Gilmore, 1999). Pine and Gilmore (1999) recommend that in order to have rich experiences all four realms of experience namely entertainment, education, escapist and esthetical ones need to be explored. That is to say, companies need to go beyond just 'entertaining' consumers and use every available space to 'engage' consumers' five senses, attending to their emotional, physical, intellectual and even spiritual needs. In addition, experiences are best designed and staged using experience design principles, namely the need to: 'theme the experiences' so that consumers can integrate all their feelings experienced; 'harmonize impression with positive cues'; 'eliminate negative cues' which are inconsistent with the theme; 'mix in memorabilia'; and, 'engage all five senses' (p.102-104). The successful designing and staging of experiences relies on creativity and innovation. Many of the later work on consumer experiences, in essence, are grounded in the concept of an 'experience economy'. Such a concept is significant for the

tourism industry because the existence of tourism industry lies in the supply of consumer experiences given its hedonic and conspicuous nature (Morgan and Watson, 2007; Morgan, Lugosi and Ritchie, 2011).

### **1.1.2 The Growing Importance of the Consumer Experiences**

Over the past few decades the consumer experiences have attracted increasing academic research (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; McIntyre, 1989; Arnould and Price, 1993; Lee, Datillo and Howard, 1994; McIntyre and Roggenbuck, 1998; Borrie and Roggenbuck, 2001; Curtin, 2005). Building on the landmark text by Pine and Gilmore (1999), the recent publication by Morgan et al (2011) brings the debate up to the present day in that it explores three aspects of experience research, namely, understanding experiences, researching experiences and managing experiences.

Echoing Pine and Gilmore (1999) and Schmitt (1999; 2003)'s view, Morgan et al. (2011) stress that such exponential growth in interest in the consumer experiences has emerged from a context where an increasingly rich supply of commodities and a rising functional homogeneity offer consumers a wide range of consumption possibilities. This in part, can be contributed to the fact that functional homogeneity is unable to differentiate economic offerings. As such, the importance of 'experience management' lies in its ability to sustain competitive advantages where there is a rising functional homogeneity.

In addition to the principles and techniques offered by Pine and Gilmore (1999) in designing and staging successful experiences, Morgan et al. (2011) highlights the importance of interactive 'co-creation' as seen in Prahalad and Ramaswamy's (2004 cited by Morgan et al., 2011) work, ideally enlarging the concept of 'experience creation' (Sundbo and Darmer, 2008 cited by Morgan et al., 2011) with the involvement of a diverse multitude of agencies and processes in producing experiences. While the current experience management literature has addressed the matured Western markets, future work also needs to understand the newly rising markets, such as the Chinese one. Successfully managing experiences cannot be achieved without a good understanding of experiences, which is often uncovered through innovative research methods. While the current experience research has adopted quantitative research methods, Morgan et al. (2011) calls for more creative qualitative research methods.

If consumption is not merely about functional utility, but more about subjective 'feelings, fantasy and fun', as described by Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) and how it serves social, psychological and symbolic meanings, to operate successfully in such an environment, companies are recommended to adopt a consumer-oriented experiential approach where they

explicitly listen to consumers' voices, attend to their feelings and experiences, and value their subjective interpretations. The literature suggest that only when a comprehensive understanding of experiences from the consumers own perspectives is gained, are companies and experience providers able to achieve added value and competitive advantage by designing and providing personally meaningful experiences that bring significance to the lives of their consumers.

### **1.1.3 Consumer Experiences in Travel and Tourism**

The tourism industry has naturally become the pioneer in the adoption of experiential approaches due to the conspicuous and hedonic nature of consumption (Morgan et al., 2011). This means that utilitarian may be less of a concern for tourism industry compared with other industries that mainly focus on the offering of functional 'products'. The tourism industry, in essence, is presented to supply consume experiences (Morgan et al., 2011). In the tourism industry, as elsewhere, with the increasing development of transportation and Internet technology, there is increasing functional homogeneity in terms of tourism product offerings. For instance, more and more destinations can offer goods and services with similar functional attributes. As such, offering unique tourist experiences can create added values and sustain competitive advantages.

### **1.1.4 The Growth and Significance of the Chinese Market**

China is widely recognized as one of the major emerging outbound tourism markets in the world where the annual average year-on-year growth figure has been 22% since 2000 (WTTC, 2006). As a country with the fastest growing economy and the largest population in the world, China is expected to generate more and more travellers abroad in the years to come. It is estimated that the number of Chinese outbound tourists has the potential to reach 100 million by 2015 (WTO, 2008). Despite this rapid growth, the literature on the phenomenon of the Chinese outbound tourist market has been limited.

More recently, studies have begun to focus on the understanding of Chinese travellers. To date, certain authors have contributed to the understanding of Chinese travellers (e.g. Choi, Liu, Pang and Chow, 2008; Gu and Ryan, 2008; Law, To and Goh, 2008; Li, Harrill, Uysal, Burnett and Zhan, 2009; Sparks and Pan, 2009; Chang, Kivela and Mak, 2010; Lee, Joen and Kim, 2010; Ye, Qiu and Yuen, 2010; Li, Lai, Harrill, Kline and Wang, 2011; Tsang, 2011). The majority of the current literature on Chinese travellers has focused exclusively on trends (e.g., WTO, 2008; Li et al., 2009), behaviour (e.g., Choi et al., 2008; Gu and Ryan, 2008; Law et al., 2008; Sparks and Pan, 2009; Chang et al., 2010), expectation or motivation (e.g., Li et al., 2011) and satisfaction (Gu and Ryan, 2008) when visiting Asian destinations such as Korea, Singapore

and Hong Kong (Choi et al., 2008 ; Lee, et al., 2010) and on all-inclusive package tours (e.g., Chang et al., 2010). A latest study done by (Ye et al., 2010) has started to address both motivation and the experiential dimension of Chinese tourists, despite the fact that the study they conducted is specific to Chinese medical tourists visiting Hong Kong. Lacking to date, however, are studies that investigate Chinese travel experiences, especially in Europe. A variety of reasons may explain this paucity of research to date. For example, although historically tourism has a long tradition in China, contemporary Chinese outbound tourism has not been researched intensively. Until now, Asia still constitutes the number one outbound tourism destination for the Chinese tourist market. Contemporary Chinese outbound tourism, especially to Europe, is a comparatively new phenomenon. As mentioned earlier, the experiential approach is a newly-introduced one, only after Pine and Gilmore's landmark text in 1999. Finally, the Chinese economy, despite its rapid developing pace and its promising potential demand, may have not yet reached the fully-fledged 'experience economy', as is the case in the more developed Western nations. This may partially explain the lack of experiential research in this area.

Most previous research has adopted a quantitative approach, involving questionnaire surveys to understand Chinese tourists (Choi et al., 2008; Gu and Ryan, 2008; Law et al., 2008; Sparks and Pan, 2009; Tsang, 2011). Very few qualitative studies have been dedicated to the understanding of Chinese travelling experiences in European destinations. While earlier traveller behaviour literature focuses upon the understanding of motivations and individual cognitions, mostly in other Asian destinations, this study adopts an experiential and meaning-based approach in that it focuses upon Chinese travellers' emic experiences, their feelings, fantasy and fun, and the emotional reactions and symbolic significance initiated in interaction at the destination level. Experiences are culturally bound. Hence, motivations, values and meanings of travel experiences are likely to be different for Chinese travellers when compared with Western travellers (Urry, 2002). As such, their perceptions and interpretations of tourist experiences may differ.

### **1.1.5 The Growth of Technology**

In addition to the increasing need for personalised memorable experiences, another important change in our contemporary world is the tremendous developments in technology. In particular, the development and adoption of information and network technology has now reached a point where the sharing of 'experiences' with like-minded others has become an established part of modern living (Kozinets, 2010). Much of the recent growth in usage of the Internet can be attributed to the use of Online Social Networks such as Facebook and Twitter and the increasing emergence of e-cultures and communities. This revolution has transformed the social lives of

many people around the world to the extent that Kozinets (2010) claimed that it is impossible to understand fully one's social world without consideration of the online culture, or cultures, one participates in. More importantly, as predicted by Kanter (2001), in the foreseeable future when the so-called e-generation (commonly referred to as Generation Y) dominates our society, those companies who are able to respond to e-cultures well will replace those who are unable to do so.

To date, Asian users of the Internet outnumber those in the West (Li and Bernoff, 2008). Asia is the number one region in terms of the number of Internet users (825.1 million), which occupies 42% of the world total (Internet World Stats Website, 2011). China has the largest number of Internet users at 513 million, not to mention those Chinese speaking people living outside China. It is reported that the Chinese spend the largest percentage of their leisure time online (BBC website, 2009). In the tourism industry, for instance, the Internet has been reported as the most popular way of acquiring travel information (WTO, 2008). According to the WTO (2008), 90% of Chinese travellers under 40s use the Internet at work and regard it as useful source of travel information. In addition, online social travel communities are growing with the rising number of online communities formed by travel enthusiasts. Chinese consumers are keen to travel, to write while travelling and eager to share and express their feelings online as identified by Baidu reports (Baidu website, 2008). One of the biggest travel websites offering travel information to European destinations is [www.go2eu.com](http://www.go2eu.com), which has in excess of 1.2 million registered members and the highest clicking rate (Baidu website, 2008). It is based on tourists themselves supplying information to each other. There are large amounts of user-created contents, rather than the more traditional sites dominated by commercially-driven content.

#### **1.1.6 Researching Consumer and Travel Experiences**

With regard to suitable methods to investigate consumer and traveller experiences in general, and to research Chinese traveller experiences in particular, quantitative methods have dominated in earlier stages (Jensen, 1999). This is partially because consumers used to have been pictured in the literature as rational beings whose satisfaction is derived from the discrepancy between 'expectation' and the subsequent 'perception' (e.g. Bettman, 1979).

In the research of Chinese travellers, quantitative methods still constitute the prime focus (Choi et al., 2008; Gu and Ryan, 2008; Law et al., 2008; Sparks and Pan, 2009; Tsang, 2011). More recently, conventional qualitative methods are being used such as in-depth interviews and focus groups (e.g. Chang et al., 2010; Li et al., 2010; Ye et al., 2010). However, little research has adopted the online ethnographic approach, as advocated by Kozinets (1998, 2002), Morgan (2006) and Watson, Morgan and Hemmington (2008). Netnography is a method which blends ethnographic research techniques with Internet technology to research tourist experiences.



Given the increasing emergence of online travel communities, online ethnography could prove to be a potentially promising method where interesting and rich data can be obtained in a timely manner. In the Chinese travel research domain, for instance, virtually no research has adopted a qualitative non-participant observational netnography.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

The rising attention in ‘consumer experiences’, the continuous Chinese economic development and the substantial growth in the Chinese outbound tourism market point towards the importance of understanding more about this emerging market. An understanding is critical for the successful designing and staging of personal, memorable and engaging experiences, tailor-made for this market. Despite this, there is a gap in the literature where there is little qualitative research dedicated to Chinese tourist experiences, especially in European destinations. Qualitative research in this area is needed. As the Internet technology, the online e-communities and cultures have been increasingly integrated into consumers’ social world, it is important to better understand the tourist experiences shared with their online peers within these e-communities and cultures. This may be of particular relevance when researching Asian tourists where there is relatively active online involvement. This study, therefore, addresses this gap by researching what is like to be a Chinese tourist in European destinations and their experiences using a newly emerging methodology, namely netnography.

## **1.3 Aim and Objectives**

UK, being one of the typical European destinations in which the researcher has already had intensive travel experience, has been chosen for this study. The aim of this study is to deepen our understanding of Chinese traveller experiences in the UK, where there is as yet little qualitative data available. In order to achieve this aim, this study has five key objectives, namely:

1. To undertake a review of current literature concerning consumer experiences, tourist experiences, Chinese outbound traveller markets, Chinese culture and online cultures.
2. To adopt a qualitative non-participant observation netnography to research Chinese travel experiences. To contribute to our further understanding of netnography as a method to research consumer experiences.
3. To explore what is like to be a Chinese traveller who is a member of an online community group to visit the UK and particularly the wider meanings of their travel experiences.

4. To understand the nature of Chinese travellers' participation in eLearning communities such as the online travel groups. To explore the impact of online community group participation in a Chinese tourist experience in the UK.
5. To Explore the Implications of These Chinese Travel Experiences for the Management of Services or Experience Industries

#### **1.4 Research Methodology**

While it is maintained that there is one single truth regarding the nature of the external physical universe as underpinned by the realist or positivist ontology, individual's perception and experiences of such objective universe is subjective and uniquely different (e.g. Luo, 1995; Patton, 2002). The subjective experience research is best approached from an interpretative ontology recognising 'multiple-reality'. This study taps into Chinese travellers' subjective travel experiences utilising an interpretative ontology underlying subjective reality.

In epistemological terms, this study is more closely aligned with the interpretivist approach in the belief that the researcher cannot be completely objective (Patton, 2002). It holds, as also seen in the traditional Chinese epistemologies (e.g. Luo, 1995), that the knowing-process is the combination of experiencing through 'senses' and the use of 'rationality'.

The research paradigm divides its theory construction approach into three main categories. On the one hand, there is a deductive approach in which theory and a research hypothesis are formulated prior to the data collection and then the data collected serves purely as the testing of existing theory (Mason, 1996 cited by Curtin, 2008). On the other end, there lies the purely inductive approach, such as grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), where the researchers enter the field with no pre-influence of existing literature and conceptions. In the middle of the spectrum there lies the approach where data and theory are generated concurrently and iteratively (Mason, 1996 cited by Curtin, 2008). This study employs the middle approach where theory generation is an interactive and evolving process. The literature review provides the study with a context, during which the gaps in the literature can be continuously identified and modified in congruence with the results of the study.

This ethnographic study explores the nature of Chinese travellers' experiences within the context of a natural-occurring online social setting. Because it adopts non-participant observation approach, there is minimal external artificial control imposed by the researcher. The online threads sampled for the final data analysis includes all postings between January 2009 and January 2010 regarding discussions about travel in the UK at the 'travel stories' section in the UK forum at [www.go2eu.com](http://www.go2eu.com).

## **1.5 Relevance and Impact of the study**

There is increasing evidence of the growing importance of the Chinese outbound tourist market despite a relative lacking in the literature. This study seeks to address this gap in the literature by going beyond ‘quantitative statistic data’ and offering a qualitative understanding of what is like to be a Chinese tourist in Europe. This study hopes to shed important insights on how Chinese tourists experience European destinations and thus be useful for future academic study of the differences between the behaviour and experiences of tourists from different cultures.

Investigating more closely the Chinese tourists in European destinations is a relatively new phenomenon. Designing and developing personalised memorable experiences for tourists can both serve the needs of the destination countries and the Chinese tourists’ specific needs related to their touring or holiday experiences. Pine and Gilmore (1999) suggest that memorable experiences consist of five key design principles. Thus, experience providers can make specific changes in the themes of the experiences, as well as other elements, to create a meaningful experience to engage their tourist clients in a much more personalised way.

More specifically, with a growing number of destinations offering similar products and services, the application of an ‘experiential’ concept may serve as new means of successful destination differentiation. By experientialising the commodity offerings for a given destination this allows for the sustaining of competitive advantages and creates higher economic values. This, more explicitly as suggested by Pine and Gilmore (1999), may make the goods (memorabilia) and services offered more appealing to Chinese tourists. Goods may be used as the ‘props’ and services may be used as the ‘stages’ to facilitate such memorable experiences. This may encourage repeat business for the providers and referrals from the Chinese travellers. Thus, a more in depth study into the essence of the Chinese travellers’ travel experiences in the UK may offer tremendous insights for experience providers in the designing and development of efficient and enjoyable tourist experiences specifically for the Chinese travellers.

## **1.6 Structure of the Thesis**

While Chapter One has explained the rationale of the topic and set out the aim and objectives and conceptual underpinnings of the study, Chapter Two provides a synthesis of the relevant theory and literature on experiences in general and consumer “traveller” experiences in particular within the context of contemporary Western literature. Subsequently, Chapter Three looks specifically at Chinese perspectives and explores the Chinese outbound traveller market,

Chinese culture in general and Chinese tourism culture in particular. In Chapter Four, literature on online communities and cultures are reviewed.

Chapter Five describes the research methodology. The first section of the research methodology chapter covers the explanation of the researcher's axiological, ontological and epistemological positions. Then the research methodology, which is a non-participant netnography to analyse the data generated from one popular outbound Chinese travellers' online community ([www.go2eu.com](http://www.go2eu.com)) is detailed. This includes the comprehensive discussion about the research approaches, research strategies, time horizons, data collection, the sampling procedures, ethnographic analysis of the data, ethical issues and the researcher's positionality. The ethnographic approach is described followed by Chapter Six to Chapter Nine takes up the reflective ethnographic analyses of the themes and sub-themes that have emerged from the thick data gathered from the online postings in the chosen online Chinese travel community.

To be more specific, the findings pertaining to the language and self-identities are revealed in Chapter Six. Chapter Seven looks into Chinese travellers' experiences of holiday time. Chapter Eight presents findings related to their experience of holiday space. Chapter Nine uncovers their bodily feelings on holidays. Finally, conclusions are drawn accordingly in Chapter Ten. This starts with an evaluation of the research and the presentation of the contribution to new knowledge theoretically, methodologically and empirically. Subsequently, limitations and recommendations for future research are explored. Having outlined the thesis structure, the following three chapters provide a detailed review of the literature to set the context for the research.

## **Chapter 2**

# **Tourist Experience**

## **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter introduces and critically evaluates the relevant theory and published literature on experience in general and tourist experiences in particular. It is broken down into four sections, the first of which provides a general discussion of human experiences followed by experiences in the management literature. In section 2.3, an over-arching section on tourism experiences and the experiential and meaning-based approach to assess experience quality is presented. There then follows a discussion about themes related to language and self-identities, experience of holiday time, experience of holiday space and bodily feelings and emotions. The chapter concludes with the justification of the research approach adopted in this study.

## **2.2 Experiences**

### **2.2.1 The Notion of Human Experiences**

Experience is a complex notion and has been conceptualised from various perspectives (Caru and Cova, 2003). For instance, sociologists and psychologists view experience as ‘a subjective and cognitive activity’ permitting individual development (Dubet, 1994, p 93 cited by Caru and Cova, 2003, p270). In philosophy, experience is construed as a ‘personal trial’ which usually leads to individual transformation (Dilthey, 1976, p161 cited by Caru and Cova, 2003, p269), or the gaining of individual ‘knowledge’; in science experiences are treated as an experimentation based on generalisable factual proof called ‘scientific knowledge’ (Agamben, 1989, p25 cited by Caru and Cova, 2003). In anthropology and ethnology, ‘experience is the way in which individuals live their own cultures’ (Bruner, 1986, p4 cited by Caru and Cova, 2003, p270). Experience can further be divided into the lived experience as ‘Erlebnis’ or reflected experience as ‘Erfahrung’ (Boswijk, Thijssen and Peelen, 2005). Boswijk et al. (2005, p125) define experience in the sense of Erfahrung as ‘continuous interactive process of doing and undergoing, of action and reflection, from cause to sequence, that provides meaning to the individual in several contexts of his life’.

Among various experience definitions, several common characteristics can be identified. Emotions and imaginative states are the core of experience. Unlike externally observable behaviour, experience is more of an inner-subjective personal occurrence arising from the interaction with other humans and the external physical world (Caru and Cova, 2003). Individuals always draw from their own accumulated feelings to experience the external world. Meanwhile, experiences can lead to a formation of a newer state of mind, emotional feelings and a more profound grasp of life. It is a personal occurrence with some memorable significance in someone's life. It is also a continuous and cumulative process of learning, which may lead to personal transformation (Dewey 1934; Dilthey, 1976; Dubet, 1994 cited by Caru and Cova, 2003; Boswijk et al., 2005). Individuals can gain knowledge and change through experience (Caru and Cova, 2003). It is through experience that humans discover the world around them and understand themselves.

In experience, individuals can be actively involved in or passively accept the experience (Caru and Cova, 2003). Experience can be mundane and extraordinary (Caru and Cova, 2003). Mundane experience is more akin to the 'mere experience' identified by Turner (1986 cited by Caru and Cova, 2003), in which individuals more submissively undergo and accept events. The extraordinary experience is more akin to the 'an experience' (Turner, 1986 cited by Caru and Cova, 2003).

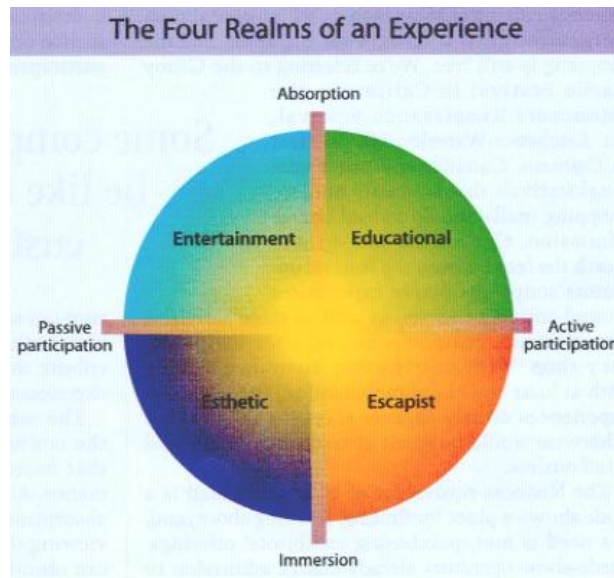
So far as experiences are concerned, extraordinary (Abrahams, 1986), flow experiences (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; 1997), 'peak experience' (Maslow, 1962; 1964), meaningful experiences (Boswijk et al., 2005) are several of the most desirable experiences reported in the literature. Extraordinary experiences are characterised by high level of emotional intensity usually triggered by unusual events (Arnould and Price, 1993; Hanefors and Mossberg, 2003). They often serve as 'rites of passage', in which personal development (Arnould and Price, 1993) and transformation (Pine and Gilmore, 1999) are most likely to occur. In extraordinary experiences, individuals often hold vague expectations (Arnould and Price, 1993) or 'no script' at all (Hanefors and Mossberg, 2003). The extraordinary is interactive and personally involving (Hanefors and Mossberg, 2003). Extraordinary experience offers surprise, pleasure, enjoyment and it is memorable (Hanefors and Mossberg, 2003). Flow experiences are a mental state with total absorption that normally occurs when there is a match between individual skills and the level of challenge of the tasks. In flow, time may past faster or slower than usual and individuals feel joyful, spontaneous, immersed, 'letting-be' and intrinsically rewarding (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997).

In peak experiences, individuals feel extremely fulfilled and undergo higher order feelings such as 'moments of highest happiness and fulfilment' with intense meanings (Maslow, 1962, p69)

and are associated with perceptions of self-actualisation. Similar to flow experience, peak experience is also characterised as being spontaneous and ‘letting-be’, rare, unexpected, ecstatic, the loss of self, high level of absorption, a feeling of joy. However, the joyfulness depicted in peak experience is of optimal intensity. Unlike flow experience, peak experiences are not necessarily derived from intrinsic motivation. Boswijk et al. (2005), having integrated several inherent elements from ‘flow experience’, identified that meaningful experiences exhibit the following characteristics:

1. There is a heightened concentration and focus, involving all one’s senses
2. one’s sense of time is altered
3. one is touched emotionally
4. the process is unique for the individual and has intrinsic value
5. there is contact with the ‘raw stuff’, the real thing
6. one does something and undergoes something
7. there is a sense of playfulness
8. one has the feeling of having control of the situation
9. there is a balance between the challenge and one’s own capacities
10. there is a clear goal

Pine and Gilmore (1999), on the other hand, divide the content of experience into four types: entertainment, education, escapism and aesthetic experience. According to their framework, the content of experience can be divided along two dimensions, namely the level of participation and the relationship between human and the environment. The horizontal axis represents the level of participation. One end of the horizontal axis signifies passive participation and the other end denotes active. A symphony audience is a typical example of the former experience and skiers of the latter. The vertical axis stands for the relationship between human and the environment. At one end of the vertical axis the relationship between is low, and, at the other end, human and the environment become ‘one’. It says watching TV belongs to the former and game-playing belongs to the latter. Often, the richest experiences simultaneously cover all four areas and lie in the ‘sweet spot’, which is the intersection of the four areas. As Pine and Gilmore (1999) say, the richest experiences simultaneously cover the entertainment, education, escapism and esthetical aspects. It, as seen in **Figure 2.1**, lies in the middle.



**Figure 2.1: The Four Realms of an Experience**  
Sources: Pine and Gilmore (1998, p 102; 1999)

### **2.2.2 Human Experiences in Management Literature**

In management literature, experience can be divided into two main typologies (Caru and Cova, 2003). One underlies the marketing (Schmitt, 1999) and economic perspectives (Pine and Gilmore, 1999) and the other underlies the consumer perspective. From the marketing and economic perspective, experience is construed as a holistic memorable economic offering where goods are used as the props and services as the stages for the occurrence of experiences. The consumer literature, meanwhile, regards experience as a personal occurrence, often with important emotional and symbolic significance, founded on interaction with stimuli which are products or services consumed (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). While within the marketing and economic approach experience has been featured as ‘extraordinary’ and ‘memorable’ to justify the charge of a fee (Pine and Gilmore, 1999); the consumer experience, in reality, may combine both ‘extraordinary’ and ‘ordinary’ elements (Caru and Cova, 2003; Poulsson and Kale 2004). It may be just the ‘take-away impression’ of the consumer created by his or her experience with products and services (Carbone and Haeckel, 1994, p8 cited by Poulsson and Kale, 2004).

Despite the fact that these two experience typologies may differ in their extraordinariness, they are also inter-related. What the former perspective promotes is a consumer-oriented philosophy highlighting individual personal experiences. This is, in fact, what the latter seeks to understand. Only once a thorough understanding of experiences from consumers’ own perspectives is



achieved, can we design and stage a unique memorable experience that yields economic values. Consumer experience values the emotions, feelings, fantasy and fun (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). The offering of experience can make the ‘tangibles’ intangible. In addition, in management literature, consumer experience is distinguished from consumption: while the former is related to a market relation the latter can occur with or without a market relation (Caru and Cova, 2003). According to Caru and Cova (2003), a meal purchased from the supermarket and consumed at home is a consumption experience and a meal consumed at the restaurant is a consumer experience. As such, consumption experience is not always planned by experience providers. In this sense, it is better to view travel experience as that of a consumption experience carried out in the tourism domain. This is because travel experiences not only include the pre-packaged tour elements, travellers can also travel independently, purchase parts of a package via many different companies and then assemble them together themselves. Having discussed and defined experience, the next section presents tourist experience literature.

### **2.3 Tourist Experiences**

Nowadays, millions of people travel from place to place to acquire different holiday experiences. As a result, tourism has become a global social practice. In response to the growth of the tourism industry, much research has focused on investigating ‘tourists’ and their tourist experiences (e.g. MacCannell, 1973; Graburn, 1977; Cohen, 1984; Hanefors and Mossberg, 2003; Williams and Anderson, 2005; Xie, 2005; Uriely, 2005; Curtin, 2008). Tourism has been studied from various viewpoints. Williams and Anderson (2005) look at it from a theatrical perspective. It is viewed as modern leisure (Cohen, 1984) or a pilgrimage (MacCannell, 1973; Graburn, 1977; Cohen, 1984). Tourist experience is heterogeneous (Uriely, 2005). Different people need different experiences (Cohen, 1979). The tourism industry subsists to supply a variety of experiences (Morgan and Watson, 2007; Morgan, Lugosi and Ritchie, 2011). If travellers range from the ones who are in pursuit of ‘pleasure’ to the ones who are in the quest for meanings, tourist experience theoretically encompasses five modes, namely the recreational, the diversionary, the experiential, the experimental and the existential one (Cohen, 1974).

Tourist experience is traditionally portrayed, at least in social science literature, as an extraordinary experience representing the negation of the daily mundane (e.g. Graburn, 1989). Quan and Wang (2004), however, recognise the co-existence of extraordinary ‘peak’ experience and daily experience. Peak experience is the experience of attractions that constitute the major motivation of ‘tourist experience’. Daily experiences are those satisfying the basic consumer needs but do not constitute the major motivations to tourism. Viewing tourist experience as extraordinary one captures the essence of the tourist experience despite the fact that the actual experience of the diversified extraordinariness represents the reality (Uriely, 2005). According

to Xie and Wu (2000), tourists desire ‘extraordinary’, ‘peak’ and ‘flow’ experiences although they may not always experience them on holidays. Xie (2005) argues that the meanings of performing certain daily routines (such as eating, sleeping) may alter because it happens in the ‘tourist world’ and new meanings are assigned to such daily activities. Uriely (2005) sees a reconsideration of the distinctiveness of tourism from that of everyday life experiences and stresses that the boundary between tourist and everyday experience is increasingly blurred. In this study, rather than pre-assume the ‘extraordinariness’ of Chinese travellers’ travel experiences, it seeks to uncover if their travel experiences are extraordinary or not from their emic descriptions.

Earlier tourism experience literature focuses on the understanding of tourist motivations (e.g. Gray, 1970; Cohen, 1979; 1984; Dann, 1977; 1981; Iso-Ahola, 1982; 1983; Beard and Ragheb, 1983; Dunn Ross and Iso-Ahola, 1991). It relies on the motivation-oriented approach to assess the quality of tourist experiences. It normally involves the assessment of ‘expectations’ and then subsequently compares this with the ‘perceptions’ using a survey along a pre-determined set of quality attributes to calculate the discrepancy. The discrepancy scores, as it is claimed, represent the satisfaction level (e.g., Bettman, 1979). The higher the discrepancy scores, the higher the satisfaction level. This way of assessing the quality of travel experience is also known as an ‘information processing’ approach, or ‘expectation conformation’ theory. It is based on three core assumptions: (1) consumers have a clear expectation; (2) consumers expect and only expect those quality attributes that appeared in the pre-defined scale; (3), satisfaction derives from the discrepancy between expectation and perception.

Over the years, this approach has been questioned. Expectation is just a blurring priori understanding of what might be experienced (Xie and Wu, 2000). In some experiences, especially the extraordinary ones, the consumers hold vague expectations (Arnould and Price, 1993) or ‘no scripts’ at all (Hanefors and Mossberg, 2003). In addition, when perception falls below expectation, consumers’ evaluation does not necessarily and instantly become negative. They have the ability to adjust themselves. For instance, according to Csikszentmihalyi (1991), those who are good at controlling their inner experience have the potential to control the quality of their life. In the tourism industry, tourists who are good at controlling their inner experience may be able to stay positive even when experiencing negative services. Hence they may be in a better position to enjoy quality tourist experiences. Another criticism is that although the use of a pre-defined set of attributes is quick to ensure that companies are ‘doing things right’ along these dimensions, it can never lead to strategic changes. This is because other potentially important attributes are not included in the pre-defined set.

In addition, there is increasing recognition that consumers' evaluations of their consumption are not just influenced by the fulfilment of expectations. It is more likely to be dictated by the primarily subjective states such as hedonic pleasure and symbolic meanings (Holbrook and Hirschmann, 1982; Zeithaml and Bitner, 2000). Different emotional response modes, such as contentment, pleasure, delight, and relief might all be described as satisfaction (Oliver, 1996). This is of particular relevance to the tourism industry because tourism consumption is hedonic and conspicuous in nature. Most importantly, what expectation-confirmation theory adopts is a segregation approach. It breaks the complex experience into individually constituted elements and subsequently assumes the aggregated whole equals to the summation of individual elements. According to the holistic approach seen in traditional Chinese Taoist philosophy (e.g. Lao Tsu, translated by Gia-Fufeng, 1972) and Gestalt psychology (e.g. Koffka, 1935; Kohler, 1947 cited by Xie, 2005), the aggregated whole may be larger than the summation of individual parts. By combining them, something new may be formed. As such, tourist experience is best researched holistically (Gyimothy, 2000; Xie and Wu, 2000). A motivation-focused approach such as expectation-conformation model may only represent a snapshot of a certain rational moment of a total experience, and therefore may be an insufficient point of departure for the explanation of the whole process of tourist experiences. This leads to the adoption of an experience-based research approach to understand tourist experience (Killian, 1992).

However, the experience-based approach is still unable to identify the underlying meanings individuals assign to their experiences. Afterwards, the holistic meaning-based approach was presented to address the limitations associated with previous approaches. Tourists are believed not just to process information, but also interpret their own experience through a cultural interpretative frame (McCracken, 1987). Merely using an information processing model is unable to successfully address the cultural context of the consumption (McCracken, 1986; 1987). The meaning-based approach focuses on the understanding of how the experiences are constructed and remembered from the consumers' own perspectives (Patterson, Williams and Sherl, 1994). This method roots the interpretation and construction of meanings deeply within consumer sub-cultures (Borrie and Birzell, 2001), where they are depicted as individuals who are engaged in a cultural project, as storytellers who actively narrate their experiences to express themselves and create a sense of identity (McCracken, 1987). Because of this, the next section discusses self-identity and language in details.

### **2.3.1 Language and Self-identities**

Self-identity is a set of characteristics making an individual or a group the same or different from other individuals or groups (Jenkins, 1996). Self-identity can be divided into personal identity and social identity. Personal identity refers to the unique attributes one possesses that

are the same or different from other people (Fornas, 1995). Social identity is the similar and collective features shared at group level (Fornas, 1995). Personal identity is the totality of an individual's life experiences, which includes elements such as past experiences, values, beliefs, abilities, achievement, personality, uniqueness, lifestyles and personal aesthetic tastes (McCracken, 1990; Featherstone, 1991; Douglas and Isherwood, 1996). This suggests that personal identity is a much wider concept incorporating various components such as one's social identity (e.g. group memberships, nationality and social status).

Personal identity comprises internal and external aspects. Internal personal identity depicting one's inner perception of his or her own attributes (the individual's self-image) whereas external personal identity denotes how one's attributes are outwardly evaluated by the public often according to social categorization (the individual's public images) (Jenkins, 1996). Similarly, social identity is also believed to incorporate two aspects, internal and external social identity. Internal social identity comes from a sense of belonging and subjective perception of group membership association. While, external social identity refers to group attributes externally defined and imposed by social categorisation (Jenkins, 1996). In the tourism setting, for instance, an eighteen-year boy may subjectively perceive himself as mature and participate in holiday experiences tailor-made for adults, when he may be externally perceived as young. Often internal and external aspects of self-identity interact with each other. Individuals are conscious about their social image, and often internalise the other's perception of him/her. Once internalised, the external aspects become an integral part of internal personal identity.

Often, psychological mechanisms operating in the process of social identification include social categorization, social comparison and the need for positive self-esteem (Solomon and Askegaard, 2002). Social categorization refers to the act of perceiving others as being either 'our group' or 'their groups'. Social comparison is a more evaluative act of comparing one group with another. By comparing and defining differences with other groups, the communal features 'our group' possesses may become clearer (Jenkins, 1996). Generally, individuals are passionate about their 'belonging groups' and evaluate their 'belonging groups' as more favourable than other groups. It is through such favourable comparative evaluation that individuals gain a sense of self-esteem.

There exist debates about the stability of self-identity. On the one hand, identity is viewed as more static based on the assumption of an existence of a stable 'self' waiting to be discovered. On the other hand, there witnessed increasing freedom of consumption styles leading to highly fluid identities (Giddens, 1991; Firat and Venkatesh, 1993; Desforjes, 2000; Lysloff, 2003; Williams and Copes, 2005). Contemporary identities are less embraced by social hierarchies (Giddens, 1991). Consumers are believed to enact different identities in different situations to

make themselves acceptable (Firat and Venkatesh, 1993). There is often a lack of emotional depth and commitment to a singular self-identity (Firat and Venkatesh, 1993). Smith (2006) notes Goffman's view on self-identity stating that individual has multiple selves. Some are situational-enacted whereas others are relatively durable.

As a member of society, individuals belong to different social groups. Each social group has its unique cultural framework. Such a framework serves as reference points governing the formation of self-identities. One needs to adhere to the acceptable criteria of self-identities. Self-identity can be positive, normal and negative depending on whether such identities are affirmed by society and accepted by individuals. As such, self-identity can be supported or contested (Desforges, 2000). As an example, the 'independent self' resulting from long-distance travel is contested by their family members back home when their marriage is postponed due to travelling (Desforges, 2000). Consumers are believed to desire uniqueness as well as following the crowds (Firat and Venkatesh, 1993). Since travelling is a social event, travelling experiences are a symbolic way of sharing group identity (Belk, 1988). It is human nature to desire a sense of group belonging and link with other similar people. Often, consumers consume culturally appropriate products or services to signal a sense of belonging and display their social identity (Cova, 1997). Such an act of identification with a social group could also lead to a stronger link to the groups.

Identity is a dynamic process (Fornas, 1995) and in a continuous state of 'becoming' (Jenkins, 1996). It is open to continuous maintenance and re-creation. It is through a dynamic socialization process that self-identities continuously undergo the maintaining and re-creation process. Travel experiences, on the one hand, are shaped by self-identity, and on the other hand, are used as the symbolic resources for identity expression, construction, maintenance, reinforcement and performance (Friedman, 1994; Desforges, 2000; William, 2006). Products not only possess functionality but also symbolic meanings (Firat and Venkatesh, 1993). For instance, one night in a hotel has not just functional attributes with beds to sleep in, but it may also be associated with the symbolic meanings of being 'adventurous' or 'upscale'. Tourists are metaphorically described as actors/actresses, images attached to products or brands are just like the props that are used by consumers to define their roles (Solomon and Askegaard, 2002).

Often, through rituals such as exchange, possession, grooming and divestment symbolic meanings of tourist experiences can be passed on to the consumers (McCracken, 1986) and form an integral part of our extended self (Belk, 1988). The process of using visible product symbols to express self-identity constitutes consumer culture. Consumption symbolism is defined as the type of person we would like to be associated with by consuming (Wright, Claiborne and Sirgy., 1992, p 312). As such, consumption such as travel experience is a means

of producing self-image (Firat and Venkatesh, 1993) as well as allowing individuals to identify themselves more closely to a social group or society or sometimes distancing themselves from them (Cohen, 1988). Travelling consumption often not only convey personal identities such as personal information and attributes, aesthetic tastes but also information associated with social identities (Bourdieu, 1984; McCracken, 1990; Featherstone, 1991; Munt, 1994; Urry, 1995; Desforges, 2000). Travel experience allows for the expression of personal identities such as a moral self, an educated self or an accomplished self (Desforges, 2000). For instance, outdoor hiking and environmental conservation related leisure tourism allows for the expression of a 'moral' self (Matles, 1995).

In addition to the personal identities, Travel consumption can also create class-based identities, gendered identities and collective identities (Desforges, 2000). For instance, Travel experience in the third-world country construct and affirm the middle-class identities (Munt, 1994), or the 'European' identities (Urry, 1995). They can serve as 'rites of passage' (Arnould and Price, 1993). During the transitional period, identity may face renegotiation (Giddens, 1991). Travelling occurred in these transitional periods is also addressed (Deforges, 2000; White and White, 2004). Kaplan and Kaplan (1989) found that outdoor experiences lead to the increased self-confidence. Travel may also allow for the reversal of everyday class roles (Gottlieb, 1982; Lett, 1983). Urry (1995) acknowledges the innovating social identities brought about by short-term global mobility. Travel experience can testify the capacity of people to face challenges and enable them to achieve a sense of self-fulfilment (Beard and Ragheb, 1983; Celsi, Rose and Leigh, 1993). Travel can lead to personal growth and renewal (Arnould and Price, 1993), increased self-confidence (Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989) and transformation (Pine and Gilmore, 1999). It can assist self-understanding and self-awareness (Galani-Moutafi, 2000). Going to places where others have not visited may enhance social status (William, 2006). Travelling may also lead to increased social, cultural and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991).

The creation of self-identity is embedded in language. Certain literature delicate for the discussion of language features (Hymes, 1977; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Wetherell and Potter, 1988; Van Manen, 1997). The understanding of the language which travellers use to describe their experience and the contextual settings of their language use is generally lacking (McCabe, 2005). Current tourism literature is generally Western-dominated and an emic understanding of non-Western tourist experience is needed (Wang, 2000; Elsrud, 2004; Uriely, 2005), which is currently lacking (Nash, 1981; Graburn, 1983; Morgan et al., 2011). Having discussed the language and self-identity, the next section deliberates the experience of holiday time.

### 2.3.2 Experience of holiday time

Graburn (1983) asserts that the passage of time alternates between 'profane and sacred'. It is special time. The passage of time is alterable on holidays. Timetable time is normally associated with work and daily routine where time can be schedulable (Hall, 1983). Holiday time is depicted as the sacred time where the escapes from daily routine and schedules are grantable (Neumann, 1983). Adler and Adler (2004, p126) say holiday allows for 'freedom from time'. Holiday means 'doing nothing' (inaction) and just relaxing (Urbain, 2002 cited by Ryan 2002). During this period of sacred time, holiday may allow for the experience of subjective time. Galani-Moutafi (2000, p. 209) acknowledges the time travelling attributes of holiday experience, in which travellers are found to 'experience in the present of the grandeur of an imagined past' when interacting with heritage attractions. The alteration of the speed of time is touched upon by the concept of 'flow experience' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Csikszentmihalyi (1997) says that in 'flow', one may experience time pass faster than usual when individual skills match well with the challenge of the tasks. The alternation of the speed of time is also touched upon by Van Manen (2007). By contrast, Dann (1996, p73-79) recognises that tourism may be full of constraints like schedules, finances, queues, etc. There is little or no freedom and much of this social control imposed upon the tourist is by business and organisations from the tourism industry. Edensor and Holloway (2008) talk about the timetabled activities of tourists as composing multiple rhythms. Contrary to the notion of 'doing nothing', there exist the literature viewing time as limited resources not to be wasted and must be used efficiently (Adam, 1995). The utilising time in full to obtain a goal is regarded as the utilitarian approach to time (Zerubavel, 1981). In addition, time can also mean the 'organic' natural time (Adam, 1994, cited by Ryan, 2002). It can also mean timing (Adam, 1995).

In addition, rhythm is a bridging concept connecting time and space (Lefebvre, 2004, cited by Edensor, 2010). According to Lefebvre (2004, p 15, cited by Edensor, 2010), 'Everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time, and an expenditure of energy, there is rhythm'. A sense of place is created by the interplay of multiple rhythms, including both the human rhythms of commuting (Edensor, 2009) and non-human ones such as that of the 'flora and fauna' (Edensor, 2010), the 'trees, flowers, birds and insects' (Lefebvre, 2004, p17 quoted by Edensor, 2010). A number of researches have touched upon the concept of rhythms (Zerubavel, 1981; Edensor, 2000; Lefevre, 2004, cited by Edensor, 2010). Natural rhythms may constitute the background for human activity and may be slower compared with our own bodily rhythms (Lefebvre, 2004, p17, quoted by Edensor, 2010). Curtin (2008) notes that wildlife tourists live according to the natural rhythms on wildlife tours. In addition to the place-oriented rhythm, there are also rhythms derived from the human body (Edensor, 2010). Lefebvre (2004, quoted by Edensor, 2010) view body as the core departing point for sensing the external

rhythms. The displacement may lead to bodily reactions (Edensor, 2010; Meadows, 2010).

### **2.3.3 Experience of holiday space**

The spatiality may behave in two layers, that is, the physical space and the imaginative one (e.g. Ingold, 2010). Lim - Alparaque (1986), talks about Merleau - Ponty's perspectives on spatiality '...as far as experience is concerned it is from the bodily situated - ness and perspective that one is able to view and relate to objects and events in the environs...' (p. 31). Currently, most literature on tourism spaces is focused on the discussion of physical spaces (Goffman, 1959; Bitner, 1992; Lugosi, 2008). Goffman (1959) view spaces as the 'setting of social interaction'. Holiday spaces is a setting for social interaction, where a sense of collective ritual bond and 'communitas' (Turner, 1974) may form. Such a bonding is also discussed by Li (2000). International travel experience may facilitate the creation of a bond between the host and the guest (Li, 2000). Hence, it may promote cross-cultural understanding and thus peace. Cohen (1982) argues against the notion of 'communitas', stating that tourists on the beach may experience the notion of 'alone together'. In the wider spatiality literature, there also exist poetic spaces provoking poetic imagination (Bachelard, 1964).

Tourist experiences occur in a space which is different from the daily residential place. It is believed that tourists are in pursuit of space different from their daily world (Xie, 2005). Xie (2005) also acknowledges that sometimes tourists may seek for both 'familiarity' and 'novelty'. On the other hand, the tourist space is perceived as authentic unfamiliar liminal one (Graburn, 1983; 1989; Wang, 1999). The exoticised presentation of tourist space is noted in the literature (Zheng, 2000; Tse and Hobson, 2008; Yan and McKercher, 2013). The paradisiacal presentation of travel space is also reported (Cohen, 1982). On the one hand, travel space is construed as familiar 'pseudo-events' (Boorstin, 1964). Martin (2010) notes the tendency to construct others as a unified culture as if there is no global involvement with the wider world. In fact, much of the current tourism research dedicate to the discussion of the notion of 'home' and 'away' (Watson and Austerberry, 1985; White and White, 2007; Malleu, 2004, cited by Uriely, 2010; Uriely, 2010; Pocock and McIntosh, 2013). The conception of 'home' is discussed in the literature (Watson and Austerberry, 1985; White and White, 2007; Malleu, 2004, cited by Uriely, 2010; Uriely, 2010; Pocock and McIntosh, 2013). Travellers, being physically positioned in tourist space, also experience the constant negotiation between the familiar and the unknown, between a here, a there and an elsewhere (Galani-Moutafi, 2000). The development of internet and communication technology witness increasingly blurring between 'home' and 'away' (Feifer, 1985; Urry, 2002; White and White, 2007). White and White (2007) discuss the incorporation of domestic routine in the travel world with the aid of communication technology. Uriely (2010) analyses the experience of 'home' and 'away' in VFR tourism, in which he



mainly concerns about how the lodging in the friends or relatives' home engenders the experience of either 'home' or 'away'.

Bitner's (1992) 'servicescape' represents the place of encounter between the tourists and the service providers during which experience are 'staged'. Morgan et al., (2011) caution about the over-emphasis on the staging of experience in fear of the creation of superficial impressions in the eyes of the tourists. Similarly, Boswijk et al (2005) state that experience should be designed and staged as if it is natural. Lugosi (2011) notes the role of spontaneous unscripted moments played in formulating memorable experiences. MacCannell (1989), on the other hand, recognises the wider conception of tourist space. He states that tourist space represents 'any place that fosters the feeling of being a tourist'. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) highlight the importance of co-creation. Drawing from Koffka's (1935) concepts of the geographical (physical) and behaviour (psychological) environment, Xie and Wu (2000) put forward the concepts of 'tourist atmospheric environment' and 'tourist behavioural environment'. The former refers to the environment that remotely influences the tourist experience whereas the latter refers to the more immediate environment that dictates tourist behaviours. Outdoor experiences allow the tourists to spiritually connect with the outdoor environment (Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989; Loeffler, 2004). Tourists' relationships with tourist space vary. Ittelson, Franck and O'Hanlon (1978 cited by Borrie and Roggenbuck 2001) have identified five modes of environmental experience: focus on self, others, task, environment and focus on emotions. Borrie and Roggenbuck (2001) measure four aspects of wilderness experience: a combined oneness, primitiveness, humility variable, timelessness, solitude and care. In extraordinary rafting experience, tourists are found to have a deep connection with the nature (Arnould and Price, 1993). Having discussed the tourists' experience of holiday space, the next section addresses their bodily feelings and emotions.

### **2.3.4 Bodily feelings and emotions**

Bodily feelings and emotions are fundamental to tourist experience (Borrie and Roggenbuck, 2001; Graburn, 2001). Positive emotions may lead to consumer loyalty (Velazquez, Saura and Molina, 2011). Tourism is a modern leisure (e.g. Graburn, 1977; Pearce, 1982). Tourists are the persons who are 'at leisure' (Nash, 1981, p462). Tourist experience offers opportunities for relaxation (Cohen, 1982; Breejen, 2006), which is 'necessary for the maintenance of mental and bodily health' (Graburn, 1977, p15). On the other hand, tourist experiences may involve the stepping into the liminal zone due to tourists' desire for 'novelty' and 'change' (Cohen, 1979; Graburn, 1983). Such an alteration from daily routine and the authenticity of tourist sites may evoke excitement (Rojek, 1993). Similarly, Fredrickson (1998) reports feelings of excitement derived from activity engagement. Hull, Stewart and Yi (1992, cited by Borrie and Roggenbuck,

2001) state that tourist experience often evokes more than one type of bodily feelings and emotions. As they say, it is 'an extended sequence of relaxing feelings dotted with peaks of excitement' (Hull, Stewart and Yi, 1992, p250 cited by Borrie and Roggenbuck, 2001). Tourists may experience a wide range of bodily feelings and emotions. However, little current research covers a wide spectrum of such feelings and emotions in a single study (Mitas, Yarnal and Chick, 2012).

Holiday is essentially a social phenomenon. Several studies uncover the bodily feelings and emotions related to socialisation. Socialization can enhance emotions (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991, p251). Positive emotions occurred on social interaction is noted (Schuchat, 1981; Fredrickson, 1998; Mitas et al., 2012). Such positive social emotion is labelled as 'love' by Fredrickson (1998) and 'warmth' by Schuchat (1981) and Mitas et al. (2012). For instance, Schuchat (1981) identifies the warmth feeling derived from the companion of tour friends. Similarly, Mitas et al., (2012) uncover warmth from friendship as one of the positive emotions. In addition to the loving and warming feelings, fun feelings also occur in tourism socialisation (Sharpe, 2005; Mitas et al., 2012). Such humorous fun may serve as the 'social lubricant' bonding tourist together and shaping community feelings (Mitas et al., 2012). Along with socialisation emotions, the encountering with the nature and wildlife allows for the closeness to and connection with the natural beauty (Loeffler, 2004). Curtin (2008) discovers that wildlife tourists feel in awe when they are close to the nature. Such experiences of awesome feelings are also reported in other studies (Arnould and Price, 1993; Mitas et al., 2012).

Further, Tourists are believed to need the comforts and easement extended from daily routine (Quan and Wang, 2004). According to Ryan (1991), the experience of comfort and ease can enhance satisfaction level. Such a need for comforts and ease is especially salient among mass package tourists (Ryan, 1991). Despite longing for comforts and easement, tourists may also experience discomforts such as mosquito bites (Ryan, 1991). Indeed, Tourist experience can be positive, negative (Hanefors and Mossberg, 2003) or a combination of both within one experience. On the one hand, travel generally is associated with feelings of enjoyment and pleasure (Foster, 1986; Rojek, 1993). However, negative emotions may also occur (Ryan, 1991). According to Firat and Venkatesh (1993), postmodern consumers can experience contrasting emotions (love and hate) simultaneously. Further, Xie (2005) proposes the adoption of the concept of 'tourist happiness' to understand tourist emotional motives. As Xie (2005) states, tourists are motivated for 'tourist happiness'. His concept of 'tourist happiness' is a broader concept incorporating both the direct pleasure and indirect pleasure. Indirect happiness is the pleasure obtained from the experience of pain. For instance, extraordinary water rafting tourists may experience fear and frustration during the holiday (Arnould and Price, 1993). Such

experiences of fear and frustration may lead to sense of achievement, personal growth and renewal (Arnould and Price, 1993).

Extraordinary experiences such as the water rafting ones are characterised by high level of emotional intensity usually triggered by unusual events (Arnould and Price, 1993; Hanefors and Mossberg, 2003). It offers surprises, pleasure, enjoyment and it is memorable (Hanefors and Mossberg, 2003). Tourists' moods are found to swing (Arnould and Price, 1993). Among other desirable experiences, the emotional feelings associated with the peak experience are of optimal intensity, which represents 'moments of highest happiness and fulfilment' (Maslow, 1962, p69). In flow, one feels joyful (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). According Boswijk et al (2005) the memorable experiences tend to occur when one is emotionally touched. There is a heightened concentration and focus, involving all the senses (Boswijk et al., 2005).

Earlier tourist research emphasises the vision 'tourist gaze' (Urry, 1991). However, Veijola and Jokinen (1994, p136) argue that the visual is inseparable from other senses such as sound, touch and smell. There is a need to address a multi- embodied sensual existence, including five senses (Urry, 2002). As well as the sensual experience, travelling into the other land may allow for an inner reflection (Galani-Moutafi, 2000). Such heightened reflection is also reported in outdoor or wildlife experiences (Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989; Curtin, 2008).

Wang (1999) says that tourist bodies are more spontaneous and freer from the stress and pains imposed by the formal structure of their own society given that the tourist experiences often occur in a 'liminal zone'. This may allow for the gratification of various bodily desires, the experience of various sensual pleasures and the releasing of bodily impulses (Wang, 1999). As an example, wildlife recreation is found to grant the escape from daily norms and demands (Loeffler, 2004). Bodily feelings can also be realistic or imaginative (Jansson, 2002 cited by Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier, 2008). The former refers to bodily pleasure and the latter relates more to emotion and spiritual stimulation such as fantasies and daydreams. It can also be divided into sensual and symbolic aspects. The sensual aspects address the bodily feeling and the symbolic aspects look at the culture or sign-system of the body (Featherstone, 1991; Wang, 1999).

## **2.4 Conclusions**

In this chapter, past studies on human experience and tourism experience have been reviewed. The review starts with the human experiences discussed in various disciplines, the characteristics of experience and the defining features of several most desirable human experiences before proceeding to the discussion of human experiences in the management literature. This has laid a theoretical foundation for the more specific discussion about tourist experience. It is noted that human experiences have been studied from various perspectives.

In section 2.3, tourist experience literature is presented. The extraordinariness of tourist experience and the different perspectives of research tourist experience are discussed. Despite of the fact that the motivation-based approach and expectation-conformation theory represent the earliest constructs adopted to research the quality of tourist experience, these approaches have been widely questioned. To overcome this problem, experience and meaning-based approach have been proposed in the literature. Experience and meaning based approach offers an emic understanding of how experiences and meanings are constructed and remembered from the tourists' own perspectives. The interpretation and construction of meanings are greatly embedded within consumer sub-cultures, in which individuals are narrate their experiences to express and construct self-identity. This study adopts the experience and meaning based approach to research tourist experience. Having discussed the experiential and meaning based approach, the next few sections discussed tourism literature related to language and self-identity, experience of holiday time, experience of holiday space, bodily feeling and emotions respectively. Having presented the literature on tourist experience, the next chapter, therefore, reviews the literature in Chinese travel culture.

## Chapter 3

# Chinese Travel Culture

### 3.1 Introduction

Because experiences are culturally rooted, this chapter explores the literature related to Chinese travel culture. The chapter starts with a brief discussion of the definitions and characteristics of culture section 3.2 and is then followed by section 3.3 which addresses Chinese culture. Section 3.4 explores the literature on Chinese travel culture and contemporary Chinese travel before key conclusions are drawn up in section 3.5.

### 3.2 Culture

#### 3.2.1 Definition of Culture

According to Kroeber and Kluckhohn's (1952, p181) definition of culture is:

*Culture consists of patterns of behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artefacts. The essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas and especially their attached values.*

Tylor's (1871, p89) descriptive definition of culture equates it with the totality of human-society heritage:

*That complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.*

Whilst Engel, Blackwell and Miniard (1990, p67) define culture as

*A set of values, ideas, artefacts, and other meaningful symbols that help individuals communicate, interpret, and evaluate as members of society.*

Therefore, culture can be defined in a both broad and a narrow sense (Engel et al., 1990). Broadly speaking, culture refers to the sum of human creation, which consists of both material culture and abstract components (psychological and spiritual elements). Material culture refers to the artefacts and material manifestation, including objects often used by members of a group and regarded as an integral part of cultural configuration (Engel et al., 1990). Culture, in its narrow sense, includes only the abstract components (behavioural, psychological, mental and spiritual aspects) such as values, ideas, norms, rules, belief and so on (Engel et al., 1990).

### **3.2.2 Characteristics of Culture**

Regardless of different definitions, a number of key characteristics of ‘culture’ can be identified. Firstly, culture is human-oriented which is closely linked to human society and the process of civilisation, socialisation and acculturation (Williams, 1976). Herskovits (1955 cited by Ying, 2000, p3) refers to it as the ‘man-made part of the environment’ created by human social activities. Secondly, culture is the communal attributes and ways of reacting to the external world adopted by the whole society or group (Hofstede, 2001). Such shared attributes serve as a set of normative rules regulating members’ behaviour and activities. It provides its members with principles in relation to environment (Kluckhohn and Kelly, 1945). Geertz (1973, p 44) viewed culture as a ‘set of control mechanisms – plans, recipes, rules, instructions – for the governing of behaviour . . . man is precisely the animal most desperately dependent upon such extra genetic, outside-the skin control mechanisms’.

Culture, when conceptualised as value tendencies, represents a relative enduring set of attributes (Hofstede, 2001). It is the desirable principles established in a society by which everything in a society is judged. Cultural values represent what is expected in a society, not necessarily what occurs. Once formed on the basis of social practice, it plays the prevailing roles in influencing its members’ preferences. Culture can also be viewed as less enduring and more fragmented and dynamic as a set of subjective contexts and situations that are constructed and experienced by the individual (Cross and Markus, 1999). Culture is learnt through socialization and is not biologically inherent. Culture, as a cluster of learnt attributes, is modifiable by learning. Hence, it is dynamic and adaptable to the external environment (Kluckhohn and Kelly, 1945).

In addition to the dynamic and adaptable nature of culture, cultural politics recognises the political nature of culture, in which culture may promote or hinder inevitable revolutionary changes (Gramsci, 2008). One important notion of cultural politics is the theory of cultural hegemony (Gramsci, 2008). According to Gramsci (2008), the superstructure of Marxism includes political society and civil society. Political society mainly refers to the state administrative institutions, such as the armed forces, prison, courts and other dictatorship tools.

Civil society, on the other hand, refers to various non-governmental organisations such as churches, schools, cultural and arts organisations and other institutions. Cultural hegemony refers to the leadership position one social group in the civil society has played in terms of its culture, moral and ideology. It is mainly achieved through group endorsement, recognition instead of the mere coercion. Civil societies can be core field for ideological battles leading to revolutionary change (Gramsci, 2008). Williams (2008) abandons the concept of elite culture and state that culture can be ordinary. This provides legitimacy for the working class culture and mass culture research. Williams (2008) views Gramsci's cultural hegemony theory helps to uncover the unequal distribution of power. It reveals the relatively complex, mixed, incomplete or still not yet clearly-expressed ideology under the decisive universal system. According to Williams (2008), hegemony is more or less always a combination of various even completely different meanings and value practices sometimes separate from each other. Culture can be classified into dominant, emergent and residual ones (Williams, 2008). Foucault (2005, cited by Gary, 2005) notes the penetration of power into every corner of our social life and personal existence, which may be embedded in the creation of discourse and identity. Hall (1997) regards culture as the territory of meanings. Culture can be viewed as a basic constructing process. It is through the giving and receiving of cultural meanings that social practice are organised and social reality are constructed. Inspired by Foucault's discourse theory of power, Hall (1997) believes that culture is inevitably involved in the power relations. It is both the media for constructing and resisting powers. Cultural politics means the dispute of the territory of meanings under the power fiddles. He concerns the ways in which meanings are contested, and whether a particular symbol systems can be challenged, competed and changed. For Jordan and Vuitton (1995), one of the central questions of cultural politics is the legitimacy of social inequality, and the struggle in the territory of meanings to change such unequal relationships. Post-modern politics stress on new, cultural, personal identity and daily life. Scholars such as Foucault (2005, cited by Gary, 2005) note the micro-cultural and political struggle in lifestyle, discourse, body, sexuality and interaction. Politics can be linked with almost any concept, such as gender politics, film politics, gay politics, identity politics and body politics. Cultural studies in the post-modern period can be said to be widely politicized. Identity can also be of a political nature in which one may distance themselves from one particular identity (Foucault, 2005, cited by Gary, 2005)

### **3.2.3 Culture and Consumption**

The relationship between consumption and culture is highlighted by Arnold and Thompson (2005). Other researchers stress material flows and 'meaning systems' (Sherry, 1987). Material flows refer to the movement of potentially countable entities- goods, services- in space and time. Meanings stand for the world creating cultural entities, and guide people to behave in particular

ways and evoke particular feelings. Aaker, Veronica and Jordi (2001, p 493) state that ‘culture is best conceptualized in terms of the meaning derived from and added to everyday experience. . . . Individuals and culture are inseparable and mutually constitute each other’. Greetz (1973, p4-5) states that ‘man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning’.

The meanings of consumption are ingrained in the socio-cultural context (Douglas and Isherwood, 1996; Elliott, 1999). The culture and marketplace provides consumers with the means to construct individual and collective identities (Arnold and Thompson, 2005). Through possession, exchange, grooming and divestment, the meanings transfer from the culture to consumer goods and then to individual consumers (McCracken, 1986). Cultural research in consumption attends to the ‘sociocultural, experiential, symbolic and ideological aspects of consumption’ (Arnold and Thompson, 2005, p868).

### **3.3 Chinese Culture**

According to Hamilton (1997, p882), Chinese culture is “composed of a homogenous set of institutionalized value emanating from the ‘Great Tradition’ of Confucianism”. The essence of Confucianism is to attain social harmony through an ordered collective living (Guan and Lin, 1963; Mok and DeFranco, 1999). Influenced by Confucian, Chinese society is collective, of hierarchy and high in power distance (Hofstede, 1994), familial (Hsu, 1972) and values harmonious human relations (Guan and Lin, 1963). The collective living may mean that people display a strong group orientation (Mok and DeFranco, 1999). Social and group welfare is beyond that of the individual. As such, individuals are willing to exchange self-indulgence for group welfare (Triandis and Geland, 1998; Hofstede, 2001; Iyengar and DeVoe, 2003). They may feel more obliged to follow in-group opinions or recommendations and embrace behaviours fulfilling a self-defining relationship with significant others (Hui and Triandis, 1986). They are thought to comply with rules and demonstrate social conformity (Hsu, 1972). Social recognition is valued and so does ‘face’, an important Confucianism concept to mean other’s perception of self (Mok and DeFranco, 1999). As a result, people from these cultural backgrounds may be more influenced by the social and ideal aspects of self-concept, and their ‘collective self’ and ‘relational self’ may play a greater role compared with the personal one (Solomon 1983; Mooji, 2004). To create social harmony, the Chinese are conscious of proper behaviour, demonstrate self-discipline. They value reciprocity and accentuate affiliate and altruistic values of being joyful, forgiving, helpful and loving (Reisinger and Turner, 1998). They are said to avoid voicing negative feelings, be emotionally self-restraint and partially socially withdrawn (Hsu, 1972; Feather, 1986). Implicit nonverbal communication is valued



(Hall, 1976). Under collective culture, the Chinese value that element of socially and psychologically inter-dependency (Triandis, 1995). Markus and Kitayama (1991, p 10) note the existence of a mutually-dependent self among the Chinese and 'it takes a high degree of self-control and agency to effectively adjust oneself to various interpersonal contingencies'. As Pellow (1996, p 115) says, 'the Chinese person is a totality of social roles; without a network, one is no one'. Trustable personal relationships and connections (Guanxi) are essential in China (e.g., Zhuang, Xi and Tsang, 2010).

Chinese society is also familial (Hsu, 1972). Confucius regards 'family' as the smallest constituent of society and a good departing point for a harmonious society. For the Chinese 'the attainment of family-oriented goals represents an important measure of self-realisation and self-fulfilment' (Joy, 2001, p 239). The concept of 'family' in China can be expanded to incorporate members beyond the nuclear family (Joy, 2001). Due to its collective and familial culture, Pizam and Sussmann (1995) believe that Chinese tourists prefer group or family tours than travelling alone.

Confucianism support hierarchy to create social harmony (The Analects of Confucius translated by Legge, 1994). Everybody inside the society and also in individual families has their positions and is treated with proper 'Propriety or etiquette (Li)' according to their social position in order to achieve social harmony (The Analects of Confucius translated by Legge, 1994). The seniors and elders are respected (The Analects of Confucius translated by Legge, 1994). Influenced by Confucianism, Chinese society is of hierarchy (Guan and Lin, 1963).

In order to achieve social harmony, Confucius advocates morality of 'humanity/benevolent love, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and faithfulness/ trust, reciprocity, altruism, diligence' and life-long self-cultivation (e.g., Croll, 1997; The Analects of Confucius translated by Legge, 1994; Ying, 2000). Confucius believes natural landscape possess desirable virtues. The Confucius notion of 'compare morality' delineates the process of comparing the virtues of the people with the virtues displayed in the natural world (Shen, 2002).

Self-cultivation, in the Confucius sense, encompasses not only life-long moral cultivation but also intellectual one. Confucianism stresses study and acquisition of knowledge and wisdom (Guan and Lin, 1963; Feather, 1986). Travelling is regarded as an important way of gaining knowledge as the ancient proverb goes 'read ten-thousand books, travel ten-thousand Li'. Travel can broaden the vision (Kai kuo yanjie) and horizon (Shen, 2002, p74). Qian (1759-1844, cited by Zheng, 2000) extends the theory of 'Read ten-thousand books, travel ten-thousand Li' to form his travel trilogy theory:

*Read ten-thousand books, travel ten-thousand Li. Both cannot be neglected, although sometimes it is difficult to combine both, holidays are not just for leisure, through holidays, one should also understand the knowledge about the world such as the 'mountains, roads and cultures and plants' etc. One should read books for twenty years, travel for twenty years, and then writing books for twenty years. In that way, it can be truly said 'read ten-thousand books, travel ten-thousand Li.*

While scholars such as Hamilton (1997) stresses viewing Chinese culture as incorporating Confucianism, other researchers such as Redding (1990) argue that Confucianism alone is not enough to explain the complexity of Chinese culture. The Chinese culture has long been jointly influenced by various ideologies including Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism despite the fact that the ideology of Confucianism had constituted the dominant official teaching from the second century B.C. until the 19th century (Redding, 1990).

If Confucius is collective, Taoism is more individualistic and imaginative. The Dao De Jing gives an account of the origin of all things in the world. Non-existence (wu) is the source of heaven and earth, the universe. Existence gave birth to 'the ten thousand things' (all phenomena). Non-existence and existence are different, but they both come from the same Dao and both may be considered profound (xuan) (Yang, 1957; Ren and Feng, 1959; Lin, 1963; Laozi annotated by Yu, 1994). Dao, the principle, is beyond form and cannot be seen, heard or touched by the senses.

Taoism advocates naturalness and spontaneity (ziran). One of the core principles of Taoism is that of acting according to one's nature: mountains can only behave as mountains, not as water, and so it is with all things. Dao acts naturally. Taoism advocates the return to nature, the discovery of the natural world and act according to the nature in harmony (Lin, 1963; Zhuangzi annotated by Huang, 1996; Shen, 2002). Spontaneity (ziran) literally denotes living according to its nature (Yang, 1957; Ren and Feng, 1959; Lin, 1963; Laozi annotated by Yu, 1994). Natural spontaneity is essential to live in accord with Dao (Yang, 1957; Ren and Feng, 1959; Lin, 1963; Laozi annotated by Yu, 1994).

Directly connected to naturalness and spontaneity, there lies another key notion, which is 'no action' (wuwei) or 'action without effort'. If Confucianism encourages highest human endeavour, the Taoism advocates 'inaction'/'doing nothing' (wuwei). Dao is of such natural of 'nothingness', 'emptiness' and 'non-existence'. Dao support all phenomenons in their own nature without intervening actions. To mimic and live in line with Dao, one should do nothing (wuwei), or to 'let things alone' and to 'stay where we are' (Yang, 1957; Ren and Feng, 1959;

Lin, 1963; Tao Te Ching translated by Bahm, 1958; Cleary, 1993; Laozi annotated by Yu, 1994).

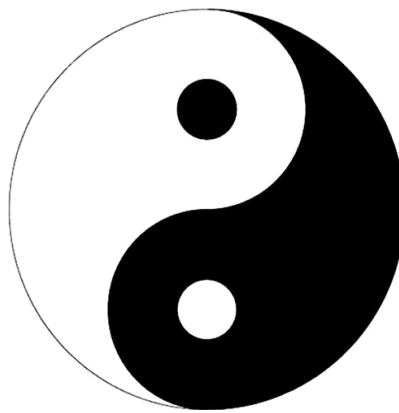
In the Dao de Jing it is said that Dao ‘takes no action and yet nothing is left undone’ – wuwei er wu buwei (Tao Te Ching translated by Bahm 1958), and for Zhuangzi the ideal way to experience Dao is simply to roam. However, his concept of ‘wuwei’ – non-action – is not to be understood as a ‘complete absence of activity’ or ‘no action’ in the sense that one might assume by a literal interpretation of the words. Rather, it means acting only when that is needed in order to fulfil a particular aim and never to over-do, to over-exert oneself. As the saying goes ‘going further means reverting’. Wuwei is the condition in which one is aimlessly and naturally spontaneous so as to be like Dao (Lin, 1963; Zhuangzi annotated by Huang, 1996). Taoism also advocates simple and quiet way of living in believing that simplicity and quietness can create wisdom (Lin, 1963; Zhuangzi annotated by Huang, 1996). The ideal Taoist ways of travelling is depicted in the book as ‘a happy unfettered travel (Xiaoyaoyou)’, which refers to the simple and unfettered travelling subject to no external constraints (Lin, 1963; Zhuangzi annotated by Huang, 1996; Zheng, 2000). They value inner happiness and harmony as well as the social harmony.

The worldly needs of the Chinese are addressed by the order provided by Confucianism, which reflects the rational, ‘yang’ mind in Chinese society. The spiritual needs of the creative, intuitive, ‘yin’ mind are catered for by the Taoism with its dream world (Feng, 1983). Greatness resulted from the combination of practical Confucian values of conformity, self-control and clarity with the liberal and imaginative values of Taoist spontaneity and the mysterious.

Buddhism, on the other hand, believes the concept of ‘Karma’ (cause-and-effect). Influenced by ‘Karma’, the Chinese believes in Yuan, which is the predestined relationship (both close and casual relationships) with other objects or beings beyond one’s control (Yau, 1988). There are four dimensions of Yuan, namely association, quality, matching and attitudes towards relationship (Chang and Holt, 1991). The belief in Yuan may make the Chinese people cherish the human encounters. Buddhist Chan concerns the realisation of Buddha-hood through awakening to one’s own nature. Chan is not necessarily restricted to sitting meditation (zuochan) (Fung, 1958; Fang, 1986; Feng, 1983; Yanagida, 1983). Chan can be carried out everywhere and in every activity so long as the mind is no longer disturbed by external conditions, which includes travelling (Fung, 1958; Fang, 1986; Feng, 1983; Yanagida, 1983). Travel can be seen as process of Buddhist cultivation (xiu dao/ xiu xing) where one may experience meditative states such as sudden enlightenment and gradual enlightenment (Fung, 1958; Fang, 1986; Feng, 1983; Yanagida, 1983). Further, Buddhist belief in ghost is found to prevent Asian tourists from visiting the disaster-hit destinations (Bongkosh, 2010).

In addition to the above-mentioned characteristics, the Chinese is also traditionally depicted as being 'thrifty', hardworking and perseverance (Worthington, 2005). They are more conservative and shy and tend to minimise intimate physical contact in interpersonal relationships (Argyle, 1975). Hofstede (1994) says Chinese culture is categorised as low in uncertainty avoidance implying that Chinese tolerate ambiguity and are less likely to be threatened by uncertainty and novel situations. Further, Chinese culture is long-term oriented (Hofstede, 1994).

Some scholars argue the fundamental of Chinese culture lies in the Yin/Yang principal (Moore, 1968; Hsu, 1972; Fang, 2003). Yin and Yang denotes two original powers of nature. These two original forces are in a constant change. As seen in **Figure 3.1**, Yin Yang Taiji emblem consists of the white halves [yang] and the black halves [yin] with an S-shaped segregating line in the middle. Inside the white [yang] halves, there holds a small portion of black [yin] source and vice versa. Noticeably these two polar forces are not opposites but complementary and unitary. They embrace one another and need one another for wholeness. It is in a continual rotation. When the white [yang] halves are developed to its fullest, it may be converted into the black [yin] halves. At any moment, there are both yin and yang either partially or fully. Each is capable of change and always changing as the S-shaped line constantly moving towards each other. Therefore, yin can grow to be yang and yang can grow to be yin.



**Figure 3.1: Yin/Yang Taiji emblem**

Chinese culture, underpinned by Yin/Yang changing philosophies, is highly contextualised and holistic (Moore, 1968). The Chinese are more likely to resort to the holistic situation rather than linear logic for decision-making, which is profoundly dissimilar with its concept-based Western counterpart (e.g. Hsu, 1972; Choi, 2000; Nisbett, Peng, Choi and Norenzayan, 2001). According to Nisbett et al. (2001, p293) holism means

*an orientation to the context or field as a whole, including attention to relationships between a focal object and the field, and a preference for explaining and predicting*

*events on the basis of such relationships. Holistic approaches rely on experience-based knowledge rather than on abstract logic and are dialectical, meaning that there is an emphasis on change, recognition of contradiction and of the need for multiple perspectives, and a search for the 'Middle Way' between opposing propositions. We define analytic thought as involving detachment of the object from its context, a tendency to focus on attributes of the object to assign it to categories, and a preference for using rules about the categories to explain and predict the object's behaviour. Inferences rest in part on the practice of decontextualising structure from content, the use of formal logic, and avoidance of contradiction.*

Nisbett et al. (2001) says Yin/Yang philosophy is more of a dialectical thinking, involving reconciling, accommodating contradictions and addressing the whole field. Rowley (1970) argues that Yin and Yang are neither dialectical nor opposites. Yang (2000, p19) states that 'yin and yang represent not literally two separate 'states' but rather one symbolic covariate relationship in the dynamic life-world . . . the covariate relationship is not a linear one as often seen in Western conceptualization; rather it is one in which too much yin will push things to the yang side which is equally undesirable . . . yin and yang will together produce desirable results.' In the Yin-Yang principle, the opposites can coexist. For equilibrium and harmony, the Chinese pursue balancing and reconciliation of extreme opposites through a 'Middle Way'. The contextualised and holistic nature of Chinese culture may mean that the self-presentation for the Chinese varies according to the situation (Tu, 1985).

Fang (2003) is one supporters of the argument that the fundamental of Chinese culture lies in its Yin/Yang philosophy and holism. Fang (2003) opposes Hofstede's (1994) depiction of Chinese culture as being 'long-term' oriented. According to Fang (2003), for the Chinese, it is more of a 'both/and' answer rather than 'either/or' answer. Fang (2003) points out that a post-modern approach may be fruitful to understand Chinese culture because the Chinese adopt holistic thinking and change according to situations. Contemporary China has undergone tremendous changes. The relevant question is to what extent, the Chinese is to stick to its traditional values. Smith and Schwartz (1997) say that Western value of materialism has penetrated into contemporary Chinese society. This is exemplified by the Chinese travellers' eagerness to purchase luxuries on holidays even for friends and acquaintances (Guo, Seongseop and Timothy, 2007).

In light of globalisation and modernity, China has undergone significant cultural change. Despite of that, Faure and Fang (2008) argue that Chinese's paradoxical thinking process remain anchored to the classical Yin/Yang approach. According to Faure and Fang (2008), such a paradoxical thinking is deeply rooted in the Chinese language. The influential power of

language on Chinese tourists' behaviour is also underlined by Arlt (2006). As Arlt (2006) says, language represent 'the basic mindset of the Chinese civilisation and therefore also influence the behaviour of Chinese outbound tourists' (p. 107). Faure and Fang (2008, p196) identify eight pair of business-related paradoxical values co-existing in contemporary China. They are:

1. Guanxi vs. professionalism
2. The importance of face vs. Self-expression and directness
3. Thrift vs. Materialism and ostentatious consumption
4. Family and group orientation vs. individualism
5. Aversion to law vs. respect for legal practices
6. Respect for etiquette age and hierarchy vs. respect for simplicity, creativity and competence
7. Long-term orientation vs. short-term orientation
8. Traditional creeds vs. modern approaches

Having examined Chinese culture values, the next section is to reveal Chinese Travel Culture and contemporary Chinese Travel.

### **3.4 Chinese Travel Culture and Contemporary Chinese Outbound Travel**

Travel in China is a long tradition as the age-old proverbs go 'He who travels far knows much' (Zhang, 1997, quoted by Arlt, 2006, p25) and 'Read Ten-thousand Books, Travel Ten-thousand Li.' Its history can be traced to a few thousand years ago (Zheng, 2000; Shen, 2002; Tse and Hobson, 2008). There is a substantial amount of literature on leisure travel including landscape appreciation (Zheng, 2000; Wu, 2003). The Chinese Romanticism of landscape while travel is noted even prior to the Western's Romantic Era (Berque, 1995 quoted by Yan and McKercher, 2013). Berque (1995, quoted by Yan and McKercher, 2013), the Chinese's rhetorical presentation of landscape is powerful and there are rich terminology related to landscape descriptions. However, it is not just the presentation of nature scenery, Chinese travel literature also witness the expression of deep feelings and emotions, the description of factual knowledge about places, contemplating about famous people life as well as philosophical reflections (Zheng, 2000).

Contemporary Chinese experience a period of restricted mobility due to multiple reasons such as a close-door policy and visa restrictions (Arlt, 2006; Tse and Hobson, 2008; Xie and Li, 2009). International travel is still relatively new leading to the scarce of contemporary Chinese travel literature (Arlt, 2006). The increasing Open Policy leads to the rising of business

interactions and academic exchanges and hence the rising of business, student and scholar travelers. The impressive GDP growth also contributes to such an upsurge, leading to rising individual wealth. In addition, other factors such as increased annual holiday, a peaceful environment, continual air transport development and the appreciation of the Chinese currency all combined to fuel such growth (Tse and Hobson, 2008).

The ‘stunning’ growth of Chinese outbound travel is highlighted in the literature (e.g. Guo et al., 2007). Chinese outbound travel experienced an average rate of 21 percent per year year-on-year growth from 1997 to 2007 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 1998, 2004, 2008). Despite the financial crisis, the Chinese outbound-travel market sustained an impressive growth rate of 4% in 2009 (Qian, 2010). By 2009, over 47 million Chinese are engaged in outbound travel (Qian, 2010). 11.5 million Chinese have journeyed or intend to journey beyond Asia (Li et al., 2011). The Chinese outbound travel market, as one of the chief tourist generating market, is currently already deemed as immense although this only represents a small portion of the country's entire population (World Travel and Tourism Council., 2006, p15; Gu and Ryan, 2008). With its large population and rapidly growing economy, the strong growth potential of Chinese outbound travel is envisaged (China National Tourism Administration, 2008; Tse and Hobson, 2008). Chinese in the middle or top income brackets are already seeing travel as a ‘birth right’. It is estimated that by 2015, China is to become the world’s fourth leading tourist source country, with 100 million outbound tourists annually (WTO, 2008). In response to such escalation, Arlt (2006) highlights the importance of Chinese outbound travel market.

This makes China an important target market for various destinations including the European destinations. Europe destinations are relatively new for the Chinese travellers yet becoming increasingly popular (WTO, 2008; Xie and Li, 2009). Chinese favour Western European countries such as UK one with strong economies, long histories and rich cultures (Handbook to China’s Outbound Travel Market, 2008). Having been awarded ADS by the Chinese government in 2005, Britain is among the best players in Chinese outbound market in Europe (European Travel Commission, 2008). Chinese travel market is among their fast-growing source markets and one of their top Asian markets in the UK (Office for National Statistics, 2008). In 2004 alone Chinese visitors experienced a growth rate of 41% (Frewin, 2005, p 10-20). Currently the Chinese travellers market to the UK comprises diverse groups: leisure groups of five or more, business travellers, student travellers, VFR and so on (WTO, 2008). Among them, as illustrated in **Table 3.1**, business travellers constitute the largest share of 45%, then followed by leisure tourists (19%); VFR is ranked third (18%) and then student travellers (14%). In terms of age group, the 25-44 age group constitutes 50% of the total Chinese outbound travellers (IPS 2005, cited WTO, 2008). 76% of total number of Chinese travellers to the UK are under 44 and the under 34s accounts for 46% of the total (WTO, 2008, p 100).

**Table 3.1: Chinese travellers' purpose of visit UK**

Source: IPS cited by WTO (2008)

Purpose	Visits	Nights	Spend
Holiday	19	6	9
Business	45	26	38
VFR	18	13	10
Study	14	51	40
Miscellaneous	5	3	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

a) Averages for the six years.

Note: Totals might pass 100% due to roundings.

Source: United Kingdom International Passenger Survey (IPS).

76% of total number of Chinese travellers to the UK are under 44 and the under 34s accounts for 46% of the total (WTO, 2008, p 100).

At present, the ability to travel abroad still signifies social status and prestige in China (Zhang, Pine and Lam, 2005). The Chinese travellers are characterised as high per-capita spenders overall despite the fact that large portions of their total spending goes to shopping (WTO, 2008). Chinese travellers favour paid accommodation (WTO, 2008; Shi, Nakatani, Sawauchi and Yamanoto, 2010). Chinese travellers' fondness of 'Renao' is also noted (Arlt, 2006). Current Chinese outbound literature mainly addresses expectations (e.g., Li et al., 2011), motivations (Josiam, Huang, Spears, Kennon and Bahulkar, 2009), attitudinal preferences (Sparks and Pan, 2009) behavioural attributes (WTO, 2008), benefits (Yu and Weiler, 2001) and satisfaction (Yu and Weiler, 2001) in destinations other than Europe.

In terms of expectation, Li et al., (2011) examine Chinese tourists' expectations of outbound travel products along several dimensions, namely accommodation, food and restaurants, tour guides, itineraries, entertainment, activities and transportation. These reveal that the Chinese have special expectations in the light of amenities and service standards. They usually hope for high standard of services in accordance with to their relatively high social status in Chinese society. Josiam et al., (2009) investigate the motivations, perceptions and satisfaction of Chinese Cruisers on North American Cruise Tours and identify motivations of discovery, enjoyment, social esteem, escape and family time. Arlt (2006) says that Chinese outbound tourists' motivations and practices are increasingly diversified. As he states, Mainland Chinese's motivations are more of pull-factors than push-factors (Arlt, 2006). According to Chan (2009), Chinese travellers seek for 'modernity' on holiday partially due to the 'inadequate modernity' at home. Chang et al., (2010) analyse Chinese travellers' food preference and the



motivational factors underpin their food preferences. Motivational factors such as exploration of local culture, authentic travel experience, learning/education opportunities, prestige and status, reference group influence; subjective perception are uncovered (Chang, et al., 2010). Further, three types of food preferences are identified, namely prefer Chinese food, prefer local food and non-fastidious about food (Chang et al., 2010). The influence of Chinese culture on Chinese travellers' dining behaviour such as the perception of 'palatability' and the stress on group harmony is also noted (Chang et al., 2010). Reisinger and Turner (1998) explore the cultural difference between the Chinese guest and the Australian host. According to Reisinger and Turner (1998), the understanding of such a cultural difference is vital to avoid cultural misunderstanding. Shi, Nakatani, Sajiki, Sawauchi and Yamamoto (2010) investigate international student markets in Japan including the Chinese one. It is found that the Chinese student travellers in Japan tend to rely on public media (e.g., television, radio or newspapers) for information rather than WOM (Shi et al., 2010). According to them, international students are less likely to dine in restaurants in the first couple of years due to language barriers (Shi, et al., 2010). International students' contribution to the local economy through travelling is noted (Shi, et al., 2010).

Chinese travellers' preference on all-inclusive package tour is depicted in the literature (Wong and Lau, 2001; Yu and Weiler, 2001; Arlt, 2006; Guo et al., 2007). Nevertheless, Wong and Lau (2001) also identified that their well-being in all-inclusive package tour is generally low. WTO (2008) statistics suggests that majority of the Chinese leisure travellers in Europe (60%) travel in groups. However, the proportion is falling. Among the Chinese package tourists in Europe, there is a trend indicating that they favour more immersive package tour rather covering maximum of three countries rather than the whistle-stop tours (WTO, 2008). At the moment, group travel is mandatory under the ADS scheme, with the exception of travel to Hong Kong and Macau. This may partially explain the high percentage of group travellers.

On the other hand, there is a rising of independent travellers, also known as 'free walkers' (Chan, 2009). In response to such an upsurge, recent Chinese travel literature captures certain aspects of the independent phenomenon. Nevertheless, current Chinese independent travel literature mainly focuses on one segments of independent travel, namely backpackers often within China, in Macao and Taiwan or Asian destinations (Chan, 2009; Lim, 2009; Ong and Du Cros, 2012). This branch of independent travellers exhibit distinct characteristics (Lim, 2009). Unlike Western carefree backpackers, Chinese backpackers are governed by shared core values and ethnos, namely freedom, egalitarian, democracy, self-sacrifice and simple (Lim, 2009). Chinese backpacker community functions on Chinese travellers' own initiative and they are non-profit driven (Lim, 2009). They embrace distinct language and code of behaviours (Lim, 2009). They adopt common terminologies to communicate (Lim, 2009). Internet represents

independent travellers' preferred platform for socialisation and experience-and-information sharing (Lim, 2009; Ong and Du Cros, 2012). Chinese backpackers experience constant hovering between physical space and the virtual one (Lim, 2009). The virtual space is important, which constitutes an integral part of their whole travel experience (Lim, 2009). They tend to have shorter holidays (Zhu, 2007). Chen, Bao and Huang (2013) examine Chinese backpackers' motivations, during which three main motivations have been uncovered, namely social interaction, destination experience and self-actualisation. Three backpacker segments have been identified based on motivations, namely self-actualisers, destination-experiencers and social seekers (Chen et al., 2013). Chen et al., (2013) identify the escalating yearning for self-cognition (knowing oneself better and testing oneself) and self-improvement (improving personal skills and developing personal capacity) among Chinese backpackers. Ong and Du Cros' (2012) study on post-Mao generations' backpacking experience in Macao reveals that post-Mao backpackers are eroticizing the postcolonial leisure space (Ong and Du Cros, 2012). According to Lim (2009), two types of 'playing' have been created by Chinese backpackers, namely masochism (Zinue) and debauchery (Fubai). The former denotes the physically demanding activities (e.g. hiking, mountain climbing, water rafting, travelling to remote areas inhabited by ethnic minorities). The latter refers to the more pleasant activities (e.g. eating in a restaurant). The gender disparity between male and female backpackers in terms of division of labour is noted (Lim, 2009). Weightier items tend to be the responsibility of male backpackers whereas female backpackers are generally accountable for lighter items, cook and wash (Lim, 2009). Paradoxical assertions have also emerged out of Chinese independent travellers' accounts as there exists gender difference despite of their accentuation on 'equality' (Lim, 2009). Men are usually portrayed as 'older' and 'stronger' than women (Lim, 2009). Similarly, gender differences are noted in Ong and Du Cros' (2012) study on post-Mao backpackers. The increasing experience of non-packaged travel experience, according to Chan (2009), may allow for better revelation of subjectivity and individuality.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has reviewed the literature on Chinese travel culture. The chapter starts with discussion of the definition and characteristics of culture. Culture is complex and linked to the consumption. Further, cultural politics recognise the political nature of culture and how cultural of civil societies may lead to revolutionary changes. Chinese culture in general and Chinese travel culture in particular is also discussed, which touches upon various ideologies such as Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Western cultural influence, Yin/Yang philosophy and Holism. These ideological discussions are vital because Chinese travellers may draw upon these ideologies to construct their travel stories. In addition, it may influence the social interactions and human-to-nature interactions on holidays and online. Final section presents Chinese travel culture and contemporary Chinese travel. It discusses the up-to-date research in Chinese outbound travel. It is noted that although package tour is depicted as the most preferred way of travelling. Chinese package tourists' well-being is found to be low. There is a recent rising literature of non-package tourists, also known as 'free walkers' within China and destinations such as Taiwan, Macao and other Asian destinations. Nevertheless, current literature on independent travellers mostly focus on one branch of independent travellers, namely backpackers and often in places within China or other destinations such as Macao. Having reviewed Chinese travel culture, the next chapter addresses online communities and cultures.

## **Chapter 4**

# **Online Communities and Cultures**

### **4.1. Introduction**

This chapter reviews the literature on online communities and cultures. It is divided into five sections. It starts with the discussion of the rise of online travel communities and then their importance to the travel industry in section 4.2. Section 4.3 discusses the literature relating to online community and cultures. Finally, conclusions are drawn up accordingly in section 4.4.

### **4.2. The Rise of Online Community and Its Importance to Travel Industry**

Over the past few decades, Internet advancement has led to the impressive proliferation of online communities being embedded into our everyday existence. Such embedment is increasingly deep that Kozinets (2010) says that online community represents an indispensable slice of our total social reality. In consumer domain, for instance, there is an upsurge of consumer gatherings online to share consumption information and experiences and to connect to other like-minded consumers (Cova and Cova, 2002; Kozinets, 2010). According to Clerc (1996 cited Wang, Yu and Fesenmaier, 2002), millions of consumers are creating groups that ‘communicate social information and create and codify group-specific meanings, socially negotiate group-specific identities, form relationships which span from playfully antagonistic to the deeply romantic and which move between the network and face-to-face interaction, and create norms which serve to organize interaction and to maintain desirable social climates.’ The emergence of the online consumer communities means that it is no longer the one-way communication from the marketers to the consumers. Consumers also communicate with each other. As such, the power transfers from the marketers to the consumers. In response to such power transfer, Muniz and O’Guinn (2001) highlight the significance to address consumer-to-consumer relationships, and to understand and communicate with their consumers. Similarly, Kozinets (1998; 1999) recognises the vital role online community plays in shaping consumer behaviour and marketing (Kozinets, 1998; 1999). Armstrong and Hagel (1997, p57) say such aggregated online consumer community have significantly transformed the old-style business functions, especially marketing and sales. On the one hand, the online information distribution cost is relatively low. The adoption of online community can lessen marketing expenditure

(Wang et al., 2002). This is of relevance to the travel industry given the information-intense nature of travel products (Buhalis, 1998 cited Wang, et al., 2002). Online travel community allows for the straight connections between the business and their markets (Wang et al., 2002; Paris, 2012). Such an engagement may also boost travel companies' visibility worldwide (Paris, 2010). Further, in travel industry, there is a growth of online travel community empowered by travellers themselves and traveller-generated contents such as travel experiences and photos (Lo, Mckercher, Lo, Cheung and Law, 2011). The contents contributed by travellers themselves is viewed as more trustworthy and less biased than that acquired from conventional marketing communication (e.g. Zheng and Gretzel, 2010; Lo et al., 2011). Hence, it is more likely to affect travel behaviour such as what people do at the destination (Zheng and Gretzel, 2010), brand referrals (Trusov, Bucklin, and Pauwels 2009 cited by Lo et al., 2011). Most importantly, the existence of online travel community influences travel in general and travel experiences in particular (e.g., Feifer, 1985; Makimoto and Manners, 1997; Gergen, 2000; Wellman, 2001; Zhao, 2001; Gergen, 2002; Wang et al., 2002; Sorensen, 2003; Urry, 2002; Molz, 2006; Mascheroni, 2007; White and White, 2007; Burns and O'Regan, 2008; Molz, 2008; O'Regan, 2008; Lim, 2009; Hannam and Diekmann, 2010; Paris, 2010; Paris, 2012; Zheng and Gretzel, 2010; Paris, 2011). The next section is, therefore, to discuss the definition and characteristics of online community and different types of online communities. While discussion, the influence online travel community played on shaping travel experiences is also to be detailed.

### **4.3 Online Community and Culture**

#### **4.3.1 Definitions of Online Community**

Online community, as coined by Hiltz (1984), refers to the social entity occurred in a virtual cyberspace (Wang et al., 2002) with the aid of computer technology (Benedict, 1991; Coyne, 1995) among people who have similar interests and experiences to exchange knowledge and experiences using computer-mediated communications.

Rheingold (1994, p57-58) coined such a social entity as 'virtual community'. It refers to the 'social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feelings, to form webs of personal relationships. A virtual community is a group of people who may or may not meet one another face to face, and who exchange words and ideas through the mediation of computer bulletin boards and networks'.

Rheingold's (1994) initially adopt the term 'virtual' to indicate that these online social aggregations are located in the virtual cyberspace. This is not to say that a virtual community should be interpreted as 'unreal'. Wang et al., (2002) state that online community is real because

it is created through real computer-mediated communication (CMC) with real existences. According to Hillis (1997), virtual cyberspace is a real to its participants. Similarly, Fernback (1999) states that the realness in cyberspace is determined by participants' own opinions. Hence, it is real if the participants perceive so. Kozinets (2010) argues that such virtuality is in fact reality as it is initiated by real people who may meet-up face-to-face. He further notes that 'these social groups have a 'real' existence for their participants, and thus have consequential effects on many aspects of behaviour' (Kozinets, 1998, p366). Benedikt (1991, p123) says that the virtual cyberspace is equivalent to physical space in that "Cyberspace has geography, a nature, and a rule of human law. In cyberspace the common man and the information worker can search, manipulate, create or control information directly; he can be entertained or trained, seek solitude or company, win or lose power indeed, can 'live' or 'die' as he will". In fear of being perceived as 'unreal', Watson (1997) opposes the use of the term 'virtual'. In travel industry, Lim (2009) notes that Chinese backpackers experience constant hovering between physical space and the virtual one, both of them are real in the sense that they form a whole backpacking experience. Such a virtual aggregation of travellers in online travel community allows them to connect with significant others instantly. The instantaneously linking to their social networks may strengthen travellers' 'social connection' (Gergen, 2000, p136), leading to the upsurge of 'networked individualism' (Wellman, 2001; Burns and O'Regan, 2008). As Mascheroni (2007) says, it prevail isolation and physical distance. Online travel community may also expand travellers' 'symbolic world that may be little related to the immediate practical surroundings of either speaker' (Gergen, 2002, p239).

Although Rheingold's (1994, p57-58) adoption of the term 'virtual' has been questioned, his definition highlights several key attributes to form a community online. It requires a minimum number of participants that are active, and demonstrate human feelings such as disclosure, honesty, reciprocity, trust, expressions of affiliation and expression of social intent. The number of members is suggested to be at least 20 and below 200 to be able to maintain a close community feel (Kozinets, 2010). According to Bromberg (1996 cited by Wang et al., 2002), for a community to form, there is a need for the personal investment, closeness, and dedication. According to Bressler and Grantham (2000), four essential factors to become a community include identification, unity, involvement and relatedness. In addition, they state that belonging to a community leads to a sense of fulfilment. According to Davidson and Cotter (1986), when communal history and values impact over others and there is the reinforcement of needs, a sense of community is then established. McMillan (1996) points out the elements of sense of belongings, the refinement of needs, the mutual history, experience and values as prerequisites for a community. Carey (1989, p18) perceives an online community as 'the sacred ceremony that draws persons together in fellowship and commonality'. There is some discussion as to

what constitutes a virtual, or online, community. Armstrong and Hagel (1997) identify five criteria:

1. distinctive membership focus
2. integration of content and communication
3. emphasis of member-generated content
4. choice among competing vendors
5. commercially motivated community organisers

According to Preece (2000), an online community should consist of the following elements: people who interact as they strive to satisfy their own needs or perform special roles; a shared purpose such as an interest, need, information exchange, or service that provides a reason for the community; policies that guide people's interactions; and computer systems which support and mediate social interaction and facilitate a sense of togetherness. This is similar to the five core attributes of online communities identified by Whittaker, Issacs and O'Day (1997):

1. members have a shared goal, interest, need, or activity that provides the primary reason for belonging to the community;
2. members engage in repeated, active participation, and often, intense interactions, strong emotional ties, and shared activities occur among participants;
3. members have access to shared resources, and policies determine the access to those resources;
4. reciprocity of information, support, and services among members;
5. shared context of social conventions, language, and protocols.

Komito (1998, p105 cited by Kozinets, 2010) points out the variety and dynamism of the term 'community' and state that 'a community is not fixed in form or function, it is a mixed bag of possible options whose meanings and concreteness are always being negotiated by individuals, in the context of changing external constraints. This is true whether group members interact electronically, via face-to-face communication, or both'. In this respect, the term of 'online communities' is a highly complex formation and may come to include those 'foraging society' that are more information-oriented (Komito, 1998, p104 cited by Kozinets, 2010).

The looseness of the term of 'community' is pointed out by Ryan (1997, p.1168-1169) who asserts that 'the idea of community is [...] so loose that any sort of common concern may in principle give rise to the locution of the x-ing community 'where x can be almost everything

you care to think of – the knitting community or the snorkelling community as readily as the Heidegger-reading community’. Similarly, Shumar and Renninger (2002) argue that among the proliferation of the so-called online communities, some exist merely to obtain information from its users. Further, they reinforce the need to stay attentive to the symbolic and intangible aspects of a community, which become almost pervasive in the virtual environment. Regardless of whether those information-centred online formations should constitute online community, these online formations are vital for marketers.

According to Preece (2000), there are four basic purposes of online community, namely information-exchange, support-provision (conveys empathy, express emotion verbally or nonverbally), chat and socialize and discuss ideas which usually requires guidance from a moderator. With specific reference to the travel industry, Wang et al. (2002) identify three functions of online community, namely functional needs (transaction, information, entertainment, convenience and value), social needs (relationship, interactivity, trust, communication and escape) and psychological needs (identification, involvement, belonging, relatedness and creativity). While different online travel community may focus on different needs, the strength of online communities rests in their ability to address multiple needs simultaneously (Wang et al., 2002).

#### **4.3.2 Characteristics of Online Community**

The formations of communities in the virtual cyberspace are similar to those traditional communities in ‘real life’ in certain aspects, yet display certain unique attributes. Like any other traditional community, people are the core of the community (Armstrong and Hagel, 1997; Preece, 2000). No community can exist without people. Armstrong and Hagel (1997) say online community is more about aggregating people than information. In the travel industry, in light of the technological advancement, there witness the aggregation of tech-savvy travellers such as ‘flashpackers’ (Hannam and Diekmann, 2010; Paris, 2010; Paris, 2012), ‘digital nomads’ (Makimoto and Manners, 1997) and ‘global elite’ (Bauman, 2007) online. Flashpackers refers to the upscale backpackers who are high in technology use (Hannam and Diekmann, 2010). Digital nomads denote the individuals who live a place independent lifestyle with the aid of Internet (Makimoto and Manners, 1997). Global elite embrace hypermobility mentally, corporeally and virtually (Bauman, 2007). They travel worldwide across various travelscape and are linked to manifold networks with the aid of information technology (O’Regan, 2008, p111). These tech-savvy travellers constitute the core of online travel community.



Unlike the traditional community that operates through geographical proximity (Anderson, 1983), kinship or close personal ties (Rheingold, 1994), online communities go beyond temporal and spatial constraints and do not necessarily require physical closeness (Rothaermela and Sugiyama, 2000; Cova and Cova, 2002). In the travel domain, the participation of online travel community shapes travellers' travel experience. In fact, it leads to the experience of being physically segregated yet virtually and socially close to each other through mediation (Gergen, 2002, p227), which is known as the experience of 'copresence' (Gergen, 2002, p227) or 'telecopresence' (Zhao, 2001). Virtual travel is increasingly combined with the corporeal travel (Molz, 2006). There is a merging of these two forms of travel (Paris, 2010). The hovering between the virtual travel and corporeal travel leads to the increasing blurring of the division between home and away, between travelled life and daily life (Paris, 2010). White and White (2007) note the increasingly penetration of daily life into the travelled life with the adoption of information technology. That is, the communication with friends and family members at home while one is away initiates the feelings of being at 'home' and 'away' at the same time. Feifer (1985) acknowledges the penetration of 'tourist gaze' into the everyday life. Virtual space is viewed as 'home' (Molz, 2008, Paris, 2011). There is the occurrence of 'interactive travel' when online audience increasingly interact with the travellers and influence the travellers' travel experience (Molz, 2006).

Further, unlike traditional communities that are formed from necessity and homogeneity of their membership, people's participations in an online community are autonomous (Kadi, 1995) and hence they are free to participate or withdraw their memberships. The autonomous nature of an online community also means that people may concurrently use more than one online community. This, to a certain extent, influences the online identity. Lysloff (2003) notes the fragmented sense of identity constructed online and the situational sense of voice given that online users may participate in various forums and groups:

*When we go online, the computer extends our identity into a virtual world of disembodied presence, and at the same time, it also incites us to take on other identities. We lurk in, or engage with, on-line lists and usenet groups that enable different versions of ourselves to emerge dialogically. The computer, in this way, allows for a new kind of performativity, an actualization of multiple and perhaps idealized selves through text and image.' (2003, p255)*

Williams and Copes (2005, p86) also note the 'fragmentation of identity' and 'postmodern' manifestation online where there is a 'weakening of commitment to anything but oneself', probably due to the 'liminal' nature of the Internet communal experience. Online community is thought to facilitate 'subcultural diffusion via nomadic Internet users who share subcultural

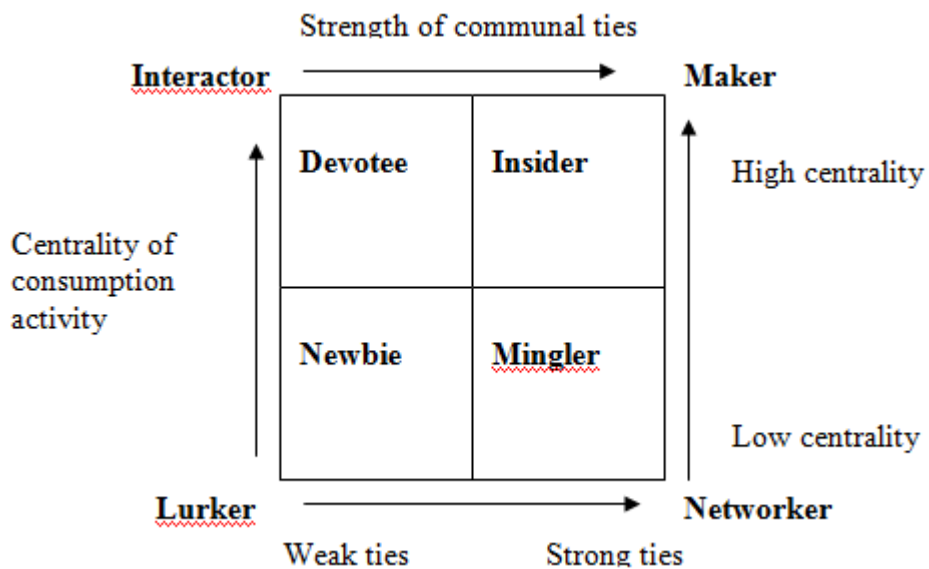
values and feel a part of a virtual community but do not feel the need to self-identity as subcultural members' (Williams and Copes, 2005, p86). In tourism settings, Urry (2002, p266) notes that technology advancement allows people 'to leave traces of their selves in informational space'. Paris (2010) acknowledges the potential of having hybrid personal identities (home identities v.s. road identity) with the aid of information technology.

Online users' real-life identity can be anonymous. This may allow for the exploration of new identities in an imaginary world (Wang et al., 2002). Online group identities are as important as offline ones. In the online setting, group norms and a sense of group identity are developed similar in the ways in which group identity are developed in real life. While creating group identity, online members are believed to adopt various interpretive, informative and social practices such as evaluation, commiseration, criticisms and so on (Baym, 1999 cited by Kozinets, 2010). In travel industry, while Sorensen (2003) states that there is a grow heterogeneity of traveller markets. Paris (2010) notes that the traveller group cultures are increasingly unified and homogeneous given that such a fragmented backpackers are accessible anywhere.

As Rheingold (1994, p58) notes, people in online communities do everything they do when they get together but do them using computer-mediated communication just leaving their bodies behind. This, to a certain extent, suggests the notion of 'disembodiment' online. Rather than being bodiless, Whitty (2003) states that the body is reconstructed and re-embodied online in different ways. As well as the embodiment and disembodiment, they also construct self-identity online.

#### **4.3.3 Different Types of Online Participation**

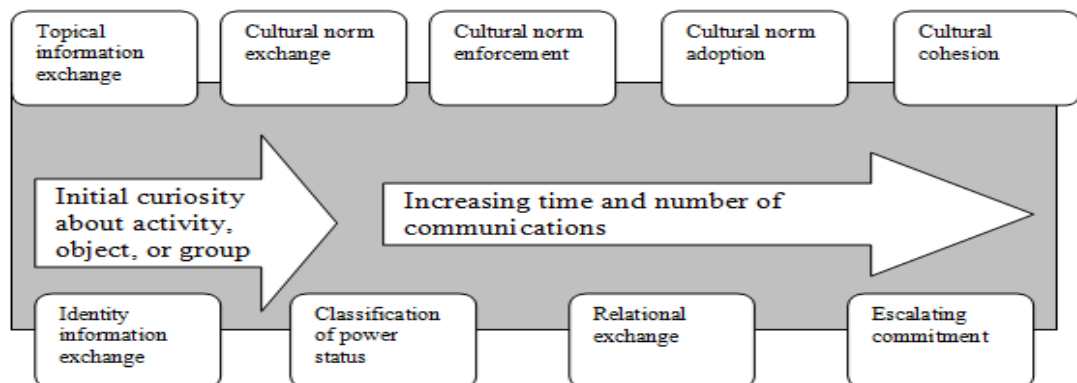
Online community users are heterogeneous (Lo et al., 2011). Correll (1995) identifies four styles of online community participation, namely regulars, newbies, lurkers, and bashers. There is an apparent developmental progression from lurker to newbie to regular. Bashers refer to those outsiders who come to harass members. Valck (2005, p133 cited by Kozinets, 2010, p32) also notes that online participants include more than 'lurkers' and 'contributors'. According to Kozinets (2010), there are eight types of online participation and four types of online membership based on two factors, namely strength of communal ties and centrality of consumption activity, as shown in **Figure 4.1**.



**Figure 4.1:** Types of Online Community Participation

Sources: Kozinets (2010)

According to Kozinets (2010), to become a member of an online community, there is a need for some sustained social interaction. As such, it is inappropriate to suggest ‘lurkers’ who visit a forum for just a few times are members of the online community. Further, the Internet users are thought to undergo a process of progression from initial acquisitions of fact-based asocial information to the increasing participation of affiliate social activities (Walther, 1995). According to Kavanaugh and Patterson (2001, p507), ‘the longer people are on the Internet, the more likely they are to use the Internet to engage in social-capital-building activities’. As Kozinets (1999) claims, the task-oriented and goal-directed informational knowledge is developed alongside social and cultural knowledge and social relationships. This is shown in Figure 4.2.



**Figure 4.2:** Developmental Progression of Participation in Online Communities

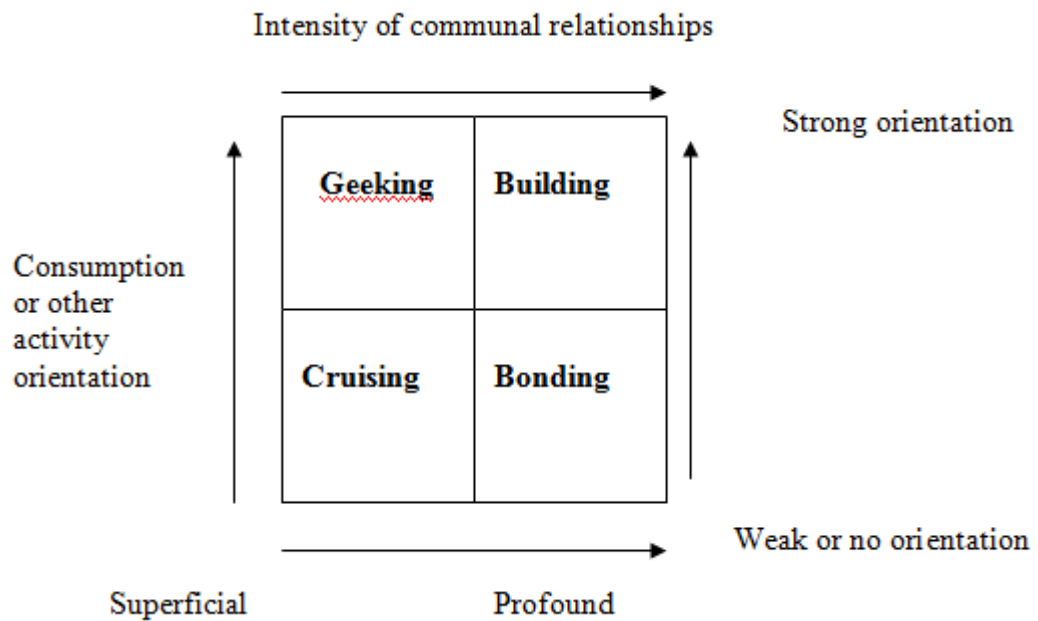
Sources: Kozinets (1999)

According to Walther (1997 cited by Kozinets, 2010), online community behaviour is, to some extent, dictated by whether 'future interactions' are anticipated. That is, if participants foresee no future interactions, their relations tend to be more task-oriented. However, if a future interaction is expected, participants are inclined to act in a friendlier way, be more cooperative, self-disclose, and generally engage in socially positive communications.

In online travel community studies, it is indicated that both passive (e.g., lurking) and active participation are beneficial and can intensify their attachment to the online travel community (Qu and Lee, 2011). Active participation, however, may lead to their sense of belonging to the online travel community showing more positive member behaviours such as knowledge sharing, community promotion, and behavioural change (Qu and Lee, 2011). In addition, the more interactive members are the more attached they are to their travel community (Qu and Lee, 2011) and the more likely they would share their expertise, experience and promote the travel community (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004). Highly interactive travel members are more likely to show meaningful behavioural changes due to their sense of belonging to the community (e.g., Kim Lee and Hiemstra, 2004; Qu and Lee, 2011). As the period of being an online community member increased, the level of membership, integration and fulfilment of needs increased as well (Kim et al., 2004). A sense of online community was found to be associated with member's purchasing behaviour and may lead to members' loyalty (Kim et al., 2004). Increased interaction brings about a strong sense of identity within the community and enhances its overall success by evoking some favourable member behaviours that benefit both the community and the travel members (Kim et al., 2004; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004; Qu and Lee, 2011). According to Qu and Lee (2011), it is important to foster individual members' sense of connection to other members in the travel community.

#### **4.3.4 Different Forms of Online Community**

Online communities are of different types. Some are of clear goals attracting people with similar goals and needs (Wang et al., 2002). Kozinets (2010) classifies online communities into cruising, bonding, geeking and building communities according to two dimensions- the intensity of communal relationships and consumption or other activity orientation.



**Figure 4.3:** Types of Online Community Interaction

Sources: Kozinets (1999)

As depicted in **Figure 4.3**, cruising communities refer to those online existences weak in social relationships and low in centrality of any particular kind of consumption activity. According to Kozinets (2010), particular virtual worlds, chat-rooms, and certain gamespaces often fall into cruising community category. Bonding communities are high in social relationships yet low in the shared or unifying consumption behaviour. Several examples of bonding communities may include social network sites and a number of social forums. Geeking community denotes those communities that are highly focused on a particular set of activities but not deeply engaging in developing meaningful social relationships. Many newsgroups, website forums and social content sites fit into this group. Building community is thought to be high in both. According to Kozinets (2010), many building communities grow out of website forums, devoted websites and virtual worlds. Among these four forms of online community, geeking and building community may be of particular relevance for researchers aiming to understand a particular consumption or activity.

#### **4.4. Conclusion**

This chapter highlights the importance of online consumer community in general and online travel community in particular. Further, it explores in detail the definition of online community, its characteristics, different types of online communities and different types of online participations. The rise of online community has transformed how travel experience providers do business. Most importantly, it impact travel experience. It expands travellers' social connectivity and symbolic world. There is a rising of tech-savvy travellers such as 'global elites', 'digital nomads' or 'flashpackers' gathering online leading to the experience of 'copresence' or 'telecopresence', which is the feeling of being physically absent yet socially present. Further, the emergence of online community also witness the increasingly merging of virtual travel with the corporeal travel, bringing about the feelings of simultaneously 'away' and 'home'. Virtual space can be 'home'. Further, there is rise of 'interactive travel' where one's travel experience is also influenced by their online peers. While the fragmented online identities are noted in the literature, the online travel community involvement is also believed to influence travellers' self-identities, leading to hybrid of personal identities (home identities and road identities). There also exists debate about how online technology influences the uniformity of travellers' group identities. Paris (2012) argues that the traveller group culture are increasingly unified and homogeneous given that such a fragmented backpackers are accessible anywhere. However, Sorensen (2003) suggests otherwise. Having reviewed the literature on online community, the next chapter goes on to detail the methodology used to understand the Chinese traveller's travel experience in the UK.

## **Chapter 5**

# **Research methodology**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Having identified that the aims of the study is to understand Chinese travellers' experience in the UK by critically analysing one online community, this chapter explicates the research methodology used in this study. It starts with a discussion of research paradigms and the justification of the adoption of a qualitative, interpretative paradigm to research Chinese travel experience in the UK in section 5.2. Then in section 5.3 the chapter demonstrates the suitability of netnography as the research methodology to understand this phenomenon. This includes a comprehensive discussion about the research approaches, research strategies, time horizons, data collection methods, the sampling procedures. The ethnographic data analysis, research ethics and the researcher's positionality are detailed in section 5.4, 5.5 and 5.6 respectively. Conclusions are drawn upon in section 5.7.

### **5.2 Qualitative and Interpretative Paradigm**

#### **5.2.1. Axiology, Ontology and Epistemology**

If paradigm discussion, as suggested by Denzin and Lincoln (2000), centres around three areas, namely axiology, ontology and epistemology, the two main research paradigms, positivist and interpretivist, differ noticeably. Each paradigm has its own advantages and disadvantages. The selection of paradigm is dependent upon the aim and objectives of the study (Szmigin and Foxall, 2000).

Axiologically, positivist research enables us to explain and predict under universal laws; the interpretivism allows us to understand (Ozanne and Hudson, 1989; Lamb et al, 2004). Ontologically, the positivist paradigm states that there is one and only one 'truth', whereas the interpretivist paradigm recognises the existence of multiple realities (Ozanne and Hudson, 1989). Epistemologically, the positivists' knowing process is detached from context whereas the interpretivist knowing process is inseparable from the context. It is more of a cooperative and socially-constructed-knowing, in which the research subjects may proactively shape the reality (Ozanne and Hudson 1989; Lamb et al, 2004).

A positive methodology tends to result in static ‘snapshots’ (Szmigin and Foxall, 2000); interpretivism, on the other hand, deals with the subject in a holistic way (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Radnor, 2002). Positivist usually involves experimentation under the controlled environment; whereas interpretivist is more of a ‘naturalistic’ approach, stress on relativism and seeking the emic understanding (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Radnor, 2002).

Positivist research is replicable. The reliability of interpretivist research does not lie in its replicability but in the interpretive awareness, that the researcher recognises and addresses the implications of their subjectivity. For interpretive research the data collection and analysis cannot be prescribed; rather, ‘ideas, meanings, and data-collection techniques are cooperatively developed’ (Ozanne and Hudson, 1989, p513).

In this study while it is maintained that there is one single truth regarding the nature of the external physical universe as underpinned by the realist or positivist ontology, an individual’s perception and experience of such an objective universe is subjective and uniquely different (e.g. Luo, 1995; Patton, 2002).

In epistemological terms, this study rests on the belief that the researcher cannot be completely objective (Patton, 2002). It holds, as also seen in the traditional Chinese epistemologies (e.g. Luo, 1995), that the knowing-process is the combination of experiencing through ‘five senses’ and the use of ‘rationality’.

### **5.2.2. Qualitative Approach**

Compared with quantitative method aiming at numerically testing existing theory, qualitative research offers an inductive, holistic understanding of consumers and the phenomenon, which is useful for generating insights, meanings and understandings (Padgett, 1998). In this study, the aim of the research is to understand an under-researched area, the nature of the consumer experiences of Chinese travellers (whose culture is thought to be holistic in nature) to the UK and the meanings they assigned to their travel experiences by critically analysing one large online community. The adoption of the qualitative, interpretivist paradigm is deemed most appropriate because it allows for the grasping of the ‘social, complex, often irrational and sometimes unpredictable nature of consumer behaviour’ (Goulding, 1999, p859).

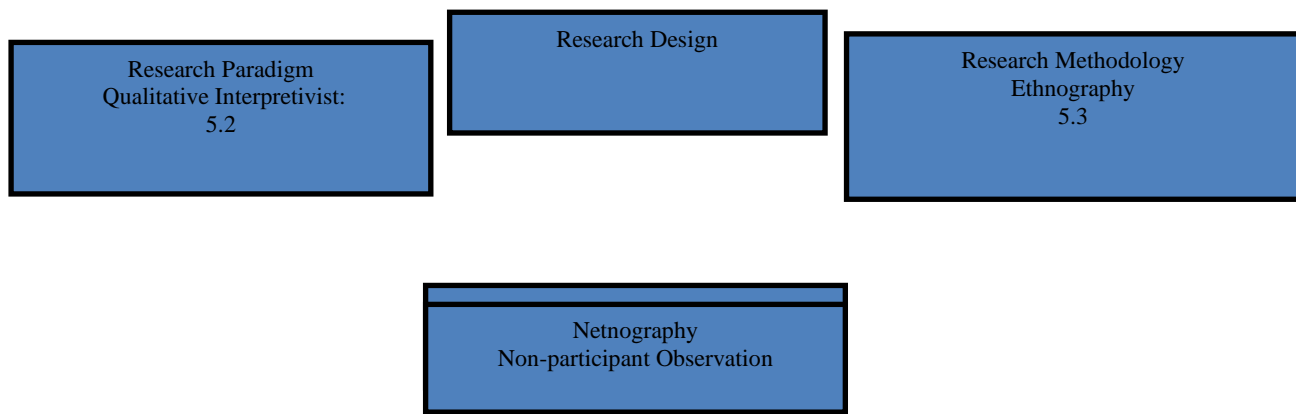
Consumer experiences are dynamic, subjective, emotional and symbolic. Hence it requires a qualitative experience and meaning-based approach for rich insights. These insights include emotions, fantasy and fun from consumers’ own perspectives and the associated meanings (e.g.,



Holbrook and Hirschmann, 1982; Patterson et al., 1994). This method roots the interpretation and construction of meanings deeply within consumer sub-cultures (Borrie and Birzell, 2001), in which they are depicted as individuals who are engaged in a cultural project, as storytellers who actively narrate their experiences to express themselves and create a sense of identities (McCracken, 1987). In this respect, positivist quantitative methods such as the expectation-conformation model (Bettman, 1979) and the SERVQUAL method (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1988) are inadequate (Fache, 2000). Although up until now typical approaches adopted to research Chinese patterns of consumer behaviour in general and travel behaviour in particular addressing expectation, satisfaction, attitudes, decision-making and purchase intentions (e.g., Wang, 2004; Tam, 2005; Bojanic and Xu, 2006; Choi et al., 2008; Sparks and Pan, 2009; Wong and Dean, 2009; Zhu and Mathieu, 2009). Up till now, little research attends to Chinese travellers' subjective reflection and interpretation of travel experience (WTO, 2008), especially in European destinations such as the UK. Qualitative experiential research has been adopted in Chinese patterns of behaviour in other areas, such as childhood experience of sexual abuse (Tang, 2002), women's experience in accountancy (Kim, 2004), pain experience (Wong, Chan and Wai-Chi, 2009) and discrimination experience (Benner and Kim, 2009).

### **5.2.3 Theory Construction Approach**

The research paradigm divides its theory construction approach into three main categories. On the one end, there is a deductive approach in which theory and a research hypothesis are formulated prior to the data collection and then the data collected serves purely as the testing of existing theory (Manson, 1996 cited by Curtin, 2008). On the other end, there lies the purely inductive approach, such as grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), where the researchers enter the field with no pre-influence of existing literature and conceptions. In the middle of the spectrum there lies the approach where data and theory are generated simultaneously and iteratively (Mason, 1996 cited by Curtin, 2008). This study employs the middle approach where theory generation is an interactive and evolving process. The literature review provides the study with a context, during which the gaps in the literature are continuously identified and modified in congruence with the results of the study.



**Figure 5.1: Research Design**

The research design of this study is shown in **Figure 5.1**. The research paradigm of this study rests on qualitative interpretivist paradigm. The research methodology is essentially a netnographic study, originated from ethnographic research. The collected data is then subject to ethnographic analysis. Having detailed the research design, the next section is to discuss in more details about ethnographic research method in general and netnographic research method in particular.

## **5.3 Ethnography as the Research Methodology**

### **5.3.1 Ethnography**

Whilst netnographic research is relatively new, ethnographic research has a much longer history. It has existed for more than a century as a topic of interest within the methodological literature. It is especially appropriate for the generation of an understanding of the behaviours of people and the distinct meanings associated with particular social group or phenomena (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Arnould and Epps, 2006).

In principle, ethnography is regarded as an anthropologically-originated method because it generally requires the researcher to immerse him/herself into the communities as an insider in the form of fieldwork to gain deep insights of the communities (Fetterman, 1998). Because of this, participant observation constitutes an integral part of ethnographic study. Often, ethnographical researchers keep regular field notes regarding their self-reflexivity in the process of behaviour observation. Both the self-reflexive field notes and the observation results are invaluable data for the subsequent interpretative analysis. The researcher in ethnographic research, as an instrument of researching (Fetterman, 1998), plays a vital role. Their interests and interpretation skills are hence crucial to the success of the study. Due to its attending to the subtle, metaphorical and hermeneutic interpretation, the researcher's rhetorical skills are

important (Kozinets, 2010, P59).

A key characteristic of ethnography is that it is a flexible research approach which inherently promotes open-ended practice (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). As a result, it has become refined and closely adapted to diverse disciplines to suit individual research interests. This brings about a proliferation of such ethnography research work across a wide range of disciplines including consumer research. In the context of tourism, for instance, Curtin (2008) adopts ethnography to research wildlife tourist experiences.

### **5.3.2 Netnography**

With the advancement of Internet technology and rising Internet usage (Internet World Stats, 2011), online communities have increasingly become a widespread place for consumers to be united by shared interests and socialise (Kozinets, 1999; Kozinets, 2010). Online communities provide crucial sources of online consumer culture. Recently, ethnography research takes on board the new opportunities offered by Internet technology and has formulated a new qualitative research methodology called 'online ethnography' (Kozinets, 1998; 2002; Morgan, 2006; Watson et al., 2008). Online ethnography, also termed as netnography (Kozinets, 1998), refers to the research approach of using web and online communities as a data collection platform to conduct ethnographic research to obtain qualitative insights into these sub-cultures and understandings about how meanings are constructed within these sub-cultures (Arnould and Epps, 2006). The capability and reliability of netnography is already evident (e.g., Kozinets, 1998, 2002; Langer and Beckman, 2005). It has been used in marketing to gain qualitative insights into online consumption culture and behaviours. One such example is Kozinets' (2002) study of online coffee culture. A few tourism studies have already looked at the online sources as useful information to understand tourist experiences (Mena and Bosangit, 2007; Pan, MacLaurin and Crotts, 2007; Carson, 2008; Puhlinger and Taylor, 2008; Wenger, 2008; Enoch and Grossman, 2010), yet they are mainly focused on destination images and behaviour attributes. Recently, Lim (2009) and Du Cros (2011) adopt netnography to research Chinese backpackers. Netnography may be fruitful for understanding Chinese traveller sub-cultures given its large number of Internet users (World Internet Statistics, 2011) and active online participation (BBC website, 2009). Given that the Internet has been recognised as one of the most popular sources of travel information and experience sharing for the Chinese (WTO, 2008), it is an ideal place to study their recollection and reflection of their travel experiences and their shared system of meanings.

The advantages of netnography over traditional consumer experiences research methods are clear. First, online ethnography offers a much less obtrusive platform for uncovering the

naturally occurring discourse spontaneously generated among online members (Kozinets, 2002; 2010). The data are naturally-occurring and hence it overcomes the potential problems associated with the research results being biased by the presence of the researchers (Kozinets, 2002).

Another attraction is that the possibility of anonymity may allow for greater openness and revelation of true feelings and experiences. Furthermore, the data is readily downloadable online. Doing this saves time and resources and hence makes it responsive to consumer trends in a timely fashion (Kozinets, 2002; Arnould and Epps, 2006). In addition, the travel stories often offer a rich emic view of their travel experiences. Online communities also allows for the understanding of travel experience from travellers located in a wide geographical area given that there is no temporal and spatial constraints online (Kozinets, 2010).

Netnography is not without limitation. First, the vast volume of available online data may lead to information overload if not handled effectively (Catterall and Maclaran, 2002; Kozinets, 2010). Therefore, an appropriate criterion for selecting only the most relevant data is needed (Kozinets, 1998; Yang and Fang, 2004; Kozinets, 2010). According to Yang and Fang (2004), netnographic research is best focused on sites with:

1. a more focused and research relevant segment
2. higher 'traffic' of postings
3. larger numbers of discrete message postings
4. more detailed or descriptively rich data
5. more interactions among members

Second, the concealing of the posters' real-life identities makes it hard to know the community sample precisely. Moreover, it is not possible to generalise the netnography research results into the wider real-life consumer community (Kozinets, 2002, p. 62). However, on balance, netnography is appropriate to ensure an in-depth understanding of how a community of travellers construct experiences and interpret meanings in the online context (Kozinets, 2002, p. 62).

### **5.3.3 Data Collection**

The data sampled for final analysis include archival data and field notes. The archival data include all postings between January 2009 and January 2010 regarding discussions about travel in the UK at the 'travel stories' section in the UK forum at [www.go2eu.com](http://www.go2eu.com). This results in 258

pages long of field notes, 3081 pages of data in total from 65 travel authors. In total, there are 80 travel stories. The stories are about a group of Chinese travellers or travellers of Chinese origins. What they are sharing in the UK travel forum are their travel experiences in the UK. Some may fly from China to the UK specifically for holidays; some may travel from other European countries or even other continents; some may take regular holiday as a supplement to their study or working life in the UK; some may reside in the UK. What the website offers is an open space for them to share their travel experiences. Often, other travellers' holiday experiences serve as building blocks. Having listened to others' travel experience, it is then up to the individual travellers to decide how to build their own holidays. Like a child choosing different building blocks to design their own architecture, Chinese travellers on this website use the available information supplied by other travellers online and self-design their own holiday based on their individual situations such as discretionary time, budget and preferences. As such, the stories published on this website are of myriads of forms. They prefer at least elements of independent travelling instead of joining the all-inclusive package tours. However, they may combine independent travelling with local tour groups. For instance, *FuNiu42* and her mother joined Timberbush tour group for a few days while they travelled independently for the rest of their holidays in the UK. Similarly, *Bluecastle* and *Tutu* joined a five-day Scottish tour when they visited the Scotland for their seventeen-day independent holiday in the UK. *Aming2u* and his friends self-organised a tour group using the website with his online friends. Nine-day of his travel experience in the UK was spent on this self-organised group tour and another few days he travelled independently. Further, their budget also varies and so does their length of holiday time. They use various types of accommodations, including hotels, B&B and hostels. Sometimes, some travellers such as *Aming2u* even creatively combine different types of accommodation within one trip. It is, to some extent, similar to the post-tourists. However, the reason why they behave like post-tourists is not because we are in the post-modern era. It is more about the fundamentals of the Chinese culture, the Yin/Yang changing philosophy and holism. They resort to individual context and situation for decision-making. The profile of the travel authors is shown in **Table 5.1**. Forty percent of these travellers travel in groups (either with their spouse, family members or friends), twenty percent travel alone. Forty percent travellers mention nothing about if they travel with other people or not. In regards to their gender, 30% are males, 34% are females and 36% reveal no information about their gender. Concerning their marital status, 23% explicitly say they are married. Regarding their place of departure, 21% are from China, 67% are within UK (working professionals, students and overseas Chinese), 5% are from European countries and Ireland, 3% (two travellers) indicated that they are from outside UK because they were talking about Visa but not enough information to decide which place they were from. 4% say nothing implicit about their place of departure in their online postings.

Travel modes	Number	Percentage	Gender	Number	Percentage
Travel with spouse	12	15%	Male	24	30%
Family holiday	2	2%	Female	27	34%
Travel with friends	18	23%	Did not say	29	36%
Travel alone	16	20%			
Did not say	32	40%	<b>Online status</b>		
			New disciples	3	4%
<b>Place of departure</b>			1 <sup>st</sup> belt	27	34%
China	17	21%	2 <sup>nd</sup> belt	8	10%
Inside UK	54	67%	3 <sup>rd</sup> belt	17	21%
Ireland and Europe	4	5%	4 <sup>th</sup> belt	7	9%
Outside UK	2	3%	5 <sup>th</sup> belt	2	2%
Did not say	3	4%	6 <sup>th</sup> belt	1	1%
			7 <sup>th</sup> belt	4	5%
Marital status			8 <sup>th</sup> belt	5	6%
Married	18	23%	9 <sup>th</sup> belt	1	1%
Not married	5	6%	Moderator	2	3%
Did not say	57	71%	Elders of Custodian	2	3%
			Tang Zhu	1	1%
<b>Length of holiday</b>					
1 day	11	13%			
2-4 days	27	27%			
5-7 days	17	17%			
8-14 days	11	11%			
15-20 days	2	2%			
21-28 days	1	1%			
Reflect UK experience as a whole	2	2%	2 month business training in the UK		
Did not say	16	16%			

**Table 5.1: Profile of Travel Authors**

Their online status spans from new disciples to senior online members such as 9<sup>th</sup> belt holder (online rankings), moderator, Elders of Custodian and Tang Zhu. In terms of their length of

holiday, large percentage of travellers (57%) takes short holidays less than a week. This is because many Chinese inside UK tend to use weekend, bank holidays or annual leave to travel. For instance, *fangfangorchid* visited the Lake District for her 3-night-4-day trip during bank holiday. The Chinese travellers flying from China tend to take slightly longer holidays. They are mainly made of leisure travellers, business travellers and VFR. Some travellers travel to the UK especially for holiday, to name just a few: *FuNiu42*, *Aming2u*, *Shuangshuangyan* and *Augx*. There are also business travellers. For instance, *thaline* travelled with her husband to the UK while her husband was doing business training in the UK. *Summercco* was visiting his husband (who is working in London). Most of her 20 days in the UK was spent on holiday travelling around the UK. Because the sample is drawn from online discussion forum, there is some missing information in terms of their profiles due to the anonymous nature of online community. Some travellers mainly upload their travel photos or talk about travel tips without explicitly mentioning about their demographic information. Although the final data analysis focus only on postings between January 2009 and January 2010 regarding discussions about travel in the UK at the ‘travel stories’ section in the UK forum, various other sections of the website and its official micro blogs are read and mentally processed from time to time and become part of the so-called ‘distilled’ knowledge (Kozinets, 2010).

#### 5.3.4 Study Site

This study focuses on the understanding of Chinese travellers’ experience in the UK specifically, because the researcher has had intensive travel experiences in the UK prior to the study as well as during the study. Furthermore, the UK was chosen because Chinese travel to the UK is a relatively new yet a growing area. In this study, the largest travel information website rich in traveller-generated content, [www.go2eu.com](http://www.go2eu.com), (currently known as [www.qyer.com](http://www.qyer.com). The website domain name has changed from [www.go2eu.com](http://www.go2eu.com) to [www.qyer.com](http://www.qyer.com) because the website has gained increasing popularity, go2eu no longer reflect the nature of the website) was chosen as a place of study. The selection of this site for netnographic research follows Kozinets’ (2010, P89) guidelines for site selection. They are:

1. Relevant, they relate to your research focus and questions
2. Active, they have recent and regular communications
3. Interactive, they have a flow of communications between participants
4. Substantial, they have a critical mass of communicators and an energetic feel
5. Heterogeneous, they have a number of different participants
6. Data-rich, offering more detailed or descriptively rich data

Although it may be more representative to the whole population if more than one website was chosen, the data generated from this largest travel information website is rich enough for thick description and understanding the essence of the phenomenon. Furthermore, it allows for a deep understanding of this chosen travel sub-culture. It is justifiable because it helps to locate the individuals who are willing to express their inner feelings and experiences and gain rich data to yield potential insightful findings.

[www.go2eu.com](http://www.go2eu.com) is the No. 1 travel information website in China with more than 1.2 million registered members in 2007 (Baidu report, 2008). It relies on travelling enthusiasts themselves to provide travel information and share experiences with their peers. As a result, it has high traffic and there are large amounts of tourist-generated information. To be more precise, up till now, more than 1.2 million travel stories have been published in this website (BaiduWikipedia, 2009).

The website was founded in 2004 in Germany by a Chinese overseas student when he was studying there. The original website, named [www.go2eu.com](http://www.go2eu.com), was mainly an online platform for European Chinese to share travel information and experiences in Europe. Initially, its members were mostly European Chinese and the Chinese who live abroad. It has now grown to incorporate discussions about their holiday experiences at various destinations worldwide (both outside and inside China). There is a rapid increase of Chinese travellers inside China. The ratio between the Chinese travellers inside China and those living abroad is now almost 50:50. In fact, it actually brings about a community of Chinese travel enthusiasts across wide geographic areas together to discuss and share their travelling experiences.

Later on, due to its rising popularity, the website expanded to include travel information and experience sharing in other continents in 2006. Because of its rising popularity, it has been rated as the website attracting most of the attention among travel information websites in China (Baidu report, 2008). It was rated as one of the most useful travel websites for the Chinese in September 2006. In 2007, it was rated as one of the thirty coolest websites in Chinese network weekly (Healthy Daily, 2007). In addition, CCTV international conducted a news interview about this online group in 2006. It ranks No. 6 in Google page hits in China (Baidu Baike, 2009). About 95% of the users in this website are high-income-white-collar workers with good qualifications. 90% falls into the 18-35 age group (Baidu Baike, 2009). The website is broken down into sections by geographical areas. Consequently, a large number of postings regarding travelling experiences in Europe destinations such as UK can be found in this website. This offers an ideal window to understand their travel experiences without undergoing the stage of travelling across wide geographical areas to interview them. The main focus of this study is on the European section, and specifically the UK one.



Online interview is not adopted in this study firstly because it is deemed to have ‘limited value’ (Bruckman, 2006, p87 cited by Kozinets, 2010). Further, in one section of this website, there is already a section where experienced travellers are interviewed by their fellow travellers. As the website becomes increasingly popular in 2006, several Chinese newspapers also conducted interviews on travellers in this online community. Consequently, this study uses the collection and analysis of these documentations (e.g. sections on interviewing the experienced travellers and news report) to obtain the contextual knowledge about this group and facilitate the netnographic interpretation. While the online community is observed, both observational and reflective field notes are written. Because participant observation may create a bias (Avery, 2007, cited by Kozinets, 2010), non-participant observation netnography is adopted to analyse the data generated from [www.go2eu.com](http://www.go2eu.com) to allow for the understanding of the naturally-occurring phenomenon free from the influence of the researcher (Kozinets, 2002). This is in line with naturalist approach (Hammersley, 1990; Fetterman, 1998). The research is in a constant evolving process where sampling strategies and research approaches are continuously modified in light of new data. It starts with a pilot study.

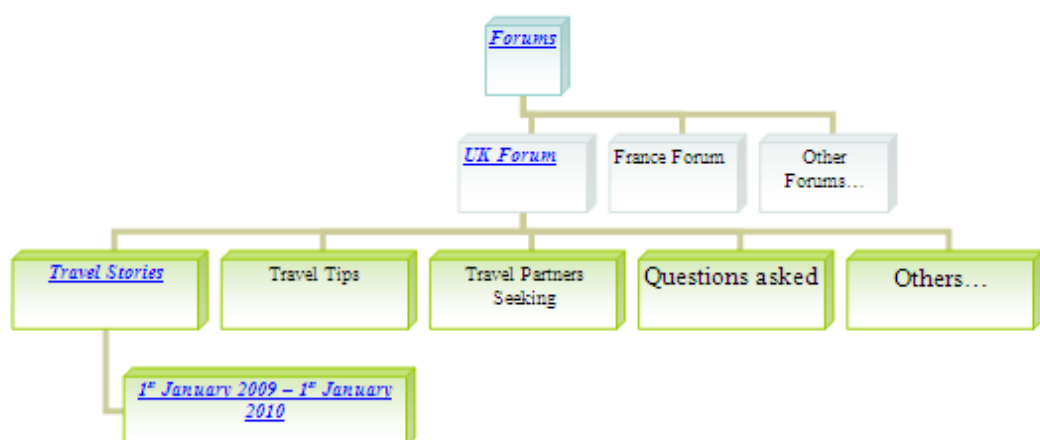
### **5.3.5 Pilot Study**

Prior to the final data collection, a pilot study was conducted. As part of the pilot study, the researcher immersed herself inside the online community [www.go2eu.com](http://www.go2eu.com) in a form of non-participant observation between January 2008 and September 2009 to gain a sense of familiarity about this sub-culture, its members’ roles and identities. It involves the exploration of different sections of the website to explore the possibility to use this website to gain rich travel stories and identify the best area of collecting the rich final data. It was discovered that there is one section in the website where experienced travellers are interviewed. According to the online members’ discussion, it was revealed that this group of travellers have gained rapid popularity. Several newspapers have interviewed some travellers and there are some news reports about them. In addition, it is found that there exists an ‘excellent travel stories’ index created by an elder in this community where excellent travel stories can be easily located. This leads to the decision to search for those news reports about this group. In addition, it also involves the analysis of ten postings about travel stories of Cambridge to explore the possibility of using netnography to collect data. These ten pieces are of individual postings but have been grouped together under the ‘excellent travel stories’ index. The reason for choosing the Cambridge postings is because Cambridge is a popular visiting place among Chinese travellers. This falls into the ‘typical’ cases category of purposive sampling methods (Patton, 2002). The postings vary in length and include both experienced travellers and non-experienced travellers. Almost all are written in Mandarin. Ultimately more than 230 pages of data were drawn and analysed.

The data set analysed includes not only the authors' reflections on the travelling experiences, but also readers' comments about the postings and non-linguistic visual images.

One positive outcome of the pilot is that the chosen community is especially active and rich in traveller-generated data. However, all of these ten postings are chosen from the 'excellent travel stories' index. This index has been arranged by the moderator based on the geographical areas the travellers visited. It has a list of links to the travel stories located in the 'travel stories' section. One concern is that this may not represent the whole community. Although using the 'excellent travel stories' index enable the easy location of the travel stories related to Cambridge, it imposes certain limitations: the less excellent travel stories may not be chosen. Additionally, the index was arranged on 02/04/2008, which means the travel stories published after this date are not included in the index. It is more of the moderators' choice than the real representation of all travel stories. This leads to the revision of sampling strategy to include all postings between January 2009 and January 2010 regarding discussions about travel in the UK at the 'travel stories' section in the UK forum instead of relying merely on the 'excellent travel stories' index.

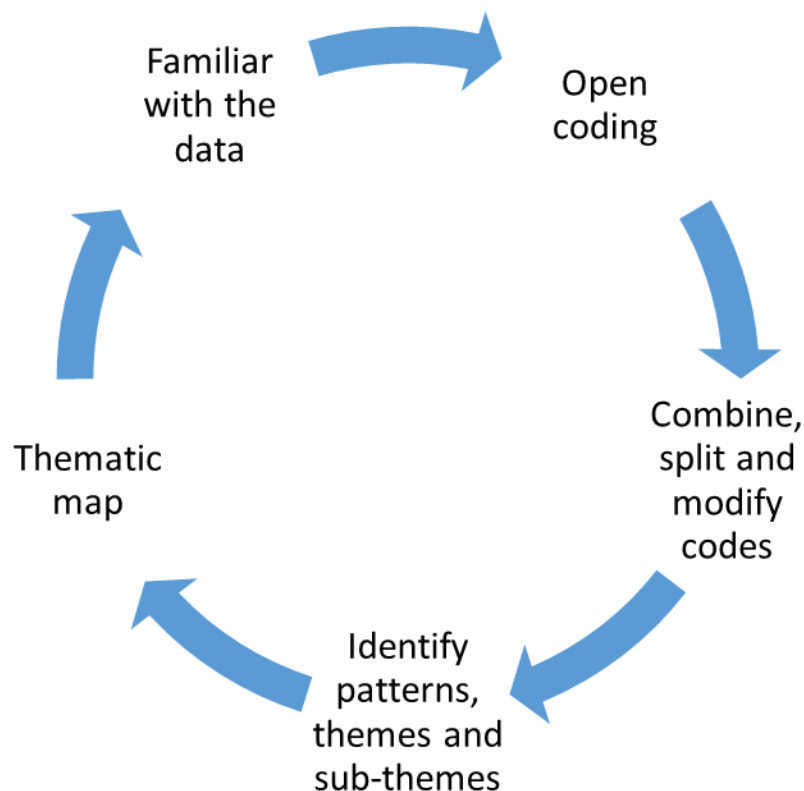
As shown in **Figure 5.2**, the forum is made up of different sub-forums based upon countries discussed such as UK forum, French forum and so on. The UK forum is further divided into different sections such as 'travel stories', 'travel tips', 'asking questions', 'finding travel partners' and so on. All of these discussion threads are postings by travellers and for travellers. Inside the 'travel stories' section, it mostly includes postings where travellers published to share their travel stories and experiences. It is very much akin to the 'travel journals' where detailed information about travel experiences is documented. It was decided to focus on the 'travel stories' section under the UK forum because that was where most relevant data can be generated.



**Figure 5.2:** Revised Postings Selection Strategy

## 5.4 Ethnographic Analysis

The data is subject to ethnographic analysis searching for patterns of thoughts and behaviours. It is an ongoing process, which spans from the beginning of the field work at the end of 2007 to the final writing up and last for more than four years. The 80 pieces of travel stories were copied and pasted into word documents and then exported to Nvivo for analysis. The data were then analysed with the aid of Nvivo. Among them, 20 postings are subsequently manually coded for detailed hermeneutic readings because it is believed that the use of Nvivo may not allow for close readings of the data. The 20 postings are selected in a way that it represents a comprehensive covering of all emerging themes. The closer, more detailed reading is used to check if there is anything to add to the coding conducted in Nvivo. As illustrated in **Figure 5.3**, the data analysis starts with the read and re-read of downloaded positing, documentations and field notes to gain a sense of familiarity of all aspects of the content. During the process of repeated readings, annotations have been inserted around the data to facilitate understanding and provide the foundation for the rest of the analysis. The repeat readings not only give the researcher a holistic grasp of the text, it also enables the researcher to closely exam the specific parts. In this way, it enables the researcher to see both ‘the forest and the trees’.



**Figure 5.3:** Data analysis process adopted

It then follows by the initial creation and application of codes guided by the aims and objectives of the research. This is done through labelling the data based upon its meanings. Codes refer to the most basic level of meaningful data segmentation (Boyatzis, 1998). Coding refers to the process of sorting and categorizing different instances of data extracts according to meaningful units and subsequently assigning codes to each unit. Generally speaking, there exist two major strategies of coding qualitative data, namely, the theory-driving coding and open coding. The former tend to link the coding framework explicitly to the theories, whereas the latter is characterised by the fact that the code framework is developed from the data itself (Boyatzis, 1998; Fetterman, 1998). Hence, it is more inductive in essence. This study employs an interactive, inductive and evolving coding strategy in which the development of codes and themes are deeply rooted in the data. The codes are continuously revised whenever necessary.

The coding process is performed with the aid of the software programme Nvivo. In order to obtain a closer feel of the data, after the coding in Nvivo, twenty pieces of postings are printed out, manually coded and then checked with the coding in Nvivo for consistency. The data has been coded line by line to ensure the generation of maximum themes. Furthermore, procedures have been taken to ensure consistent coding scheme has been applied throughout the entire analysis. Extra surrounding data extracts have been included to contextualise the codes. During the process of producing the initial codes, four attributes associated with each code have been specified. They are 1) the name of the code; 2) a brief definition of the code; 3) the inclusion and exclusion principles; 4) example data extracts illustrating the identified codes. It is important to note that the analysis is a continuously involving process in which the attributes of the initial codes have undergone constant modification and refinement as the analysis goes on to ensure that the data extracts pertaining to the same meaning are coded in the same category. This may involve the combining and splitting of codes whenever necessary.

Once thoroughly coded, the data extracts related to each code are then assembled together and copied in a separate word document. Next, related codes are condensed to identify regular re-occurring patterns and themes. At the end of this stage, a list of sub-themes, themes and potential themes have been generated. After briefly working out the relationships among different codes and themes, a primitive thematic map is produced using the model function in Nvivo. The identified themes are then subject to a progressive refining process to ensure the achievement of internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity (Patton, 2002). During the process of refinement the previously-produced thematic model is modified. Finally, the refined themes are named and the scopes and content of each theme are specified. Five major themes are identified, namely language and self-identities, experience of travel time and space, bodily feelings and emotions.

All the data coding and analysis were done in Mandarin to minimize the data being wrongly interpreted due to translation. Only in the final writing of the finding chapters, the data quotes are translated into English. Because all the postings were written in Mandarin, the translation is unavoidable. There are many Chinese slangs, idioms, and poems that are difficult to translate. In addition, there are certain online jargons the researcher did not come across before the research. Upon coming across something difficult to translate (e.g., a Chinese idiom), the researcher tries to search for various dictionaries to obtain the most accurate translation. Despite endeavouring to translate the data as accurate as possible, it is inevitable that certain meanings may be lost in translation (Bellos, 2011).

The researcher sees the data analysis and writing process like an artist painting a picture. At the beginning, the researcher sketches an outline of the findings based on the analysis. From time to time, such a draft outline are continuously modified and refined to reveal the essence of the phenomenon. Even in the final writing-up stages, the researcher still constantly goes back to the original data to double check to avoid data being wrongly translated and presented. The researcher needs to see if the writing reflects the true essence of the phenomenon and if more details need to be added. While writing-up, it is written up in a way to include multiple voices. The data analysis and writing-up is a process of constantly switching between an insiders and outsiders position, to allow for the merging of horizons and at the same time maintain the maximum objectivity. In this sense, contemplations and reflections are the keys. Like the continuously revising of sampling strategies, the themes of the data analysis are constantly refined in the light of new data being incorporated.

## **5.5 Ethical Issues**

Ethical concerns associated with online ethnography research are the subject of continuing debate. Kozinets (2002) advocates the need to encapsulate rigid procedures when conducting netnography research, including obtaining informed consents. Langer and Beckman (2005, p.198), however, argue that these ethical practices may well ‘disrupt the peace’ inside online communities and jeopardize the unobtrusive nature of the netnography research. The information obtained from online message boards or forums is perceived as being publicly available in circumstances where the access to the observation is not restricted by passwords or subscriptions. In such circumstances, the ethical procedures should be no more complicated than those applied to the studies of information derived from newspapers and magazines (Langer and Beckman, 2005). Bruckman (2002, p227; p229 cited by Kozinets, 2010) also states that most work on the Internet is ‘semi-published’ and should be treated as ‘various forms of amateur art and authorship’. In this study, the ethical procedure proposed by Langer and

Beckman (2005) has been adopted because the non-participant observation of the postings is not restricted and the postings are public published and available online. All quotes are credited and cited properly just as citing any other published authors to respect their authorships because creators online deserve as much credit as the offline ones (Kozinets, 2010, p154). The pseudonyms are used in the citing in viewing that it is as real as their real names (e.g., Bruckman, 2002, p221, cited by Kozinets 2010; Walther, 2002 cited by Kozinets 2010). The pseudonyms, as part of cultivated identity, are kept unchanged because it is appropriate when no harm can be imposed to the authors (Kozinets, 2010), which is the case in this study.

## **5.6 Positionality-Subjectivity and Interpretation**

I am Chinese. I am proud of my ethnic background and Chinese culture. In addition, I am very interested in knowing about other ‘cultures’ while travelling and interacting with people from all over the world. I have formed a good understanding of Western culture. I love the best of both. In some aspects of my life, I am westernised. In other aspects, I am very much Chinese. I tend to stick to the good aspects of both cultures and discard those bad ones. I am a great lover of Chinese classics including Confucius, Taoist and Buddhist teaching. At the same time, I am also a regular church-goer and a believer of Christianity. I regard myself as a ‘global citizen’ who can see the views deriving from both sides and who are open-minded about various schools of thoughts. In addition, I have intensive travelling experience in the UK both prior to and during the research. On top of that, I regularly use online platforms to search for travel information.

At the beginning of my PhD, I started with a broad topic of consumer experiences. My early literature review suggested that Chinese travellers’ travel experience in Europe destinations such as UK is an under-researched area. This coincidentally matches my personal interests and my life experience as I am myself a Chinese traveller in the UK with a strong interest in foreign cultures. Being a Chinese traveller allows me to build a social network of Chinese travellers even before I started my research. Furthermore, during my own travels, I have often searched online for travel information. Therefore, I know the potential popular websites where a high level of user-generated content can be located. I was very much fascinated about this growing new online phenomenon where like-minded tourists can exchange tourists’ experiences instantly at the global scale. I am interested in knowing this cultural phenomenon online.

In this study, I am an ‘insider’ of the Chinese travelling phenomenon to the UK, but an ‘outsider’ of the chosen online sub-culture because I observe the online discussions without participating in the discussion. I am more of a ‘lurker’ in the online community using Kozinets’ (2010) terminology. If the terminology of the online community is used, I am a ‘submarine’. I

chose non-participant observation because in that way my data is naturally occurring without the influence of me as a researcher. However, I noticed from my pilot study that my research findings may still be biased by my sampling strategy. Initially, I decided to choose several participants and then follow these chosen participants to different destinations. However, I later on realised that my selection of participants at the first instance may be biased by my personal preferences. In addition, all the postings I select are from people who have already been to Cambridge and whose postings are grouped into the excellent travel stories section. To avoid such bias, in the final analysis, I decided to take a more objective sampling strategy to include all the postings from January 2009 to January 2010 about UK travel discussions for analysis.

Being an ‘insider’ of the Chinese travelling phenomenon not only allows an easier access to the social network and data but also allows a much more insightful understanding of this cultural phenomenon. In addition, my language skills (fluent in Mandarin) and my in-depth knowledge of Chinese culture and Chinese travellers in the UK all facilitate my research. Often, reading their travel stories online can provoke strong resonance because I myself was there before and I myself had experienced them before. I feel I can understand how they feel. For the places and experiences I have not experienced before, their travel stories actually make me feel the need to go there and experience them. As a result, during the non-participant observation of online postings, from time to time, I would book my tickets and travel. My travel experience helps me to embed myself into such phenomenon, which shapes my understanding of the phenomenon, enhances my interpretative ability of the online data and allows for the merging between their ‘horizons’ and mine.

One of the most challenging things to conduct netnography is the large volume of data I need to download and analyse. For example, one of the postings alone (of course including readers’ comments) yields 230 pages of data and the final collection result in more than 3000 pages of data. The online community is so active that the readers’ comments sometimes are very lengthy. In order to be objective and make sure my presence does not influence other bloggers’ opinions and travel writings, I have tried not to write any blogs in this website. This is a community where members are eager to offer help to each other whenever possible. Sometimes, while reading their travel postings, I really want to be useful to them and offer help because I know the answers to some of the questions they raised. However, in order not to distort the research result, I know I cannot do this and sometimes it is not really a good feeling because I myself have the strong eagerness to share. I have spent time reading the travel stories on this website since end of 2007. Therefore, I have gained a good understanding of the cultural symbols of the posters.

## **5.7 Conclusions**

This chapter explained the research paradigm and methodological approaches adopted for this study. In terms of research paradigm, this study falls into the qualitative interpretivist paradigm. To be more specific, ontologically speaking, the researcher recognises that social reality is 'multiple'. Epistemologically speaking, the knowing process is socially-constructed and cannot be completely objective. In terms of methodological approach, this study is netnography study. The data was interpreted through an ethnographic analysis based on the online postings at one travel forum at one of the largest travel information website. This leads to the emergence of five main themes, namely language and self-identities, experience of travel time, experience of travel space, bodily feelings and emotions. Subsequently these identified themes are presented in detail in Chapters Six, Seven, Eight and Nine.



## Chapter 6

# Language and Self-identities

## 6.1 Introduction

Language is culture, language is social and language is personal (Hymes, 1977). Language allows us to communicate the feelings and experiences, express our personal tastes and self-identities. This chapter presents the themes related to language and self-identities.

## 6.2 Language

### 6.2.1 Language

How do they use language? How does the computer-mediated online program for the travel group impact their use of language? This section explores the themes about language. The main genre is that of a narrative-based travel journal, but a variety of other forms of genres, including poems, jingles, lyrics and photos are drawn upon in quite complex and innovative ways to illustrate the stories and display individual identities. Generally, it used the first person voice with the writer being self-identified. One exceptional case is **Bluecastle**'s holiday story. She wrote her travel stories as if it was a fiction, as illustrated by the beginning of her story:

*This is the real experience of two girls travelling abroad for the first time, I hope through the fun of the story, it can also provide some help to those who travel abroad for the first time.*

*Character one: Tutu, female, a colleague of mine, single at that time, characters include upright, vintage, elegant and self-closing.*

*Character two: Me, female, single, friendly personality.*

Different writers have different writing styles. Not everybody has the same language level. Some travellers such as **Bluecastle** are more able to use the language to express their feelings and ideas. Her grasp of language to convey her meanings is superb. The holiday story she wrote was so interesting and vivid that many people were attracted to her story. However, neither the genre, the language style nor abilities serves as the criteria that make the postings legitimate in

this online community. They are interested in sharing real holiday experiences. It did not matter how good their experiences were and how wonderful their language level was, so long as the stories described are authentic and real, they were welcomed. Having travelled to the UK gave them a voice and credibility to provide information, advice and constructive evaluation online. The readers tend to look for evidence (e.g. photos sometimes with personal subjects) and sometimes would ask for photos to prove that the writers had actually been there and their stories were not invented. For instance, although *Bluecastle* uses the fiction style, she used travel photos to prove that they had actually been there and the story she wrote is based on her own holiday experiences.

They do not normally contest self-identity unless they feel the writer faked the holiday experience without actually going there. However, they do raise questions about certain information the author provides, for instance, *Sunny Yin Er* visited the London Bridge and thought it was the place where the love story in the movie ‘Waterloo Bridge’ occurs. In knowing that *Sunny Yin Er* was wrong, an audience corrected by saying “*the blue bridge in the film is ‘Waterloo Bridge’, not ‘London Bridge’, the English name for the film is called ‘Waterloo Bridge’.*” *Sunny Yin Er* modestly accepted his correction:



You

are

**RIGHT!**

Thanks!...’



xie xie

In a similar vein, one reader raises questions about something *life is hiking* writes:

*At the exit of the station, there is a specialized information centre to provide the university maps and a wide range of other tourist information, I have been to many places, but haven’t seen any places with information centre dedicated for providing information for their local universities in the train station, how lucky these two universities are and how glorious these two towns are.*

The reader pointed out: ‘Leiden University also has dedicated reception area in the Leiden train station, hehe’. In response to this situation, *Life is hiking* just modestly admits: ‘*hehe, my knowledge is limited*’

## 6.2.2 Online Roles and Relationships

If the social self is described in relation to other people who surround it, then, the next question is, what about the relationships forged online? One of the obvious relationships online is the elder-junior relationship. In the online community, there is one moderator for UK section. It is the moderator's role to facilitate the discussion as well as motivate people to contribute online. The rest of the travellers also have an online ranking, ranging from beginners to level 8 or 9. The ranking depends on how much they contribute through postings. The more threads one posts, the higher his/her ranking. The higher the ranking, the more power they have. Often, travellers with higher rankings can reward good travel stories by adding scores. For instance, *Seaweed soup* rewarded *Bluecastle* with five scores for her interesting story:

*Seaweed soup* Money +5 Landlord's words make people so happy 2009-9-16 15:38

Further, other members of the online community like *Kellykelly* reward *Reservoir* with appraisal comments and one little red flower:



*hardworking reservoir!!*

*One little red flowers*

When they are senior enough by contribution, they may be called 'the elders/elders of a Buddhist monastery' (长老). The juniors often self-identify themselves as 'Rookies'. If you self-identify yourself as a 'rookie' in this online community, you will be treated with extra care. The elders and more experienced travellers would often motivate and encourage the juniors at the same time provide them with constructive advice and sometimes even personal care. Some elders in the online community even form a master-disciple relationship with one or two other online members. The elder would constantly pass on valuable advice to his/her disciples. For instance, *Curly hair* has a disciple who often calls him 'master'. As well as the elder-junior relationship, they also form friendship as many travellers clearly identify some other members of the online community as their 'old friends'. Some even are tour friends who have once travelled together in a group. For instance, facing the support from her old friends, *old baby vivi* says thanks:

*Firstly thank to those old friends who came to support in the first instance*



Some online members address each other as classmates, indicating that they are learning from each other and are learning together. Other online members address each other as siblings, reflecting the familial atmosphere created by this online community. The familial relations are to be discussed in detail in ‘One for All, All for One’ section. Everybody is recognised as an individual, treated with respect and encouraged to contribute. They show help and support to each other as well as building social networks through the responses of other posters. This echoes the ‘equality’ and ‘democracy’ ethnos identified by Lim (2009) in his study on Chinese backpackers. Therefore the website actually creates a community with its own cultural conventions and discourses as well as the supportive community feelings. Such a supportive community feeling contributes to their sense of belongings to this online social group.

In addition to the above-mentioned relationships, there is the writer-audience relationship. Both the elders and juniors can take the role of the writers and write their holiday stories. The communication between writers and audiences are one-to-many. The writers write about their holiday experiences with a title indicating what their holiday stories are about. The audiences from diverse locations can then read and comment on them. Praise, applauding and encouragement were often given online by the audience somewhat similar to the way sport fans would supporting their team in a match, as illustrated in the following extracts:

*Uniquely designed travel itinerary! Highly recommended! Organised 20-day holiday stories, LZ you worked very hard* 🌹

*Looking forward to the next part~~looking forward to Wales~~*



*Come on, come on, LZ continue*



Continue

Come on



*The travel story Landlord MM wrote was very interesting*

Another audience member, knowing that one traveller has an interesting holiday stories to tell, shows great patience as if she will always be there to listen, saying:

*If you have a fun story to share, you can share it slowly, no need to hurry,*



This appraisal and encouraging comments give the writers an immediate sense of communion with the group and felt rewarding to contribute more. The writers are praised for their effort to contribute and not for their ability to write interesting stories.

### 6.2.3 Interpretative Repertoires

To speak of the experience of travel within a computer-mediated communication such as utilized in the online travel group community, significant themes of language are identified. The community clearly shows that the participants are all part of a shared community who use shared interpretative repertoires while showing support to each other. Interpretative repertoires (Wetherell and Potter, 1988) are the repertoires of linguistic terms and patterns of speech that the speakers draw upon to convey meanings. When the Chinese traveller is posting online there is the matter of attempting to describe briefly, albeit aptly and vividly his/her experience of travelling to the UK. Sharing their travel experiences online usually requires the use abbreviations, phrases, online jargons, emoticons and idiomatic expressions that uniquely belong to virtual communication. For example, placards are popular tools used among readers to express their support and gratitude to authors for publishing their travel stories. They are commonly blue or yellow little men lifting a message board with Chinese letters written on it, which may carry meanings ranging from 'support' to 'excellent travel story, you will be remembered'. The audience normally start their comments with these supporting placards. One example of such is:

*Excellent posting! Rank it to the top for 2 weeks* 😄



Meanings for the majority of placards are quite straightforward as you can read from the Chinese letters written in the board. However, for some placards, the meanings are somewhat implicit. For instance, the meaning of the placard of 'sofa' is slightly difficult for a complete outsider to grasp. However, just a few days immersion into the community soon enables you to understand that sofa stands for the 'best seat', normally for the first reader who posts a comment after a travel story. Those readers who follow the first

comments can only sit in the ‘stools’. For instance, one reader wanted to be the first person to sit there and read **Kuku**’s travel story:

*It is worth grabbing the sofa ! ! ! Come on, kuku.*

On another occasion, after one reader indicates that she just bought her camera and is ready to travel, **Tropids** displays the placard to express his encouragement and his wish to hear about her travel stories in the future. The common yellow smiley-face emoticons are also in use in the community.

In addition, there are other commonly used online jargons. For instance, ‘RP’ means ‘lucky’ and ‘rookie’ is used to describe ‘novices’, and ‘get some soy sauce’ means that ‘care nothing about politics and only care about one’s own things’; ‘doing homework’ is used to refer to ‘researching about the places visited beforehand and writing and uploading holiday stories afterwards’. ‘Digging a hole’ (***I love the D80***) means opening a new thread and ready to upload postings. In addition to appraising, it seems common for the audiences to describe their previous travelling experiences after reading the travel stories. One of such examples is:

*Went there five years ago, one travel partner who went there together with me is now the mother of a child.*

*Time passing so quick, it seems it just happened yesterday.*

For those who have not visited the place yet, they may talk about their travel plans or intention. One even tries to find travel partners for her upcoming trip. Indeed, many like **Aming2u** find their travel partners online. Interestingly, some readers do not feel reluctant to provide their personal information. For instance **Jeffery** includes his personal picture, name, networks, personal website address and email address at the bottom of each comment. This shows the trust within the community based on their shared values.

Another common feature across many readers’ comments is that they are normally supplemented by lists of links to other travel stories he or she previously wrote for his/her personal space. It is almost as common to include personal mottos as to include lists of links. These mottos reveal not only their personal tastes but also their shared values. With this particular group that was the focus of this research, their self-identity (how they perceived of themselves as a traveller) was usually clearly described and demonstrated in the pseudonym they used to sign their postings and their personal mottos. Personal mottos also revealed either certain elements of either personal tastes, preferences or identified group memberships. The personal mottos can be grouped into several categories. Some mottos may be just a quote from a

well-known literature or films. For instance, *Enigmax* quoted a paragraph about Chinese chess from ‘the Art bible’ as his motto, in other occasions, the famous saying ‘read ten-thousand books, travel ten-thousand li’ (Dong, 1555-1636) as well as a paragraph from the ‘XiaoYao Tour’ by Zhuangzi was quoted as the motto depicting that he was into the simple unfettered spiritual travelling. Not only famous Chinese literatures are quoted, some also quote famous western literature. For instance, *Pugphotography* quote Heidegger’s saying ‘humans should live poetically’ as his motto. *Happy pig* quoted one of the memorable quotes from *Forrest Gump* as her motto ‘Life is a box of chocolates, you never know what you are going to get!’ (*Happy pig*). It implies that this is a group of travellers who are familiar with both Chinese and Western literature and make reference to both to describe their experiences. Some travellers write one or two sentences to describe themselves as illustrated below:

*The owl who loves walking*

*Acting as a frog in the centre of the maze to see the wonderful world outside*

*Travel for the dream just like Xiao Pei [a character in a Japanese cartoon who travelled the whole world to search for the seven-coloured flowers] does.*

*Do not want to stop the foot pace used to measure the world.*

In other instances, motto was used to depict the ‘enjoyment’ holiday brings, as illustrated by self-composed jingles ‘*Barefoot, running everywhere, Bathe in the sun, eat large dates*’ and also in the English lyrics of the song ‘*What a wonderful world*’ displayed by another online member. More mottos will be discussed in the self-identity section. Having briefly described the genres, legitimacy, relationships and communicative interactions of this online community, the next relevant questions are: what are the writers’ communicative objectives and what kind of linguistic features do the writers use to describe their holiday experiences online?

#### 6.2.4 Communicative Objectives

The primary purposes of the postings are to provide information, advice and support for other travellers, exchange ideas and share travel experiences. Preece (2000) states that there are four basic purposes of online community, namely information-exchange, support-provision (conveys empathy, express emotion), chat, socialise and discuss ideas. Wang et al., (2002) identifies the functional needs, social needs and psychological needs of online community members. It appeared that this online community exist to address all these needs. This online community is rich in both information and socialisation. Such an information-sharing is operated according to

reciprocity. Because many travellers benefit from reading others' holiday stories and receiving information and advice from others, many writers like **Franklyn** and **Aming2u** start their holiday stories with special thanks to those online friends for their kind help to make their holidays possible, at the same time hoping that others can also benefit from his sharing:

*I do not like to travel alone, so I felt lucky to have been able to meet good companions, I hope my companions would feel the same as me. Without this website, it would be difficult to realise such a wonderful trip, I would like to use this posting to express my thanks. This time I am not going to show pictures, I would mainly focus on sharing my experiences and exchange practical information, I hope this will be useful for those future travellers. (Aming2u)*

For other travellers such as **Letitialz**, posting holiday stories online serve as an online memory record for the future:

*Slowly organizing every photo, recording the experience along the way, recollecting my every-day mood, it can be said to be the best way to commemorate my far-away travel. Hope at one day one month and one year (in the future), the old majestic buildings in the England and the melodious Scottish bagpipe can still flash into my memory unexpectedly. (Letitialz)*

After the acknowledgement and explanation of the reasons why they post online, many would list their travel itinerary chronologically before they narrate their holiday experience. Some writers such as **Rain\_euro** write an index at the beginning telling the audience what she is going to write in her travel story.

Their language online also reveals a lot about their feelings and impressions as they travel. In line with Baym's (1999 cited by Kozinets, 2010) claim, this group of travellers also adopted various strategies such as evaluation, commiseration, criticisms and so on to describe their experience and express their self-identities online. They often share their holiday experiences, talk about the places they have visited, things encountered, people met and scenery appreciated. At the same time, some may express the deep feelings and emotions associated with travelling experiences. As such, the online postings can establish a good picture of their holiday experience. For instance, **Summercoo** shared many interesting things encountered on holiday:

*PS: Right, there was an interesting thing. We booked a double room, but entered to have a look, there was another door inside our room, opened and saw another door, opened again, it was another double room! At that time we were thinking that*



*Scottish people were so hospitable, they directly upgraded our room to the Executive suite ah! Later on we thought that it couldn't be right, and then walked out from the main entrance of another room to have a look, there really was another room number on the door. Haha, it turned out that these two bedrooms can be combined into a family room for families to use, the foreigners normally have two children per family.*

They not only describe their experience but also share photos to illustrate the places visited. Quite often they uploaded pictures to illustrate the places they visited, and then after the pictures, they usually wrote a short paragraph or just a few words explaining the places framed in the pictures. Sometimes the photos are mainly about the scenery appreciated and others may include photos with personal images as well. For instance, having visited North Wales, ***Moonbath*** introduced the smallest house in the UK with picture illustration:



**Figure 6.1: The Smallest House in the UK is like This**

**Author: *Moonbath***

Once the writers finish a holiday story, audiences commonly would ask for the writers to upload the holiday pictures. For instance, after ***Reservoir's*** holiday story of the Lake District, ***Moonbath*** asked for photos:

*Sitting on the sofa waiting for photos* 🤔. (***Moonbath***)

They share almost everything they encountered on holiday to their online friends, not only the well-known attractions in their pre-planned travel itinerary, but also the places they accidentally found on holidays:

*Also had a casual stroll in the town and found an interesting place, an old house, a place marked as 434 miles (probably miles) from both the Land End at the South British Sea and the John O'Groats from the North end of the world.*

In addition to sharing some factual information about the places visited, they also tell interesting stories about the attractions just as the tour guides would normally tell to their travellers. It is clear that there is an ‘entertainment’ element in the online communication. For instance, **Summercoo** shared the legends about the five-sister mountain she and her husband visited:

*Five-sister Mountain, legends says that there are five sisters who want to find a fairy to make them eternal beauties. The fairy turned them into these five beautiful mountains we now see. Later, the five sisters regretted, but nothing they can do to change themselves back again, they could only be in tears every day. So, the streams in the five-sister mountain are the tears they shed.*

Similarly, **FuNiu42** introduced many stories associated with the places and started to tell the story about Jane while she was telling their holiday story in Bath:

*Although Jane is uniquely important for Bath, she didn't live a happy life here. The most interesting thing is that, it is here that she accepted the proposal of her friend's younger brother who was 6 years younger than her, but after one-night careful thinking, she discovered that she didn't love him, then the next morning when all her friends came to congratulate them, she changed her mind, which made everybody feel embarrassed. Jane soon left here for a beautiful English countryside to construct her own fiction. (FuNiu42)*

On hearing about such stories, the audience felt that **FuNiu42** was knowledgeable. They got to know these stories from various sources, some from their tour guides, some from the audio guides, some from the locals they met and some are from the own research. Many audiences, when reading a holiday story with good factual information plus interesting stories, would feel that the online holiday stories are like a ‘tour guide’ for them. They would print the holiday stories and bring it with them while travelling. In Chinese history, it is common for friends, tour partners, locals and monks to act as tour guides (e.g., Wu, 2003), it is new that online holiday stories do. As well as sharing their experiences and feelings, introducing the stories and history about the places visited, they also evaluated various holiday products and services consumed, including tourist attractions, resorts and accommodation, as illustrated below:

*The last day [I] selected Hilton at the airport, 52 pounds, Hilton's standard is OK. There are many free buses running from the airport to the hotel. In the early morning there are also coaches to the airport, 4 pounds per person. Opposite to the*

*hotel, there is a McDonalds, there is also a Chinese restaurant not far away by walk. (I love the D80)*

*We had dinner together at a Chinese restaurant called 'Han Dynasty', in our tour group, quite few of us haven't had Chinese meal for many days, of course, everybody rated it [the Chinese restaurant] well, and objectively speaking the tastes of the meal was not bad at all. (Aming2u)*

Sometimes, travellers such as **I love the D80** have a thorough evaluation in terms of various accommodations, food, shopping, transportation and tours. While evaluating attractions and places individually, many travellers would provide an overall evaluation of their holiday experiences in one or two sentences. Throughout the narration, they also blend recommendations with evaluations and descriptions. For instance, **Baiship** and **Augx** recommended Bath and a Chinese porcelain exhibition to their online friends respectively:

*My Bath trip is like that ^ \_ ^, Bath is a town worth a visit. (Baiship)*

*Chinese porcelain exhibition is especially worth visiting. (Augx)*

Sometimes, the writers also share their views on various things. Some writers are humorous and their holiday stories are written in interesting styles accompanied by jokes. When reading such stories, the audience may be entertained.

### 6.2.5 Metaphors and Personifications

The use of metaphors is also common while narrating their holiday experiences. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), we often think and act metaphorically and usually draw upon metaphors to make complex concepts easier to comprehend. Metaphors were used by travellers to explain either the unfamiliar external world encountered through a familiar image. For instance, **Zhaoxiaoming** describing the car below as 'pig-nose car':

*My wife likes the pig-nose car! (Zhaoxiaoming)*

In other instances, the white marble roof and five small steeples on top of two towers were metaphorically described as two crowns (**Summercco**). Doodle door was described as an 'elephant trunk mountain' or a 'long-necked dragon bowing down to drink water' (**Summercoo**). The B&B in the forest was metaphorically described as the 'witches' little house'. The architecture looked like the palace in the fairy-tale whereas the bird on the wire 'seemed like

music signs' (*Summercoo*). Sharp stones on the grass field looked like *'the spring bamboo shoot sprouting out after the rain'* (*Summercoo*). The kilt rocks looked like the Scottish kilt (*Summercoo*). The white and soft sands on the seaside appeared as if it were snow on the ground (*Curly hair*). The school building at Cambridge University looked like churches (*Summercoo*). Bath Town Hall looked like a hotel (*Baiship*). The luxury houses on the way up to the hill, are similar to the beautiful villas on the outskirts of the Los Angeles (*Neko1105*). According to *Bluecastle*, London Tube map looked very much alike *"Shanghai Metro 2012 'wishful thinking map'."* Accommodations, if warmed with the hospitality of the owners, were constantly described as 'home'. Simple accommodations, such as 'Travelodge', were described as a 'student dormitory' (*Zhaoxiaoming*). Whenever they saw big crowds, they felt like they were in China. The weather in Britain was like 'the face of a child' (*Momomomo*).

Sometimes, travellers would use songs, old expressions, proverbs and poems from the ancient Chinese classics. Sometimes characters in literature, movies or films were also used to express their feelings, especially when the situations described could provoke resonance to the current encounters. For instance, *Baiship* used the poem 'facing the sea, warm spring, flowers blossoms' from Haizi to describe the beauty of Swansea beach. *FuNiu42* drawn upon the character of the little mouse in 'Tom & Jerry' to describe her holiday feelings, saying she was *'like the little mouse in 'Tom & Jerry', constantly looking up at the tall buildings nearby until he had no energy and fell down'*. Similarly, *Summercoo*, when walking inside the forest with her hubby on a rainy day and did not know how far they needed to go, used a well-known song to express her feelings, *'the road ahead is always too chilly and remote; please bless me in smile'*. *Bluecastle* drawn upon the character of 'grandma Liu' in the classic 'the dream of the red mansion' to describe herself:

*Tutu always smiles elegantly, but I always feel like grandma Liu. (Bluecastle)*

Grandma Liu was a lady from countryside with little knowledge about the luxurious life. The first time she was invited to visit the grand garden of the wealthy Jia family, she did not know how to react. On other occasions, when *Bluecastle* was dancing with another tour friend, she felt like the character Rose in the movie 'Titanic'. *Summercoo* mentioned that the sales assistant they encountered in the shop was of an elegant and arrogant temperament. She likened her as the chief editor in 'the Devil wears Prada'. The tour guide who came to find them was described as a 'worried parent who lost his children' (*Bluecastle*). The metaphors used to describe the consciousness of the self and others are to be discussed further in the self-identity section. Metaphors were also used to describe the way of life in the UK. While most travellers felt the pace of life in the UK was slower than that in China, *Bluecastle* felt that the pace of life

in London was much faster than that of Shanghai, in which she described ‘most people were running up and down the escalator hastily as if they were in a hurry for a reincarnation.’

As well as using metaphors to describe the external world, feelings, consciousness of self and others, metaphors were drawn upon to describe travelling in general. For instance, solitary holiday experience alone was also described as ‘meditation’. Travelling was also likened with ‘compulsory module’ implying its inherent educational element. Travelling was described as a ‘story’ with peak moments, as an ‘opera’ with an ending moment. **Life is hiking** talked about travelling as a pilgrimage journey when he visited Cambridge- the sacred source of knowledge.

*Came to Cambridge with a kind of admiration and respect, perhaps I have no chance to study in such a university, but as a scholar, visiting here kind of fulfilled my dreams.*

He constructed himself more like a pilgrim to the sacred ‘educational’ centre (Cohen, 1979) and the trip as an act of religious worship. He uses ‘pilgrimage’ as a metaphor to describe his journey to this sacred place, highlighting the spiritual elements of travelling:

*I would describe my trip to the universities as a pilgrimage rather than tourist activity.*

Everything he encountered appeared to be covered with a sense of holiness, including the college badge and even the apple tree, once the author learned that it was the tree that inspired Newton.

*The door is firmly closed. There is an eye-catching shield-shaped thing hanging on the door, it must be the college badge, I have seen it many times from books and TVs previously. Today, I can finally see it in person and have a closer observation. Almost every famous university has the ‘shield’ shaped college badge. I don’t know the reasons. I have always dreamed of studying in an older university, but very unluckily, from my first degree till now, all my universities are less than 50 years old, I reckon I have no chance to study in an older university for the rest of my life, I can only get close to the atmosphere of such universities via holidays.*

*But the most wonderful thing is that there was a short apple tree next to it. This tree no longer had any leaves, and was hidden in a corner, if other people hadn’t told me I would not have paid any attention to it. However, when I heard that it*

*was the tree where an apple fell onto the head of Newton, resulting in his discovery of the law of gravity, its image suddenly became taller in my eyes.*

*Of course, I do not know whether this really is that tree, but sometimes people like to deceive themselves, and therefore I not only took a photo of its beautiful shape, but also looked at it carefully for a long time, as if I could obtain some spirit from this tree.*

What ***Life is hiking*** is sharing here was that human experience of being a scholar and the trip to Cambridge was more of a ‘pilgrimage’ to him. He is a scholar. Cambridge has a reputation for its academic excellence. To say it is like a ‘pilgrimage’ is to say it is more than just another visit to a place in the itinerary, there is some sort of sacredness about this place because its academic reputation. It is that hallowed place of academic excellence, the bearing place of the rigorous scholarship that he likens it to a pilgrimage, which means it is something special and uniquely sacred. On another occasion, ***Aming2u***, a Beetle fan’s one night living in the place where Beetle once lived also experienced the pilgrimage-feelings. This is in line with the literature resembling travelling with pilgrimage (MacCannell, 1973; Graburn, 1977; Cohen, 1984; Graburn, 1989).

In addition to metaphors, personifications were also used. The city of London, for instance, was described as a history scholar with both inside and outside beauty. ***FuNiu42*** described the waterfall pictured in ***Zhaoxiaoming***’s photos as possessing the personal attributes of ‘deep, soft and tender’ and the flowers standing in the strong wind, yet not afraid, as ‘brave’ and possessing the personal attribute of ‘strong-willed’. The roof at the edge of Bath spa was also impersonated by ***Baiship*** as if it was ‘telling us his past, in a low voice’. The sun and the Scottish landscape were also depicted as if it was capable of ‘deceit’ and ‘baffling’ us respectively just like humans do.

Generally, Chinese travellers are capable of describing their feelings, experiences and meanings. Chinese language is generally rich. For instance, there are numerous ways of describing ‘beauty’. When sharing the beautiful scenery with the audience, they also draw upon metaphors, personifications, texts, literature and multi-media (e.g. photos and videos) to illustrate. Even with the use of photos, metaphors, personifications, texts and characters from literature, there were still moments when travellers felt that their language falls short, as illustrated below:

*It was really beautiful along the way, I tried to describe but I couldn’t.*  
(***Xiaobaiinuk***)

*Bath can never be described by the language, nor can it be recorded by the camera. I can only feel it using the heart, keep every moving-moment and bit-by-bit moods like treasure in my heart. Bath is the beauty, it is also the ideal of the life. In fact, in every person he/she has a Bath that belongs to him/her. (Sunny YinEer)*

*Although I travelled to the Lake Districts before and saw a lot of lakes, the lakes in the Scotland are different, I can only feel that it is different, but cannot express it. (Summercoo)*

Language is, sometimes, only medium for us to understand other people's experiences. However, as Van Manen (1997) says that experiences are inner feelings that often go beyond what we can express in language.

### **6.2.6 Inter-textuality, External Influences and How They React with the External Physical World**

The travel stories appeared to be influenced by literature, films and historical stories. They were drawing on their knowledge of literature shared with the on-line community to describe his experiences. For instance, **wooden man** associated his journey from Kings Cross station to Cambridge with the platform 9-3/4 from Harry Potter and dreamed that he too could be a wizard, going on magical journeys.

*I departed from platform 10 King's Cross station for Cambridge just next to Harry Potter 9-3/4 platform, I did not have the magic power to go through the wall, nor did I see the fascinating "Hogwarts Express. Only "Platform 9-3/4" station and that trolley half penetrated into the wall, calling the childhood dream, let the magician dream, ride the magic flying broom and fly far away to Hogwarts.*

The well-known lyric poem 'Say goodbye to Cambridge again' written by the famous poet Xu Zhi Mo was another good example of literature influence. In this poem, Xu Zhi Mo not only paints a beautiful picture of Cambridge using imageries such as 'golden tree', 'green Nymphoides', 'star' and 'the bride-like River Cam under the sun-setting', but also blends a sense of affection and romantic touch into his scenery-depiction. Interestingly, many authors, such as **Tripods**, captured photos of certain scenes depicted in the poem and constructed their experience from it.

*Sitting on the boat, enjoying the River Cam from an angle not far away from the water; although there were boats of various sizes punting in the small river, I was*

*just quietly and gently enjoying the beauty of River Cam just like nobody was around me. From the Bridge of Sighs, through many different bridges and arriving at the mathematic Bridge, though it was a short trip, I began to have a deep affection for the river. I could experience some of the scenes and feelings described by the poem 'Say goodbye to Cambridge again'.*

On another occasion, when **Aming2u** visited Cambridge and was punting on the Cambridge River, he acted as if he was the poet 'Xu Zhi Mo'. As he described: '*With a quick jerk of my sleeve, hehe, I saw my tour friends punting forward*'. The sentence 'with a quick jerk of my sleeve' is actually from Xu Zhi Mo's poem 'Say Good-bye again, Cambridge' (Xu, 1928). It says:

*I leave quietly, (悄悄的我走了)*

*As I came quietly. (正如我悄悄的来)*

*I am leaving*

*Without taking so much.*

*As a piece of cloud. (不带走一片云彩)*

*But with a quick jerk of my sleeve, (我挥一挥衣袖)*

*I wave goodbye.*

**Tata** clearly indicated that his/her intention of visiting the actress's tomb was initiated by other online net citizens' postings regarding the actress. Their experiences were also shaped by the actress's love story discussed online:

*Previously we saw the photo of the tomb from the website, it has a heart-shaped tombstone, everyone was trying hard to find it, our hearts were praying silently.*

Their experience was not only a reflection of the external physical world and its impact on them, but also a reflection of internal forces such as their self-identities and individual attributes that draw upon their cultural background, level of education and so on. More precisely, it was the reaction of these two. Self-identities often are constructed by language. The next section looks at the self-identities constructed online using language. It also draws upon the literature to discuss the nature of constructed self-identity (stableness or fragment of self-identities constructed).



### 6.3 Personal Identities

Travel experiences can also serve as the resources for self-identity construction and as symbols of expressing multiple self-identities (William, 2006).

#### 6.3.1 ‘Self-forgetfulness’

One of the essential meaning structures of going on holiday was the delightful experience of pleasure in a museum tour or social occasions where some travellers are lured into another ‘time and space’, forgetting about oneself. *FuNiu42*, for instance, upon seeing the ‘old English gentleman who was wearing a black hard wide-brimmed hat and was holding a Holmes beret and a long pipe to ‘promote’: take a photo’ and when they ‘walked gingerly onto the creaky wooden stairs’, she was taken by the presentation and felt as if she was in the fictional detective space. In this space, she felt that she was a ‘client’ in the novel of Sherlock Holmes, walking there to seek help from the detective to solve a mystery for her.

*About a year ago, I crazily loved Holmes, read through all the complete series of Sherlock Holmes at home. Later on, I gradually forgot about it, this time visiting his former residence, I was a little afraid [that I may have forgotten some of the stories]. At the door, an English gentleman who was wearing a black hard wide-brimmed hat was holding a Holmes beret and a long pipe to ‘promote’: take a photo?*

*Bought the tickets, we walked gingerly onto the creaky wooden stair, really had the feeling that I am the ‘client’ in the novel----but I was a bit depressed that I had nothing mysterious to hand over to Holmes to solve. (FuNiu42)*

Here she experienced what Gadamer (1988) calls the notion of ‘Self-forgetfulness’ where she forgot about herself in the present space and time and into another fictive space. In that space, she felt she like a ‘client’ of Sherlock Holmes walking into his lodging place seeking help. Holidays may allow the Chinese travellers to enter into a play mood. They may be seized by the moments and is no longer recognising the actors (the museum staff in this instance) as the actors but as the individual they are portraying. They may lose themselves in the story presented by the tourist attractions.

### 6.3.2 Reinforce Part of the Self-identities

While they may enact a situational self in a particular situation, part of the self-identity may stay stable over time. The modernist view sees the personal identity as a fixed set of traits that is stable over time while the post-modern views challenge the unitary and stability of identity (e.g., Lysloff, 2003; Williams and Copes, 2005). This study is more in line with Smith's (2006) claim that any person has a 'multiplicity of selves', some are situational-enacted and others are relatively enduring. Holiday experience, in these instances, provides the opportunity for the travellers to reinforce parts, especially the core part of their self-identities. It can also convey social and personal information that relate to consumers' self-identity, social status, moral value as well as aesthetic taste (Bourdieu, 1984; McCracken, 1990; Featherstone, 1991). For instance, **Pugphotography's** holiday story depicted himself more as an individual with a special taste for wine. Whenever he found some alcohol beverage-related tourist attractions in the places he visited, he would pay them a visit. This part of his self-identity is consistent over many trips. For instance, he visited the Guinness storehouse when he travelled to the Dublin. **Pugphotography's** 'predestined relationship' with Guinness can be traced back to the time when he visited Leeds for a business tour in 2005. During which he drank Guinness there with his colleagues and a waiter gave him and two of his Singaporean colleagues Guinness labelled T-shirts. Because of this, when the host mother mentioned that the Guinness in Dublin is the most authentic, he feels:

*Since then, I had a wish in my heart to visit Dublin. I didn't realise that this time my wishes come true.*

While visiting Dublin, **Pugphotography** visited the Guinness storehouse there. On another occasion, he visited Whiskey factory on his holiday to Scotland:

*When [I] passed Bush mills yesterday, I saw there was a Whiskey factory in the town. I discussed with my family members and decided to go inside the whiskey factory to see, it was indoors so no need to worry if it was raining.*

*In fact, I was very interested in the Whiskey since I came here in 2006, especially the Scottish kind. So in September 2007 my wife and I drove our car all the way around the Scotland and visited three different Whiskey factories: Famous Grouse, Glenfiddich, and Highland Park. So this time when I saw there was an Irish whiskey factories nearby, how could we miss it? (**Pugphotography**)*

Any wine-related objects, including the rubbish bin in the shape of a wine barrel, could become

the tourist attraction to attract his attention. In this sense, the concept of tourist place is more in line with Pearce's (1982, p98) conception of enlarged tourist place. In which a tourist place is defined as 'any place that fosters the feeling of being a tourist'. Taoism's emphasis on spontaneity also supports this notion stating that any places can become tourist attractions (Zheng, 2000). Hence, MacCannell (1989, p 41) points out that 'no naturalistic definition of the (tourist) sights is possible'.

*As soon as we started to walk downhill, we saw a rubbish bin on the side of the road, can't believe it was in the shape of a wine barrel. It seems it's really good to be located next to a brewery! (Pugphotography)*

Another dimension of **Pugphotography**'s self-identity that has stayed stable over time is his preference of small rural areas and seaside resorts over big, crowded cities. He stresses the personal attributes of 'loving rural and seaside resorts instead of big cities' wherever he travels, as he recounted:

*To be honest, probably because previously we experienced too much congestion in big cities inside our country, when we got to the UK, each time we went out, we tried to stay away from cities. In 2007 when we drove from Marseille, France to Venice, Italy, we lodged one night in Florence and the next day we drove through the city. When we got to Rome, we didn't even head inside the city but passed around and got to Napoli; at Napoli, we also arrived late and departed early the next day. The next day we drove hurriedly across Italy to the East and then drove northwards along the sea. For the details, pls refer to a posting inside the photography section: the colour of Mediterranean Sea (Provence-Venice)*

*This time we also only spent half day in the Belfast city, we parked our car at the car park behind the City Plaza and carried cameras and accompanied our parents to have a stroll in the city, just to fulfil their desires. (Pugphotography)*

Once again here he traced his past experience in China to explain why he endeavours to avoid visiting cities on holidays. His preference of small rural areas and seaside resorts tend to be consistent through time and manifested in many of his holiday experiences. It may imply, while part of the self-identity may change according to situations, the core defining part of self-identity can be persistent over time.

Noticeably, despite of **Pugphotography**'s love for rural, he still arranged half a day visiting the city to 'accompanied' their 'parents to have a stroll in the city, just to fulfil their desires'.

Generally, self-concept has been construed from a multidimensional perspective (Sirgy, 1982), which includes the ideal self, actual self, social self and expected self. The *expected self* is defined as what type of person other people expect us to be. The expected self (how family members expect me to be) is found to influence Chinese tourists' purchase intention of ski holiday products (Liu, 2008). Despite the existence of the core dimension of self, the self may change according to situations. The holist nature of Chinese culture means that the self-presentation may vary according to situations (Tu, 1985). Similarly, *Shanpoyan*'s identity as a poet is also consistent over time as he wrote poems whenever he travelled. Like *Pugphotograph* and *Shanpoyan*, *Xiaobaiintheuk*'s travel experience to the Isle of Wight reinforces her identity of being a gourmet who has special fondness for natural scenery. When narrating her trip to the Isle of Wight with three friends, *Xiaobaiintheuk* says: 'We four still think that one can see less of the man-made landscape of the Island, and see more of the natural scenery, and try more of the local cuisine'. Throughout her travel story, she made many references to the cuisine they tried on the island:

*One would naturally want to eat seafood when visiting the small island, we had four different courses and then shared the food, there was lobster, mussels, fish & chips, and a scampi. (Xiaobaiintheuk)*

She is not just a normal gourmet but a health-conscious one who is knowingly aware of nutritional benefits food or beverage brings to her:

*Little tips: the water in the Isle of Wight was very sweet! ~ When I poured water out to drink, I thought my cup wasn't cleaned properly, did not think that the water was so sweet! ~ Felt that it should be good for the health to drink such water!! (Xiaobaiintheuk)*

They would purposely search for local speciality and were not hesitant to ask the locals to recommend famous restaurants.

*Asked a grandma from a gas station after [we] came out of the Needles Park, the grandma recommended me to go to the restaurant at the beach in Yarmouth to eat, it was very close to drive there, that restaurant was called the waterfront, because it was at the seaside, the scenery was unbeatable, it was also not expensive, the seafood was just so so, but [I] ordered the special of the day, it was really amazing! ~ it was called something like skate fish, was the first time to eat such a fish, the meat was very tender, and the bones looked like bamboo, section by section, you*

*can chew to break it, I felt that it could supply me with a lot of calcium!(Xiaobaiintheuk)*

Here again, while talking about the skate fish she ate, she was speaking of the nutritious benefits of eating fish bones. Such a purposeful search for famous local cuisine occurred many times. On another occasion, they found out about a famous restaurant from the B&B owner and became excited:

*After returning to the accommodation, asked the owner once again where we could find good cuisine ~ ~ the owner recommended us the crab & lobster at bembridge, when we called the restaurant, it said we need to be hurry, otherwise the lobster and crab will be finished, as soon as we heard that, we were very excited, put on our clothes and ran, bolted all the way, on the way we saw many road signs about this restaurant many times (which is kind of brown-coloured signs commonly found at tourist attractions), so you can imagine this restaurant must be very famous and the food there must be very good ~ rushed into that restaurant, there were a lot of people there, finally found a place, asked the boys to go and order the seafood for fear of them running out ~ this restaurant was also at the seaside, but it was in the evening, so did not look at the scenery carefully ~ when the dishes were served later on, it was really good ah! ! ! Our B & B owner said if we can ask anybody, they would certainly know it, we can see it was really well known Oh! (Xiaobaiintheuk)*

While holidays reinforce parts of the existing self-identities, it also provides the opportunity for the travellers to discover new dimensions of the self.

### **6.3.3 Self-growth and Discovery of Self**

Travelling allows for self-discovery. For independent travellers, there are many unexpected events. Holidays provide the travellers with the opportunity to experience this sense of the unknown that leads to new knowing (Lim-Alparaque, 1986). While encountering unexpected events, they learn. This may lead to self-growth and discovery of new dimensions of the self. This is in line with the literature stating that travel is educational and allowing for intellectual discovery (e.g., Beard and Ragheb, 1983; Klooster, Vijk, Go and Rekom, 2008). Travel experience can testify the capacity of people to face challenges and enable them to achieve a sense of self-fulfilment (Beard and Ragheb, 1983; Celsi et al., 1993). It may also lead to personal growth and renewal (Arnould and Price, 1993) and transformation (Pine and Gilmore,

1999). It can enhance the status and lead to the development of self (William, 2006). Many travellers report self-growth and discovering elements of a new self, such as being 'independent'. Similar to what Arnould and Price(1993) find in their extraordinary river magic and what Pearce (2005) mentioned, holiday experience in the UK, especially for the independent ones, often offers elements of adventure (although some are explorers who constantly look for something new to watch and share and others may be more followers). It also allows for self-growth and the discovery of a new dimension of self.

For instance, many travellers talked about how their English improved and learning new vocabulary. Others mentioned that they learnt how to book tickets and hotels, design travel itinerary, how to capture good quality photos and read maps. They also got to know the best seasons to visit certain places and best viewing point for scenery and photos. Their general life skills are also increased. As *Letitiaz* says '*By the way, I will praise myself, after this trip in the UK, both Glenny and I started to feel proud for our sense of direction!*'

*Moonbath* became more and more experienced in putting together travel itinerary: '*Because I went to North Wales for three times, it took very little time to design the travel itinerary this time*'. The online community, to some extent, facilitates this kind of self-growth. There is also something of an 'achievement' through the enduring of pain and pushing up to the limit that the travellers experienced, the breaking of a walking record may also serve as a rite of passage. *Moonbath* talked about this:

*The one-day trip to the northern Lake district, cycling+ walking, in total 12 hrs, travel journey 55 miles which was around 88 Km, passed 6 lakes on the way, it can be the sister-travel posting to my other travel posting about my fiercest walk in the southern lake district. (Moonbath)*

At the beginning, it was easy:

*From Grasmere Lake, [I] started my trip to the north, it was a rising terrain as soon as I started, but since I had just begun my journey, my body can fully adapt to it. (Moonbath)*

*Needless to say, This is another fierce walk, I sometimes wanted to stop and stay there for one night when I got to the final 20 miles, and sometimes wanted to throw my bike away and call SOS, even wanted to ask for help from a red Bulldozer to help me, but [I didn't], I kept going, and caught my last train on time and got back to my place. (Moonbath)*

*My returning journey to Penrith was very hard, [I] already couldn't pay attention to taking pictures, so I had only one picture. I had been hesitating whether to stay in Keswick, but my persistence made me once again renew my walking record. (Moonbath)*

#### 6.3.4 Heightened Self-consciousness

While holidays help to reinforce part of the self-identity, the Chinese travellers also sometimes felt the heightened sense of self-consciousness. Such a feeling usually occurs when they encounter different people and realise the differences between other people and themselves. For instance, *Shuangshuangyan* described a heightened sense of self-consciousness of her English when she heard the British English from a British lady.

*Something [I felt a bit of] shy and ashamed of: British English really sounded very good, I could appreciate but couldn't understand them fully. Once walked into the underground, I said 'Excuse me' to the old lady in front of me, she turned around and realized that she blocked my way. [She] felt very sorry, and hastily she said: 'Oh, I am sorry.' Very short and just one sentence but with cadence, at the same time she also shrugged her shoulders, both her voice and expressions were vivid. [After I] finished listening to what she said, I felt really shameful, [I] realised my accent was so unfashionable. (Shuangshuangyan)*

*Letitialz* became conscious of her dressing style when she saw the British were all wearing black windbreaker jacket plus long boots in the Winter and she reported that '*I who was wearing a down jacket plus trainers was incompatible with them.*' *Xiaobaiinuk* felt embarrassed when she compared her non-braveness with the braveness of a group of children when they went boating:

*When we returned the boat, we saw a group of very young children, also coming to rent the boat similar to the ones we rented, the youngest was just as tall as my knees, suddenly I felt very shameful, because just now, I was yelling on the sea because of the small wind.*

Similarly, *Summercco* was conscious of herself and her hubby both wearing too much while other travellers they encountered were wearing very little. She felt that they were dressed like 'polar-bears'.

## 6.4 Shared Identities

While holiday experiences allowed them to display individual tastes and personal identities, it also allowed them to connect with the social group. Bourdieu's (1991) claim that consumption link consumers certain social belonging groups and therefore may lead to increased social, cultural and symbolic capital. This is a group of keen Chinese travellers who self-identified themselves as 'Qiong You Er', who walked simply with a free spirit, who behaved collectively and helped each other yet also displayed distinct personal consumption tastes and preferred elements of independent travelling.

### 6.4.1 Walk Simply with a Free Spirit

A slogan displayed at every page of this website conveys their shared values:

*What this network is advocating is the spirit of travelling is to travel and walk simply, with a free spirit, with the lifestyle of obtaining the natural beauty in the most enjoyable and unrestrained way.*

This shared slogan conveys several layers of meanings. Firstly, it depicts themselves as a group of simple travellers. Simple travellers not only travel in the simple style. That is, they do not need the exaggeration and displaying individual wealth on holiday to convey their self-identities and enhance their social status. Lim's (2009) study on Chinese backpackers identifies backpackers' shared values of being 'simple', also known as 'Pusu' in Chinese. In fact, the pursuit of simplicity is not new but a core part of Taoist ideology. Taoism advocates simple and quiet way of living in believing that simplicity and quietness can create wisdom (Lin, 1963; Zhuangzi annotated by Huang, 1996). Being simple does not mean they do not consume. They do consume whenever necessary and appropriate. In addition, being simple should not be mistaken as an element of backpacker. One core attributes of backpacker is that they often live in budget accommodations such as hostels (e.g. Riley, 1988; Uriely, 2002). The travellers in my sample are different from backpackers. They use various types of accommodations including B&B, hotel and hostel. Sometimes they may even blend B&B, hotels and hostel within one trip. Their budgets could be high or low. Some listed their total expenditure at the end of their holiday. Some of their total expenditure may be even more than the total cost of joining an all-inclusive package. Regardless of their budgets, they advocate saving, not spending excessively. Their construction of self-identities lie less in the displaying of personal wealth but more in other aspects, such as the accumulation of cultural capital (Munt, 1994), demonstrating distinct personal consumption tastes (Bourdieu, 1984), and the obtaining of spiritual satisfaction. They look for a good balance between the quality and price. They constantly share promotional information such as the 2 for 1 offer to London attractions to obtain a good balance between



quality and price. Chinese culture is known for its thrifty value (Hofstede and Bond, 1988). No matter if they are rich or poor, they can always find the travel activities suitable for their own tastes and individual circumstance. In this sense, money no longer is regarded as the constraint factor preventing people from travelling. Most importantly, 'simple' means, travel with a simple mind-set. They desire for a simple way of travelling and stress spirituality over materiality. They can be easily satisfied with 'simple happiness'. For instance, **Sunny Yin Er** felt happy after touring around and then in the evening '*being satiated with enough food and dishes*' and *sitting on a bus appreciating London at night with a Chinese soft drink 'Wanglaoji' in hand, she 'suddenly obtained the happiness feeling'*. As she said:

*Happiness can be so easy, and come so naturally. (Sunny Yin Er)*

This is indicative of Taoism's longing for a simple life (Yang, 1957; Ren and Feng, 1959; Lin, 1963; Laozi annotated by Yu, 1994). In fact, the notion of 'chenhuai weixiang' point out the importance of possessing a simple mind-set to obtain spiritual happiness from artistic appreciation (Shen, 2002). According to the Taoist and Buddhist, living a simple lifestyle with few desires is important to obtain 'Tao' (Zheng, 2000). Although for most Chinese travellers, obtaining 'Tao' may not be the single or explicit motivation for travelling, they often found that travelling offered them moments of philosophical contemplation' where they obtained a more profound grasp of the essence of life and the universe. For instance, in sight of the tombs of Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth, **Sunny Yin Er** undergoes a moment of contemplation:

*Although Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth were sisters, they begrudged each other because of power, they intrigued each other, finally Mary died at the hands of Elizabeth, after their deaths, they are lying side by side in such a small space. Many things in our life are temporary, the purpose of our life is to perfect our souls. (Sunny Yin Er)*

On another occasion, the story of the dog, Gelert, narrated by the driver made **Moonbath** think of 'the *hypocrisy, evil and impulsivity of the human world. Perhaps we should realize this and repent*'. This is, to some extent, akin to the meditative state of 'sudden enlightenment' mentioned in Buddhism Chan where one may suddenly grasp a deeper truth or the essence of life (Shen Xiu, 606--706; Yanagida, 1983). As these moments of 'sudden enlightenment' accumulated, the travellers may have felt a more profound grasp of life and their attitude towards life may have changed. Traveller **LiuShuiXingYun** also highlighted the fact that travelling allows the travellers to obtain wisdom just like meditation. He equated the solitary experience of travelling alone with 'meditation':

*Travelling alone,  
Danger is a kind of stimuli,  
Whereas loneliness is a kind of meditation. (LiuShuiXingYun)*

Equating holiday experience alone with meditation implies the spiritual-rewarding element of holiday experience. Often, Taoist practitioners would stay solitary and simple, with few desires as a hermit, for a period of time in beautiful yet quiet surroundings to meditate for spiritual gains. Taoism believes 'wisdom can grow out of quietness and simple life because it allows for reflection and contemplation (Lao Tsu, translated by Gia-Fufeng, 1972). Travelling alone in the splendour of the British landscapes and encountering different ways of life often provided travellers with things to reflect. As one traveller said, this '*kind of ethereal quiet feelings can affect the deep end of one's soul*'. Indeed, many travellers included philosophical sentences as their motto:

*Everything is like floating clouds. (Camouflage)*

Floating clouds can disappear very quickly. To say 'everything is floating clouds' literally mean that it is 'illusion'. This reflects Buddhist teaching documented in the 'The Vajra Prajna Paramita Sutra' stating that everything in the secular world including the material possessions and power are just 'illusions' without the eternality. The idea that travelling offers the opportunity for philosophical thinking is not new in Chinese history. Over the history, a great deal of travel-related literature blends the philosophical discussion with the depiction of their travel experiences (Zheng, 2000).

Another dimension of meaning conveyed in this slogan is 'free' and 'unrestrained' element. They depict themselves as travellers who 'walk simply with a free spirit'. A 'free spirit' means that their spirit is unconstrained. This is in line with the Taoism's 'unfettered happy travel' with no subjection to external constraints (Watson, 1968; Chan, 1975; Mair, 1994; Huang, 1996; Zheng, 2000). If there is an external constraint, they try their best to confront them. If they have less time, they may travel to nearby places or use faster transportation such as renting a car. If they have more time, they may enjoy the more leisurely travel, may visit more places or simply walk or rent a bicycle to tour around the natural scenery. When they have lower budgets, they may look for promotional offers and live in cheaper accommodations. When they have higher budgets, they may live in more upscale accommodations. None of these factors should constrain their travelling. Even when they cannot travel physically, they travel spiritually and wander around the four seas. Indeed, Travellers such as *Iceguard* quoted a few sentences from 'an Unfettered Happy Travel (Xiaoyao you)' (Watson, 1968; Chan, 1975; Mair, 1994; Huang, 1996) as his motto to reflect his desire to travel in a style of 'Xiaoyao you'.

In addition to the slogan indicating the 'free spirit', this group of Chinese travellers self-identify themselves as 'free walkers' or 'free tourists'. The communicated meanings of 'free walk' are twofold (Chan, 2009). On the one hand, it denotes the freedom that Chinese travellers experience after being long obliged to collective schedules created by all-inclusive package tours (Chan, 2009). On the other hand, the identification of being a 'free walker' may be comprehended through the notion of identity politics, in which the travellers consciously distancing themselves away from the all-inclusive package tourists (Chan, 2009). It denotes a sense of liberation from the long-confined all-inclusive package tours. They book their own flights, accommodations, transportations themselves and may join local tour groups whenever necessary but not confining themselves into the all-inclusive package tour. In fact, it is more like the common travellers who book flights, accommodations and sometimes transportations and plan itinerary themselves but leave some flexibility of their trip open. This kind of tour is quite common for Western tourists.

#### **6.4.2 Journey Has No End**

*Journey has no end, let's discover the world and discover ourselves.*

Further, they self-identify themselves as 'Qiong You Er'. Qiong You is the name of this website. 'Er' in Chinese means 'son'. Qiong You Er denotes the members of this online community. Many Chinese travellers in this online community clearly identified themselves as 'Qiong You Er' to indicate their sense of belonging to this group. 'Qiong Jin' in Chinese means 'end'. 'Journey has no ends' does not necessarily mean that they do not finish the journey. Each individual journey has the beginning and the end, as mentioned in Chapter Seven. The length of their holiday was discussed in Chapter Five. Most of them are found to be short-term travellers. This is different from Cohen's (2010) lifestyle travellers and White and White's (2004) caravan travellers. Cohen (2010) and White and White's (2004) travellers have completely broken from their work responsibility at home for travelling. The travellers in my sample travel for a shorter period of time. They do have their work responsibility and daily life to return to after the trip. To say it has no ends virtually means that they are keen travellers and their holiday has become an integral part of their life, as *FuNiu42*'s mother stated, '*last year, my daughter and I went to France for holiday [this year we travelled to the UK for 20 days], travelling has become our life goal.*' This period of break away from their daily life enrich their experience, allowing them to discover the world and themselves.

#### 6.4.3 One for All, All for One

'One for All, All for One' is another slogan that appeared in this website. Similar to other independent Chinese traveller online community, this online community starts with Chinese travellers' own initiatives (Lim, 2009). This kind of selflessly helping each other is highly valued in this online community. They acted reciprocally. Because many travellers benefited from reading others' holiday stories, receiving information and advice from others, they write their own travel stories to say thanks to those online friends for their kind help of making their holiday possible. At the same time hoped that others could also benefit from their sharing. Below is one extract:

*I had originally planned to put these pictures under the photography-section, but thought that I had visited here and read many postings, and obtained much relevant, useful information. As a (Chinese) saying goes, 'the person who drinks the water from the well cannot forget the person who originally dug the well', so I sorted out my photos and put them here. Apart from saying thanks to those who had previously helped me, I also hope it can provide some valuable information for those who will visit these places in the future. (Franklyn)*

The self-sacrifice and reciprocity ethos is also identified by Lim (2009) in his study on Chinese backpackers. Chinese culture is believed to value reciprocity and accentuates affiliate and altruistic values of being joyful, forgiving, helpful and loving (Reisinger and Turner, 1998). Further, Chinese culture is collective and inter-dependent (Hofstede, 1991; Karkus and Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995). Online community, to some extent, is akin to a big family. Travellers sometimes address each other as siblings ('xdjm' is the abbreviation of 'xiong di jie mei' to mean siblings). Chinese culture is familial (Yang, 1998). The concept of family not only mean the nuclear family members, but can be enlarged to include close friends and significant others (Fei, 1989; Joy, 2001). Such a formation of an enlarged family is not only occurred online but also on holidays. On holidays when they encountered with warm-hearted host or other kind travellers, they normally, respectfully call them 'uncle', 'grandma', 'grandpa' as if they are coming from the same family. For instance, *Bluecastle* felt that the locals at the Lake District were very kind and treated them as if they were coming from the same family. Online involvement may create a bond between travellers and their online peers. Holidays may create a bond between the hosts and the guests, and among the travellers from all over the world. At these moments, the clear distinction brought about by national identities or distinct personal identities are dissolved.

## 6.5 Conclusions

This chapter presents the language features the online community used and the self-identity grow out of travellers' holiday stories, their personal and shared identities. It is also discovered that while they may enact a situational self in a particular situation, part of their self-identity, especially the core defining part, may stay stable over time. On holiday, they experience the loss of self. Travelling also allows them to reinforce part of their self. In addition, many travellers report self-growth and the discovery elements of the self. This is a group of keen travellers, where travel activity has become an integral part of their life. They are simple travellers who travel simply and in an unfettered manner. They also act reciprocally and collectively both on holidays and online. They are 'free walkers' often distance themselves from all-inclusive package tours. However, this should not be interpreted that they are backpackers. They are more of those non-all-inclusive package tourists, in which backpackers only constitute a small portion. In fact, this kind of non-all-inclusive package travelling (only book flights, accommodation, transportation, attraction tickets and leave some room for spontaneity is common in Western country) is common for Western tourists. Having presented the findings on language and self-identity, the next chapter address their experience of holiday time.

## Chapter 7

# Experience of Holiday Time

*Every moment is all being on the whole universe. (Kigen Dōgen in Tanahashi, 1999, p. 70)*

## 7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the themes related to Chinese travellers' experiences of time. Chinese travellers' holiday time is of a clear finite linear duration as delineated in their travel itinerary and journal-like accounts. However, such a clock or calendar times 'is but one aspect of the many times that bear on our lives simultaneously' (Adam, 1995, p16). Their experience of time is multiple and interesting. It is especially so given the existence of the online community and the influence of Chinese travellers' culture. The analysis has uncovered many interesting and diverse dimensions of the time, which is to be unfolded in the subsequent sections.

## 7.2 Prolonged Holiday Time

The online community provided a beneficial resource for the Chinese as they prepared for their trips. Members of the online community groups were able to avail of important useful information. Postings shared by other travellers who had made similar tours to the UK gave potential travellers first hand insights into the UK tours. In a way, membership in the online community enhanced the Chinese traveller's tourism experiences, providing a forum for their initial inquiry into possible UK tours. They learned more about the places in the UK from first-hand accounts of those who had already taken the tour, and extended the pleasures and delight of their trips all over again by way of the online forum. Planning is valued for this online travel community given that they are eager to build a sense of independency into their journey. Often, Chinese travellers, especially those inexperienced travellers who are about to embark a long-distance journey to an unfamiliar land for the first time, can spend months in advance immersing into the online community to search for information and seek for tips. *Shuangshuangyan* is one of them:

*From applying for the visa to the hotel booking, then looking for advice, I had already soaked in this website, during which I took a lot of useful information, and also got the help of many friends.*

*I am also planning to take the same flight as the landlord to the UK, I must study it [your posting] carefully.*

Traditionally, holiday experience is depicted as incorporating three distinct stages of before, during and after (Graburn, 1983; Clawson and Knetsch, 1966 cited by Killion, 1992; Jafari, 1987 cited by Hanefors and Mossberg 2003; Borrie and Roggenbuck, 2001). The before-stage usually resides in the daily world with limited connection to the 'liminal zone'. With the development of the Internet technology, there is increasing blending between virtual travel and the corporeal one. As such travellers' holiday time is prolonged. Scholars such as Feifer (1985) and Urry (2002) note the invasion of 'tourist gaze' into the everyday world. Existing literature delineate how such invasion influence travellers' experience of holiday space, leading to the blurring between 'home' and 'away' (Feifer, 1985; Urry, 2002). However, the influence of such invasion on travellers' experience of holiday time is merely touched upon in the existing literature. Findings from this study suggest that such invasion prolong travellers' holiday time. Such prolonged holiday time is not just derived from the pre-trip planning. The after-trip sharing also contributes to the elongated holiday time. This online travel community witnesses high level of online involvement at the post-trip stage. The post-trip narration may create multiple peaks as holiday experience can also peak in the end. It is almost like a ritual to posting their travel stories back to their community to say thanks to those who have kindly offered the help:

*[I] have returned from England for almost a month now. For this trip I basically referred to a lot of information from this website. To say thanks, I will hand over a piece of homework. It can also act as reference for those friends who will travel in the future.*

Such an online engagement not only further lengthens the holiday time. The recounting also allows the travellers to re-live their holiday experience once again online.

### 7.3 Reliving or Travelling to the Past

As they shared their stories, they were once again in the River Thames, visiting the Tower of London, walking across the London Bridge, watching the changing of the Guards at Buckingham Palace, etc. *Summercoo*'s travel account reveals this insight. She clearly indicates that she has come back to China for a while when she writes her travel stories. However, her travel story was written as if she is living it now:

*Today [we will] go to the Leeds Castle*

*Our next stop is Glenocoe.*

*Tomorrow [we are] going to the Lake District.*

While *Summercoo*'s travel narration online allows her to re-experience her holiday one more time, *Aming2u*'s travel postings allow her group members to collectively travel back to their collective holiday time. *Aming2u* spent 9-day of his holiday time travelling in a group self-organised by his online peers. He subsequently uploaded his travel stories and photos online. His travel partners, upon seeing his travel postings, comments:

*Just came back from Cornwall in southwest England, then saw the summary postings [you] wrote about our tour groups it [was] really as if I had travelled back to that period of happy time again.*

On another occasion, when *FuNiu42* was sharing her travel stories and talking about her experience of visiting the Tower of London, one of her audiences who travelled to the Tower of London four years ago comments on her travel story. *FuNiu42*'s travel photos and travel stories tapped into his/her memory. He/she felt that he/she returned to that past:

*See the Tower Bridge, as if I have travelled back to 4 years ago.*

Interestingly, such experience of travelling back to a past also occurred on holiday. *Baiship*'s holiday experience illustrates this. As *baiship* seeing a staff dressed like people from the Roman era, he felt being transported back to that ancient Roman Time:

*There was a finely-dressed lady in her Roman costumes sitting next to the Roman Bath, I took photos with her, as if I had travelled across time and space.*



What *baiship* experiences here is what Galani-Moutafi (2000) calls the ‘experience in the present of the grandeur of an imagined past’ (p. 209). Such an experience of being transported back to a time in the past is also reported by other travellers:

*In the Cotswolds there were scattered many natural and simple ancient small 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century villages, [we] leisurely strolled among them, as if you were in a time tunnel and travelled back to a few hundred years ago.*

Sometimes experiences on holiday might tap into their childhood memory. For instance, when *Summercoo* was watching the musical *Lion King*, she felt she was brought back to her childhood (this is further discussed in the childhood memory section in Chapter Eight). All these travel accounts pinpoint that Chinese travellers experience the reversible attributes of time on holiday and online. McTaggart (1927 cited by Curtin, 2008) talks about the A-theory of time and B-theory of time. The B-theory of time depicts the irreversibility of time, in which time is believed to flow from the past to the present and then to the future linearly (1927 cited by Curtin, 2008). On the contrary, A-theory of time argues that time can be reversible (1927 cited by Curtin, 2008). The findings in this study suggest that Chinese travellers experience A-theory of time. While Chinese travellers experience the reversibility of time on holiday, they also feel that their holiday time and online time have a speed.

#### 7.4 Holiday Time and Online Time Have a Speed

*Aming2u* had a very happy nine-day holiday travelling with his online friends. *Bluecastle* felt the same when she recounts her five-day experience of joining a local tour group. Both of them feel the period of happy holiday time pass very fast:

*Happy time together always passes very quickly, Xiao Zhang, Xiao Tang, Xiao Wu, Xiao Bai Yang, Shanghai couple, teacher Liu and Tour guide Ye, yesterday all these titles were still mentioned by me. Now it turns into my written memory here. (Aming2u)*

*Five-day is a very short period of time, especially when it is the five days filled with ‘happiness’. (Bluecastle)*

On another occasion, when *Summercoo* and her husband encountered problems with their pre-booked B&B, they felt that time dragged; it was only around two hour but they felt it was half of a day. When another traveller was queuing to get Oyster card refunded, the twenty minutes or half hour queuing time for him was very slow and long. Holiday time was unlike objective

clock time that can be divided into blocks of time of equal interval. Chinese travellers could feel the speed of their holiday time. Similar experiences of time acceleration also occurred in the online situation when online members feel like it was just one-breath time when they read interesting stories:



*I finished reading it at one-breadth time, LZ you worked really hard la !*

*I also read in one-breath time, LZ wrote so excellently*

The alteration of the speed of time is touched upon by the concept of ‘flow experience’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Csikszentmihalyi (1997) says that in ‘flow’, one may experience time pass faster than usual. Such alteration of the speed of time in ‘flow experience’ is derived from situations where there is a fit between individual skills and the level of challenge of the tasks (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). *Aming2u* and *Bluecastle*’s experience of time passing faster is less due to the tasks matching their skills but more due to the pathic nature of things as described by Van Manen (2007). Time can become accelerated, decelerated or stand suspended, depending upon the situation. Often, one may feel time moves faster when one engages in something interesting, or is fully occupied or when they were happy. Time may drag when one is suffering or not enjoying. As they experience their time pass faster or slower, they also experience their dynamic travel pace.

## 7.5 Travel Pace and Rhythms

Their travel pace varies. Some travellers travelled in a more hurried pace. Other travellers travelled more leisurely. Often, varied travel pace may be also combined even within a single trip. There were moments of ‘hurried and cursory glances’ (走马观花) at attractions (*Ever\_Ever*). There are also moments of ‘strolling slowly on the beach’ (*Bluecastle*); ‘slowly savouring the thick dark chocolate cake, contemplating what had just happened’ (*Bluecastle*); ‘looking at each shops slowly’ (*FuNiu42*); ‘slowly walking to the city centre while chatting with Yao’ (*Dannya*). On some occasions, there is the interplay between their travel pace and the UK local temporal norms. *Letitiaz*’s story tells us about this:

*On Christmas Day the whole of London city was like in the ‘sleeping mood’: the shops were closed, public transport stopped running, [and] there were no trains, Tube or buses. You even needed to book specifically if you needed a taxi, and also the taxi would add service fees. Everybody stayed inside the house, [so] if you wanted to go out without a private car, you could only walk...We*

*couldn't stay indoors just like the Londoners because we came such a long way [from China], so Glenny and I discussed finding something to do. (Letitialz)*

**Letitialz** and **Glenny** travelled from China to the UK during the Christmas holiday. They did not expect that many attractions would be closed and the transportation would not be running on Christmas. While all Londoners were staying at home, they did not want to waste their precious holiday time just to stay indoors. What **Letitialz** experiences here are UK's different temporal norms, which run contrast from that in China. As **Letitialz** mentioned:

*Unlike China, Chinese people like to go out on traditional festivals to have carnival-like celebration, the European stayed at home with their families to enjoy family dinner and reunion. (Letitialz)*

Chinese people's fondness of 'Renao' (hot and noisy) is noted in the literature (Arlt, 2006). Arlt (2006) translates 'Renao' as 'hot and noisy'. Actually, it is more appropriate to translate it as 'lively and bustling with people and activities'. 'Renao' is positive. Chinese people enjoy such sense of 'Renao'. Chinese traditional Spring festivals often is regarded as one of the most 'Renao' days in a year. Although **Letitialz**'s trip allow them to get to know more about UK's culture (different festival norms), her narration also tells us that there is a clash between the UK temporal norms and her eager travel pace as a tourist during Christmas. Such a clash become especially prominent when there is a complete closure of everything (attractions, public transport and shops etc.), which made their plan virtually impossible to be fulfilled. Places are bestowed with their distinct temporal rhythms, which is the local temporal rules and norms. According to Lefebvre (2004, p 15, quoted by Edensor, 2010), 'Everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time, and an expenditure of energy, there is rhythm'. As an example, the variegated rhythms of the Indian roads are distinct from that of the Britain (Edensor, 2000). Often, the existence and segregation of special days (e.g Christmas) and the ordinary days represents one dimension of the rhythms of a place (Zerubavel, 1981).

On many occasions, the Chinese travellers enjoy the normalised UK temporal rhythms. This may signify the attractive elements of their UK trips. As they walking into the UK space and seeing the pigeons, seagulls, strolling 'leisurely' and the wildlife staying harmoniously with the humans; the horses and cattle grazing on the grass relaxingly, they felt the leisured UK rhythms. This is in contrast to the Chinese travellers' daily rhythms at home or near Asia Pacific where it is more crowded, busy and lively. People are working hard to make money. Upon reflecting the difference between UK and China, **Oldbabyhere vivi** says:

*What you can experience here is the tranquillity of the countryside, which is different from that in China, and also the uncrowdedness, which is the thing you can hardly experience in China. (Oldbabyhere vivi)*

The UK natural rhythms was perceived as tranquil, less crowded, no noise and leisurely, especially in the countryside and small towns. Travellers often exclaimed, ‘*a very quiet small town (Peterxuduck),*’ ‘*walking out from the Windsor Castle, walking towards the river direction, then it was the small Eaton Town, very quiet.*’ (Ifcfans) ‘*Inverness was a very quiet town.*’ (Summercoo) Different places exhibit different rhythms even within the UK. The pace in London is perceived as much faster where people are hurried up and down the escalators and rushed to work. Countryside and seaside cities are different from the urban city. **Zhaoxiaoming** and his wife were from London travelling to Cornwall for holidays:

*Sitting on the coach watching the scenery along the way, suddenly felt the seaside city's different style! Windy, the sun was shining and even somewhat too bright to open your eyes, (there was) no noise of the city, and (what's more you could find here) was the quietness, felt that the blue sea was so near and just in front of your eyes. (Zhaoxiaoming)*

Notice that this couple describe their experience of the scenery as the nearness of the sea ‘the quietness feeling that the blue sea is so near and just in front of your eyes’. The seaside landscape in its splendour embraces the travellers and transports them from the physical space of the coach where they were riding to the virtual space of the blue sea. They sensed different rhythms. Such quiet and leisurely rhythms often represent a treasured element of their holiday, which offers them a respite from their daily rhythms. A sense of place is created by the interplay of multiple rhythms, including both the human rhythms of commuting (Edensor, 2009) and non-human ones such as that of the ‘flora and fauna’ (Edensor, 2010), the ‘trees, flowers, birds and insects’ (Lefebvre, 2004, p17 quoted by Edensor, 2010). Natural rhythms may constitute the background for human activity and may be slower compared with our own bodily rhythms (Lefebvre, 2004, p17, quoted by Edensor, 2010). This may allow them to live what Adam (1994, cited by Ryan, 2002) calls the ‘organic’ natural time. Travelling into a space with different temporal rhythms such as the slow nature rhythm may offer travellers opportunities to undergo experiences different from their daily ones. In this sense, the findings are in line with the literature depicting travelling offering an experience contrast with their daily ones (Rojek, 1993).

Interestingly, Chinese travellers also talk about the nightlife as contrasting and conflicting with their own rhythms. Sometimes, when they book accommodation near nightclubs, they may be woken up by the noises of people coming in and out of night clubs midnight. This may conflict

with their travel rhythms, wanting to sleep properly and go travel the next day. On another occasion, **Bluecastle** talks about the nightlife of one of other travellers who was living at the same room with them at one hostel. What's more interesting about **Bluecastle**'s narration about her experience of different rhythms is that the rhythms are linked to her sense of self-identity as a girl from a decent family:

*Castle Rock Hostel in Edinburgh seems to reproduce some unbearable historical stage. Messy room, air pollution, air dust, a young woman who went out whole night without returning, filling her bed with broken bottles, exaggerated high-heeled shoes and underwear. Tutu and I felt so out of place, restlessly feel like the next day we would be forced to become prostitution.*  
(**Bluecastle**)

The traveller who lived at the same room with her and *Tutu* obviously went out enjoying the nightlife. She did not return to the accommodation at all the whole night. Usually in China, girls from decent family are not supposed to go out whole night without returning home. In China, prostitute-like girls or girls from families with no good '家教' (family-education, means the proper education and guidance parents give to their children) may go out whole night to the nightclubs without returning home. It speaks about her class identity as a girl from a decent family.

While the above-mentioned travellers talk about the social rhythm and natural rhythms inherent in the UK space and how it interacts with their personal rhythms and their travel pace, **FuNiu42**'s stories draws our attention to travellers' bodily rhythms. **FuNiu42**, like some Chinese travellers flying from China or other countries in far-away continents, experienced the adjustment of different time zones. She temporarily experience and is conscious of two different clock times at one time:

*Dubai time about 7am, Shanghai time about 11am, we had the third breakfast on the 7<sup>th</sup> August, fried noodle, fried egg, sheep-horn-like bread, plus coffee and many snacks. We ate so well that we felt sleepy. (FuNiu42)*

Such an experience of two clock time may also lead to insomnia. **Letitiaz** fled from China and reported insomnia. Lefebvre (2004, quoted by Edensor, 2010) view body as the core departing point for sensing the external rhythms. According to Edensor (2010), 'The usually un-reflexive sensual and rhythmic attunement to place and familiar space may be confounded when the body is 'out of place', through spatial-temporal patterns may be quickly re-installed to reconfigure presence in a changed or unfamiliar space in order to regain ontological security.' Meadows

(2010) note the out-of-synch insomnia. Such an out-of-synch insomnia, on the other hand, is not experienced by those Chinese travellers departing from places within the UK.

On another occasion, **FuNiu42** talk about the conflicts between personal rhythms and group rhythms. **FuNiu42** and her mum travelled to some places in the UK independently. While visiting Scotland, **FuNiu42** and her mum joined a local tour group. She talks about the difference between joining a tour group and travelling independently. She felt a bit painful having to conform to a collective rhythm of gathering at 9:15.

*Since we were joining tour groups from a travel agency, we couldn't have the luxury of sleeping in/lie-in like when we were travelling independently. The gathering time of 9:15 am made me who likes lie-in feel a bit painful.*

Indeed, the advantage of travelling independently is that one can live according to their biological rhythms when they were unfit. For instance, despite her eagerness to finish all the attractions recommended by photo stop on her second day in the UK, **FuNiu42** over slept due to stomach pain.

*Ah, London. [I] finally got to this mysterious yet intimate city. Originally [I] planned to finish all the tourist attractions recommended by photo stop, but I was hopeless and couldn't live up to the expectation, my tummy was so painful. [I] didn't get up until more than 9am, [It] completely ruined my one-day plan, [as I] could only give it up. But [I] really wanted to catch up with the 11 o'clock Buckingham Palace Guard Change, so dragged and then finally and hurriedly got to Baker Street Tube station around 10am. (FuNiu42)*

**FuNiu42**'s account makes reference to the conflicts of personal bodily rhythms with the collective group rhythm. It also reveals how independent travelling allows for such a living to the bodily rhythms. Similarly, **Aming2u** spent nine days of his holidays in the UK travelling in a coach group. Although group travel offers him treasured memory of social time, he felt the time constraints imposed by the scheduled timetable. For **Aming2u**, his travel time is '2 hours at Oxford', '2 hours at Bicester Village', 'half an hour at the Shakespeare's home'. As he narrating his travel experience, he reveals a clear sense of 'exceeding the planned time' or 'time running out'. Such exceeding the pre-planned limits at one attraction might mean they had to compress the time they spent at other attractions:

*[We] originally planned to stay in the old blacksmith's shop for 40 minutes, but whenever we did shopping, our time seemed to run out. (Aming2u)*

*We only chose to visit the garden, but we still went far beyond our scheduled time. (Aming2u)*

*We stayed beyond the time planned in Darcy's home, so we had to compress the length of stay in Manchester slightly, but couldn't miss Old Trafford. (Aming2u)*

Timetable time is normally associated with work and daily routine where time can be schedulable (Hall, 1983). Traditionally, holiday has been depicted as the removal of daily routine and fixed chronological time. Holiday means 'doing nothing' (inaction) and just relaxing (Urbain, 2002 cited by Ryan 2002). By contrast, Dann (1996, p73-79) recognises that tourism may be full of constraints like schedules, finances, queues, etc. There is little or no freedom and much of this social control imposed upon the tourist is by business and organisations from the tourism industry. **Aming2u**'s time experience is less reflected to notion of 'doing nothing' as he is aiming to do something. However, it is also not quite in line with Dann's (1996, p73-79) claim of being full of constraints as there are also moments of leisured strolling around the Lake District where **Aming2u** and his tour friends purposely arranged. **Aming2u**'s group is made up of his online friends. They can discuss with each other to decide about the time allocation. Edensor (2008) talks about the timetabled activities of tourists and the multiple rhythms. **Among2u**'s reflection about the felt time constraints is also voiced by other travellers. Similar to **Aming2u**, **Augx** also travelled from China and felt the time constraints. Unlike **Aming2u**, **Augx** and his wife travelled independently:

*We scheduled to go during the 1<sup>st</sup> May holiday, at 22:00 on the 30<sup>th</sup> we departed from Shanghai Pudong, at 23:00 on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May we returned to Shanghai Pudon. Excluding the time we spent on the aircraft, the actual enjoying time was less than 8 days, no choice, we working people, time is not free ah. It was already the mercy of our boss that we could ask for this week, [we are] jealous of the students, they can spend half a month travelling. I know the time we had was normally only just enough for us to visit either England or Scotland alone, but when I thought that I may not come here again for many years, then[I] found it difficult to give any of them up (no matter which one), so we finally decided to choose London, the Lake District, Edinburgh, the Scottish Highlands (Inverness, Skye), it can be called the classical British travel routes, but the time was still very tight, and we missed a lot of contents we planned, but it's also OK, [as] it gave us the motivation to visit here again, huh, huh. (Augx)*

**Augx**'s account speaks about the situation when one's total length of holiday is short and when one wants to build as much as possible in his travel itinerary, time can be constraint. It was sometimes the case of '*a lot of contents and time was tight.*' When **Augx** and his wife are short of time, they are more concerned about speed and efficiency as well as the enjoyment. As **Augx** explains how he considers renting a car to sightseeing all those Scottish trekking routes instead of walking through them, he draws attention to the issue of time in terms of speed and efficiency. This echoes the notion of viewing time as limited resources not to be wasted and must be used efficiently (Adam, 1995). Zerubavel (1981, p54) regards it as the 'utilitarian philosophy of time' where time is utilised in full to obtain a goal.

Then, why Chinese travellers want to visit as much as they can? This was, to some extent, linked to their future possibility of re-visiting. Like many other Chinese travellers who fly from China specifically for holiday, their holiday represents more a 'once in a life time' holiday. There was a sense that '*it is not easy to travel to the UK*' and '*there are not many chances in their lifetime to visit the UK*', so they wanted to see as much as possible. It was sometimes the case of '*a lot of contents and time was tight.*' Similarly, other travellers such as **Iriszhang\_qq** also touch upon the factor of future possibility of revisiting.

*After all, in my life there won't be several opportunities to visit the UK, always want to tour more. (Iriszhang\_qq)*

Currently, the Chinese's international mobility has been enhanced (Arlt, 2006; Chan, 2009) and yet still relatively limited. Not all Chinese can travel abroad, not to mention about frequent travels. If so, then does it mean that all the Chinese travellers have scant future possibility of re-visiting? Do they all want to build as much as possible as a result? For some travellers, a holiday in the UK, if it was not an 'once-in-a-lifetime experience' (Ryan, 2002), was certainly not going to occur frequently in their near future. **Augx** and his wife may lie somewhere in the middle in terms of their future possibility of revisits. For **Augx** and his wife there was an awareness that they might not plan to visit the UK again in the near future, when he planned his holiday. However, after he finished his holiday, he mentioned that he would re-visit UK. Because of time, he missed a great deal of content; he said '*it gives me the motivation to visit it again*'. It is not impossible for them to visit the UK in the future. He and his wife had rich experiences abroad. They had been to the US before, so it appeared that it was not difficult for them to obtain a visa and also they are financially capable. If they were happy about their first experience, they are likely to become the repeat customers visiting again to finish the content they have not finished. For those Chinese travellers living in the UK, they have the hope in the future for a revisit. Their travel accounts also echoes Du Cros' (2012) finding that Chinese



travellers exhibit different levels of mobility. Somehow their future possibility of revisiting influences their travel pace. Chinese travellers in the UK may travel more leisurely. If there are disappointments or missing content, they may resort to future solutions.

*Although this trip is a bit hurried, it, after all, laid a good foundation for more wonderful plans in the future. (2009 another Spring)*

The lesson learnt from the current trip as laying a ‘solid foundation’ for better future holiday implies that holiday was viewed as a kind of ‘learning’ process in which travel skills and tastes may be enhanced as time passes on. This reflects the notion of ‘travel career ladder’ (Pearce, 2005) in which travellers may grow. This notion of holiday time being ‘precious’ and not to be wasted is actually one of the prominent sub-themes. It is not only voiced by those Chinese travellers with limited international mobility but also voiced by those Chinese travellers in the UK who have a future possibility to revisit. **Zhaoxiaoming** is one of them. In order to ensure that he and his wife’s holiday is used in full for the ‘appreciating of the scenery’, they plan in advance so that they do not need to worry about searching for hotels and purchasing transportation tickets while on holiday. As he says:

*Transportation tickets, hotel and transportation, we booked them online in advance, firstly for its cheap price, and secondly for a peaceful mind; [because] one doesn’t need to think about it while playing, one can put all the energy into appreciating the scenery. (Zhaoxiaoming)*

**Fangfangorchid** is another example. **Fangfangorchid** travelled alone to the Lake District on a bank holiday. Often, travelling alone would initiate the feeling of loneliness. However, **Fangfangorchid**’s case was different. She was just too busy to think about other issues such as ‘loneliness’.

*Three nights and four days in the Lake District were so perfect. Warm stories were filling my holiday. In the postcard I posted to my husband I wrote: I am travelling alone, but not lonely. Really, in the Lake District, I didn’t have the time to think about ‘loneliness’, because the places as far as my eyes could see were filled with joy and happiness.*

Interestingly, many travellers such as **Baiship** report that their ‘waiting time’ at the train stations was used for sightseeing. The time sitting on the train, coach or walking to the place of interests was also used for scenery appreciation. Below are two extracts illustrating this:

*After [I] bought the tickets, I just missed one train, [so] I used the waiting time to have a look around the Bristol Temple Meads station. (Baiship)*

*After [we] got off, [we] still needed to walk for a period of time to get to the seaside. The scenery on the way was very good, the blue sky, several clouds floating around, rolling grasslands, and also the small lake. (Zhaoxiaoming)*

The reason why those Chinese in the UK with relatively good mobility also want to make the time in full can be understood from three perspectives. Firstly, UK, as a Western destination displaying cultural, customs, architectural landscape and natural space uniquely different from that in Eastern world such as China. The train stations such as the Bristol temporal Meads is so ordinary for the locals. But in Chinese travellers' eyes, they are extraordinary. As such, there are so many places worthy of seeing in the UK. In addition, currently Chinese's overseas travel experiences is still relatively new, the collection of these 'other' spaces still signifies social status and prestige in China (Zhang et al., 2005). Another reason is that Chinese travellers are intrinsically motivated to learn while travelling. This learning theme has been touched upon in detail in Chapter Six on Language and Self-identity.

Such an eagerness to fit as much as possible exist in most Chinese travellers account but their degree of eagerness varies. Such eagerness also means that they need to trade off and allocate their time to the places and attractions they are interested most or the must-see ones given their limited time. Further, the eagerness and the scheduled timetable mean that some Chinese travellers cannot live the time as if the clock time renders non-existence finitely. There are moments when they may live just according to the activities. Some Chinese travellers, especially the ones who have a bit time in a resort (e.g. *Xiaobaiinuk*), may live according to the sequence of the activities. For them, time temporarily mean 'after [I was] satiated', 'after returning to the boat', 'came out of the Pencil Museum'. Further, there are moments of qualitative daydream time (this is to be further explained in Chapter Eight in the poetic space section). There are also moments when they were so absorbed that the concept of time becomes non-existent. One such example is *FuNiu42*:

*When we realised that there was still some time before the departure of the next train, we decided to visit the cathedral hurriedly and have a look. Walking inside the tall arches of medieval Salisbury, it was very easy to forget about the concept of time. Then, we bolted once again, and finally caught up with the train we previously thought we had plenty of time and went to Bath. (FuNiu42)*

However, it is important to note that such indulging in qualitative time was temporary and soon there were moments when they need to switch back to clock time and move on to their next attraction or finish their holiday. While **FuNiu42** and her mother temporarily forgot about the concept of time as they were walking inside the tall arches of medieval Salisbury, when they realised they needed to catch the train, their time experience suddenly changed. It switched from the qualitative time to quantitative clock time. They felt a sense of urgency to conform to the clock. In some ways, it was like suddenly being woken up in a 'dream' and realised 'got to be ready for something important'. Hence, on holidays, Chinese travellers experienced the interwoven of 'objective time' and 'subjective time' at different time. Given the partially independent nature of their travelling, they need to self-guard the time. While the self-guarding of time may mean that there are always moments they have to think about 'timetable' and 'schedules', it can also create a sense of spontaneity given that they can also self-adjust their time should anything interesting coming up. This may mean that 'surprises' are more likely to occur. **FuNiu42** speaks of her delighted surprise when she accidentally saw the James Bond Museum and adjust her plan to add this attraction. It leads to a very pleasant experience:

*[When we] left here [pencil museum at Keswick], we were about to go straight to another car museum, but were surprised to see a sign, saying the James Bond Museum was next door. Very curious, how come there was a 007 Museum in this small town? We then went to visit this museum first.*

The abolishing of timetabled time, even just momentarily, may allow for various spontaneity and creativeness (Zerubavel, 1981). Another interesting theme from **FuNiu42**'s earlier account stating that she had to bolt to the train station also tells us that for these Chinese travellers, they need to self-guard their time for two reasons. Their self-designed travel itinerary is one cause. Another cause is their need to conform to the local temporal norms. **Moonbath**'s account reveals how his own timetable means that he needs to guard the time he spent on the castle:

*It can be said that the location of my B & B was so unbeatable, and I turned left around the corner outside of my door, walked less than 1 minute and then got to the entrance of the castle, £4.60 for the student ticket. I paid without hesitation and rushed in. There would be something more important to see later on, [I] had to hurry the time ah.*

In addition to their own itinerary, they also need to conform to the local temporal norms such as the train time, the bus time, the attraction opening time etc. For instance, while most of the time at the Lake District **Summercoo** did not need to guard her time, she needs to make sure she return the bicycles she and her husband rented before 5pm, which is the bicycle shop closure

time. *Fangfangorchid* need to safe guard to the bus timetable for her to go back to her accommodation. *FuNiu42* need to attend to the train time. In other cases, they also need to attend to the attraction opening times, the peaks or non-peak time of the destinations for travel planning purposes. They can never stand out of the clock time completely. Chinese travellers need to think about his travel itinerary and attend to the temporal norms of the place to which they are about to travel. The success of their trip, somewhat, rest on their successful adoption of the temporal flows of the host community. They need to understand shops and restaurants' opening time, transportation timetable, opening times of the attractions and the length of the time they need for certain attractions. Online community, to some extent, provides them with information to familiar with such temporal norms prior to their visit. Chinese travellers in this online community share the train timetables, opening times and the length of travelling time from one place to another, the intervals needed to finish touring one attraction or city. Below are some extracts:

*(Seven Sisters)*

*Open Daily*

*October to March 10.00 am-5.15 pm (last tickets at 4.30pm)*

*April to September 9.30 am-5.45 pm (last tickets at 5.00pm)*

*Closed from 2.30 pm on 24 December and all day on 25 & 26 December*

*Adult £8.80 Students (identification required) £6.90. (Summercoo)*

*Cruise ships, apart from July and August: everyday there is only one ship at 11:30. The whole cruise journey takes two and a half hours (if it is low season, the ship doesn't operate everyday), [it's] better to go early since they will depart once the boat is full.*

*Train from Preston to Conwy, 2 h[ou]rs 20 min[uts].*

*Walk from Llanfair P. G to Menai Bridge, 2 mile[s], 40 min[utes].*

*Took a taxi, [and it] took 20 minutes.*

*It is estimated that if you viewing the scenery while you walking, the whole journey takes at least three hours or more.*

By referring to clock time, the Chinese travellers could pass on accurate information. This served as a reference point for others to plan their holiday. In addition, they often talked about a 'good time', the 'right time' and the 'appropriate time' for certain activities. They discussed different experiences in different seasons and weather conditions so that others knew the best time to do certain activities. Apart from the discussion of the seasonality, there was also constant discussion about different experiences occurring during the weekday or weekend. For

the weekend, the public transportation was less frequent, which might influence the holiday. During holiday periods such as bank holidays or peak season, there tended to be more people going on holiday. Therefore, it was better to make a reservation. The shops are more crowded during holiday seasons too. Below are two extracts:

*Now the Isle of Skye has become a British summer resort. It says if you visit here in July and August, it is hard to find accommodation if you don't book in advance. (Summercoo)*

*Nowadays it takes some time if you want to find the ideal products to buy in Bicester Village. If you are not experts, don't count on it, [and] in addition, don't go there during holiday seasons, oh.*

Time is also related to timing. Sunny days tended to be the good time for photos and outdoor scenery appreciation. Summer was a better holiday time whereas winter tends to be regarded as a less appropriate time for holidays. When the British pound was decreasing in value and when there are good promotional offers, it can be a good time to travel:

*[It was] early May, [it was] very rarely [we] can apply for a holiday, [I] had started to plan with my wife long before [our journey], initially planned to visit America, finally decided to go to the UK because [we thought] it was a rare opportunity as sterling had dropped to such a low level.*

*[I] forgot to say that Bath and Bristol are doing 2 for1 offers... It is so good value for money...but you need the train ticket to Bath, so don't throw away the train ticket.*

This echoes Adam's (1995) view of relating time to 'timings'. Upon knowing the good time and bad timing, it is then up to the individual as to how they may arrange their holidays. As Adam (1995) says, 'Whilst the existence of clock time facilitates context independence and global standardisation, decisions about the timing of even the most habitual actions are made on a unique basis and with reference to a particular context' (p22).

## 7.6 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the themes related to Chinese travellers' experience of their holiday time. It is found that the existence of online community prolongs their holiday time. The after-trip reflection allows the travellers to nostalgically re-live of their holiday time online one more time. Sometimes, such re-living also taps into their online travel partners' memory, making them feeling like travelling back to that period of happy time again. This leads to a collective re-living of the holiday time. Further, on holiday Chinese travellers experience the travelable time when they felt as if they are travelled back to an ancient era as they stepping into some heritage sites or old ancient-like towns. The speed of holiday time is also thought to pass quicker or slower depending on the situations. Holiday allowed them to temporarily indulge into the qualitative dimensions of time where they temporarily live according to the sequence of the activities, the natural rhythms, the dreaming time when the past, present and future may be fused into one, or sometimes the concept of time renders non-existence. As such, their travel pace may varies depending on situations. There exist the interplay between their travel pace and the local temporal norms. While the leisured temporal norm of the UK space matches well with their travel pace and offer them respite from their everyday temporal norms (e.g. busy, crowded and lively), there sometimes also exist conflicts between their travel pace and the local temporal norms. Sometimes, such conflict is related to their eagerness to travel. In other cases, the conflicts can also due to their cultured class identity. Their eagerness to travel means that they have timetable, be they rigid or loose, in which they need to attend to ensure the smooth running of their trip. The elements of independence means that they need to self-guard time sometimes despite of the fact that independent time offers them opportunity for more spontaneous and pleasant surprises. In addition, Chinese travellers need to self-guard the local temporal norms, such as opening times, train timetables, peak and off peaks. The existence of online discussion forums facilitate the sharing of this information related to the local temporal norms. This sharing allows Chinese travellers to gain rich first-hand information from those travellers who had just finished their trips and feed each other's ideas. Chinese travellers' temporal orientation is situational dependent. They can be past-oriented when they nostalgically re-living their holiday time online. They can be present-oriented when indulging temporarily into the activities or daydreaming time. They can also be future-oriented in the sense that they are willing to give up hedonic pleasure to learn for the better future. Following the discussion of their experience of holiday time, the next chapter moves on to uncover their experience of holiday space.

## Chapter 8

# Experience of Holiday Space

### 8.1 Introduction

This chapter moves on to uncover the Chinese travellers' experience of holiday space. The experience of space or spatiality may behave in physical space and imaginative space. In this study, the Chinese travellers shared several occasions of experiencing the two levels of spatiality, both in its physicality and imaginative. Lim - Alparaque (1986), talks about Merleau - Ponty's perspectives on spatiality '...as far as experience is concerned it is from the bodily situated - ness and perspective that one is able to view and relate to objects and events in the environs...' (p. 31). It is from the physical space (bodily) that the Chinese travellers take part in the tour and consequently is ushered into the imaginary level of spatiality. In a way, going on a tour in the UK opens up for the Chinese traveller fascinating and interesting experience of space.

### 8.2 Between the Physical and the Imaginative

#### 8.2.1 Picturesque---Earthly Heaven---Peach-blossom Shangri-La

The natural spaces in the UK were viewed as beautiful, green, tranquil and less crowded which allowed the Chinese travellers to be close to the nature and the wildlife and experience the harmony between the human and the nature. The travellers often proclaimed: '*so beautiful.....so blue ....so green....so clean*' (*Selly*); '*this place is very beautiful ah* (*Oldbabyvivi*)', '*along the way one word: beautiful.*' (*Xiaobaiinuk*) *Everever* talked of the wide-presence of green spaces and the blurred distinction between urban cities and countryside in the UK:

*Large areas of grass field joined with another grass field, this is the most profound impression UK has given me, which is something I have never experienced in other places. The Brits don't plant vegetables, so in the supermarkets there were Spanish tomato and Morocco cucumbers. No matter when you are sitting on a train or driving on a motorway, the things you can see most are grass field, except in big cities like London or Manchester, generally almost in all medium or small-sized cities and towns, you can walk and walk from the town center and then you can get to the countryside.*  
(*Everever*)

Such natural landscape is so beautiful that many Chinese travellers describe it as ‘idyllic’ (如诗) ‘picturesque’ (如画). Often, this beautiful travel space are metaphorically resembled as ‘picture’, ‘oil painting’ or ‘landscape portrait’, which reflects the picturesque nature of the travel space. Below are two extracts:

*On the way from York to Edinburgh, the Berwick upon Tweed was as beautiful as a picture. (Zhangyuansophia)*

*‘The Scenery on the way from Ballachulish to Glencoe was enchanting, plus the misty feeling after the rain, it looked like an impressionistic landscape portrait’ (Graziadeng).*

Due to the picturesque nature of the landscape, the Chinese travellers sometimes felt like being positioned in a painting or picture, as **Yanzhengjinghan** claimed, ‘*I felt I was viewing a painting when I was standing inside a painting*’. The Chinese travellers are at times romanticising the UK. The romanticising of landscape is salient in both Chinese travel history (Zheng, 2000; Yan and McKercher, 2013) and contemporary Chinese travel literature (Tse and Hobson, 2008). Interestingly, Ong and Du Cros’ (2012) study on post-Mao backpackers also identifies the exoticising of leisure space as a prominent theme. Such a picturesque space in the UK also created the feelings of being in the heaven. Below are three extracts:

*The sun was setting gradually, the sun set slowly behind that forest. The last glimpse of the sunshine before the setting was dazzling, under the sunshine, circles and circles of ripples became transparent and crystal clear, the pond was covered in a golden shining. At that moment, a swan swam slowly into the golden sunshine, then there was a perfect silhouette, as beautiful as if it was in heaven. (FuNiu 42)*

*The train departed on time at 12:55, it drove from south to north across the Blake national Park, the scenery along the way was charming, when looked around, the grass was lush, one minute the mountains and rivers were high and tall, the next minute, hills were rolling, quiet and relaxed small villages were scattering around the lush mountains, the small villages with different architecture styles sometimes nestled in the foothills, and sometimes had their reflections on small rivers, the white sheep were dotted around the pastures slopes around the towns and villages, it was the unique rural scenery, it was very quiet and peaceful. Inspiring and beautiful scenery made people suddenly*



*don't know whether this was on the earth or in the heaven?!  
(Zhangyuansophia)*

*History combined with beautiful surroundings, earthly paradise ah*

Interestingly, **Zhangyuansophia** experiences the heaven and reality became blurred and she didn't know if she was in heaven or earth. This is in line with Ingold's (2010, p. 15) statement that 'the terrains of the imagination and the physical environment, far from existing on distinct ontological levels, run into one another to the extent of being barely distinguishable'. This is in line with the paradisiacal notion of the tourist space proposed by Cohen (1982). On another occasion, **Neko1105** drawn upon the Chinese allusion of 'Peach-blossom Shangri-La' to describe the beautiful travel space as 'Shangri-La' distinct from secular crowded city:

*Those flowers such as Winter Jasmine, peach flowers, magnolia, daffodils that  
are hardly seen in the crowded city were contesting with each other here. In  
such a sunny day, experiencing the peach-flower-blossomed village outside the  
secular world, it was just so simple and enjoyable. (Neko1105)*

The allusion of '世外桃源' (Peach-flower-blossomed-Sharing La) grows out of the well-known article 'the story of a Peach-flower-blossomed-village' (317-420). The allusion denotes an imaginative beautiful space outside the secular world where people live a simple lifestyle. Similar, another traveller used the allusion of '世外桃源' to describe the beautiful Cambridge. In addition to the heaven and peach-flower-blossomed-Sharing La, the Chinese travellers also felt the co-existence of ancientness and modernity.

### **8.2.2 Ancient History and Modernity**

Generally, when encountering with historical architecture such as castles, churches and heritage sites, Chinese travellers felt it was 'ancient', 'with a strong sense of history' (**I love the D80**) and stories to tell.

*The 14<sup>th</sup>-century-old historical village is famously beautiful in the UK. The  
stone houses built by honey-coloured stone blocks have the history of several  
hundred years old. (Summercoo)*

*Walking up along the ancient masonry, it seemed that behind every brick there  
was a story. (FuNiu42)*

*Statues and monuments were everywhere in London, and standing there for hundreds and thousands of years telling a history and a story. (Letitiaz)*

While travelling and hearing about the historical stories, Chinese travellers could feel Britain's historical past. They often shared the historical stories associated with the places they visited with their online friends.

*It [Merton College] was the place where Tolkien completed the 'Lord of Ring', at that moment he was teaching here.' (FuNiu42)*

The historical sites and monuments engraved the marks of the past, often invited them into imaginative spaces in the past. This was explained in details in Chapter Seven under the section Reliving and Travelling to the Past. However, it is not just the ancientness. Chinese travellers also experienced the modernity. Sometimes what they experienced was the co-existence of ancientness and modernity. **Sunny Yiner** describes Oxford is not only a 'modern city' but also a place with ancient architecture and universities with a long history. **Zhangyuansophia** also voices so:

*Experienced a 10-day short and hasty trip in England, brought back a lot of regret, I felt deeply that the beauty of UK was everywhere: it had the modern city, it had historic Castles, it had scenic countryside, it had so much beautiful scenery that I was lingering on without any thought of leaving. You don't need high-tech and superb quality equipment to capture beautiful photos. You can just capture them easily with cameras. Travelling in different cities, could feel different cultures and different ways of life. (Zhangyuansophia)*

**Gumglegee** offers an even deeper reflection. As he said, 'in the UK, the outside appearances of a lot of architecture are old, but the interiors are not necessarily not modern'. He attributes this to British people's awareness of preserving the ancient architectures. He thinks that this is something the Chinese people should modestly learn. In addition to the co-existence of ancientness and modernity, Chinese travellers also talk about Western Landscape and Cross-cultural connection.

### 8.2.3 Western Landscape and Cross-cultural Connection

The English landscapes were perceived to be of ‘typical Western’ or ‘typical British’ style. As they travelled around the UK, the Chinese travellers paid special attention to the typical British and Western landscape such as palaces, castles, churches, Gothic-styled architectures and Western artefacts, as illustrated below:

*The Royal Crescent with graceful lines, is the representative symbols of classical British architecture, it is also one of the most beautiful and elegant architectures in the UK. (Moonbath)*

*Although I only had a hurried first glance, already felt being visually shocked, maybe due to the colourfulness of the oil painting, which was very different from the style of Chinese ink painting. (Summercoo)*



**Figure 8.1:** A series photos on Cambridge

Author: Aming2u

While the uniquely Western landscapes such as the Gothic-style architectures, palaces, castles and artefacts had left unforgettable traces in their memory, many Chinese travellers also felt the cross-cultural connections. **Glenny** and **Letitialz** felt that London is similar to Hong Kong due to historical connections when they made their way from the airport to the places to board the express train.

*Both Glenny and I couldn't help but feeling at the same time that the London in front of our eyes were very much akin to Hong Kong, even the atmosphere in*

*the air was similar, it seems that the colonisation in Hong Kong was very thorough. (Letitiaz)*

On other occasions, Chinese travellers noticed the Western designs blending with architecture designs from other countries. *Thaline* noticed the India outer architecture designs were blended with Chinese interior design at the Royal Pavilion at Brighton, in which she experienced the Chinese style once imagined by the West and that became popular in the UK.

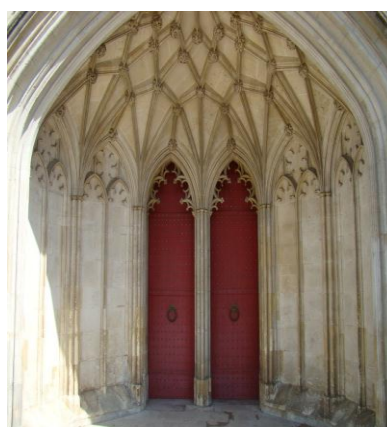


**Figure 8.2:** Brighton Pavilion

Author: *Thaline*

*Moonbath* especially captured the Chinese-style-side-door he encountered:

*Chinese-style side door.*



**Figure 8.3:** Chinese-style door

Author: *Moonbath*

In the museum, there were also artefacts from all over the world such as Egypt and China. Most Chinese travellers would pay a special visit to Chinese exhibitions at the British museum to see

the Chinese artefacts which were once looted during the wars. The visitation of the Chinese artefacts often brought Chinese travellers' memories back to that painful past, which often steered strong emotions in their mind. It also urges them to be strong so that nobody can invade China again in the future.

*I especially came to visit the Chinese exhibition, had a look at what kind of treasures were looted by the British, hehe. (I love D80)*

While the Chinese experience the Western landscape and Cross-cultural connections, they also experiences homes away from home.

#### 8.2.4 Homes away from home

For some Chinese travellers, especially those from China, home is in China. They describe their returning back to China as '回家' (returning home). Some of the temporary accommodations (hotels, B&B or hostels) on their voyage are referred to as '住处' (the lodging place) or hotels, B&B and hostels. *Summercco* is one of them. She was from Beijing. Her husband worked in London. She visited her husband and had a 20-day holiday in the UK. She distinguishes between 'home' and 'lodging place':

*D1: Home (家) → Beijing Capital Airport → Dubai Airport Transit → Heathrow Airport → Lodging Place (住处)*

*On my way home (回家), I encountered a traffic jam, Oh, I'm back to Beijing now! (Summercco).*

Throughout her narration, she continues to call the B&B or Inn she lived '住处' (the lodging place): 'It was already 11pm when I got back to the lodging place'; 'Walked a few miles to get back to the lodging place'. 'We walked up the mountain behind our lodging place Inn'. What does home signify then? Home is distinct from other lodging places such as house (Malleu, 2004 cited by Uriely, 2010). House designates a mere material, spatial entity. While home goes beyond that physical entity to incorporate emotional elements and facilitate both physical and emotional well-being. As Uriely (2010, p. 855) says, home encompasses 'spatial and physical aspects as well as symbolic and emotional attachments to real or imagined places and people (Uriely, 2010, p. 855). In addition to control and privacy, one feels loving and caring social relations at home (Watson and Austerberry, 1985, cited by Uriely, 2010). Uriely(2010) analyses the experience of 'home' and 'away' in VFR tourism, in which he mainly concerns about how

the lodging in the friends or relatives' home engenders the experience of either 'home' or 'away'. *Summercco* is a VFR tourist. However, her case is different. She spent most of her 20 days in the UK on holiday. Therefore, most of the time, she was lodged in B&BS. Her experience with the friends or relatives' accommodation renders little reference to the understanding of her experience of 'home' or 'away'. *FuNiu42* also flew with her mum from China to the UK for a 20-day holiday. Similar to *Summercco*, *FuNiu42*'s home is in China.

*Jet lag, catch up with some sleep, make up for the uncompleted dairy. [I or We] were muddleheaded when passed the seven-hour time zones. I finally returned home (回家). (FuNiu42)*

However, *FuNiu42* also regarded several of her accommodations (B&B and hotels) as 'home', which were the places where they ventured out in the morning and yielding to return when it was dark. As she recounts:

*Wanted to go to the famous Hyde Park, the speech corner to have a look, but because I was too lusting for the birds (spent long time looking at the birds and did not have time), [we] realised that it was already dark, we decided to go straight home.*

In this sense, home implies security and protection. It is a place where they are safe. As the English proverb goes, 'A man's home is his castle'. Home is that place where one is in 'situational control' (Watson and Austerberry, 1985, quoted by Uriely, 2010). On another occasion, *FuNiu42* affectively call a family B&B as her home:

*Left here, we went for a walk in a countryside lane, then had our dinner at the restaurant called Rose Tree in this small village. Very tasty. In the evening, we returned home (回家). A very very beautiful small England village! (FuNiu42)*

*A small family hotel, the walls were covered with red and green plants, it was stone walls and the paint was in milky white colour, inside there was a huge pinecone, as soon as I looked at the fireplace, I felt it was warm (温暖). The decorations inside were of warm (温馨) colours, white and flowery bedding, triangle-shaped table lamp, thick curtains and elegant gauze, plus hot English afternoon tea made by the owner of the B&B, we finally back home (回家) (FuNiu42).*

In this case, ‘hospitable’ owners of the B&B and the warm decorations of their accommodation conjure up the ‘warm’ feelings and make them feel at home. Home, hence, is that place engenders the homely feelings (warm, comfort and belongingness). In Chinese, home is usually associated with adjectives such as ‘温暖’ (warm) and ‘温馨’ (warm and fragrant). Such a warm feeling derives not only from the warm coloured decorations, but also from the warm host (the B&B owners). Schuetz (1945 cited by Uriely, 2010) says home is the particular ways of life comprising small yet cherished elements. Home encompasses the loving and caring social relations that make you feel a sense of belonging (Watson and Austerberry, 1985). Simmel (1949, cited by Uriely, 2010) highlights the ‘sociality’ attributes of home as a place eliciting home-like feelings, which allows the connection with significant others, often in the form of equal social relations. It is that ‘emotional home’ where one’s heart belongs (Williams and McIntyre, 2001, p392, cited by White and White, 2007). In this sense, home is not necessarily the place of residence. It can be anywhere. Indeed, **FuNiu42**’s acknowledge of several ‘home’ (B&B, hotels) on their holiday implies that travellers can experience ‘multiple homes’ on holidays. Such a notion of ‘multiple homes’ is also emerged from **Moonbath**’s accounts. **Moonbath** was once a student in the UK. He travelled intensively while he was studying in the UK. He returned back to China after his study. For **Moonbath**, China is his home so as the residential place in the UK while he was studying. That was the place he was consciously thinking of returning after his adventures. As he says:

*Based on my query at the information centre, it consumes time to climb up to the mountain, maybe I will miss my last train back home(回家), was thinking if I can come next time, I would stay at bottom of the mountain, and climb up to the mountain as early as possible (**Moonbath**)*

The presence of ‘multiple homes’ on holidays also emerged from other travellers such as **Sunny Yiner**’s account ‘I am taking the afternoon train back home (回家)’ (Her residential place in the UK). For the holiday accommodations, **Moonbath** calls some of them as ‘lodging place’ and others as ‘home’. As he says, ‘after dinner, we walked home (the B&B they were living) (**Moonbath**)’. It appears that **Moonbath** have multiple homes. While some Chinese travellers experience multiple homes away from home, some of their homes also allow them to temporarily go back to that elements of daily mundane after their adventures. **Fangfangorchid**’s account draws our attention to such a notion.

For **Fangfangorchid**, the ability to cook at the hostel makes her feel at home. As she says: ‘they supply cooking oil, salt and spices, [I] can buy food to cook, just like at home’. Here **Fangfangorchid** talks about the ability to perform certain routine tasks such as buying food and cooking and how such an ability making her feels at home. In addition to their adventure into

the space of ‘liminality’, there exist traces of ‘daily’ episodes. White and White (2007) talk about the incorporation of domestic routines in the travel world. White and White (2007) attribute such incorporation of domestic routines as a sign of ‘nomads’. *Fangfangorchid*’s story is slight different. The tourists White and White (2007) interviewed were long-term tourists (between six weeks to two years) travelling with families and often living in caravans or campervans. *Fangfangorchid* was an oversea Chinese visiting the Lake District for her three-night-and-four-day trip during bank holiday. She did not carry her home with her. *Fangfangorchid*’s story tells us more about the longing for familiarity and the sense of going back to the ordinary after one-day adventure. So part of her everyday routines is maintained on holidays. Can holiday be a completely extraordinary without any traces of ordinariness? Maybe not. Sometimes travellers just cannot experience extraordinary all the time. After their day-adventure, the temporary shifting towards the daily tasks, the familiarity of ‘buying food and cooking’ makes them feel at home. This draws our attention to Shutze’s (1944, cited by Uriely 2010) equation of ‘home’ as the feelings of ‘familiarity’, which distinct from the feelings of ‘strangeness’.

*Aming2u* also talks about the ability to buy and cook food. He mentions about ‘having meals together’ with his tour friends. This provokes warm feelings and made him forget they were ‘thousand miles away’ from their home. *Aming2u* travelled from Shanghai for a holiday. He travelled partially independent and partially in a group they self-organised. They used various types of accommodations, including hostel. Most often, they had meals in Chinese restaurants near their accommodations or attractions. When they visited the Lake District, they cooked a dinner at the hostel:

*The most satisfying one was the kitchen and a large-enough dining room, it was ideal for having meals together. That day we bought DIY meals from supermarkets, it was very warm feeling, I almost forgot that we were in an island country thousands miles away from our home. (Aming2u)*

In addition to the performing of daily cooking, *Aming2u* talks about the ‘having meals together’, the ‘warm feeling’ derived from it. Chinese culture is collective (Hofstede, 1994). Often, ‘home’ in China is also a space where you can entertain guests, share meals and enjoy the sociality with your friends. Both *Fangfangorchid* and *Aming2u* desire the blending of elements of familiarity (e.g. familiar food) while they are away from home. The relevant question is, do all Chinese prefer Chinese food? Chinese travellers exhibit different levels of attachment to Chinese food. Some Chinese travellers such as *I love D80* feels strongly connect to Chinese food, as he says: ‘*I have a Chinese stomach, and can't really appreciate Western food*’. On the other hand, the gourmet *XiaobaiinUK* is delighted to try famous seafood restaurants



recommended by the locals. Due to the partially independent nature of the tour, sometimes their food choices were more diverse. While Chang et al., (2010) found three types of food choice, namely Chinese food, local food and non-fastidious about food, this study suggests that on some occasions Chinese travellers choose food from other countries (neither Chinese nor British) such as Greek, Indian and French. There are wide ranges of food choices in Britain with food from all over the world. According to the survey conducted by UKTV, among the top ten of Britain's favourite dishes, half of them are foreign with the Indian Curry rating as the most popular food in the UK (Pocket cultures website, 2012). In some occasions, the recommended local restaurants are from other country, which makes it hard to distinguish what constitute local and what constitute non-local. Generally, most Chinese travellers loved the full English breakfast at their B&B, as *Summercoo* said, '*full English breakfast deserved its reputation ah, a variety of choices, large quantity, delicious.*' Some would try the traditional English dishes such as fish and chips on holidays, but some Chinese travellers could not eat British food all the time, as *Summercoo* recounted '*saw the famous UK fish and chips, had one, didn't like it, I didn't know if it was because there were not much seasoning. But the amount was a lot, very full.*' This is similar to Chang et al's (2010) claim that the main reasons why the Chinese travellers feel connected to the Chinese food is due to seasonings and appetite assurance. In addition to the seasonings and appetite assurance as identified by Chang et al (2000), the temperature of the food is also found to influence their food experience. Chinese travellers such as *Bluecastle* articulated the desire for food to be served in hot temperature.

### 8.2.5 Familiar yet unfamiliar

Chinese travellers described their travel world as '*familiar yet unfamiliar*', '*mysterious yet close*'. The travel space experienced is neither 'familiar pseudo-events' as proposed by Boorstin (1964) nor completely unfamiliar liminal space (Graburn, 1983; 1989). It lies somewhere in the middle. When she visited Greenwich, she said:

*I have heard about this famous place from various textbooks- English, Maths and Chinese....The Cutty Sark, that famous wooden boat appeared in the new concept English vol. III ( I recited it before), is now displayed here after its retirement.*

*Sunny Yin Er* felt that the scenery she experienced at Cambridge was '*the Cambridge scenery commonly seen on TV*'. They have heard about it before from various media or sources, including online community prior to their visitation.

*Near the gate of the King's college, a university boy came over, listed an advertisement on a board ' Do you want punting?' Just exactly the same as the online friends said on the website. (FuNiu42)*

*Later on went to the famous Tesco, I have heard about this supermarket before in this website. (Summercoo)*

*Always heard people in this website saying that it is normal for the UK train to be late. (I love D80)*

It appears that travellers have certain level of mental familiarity towards the travel space prior to their visits. The existence of online community, to some extent, influences travellers' mental familiarity. As this online community favour elements of independency, they are more likely to read others' travel stories and seek for information from experienced others given that they sometimes have no protection from the travel agency. They experienced what Urry (2002, p 256) calls the 'virtual travel' or 'imaginary travel' prior to their corporeal travel to the UK. White and White (2007) note that such imaginative travel or virtual travel is especially salient for those travellers who use communication technology to connect with others. Communication technology enlarges travellers' 'symbolic world'. In light of the virtual travel using communication technology, there witnesses the incursion of 'tourist gaze' into the everyday life (Feifer, 1985). As argued by Urry (2002), such an incursion of 'tourist gaze' into the everyday life renders the clear distinction between 'home' and 'away' impossible. It is, hence, not surprising that Chinese travellers felt the travel world is both 'familiar' and 'unfamiliar'.

### **8.2.6 Poetic spaces---make believe---memories of childhood**

Many of the Chinese travellers described the travelling in the UK in poetic terms. Travelling invited them into poetic spaces. As *FuNiu42* experienced the countryside scenery at Cotswolds, she felt that she was invited into the poetic spaces created by one of *Dufu*'s (712-770) poem:

*Cotswolds has the typical British countryside scenery, its atmosphere was very similar to the one described in the poem 'Stars shining closely above the vast plain fields, the moon pours its light on the flowing rivers (星垂平野阔，月涌大江流)', the only difference was that it was daytime now, the wheat fields were just harvested, with long grassland very close to it, the light clouds were just like muppets, it was like the props with hanging wires and subtly draped over the wilderness, although it was very low, you didn't feel depressed but felt rather close, from time to time the star-like white goats were embellished on*

*the plain, some were black-and-white colourful cow, also there were white,  
dark brown coloured handsome lonely horses with long mane. (FuNiu42)*

Confucian advocates the pursuing of ultimate truth from the landscape (Petersen, 1995). Taoism also promotes the returning to the nature (Zheng, 2000). Traditional Chinese travel culture is nature based (Han, 2006, cited by Yan and McKercher, 2013). Landscape travel literature is abundant in China (Berque, 1995). The Chinese's poetic romanticising of the landscape is well documented long before the Western Romantic Era (Yan and McKercher, 2013). The imageries created in these poems have influenced the Chinese over the history and has become the collective memory for the Chinese. On holiday, such a collective memory has been amalgamated with the imagination while they are invited to the poetic space and relive it. 'By recalling these memories, we add to our store of dreams.' (Bachelard, 1964, p6) As Bachelard (1964, p5) says:

*In this remote region, memory and imagination remain associated, each one working for their mutual deepening. In the order of values, they both constitute a community of memory and image. Thus the house is not experienced from day to day only, on the thread of a narrative, or in the telling of our own story. Through dreams, the various dwelling-places in our lives co-penetrate and retain the treasures of former days.*

On another occasion, when experiencing the fast-changing weather at Windermere, **FuNiu42** felt being transported to the poetic spaces constructed by Wordsworth's poem:

*England weather is really ever-changing, on one side of the long Windermere Lake, it was covered with heavy clouds, and on the other side the sky was transparently blue with only a few clouds floating away.  
But after a few minutes, it was the other way round, I couldn't help but thinking of the Wordsworth's poem:  
I wandered lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils.*

The poets travel across time and space without any constraints. The poetic space transcends such limitations and we can wanton travel in the poetic space. We can be any beings. At one moment, they can be a miniature and another moment a giant or a cloud wandering lonely in the sky. They can be young or old as they wish. They can observe the world without any boundaries.

When visiting the Wordsworth's house without seeing the pigeons, **FuNiu42** thought of Cui Hao's poem (? -754) '*The yellow crane never revisited the earth, and white clouds are floating without him forever* (黄鹤一去不复返, 白云千载空悠悠)'. Similarly, the experience of listening to the violin performance at Bath firstly reminded **FuNiu42** of YueFei's (1103-1142) poem '*few bosom friends who know how to appreciate my music, nobody is listening to it even when the strings are played till broken*'. With another thought, she decided that another poem by Yan Shu (991-1055) "*if there are bosom friends who know how to appreciate my music, I would not be hesitated to sing the song 'Spring' all over the country* (若有知音见赏, 不辞唱遍《阳春》)" was more appropriate. She changed slightly from the original poem '若有知音见采, 不辞徧唱阳春' to reflect her thoughts in Bath. She was transported back and forth between the physical space she experienced on holiday and various poetic spaces created by past well-known poems. Traditionally, it is common for the travellers to recite, or mostly, compose poems or articles about their travel experience (e.g., Zheng, 2000, p70). Many scholar travellers such as **Taoyuanming** and **Xu Bo** composed poems whenever they travelled. Some scholar travelers like **Gao Qiao** would even make stone inscriptions of their inspired poetry (e.g., Wu, 2003). As a result, plentiful travel literatures have been passed on from one generation to the next. It is, therefore, not surprising that the Chinese may mimic the ancient travellers to recite and compose poems on holidays. While **FuNiu42** felt being invited to the poetic space constructed by other poets, **Wooden man** self-composed a piece of humorous rhythmical epic to describe the story of the apple tree accompanied by a picture of the apple tree:

*Composed a poem under the apple tree in memory of Newton: "Apple without this tree, mirror without the standing. Why there was such a thing, unfortunately it happened to have smashed my head?!" Ha ha.*

**Wooden man**'s poem was an imitation of Huineng's (638-713) poem about the notion of 'no thoughts' (wunian). This implies that great human discovery tends to initiate when the mind is not constrained.

*Puti originally has no tree,  
The bright mirror also has no stand.  
Buddha-nature is always clean [and] pure,  
Where is there [any] dust? (Huineng, 638-713)*

**FuNiu42** and **Wooden man** were not the only two. **Sheep on the hill** wrote poems to express his feelings whenever he travelled. As can be seen from the links to other travel stories he wrote, both his holiday stories about Switzerland and Italy were written in a poetic format. They were

entitled ‘using poets to talk about Switzerland’ and ‘using poets to express the moods about Italian Journey’. When he visited Cambridge, he composed a poem called ‘Touring Cambridge’:

*Mountains and rivers are similar (山河相若),  
At the beginning of winter and the end of autumn (冬初秋末),  
Was looking for terraced rice paddies at the countryside of Cambridge (康桥乡里  
寻阡陌).  
Sitting on a boat (坐船头),  
It was breezing (清风拂),  
Was talking about Xu Zhi Mo in his years (戏说当年徐志摩),  
His passionate and goodwill in the end became wrong-doings (多情善意竟成了  
错).  
Sign, the world is big (叹, 天地阔).  
Pity, people are often perplexed (惜, 人常惑).*

While *Sheep on the hill* paid homage to the place where the famous poet *Xu Zhi Mo* (1896-1931) once visited and wrote the famous poem ‘Say good-bye to Cambridge again’, he wrote a poem to describe his travel experiences and contemplate about the life of *Xu Zhi Mo*. Writing poems to contemplate famous people’s life while visiting sites related to famous people is another dominant theme in traditional Chinese travel literature (Zheng, 2000). In poetry, ‘Dreams, thoughts and memories weave a single fabric. The soul dreams and thinks, then it imagines.’ (Bachelard, 1964, p175) While some travellers felt they were invited into poetic spaces, others felt that the sight of ‘ancient castles’ or ‘palaces’ immediately recalled the once-familiar-fictive fairy-tale world.

*When coming out of the Tube tunnel, my eye-views suddenly became bright and  
broad: Light blue Tower Bridge spanned horizontally over the Thames, next to  
the famous Tower of London, the ancient stone castle, looking at it from  
faraway, it seemed that it was walking out of the fairy-tale world. (FuNiu42)  
Stone buildings, stone bridges, rivers, trees existed side by side, giving you a  
fairy-tale feeling. (Summercoo)*

Interestingly, *Summercoo* was so captivated by this fairy-tale space that she metaphorically described the B&B in the forest they stayed as the ‘witches’ little house in the forest’ as they walking through the forest to search for the B&B. The architectures they experienced were like

the palaces in the fairy-tales. Similarly, *Fangfangorchid* felt that she returned to the fairy-tale world when visiting the Peter Rabbit Attraction at the Lake District.

*Also it was not big inside, you can finish in two minutes if you take a brisk walk, but it was a very fun place. So this is not a place where you should visit in a tick-a-box fashion, you'd better stop and have a close contact with the animals and have a friendly dialogue with the author, because it makes you return to the fairy-tale world again. (Fangfangorchid)*

Similar experiences also occurred when another traveller visited the places where 'Pride and Prejudice' was filmed and felt that she was "in the screen of the film 'Pride and Prejudice'." The virtual experience of the film became a more realistic experience for her, the fictive reality became concretised. Likewise, *Yang\_zhuer83* had the experiences of the moving between fantasy and reality when she visited Haworth, the places where 'Wuthering Heights' was filmed. She described her holiday experiences in Haworth as 'daydreaming in the place of origin' that 'allows the re-collection of the original novel 'Wuthering Heights'. As Bachelard (1964, p.6) says, 'The values that belong to daydreaming mark humanity in its depths.' On another occasion, when *Sunny YinEr* visited the Alice in the Wonderland Candy store, she also felt as if she was in that imaginative fairy-tale world worrying that the Poker Queen would arrest her:

*I stood in front of a small shop. This was the candy store in Alice in the Wonderland. I shot some photos in front of the door. [I] didn't buy candy there, [because] I was afraid of being arrested by the Poker Queen. (Sunny YinEr)*

As *Sunny YinEr* saw the 9 ¾ platform she was dreaming and running towards that platform as if she was in that magical world of Harry Potter:

*9 ¾ platform in the Harry Potter movie is just here. I ran towards the platform, in the end I was bounced back, a muggle is a muggle, forget about it, it is more realistic to go for dinner. (Sunny YinEr)*

As Bachelard (1964, p166) says, 'as we follow the tale, we are invited to go beyond the auditory threshold, to hear with our imagination.' Chinese travellers' imagination was stretched as they stepping into the fairy-tale like world. They experience the synthesis between the actual and the imaginary. In poetic imagination, the actual and imaginary are merged, the actual, our past experiences 'resonate' within us, while the imaginary, the possible future, the unknown, the other 'reverberate' at the surface of our being and inflates its limits. Through the resonation and

reverberation, a new being is made (Bachelard, 1964). UK is the birthplace of many fairy-tales such as 'Snow White' and 'Sleeping Beauty'. The backgrounds of these fairy-tales are surrounded by ancient Western architectures such as castles or palaces. On holiday, the Chinese travellers felt transported to the arena of make-believe in sight of Western palaces, castles and ancient stone pavements. The world of fairy-tale/make-believe reality became a practical reality for them on holiday. If the above experiences were about the transfer between fantasy and reality and fantasy being concretised on holiday, the viewing of the musical 'Lion King' on holiday prompted *Summercoo*'s childhood memories, she moved from a physical space now to a virtual space in her memories.

*It was more than 11 when I got back to our accommodation, I was still very excited, I had the feeling, the same feeling as the one I had in my childhood when I watched the 'Lion King' many times in the cinema! Happy day!*  
(*Summercoo*)

In the boundless poetic space, the memories and imagination are meshed together. Bachelard (1964, p5) says:

*He experiences the house in its reality and in its virtuality, by means of thought and dreams. It is no longer in its positive aspects that the house is really "lived," nor is it only in the passing hour that we recognize its benefits. An entire past comes to dwell in a new house. The old saying: "We bring our lares with us" has many variations. And the daydream deepens to the point where an immemorial domain opens up for the dreamer of a home beyond man's earliest memory. The house, like fire and water, will permit me, later in this work, to recall flashes of daydreams that illuminate the synthesis of immemorial and recollected. In this remote region, memory and imagination remain associated, each one working for their mutual deepening. In the order of values, they both constitute a community of memory and image. Thus the house is not experienced from day to day only, on the thread of a narrative, or in the telling of our own story. Through dreams, the various dwelling-places in our lives co-penetrate and retain the treasures of former days. And after we are in the new house, when memories of other places we have lived in come back to us, we travel to the land of Motionless Childhood.*

Chinese travellers experience poetic space and poetic imagination on holidays. Holidays concretise the make-believe fictive reality and allow them to be transported back to the childhood memories. They experienced what Bachelard (1964) calls the poetic imagination as

detailed in his book ‘the poetics of space’. Bachelard (1964) queries the nature of space and the nature of our experience of space. He highlights the role of poetic imagination in shaping our experience of space. In poetic imagination, we live in poetic spaces, where boundary renders non-existence (Bachelard, 1964). In such a boundless space, the inside and the outside, the rational mind and the physical body, the consciousness and unconsciousness, the actual and the imaginary, the past, present and future are all fused into one (Bachelard, 1964). Poetry grant us that freedom to imagine and break the boundaries of space and create a new being (Bachelard, 1964). In poetic imagination, Cartesian’s dualism renders irrelevant. Currently, most literature on tourism spaces is focused on the discussion of physical spaces (Goffman, 1959; Bitner, 1992; Lugosi, 2008). Virtually little research touches upon the poetic spaces and poetic imagination. Influenced by Taoism’s concept of ‘unfettered travel’ (逍遥游) and ‘spiritual travel’ (神游/神行) (Yang, 1957; Ren and Feng, 1959; Lin, 1963; Laozi annotated by Yu, 1994), the Chinese have produced numerous poems or literature transcending the temporal, spatial, real and imaginary boundaries. Dufu’s poem ‘遥怜小儿女，未解忆长安’ transcends the spatial constraints. Libai’s ‘今人不见古时月，今月曾经照古人，古人今人若流水，共看明月皆如此’ transcends the temporal constraints. Numerous literatures such as ‘Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio’ (聊斋) transcend the boundary between the real and the imaginary. It is, hence, not surprising that the experience of poetic spaces are salient in Chinese travellers’ stories.

### 8.3 Socialising Space

Travel spaces were also spaces for socialisation. It is what Goffman (1959) calls the ‘settings of social interaction’, in which certain social relations may befall. If so, what is the nature of the social relations occurred in these ‘settings of social interaction’? The following stories provide us with some insights:

#### 8.3.1 Global Conversation

In the travel world, they may meet people from all over the world. They enjoy the ad hoc social interaction and the chances of holding a global conversation. *Summercco* spent large amount of text describing her husband’s conversation with the Scottish gentleman. She was excited about this point of inter-cultural ‘encounter’ although she was just a listener because of language problems. Most of the time it was her husband who talked with this friendly Scottish gentleman (*Summercco* respectively addresses him as a Scottish Uncle ‘大叔’). According to Li (2000), tourist experience can establish a bond with the ‘other’ and create cross-cultural understanding, thus peace. Similarly, *FuNiu42* was enthusiastic about her English conversation with an old



gentleman they bumped into at Hyde Park when the gentleman kindly sent them to the Tube station:

*Because we couldn't find the park exit, I asked an old British gentleman who was walking by. As soon as he heard, he was very warm and took us all the way to the Tube station, and then he turned around and went home. We were very moved. On the way, he chatted with me, which seriously shocked me [why he thinks I am old enough to work?], he asked [my] mum 'What's your job?' I answered on behalf of my mum, 'editor', then he asked me, 'What's your job, young lady?' It seems that he wasn't joking and was very serious, I answered 'I'm a student, of course.' After that he showed a look of surprise!! Then he was very concerned about if there were signs of economic downturns in China, I was joking, yes, there is, not long ago, the stock was plunged ah! He was very understanding and said it is the same all over the world. He said, he hopes Chinese economy can become strong and then push the world out of the economic crisis. Later on, he also discussed 'Feng Shui' with me, and I did not know what to say. The funny thing was, I could understand all the English he said previously but when he said the Chinese word 'Feng Shui', I didn't understand, I was thinking in panic, what was that word ah, finally I understood that it was Feng Shui, then explained to him the meanings of 'Feng Shui'.*

On another occasion, **Bluecastle** narrates about their conversation with their tour friends from other countries when they joined a five-day Scottish tour in Scotland. Tour groups were usually good places to meet people from all over the world. **Bluecastle** described the people they bumped into on tour groups as international friends. Below is the extract:

*In fact, in the formal, decent, harmonious atmosphere of multinational dialogue, Tutu who achieved level 8 in the major of English at Shanghai International Studies University was still quite comfortable. For instance, that night, tour friends decided to chat with each other after dinner, Tutu and the Austrian girl, Sabinen, chatted very happily.*

*Sabinen had been to Beijing once, and had some understanding of Chinese culture. She said: 'I think Chinese people eat a lot of feet!'*

*[Meanwhile] she took her hands out and acted like chicken feet, there were hard-to-understand expression in her eyes.*

*I was wondering how to use English to express that chicken wings are more delicious than chicken breast and chicken feet are more delicious than chicken wings. Tutu couldn't wait and came up with one sentence: 'Yeah! Sometimes we just eat the neck of ducks'.*

*'Oh!!!' The circle of foreigners exclaimed with their hands over their own neck.*

Interestingly, **Bluecastle** depicts her conversation as a 'formal' and 'decent multinational dialogue' supposedly occurs in a 'harmonious atmosphere'. Her endeavour to explain her culture to her tour friends when her tour friends showed that 'hard-to-understand expression' did not make the situation any better. The problem of multinational conversation is that they may start with good intentions but end with embarrassment and misunderstandings due to cultural difference. Their good intentions may prove to be in vain. This is in line with Reisinger and Turner (1998) claim that cultural differences may lead cross-cultural misunderstanding. Such a misunderstanding is less likely to occur when the conversation is carried out in the same mother tongue with certain shared culture background. **FuNiu42**'s pleasant and warm encounter with two Taiwanese American at Cambridge shows us about this:

*On our boat there were four American Chinese, plus our two Chinese people, it is powerful and accounted for half of this little world. When they heard us speaking Chinese, they said let us Chinese people sit together and then we had a chat. They were two old American Chinese couples originally from Taiwan, the old gentlemen were professors in Physics at a university in America (it said that it was very close to Yale), they were all grandparents but dressed up very fashionably and they didn't look like more than 60-year-old at all. They also didn't join tour groups this time when they visited the UK, but they didn't have much time, for the whole UK they only toured for three or four days, they would go back the next day. We chatted so enthusiastically that in the end we didn't heard much when the punting student pointed out and introduced the surrounding colleges.*

**FuNiu42** then talked about these two couple kindly took many photos for them. Similar to **Summercco**'s address of the Scottish gentlemen as uncles, **FuNiu42** addresses these two couple as 'young aunty-like grandma'. In China, the juniors usually address the seniors or elders using respectful titles to show respect. The concept of 'family' in Chinese is an enlarged one may incorporate members outside the nuclear family (Joy, 2001). The above-mentioned extracts have illustrated Chinese travellers' delight for socialization. If so, does it mean that Chinese

travellers would always be extrovert engaging with conversations willingly? Let us hear about **Bluecastle**'s reflection:

*Generally speaking, there are communication barriers between the Chinese and the Westerners, perhaps it was more of the psychological barriers. In short we two had no courage to squeeze in the middle of a group of excited foreigners and spout eloquent speeches, we were very quiet in the tour group.*  
(**Bluecastle**)

In **Bluecastle**'s narration, she speaks of the 'communication barriers' and 'psychological barriers' of 'squeezing in the middle of a group of excited foreigners and spout eloquent speeches'. 'Communication barriers' means that they may stay silent when they felt their English level was not good enough. While in some cases, the Chinese may stay silent and not joining the conversation, in other cases, they may turn away from the conversation completely. **Bluecastle** talks of her experience of, out of respect, turning away from a tour friend in her Scottish tour:

*He is a kind of the very scary Westerners I mentioned. I felt that he would think I was an idiot if I stammered in front of him. I have turned away from him, out of respect, all the time, but on that day he came to talk to us.* (**Bluecastle**)

For fearing of being looked down, some Chinese may not volunteer for a conversation unless they are approached by friendly people or they are confident. They may only speak out when they really need help. On another occasion, **FuNiu42** and her mother was visiting Cambridge:

*Saw a lush tree outside of the door, mum was very excited, my mum pushed me and asked me to ask the staff if it was the famous apple tree. I was very reluctant and asked the staff, there was no facial expression on the staff, I could also hear her amusement: 'Oh, no, this is not the apple tree, this is a cherry tree and the apple tree is at the Trinity College'. My good reputation for a lifetime was ruined ah.* (**FuNiu42**)

In this instance, **FuNiu42** mistook a cherry tree as the apple tree that inspired Newton, the staff's amusement make her feel her 'good reputation for a lifetime was ruined'. Chinese travellers' account about their intentionally withdraw conversations or felt a bit ashamed when making obvious mistakes draw our attention to the Chinese concept of 'face'. The Chinese values 'face', which is other's perception of self (Solomon, 1983; Mooji, 2004). Influenced by 'face', the Chinese may stay silent or withdraw conversations to avoid embarrassment. They

may also be consciously aware of other's perception of self (Solomon 1983; Mooji, 2004) and proper behavior (Hsu, 1972). Interestingly, similar experiences are reported in education where Chinese students on a UK-based MBA course are found to stay in silent in their study group for the fear of making mistakes (Simpson, Sturges and Weight, 2010). On another occasion, **Bluecastle** recounted her dinner experience in a restaurant in the Lake District:

*When we left, we bumped into the waiter at the stairs: 'How was the food?' 'Very great!' I said with an honest look. I believe that the lamb here was very pure, but the British obviously don't know how to use the seasonings, good lamb, when cooked, we didn't know what the taste was. I hold salt in one hand and pepper in another hand, a shake on the left, and another shake on the right, eat one, then another shake on the left and another shake on the right. I have done my best, but finally I still had a lot left (it was very rude to waste food there). When we settled for the bill, I wanted to explain it to the owner, but in the end I was hesitated and didn't speak out.*

**Bluecastle** still praised the food when she didn't think it was good. It was not a question of deliberately wanting to lie. The purpose of that is to be polite and not to embarrass others. The restaurant owner was warm, friendly, understanding and making best effort to satisfy them. For **Bluecastle**, her encounter with the owner of the restaurant was more like a-host-and-guest encounter than a mere business transaction. It was a tradition in China to praise the food to show the appreciation of the efforts of the hosts and be polite. Chinese culture value social harmony (Guan and Lin, 1963). To create social harmony, the Chinese sometimes may avoid voicing negative feelings and be emotionally self-restraint. The Chinese are socially and psychologically inter-dependent rather than independent (Triandis, 1995). Markus and Kitayama (1991) note the presence of inter-dependent self among the Chinese. The inter-dependence means that one needs to show consideration to each other's feelings. Chinese travellers' enthusiastic reflection about their global social interaction indicates that they are interested in such global social interaction. Chen, Bao and Huang (2013) examine Chinese backpacker's motivation and identify intrinsic social interaction as one of the main motivations. Grossman and Enoch (2010) say that there exist 'cosmopolitan travellers' and 'provincial travellers'. The cosmopolitan travellers are more open to the social interaction with the host. On the other hand, the provincial travellers prefer social interaction with people from their own nations (Grossman and Enoch, 2010). Chinese travellers in this study are delighted about the global encounter with the host, international friends from other countries. However, their accounts show us that it is difficult to strictly categorize if one traveller belongs to 'cosmopolitan travellers' or 'provincial travellers'. The Chinese travellers are generally enthusiastic about the global conversation on holidays. Nevertheless, when they feel the

‘communication barriers’ and ‘psychological barriers’, they may withdraw. They may also temporarily withdraw when there are misunderstandings. Having discussed the global conversation, the next section address the romantic social interaction occurred.

### 8.3.2 Romantic socialisation

Socialisation for potential romance also occurred on holidays. Some Chinese travellers, especially the young unmarried individuals, might dream about romantic encounters on holidays. **Bluecastle** travelled with her close friend **Tutu** from China to the UK for a holiday. Both of them were single ladies in their early 30s. Her holiday story was a typical example of two Chinese travellers who were dreaming for elements of romance. They eye-gazed handsome boys. However, when they were really approached by guys for a chat, they tended to suddenly become shy. **Bluecastle** narrates her Chinese-style romance-seeking:

*I secretly wringing. Nobody knows, in fact I really do not mind a romantic encounter or chatting on holiday, especially when it was such a nice handsome boy standing in front of me. But for some very absurd reasons that I could not even explain, I instantly turned wooden.... In fact in my fearless appearance, there was a very very Chinese heart. The more I liked him, the more I would pretend that I don't care, when strangers approached me for chat, it was especially like 'my heart saying go go, my body saying no no.' I know it was very naive, but it was difficult for me to change, even if I determined to do it, when I really encountered such a situation, I was bound to fail to act. (Bluecastle)*

Interestingly, **Bluecastle** describes her as having a ‘very very Chinese heart’. She says, ‘my heart saying go go, my body saying no no’. She experienced the body/mind split where her body does not listen to her mind. In her mind, she wants to chat with this handsome boy, but her body could not act. This implies the body is not just a biological entity but also a cultural body subject to cultural standards (Featherstone, 1991; Wang, 1999). The Chinese are generally more conservative and tend to express their emotions in a subtle way (Hsu, 1972; Feather, 1986).

Similar to **Bluecastle**, **Dannya** also expresses her wishes to meet her Mr. Right on holiday. **Dannya** is an overseas Chinese working in the UK. Her everyday life offers her scant opportunity to meet people from the same cultural background, not to mention meeting her Mr. Right. Holiday, to some extent, was a way of broadening her social circle. Although the chances of meeting one's life time partners, as commented by one of **Dannya**'s audience, was low, holidays provided them the opportunity to socialise with new people. **Dannya** expresses her cherish about the short friendship formed on holiday no matter such encounter lead to romance

or not:

*We are all good people, I was glad to meet them. The chances of winning a lottery is one in ten-million, the probability of two people meeting each other is one in six-billion. I believe that it is not accidental but destiny that people encounter with each other. Although just like the small meteor, we only had come across each other's life so briefly, but if we had such an encounter, it is already not easy.*

Noticeably, **Dannya** acknowledges the existence of external forces of destiny. She believes that the inter-personal encounter on holiday is not accidental but dictated by fatality and destiny. This draws our attention to the concept of 'Yuan' (缘). Originating from the Buddhist concept of 'Karma' (cause-and-effect), the Chinese Yuan designates predestined relationships (both close and casual relationships) with other objects or beings beyond one's control (Yau, 1988). **Dannya** called the people they bumped into on holiday as '有缘人' (the persons who have 'Yuan' with her). Similarly, **ChineseEmma** also acknowledge the presence of Yuan in making people meet each other. As she says:

*The scenery with stories is even more profound, simply meeting [one another] already means that there is Yuan.*

Chang and Holt (1991) depict 'Yuan' as a multi-faceted concept incorporating four dimensions: association, quality, matching and attitude towards relationship. The above accounts touch upon the association dimension of Yuan. The Chinese ascribe the occurrence of inter-personal encounters to the presence of Yuan. The association can either be the presence of Yuan 'You Yuan' (有缘) or the absence of Yuan 'Wu Yuan' (无缘). Yuan shapes the association of two parties as well as the degree of association. Those who have much Yuan with one are those who are likely to hold important relationships with one (Chang and Holt, 1991). On another occasion, **laohai1991** draws the proverb '千年修得同车行' (It takes thousands of years of meditation or good deeds to bring two people to sit on a same bus together) to describe **Bluecastle**'s romantic dance with Darcy in her dancing-night out organised by **Bluecastle**'s tour.

The Chinese philosophy advocates the discovery of the natural world and act according to the nature to obtain harmony (Yang, 1957; Ren and Feng, 1959; Lin, 1963; Laozi annotated by Yu, 1994). Yuan metaphorically designated the sum total of all conditions in the natural world. The Chinese values the act according to Yuan. The Chinese holds two types of attitudes towards Yuan, that is, 'follow Yuan' (随缘) and 'cherish Yuan' (惜缘) (Chang and Holt, 1991). To 'follow Yuan' is a way of respecting the nature. Chang and Holt (1991) say that the Chinese is

unlikely to strategically manipulate relational outcomes through communication. To 'cherish Yuan' is a more active notion to mean that two people do their best to maintain and treasure the relations (Chang and Holt, 1991). Influenced by 'Yuan', the Chinese travellers may cherish the treasurable opportunity of connecting with others on holidays. This also applies to the romantic encounters elicited on holiday. However, to believe in Yuan is not to pessimistically submit to the fatality. There is also a sense of self-reliance. Rather than complaining about the circumstances or strategically manipulate inter-personal relations, one can do good deeds or meditate (修缘) in secret to enhance the interrelations of himself or his family with the universe. Hence, it is not surprising that *laohai1991* draws the proverb '千年修得同车行' (It takes thousands of years of meditation or good deeds to bring two people to sit on a same bus together) to describe *Bluecastle*'s encounter with Darcy. The Buddhism believes in the last life-this life-and next life. *Bluecastle*'s encounter with Darcy could be caused by the good deeds she has done in her last life. Further, '修缘' is not just an individual act but a familial one as one can do good deeds to improve his family members' Yuan. Her encounter may also be triggered by the good deeds her family has done for her. The feeling of having Yuan may make Chinese travellers open their hearts to complete strangers on holidays. *Mirror* talks about his encounter with a brother-and-a-sister from Switzerland. He bumped into them on the seaside, then bumped into them again on the bus, and then he found that they were living in the same accommodation. These make *Mirror* think that they must have Yuan. As he recounts, 'since we really have Yuan, we chatted and talked about the itinerary, and decided since we have nothing to do in the evening, [we decided] we would depart separately and then meet at the Crown Bar'. The feelings of having Yuan drew them closer with each other and they decided to go to the Bar together. The notion of Yuan not only affects the inter-personal relations on holiday but the social interactions online. Below are two extracts where travellers acknowledge the presence of Yuan for them to get to know each other online:

*[I am] planning to go there in the Summer to see the scenery I haven't finished seeing, Aming [I] don't like travelling alone, if we have Yuan (有缘), pls contact me as soon as possible. (Aming2u)*

*My friends and I toured Cornwall today by self-drive...I just coincidently saw your posting, have Yuan, have Yuan (we are destined). (HXG)*

In addition to the social relations, Yuan also dictates an individual's relationship with external objects.

*If you were asked: What Dublin attract you most? What would you answer? For me, the answer is nothing else but Guinness. It can be said that Guinness and I have very deep Yuan. For the detailed stories, pls let me tell you slowly: (**Pugphotograph**)*

Then, **Pugphotography** went on to recount his pleasant experience with Guinness when he first visited UK on a business tour. The pleasant first association with Guinness establishes his Yuan with Guinness and influences his current travel experience. That was why when he visited Dublin, the Guinness's Storehouse was a must-see attraction excited him most. Likewise, **Moonbath** used '再续前缘' (continue the previous Yuan I have established) to justify his decision to go to that Chinese restaurant to have 'evening snacks' (夜宵) again following his dinner experience there.

*The evening snack (夜宵) we ate separately according to our personal preferences, I went back to that Chinese restaurant to continue my formerly established Yuan (再续前缘), they went to the Greek restaurant to eat seafood and then to the Indian restaurant.*

It appears that a pleasant experience may establish the Yuan and initiate the repeat visitation. Yuan is currently still a neglected concept in well-known Chinese cultural theory (Fan, 2000). It is salient in holiday social encounters and online social encounters. In Western literature, there exist a sense of collective ritual bond and 'communitas' (Turner, 1974) where travellers feel no vigilant about the person they bumped into on holiday. Everybody is opened up and share their experience. In Chinese culture, the creation of such 'communitas' can be partially attributed to the belief of 'Yuan'.

While romantic encounter occurred on holiday, socializing online with a group of like-minded people bounded by shared interests might also broaden the social circle and increase their chances of meeting their potential Mr. or Mrs. Right. There were successful cases when they happened to meet their Mr. Right on holidays and online. They then got married and lived happily together. Because of their shared fondness of travelling, some of them not only became life-time married partners, but also life-time travel partners. While Desforges (2000) found that marriage or settling down hinders holiday activities, this study discovered that settling down, especially with a spouse who were also fond of travelling, might encourage them to travel more together in their married life. Some travellers who contributed online were married couples travelling together. To some extent, travelling with the loved one hand in hand appreciating the beautiful scenery is also a romantic experience. For instance, **Smile-life oleander** saw travelling together with her loved one as a way of witnessing their love and she wrote at the end of each



her postings:

*Love him... love life...love travelling  
travelling and photographing, witness the love through travelling*

While some social interaction may foster romantic relationships, other social interactions help to ‘open up a different world’.

### 8.3.3 Open up a different world

**Dannya** felt that socialization with different people on holiday, hearing their different life experiences and opinions, opened up a different world for her. It was not a physical world but a virtual world evoked in her inner heart.

*The Xiao who are very humorous but he himself didn't realise; the couple Qian Qian and Tao who are freshmen at the university, the B&B owner Lili who had magical life experiences; the Qing who has just applied for an internship in London from China; the Yao who like to play cards and who knows how to enjoy life; the Peng who are good at studying and got a scholarship from the Chinese government, the Han who run away from home due to domestic argument; and the Scottish gentleman called Keenth who can speak excellent Chinese, plus Hong who was the last person joined our conversation. Talked to different people, listened to different experiences and opinions, it allowed me to see a different world. At this moment I then realised, the world was so big, but my cognitive knowledge was so little.*

Such a social interaction allows her to see a different world and broaden her horizon. It enlightened her. Indeed, **Dannya** called her trip to Scotland as a journey allows for the ‘baptism of the heart and spirit’ (心灵的洗礼). She said ‘Scotland is very beautiful, but these sceneries, compared with the impact those people brings to my mind-set, is inferior.’ **Dannya**’s account also draws our attention to the fact that for travellers who were motivated for socialisation on holiday, the physical scenery became secondary. For instance, the day when **Dannya** went to Loch Ness Mary Gulf with her newly-encountered friends on holiday, they enjoyed it very much, despite the cloudy weather. At that moment, the natural scenery faded to the background to become what Xie and Wu (2000) calls the ‘tourist atmospheric environment’ and only remotely influenced the tourist experience. The significant others (in this instance the friends encountered on holiday) became the more immediate ‘tourist behaviour environment’ (Xie and Wu, 2000) dictating the situation. Ittelson, Franck and O’Hanlon’s (1978 cited by Borrie and

Roggenbuck 2001) claim that there exist five modes of environmental experience: focus on self, others, task, environment and on emotions. In *Dannya*'s case, she was less focused on the external environment. She highlights the impact those people brings to her rather than the natural scenery. Such an experience of 'opening up a different world' also occurred on holidays when Chinese travellers paid homage to attractions related to famous people and hear about their life stories. In addition, it also appeared online when online members hear about each other's travel stories. As *Janesarea* says:

*Each time when [we] embark a journey, the story began. Both the people in the story, and the people who listen to the story knows that there is not always a happy ending, but every story brings us different inspiration and enlightenment.*

## 8.4 Learning Spaces

### 8.4.1 Stepping into the Uncomfortable Zone

Travelling in an unfamiliar space, to some extent, was like stepping to an uncomfortable zone. The language was different and so did the culture, customs, rules, norms and ways of living. While some Chinese travellers mentioned no or less language difficulties, others felt the 'communication barriers'. *Bluecastle* talked about how communication barriers had led to the felt difficulties of purchasing the travel cards:

*We went for great strength [it was very difficult] (because of communication barriers) to buy two travel cards, then went to the ticket machine trying to use the travel cards to buy the Tube tickets. We searched almost half a day for various option, the only option was to charge the travel cards, but no options to buy tickets. Soon there was a long queue behind us. We were so worried that we pulled a boy to help us, he studied for a half day, shook his head, pulled another boy and shook his head again. Tutu almost wanted to go to seek for help in that 'communication-barrier- and-ticket-purchasing' window, just at that moment somebody told me that I only need to swipe the travel card to enter.*

*Yu Wei Chuan Qi* mentioned that 'British English really sounded very good, I could appreciate but couldn't understand them fully.' It appeared that she had no difficulty of reading maps, purchasing tickets and navigating around having researched in advance but she had problem of listening. *FuNiu42* travelled with her mother and acted as her mother's little translator. She communicates well most of the time but sometimes she felt she could not understand. In addition to the language barriers, some rules were also different. Sometimes, they may not be able to adjust themselves immediately. *Bluecastle* reflects her experience of walking on the

escalators at a Tube station:

*We all strictly abided by the rules of ‘walk on the left and stand on the right’. I don’t know what the secrets were, Tutu complied to it very well every time, but I always forgot. Each time when she stood on the right, I was habitually standing on the left, then immediately all kinds of polite languages such as ‘Sorry!’, ‘Excuse me!’, ‘Please’ started one after another, I was so scared that I quickly gave the way. Tutu always smiled at me with elegance, but I felt like I was the Grandma Liu. (Bluecastle)*

**Bluecastle** consciously wanted to abide to the local rules, to ‘do as the romans do, when in Rome’. However, she felt the difficulty of immediately adjust herself to the ‘walk on the left and stand on the right’. It took time. She and **Tutu** have different levels of adaptability. On another occasion, **FuNiu42** recounted their experience of mistakenly thinking the House of Parliament as the Westminster Abbey:

*They are both of the Gothic-style architecture, Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament look so alike, that we firstly mistakenly thought that the House of Parliament was the Westminster Abbey. We also said facing Big Ben ‘this clock was so beautiful’, we took photos for a long time, and was very excited to think that we had discovered a new attraction, in the end we quickly realized that it in fact was the famous Big Ben. (FuNiu42)*

If it is such an uncomfortable zone, why do Chinese travellers desire to travel to such a zone? Despite the challenge felt, the experience was educational and provided rich learning opportunities. As one traveller says: ‘the more unfamiliar environment you put yourself in, the more you may gain. The existence of the online community, with the advice and support from other peer travellers, allow the travellers to familiar the uncomfortable zone prior to their visits.

#### **8.4.2 Read Ten-thousand Books, Travel Ten-thousand Li**

*Travelling has been my compulsory module every year these years. (Amanda6082)*

Travelling, as metaphorically described by **Amanda6082**, was a compulsory module. This implied the recognised educational element of travelling. To say it was compulsory instead of an optional one also indicated that **Amanda6082** saw travel as an essential part of his/her education.

Throughout the online discussions, there were many learning-related metaphors used to describe the holiday process. For instance, planning was metaphorically described as ‘doing the homework’. As **Qinnan** said, *‘I printed numerous informational documents about Dublin, and did the ‘homework’ for two weeks, when everything is ready, waiting to depart.’* The actual holidays were like *‘going for a lesson’*. If they missed getting to know certain knowledge relating to the places they visited, they would jokingly call it ‘missed a lesson’. The researching about the historical background of the places visited before, during and after the holidays was described as ‘taking supplementary lessons’. Writing travel stories and posting it back to the online community was like *‘handing in homework’*. Learning did not just stop when they came back from their holiday. Online involvement afterwards (writing, posting and discussing holiday experiences) was also educational. While many audiences clearly indicated that they *‘learnt many things from’* some travel stories, the writers also gained knowledge from their online discussion with the audience. For instance, **Summercco** got to know the history about the sculptures she captured around the Hyde Park via online discussion after her holiday. **Baiship** also found that online discussion afterwards allowed him to get to know more about the places he visited. He called it ‘making up for a missed lesson’:

*Thank you for looking at the postings and making up the lessons for me, I went there many times but there is still a lot of things I didn’t know, it seems that I didn’t do the homework well, hehe. (Baiship)*

While before and after holidays, they were eager to research about the places. On holiday they were also keen to get to know the background history, geography or biological knowledge about the place visited. In the stories written, many travellers would include the detailed background knowledge they got to know on holidays (e.g., audio guides, tour guides, friends, locals) and other routes (e.g., their own research or literature reading). Holidays allowed them to enrich various knowledge including geography, biology, history and political knowledge. For instance, while visiting the Pencil Museum at Keswick, **FuNiu42** got to know how pencils were made. **Moonbath** felt that her visit to the natural history museum allowed him to understand the origin of the human species from the worldwide perspective. **Summercco** felt that their history knowledge had been enhanced after listening to the audio guides while visiting Windsor Castle.

*According to the map, listening to explanations, I felt that Windsor Castle was really great, got to know much relevant history, especially about the badges of Guardian Knight, it was interesting that he designed the badges with so many styles, all of them have a lion or sword at one side.*

Like most of the other travellers, *Sunn yin er* voiced her gradual, enriched feelings when she came to realise her accumulated knowledge:

Think about it, I originally knew not much about politics, history and geography, but because of travel I have really started to try to make it up. This feeling of gradually enriching my knowledge makes me feel the sense of happiness and confidence from the deep bottom of my heart, this is just like what the ancient people says: read ten-thousand books, travel ten-thousand Li.

While man-made attractions allowed for the enrichment of historical knowledge, travellers also found that it was knowledge-gaining to be close to the nature. While it was knowledge-gaining to chat to people with different life experiences, holiday experience in a famous person's house also allowed them to get to know about this person's life and learn something from that. As mentioned by one of the audience, sometimes, it was knowledge-gaining and inspiring by listening to other people's life experience and story online:

*Every time when one starts a journey, the story begins. There is not always a happy ending, no matter if it is the people in the story or the people who listened to the story, however, every story can give us certain inspiration.*

Stepping out of the normal space gave them opportunity to reflect about self and the collective selves and China. *Glumglegee* reflected that '*in fact in many detailed aspects they were very humane, especially their treatment of the disabled people, in this aspect, we should learn a bit more.*' Other travellers also talked about the preservation of natural environment and the preservation of old architectures. This is in line with Wahlin (2006, cited by Simpson et al., 2010) notion that being 'out of place' and adjusting to new conditions can fuel reflexive capacities and promote a self-questioning that may not come readily in more familiar environment.

In addition, travelling also allowed them to experience different ways of living, which enriched their life experiences and broadens their vision. For instance, *Yu Wei Chuan Qi* talked about the independent and private way of living in the UK which was different from the collective social life in China. *Letitiaz* experienced the difference between the traditional Chinese festivals and traditional British festivals:

*What is different from Chinese customs, the Chinese love to go outside and party on traditional festivals, whereas Europeans love to stay indoors, a family reunion, enjoying Christmas meals and the familiar happiness.*

This echoes the long-held view that travelling is a route for intellectual self-cultivation and education. Travelling, as a knowledge-gaining and self-cultivation activity, is not new but well documented in Chinese history (e.g., Zheng, 2000). Around 500 B.C., Confucius had already led his disciples and travelled widely for knowledge. In Chinese history, numerous scholars, philosophers such as Confucius and Mencius all travelled widely to gain and test the knowledge they obtained via reading books (e.g., Zheng, 2000, p23). Travelling has often been stressed in parallel to learning. The famous Chinese saying ‘Read ten-thousand books, travel ten-thousand Li’ (Dong, 1555-1636) drew an interesting parallel between reading books (indirect knowledge) and travelling (direct knowledge) and vividly articulated the ancient Chinese knowledge-gaining pattern. The educational meaning of travelling is also noted in Western literature (Beard and Ragheb, 1983; Klooster et al., 2008). Qian’s (1759-1844) travel trilogy notion extends the theory of ‘Read ten-thousand books, travel ten-thousand Li’ to include writings:

*Read ten-thousand books, travel ten-thousand Li. Both cannot be neglected, although sometimes it is difficult to combine both, holidays are not just for leisure, through holidays, one should also understand the knowledge about the world such as the ‘mountains, roads and cultures and plants’ etc. One should read books for twenty years, travel for twenty years, and then write books for twenty years. In that way, it can be truly said ‘read ten-thousand books, travel ten-thousand Li’.*

Currently, the three stage holiday experience (plan and research beforehand, go on holiday, write stories afterwards) is, to some extent, akin to the travel trilogy proposed by Qian (1759-1844). What differs in the contemporary China is that, with the development of Internet and transportation, the length of time spent on reading, travelling and writing may be shortened. In ancient China, scholars also conducted an educational tour called ‘You Xue’. According to Wu (2003), the scholar-bureaucrats of imperial China often brought their sons together when travelling, wanting to give their sons the opportunity to see the world outside, which often helped with their sons’ future careers (1624-1690). Holidays then combined the functions of ‘education’ and ‘socializations’. It is similar to the Grand Tour in the 18<sup>th</sup> century when the UK elites travelled to other European countries for three to five years. It was an important educational stage for them. They learned the European languages, trained to act elegantly, developed artistic tastes and also made friends with important characters in the high society. The Chinese travellers’ holiday experiences in the UK also exhibit such educational features and travel is a space for learning.

## **8.5 Conclusions**

In this chapter, Chinese travellers' experience of holiday space is discussed. Travelling through the natural world, wandering on the historical heritages, gazing upon different ways of life and socialising with people from all over the world, the Chinese indulged themselves not only in the physical spaces but also in imaginative spaces. The beautiful picturesque travel space provokes the feelings of being on an earthly heaven, the peach-blossom Shangri-La. They also experience the co-existence of ancientness and modernity, the Western landscape and cross-cultural connection on holiday. Holiday, to some extent, represents that stepping into an uncomfortable zone. However, there are still some momentarily switching back to that familiarity, especially when they return back to their accommodations after one-day adventure, which creates a sense of homely feelings. The existence of online advice and support from other peers, to some extent, prepares the Chinese travellers for their stepping into the uncomfortable zones. This also leads to the feelings of unfamiliar yet familiar given that Chinese travellers may be able to familiarize themselves of the liminal zone prior to their visit. While Chinese travellers experience poetic space and poetic imagination on holidays, holiday is also a place where meaningful socialisation may unfold. Following the discussion of Chinese travellers' experience of holiday space, the next chapter addresses their bodily feelings and emotions.

## Chapter 9

# Bodily Feelings and Emotions

### 9.1 Introduction

Having presented Chinese travellers' experience of holiday time and space, this chapter moves on to reveal the multi-faceted bodily feelings and emotions that Chinese travellers experience in the UK. They had moments of 'happiness', feeling very 'high', of being 'very satisfied' and/or 'surprised' but on the other hand, they also experienced moments of being 'physically tired', 'frightened', 'nervous', 'anxious', 'disappointed', and 'depressed'. Such feelings are in line with the notion of 'extraordinary experience' where high intensity of emotions may occur (e.g., Arnould and Price, 1993). Despite advanced planning, their bodily feelings and experiences could not be completely predicted as there were unexpected events which happened from time to time causing their emotions to swing. Little research covers a wide range of emotions in a single study (Mitas et al., 2012). This study uncovers a wide spectrum of bodily feelings and emotions, which is to be revealed in the subsequent sections.

### 9.2 Embodiment

Chinese travellers' experience not only involves the vision but also involves the whole body; it is an embodied experience. While sitting on the train, buses, car, coaches, or while walking and cycling around, they kept on 'gazing' upon the beautiful scenery and interesting things that occurred along the way. Their holiday experience was thus closely tied to vision. This is in line with Urry's (1991) stressing on 'tourist gaze'. However, it is not the vision alone. The following extracts reveals how all the senses, the body and the mind were engaged in the poetic reflection of the experience:

*The garden was not large, but it's been greenised well, flowers blossomed, [we] could smell the scent of the flowers everywhere inside the garden, it made people feel 'heart become broadened, spirit is refreshing and joyful' (心旷神怡). (Zhaoxiaoming)*

While **Zhaoxiaoming** and his wife entered into the garden, not only their vision was activated, their smells were too. Further, the green garden, the lovely scented flowers make the whole



body feel relaxed and refreshing, leading to a mental and spiritual experience. Noticeably, **Zhaoxiaoming** used the word '心旷神怡' to describe their mental and spiritual experience derived from seeing the flowers and smelling the scent of the flowers. '心' means 'heart/mind' in Chinese; '旷' means 'become broadened'; '神' means the spirit. '怡' means delightful and joyful. The whole word '心旷神怡' means that both the heart and mind/spirit feel fresh and delightful. On another occasion, **Baiship** reflects his experience of seeing a large tract of green lawn:

*There were large tracts of green lawn on both sides of the train station, the new green made you feel as if the refreshing feeling derived from seeing the new green have soaked into your body (沁人心脾). (Baiship)*

In this instance, **Baiship** uses the word '沁人心脾' to describe his experience. '沁' means 'soak' or 'penetrate', '心' means 'heart', '脾' means 'spleen'. Such new greenness and fresh feelings have soaked into the body, making him feel refreshed. In addition, **Aming2u**'s audio experience also involves more than the activation of the ears:

*Firstly visited the castle, and then walked along the Royal Mile [High Street] until we came to the Palace Holyrood Palace, we gathered there for the coach, then first stopped at the Princes Street, then climbed up the east of the hill overlooking the old and new city, and finally returned to St. Giles' Cathedral, next we were immersed into the ocean of the music, firstly listened to a Sunday concert in the church, then when we came out, we also heard the passionate performance of bagpipes, the whole day experience was very rich, made us who were about to leave The Scottish Highlands felt like hanging around more. (Aming2u)*

Interestingly, **Aming2u** described the music was like an ocean. When encountering with the music, he does not only use the ear to listen, he used the whole body. The whole body was immersed into such an ocean of music. Traditionally, especially in Western culture the belief in mind/body dualism is widespread, which depict body as distinct entity separating from the mind (Bloom, 2004). The Eastern thought process in general and the Chinese thought process in particular is more of a mind/body holism where mind and different parts of the body interact with each other (Rosemont and Ames, 2009). During such interaction, there are moments of heightened reflection and contemplation. As **Bluecastle** watching the beautiful scenery on her train from London to Edinburgh, she was contemplating 'why the crops in the UK were so green'. On another occasion, while **Sunny YinEr** visited Westminster Abbey and saw Queen

Mary and Queen Elizabeth ‘lying side by side’, she was engaged with contemplation, leading to enlightenment:

*Think about it, it is really true to say that one can draw lessons from history. Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth were sisters, but in their whole life there were times of gratitude and grudges, cheats and deceptions because they were fighting for wealth and power. In the end, Queen Mary died at the hands of Queen Elizabeth, but after they died, they were lying side by side in this small space. A lot of things in our life are only temporary, the only eternal thing is our souls, and only the perfection of our souls can be the purpose of our life.*  
(**Sunny YinEr**)

Galani-Moutafi (2000) says that travelling into the other land may allow for such an inner reflection. Similarly, such heightened reflection is reported in outdoor or wildlife experience (Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989; Curtin, 2008). The Chinese word ‘experience’ (体验) is composed of two characters ‘体’ and ‘验’. ‘体’ means ‘body’ and ‘验’ means to ‘observe and inspect’. Experience in Chinese, hence, involves both body and mind. It involves the body to feel, the eyes to observe and the mind to think and inspect. It is a holistic synthesis of both.

### 9.3 The Surreal Feelings

On holidays, Chinese travellers also feel the surreal, dream-like feelings and undergo ‘out-of-body’ experience as they experience moments of association, imagination and daydream. **FuNiu42**’s experience at St. Mary Church in Oxford, **Sunny YinEr**’s experience at the 9 ¾ platform and Alice in the Wonderland Candy store tell us about this:

*Wooden stairs, narrow and steep, the oil-painted rope as the bars, when stepped on it, it made creaky sound, one can easily imagine (associated to) the old church, the bell in the far away and an old priest standing on the stage and his deep mysterious eyes.* (**FuNiu42**)

*9 ¾ platform in the Harry Potter movie is just here. I ran towards the platform, in the end I was bounced back, a muggle is a muggle, forget about it, it is more realistic to go for dinner.* (**Sunny YinEr**)

*I stood in front of a small shop. This was the candy store in Alice in the Wonderland. I shot some photos in front of the door. [I] didn’t buy candy there, [because] I was afraid of being arrested by the Poker Queen.* (**Sunny YinEr**)

As suggested by Jasson (2002 cited by Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier, 2008), bodily hedonic feelings can be realistic or imaginative. What **FuNiu42** and **Sunny YinEr** experience here is what Jasson (2002 cited by Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier, 2008) calls the imaginative bodily feelings relates to fantasies and daydreams. It is the surreal feelings. Such dreamlike and surreal feelings also occurred in the post-travel period. Travellers such as **Bluecastle** felt that their holiday experience was quite surreal and dreamlike when they returned to their daily world. This may be due to its extraordinary nature:

*When we finally returned to our own lives, I opened my eyes and found that I was lying on my own bed, what we experienced in the UK was like a dream, real but so far away, I even suddenly started to suspect did everything truly happen? I opened my treasure box, delighted to find the postcards from London, Edinburgh Castle, tickets, a recording of the tour guide Juve when he was telling the stories, also Dace's address, it means that I really once owned these experiences. (**Bluecastle**)*

While Chinese travellers experience the surreal feeling during holidays and after their trip, such surreal feelings also occur online. As mentioned previously, Chinese travellers upload beautiful photos and share their holiday experience online. The next relevant question is what is it like for an audience to listen to the travel stories described by the travellers? What is it like when they see the beautiful photos captured and uploaded by other fellow travellers? Chinese travellers often use the word ‘身临其境’ (as if my body is entering into the scene; as if I am physically and personally on the scene) to describe their experience of seeing the beautiful photos and reading the interesting travel stories. The word ‘身’ means body in Chinese, ‘临’ means being physically present, ‘境’ means the scene. Below **Caiwangzi** is commenting on **baiship**'s travel stories and travel photos:

*Really beautiful ah!*

*As if my body is entering the scene (身临其境)! Thank you for sharing! (**Caiwangzi**)*

To say ‘as if my body is entering the scene’ is to say that the online experience is so surreal. This is different from Rheingold's (1994) ‘disembodiment’ notion that online community members leave their bodies behind while engaging in online activities. Rather than leaving their bodies behind, online community members felt that their bodies are entering into the scene. In addition to the surreal feelings, Chinese travellers also encounter a number of other pleasurable feelings. This is to be uncovered in the next section.

## 9.4 Travel Pleasure

According to Oliver (1996), various emotional responses such as happiness, contentment, surprise, comfort, being in awe of, and warmth might all lead to satisfaction. Xie (2005) states that tourists are in pursuit of tourist pleasure, in which he maintains a broader concept incorporating not only direct pleasure, but also indirect pleasure obtained from the experience of pain. This section focuses on the discussion of the direct pleasure Chinese travellers experienced on their holiday. While some placed great emphasis on happiness derived from aesthetic appreciation, the feelings of happiness might come from non-aesthetic activities such as socialization and shopping:

*The stores were big and the customers were few in the York Outlet, [we] enjoyed shopping till close, was very exhilarated. (Aming2u)*

In addition, it appeared that there was disparity of their spirits and moods at different periods of their journey. Their moods had a temporal as well as spatial component. For instance, *Aming2u* noticed that their companions' spirits were lowered when it was almost the end.

*If travel is a story, then the peak of our trip seemed to have a past, even the driving directions were no longer zig-zag, obediently went straight to London. Nearer to lunch time, we arrived at Stamford, there were many attractions appearing in the 'Pride and Prejudice', but unfortunately, we were thinking of returning home, so our companions' spirits and moods to enjoy could not be compared to the moment when we were in Darcy's home.*

While it is impossible to describe all the happy feelings Chinese travellers had undergone, the next sections focus on several major happy feelings identified.

### 9.4.1 Feeling Beautiful, Stunned and in Awe

Many travellers experienced pleasurable feelings associated with aesthetic appreciation. The UK has rural idyll, beautiful coastal, nostalgic and historic heritages. Walking into such a space, travellers felt '*it was very beautiful here*', '*everywhere, as far as my eyes can see, is full of joy and happiness*'. In their travel stories, they often described the natural beauty:

*Swansea bay is so famous, but I don't mind adding icing on top of the cakes, because it was so beautiful, sunshine, beaches, cliffs, meadows, flowers, streams, castle, rock, .....and bikini ^-^.* (**Baiship**)

*Across the top of the hill, the endless sea suddenly emerged in front of (our) eyes, the sun was spreading on the sea surface and seagulls were circling in the air. Such a beautiful picture made people feel happy, the beach is really a good place for leisure ah!* (**Zhaoxiaoming**)

Interestingly, some Chinese travellers describe the aesthetic experience as an indulging one. They sometimes used the word ‘陶醉’ (the state of being intoxicated with/ revelled in/highly absorbed in something) to describe their scenery appreciation experiences. Without alcohol, they felt intoxicated (醉) in sight of beautiful scenery. To say they are intoxicated with/revelled in beautiful scenery is another way of saying that they are so much absorbed in the scenery appreciation. There may be a loss of self while they are so absorbed and delightfully indulged in the activity. This indicates a high level of absorption occurred in the scenery appreciation. Pine and Gilmore (1998) put forward four realm of an experience according to the level of absorption and passivity. Esthetical experience is labelled as a passive experience with low level of absorption (Pine and Gilmore, 1998). The aesthetic experience in this study suggests that esthetical experience can also be of high level of absorption. On other occasions, **FuNiu 42** said that she entered into a state of feeble-mindedness while indulging in the scenery appreciation:

*On the train to Moreton-in-Marsh, our eyes were too busy, hold our cameras and captured the sheep herd outside the window and then realised that we missed the grain stacks outside the window, finally I just simply put the camera inside my bag and indulge into my appreciation as if I am feeble-minded.* (**FuNiu 42**)

In addition, there are also moments of thought process. For instance, while **Baiship** was appreciating the scenery at three cliffs at Swansea, he was trying to figure out why this place is called three cliffs:

*Continue to walk forward, change another angle, then you can see what the name three cliffs want to express, hehe.* (**Baiship**)

In this instance, the scenery appreciation process is also the learning process about the history of the places. Interestingly, **Zhaoxiaoming** says that they ‘want to put all their energy into appreciating the scenery’. According to Pine and Gilmore (1999), esthetical experience represents a passive one. Both **Baiship** and **Zhaoxiaoming** speak of an active participation in

esthetical experience. This is different from Pine and Gilmore's (1999) depiction. As well as the happiness derived from aesthetic beauty, they also reported feeling of 'stunned', 'in awe of', 'spectacular' and 'grandeur'. Generally, objects of large scale could produce such feelings. For instance, **FuNiu42** felt it was so stunning when she '*stood at the edge of the cliff watching the waterfalls pouring down from the cliff 1.5m above the sea surface*'. She also felt in awe at first glance of the Assyrian Huge Statue. When **Summercoo** saw St. George's church, she felt it was '*stunning and the church was so grand, so magnificent*'. **Oldbabyvivi**, when encountering with the giant ocean, claimed that the moods were '*broad*' and '*enlightened*'. Another traveller said their '*heart was opened and everything else became unimportant*'. **Zhaoxiaoming** felt a surge of 'emotions'.

*Looking down from the cliff, you could see the cliffs, and there dotted three reefs in large, medium and small size not far from the sea. Listening to the rhythm of the waves hitting the huge rock, felt a surge of emotions (emotions run wild), and really wanted to fall into the arms of the sea. (Zhaoxiaoming)*

To say, they felt in awe and their emotions ran wild, what they were really experiencing was in fact what the sublime, which is the simultaneous feeling of both the fear and the respect (Kirwan, 2005). The feelings of 'in awe' and 'stunning' not only arose when they encountered with objects of huge sizes. As **FuNiu42** reported, she felt she was in awe when she came across small objects with strong spirits, including the resilient little wild flowers standing persistently against the strong wind and the small spring in the crevice was so focused and dedicated:

*The crevice in the mountain, spring in the crevice, the spring became the waterfall, waterfall flew down mountains and merged into a stream, the stream can then form a river, the river then attribute to the sea ... .. there were mountains and water, similar to the lake district, the water was dripping, obviously was not as majestic as the one in the lake district, instead they were weaker, but little by little, it gave us a very vigorous feeling. The water flew from the crevice to the grassland in a zig-zag manner, then formed into a small unit, then formed into another large unit, so focused and persistent, made me feel in awe. (FuNiu42)*

The water stream was small and not majestic at the beginning. However, the small water stream did not give up. They continue to flow. Gradually and little by little they flow to form a small unit and then another larger unit. It is the strong persistency and focused spirit of the little weak water that made **FuNiu42** feel in awe. Confucianism advocates the seeking supreme truth from landscape (Petersen, 1995). The natural landscape is believed to possess desirable human virtue.

Confucianism advocates the comparison of virtues inherent in the natural world with that of the humans. This is known as ‘Bi De’ (comparison of virtues) (Zheng, 2000). Here **FuNiu42** recognises the persistency virtue inherent in the small water stream and felt in awe and touched by such persistency.

Sometimes, even very little things, when put together, could evoke the stunning feelings. As stated by **FuNiu42**, ‘green grass is everywhere in Scotland’, the ‘purple wild flowers’ and ‘sheep’ in Scotland was not worth mentioning compared with flowers and sheep in other places, ‘But when all these small non-outstanding things were put together, it produced a stunning feeling’. In addition, the stunning feelings could stem from viewing something totally different from the one normally viewed in the daily life, as mentioned by **Summercoo**:

*Only a hurried first glance, felt it was very stunning visually, probably due to the colourfulness of oil paintings that was so different from the styles of Chinese ink paintings. (Summercoo)*

In addition, **Summercoo** felt very grand and powerful when she was hearing 100 types of African drums playing in the musical the Lion King, as she said, ‘this musical used more than 100 types of African drums, sounded very nice, it had the grand and powerful feelings of the big African savannah.’

#### **9.4.2 Be Close to Nature, Feeling Leisurely and Refreshed**

They often reported being embraced with the nature and amazed by the wonder of the natural world. This is in line with the literature that outdoor experiences allow for the closer interaction with the nature and in increased relationship with the physical environment (Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989). Below are two extracts:

*Mountains, valleys, pastures, yellow flowers, forest, coast, cliffs, the house far away, enjoy the closeness with the nature. (Yinzongyu)*

*Finally got to the durdle door (sea stone arches) la! In fact, it is a Guilin Elephant Trunk Hill! Nature is very amazing ah! (Summercoo)*

While encountering nature, the Chinese felt refreshed and leisurely. The idyll rural landscape and seaside made the Chinese travellers feel ‘calm’, ‘relaxed’, ‘cozy’, ‘refreshed’, ‘leisurely’ and sometimes even ‘escractic’. This is in line with the notion stating that tourist experience offers ‘relaxation’, ‘refreshment’ and ‘leisurely’ feelings (Cohen, 1982; Breejen, 2006). As

Graburn (1977, p15) says, the tourist experience is ‘necessary for the maintenance of mental and bodily health’:

*Speaking of its scenery, it was not delicate, but the weather was sunny, the breeze was blowing gently in the weekend, [I] was walking on the grass, and watching the sheep, it was a really relaxing and refreshing thing ah.*

*When hearing the ocean waves patting the beach, we suddenly felt relaxed and refreshed.*

*1<sup>st</sup> Mary bank holiday, we four had a four-day visit to the Isle of Wight from London, the conclusion is: beautiful ah! ~ Refreshing ah. (Xiaobaiinuk)*

Some travellers experience a sense of leisurely feeling as they journey through their holiday space.

*Walking along the path full of small shrubs and lawn nearby till to the ticket office, could also see a large group of cattle grazing on the grass, very leisurely and cozy feelings. (FuNiu42)*

The quiet and wild scenery in Scotland made people feel ecstatic, as noted by **Summercoo**:

*The transportation is blocking, the weather was bad, in the past it had been a sparsely populated land, but the scenery is unparalleled, the day is long there, the air was fresh and biting cold, the land was wild and quiet, brought people a sense of ecstasy. (Summercoo)*

Such serenity could, sometimes, affect people’s heart and soul:

*From Morton-marsh to Water-upon-Burton, about a half hour journey by bus, along the way there were all wild and open ramps, the shadow of clouds gently floating motionless on the hillside, those ethereal and serene feelings can affect people deeply in their heart and soul. (FuNiu42)*

Here what **FuNiu42** experienced was deeper than the visual satisfaction from the scenery appreciation, it actually touched her heart and soul.



#### 9.4.3 Joy, Mirth and a Moment of ‘letting go’

Travellers such as *Bluecastle* also experienced the joy and mirth, the moment of ‘letting go’ of ourselves and allowed to be seduced by the moment of pleasure in the dance. She enjoyed a moment of letting one’s hair down, as she recounted her dancing experience arranged by her tour operator:

*Two teachers were demonstrating on the stage, it was already our turn before I comprehended. In the tour group, there are more girls than boys, it was a bit difficult to pair up. Just when I was thinking of pairing up with Tutu, I had no idea where Dace came from, he took my hands and ran straight to the centre of the stage. Cheerful music immediately sounded, It was completely too late for me to think, I was already dancing frantically with Dace.*

*Why I would say ‘frantically’. Have you seen Titanic? Do you remember that episode where a group of people were dancing in the lower cabin? Remembered that the faster the music, the higher the people felt, Rose was pulled by Jack to dance round and round until she felt dizzy? En, almost just like that.*

*I was also dragged by Dace to dance dizzily. After one dance, I couldn’t even find where north was, but it was very fun! Inside my heart, there were many unspeakable good feelings, just like...I think Rose had similar feelings. Always a life of various rules, even the facial expressions and muscles become stiff and the mood were stiff too. But in this moment, all the cells in the body were activated, the rich girl experienced the freedom and joy of farmer’s lives for the first time, except that I am not a rich girl.*

While dancing, she was also reminded of the Titanic. She felt as if she was Rose in the Titanic being freed from the rules and norms of her everyday life. In China, there is a much more clearly-defined gender role than that in the Western world where lady from decent family are expected to behave like a lady. Wang (1999) says that tourist bodies are more spontaneous and freer from the stress and pains imposed by the formal structure of their own society given that the tourist experiences often occur in a ‘liminal zone’. This may allow for the gratification of various bodily desires and the experience of various sensual pleasure, and the releasing of bodily impulses (Wang, 1999).

#### 9.4.4 Feeling Excited

Apart from feeling leisurely, many travellers also felt excited before departure.

*With an unparalleled excitement, we started our 5-day trip to Cornwall.  
(Zhaoxiaoming)*

*On the 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2009 in the evening, there were two exciting old-fashioned ladies at the PuDong airport, me and Tutu. (Bluecastle)*

Such an excitement might start at the beginning of their journey and be dotted throughout their journeys. For instance, **Aming2u** felt very excited to have stayed for one night in the place where the Beatles once lived and regarded it as the highlight of his trip. When they entered Chatsworth Park (Mr Darcy's home) for the first time, **Aming2u** recounted 'the people in the whole coach became excited.' **FuNiu42** was excited because they were going to visit one of the largest and most refined museums the next day. She was also very excited to put her name down in the guest book at the Sherlock Holmes museum. **Summercoo** was very excited to live in a B&B for the first time and see the castles.

According to Rojek (1993), the alteration from daily routine and the authenticity of tourist sites may evoke excitement. If the above-mentioned travellers experienced excitement when they were either visiting famous attractions or living in a novel accommodation, the foodie **Xiaobaiinuk** and her friends become extremely excited whenever she heard about a good restaurant for seafood:

*When we called them, they said we must hurry so that the seafood won't run out. As soon as we heard that, we were very excited, we put on our coats very quickly and off we ran. (Summercoo)*

Fredrickson (1998) reports feelings of excitement derived from activity engagement. Hull, Stewart and Yi (1992, p250 cited by Borrie and Roggenbuck, 2001) state that tourist experience often evokes more than one types of bodily feelings and emotions. As they say, it is 'an extended sequence of relaxing feelings dotted with peaks of excitement' (p250).

#### 9.4.5 Feeling Surprised

Although they planned to ensure they do not miss the must-sees, their holiday experience could never be completely predictable. As **Bluecastle** claimed prior to her departure, ‘*at that moment, I had no idea what will happen in the next 17 days.*’ From time to time, moments of surprise occurred.

*There are often surprises along the way, saw those scenery I have never seen before. (Yingzongyu)*

*When I was wondering around at Royal Mile, I didn’t expect that I would bump into Qian Qian and Tao again, really a surprise, haha. (Dannya)*

*On that day when went to buy the Tube ticket, I was surprised to see that on the conductor's badge it said ‘I can speak Mandarin’. Moreover, it proved that her Mandarin was very standard! (Summercoo)*

The feeling of surprised was partially due to its ability to self-control and adjust their itineraries. For instance, **Moonbath** initially planned to climb up the mountain. Because the girls he travelled with felt very tired, they decided to take the steam train to the mountain top. This change of the original plan allowed them to obtain certain surprises. They had close contact with animals around the lake.

*Our plan to climb up the mountains were ruled out by those girls who were not physically strong and our shortage of the time, we then bought a return train ticket for the steam train to the peak of the mountain, return ticket was £11 for students. It’s still two hours left for the train departure time, we then toured around the lake, and surprisingly we had some very close contact with some animals.*

While most travellers reported their holidays being dotted with certain degree of surprises, two travellers said that their holidays were a complete surprise. As mentioned in Chapter Six, **BigXiong** didn’t plan in advance. He woke up 2am in the morning and then booked his train ticket to the Scottish Highlands next day for his four-day holiday. **Yinzongyu**, on the contrary, researched intensively beforehand. However, he wanted to cancel his trip many times due to the weather forecast. When the weather was much better than expected, he felt his holiday was a pleasant surprise.

*The holiday to Northern Ireland could be counted as a pleasant surprise. Wanted to cancel the trip several times because the weather forecast said that Northern Ireland would be rainy often with hail. But finally I still went there without hesitation. Didn't expect that kind of weather, it was rainy when I first arrived there, it turned sunny in the afternoon, and then continued to be sunny for the next few days and I regretted not bringing along some sun cream. Originally thought that we couldn't take photos, I was also wearing thick clothes. In the end, I took many photos, it was really lucky. (Yinzongyu)*

Surprises are a highly valued attribute often occurred in extraordinary experiences when triggered by unusual events (Arnould and Price, 1993; Hanefors and Mossberg, 2003).

#### **9.4.6 Feeling Warm, Moved and Fun**

Chinese travellers often felt warm when their online friends offered help, as **Fangfangorchid** claimed, 'I haven't travelled yet but already felt the warmth from the online friends in advance'. While on holidays, they also often mentioned warm feelings and being moved by the kind help the host and tour friends offered.

*As soon as we went out, we met warm-hearted people who passed by saying Merry X'mas, they also offered to take photos for us, made us feel the hospitality and warmth in the winter in the foreign land (Letitiaz).*

*Good-hearted people: these all occurred in Bath, felt that the people there were extremely friendly. When I stood at the riverside to take photos for myself, an elderly person came to me and offered to take my photo when I was standing on a street to check the map and looked around to find the direction another senior elderly gentleman stopped to ask me if I lost my way, then he kindly pointed the direction for me. All these moved me. (Shuangshuangyan)*

*The 'Aunty Grandma' from Taiwan was very kind-hearted, since we first asked her to take a photo for us, she helped us (mother and daughter) take unprecedented number of photos.*

*When [we] got to the ticket office, she explained that she lost a coat, this Grandma took one out: is it this one? As it turns out that mum left her coat at the upper floor, another tourist saw it and then took it down, couldn't help but exclaim the British people are really nice.*

A number of researches uncover the bodily feelings and emotions related to socialisation. The role of Socialization in enhancing emotions is noted (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991, p251). Fredrickson (1998) identifies the positive social emotions and labelled it as 'love'. Schuchat (1981) and Mitas et al., (2012) label such positive emotions as 'warmth'. In this study, Chinese travellers also speak of the warmth feeling derived from socialisation either holiday or online. On another occasion, **Aming2u** speaks of the fun elements inherent in the socialisation with his tour friends:

*While travelling alone is special, travelling with tour friends may have more happiness and laughter. (Aming2u)*

This echoes with the literature depicting fun feelings occurred in tourism socialisation (Sharpe, 2005; Mitas et al., 2012). Further, there was **Dannya** who was quite impressed when the owner of the B&B, a Chinese lady served them homemade buns she had baked herself. Then there was another friend she bumped in at the B&B Qian Qian who expressed her sympathy and empathised with Lili's lonely life without her husband and child.

*Closed the door, Qian told me in a sad tone, she said that she felt LiLi was a nice person, also very good at talking and liked smiling, but usually she was here in her B&B alone with nobody chatting with her, she felt that it would be nice if people can come here often to keep her company. I was very moved by what she said, I wanted to say to Qian Qian and then we will come to see her more often. But I said nothing, I only kept it inside my heart. I told Qian Qian, we were all the single child in the family, one day in the future, we will get married, then our parents will also, like LiLi, every day stay in the empty house, stay lonely in an incomplete home, Qian Qian said nothing, then we both went silent.*

Travelling opens up rich heart-warming experiences like this encounter with Lili at the B & B house. Lili's story gave the tourist insight into the practical reality of their own lives as children born into a 'single child' generation required by Chinese law. Lili's story reveals closer to home the consequence of the single child families and its impact on the 'empty nest syndrome' much more gravely within the Chinese familial context. Lili's story also implies that travelling offers them the chances for meaningful and heart-warming personal exchange and the ability to connect with complete strangers. Such inter-personal experiences can make their travelling experience richer because it often gives them food for thought and can make them appreciate their life and family more.

#### 9.4.7 Gradually Enriching and Gaining New Knowledge

In addition, many Chinese travellers talked about the kind of happiness stemming from ‘gaining new knowledge’ and the feeling of being gradually enriched:

*According to the map, and the audio explanation, I felt that Windsor Castle was really excellent, got to know a lot of relevant history, especially those about Guardian Knights of the Order and the like, felt that it was very interesting that they designed so many different styles of gadgets, half of them had lions and heavenly swords on them. I also intend to go back home and make a gadget myself, I've already thought about a good design, 'left is the Green Dragon, right is the White Tiger, in the middle I'll tattoo a Mickey Mouse' (Summercoo)*

*Think about it, in order to travel, I who originally knew not enough about the politics, history and geography really made up the lessons wildly. This kind of gradually enriching feeling. Really a kind of happiness and a sense of self-confidence are derived from the bottom of my heart. This is what the ancients mentioned the wonderfulness of reading ten-thousand books and travel ten-thousand Li! (Sunny YinEr)*

This learning theme has been discussed in detail in Chapter Seven under the learning space section. This is in line with the educational dimension of experience in Pine and Gilmore's article (1999). In Chinese culture, travel has often been emphasized in parallel with learning and broadening horizons (Zheng, 2000).

#### 9.4.8 Happiness can be Infectious on Holiday and Online

Happiness might be passed on trans-personally on holiday and online. Below are a few extracts:

*The fallen leaves covered thickly on the ground in the park, it made a rustling sound when you stepped on it and strangely the fallen leaves here were golden. Therefore, it didn't give me the bleak feelings. On the contrary, it made me feel comfortable. A mischievous kid was holding a bunch of fallen leaves and threw them to his family and friends, the happy emotions [from the kid] has infected to everybody who were there. (Sunny YinEr)*

*Gosh, so beautiful ah~ ~ ~this is the MR. DARCY's home ah! 🌹*  
*I was always infected with joy when I saw your postings.*  
*(Wizard autumn)*

*It was really an enjoyment to see vivi's photos ~~ (VraiFrance Vera)*

  
*Very cozy (support) (Takhisis)*

In addition to the joy, happiness and cozy feelings, some of the interesting things Chinese travellers encountered while travelling can be 'funny' and 'interesting'. By sharing online, the fun could be passed on and create a type of shared happiness. Online community is a good place for the Chinese travellers to share the fun. Some Chinese travellers may make joke out of their travel experience. Upon hearing these humorous jokes and fun stories, the audiences acknowledge the fun elements. Below are a few extracts:

*Thanks MM for bringing us so many happy words*

*The seven-step poem was very interesting, hehe.*

*Oh, (you) wrote quite interestingly, looking forward to your follow-ups Oh ~*

There is an entertainment element inherent in the online community. The role humorous joke played in socialisation among tourists is highlighted in the literature (Sharpe, 2005; Mitas et al., 2012). According to (Mitas et al., 2012), such a humorous fun serves as the 'social lubricant' bonding tourist together and shaping community feelings. Despite of the mention about the fun feelings derived from real-life holiday socialisation, little tourism study address the fun feelings arising from online humorous socialisation and storytelling among travellers. Having talked about the direct happiness, the next section moves on to talk about negative feelings and indirect happiness.

## **9.5 Travel Pain**

### **9.5.1 Nervous and Anxious**

Whilst the more experienced travellers or those who travel with companions report less anxiety and fear before their departure, the departure for the first-time travellers like *Shuangshuangyan*

who travelled abroad alone may mark a moment of heightened nervousness. This is especially so when one's language level is limited.

*Departed from Shanghai, independent tour, travel alone, first-time abroad, English level so so, the feeling of travelling abroad was nervous.*

Similarly, **Fangfangorchid** also reports that her pre-travel experience is a mix of 'anticipation' and 'nervousness'. **Fangfangorchid** works in the UK. Language does not seem to be an issue for her. Yet she still felt anxious and fearful when she travelled for the first time alone in the UK from London to the Lake District for her four-day-and-three night holiday:

*Have never travelled alone in the UK for a long distance, so had anxious and fearful feelings before departure. Didn't know what kind of scenery would be appreciated on the way, what kind of stories would happen. With anticipation and anxiety, I set foot on my journey on 23<sup>rd</sup> May.*

It appeared that they were less likely to experience nervousness and anxiety when they had travel companions. **Fangfangorchid** travelled to Isle of Wight with a friend about 20 days before her trip to the Lake District, she did not mention about nervousness then. Other first-time travellers from China such as **Bluecastle** and **Summercoo** were not travelling alone. They did not report nervousness and anxiety. **Bluecastle** travelled with her friend **TuTu**. **Summercoo**'s husband was working in London. During her 20-day holiday in the UK, her husband was travelling with her to some places together. This may help reduce the nervousness. It appears that experienced travellers are less likely to experience anxiety and nervousness. For instance, many travellers who work in the UK such as **Dannya** did not report nervousness at all. **Moonbath** once studied in the UK and he travelled intensively while he was there. He did not feel nervous when he travelled to North Wales for the third time.

While travellers experienced different levels of nervousness and anxiety, the existence of the online community as a platform facilitating the sharing and discussion between the inexperienced travellers and more experienced ones could reduce or partially combat feelings of discomfort. **Shuangshuangyan** is one example. Despite the nervousness, by reading other people's travel stories and tips online, **Shuangshuangyan** rationally knew how to get to his hotel from the airport:

*It was very easy, took the Tube, at the entrance, bought Oyster card (£3 deposit).*



Further, nervousness doesn't have to be negative. If the kind of nervousness reported by *Shuangshuangyan* and *Fangfangorchid* is more of the negative latitude, the kind of nervousness *FuNiu42* mentioned is less of a dissatisfying feeling:

*Have heard about this famous place from various text-books-English, maths, Chinese and Science ones, finally I could see it in person, could feel the kind of nervousness that you would normally feel when you go to see your idols.*

Fang (2003) states that influenced by Yin/Yang paradoxical thinking and holism, the meanings of Chinese words can be either positive or negative depending on the situation. In this instance, *FuNiu42*'s nervous feeling differ from the nervousness *Shuangshuangyan* reports.

### 9.5.2 In a State of Suspense

Apart from the fearfulness and anxiety most first time travellers experienced prior to their departure, the Chinese travellers from China felt worried about their visa being declined and wasting their time and money. While those like *Augx* who had travelled to the US before found that it is not difficult to apply for a visa, some travellers such as *Letitialz* who had not travelled abroad lamented about the complexity of the visa procedures. She '*felt in a state of suspense*' waiting for her visa and worried about it being declined. She also '*felt upset, frustrated and being treated unfairly*':

*It is not easy for the Chinese to travel abroad, especially to Europe, just for documents of applying for the visa, I prepared a large stack of them, all kinds of documents amounted to more than 20 items, also they need English translations for all the documents, as if they want to check your ancestors up to eight generations above, firstly we didn't steal, secondly we didn't rob, also we go to contribute to your GDP when there is a financial crisis, but we still need to go through so much trouble, it really made people feel upset, frustrated and being treated unfairly.*

### 9.5.3 Feeling Disappointed and Pitiful

Sometimes, travellers felt disappointed. There are many reasons that may cause disappointment. For instance, some travellers may have already formed a pre-conception about certain attractions because of the images in movies or promotional materials. While encountering such attractions on holidays, they may feel disappointed when the scenery is not as good as the ones featured in the movie or film. *FuNiu42*'s reflection talks about this:

*Got into it with great difficulty, I was, to some extent, disappointed: it was not as grandeur and huge as the one shot in the movie, but the long table stretching from this side to the other end shared some resemblance (with the one in the movie). (FuNiu42)*

This indicates that while the overall evaluation of a holiday experience is holistic, the evaluation of an encounter at one specific moment may still, to some extent, governed by the Bettman's (1979) expectation-conformation theory. In addition to the disappointment derived from discrepancy between expectation and perception, the disappointment may also derive from scenery comparisons. While comparison, they may feel a bit disappointed if the scenery they appreciated was not as good as the environment they live, once lived or once visited:

*In fact, [we] were a bit disappointed, because I lived in Greece for a few years, this empty beach (with no people), compared with the one in the Aegean Sea, was nothing, in addition it was cloudy at that moment of time, it seemed it was going to rain very soon.*

*Went to the legendary Thames River, was very disappointing. It was not as wide as Huangpu River, and its muddiness was even worse than the Huangpu River.*

Another common source of disappointment may be caused by the weather. This is partially because appreciating beautiful scenery constitutes one of the Chinese travellers' main motivations.

*Been raining all the time during the day, very disappointing, didn't take any photos. Captured a few in the evening.*

No matter how detailed the plans are, there is always a possibility of the unforeseen. Information asymmetry may lead to the occurrence of unanticipated events. This is one of the reasons why the online community members endeavour to share their information and experiences so as to minimize the unanticipated caused by information asymmetry.

They may not be able to check all the opening times for all the attractions they want to visit in advance. As a result, they may come to attractions and find that they are actually closed on the day they wish to visit. For instance, **FuNiu42** and her mother could not visit a museum in Cambridge because it was closed on the day they visited. Most of the time, this may just evoke pitiful feelings and they find something else to do. However, if there are many unexpected

closures, as is the case of *Letitialz* and *Glenny*, disappointment may occur. *Letitialz* and *Glenny* anticipated a lot about her one-week trip in the UK during Christmas holiday. They planned to visit many attractions. However, when they arrived, they found out that many attractions in London were closed during the time they were there (24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> December) and no public transportation was running. As a result, many of their plans had to be cancelled apart from their ride on London Eyes on Christmas Eve. She felt disappointed.

In addition, another kind of unanticipated event may be caused by the unexpected cancellation of public transportation. Sometimes, the itineraries for these travellers were important because they do not want to miss the must-sees they planned. For instance, *FuNiu42* and her mother planned to visit Shakespeare's hometown on day nine: Stratford-Upon-Avon. However, their train was cancelled. They had to take replacement bus to Leamington Spa. When they finally got to Leamington Spa, they missed one train by three minutes and they had to wait for the next train, which was two hours later. It appeared that the unanticipated train cancellation had a knock-on effect on their itinerary and their whole itinerary was greatly affected. Their plan to rent a bicycle or strolling around the town leisurely had to be cancelled. They felt a bit depressed but they self-adjusted, this will be discussed in more details in the self-adjustment section.

#### 9.5.4 Feeling Depressed

While unanticipated cancellation of public transportation may cause depression, they sometimes also felt cheerless when others could not understand them. As *Bluecastle* recounted:

*When I saw that Italian Chicken noodle, my eyes were shining, I really wanted a hot meal with meat! I said to the waitress without hesitation, 'I want that! Thanks.' The waitress took one from the fridge and put it in my hands, I said, I wanted it warm. The waitress said it didn't need to be warmed. I said I wanted it warm. The waitress said but it really could not be warmed. Finally, I hold a bowl of cold Italian noodle, and finished it with great difficulty. Is this really the so-called conservative style of the British people? (Bluecastle)*

Sometimes limited language ability and being unfamiliar with certain rules may lead to some misunderstandings. *Shuangshuangyan* visited the UK for the first time without knowing the rules of requiring ID to purchase wines.

*The depressing thing: the place I lived had a kitchen, so [I] tried to make one dinner myself. Wanted to buy a bottle of yellow rice wine to cook the pork,*

*couldn't find it so I took a bottle of beer instead. When the things were being scanned item by item, the cashier said without looking up: age. I didn't respond immediately and was trying to think very hard: what is it this 'Ai Jie' she was talking about? Then, she said: How old are you? Suddenly [I] realized, but still didn't know how to answer: I was wondering, do the supermarkets need people to report age when they buy stuff? The cashier pointed to the beer and said, you need to be over 18 to buy this, I said that I was far older than 18, she said, well, please show your ID. I didn't bring my passport so I in the end didn't buy the beer. I wanted to buy the beer because they had no yellow rice cooking wine. Before I left, I asked her still wanting to buy the yellow rice wine: do you have yellow rice wine? She said all the wines were there, I explained to them, yellow rice wine was used for cooking. I wanted to buy the beer only because you didn't have yellow rice wine!*

### **9.5.5 Feeling Frightened and Gloomy**

Some Chinese travellers also felt frightened sometimes. *Shuangshuangyan* described her frightened feeling when she bumped into a drunkard.

*The most frightening thing: at that time I was tired of walking and having a rest at the riverside of the River Thames, it was just at the city pier, London Bridge, I was appreciating the scenery, a young white male yelled to me for a few times, I had a look at him and thought he might be talking to the person who passed by me, so I didn't pay attention, didn't realize that that he walked towards me and got in front of me, I was shocked. He said to me that he's got children, and he need to feed his children, if I could give him £1 then it was OK. When I confirmed that he only need £1, I got £1 coin out with my shaking hands, he said in order to say thanks to me, he wanted to give me a kiss. I quickly said he didn't need to, when he left I quickly run away, I was really frightened heavily. Felt that he drunk alcohol, the expression in his eyes were horrible, very red, straight and frozen, that is the worst thing I've ever encountered in my holiday in the UK.*

*FuNiu42* talked about a kind of frightening feeling derived from the royal guard's playful act with her, which may be not as negative as the frightening feeling described by *Shuangshuangyan*.

*One guard was a bit too much. He stood inside the stone gate holding a gun and a knife. I went to take a photo with him, in the end, it was when I was very unprepared, I was really unprepared, I was a kind of trying to be relatively close to him in a good manner, he suddenly shouted, just this shout was enough to make me scream, I stepped one step back. I really was shocked and cried out completely subconsciously without thinking. Then, immediately he was holding his knife trying to dash over me. I completely lost my ability to respond, and was hiding behind the nearby pillar, he held his knife and chased me around the pillars, I screamed and rushed behind my mum, was shivering for a while before I dared to look at that guard again. He already walked around the pillar, backed to his original position and stood as if nothing had happened. His eye continued to look ahead with no facial expression (when he scared me, he also had no facial expression, that is the most scaring bit). At that moment, I was already surrounded by a group of tourists who were attracted by my scream, who had witnessed my panic escape, my mum had already squatted on the floor and laughed too much to stand up, and what a gloat! Oh... I was very upset! But honestly speaking, I was really frightened at that time*

For instance, **FuNiu42** felt gloomy when she saw a large cemetery behind the Westminster.

*Westminster is also of typical Gothic architecture, it was in fact a large cemetery, quite gloomy. There was the famous poet corner inside, buried lot of literati and their 'souvenirs'.*

On another occasion, when **FuNiu42** and her mother were sitting in front of the 'tomb wall' of Bath Abbey to listen to a concert held there, she felt as if a chilly breeze were blowing about behind them. **Summercoo** felt reluctant to take photos with mummy bodies displayed on exhibition. Sometimes, this kind of spookiness is part of the experience of a tour. For instance, **Bluecastle** and **Tutu** joined the history tour in Edinburgh. The tour guide brought them to the places where dead bodies used to be kept. She got goose bumps all over her body when she heard that the tour guide saying '*the corpses were once folded and put into the stone blocks*'. When the tour guide was talking about his own experience with a ghost, she felt very scared. Chinese, influenced by Buddhism, believe in ghost. Hence, it is not surprising that the Chinese felt reluctant to take photos with mummy bodies and felt the gloomy feelings in sight of cemetery. Interestingly, Bongkosh's (2010) study reveals that the belief in ghost prevents Asian tourists from visiting the disaster-hit destinations.

### 9.5.6 Feeling Fatigue and Hardship

Many Chinese travellers, especially the ones flying from China, report feelings of physical weariness, fatigue and hardships. The reasons why they feel fatigue is a complex issue. One reason may be because they want to visit as much as they can within a limited time in an immersed manner. For those Chinese travellers who came from China to the UK for holiday, the long travel and the need to adjust to the time difference contributes to their tiredness too. For instance, **Letitialz** talked about the tiredness associated with the travelling on the airplane for a long time.

*After a 12-hour torment, the plane finally landed in London, at Heathrow airport at Beijing time 1am on the 24<sup>th</sup> and London time 5pm on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.*

In addition, there are the time differences. While some travellers such as **Summercoo** and **Augx** find themselves adjusting to the time difference well, other travellers such as **Letitialz** and **FuNiu42** were affected by the time differences and **Letitialz** experienced insomnia the first night in the UK.

*Stayed at a business hotel near London Tower, 4 star, the condition was good, £120, a bit of heartache, had a very good night sleep, when [I] woke up in the morning, my mood was as good as the weather, although I was very tired yesterday, therefore I also adjusted my time difference, hehe. (Augx)*

*The whole night I was suffering from the trouble caused by the time differences, woke up at 2, 3am from my dream and then kept on tossing, turning and couldn't fall into sleep, felt asleep again at 5am and at 8am struggled to crawl out of bed. (Letitialz)*

Despite the insomnia, **Letitialz** was very eager to make the most of her time in the UK, they woke up and took the Tube and trains and walked to visit various attractions in London. As a result, at the end of their first day in the UK, she felt her body being dragged down by tiredness.

*Walked a whole day, dragged my tired body and got off at the London Eye, the Christmas Eve was arriving.*

Sometimes, the endurance of hardship is associated with saving money. **Fangfangorchid** did not book her train ticket in advance. When she booked, the train ticket from London to

Lancaster would cost her around £60 and the train ticket from London to Windermere was even more. So she took the train to Lancaster and then the bus 555 from Lancaster to Windermere, as she recounted:

*In order to save money, took a train to Lancaster. It was a bit hard, because it took 2 hours from Lancaster to Windermere by bus 555, but when the weather is nice, the scenery is unbeatable.*

Interestingly, despite of the hardship, **Fangfangorchid** acknowledge the positive side. This bus tour enables her to appreciate the unbeatable scenery on the bus. While for some travellers, the physical pain is undesirable, other trekker travellers such as **Curlyhair** and **Moonbath**, the physical pains associated with trekking is actually desirable. This is to be discussed in more detail later on in the section called unity of travel pleasure and pain.

Although not all travellers are trekkers, they may trek back to their accommodation when they missed their last bus. For instance, **Bluecastle** and her friend **Tutu** trekked for three hours back to their accommodation when they missed their bus. **Letitialz** and **Glenny** stayed in an accommodation in central London. When there was no public transport running during Christmas, they carried their map and walked to visit some attractions such as Buckingham Palace (although they could not go in because it was closed), Hyde Park, Green Park. Many Chinese travellers liked to have a certain degree of trekking around the natural world and experience its aesthetic beauty.

As well as the tiresome feeling associated with the journey, some travellers they are tired to write travel stories and upload pictures. Despite of the tiredness, travellers such as **Zhaoxiaoming** said: ‘feel very pleased that [I] can provide some information to friends.’ It could be a source of another kind of ‘happiness’, deriving from social belongings and rising social status online. They felt happy when the audience praised, showed gratefulness, support, admiration and rewarding scores. It appears that they were seeking more of eudemonic happiness derived from positive relations with others and self-growth than hedonic happiness (McMahon, 2005).

*Thanks for sharing, very useful*  
*Good!!*  
*Support!!*

Chinese travellers share both happy moments and unhappy ones. It was not just the delights and wonderful moments that constitute the Chinese travellers’ experience. Difficulties, frustrating

times, obstacles, annoying glitches in one's itinerary can plague a holiday trip. One example. **Phbrow**'s trip to the Isle of Wight which she aptly labelled her 'out - of luck – trip'. Everything that could go wrong went wrong. She missed one train. Another train was cancelled, so she had to buy another ticket. When **Phbrow** came back from her trip and shared her reflection her unfortunate experience, may have been a cathartic respite for her and at the same time excellent cautionary information for potential travellers. The joy of sharing and helping others afterwards made her feel better. '*Few travel stories to the Isle of Wight...Finally I can make a small contribution*'. After sharing this travel experience, her online peers replicated some suggestion as how she could obtain a refund for cancelled train.

## 9.6 Unity of Travel Pleasure and Travel Pain

### 9.6.1 Simultaneously Experience Both Positive and Negative Feelings

While individual positive feelings are described in 8.4 and negative feelings are explained in 8.5, what the Chinese travellers often experienced are compound feelings. They may simultaneously experience multiple feelings at one time. **Moonbath** experienced bodily pain and hardship when trekking, which is a negative feeling to some extent. Such a negative feeling, the experience of pain and hardship, are embraced positively, leading to the feeling of a sense of achievement and pride for breaking another walking record. On another occasion, **Bluecastle** and **Tutu** had dinner at a restaurant in Grasmere. The restaurant owner was very kind and after the dinner, she gave them a piece of homemade chocolate cake. They felt warm, being loved and cared for. After the dinner, they went to the bus station and realised that they missed their last bus back to their accommodation. Three people were very kind and asked them where they wanted to go and offered help. They finally decided to walk home. **Bluecastle** said:

*No matter how unbearable that three-hour walk was, my heart was full of happiness after I experienced being loved and cared for by others and also witnessed Tutu's amazing energy of constantly maintaining a uniformed high-speed no matter when she was climbing up or down the hills.*

Other travellers also reported similar experiences:

*The one I liked most and also the one that made me angry was the long stone sculpture on the wall, it tells about the lion-hunting story of the king of Assyria Ashurbanipal.*

*My shopping experience made me both happy and sad.*



While some researchers (Firat and Venkatesh, 1993) describe simultaneously experiencing oppositional emotions (love and hate) as part of the postmodern phenomenon, how Chinese travellers simultaneously experience both positive and negative emotions on holiday may be better explained by Chinese Yin-Yang philosophy. Whilst the Western literature divides emotional states into two opposing states, as either ‘positive’ or ‘negative’; the Chinese Yin-Yang philosophy challenges the clear binary distinction of oppositional states. Both Yin and Yang reside in everything. It is just a case of more Yin than Yang or more Yang than Yin. Too much Yin will push things to the Yang side and vice versa (Yang, 2000). The negative feelings, in this sense, is more like what Xie (2005) calls the indirect happiness.

### 9.6.2 Self-adjustment

Another identified theme is that Chinese travellers had a certain degree of self-adjustment when they encountered negative bodily feelings. For instance, in face of the unanticipated train cancellation, **FuNiu42** and her mother adjusted themselves and tried to find solutions apart from feeling depressed:

*Forgot about it, since it was late anyway, researched about a route to enable us to quickly finish touring around the whole town. (FuNiu42)*

When **FuNiu42** felt frightened by the royal guard’s playful scare, she and her mother went somewhere else to adjust her mood. **Letitialz** and **Glenny** felt disappointed, ‘depressed and very unlucky’ when they first got to know that all the attractions in London would be closed between 24<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>. It is also clear that they take measures to ‘self-adjust’ their moods. When they were so disappointed that they felt as if they would faint, they ‘*touched the wall and walked to a Starbucks for a coffee to adjust the moods*’. Having realised that most attractions would probably be closed during Christmas holiday after their experience at the first attraction, the second time when they saw another closed attraction, their reaction was less strong, she said she did ‘*not panic and was mentally prepared even in the face of changes and uncertainties*’. When **Bluecastle** and **Tutu** missed the last bus back to their accommodation and when **Letitialz** and **Glenny** got to know London public transport was not running on Christmas day, they walked. While most Chinese travellers only felt a certain degree of dissatisfaction, **Yu Wei Chuan Qi** felt that his overall trip experience did not live up to his expectation. As he said, the UK trip ‘*didn’t reach the anticipated desired visual and spiritual impact, also had a kind of feeling of not being satisfied.*’ There were moments of adjustment afterwards:

*Finally, a good word from my wife made me realized: this was a kind of travel experience, rather than the simple tourism. Rather than relying on unlimited*

*imagination alone, human desires need to be soothed by rationality. Previously when I did something, I always wanted to be the best, when looked at the scenery, I always wanted to look at the most beautiful one, always wanted to compare and it seems that I need to adjust it.*

They are quite resilient and persevere in line with Hofstede's (1980; 1994) claim in which the Chinese are believed to be more long-term oriented and may be willing to compensate the short-term happiness for long-term gains, such as learning and broadening one's horizon. The requirement of self-adjustment may be partially due to the nature of independent travelling when there are no tour guides or anyone else at hand to help them. Part of the reason why Chinese travellers are in favour of this kind of independent travelling could be because it actually enhances their skills of handling difficulties and they learn from it. This is the so-called 'another kind of gain'. It appears that the travellers are more likely to turn disadvantages into advantages due to their positive states.

### **9.6.3 Gaining Pride and a Sense of Achievement**

Chinese Yin/Yang philosophy recognises the existence of two polar forces in everything. There are both happy feelings [Yang side] and painful feelings [Yin side]. Both happiness [Yang] and painfulness [Yin] are inherent in holiday experiences. These two states are inter-changeable as too much happiness may lead to painful feelings and vice versa. Within the happiness, there is also painfulness. Contrary to the suggestions of negative feelings as undesirable sensibilities, some travellers describe how negative feelings can be embraced as a desirable bodily feeling. Endurance to a certain degree of hardship and pain, for instance, may lead to a sense of pride and achievement. It is also viewed as an integral part of personal growth and learning (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy, 2002, p540; Pearce, 2005). As mentioned by ***Travel with the moon and the sun***, 'The more unfamiliar the environment is, the more one throws him/herself into such an unfamiliar environment. The more you'll always gain from it!' For example, despite the hardship associated with finding the ways using maps, ***Letitiaz*** acknowledges the feeling of pride afterwards.

*By the way, I will praise myself, after this trip in the UK, both Glenny and I started to feel proud for our sense of direction! (Letitiaz)*

***Moonbath*** undertook trekking holidays and he endured bodily pain. Yet the meaning resides in the opportunity of pushing himself to the limits. The feeling of being challenged engenders a sense of achievement and accomplishment. It may be physically painful at the time he experienced it, however, the happiness lies in the natural beauty he appreciated and captured on

his way and the feeling of accomplishment afterwards. The physical pain, in this instance, acts as a record, a trace of the challenging and accomplishment, thereby making the painful bodily feeling a desirable state. The experience of pain is not necessarily negative but sometimes valued. Many Chinese sayings encourage the idea of ‘*bite the bitterness*’, to name just a few ‘*If you wish to be the best man, you must suffer the bitterest of the bitterness.*’, ‘*bitter medicine is good medicine.*’ Bitterness, struggle and hardship are a part of internal self-development and a means of leading to transformation (Tu, 1985).

Chinese attributes of being resilient and of persevering may be because they are influenced by Chinese Yin-Yang philosophy (I Ching translated by Guo, 1996). Happiness (Yang) and pain (Yin) are inter-linked in a causal relationship. Something good (Yang) can grow out of something bad (Yin). As a Chinese saying goes, ‘misfortune may actually be a blessing’. Similarly, something bad (Yin) can grow out of something good (Yang). Too much happiness at one time can lead to sadness later on. For instance, while both *Dannya* and *Bluecastle* felt very happy and high to socialise with the people they met on their holiday, when they had to say good-bye to each other, they felt very sad and low. *Graziadeng* talked about their experiences when something good grows out of something bad. Although they missed the last entry to the Palace of Holyrood House, they captured postcard-like photos of a panoramic view of the town.

*It was already 5pm, didn't catch up the last entry time for the Palace of Holyrood House, so turned northwards and returned to Calton Mountain, it was there we captured postcard-like photo of a panoramic view of the town.*

*Augx* described his experience of enduring hardship before experiencing happiness as especially ‘*luscious*’. The hardship of the journey makes the moment of seeing the beautiful scenery even happier.

*Depressed with a 30-min boring drive on the mountain, after climbing over a hill, suddenly opened up to a wide panorama, farmlands, small towns, streets, which suddenly jumped into our eyes. (Don't know if you've visited LuHu Lake in YunNan, still remember feeling stunned when we suddenly saw a beautiful blue lake after a 6-hour- bumpy ride in an old car). To be honest in fact, many places have this kind of landscape, but it was particularly luscious to taste the sweetness after tasting at first, bitterness.*

This further illustrates how in Chinese culture, both the ‘bitterness’ and ‘sweetness’ are indispensable part of the total experience. While evaluating the holiday experiences, Chinese travellers evaluate them holistically, acknowledging both the positives and negatives:

*Finished the ten-day holiday in the UK, there were both gains and pities, the only thing that I am certain is: I will visit it again. (Augx)*

*It is a perfect experience dotted with some pities.*

*The trip to England this time can be described as watching flowers on a horseback, rushed and very rushed, too little sunshine and too much cold, encountered many different problems along the way, but in general it was quite satisfactory. Glenny and I had been joking: while the prospects were bright, the road had twists and turn. (Letitialz)*

Negative feelings experienced at one particular time may not necessarily lead to a negative overall evaluation. Instead it is the holistic evaluation that counts. As a result, it is inappropriate to focus on the emotions and feelings at any one time but a need to look at their overall evaluation of their holiday. This is in line with the ‘holistic theory’ (Lao Tsu, ancient scripture translated in 1972; Kohler, 1947 cited by Xie, 2005). However, the analysis of each emotions individually can help to understand the occurring process of such emotions.

## **9.7 Conclusions**

This chapter presented Chinese travellers' bodily feelings. While the visual 'gaze' plays a key role, their total experience involves the interaction among multiple senses, the whole body and the mind. Further, Chinese travellers also reported dreamlike and surreal feeling both on holiday and during reflections afterwards. Further, the aesthetic experience reported is of high level of absorption and may be high level of activity, which differ from Pine and Gilmore's (1998) depiction of esthetical experience as a passive experience with low level of absorption. It is found that this group of Chinese travellers sought more for eudemonic happiness as opposed to hedonic happiness. Both travel pleasure and pain serve an indispensable part of the total experience. They evaluate the whole holiday experience holistically acknowledge both positives and negatives. Having discussed Chinese travellers' bodily feelings and emotions, the next chapter moves on to conclude the thesis.

# **Conclusions**

## **10.1 Introduction**

This chapter draws conclusions from the research. The chapter starts with the evaluation of the research in section 10.2. Subsequently, the contributions in terms of its contextual, methodological and theoretical contributions are highlighted in section 10.3. While section 10.4 addresses the limitations of the research, the recommendations for future research are explored in section 10.5. Finally, conclusions are drawn up accordingly in section 10.6.

## **10.2 Evaluation of the Research**

The aim of this study was to deepen our understanding of Chinese travellers' travel experiences in the UK, where there was as yet little qualitative data available. To achieve this aim this study had five key objectives, namely:

1. To undertake a review of current literature concerning consumer experiences, tourist experiences, Chinese outbound traveller markets, Chinese culture and online cultures.
2. To adopt a qualitative non-participant observation netnography to research Chinese travel experiences. To contribute to our further understanding of netnography as a method to research consumer experiences.
3. To explore what is like to be a Chinese traveller who is a member of an online community group to visit the UK and particularly the wider meanings of their travel experiences.
4. To understand the nature of Chinese travellers' participation in e-learning communities such as the online travel groups. To explore the impact of online community group participation in a Chinese tourist experience in the UK.
5. To Explore the Implications of These Chinese Travel Experiences for the Management of Services or Experience Industries

### **10.2.1 Objective One: to Undertake a Review of Current Literature Concerning Consumer Experiences, Tourist Experiences, Chinese Outbound Travel Markets, Chinese Culture and Online Cultures**

The first objective of this research was addressed in Chapter Two, Three and Four. The literature review on these areas was beneficial because it allowed for the constant identification of gaps in the literature and the setting of research questions. The review of literature on consumer experience and tourist experiences is presented in Chapter Two. Several branches of tourist experience literature, such as the nature of tourist experience, research tourist experience, stage and manage tourist experience form the main parts of Chapter Two. It provides a review of tourist experience literature sufficiently deep and wide for the purpose of this research with many landmark references being incorporated.

Existing English literature sources on tourist experience is mainly Western-led. There are not many publications available on Chinese traveller experience. The underlying reasons can be multiple. Within the limited available references in this area, many focus on package tourist experience with only a recent discussion on independent travel experience, often in destinations other than Europe. Further, most Chinese travel experience literature focuses on behavioural, expectation and satisfaction. Few touch upon Chinese traveller experience and cultural elements. The limited few that talk about Chinese culture elements mainly focus upon Confucianism. Chapter Three of this thesis, devoted to the review of literature on Chinese travel culture, addresses this gap in the literature. Included in Chapter Three was a comprehensive piece of literature review covered wider areas of Chinese culture as well as links to Chinese travel culture. It went beyond the Confucianism to inquire about the fundamentals of Chinese philosophy (Paradoxical Yin/Yang philosophy and holism) and include various ideological standings such as Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. Further Chinese travel culture and contemporary Chinese outbound travel literature is also presented. The literature sources used in Chapter Three included literature in various disciplines such as philosophy, human resources management, business area specifically about Chinese culture. Given the limited space, Chapter Three contains a brief description of statistic data about Chinese outbound travel market and Chinese travel history to leave more space for a thorough discussion about Chinese culture in general and Chinese travel culture in particular. An interesting area, the analysis of the language styles of large amount of ancient travel poems and articles is not presented in Chapter Three due to its remote relevance. However, it could be an interesting area for post-PhD exploration. For instance, it can compare and contrast the language styles of ancient Chinese travel poems and articles with the contemporary travel stories to see the evolvement of language.

Chapter Four contains all the materials about online community and online culture necessary for the purpose of this research. The importance of online community on travel industry is discussed, along with a discussion of the characteristics of online community, different typology of online community and different types of online participation. In particular, this chapter engages the up-to-date literature about the study of online community in Tourism industry. The literature chapters of this thesis offer a comprehensive review that has shaped the entire thesis.

#### **10.2.2 Objective Two: to Adopt a Qualitative Non-Participant Observation Netnography to Research Chinese Travel Experiences. To Contribute to Our Further Understanding of Netnography as a Method to Research Consumer Experiences**

By utilising the data from an online travel forum this study achieved the objective of doing a non-participant - observation approach. The researcher relied on the textual analysis of the postings of Chinese travellers in an online travel forum and also travelled herself to visit several tourist spots in the UK. To minimise the bias imposed by the researcher, the researcher adopted the role of an observer rather than a participant in the online community.

China has the largest number of Internet users. Active Chinese online participation is noted in the literature. The Chinese online internet users are believed to act collectively online. The advantages of applying netnography to research Chinese travellers are touched upon by a limited few researcher. This study confirms the existence of a group of enthusiastic Chinese travellers online who are bonding together with shared enthusiasm in travelling. They are IT literate and have access to the internet and active in the online participation. They are educated, articulated and creative. They are independent decision-makers who seek advice but at the same time are eager to share. Such a sharing in an online community travel group benefited Chinese travellers in their planning, decision-making and subsequent travel experiences. They were able to inquire from experienced travellers pointers on various aspects of their tour. They are outgoing young people who are intellectually curious about learning about other cultures while also grounded and appreciative of their own culture and traditions. Netnography is proved to be especially effective and fruitful to understand this group of Chinese travellers' travel experience in the UK as it generates rich emic insights, a unique piece of data which is slightly different from that obtained from conventional methodology.

There is a dearth in the current literature using netnography to study online communities in another language and subsequently presented in English. In this study, all the travel stories are published in Chinese. It is challenging to read and analyse the stories in Chinese and then subsequently present them in English. A great deal of efforts was spent on translation. Language is culture. The researcher felt that she was constantly code-switching herself between two



languages when translating the stories. One minute she was thinking in Chinese and then the next minute she had to code-switch back to English.

In this study, netnography, a newly-emerged research method for consumer experiences, was chosen in hope for more opportunities to contribute to existing literature. Drawing upon existing literature sources, the advantages and disadvantages of adopting netnography to research consumer experience are debated in Chapter Five. Compared with conventional research methodology (e.g. interview and questionnaire), netnography allows for the obtaining of naturally-occurring piece of data which is free from the researcher's imposed control. Because it is anonymous, the consumers are more likely to open themselves up to express their inner feelings and emotions online. It is also a less intrusive and costly way of understand consumer experience in a timely manner. It allows for the collection of data across wide geographical areas and is free from temporal constraints. The disadvantages of applying netnography to research consumer experience include that the large available online information may lead to information overload. Through adopting netnography to research Chinese travel experience, this study contributes to our further understanding of netnography as a method to research consumer experiences. In this study, to avoid being overloaded with a large amount of information, the sampling strategy of the netnography research in this study was carefully considered. The researcher has focused on one largest Chinese online travel community rich in traveller-generated content. After the selection of the study site, the researcher also immersed herself into this community for a period of time, familiarise herself with various sections in this online community to locate the best place to generate rich data to answer the research question. She finally decided to focus on the travel stories section at the UK forum. Because there already exist one section in this website where experienced travellers are interviewed by their peers, the researcher decided not to adopt online interview. To minimise bias and allow for a relatively representative picture about the travel stories posted in the travel story section in the UK forum, the researcher also adopted random sampling strategy to sample all postings between January 2009 and January 2010 regarding discussions about travel in the UK at the 'travel stories' section in the UK forum. Apart from the sampled travel stories, various other sections of the website and its official micro blogs are read and mentally processed from time to time and become part of the so-called 'distilled' knowledge as the researchers immerse herself in the online community. Such carefully-thought-through approach is deemed especially fruitful and allows the researcher to obtain rich data most appropriate for the research purposes. It also further confirms the effectiveness of netnography to research consumer experience. It demonstrates that netnography can be a useful tool to research experiences as Internet is becoming widespread. It is especially appropriate for the understanding of travelling experiences because travel stories are among one of the most socially-discussed topics. Because

netnography has not been widely used in consumer experience research, the sampling strategies adopted in this study can inform further research in this area.

### **10.2.3 Objective Three: to Explore What is Like to Be a Chinese Traveller Who is an Online Community Group to Visit the UK and Particularly the Wider Meanings of their Travel Experiences**

The third objective was addressed in Chapter Six, Seven, Eight and Nine. Language and Self-identity, Experience of holiday time, Experience of holiday space, bodily feelings and emotions, this study uncovers a wide range of experiential aspects of Chinese travellers' travel experience, which is not often seen in other study in this area. It provides a major step forward in understanding Chinese travellers' travel experience.

Chapter Six deal with language and self-identity. Language section of Chapter Six covers themes such as online roles and relationships, interpretative repertoires, communicative objectives, metaphors, personifications and inter-textuality. Chinese travellers' use of language to describe their travel experience and engage in online travel community is an area that has been hitherto neglected. Holiday allows for moments of 'Self-forgetfulness'. The core part of the self-identity may stay stable over time. Holidays experience reinforces part of self-identities. Travel is also related to personal growth and self-discovery. They also experience heightened self-consciousness on holidays. Shared social identity of this online group is also discussed. This is a group of enthusiastic travellers with a strong desire to see the world outside, are interested in the destination experience and socialisation with other nationalities. This group of Chinese travellers distance themselves from all-inclusive package tourists. They self-identify themselves as 'free walkers'. They desire elements of independency although they may join local tour groups whenever appropriate. It is more like the Western types of travelling when the tourists book their flights, accommodations, transportations and attractions themselves and leave some room for spontaneity and surprises. This kind of travelling is commonplace for the Western tourists. This group of independent Chinese travellers is different from backpackers. One core attributes of backpackers is the use of hostel. This group of Chinese travellers use various types of accommodations (B&B, hotel and hostel), sometimes even blend various types of accommodation within one. It differs from the lifestyle travellers or caravan travellers because this group of travellers do not completely break from their daily life for travelling. Their length of travelling time my sample is short and of a finite duration. They are governed by shared ethnos of 'free', 'simple' and 'selfless sacrifice' and 'reciprocity'. This is reflected in the Chinese culture. Taoism emphasises on the ethnos of having 'an unfettered happy travel' and the desire for simplicity. They do consume when appropriate but their consumption is not

governed by the exaggeration of individual wealth but more in the accumulation of cultural capitals and social capitals.

Chapter Seven explores the Chinese travellers' experience probing into the qualitative dimensions of the time on holidays when they temporarily immerse into the activity and live according to the sequence of the activity, the natural rhythms, or when the concept of time is rendered non-existent. The speed of holiday time is experienced faster or slower than the clock time depending on the context. Holiday time is also travelable. However, Chinese travellers cannot completely step out of the clock time. There are two reasons. One is that they value planning and many have their itinerary created before the holidays, be they rigid or loose. Second is that while independent travelling offers greater opportunity for surprises and spontaneity, it also means that they need to self-guard the time to conform to the local temporal norms. As such, the qualitative time and clock time are interwoven. Chinese travellers' travel pace varies individually. Even within one travel experience, there are moments of fast paced travel and moments of slow leisurely travel. Further, there is the interplay between their travel pace and rhythms (e.g., biological rhythms, group rhythms, social rhythms of destinations as known as the temporal norms). Sometimes their desire for leisure matches leisurely local temporal norms, which represents a respite. On other occasions, their eager travel pace conflicts with the local temporal norms. Sometimes the occurrence of such conflicts is due to their cultured class identity. The existence of online community offers a platform for the Chinese travellers to share information about the temporal norms of the host destinations (such as timetables, opening times and promotion information) as well as a platform to relive their holiday experience. Unlike Hofstede's depiction of the Chinese being future-oriented, this study found that the Chinese travellers' temporal orientation is more of a contextualised temporal orientation. They can be past-oriented (e.g. reflecting holiday stories online), present-oriented (e.g., indulging in the present moment on holiday and live time qualitatively) and future-oriented (e.g., planning and sacrifice the present hedonic pleasure for a better future) depending on the context. Moreover, this study indicates that in the Internet age the peak of the holiday experience does not necessarily occur in the middle of on-site time; rather, it can reside at the end when travellers reflect on their travel stories online. Time experience and temporal orientation is generally an under-discussed area in tourism research. This study represents the first one touch upon Chinese travellers' experience of holiday time in the UK.

Chapter Eight explores the Chinese travellers' experience of space, both physical space and imaginative space. The Chinese travellers are romanticising the holiday space in the UK. UK space is experienced as picturesque and paradisiacal. UK remains the co-existence of modernity and ancientness. It is uniquely British and Western yet with cross-cultural connection. Some holiday accommodation is experienced as 'homes away from home'. Further, the existence of

media and Internet also mean that the travel space is familiar yet unfamiliar. Chinese travellers also constantly move between the physical and the imaginative (e.g. made-believe fairy-tale, poetic spaces and childhood memories). Chinese travellers experience the poetic space and poetic imagination on holiday, which is an under discussed area in tourism literature. On holiday the virtual made-believe fairy-tales spaces are concretised. Holiday space is also a socialisation space and learning space. Three subthemes emerged under the social space section, namely global conversation, romantic socialisation and open up a different world have emerged. Contrary to the way Chinese travellers are depicted as not being interested in socialising with other people from other ethnicities, this study suggests Chinese travellers desire this element of global conversation. This study identifies the communication and psychological barriers that prevent Chinese travellers from the more spontaneous socialising with other non-Chinese. Communicating with people from other ethnicities whose language and culture is different may lead to culture misunderstanding. Further, the socialisation is, to certain extent, influenced by Chinese travellers' cultural background, such as Confucianism advocacy for social harmony and Buddhism's concept of Yuan (Karma). While past studies suggest that marriage hinders travelling, this study suggests that marriage with a spouse with a passion for travel encourages them to travel more often. Motivation can influence spatial experiences. When socialisation is the main motivation, the external physical environment may become less important. When the main motivation is appreciating scenery and being close to nature, then the scenic beauty is become more important and influences their satisfaction.

Chapter Nine takes us through the themes about Chinese travellers' bodily feelings and emotions. Holidays in the UK are generally extraordinary encounters with intensive emotional swings, especially for the first time Chinese travellers from China or countries in far-away continents. There are moments of joy, excitement, feeling very high, happy and surprised. There are also moments of physically tired, frightened, nervous, disappointed and depressed. Both travel pleasure and pain serve an indispensable part of the total holiday experience. Chinese's paradoxical thinking as underpinned by Yin/Yang philosophy means that positives can grow out of negatives. Further positives can also lead to negatives. The recognition of the existence of pain on holidays and the inter-changeability between holiday pleasure and holiday pain makes them relatively resilient. They value eudemonic happiness over hedonic happiness. While mismatch between expectation and experience may lead to certain degree of dissatisfaction at one particular time, it is the holistic evaluation that determines the overall satisfaction.

Self-adjustable itineraries often add surprises to the experience. Visual gaze is important for the Chinese. However, it is not visual gaze alone. It is more of an embodied experience engaging various senses, the whole body and mind. The language Chinese travellers used to discuss their holiday experience reveal more of a body/mind holism where vision and other bodily sensual

experience, and the mind interact with each other. In addition to the embodied experience, there are also moments of out-of-body surreal feelings. The holiday memories can also be dreamlike. Chinese travellers' aesthetic appreciation is of highest absorption, which differs from Pine and Gilmore's (1998) depiction of esthetical experience as a passive experience with low level of absorption.

#### **10.2.4 Objective Four: to Understand the Nature of Chinese Travellers' Participation in E-learning Communities Such as the Online Travel Group. To Explore the Impact of Online Community Group Participation in a Chinese Tourist Experience in the UK.**

The nature of Chinese travellers' participation in E-learning communities such as the online travel group and the impact of online community group participation in a Chinese tourist experience have been discussed across various findings chapters. The influence of online community on language and self-identity is touched upon in Chapter Six. This group of enthusiastic online community members drawing upon shared interpretative repertoires to describe their travel experience, feelings and emotions and construct their self-identity. They exhibit shared values and ethnos of simple, free, selfless sacrifice and reciprocity. The ethnos of simple, unfettered travel is one central feature of Taoism, which also emphasize individuality and spontaneity. Selfless sacrifice and reciprocity may reflect Confucianism collective nature and the advocacy of affiliate and altruistic values. Further, Chinese travellers' experience of holiday time is influenced by the existence of online community. The existence of online community offers a platform for the Chinese travellers to re-live their happy holiday time once again online, which may lead to the creation of multiple-peaks as their sharing online may represent a peak experience. Online platform also allows the Chinese travellers to share information about the temporal norms of the destination (e.g. opening times of the attractions, timetables of transportation and festival time and rituals) and promotional offers. Online community influences the experience of holiday space, leading to the feelings of familiar yet unfamiliar. The presence of online community also impact on Chinese travellers' bodily feelings and emotions. Online community and the selfless kind help from other online community members assist to ease the nervousness. Online platform is also a place to share their happy emotions. The joy and happy emotions can be passed on to each other intra-personally online, creating a sense of shared happiness. Further, the humorous narration also creates fun atmosphere online, providing a sense of entertainment. However, not just the happy feelings are shared online, the negative feelings such as difficulties, frustrations, obstacles plaguing holiday trips are also shared. Upon reflecting the negative feelings, the pain may be halves. Further, the lessons learnt may serve as excellent cautionary information for potential travellers, contributing to the obtaining of another kind of happiness. That is the happiness derived from sharing and helping each other.

### **10.2.5 Objective Five: Explore the Implications of These Chinese Travel Experiences for the Management of Services or Experience Industries**

Some findings in this study present implications for both academia and management of service or experience industries. Academically, this study is useful for future academic study of the differences between the behaviour and experiences of tourists from different cultures.

Further, the methodological reflection is useful for future netnography research. This study further confirms the prosperousness of netnography in research travel experience. Tourism marketers should try to find the websites used by their target market (or community of consumption) and use it to gain a deeper knowledge of their values, their sense of identity and community and the way they use language to enjoy and share their experiences. This will not only aid marketers in designing effective communications to target that market but also enable experience providers to engage them in a meaningful way.

This study identified many interesting experiential needs of Chinese travellers. It point towards a series of implication for destination managers and experience providers. Based on the themes emerged, destination organisations and experience providers can better create memorable travel experiences for the Chinese travellers. For instance, experience providers can incorporate important themes emerged (e.g., educational and aesthetic appreciation of the natural beauty) into their experience design. This can ensure competitive advantage and encourage favourable word of mouth and customer loyalty.

The Chinese travellers' thought process is holistic and they resort situational context for decision-making, the experience-providers is best to be dynamic to adapt to the changes of Chinese travellers' need under different situations. It is also beneficial for experience-providers to integrate online mechanisms to offer Chinese travellers' personalised travel experiences and maintain mass customer relationships.

In addition, Chinese travellers' active use of online community to share their travel experiences means that it is important for the experiential providers to be aware of the powerful role current travellers plays on shaping the behaviours and experience of the prospective future travellers. Despite the fact that the Chinese travellers are generally resilient and able to adjust themselves when encounter unsuccessful delivery of holiday experience, the negative evaluations are still part of their holiday stories shared and distributed online and may influence other travellers' decision-making. Hence, it is important for the experiential providers to offer quality experience to the current travellers in the UK. Current travellers' complaints should be responded

efficiently to ensure positive spread of word of mouth online. In doing so, experience providers can be in a better position to attract more customers. In the age of Internet advancement, providing existing consumers with meaningful experiences is also an alternative way of marketing given their strong desire to share online.

Holiday space is experienced as a 'Peach-blossom Sharing-La', 'the co-existence of modernity and ancientness'. Experience providers can formulate the marketing activities accordingly using the language the Chinese travellers used to describe the holiday spaces. The finding indicating that Chinese travellers often draw upon the literature, films and movies to describe their travel experiences implies that it is an excellent way to draw upon famous films, movies and literature to promote the destinations. However, it is important not to over-exaggeration of the films because it may build up high expectation. If the actual perception of place falls below the image depicted in the film or movie, dissatisfaction may occur.

The Chinese travellers' preference of certain degree of independency and autonomy on holidays also means that it is important for the experience providers to engage the travellers to co-create their holiday experience. Experience providers can work more closely with the Chinese travellers and listen to their opinions and suggestions to empower them. The experience providers should engage them in the experience production process as the role of directors, producers or creators of their own travel experiences rather than passive 'audiences'. Destination organisation and experience providers can also create online communities and invite Chinese travellers to express their opinions and suggestions online or offline to improve the quality of their travel experiences.

It could be beneficial to promote local tour groups instead of all-inclusive packages tours to the Chinese travellers or provide platforms where the Chinese travellers may be able to self-assemble different holiday products. Travel agencies may be better to offer the fly-drive-accommodation holiday, that is, to create them travel itineraries, provide them with hotel booking and car rental or transportation booking services and leave the travellers to explore the destination themselves instead of all-inclusive package tours. This may be deemed more popular because it allows certain degree of independent travelling themselves and thus spontaneity. Further, experience providers should also stage experiences naturally to make it more authentic to the Chinese travellers.

The Chinese travellers are not homogenous. The Chinese flying from China for holidays may be more likely to hurry up because they want to visit as much as possible. This is linked with their future possibility of visiting the UK. Therefore, experience providers may be able to tailor-made their offering to meet the experiential needs of individual segments. For instance, fast-speed

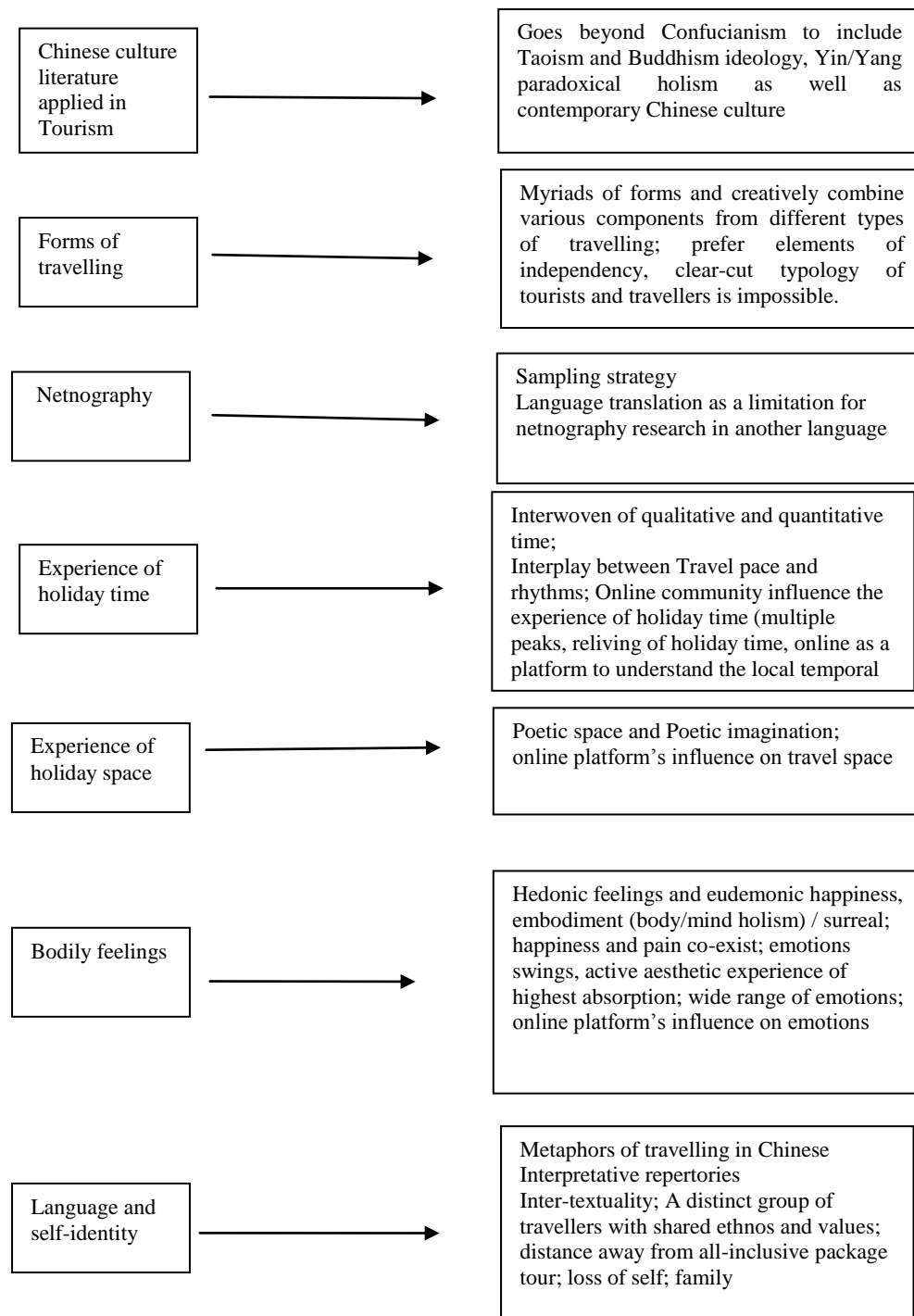
transportations such as car rental can be promoted to those Chinese travellers who are conscious of saving time. By contrast, the travellers who are in the UK may be less likely to experience the hurried holiday pace. They tend to travel during the holiday seasons such as Easters, bank holidays and weekends. Therefore, the experience-providers can design promotions to attract them holiday bookings prior to the seasonal time.

In order to meet travellers' experiential needs and drive for more favourable word-of-mouth, personal training is also essential. Themes emerged from this study can be used to inform personal training. Managers should provide staff with effective training programs to enhance their skills to meet customers' experiential needs. The personnel's can be trained to co-create values with the Chinese travellers using props, languages and storylines. Cross-cultural socialisation is desirable for this group of Chinese travellers. However, it can sometimes go wrong because of the language, cultural and psychological barriers. Experience providers can integrate elements of cross-cultural socialisation into their experience. Further, experience providers can incorporate the cultural difference training into the staff training program to avoid frictions and cultural misunderstandings.



### 10.3 Contribution to Knowledge

Key contribution to knowledge is presented in **Figure 10.1**.



**Figure 10.1:** Contribution to Knowledge

Few researches specifically uniquely focused on Chinese travellers to the UK. This research explores an under-research area. By doing so, this study contribute to the ontology of tourist experience in particular the essence of travel experience significantly specific to this cultural group online. Such a profound understanding contributes to the existing body of literature on Chinese travel experience.

Further, this study contributes a more profound and wider understanding of Chinese culture and its impact on Chinese Tourism. While earlier literature has focused a dominant influence of the collective philosophy by Confucius, this research reveals a more holistic and changing Chinese cultural view as it relates to the tourist experiences. It also draws upon Taoism and Buddhism literature to the interpretation of travel experiences. Moreover, by applying a newly-emerged methodology netnography to the under-researched Chinese travellers' travel experience in the UK, this study generate an unique piece of data, which has led to the revelation of a number of new insights of this phenomenon.

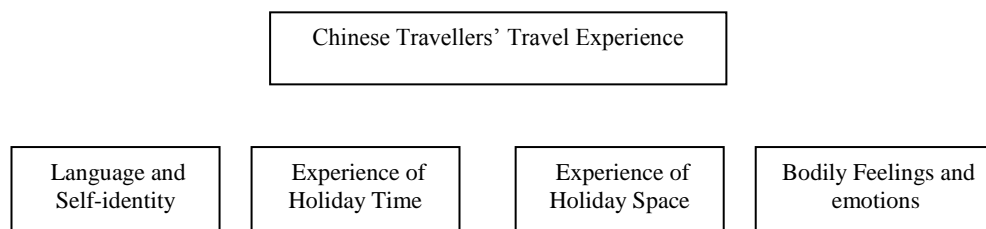
In particular, this study contributes by suggesting that it is inappropriate to 'box' the Chinese travellers into one single typology. Clearly the Chinese travellers in this online community resort to their individual situations to creatively build their own holidays given the available information. As such there are numerous different forms of travelling in terms of level of independency, budget and length of holidays. Sometimes Chinese travellers even creatively combine different forms of travelling within one holiday. This is mainly due to the fact that the fundamental of Chinese Culture lies in the Yin/Yang changing philosophy and holism. The Chinese is believed to resort situational context for decision-making.

Current tourism literature emphasises the collective nature of Chinese culture derived from Confucianism. Chinese tourists in the literature are depicted as collective beings who favour all-inclusive package tours and group travel. This study found that the Chinese travellers on this online community distance themselves from all-inclusive package tour and desired at least certain elements of independency and spontaneity. Chinese culture is both collective and individual. Taoism stresses on individuality, unfettered freedom, spontaneity and simplicity. Currently, the statistics showing that most Chinese tourists travel in groups may not be a true reflection of their desire. They travel in group maybe because it is still mandatory to travel in group to some countries. It may also because of other factors such as their language barriers. This study contributes further to demonstrate that collectivism and individualism is contextual specific. The Chinese can be both collective (e.g., acting collectively and reciprocally online) and individualistic (e.g., prefer elements of spontaneous independent travelling). The contemporary existing Chinese travel literature overlook the impact individualistic Taoism played in shaping Chinese travel experience. Hence, it is inadequate.

Another main contribution of this thesis is that Chinese travellers' temporal orientation was found to be contextually dependent. Chinese travellers can be past-oriented (e.g. reflecting holiday stories online), present-oriented (e.g., indulging in the present moment on holiday and live time qualitatively) and future-oriented (e.g., planning and sacrifice the present hedonic pleasure for a better future) depending on the context. This is different from Hofstede's suggestion that the Chinese is future-oriented.

This study makes a further contribution through demonstrating the shared language features the Chinese travellers in this group used to describe their holiday experience, express their personal tastes and construct their self-identities. It uncovers the available language resources Chinese travellers drawn upon from their culture to describe their feelings and experiences. This study contributes by informing the understanding of the meaning of being a Chinese traveller and the culturally-embedded language features for constructing holiday experiences and travel identities.

Theoretically, this study contributes by putting forward a conceptual framework containing various aspects of Chinese travellers' travel experience, under four major themes related to their experience of holiday time, experience of holiday space, their bodily feelings, language and self-identities, as illustrated in **Figure 10.2**.



**Figure 10.2: Framework**

#### **10.4 Limitation of the study**

Like any other pieces of studies, this study unavoidably displays certain limitations. As a qualitative piece of research, this study cannot be completely objective and is ingeneralisable to wider populations and other contexts. However, the ultimate aim of this study lies in the offering of rich emic insights into how Chinese travellers experience UK rather than making generalising claims. The rich themes emerged from this study need to be further explored by additional empirical research in different types of online communities and in different cultural, social or geographical contexts before any generalisable claims can be obtained.

Specifically, the present research focuses on the understanding of Chinese travellers' travel experiences in UK. A natural extension of this study would research Chinese travellers' travel experience in other countries to reflect a truly global depiction of Chinese travellers' travel experience. Chinese traveller's travel experience in other countries, for instance, countries in Asian Pacific, may be slightly different. UK is a developed nation with relatively advanced internet infrastructure and travel facilities. UK culture is also different from the Chinese one. Chinese travellers may have different experience in developing countries or other Asian destinations that share similar cultures, for instance. Hence, the spatial perceptions and experience may be different in places other than UK.

Noticeably, the use of online community to research Chinese travellers' travel experience means that those Chinese travellers who are not sharing their travel experiences online are excluded. Hence, it may be limited when applied to offline contexts. Data collected from a wider sample (e.g. travellers who do not contribute online) would reveal additional themes. Further, this framework is untested and unquantified and it is not generalisable to a wider context yet. Nonetheless, the findings in this thesis provide rich and interesting enough insights about the nature of Chinese traveller experience given the time and resources available. They can remain as areas for future post-PhD research.

In this research, various sampling strategies were carefully considered to minimise the limitation. Eventually, random sampling strategy was adopted to ensure that all the travel stories published on the UK forum at the chosen website at a period of time was selected to make it a more representative picture. The selection of the UK forum on one largest Chinese travel community may attract some criticism. The selection of this website and the subsequent

choosing of the travel stories section at the UK forum may mean that travel stories published outside the travel stories section and this website was not chosen. It would have been beneficial to expand the qualitative research by investigating travel stories in other online travel websites to compare and contrast different online sub-cultures. To minimise such a limitation, the researcher constantly navigates around various sections in the website to familiarise herself with the culture and the postings shared in sections other than the UK forum. It would have also been useful to join package tour. The selection of online postings from a period may mean that postings occurred in other periods are excluded. However, it can be justified when the data obtained is rich as this website has attracted Chinese travellers worldwide to share their travel experience. Including the information more than necessary may lead to information overload.

In addition, the data was written in Chinese, the translation of the data from Chinese and the subsequent presentation in English may mean that certain meanings are lost in translation although the researcher has endeavoured to search dictionaries to ensure the translation to be done as accurate as possible. When it comes to the translation of Chinese idioms and poems, the researcher tends to search for the most authorised translation. The limitations discussed above can also be the drive for more future research.

## **10.5 Further Research**

An interesting piece of research can be carried out to compare and contrast the language styles and features used in contemporary travel stories with the language styles and features used in ancient Chinese travel poems and articles.

As Chinese travellers' travel experience is a relatively under-researched area, it is interesting to see more work in this area. Further research should be done to quantify the research using online questionnaires to test the framework derived from this study. Further research can also apply the framework derived from this study in other contexts to expand its application. Chinese travellers' travel experiences in the UK were selected. To extend the context of travel experiences to a different geographic setting, future study can explore the Chinese travellers' travel experience in other destinations, including both developed and developing destinations using netnography. This will enable the framework to be modified to form a truly universal framework relating to Chinese travellers' travel experience reflected online. Further, this study focuses on one online community, future study can research travel experience shared in other online travel communities and maybe compare and contrast travel experiences shared in different online travel communities.

As this study found that the Chinese travellers prefer certain degree of independency, it would be interesting to see whether the Chinese travellers who seldom use the Internet prefer degree of independency on holidays. Certain themes emerged from this thesis has already touched upon the difference between package tour and independent travelling such as their different experience of time. Further research can do more in this area, maybe compare and contrast the independent travellers' travel experience with the package tour experiences across different dimensions. Within the Chinese package tourist experience, it remains an area for future research on the role of tour guides in shaping Chinese travellers' travel experiences.

This study adopts netnography approach to research Chinese travellers' travel experience in the UK using one online community. Future research can adopt different methodology to research this phenomenon. In addition, this phenomenon can be studied further with different populations, such as the Chinese travellers who seldom share their travel experiences online. Within the UK, future research can also look into British-born Chinese's travel experience using various research methods including netnography.

It is fruitful to adopt netnography to research Chinese travellers' travel experience in this study. It remains an interesting area to explore to see whether travellers from other countries also actively use online community to share travel experience. Is there any difference between countries in terms of the use of online community to share travel experiences? An interesting research may involve the compare and contrast UK and Chinese online travel community.

## **10.6 Conclusion**

This research focus on uncovering Chinese travellers' travel experiences in the UK, an area that has remained largely under-explored. Using the innovative netnography coupled with real-life ethnography, this research has revealed important experiential attributes of Chinese travellers' holiday in the UK across a wide range of experiential aspects, namely experience of time, experience of holiday space, bodily feelings, language and self-identities.

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