Understanding Chinese Post-80s' outbound adventure tourism experience

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A thesis submitted to the University of Technology Sydney
in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

April 2017

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I, Mingming Cheng, certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of the requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text. I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Student:

Date:

This research is supported by an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PAPERS

CONTAINED IN THE THESIS

Statement of Contributions to the Papers contained in this thesis

The following list summarizes Mingming Cheng's particular contributions to the joint papers directly included in this thesis.

Paper	Cheng's Contribution
Cheng, M & Foley, C. (Accepted). Understanding the distinctiveness of Chinese Post-80s tourists through an exploration of their formative experiences. *Current Issues in Tourism.*	Overall 80 % Conceptualization 90% Data collection 100% Analysis 100% Writing 80 %
Cheng, M. (Accepted).A cross-cultural comparison of East and Western academic literature on adventure tourism. *Tourist Studies.*	Overall 100% Conceptualization 100% Data collection 100% Analysis 100% Writing 100%

The following list summarizes the publications arising from this thesis

Journal articles

Cheng, M. (2017). Chinese Outbound Tourism 2.0, edited by Xiang (Robert) Li, Oakville, Apple Academic Press, 2015, *Anatolia: An International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research*. 28(1), 110-111. doi:1080/13032917.2016.1197024

Cheng, M., Edwards, D., Darcy, S. & Redfern, K. (2016). A tri-method approach to a review of adventure tourism literature: bibliometric analysis, content analysis and a quantitative systematic literature review. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*. doi.10.1177/1096348016640588

Book Chapters

Cheng, M. (Accepted). "Stranger in foreign lands": Exploring Chinese Post-80s Tourists' Safety Concerns and Coping Strategies in adventure tourism. In C.Khoo-Lattimore and E.Yang (Ed.). Asian Youth Tourism. Heidelberg, Springer.(Expected to be published in 2018)

Conference Proceedings/presentations

Cheng, M., Foley, C., & Edwards, D. (2016). Chinese Post-80s: new way of gazing west. *The 26th Annual Council for Australian University Tourism and Hospitality Education Conference, Sydney.*

Cheng, M. (2016).Chinese Post-80s: a third wave? *1ST Australia-China Tourism Forum.* Adelaide, Australia.

Cheng, M., Edwards, D. & Darcy, S. (2015). A novel review approach on adventure tourism scholarship. BEST EN Think Tank XV. The Environment – People Nexus in Sustainable Tourism: Finding the Balance. Kruger National Park, South Africa. Doi: 10.13140/RG.2.1.1391.2083

Acknowledgements

With three years' research and writing, finally, it comes to an end. As much as I am excited about starting my academic career, I am indebted to many people who encouraged and supported me during my long but rewarding journey.

First and foremost, my deepest appreciation goes to my principal supervisor, Associate Professor Deborah Edwards, who truly cared for me and offered endless support. Her door was always open to me. She challenged my arguments through frequent discussion but was extremely patient in helping me. As a supervisor, she has been open-minded to my thoughts and allowed me the freedom to pursue what interested me. She is the kind of supervisor that anyone would dream of. She set a great example of what an excellent supervisor should be. I am also very thankful to Associate Professor Carmel Foley, who always gave time and showed genuine interest in my project. Talking and discussing with her always provided me with a source of guidance and much needed comfort. Also, I am very grateful of her excellent teaching mentorship. Carmel guided me on a road to the university teaching world and informed me of the spirit of exceptional teaching. In fact, both Deb and Carmel have given me great help in many aspects of my life within and outside university. I am extremely lucky to have their encouragement, expertise and kindness.

I am also indebted to Professor Simon Darcy, with whom I had many rewarding "fights" to move my PhD forward providing me with a high level of research rigor. Without his help, this research would have been more difficult. I am thankful to Professor Anthony Wong for offering me critical advice through many Skype talks. I would also like to thank Professor Jenny Edwards for reading through my multiple drafts. Her advice has been invaluable in helping me improve my academic writing.

Acknowledgement also goes to Dr. Jennie Small's critical advice for strengthening the quality of my PhD thesis.

I would like to thank Dr. Xin Jin for her care as a friend and mentor throughout my PhD life. Acknowledgement also goes to my colleagues at UTS, including Dr Anthony Fee, Simone, Anja, Katie, and Ben for their friendship. In particular, I am very grateful for Ben's critical insights into the contribution section, Simone's insightful comments on my own reflection of this thesis and Anja's helpful advice on my personal life. I also thank my PhD friends, who generously offered their time and support, including Dr. Zunyi, Vivien, Isabelle, Hannah, Benjamin, Xunhe, Rui, Cara and Wei Wu. In particular, I am very appreciative of the help from Jianxiu Shen, who offered me support and encouragement during the most difficult time of my life. I am grateful to Graeme Kinsella, who sat next to me for the past two years offering me much advice beneficial to my life and equipping me with knowledge of New Zealand and Australia. Lastly, I would like to thank Kevil and Jackson Zhao, two bloggers of these studies who have been so kind as to spend their valuable time chatting with me. In particular, I am very grateful that Jackson Zhao from globaltrekkingclub.com allowed me to use his blog materials in Appendix 1.

I would also like to thank the Australian Government and UTS for providing me with "Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship" (formerly known as International Postgraduate Research Scholarship and Australian Postgraduate Award) to study with wonderful colleagues at such an innovative and forward-looking university. Special thanks also go to Professor Ashish Sinha and Dr Hussain Rammal for their mentorship and Elizabeth Ng and Ashleigh Crammond from UTS Business School Research Office for their efficient administrative support.

Lastly, I would like to thank my parents (Rihong Cheng and Lingling Wang) for their belief in their son to fulfill his dream by being away from home for the last eight years.

Abstract

Over the last decade, the Chinese Post-80s (born between 1980-1995) generation has gradually become the major driving force of Chinese outbound tourism. While there has been a major expansion of interest in China tourism research, very little of this literature has focused on the cohort of Post-80s travelers and their outbound experiences. Underpinned by generational cohort theory, this PhD research investigates Chinese Post-80s tourists', adventure tourism experiences in culturally distant destinations. In particular, it aims to explore the ways Chinese Post-80s tourists' adventure experiences are linked to social practices in China.

The research design incorporates a netnography approach to undertake a qualitative examination of Chinese Post-80s tourists' adventure tourism experience in Australia and New Zealand through their online travel blogs. The reason for choosing Chinese Post-80s' travel blogs is that they provide a source of deep insights into their outbound adventure travel experiences, acting as a mirror of themselves and their identities. Twenty-nine Chinese Post-80s travel blogs were selected through a series of qualifying conditions. A 'critical discourse analysis' was undertaken to analyze the twenty-nine blogs.

Three key themes emerged from the analysis (1) task engagement, (2) group dynamics and (3) settings. Task engagement deals with Chinese Post-80s' efforts and attention associated with adventure tourism activities. This includes the task's challenges and self-efficacy of the participants. Group dynamics is concerned with Chinese Post-80s' interaction with others in a group environment, including interaction with staff, other tourists and their own group members. Settings refer to physical and humanized surroundings where adventure tourism takes place, including Chinese Post-80s' interaction with nature, their personal attachment to nature and artistic conception.

While each theme is distinctive, they are inter-related. More importantly, this research reveals that while the blog representation of Chinese Post-80s on their adventure tourism experiences is situated in the tourism discourse, it is inevitably connected to wider social practices in China – where they grew up, and now live and will be part of the future of China's rapid transformation.

Theoretically, the study contributes to a richer and deeper understanding of Chinese Post-80s as a generational cohort and extends generational cohort theory from a relationship perspective. On a practical level, the study informs the strategic and practical guidance for tour operators and destination management and marketing organizations. It is proposed that the findings of this research will assist these organizations to have a better understanding of Chinese Post-80s tourists such that they may better design culturally relevant adventure tourism products and the strategies to market them.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 Background 1

1.1 Introduction 1

1.2 Adventure tourism as the context 3

1.3 Personal influences on problem identification 6

1.4 Research objectives 8

1.5 Significance of the research 9

1.6 Research method 10

1.7 Key terms 11

1.8 Delimitations 13

1.9 Organization of the thesis 13

Chapter 2 Literature review on Chinese Post-80s 19

Abstract 20

Introduction 21

Theoretical background in approaching a generation 23

Concept of Chinese Post-80s (baling hou八零后) 26

Formative experiences of Chinese Post-80s 27

Reform and Open policy with Deng Xiaoping's exploration of capitalism 27

One Child Policy 29

Education reforms 32

Diversification of social and cultural values 35

Conceptual framework of Chinese Post-80s 36

Chinese Post-80s tourism research 39

Made in China Post-80s 41

Transnational Chinese Post-80s 41

Conclusion 42

References 44

Chapter 3: Literature review on adventure tourism 48

Abstract 49

Introduction 50

Adventure tourism 51

Adventure tourism in China 54

Research design 58

Data collection 58

Data analysis 59

Results *61*
Adventure tourism development 62
Adventure tourism safety 62
Adventure tourism experience 62
Comparison between two sources of literature 63
Discussion *65*
Adventure tourism safety 66
Adventure tourism development 67
Adventure tourism experience 68
Conclusion *69*
References *72*
Chapter 4: Literature review on tourist experience and travel blogs 77
4.1 Introduction *77*
4.2 Tourist experience *77*
4.3 Travel blog – travel narratives in online space *80*
4.4 Research context *82*
4.5 Synthesizing research opportunities *83*
Chapter 5 Research Design 85
5.1 Research paradigm *85*
5.2 Etic and emic approaches *88*
5.3 Rationale for selecting netnography *90*
5.4 Netnography and its procedure *91*
5.4.1 Step 2: Data Entrée: identify and familiarise myself with appropriate online communities 93
5.4.2 Step 3: Data collection 98
5.4.3 Step 4: Data analysis and interpretation 103
5.5 The role of the researcher *107*
5.6 Ethical considerations *108*
5.7 Trustworthiness of data *110*
5.7.1 Credibility 110
5.7.2 Transferability 111
5.7.3 Dependability 112
5.7.4 Confirmability 112
5.8 Conclusion *113*
Chapter 6 Findings and Discussion 114
6.1 Introduction *114*
6.2 Analysis of the text *114*
6.2.1 Task engagement: Challenges and Self-efficacy 117

Challenges 117
Self-efficacy 121

6.2.2 Group dynamics (Interaction) *128*
Interaction with other tourists *128*
Interaction with staff from adventure tourism operators *134*
Interaction with one's own group *135*

6.2.3 Settings *137*
Interaction with nature *137*
Personal attachment to nature *140*
Artistic conception *142*

6.2.4 Summary of the analysis of the text *143*

6.3 Discursive practice *147*
6.3.1 Production 148
6.3.2 Distribution 152
6.3.3 Consumption 153

6.4 Social practices *155*
6.4.1 Wider social practices linked to the blog representation 155
6.4.2 Omitted narratives 162

6.5 Conclusion *166*

CHAPTER 7 Conclusion 167

7.1 Introduction *167*

7.2 Summary of findings *167*

7.3 Contributions to the body of knowledge *175*
7.3.1 Contribution to adventure tourism literature 175
7.3.2 Contribution to generational studies in the body of tourism literature 178
Challenging conventional wisdom 178
Looking beyond causal-effect relationship 179
7.3.3 Contributions to literature on Chinese tourists' way of approaching nature 183
7.3.4 Methodological contribution 187
7.3.5 Practical implications 190

7.4 Limitation and future research *193*

7.5 Final comment *195*

References 197

Appendices 214

List of Tables

Table 1.1: A summary of key terms....12
Table 4.1: Summary of literature review....84
Table 5.1: Differences between research paradigms....86
Table 5.2: Steps in a netnographic research project....92
Table 5.3: Website profile....94
Table 5.4: Demographic characteristics of the Chinese Post-80s bloggers....103
Table 6.1: Themes and definitions....115
Table 6.2: Theme distribution across blogs....116
Table 6.3: Sub-themes of challenges....121
Table 6.4: Sub-themes of self-efficacy....127
Table 6.5: Examples of two parallel discourses....146
Table 7.1 Contributions to adventure tourism literature....177
Table 7.2 Contributions to generational studies in tourism....182
Table 7.3 Contributions to outbound Chinese tourism literature....186
Table 7.4 Contributions to methodology literature in tourism....189

List of Figures

Figure 1.2: Outline of PhD thesis....14
Figure 5.1: User registered profile in Qyer.com in Chinese and English....95
Figure 5.2: An example of the blog....97
Figure 5.3: Decision tree of the data selection process....99
Figure 5.4: Snapshot of key term search (Step 1)....99
Figure 5.5: Blog's word length distribution....101
Figure 7.1: Chinese Post-80s' relationships....170
Figure 7.2: Chinese Post-80s' three-level model of approaching nature....184