

Folklore, Authenticity and the Tourist Gaze in Touring Chinese Cultural Heritage

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Abstract: Of late, Chinese cultural heritage buildings have enjoyed attention as desirable destination images. This has been boosted by the tourist gaze, which derives its object of desire from the soft power of transnationally broadcast Chinese historical films and television series, such as “Longest Day in Chang’an”. Within the experience of tourism lies the issue of finding authenticity, which consists of three types: objective authenticity, constructive authenticity and existential authenticity (Wang 1999). In this globalised and super-diverse environment (Vertovec 1997), does fixed authenticity based on historical experience still exist? I demonstrate how this media-enhanced tourist gaze sublimates its fantasy through tourism of Chinese heritage buildings, through a quantitative survey of tourists’ experiences of authenticity in visiting one such Chinese heritage building. Ultimately, much like “Dracula-tourism” in Transylvania, this phenomenon facilitates the embodying of the folklore of Chinese cultural heritage as desirable images. This in turn represents a form of constructive authenticity similar to film tourism, which mitigates the re-enactment of tourists’ projection of authenticity upon toured objects.

Keywords: Chinese cultural heritage, destination image, constructive authenticity, folklore, tourist gaze, film tourism

INTRODUCTION: FILM TOURISM AND AUTHENTICITY

Tourism is a large and expanding set of activities, with problems in quantification from both conceptual and empirical ends (Shaw & Williams 2004). The

literature on tourism as a consumer activity reveals that there is a relatively recent phenomenon known as film tourism. Closely related to the destination image, film tourism functions as a marketing tool to direct tourists' attention to a particular tourist site. Film tourism has emerged as a burgeoning area of study over the last two decades, with its paradigm a primarily Western-centric one (Ji & Beeton 2011). There are several forms of film tourism, such as celebrity film tourism, nostalgic film tourism, or film tourism pilgrimage (Beeton 2004), though this raises questions about the authenticity of the tourist experience. Then again, one may ask, is tourism itself an authentic "experience"? Scholars such as MacCannell (1999) might criticise tourism as being too superficial for the social sciences, describing it as a commercial activity where real encounters never happen (Korstanje 2012). Meanwhile, others such as Kavrečič & Virloget (2019) raise questions about the so-called "authenticity", continuity, or discontinuity of the tradition, and its relation to tourism.

In philosophy, possessing the quality of authenticity is described as being "what it professes to be, or what it is reputed to be, in origin or authorship" (Somogy & Guignon 2020). For Kierkegaard, it is something one becomes by personal choice, while for Heidegger, it is relative to our social embeddedness, and is known as *dasein* (Somogy & Guignon 2020; Sherman 2009). In this article, we will approach the concept of authenticity from the tourism studies angle.

There are three kinds of authenticity in tourism, namely objective authenticity, constructive authenticity and existential authenticity. Objective authenticity refers to the extent to which an experience aligns with external reality, independent of personal interpretation (MacCannell 1973). This emphasises the tourist experience through the originality or authenticity of toured objects (Ibid.). Constructive authenticity refers to tourists' projection of authenticity upon toured objects, such as images, expectations, preferences, or beliefs, and is viewed as a social construction (Trilling 1972; Wang 1999). Bruner (1989) explains that experiences of the authentic are socially constructed and therefore not objectively measurable. Finally, existential authenticity refers to a "state of being" that is to be activated by tourist activities, but that does not relate to toured objects. This also includes "hot authenticity", which is a specific expression of existential authenticity, relating to myths of the authentic self (Wang 1999).

Sociologically, the process of developing authenticity consists of "cool" and "hot" authenticities. "Cool authenticity" is the top-down approach favoured by authorities, while "hot authenticity" is one's existential authenticity. Thus, in the experience of travel, "cool authentication" leads to the stagnation or "museumisation" of attractions, while "hot authentication", which requires continual (re)enactment, will typically lead to a dynamic process of perpetual transformation, or augmentation, of the attraction (Cohen & Cohen 2012).

For MacCannell, the “tourist” meant sightseers, who were mainly middle-class and deployed throughout the world in search of experience. MacCannell also viewed the “tourist” as a proxy for gauging the modern worldview (MacCannell 1999). The concern of modern individuals for “naturalness” and nostalgia, as well as their search for authenticity were viewed by MacCannell (1999) as somewhat decadent but harmless attachments to the souvenirs of destroyed cultures.

Baudrillard (1983), meanwhile, argued that the world is constituted by models, or simulacra, blurring the distinction between the real and the apparent, creating a situation known as hyper-reality. Copies or representations of objects (simulacra) constitute this hyper-reality (Beeton 2004). Any expectation of “authenticity” is therefore impossible to find, given that all products, including culture, have been commodified (Teo & Yeoh 2001; Beeton 2004).

However, Korstanje (2012), though acknowledging MacCannell’s contribution to the study of tourism, disagrees with the latter’s negative view of it. Korstanje (2012) contends that tourism possesses no unified epistemology, and its methodological concerns lack a specific object. Yet, tourism creates parallel spaces of consumption, similar to virtual realities.

LITERATURE REVIEW: THE TOURIST GAZE

The tourist gaze is described by Urry (1990: 2) as “a system of social activities and signs which locate the particular tourist practices, not in terms of some intrinsic characteristics, but through the contrasts implied with non-tourist social practices, particularly those based within the home and paid work”. This gaze is a synthesis of discursive practices, disciplining the interactions of social actors (Huang 2013). Tourists, the tourism industry and local residents play different roles in the discursive formation of the place-myth, as “seekers”, “designers”, “guiders”, and “boosters” (Ibid.). Television as “myth-maker” transforms empirical time and space into the mythic world and embeds the media narrative into the landscape meaning (Ibid.).

More and more people are travelling to destinations that they discovered through popular novels, films, or television series (Reijnders et al. 2015). This activity is what has been dubbed “film-induced tourism” (Beeton 2006), “cinematic tourism” (Tzanelli 2004), or “media tourism” (Reijnders 2011). In Transylvania, large numbers of tourists travel to visit every year, to hunt for remnants of Count Dracula (Reijnders 2011).

Films can augment the destination image and increase awareness of the host city, while television is even more influential since it can constantly emphasise the appeal of the destination through building awareness (Tuclea & Nistoreanu 2011). Thus, a growing body of literature provides evidence that cinematic film and television drama productions can influence people’s travel decisions and entice them to visit particular destinations (Bolan & Kearney 2017).

For example, in the case of Chinese filmmaker Zhang Yimou, many scenes from his films have become famous tourism destinations for both domestic and international film fans, albeit unintentionally (Ji & Beeton 2011).

In more recent times, Chinese global media is experiencing a surge in television and films produced for a worldwide audience, such as the “Longest Day in Chang’an” (2019) which was broadcast through the web and enjoyed international reception (Chen 2019). Wei Lei (2019) observes that Chinese television dramas are committed to conveying a favourable image of a social and cultural China to the East African public among others, with two Chinese television dramas receiving an unexpectedly enthusiastic reception by East African viewers. Meanwhile, Guo & Jiang (2019) noted that in recent years, a large number of Chinese costume dramas have been exported overseas, and that costume dramas have embodied the industrialisation of Chinese cultural transmission, for example, the iconic drama “Princess Pearl” which represents the heyday of Chinese co-produced teleplays (Gao 2019).

Travel narratives can be created from either the institutional or the grass-roots approach. From the institutional approach, Shen & Jo & Joppe’s 2022 study demonstrated that country image (CI) positively influences travel attitude even in the post-COVID world, though it is also mitigated by other factors. One of the tools used to achieve a positive country image through effective marketing and communication is anthropomorphism (defined by Duffy (2003) as attaching human attributes to inanimate objects) which is further divided into technology, brand and product anthropomorphism (Ding et al. 2022). Anthropomorphism is a relatively new focus in the study of tourism, which emerged circa 2015, according to the authors. In their review of the literature, the authors advocate that anthropomorphism could be applied in paradigms such as servicescape, memory and information processing, theories of emotion, construal level theory, virtual reality (e.g., immersion, interactivity), and communication modality (Ibid.), thus opening up new avenues for the broadcasting of country image in tourism. Meanwhile, from the tourists’ perspective, tourists’ self-image plays a part in their efforts at reclaiming the narrative. In Lam & Dioko & Li’s research (2022), the authors examined Chinese tourists’ narratives related to posting travel photos on social network sites (SNS) and classified these into five categories of self-conceptions, namely their public self, possible self, hidden self, unknown self and filial self.

CONTEXT: CHINESE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN FILM

The Chinese web series “Longest Day in Chang’an” was initially broadcast on the Chinese video-streaming platform Youku in 2019. The series was then internationally aired on the websites Viki, Amazon, YouTube, and Australia’s SBS On Demand (Xinhua.net 2019). It is set in the Tang Dynasty (618–907 A.D.), and sparked interest in Xi’an, the ancient capital of the Tang Dynasty,

which is today located in northeast China's Shaanxi Province (Wang 2019). The drama takes place in Chang'an during the most prosperous and cosmopolitan period of China's imperial history, which made Xi'an become a destination of so-called "dream back to great Tang Dynasty" tourism (Wang 2019). The plot and description according to Dominguez (2018), who wrote in the drama web-site DramaPanda.com, is as follows:

The 48-episode action thriller drama is adapted from a novel of the same name written by Ma Bo Yong. Employing a format that's rarely (perhaps never) been seen in Chinese dramas, The Longest Day in Chang'an follows two protagonists as they try to stop an imminent terrorist attack during the Lantern Festival in the span of 24 hours. Li Bi is a young genius who commissions the help of death-row convict Zhang Xiao Jing to save the city. Zhang Xiao Jing is a former war veteran with the connections, the skills, and the wealth of experience. The two join hands in a political landscape that is about to usher in a new era of change.

Besides CGTN and DramaPanda.com above, other examples of official media which promoted the show include the Australian broadcasting channel SBS (2020), which reported the high attention paid to detail in the costuming and set:

Directed by Dun Cao, the show is visually stunning, and the high production values had people raving upon its premiere in China last year. The show has also been praised for its research into the clothing, make-up and architecture of the time, ensuring its visually rich depictions are as authentic as possible.

Likewise, Dimsum, a Malaysian video-streaming platform, which also broadcast the show, highlighted that one of the reasons for watching the series is that "it is full of stunning costumes and architecture" (DimSum.my 2020).

In terms of unofficial media such as blogs, which featured reviews of "Longest Day in Chang'an", blogger The Fangirl Verdict says:

[...] this is reportedly the most expensive Chinese drama made-to-date, with an extensive amount of attention to detail, in reproducing makeup, costuming and architecture true to the era.

Internet forums such as Reddit.com also had a subreddit, Cdramas, and a page dedicated to discussion of the show, noting:

Well, in this, everything is on point. It's not only beautiful, it's also authentic. We can find Tang Dynasty's style in all women's clothing for example and. We can really find Tang Dynasty at its best in terms of clothing and makeup for sure. Passing on to the decorations, we can also notice that there are lots of details and in lots of scenes, we can see the city of Chang'an and its wealthiness.

These are excerpts from a selection of both official and unofficial media describing the historical web series, “Longest Day in Chang’an”, though this list is not exhaustive. These websites make up the potential resources for a tourist in search of destination information. The meticulous craftsmanship evident in the costumes and set design also enhances the destination image of the location involved, which in this case is the present-day Xi’an.

As recently as 2020, there has been a tourist site specifically dedicated to re-enacting scenes from historical Chinese films and television series. This tourist attraction is called Xia Tianxia Scenic Area, located in the Fujian province in Southern China, and is described as:

One tourist location in Fujian, the Xia Tianxia Scenic Area, with a strategic location near some of China's most picturesque mountain ranges and natural features such as plunging waterfalls and lush green forests, offers tourists a “wuxia” experience. (Chee Kin 2020)

Parasols, scarves, costumes, and makeshift weapons are provided so that you can recreate the famous scenes from your favourite “wuxia” films. (Sukhbir Cheema 2020)

This interest in historical destination tourism can be witnessed through tourist behaviour. For example, the “Longest Day in Chang’an” was reported to have boosted tourism in Xi’an (Wang 2019). According to the CGTN news report, the web series continues to send visitors to the original location of the drama (Ibid.). Die-hard fans of Chinese costume dramas and swordsman movies often like to travel to their shooting locations, to have an opportunity to step into the past (Xu 2020). Even documentary-based television series have been observed to affect tourism, such as in the case of “A Bite of China”, which contributes to regional food-based destination images (Xu & Kim & Reijnders 2020). Another associated example is that of Chinese online literature, which has permeated the Internet and has been translated by fans worldwide, as well as made into television series and film which in turn generates interest in tourism, among other activities (Chan 2017). As for tourism recovery, especially after the global spread of COVID-19, movie studios were believed to play a role, for example, the studios in Xiangshan, which were popular for being locations of costume dramas such as the “Longest Day in Chang’an”.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

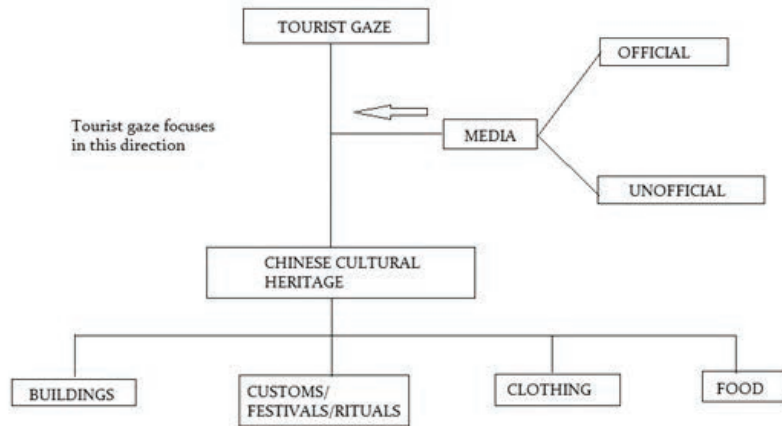


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Authenticity-Based Tourist Gaze.

Based on the conceptual framework above, the tourist gaze is influenced by the media, in both its official and unofficial forms. The official media refers to newspapers, both digital and physical, while the unofficial media refers to platforms such as social media, blogs, word-of-mouth (or its online version, eWOM) or viral news. The focus of the tourist gaze in this case study is towards Chinese cultural heritage, which comprises elements such as buildings, customs/festivals/rituals, clothing and food. For example, the tourist gaze searches for an authentic Chinese historical experience such as places related to Chinese folklore. The tourist reads about interesting places promoted in official tourist guidebooks, or multimedia such as television and YouTube channels. But they also encounter internet forum discussions, social media posts and viral news where previous visitors have shared and engaged in discourse and even debate about their experience. Furthermore, the discussions revolve around and introduce the related sites, which include natural environments; built heritage such as buildings; celebrations held at these sites based on Chinese customs, festivals and rituals according to the lunisolar calendar (Spring Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, Lantern Festival, etc.); the cuisine and dishes involved with it, such as Tang Yuan (glutinous rice ball) that is consumed during the Chinese Lantern Festival; as well as Chinese clothing such as *qipao* (*cheongsam*), or even the revival of wearing *hanfu* (the ancient Chinese robes) in some places today. To note, Chinese festivals are celebrated all throughout the lunisolar calendar year together with the family (Chan 2022). Chinese annual festivals revolve

around the Chinese lunisolar calendar, a calendar of 24 seasons, or *jieqi*, each containing 15 days (Yuan 2016).

It must be noted, however, that sentimental and critical differences exist within the perception of these cultural heritage sites by domestic and foreign tourists to any given country. In Smith's work on emotional heritage, which aimed at discovering the nature of memory and identity work people engaged in while visiting different genres of sites as well as any national differences, she found a difference between the emotional investment in national heritage sites among domestic and foreign tourists – in that the former tended to be less critical and more emotionally invested, while the latter were more critically engaged (Smith 2019: 17, 18, 21, 22).

There are other precursor theoretical frameworks conceptualised to study travel motivation, as observed by Tsephe & Obono (2013), who state that the push and pull theory (Farmaki 2012) as well as the inner and outer-directed values theory (Gnoth 1977) are the most suitable theories for the modelling of rural tourism motivation factors. For example, Pung & Del Chiappa found that Gen Y Chinese students travelling to Europe are driven by both push and pull motivations. Push factors are related to the travellers' desire to find novelty, to relax, to express social status and prestige and to satisfy what is defined as a "life-long dream"; while pull factors correspond to the respondents motivated by the possibility of experiencing different cultures and landscapes, learning about local history and typical food, as well as attending events (Pung & Del Chiappa 2018). A fundamental pull factor that could also be identified is the destination image, an asset that strongly attracts tourism (Hanqin & Lam 1999).

However, my study focuses on the modelling of urban tourism motivation and thus derives some inspiration from the two theories above, though it also contains media influence as a possible independent variable, as in the case of film tourism. Thus, this paper aimed to gauge the experience of objective, constructive and existential authenticity among tourists who visited a particular historical heritage building in Malaysia.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

Thus, given the discursive trajectory above, my paper seeks to discuss the inter-connectivity between tourism authenticity, the tourist gaze, mass media and tourist consumer behaviour in visiting Chinese cultural heritage sites, particularly in an ethnic Chinese diasporic community in Malaysia, a diverse society with multiple ethnicities.

METHOD

This study is a part of the Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS) project, “Superdiversity Networks: Cantonese Clan Associations in Malaysia as Transnational Social Support System”, sponsored by Malaysia’s Ministry of Education, which examined in particular the Chan See Shu Yuen Kuala Lumpur & Selangor Clan Association (CSSYKL).

One example of cultural heritage which is situated at the crossroads between tourism and tradition is the Chinese clan association temple, especially those located in central urban areas. Chan See Shu Yuen Kuala Lumpur & Selangor Clan Association (CSSYKL) is located on one end of Petaling Street, or Kuala Lumpur Chinatown, a major tourist attraction. CSSYKL is an example of a historical heritage building which continues to function today albeit in an evolved form. Besides being a clan association catering to the needs of its members, CSSYKL is also an important international and local tourist attraction.

The CSSYKL has its headquarters in Guangzhou, Mainland China called the Chen Clan Ancestral Hall, upon which the Kuala Lumpur one is modelled, physically and organisationally. This hall originally functioned as an “academic temple” for candidates’ preparation for the Qing Dynasty imperial examinations and was the template for the Chan See Shu Yuen built by its descendants in Malaysia. It prides itself on the inherited “Ling Nan Style of Architecture” derived from Guangzhou, Guangdong. “[The] CSSYKL building was modelled after the Chan Clan Association in Xi Guan, Guangzhou China as a design blueprint, which combined the characteristics of a family temple and ancestral hall features, incorporating ancient Cantonese-style art and Southern China architecture, which has a mix of Han and Bai Yue elements” (Chan See Shu Yuen Clan Association 2016). The CSSYKL has persisted in functioning ever since. “For more than a century, the Chen’s descendants of CSSYKL had kept the tradition alive and upheld its core values generation after generation. Celebration and paying homage to the birth commemoration of Chen’s Great Grand Ancestors, Honourable Shun Di, Honourable Chen Shi, and Honourable Chen Yuan Guang, Spring and Autumn Festival Praying are the main occasions for CSSYKL. Other celebrations like the CSSYKL anniversary, Lunar New Year, Duan Wu, Lanterns Festival, Winter Solstice Festival, etc. will not be missed yearly. These everlasting practices of CSSYKL are likened to the immortal of incenses” (Ibid.).

Today, an additional function of this clan association is to boost tourism. A great number of tourists come from various European countries as well as China and Malaysia itself. These are recorded in CSSYKL’s guest record book, and they are also observed during participant observation where tourists trickle in daily with their cameras. The CSSYKL has been listed as a historical relic in the protection of ancient buildings by the Malaysian government (Chan See Shu Yuen Clan Association 2016). It was also featured as one out of twelve

places to visit on a tourist trail, designated by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture of Malaysia (Malaysia Tourism Centre 2017).

To understand the significance of the Cantonese or Chinese clan association, I initially started fieldwork using a participant observation approach, integrating interviews with the clan association members in order to understand the history of the place. Data was also obtained from documents provided by CSSYKL itself, such as its official yearbook.

The next phase of my research was observing tourist behaviour in visiting CSSYKL. I designed the Questionnaire for Measuring Individual and Tourist Attractions towards Historical Buildings. This survey questionnaire was designed to accommodate the convenience of tourists visiting the Chan See Shu Yuen Kuala Lumpur and Selangor Clan Association (CSSYKL) building located in Petaling Street. It was designed for brevity, as I had observed that tourists linger mainly in the main courtyard for no more than fifteen minutes on average. With the permission of CSSYKL, I prepared a box containing my questionnaire and signage inviting tourists to fill up an opinion survey regarding their visit, placing this next to the tourist brochures. This survey was carried out from April 2019 to February 2020, which was only halted due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which in Malaysia was contained by instituting a Movement Control Order in March 2020.

A total of 117 responses were collected from local/domestic and international tourists. The questions covered demographics, such as age, gender, education, ethnicity, country of origin, industry, travelling companions; and Likert scale statements about respondents' motivation to visit CSSYKL. These data mirror the data collected by the Tourism Malaysia (the Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board or MTPB) survey, which covered gender, marital status, occupational group, age group and travelling pattern.

The survey consisted of ten statements, to be ranked on a Likert scale. The statements corresponded to the three types of tourism authenticity – objective, constructive and existential. Statements 1 and 2 relate to tourists' recognition of their external reality and were therefore classified as objective authenticity. Statements 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10 relate to the tourists' projection of authenticity upon toured objects, through images, expectations, preferences and beliefs, hence these were classified as constructive authenticity. Statements 3 and 7 related to the self-actualisation of tourists in visiting places that conformed to their beliefs in heritage conservation, hence these were classified under existential authenticity. It is worth noting that these statements could indeed be taken as belonging to more than one type of authenticity, as the definitions often overlap. For example, a tourist could develop an interest in a particular historical site due to the external social construction of knowledge by other social agents, but they may also visit it because they believe that the historical site conforms to their own prior personal ideas regarding cultural heritage preservation. Thus, in my analysis of the survey responses below, I have

used some of these statements as independent variables themselves, to examine the relationship between more than one type of authenticity. The response options were ranked as 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Disagree, 5 = Strongly Disagree.

Table 1. Questionnaire Statements

Statement	Type of Authenticity
1 - I visited this place because it looks historical.	Objective
2 - Historical places interest me.	Objective
3 - I found out about this place by myself.	Existential
4 - I found out about this place because it was recommended to me.	Constructive
5 - I find this place a good photographic opportunity.	Constructive
6 - I would recommend this place to others.	Constructive
7 - I understand the function of this place upon seeing it.	Existential
8 - I would appreciate more information.	Constructive
9 - I think that historical buildings should be preserved.	Constructive
10 - I think that cities should highlight their unique culture, besides their development.	Constructive

Several hypotheses were derived from the literature, namely:

H0: There is no relationship between the respondent's attitudes towards historical buildings and their visits to CSSYKL.

H1: The respondent visited CSSYKL because it looks historical, due to the respondent's interest in historical places.

H2: The respondent thinks that historical buildings should be preserved, due to the respondent's belief that cities should highlight their unique culture besides their development.

H3: The respondent visited CSSYKL because it looks historical, due to their belief that historical buildings should be preserved.

H4: The respondent visited CSSYKL because it looks historical, due to their belief that cities should highlight their unique culture, besides their development.

H5: The respondent would also recommend CSSYKL to other visitors, because the respondent visited CSSYKL as it looks historical.

H6: The respondent believes that cities should highlight their unique culture, besides their development, because the respondent is interested in historical places.

FINDINGS

Based on the ten statements and the demographics, the relationships between these variables were tested using linear regression and correlation analyses. The demographics as well as statements were considered as independent variables. These statements were tested for their relationships to other statements regarding tourist behaviour in CSSYKL, to gauge the tourists' experience of the three forms of authenticity. The software used for analysis was Microsoft Excel for the demographics and JASP for the correlation analysis. JASP is a free graphical software package for basic statistical procedures such as t tests, ANOVAs, linear regression models, and analyses of contingency tables, and is open-source (Love et al. 2019).

Demographics

According to the latest Tourism Malaysia statistics, in 2018 Malaysia recorded 25, 832, 354 tourist arrivals. The top ten visiting nationalities consisted of Singapore, Indonesia, China, Thailand, Brunei, South Korea, India, Philippines, Japan and Taiwan, all Asian countries with the majority being Southeast Asian countries. The top sources of information on Malaysia for these tourists were "Friends and relatives who visited Malaysia" (96.5%), "Own experience" (95.8%), the Internet which comprised Google or search engines (31.1%), websites (22.9%), online travel providers (14.3%), social media (13.2%), travel review sites (12.4%), travel blogs (3.1%), "Friends and relatives living in Malaysia" (50.6%), "travel agents" (24.4%), and "travel guide books" (18.6%) (Tourism Malaysia 2018). In this survey, 25% of respondents strongly agreed and 0.08% of respondents agreed that they found out about CSSYKL on their own. 17% of respondents strongly agreed and 0.06% of respondents agreed that they would recommend CSSYKL to others. In general, it appears that the majority of tourists surveyed by both this study and the Tourism Malaysia study relied on others such as friends and relatives primarily and the Internet secondarily for constructive authenticity.

Interestingly, the majority of the respondents were aged 51 and above (26%), followed by the age groups of 21–30 (20%) and 31–40 (20%). It appears that most of the tourists who visited CSSYKL and who responded to the survey were of the mature age group.

In terms of gender, 57% of the respondents were female, while 39% of the respondents were male.

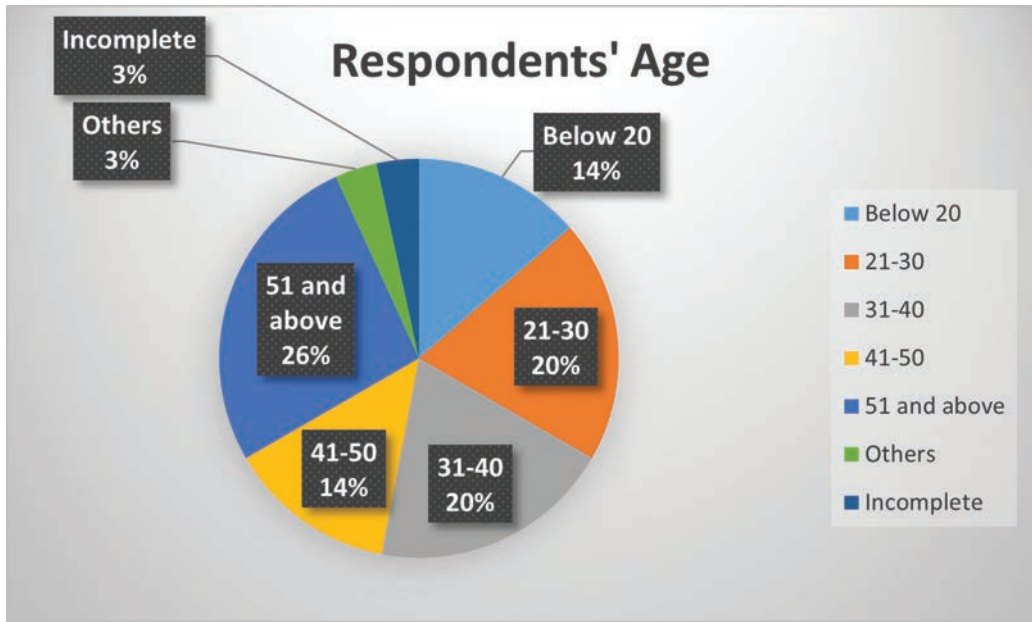


Figure 2. Respondents' age.

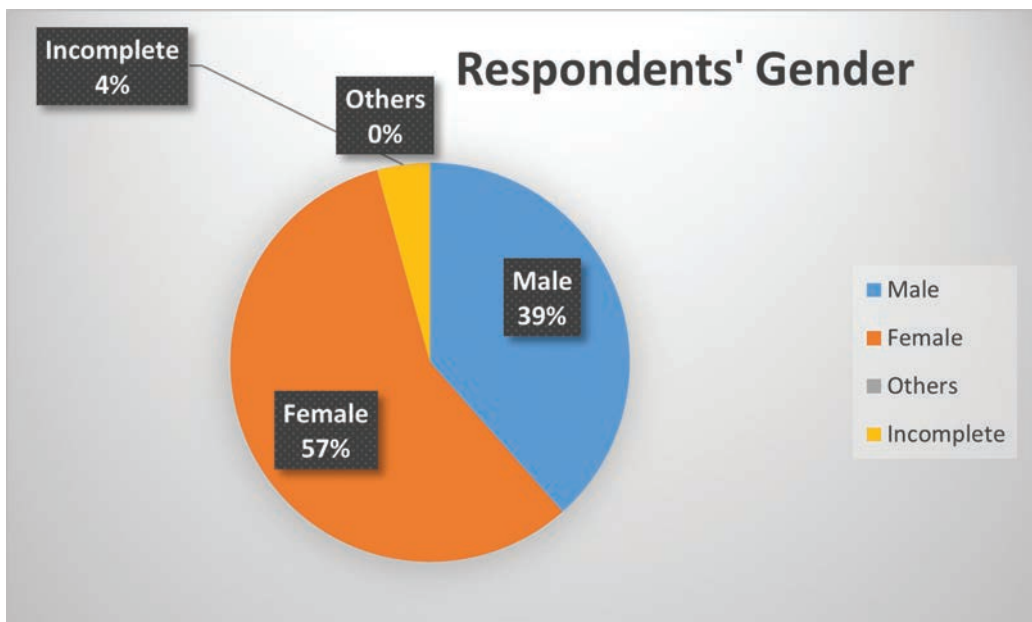


Figure 3. Respondents' gender.

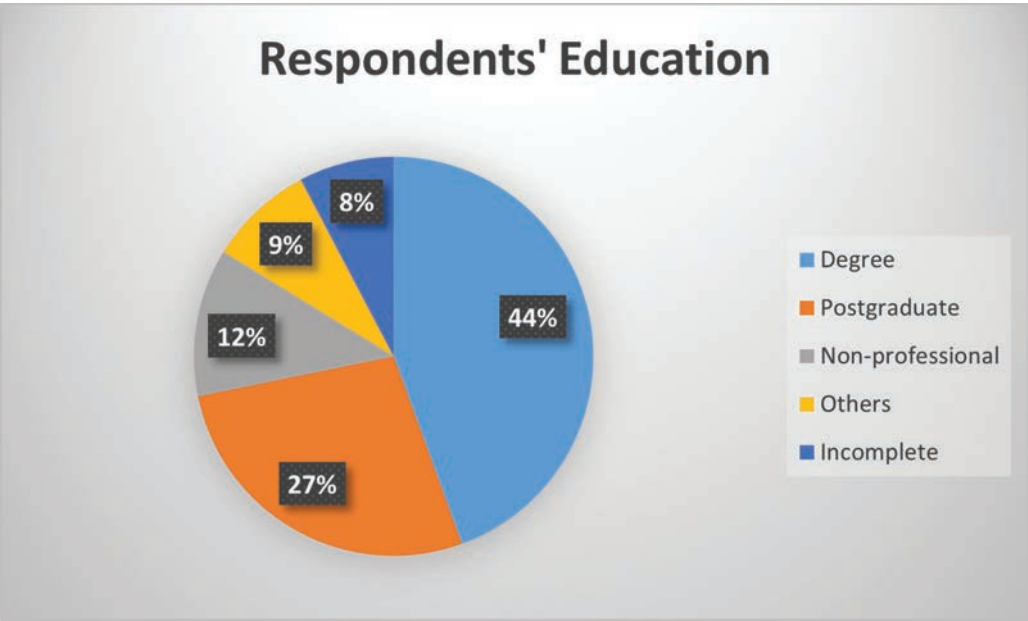


Figure 4. Respondents' education level.

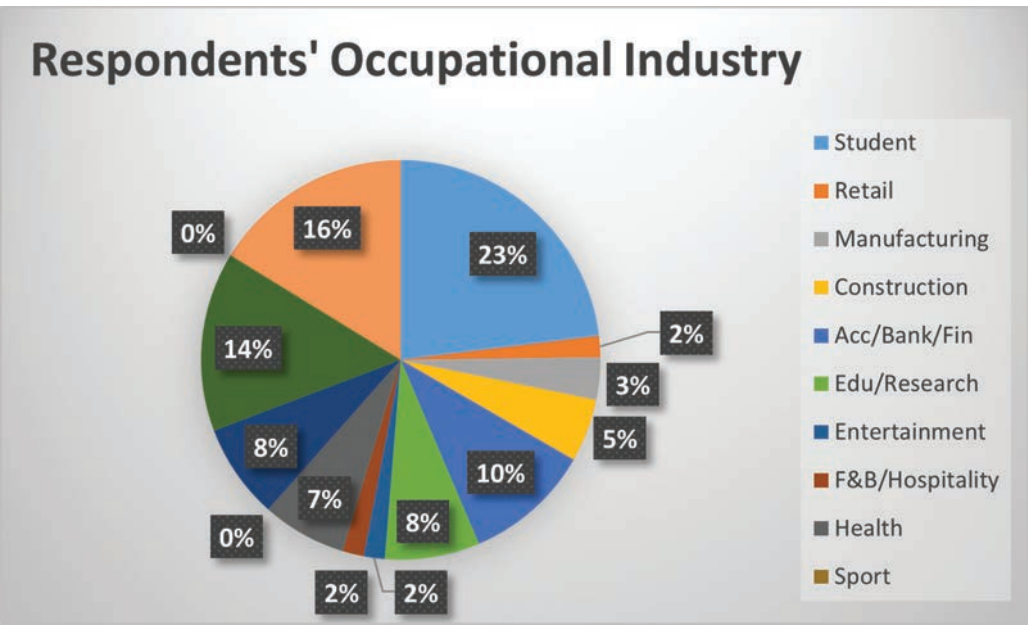


Figure 5. Respondents' occupational industry.

The majority of respondents held a least a Bachelor's degree (44%), while 27% held a post-graduate qualification such as a Master's degree or a PhD.

The majority of respondents were students (23%), followed by those employed in retail (16%), and education and research (14%).

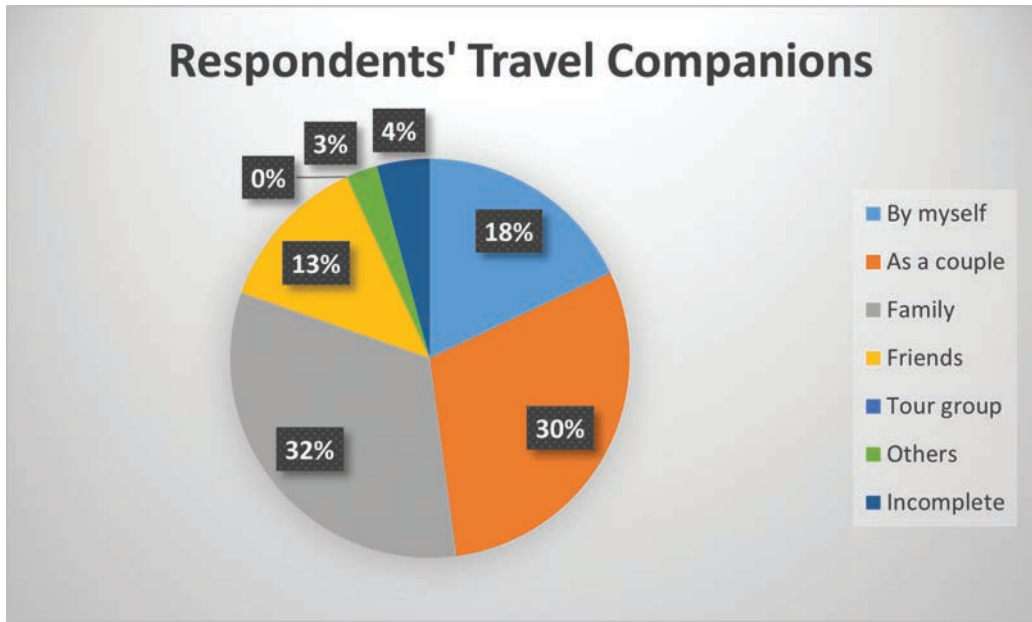


Figure 6. Respondents' travel companions.

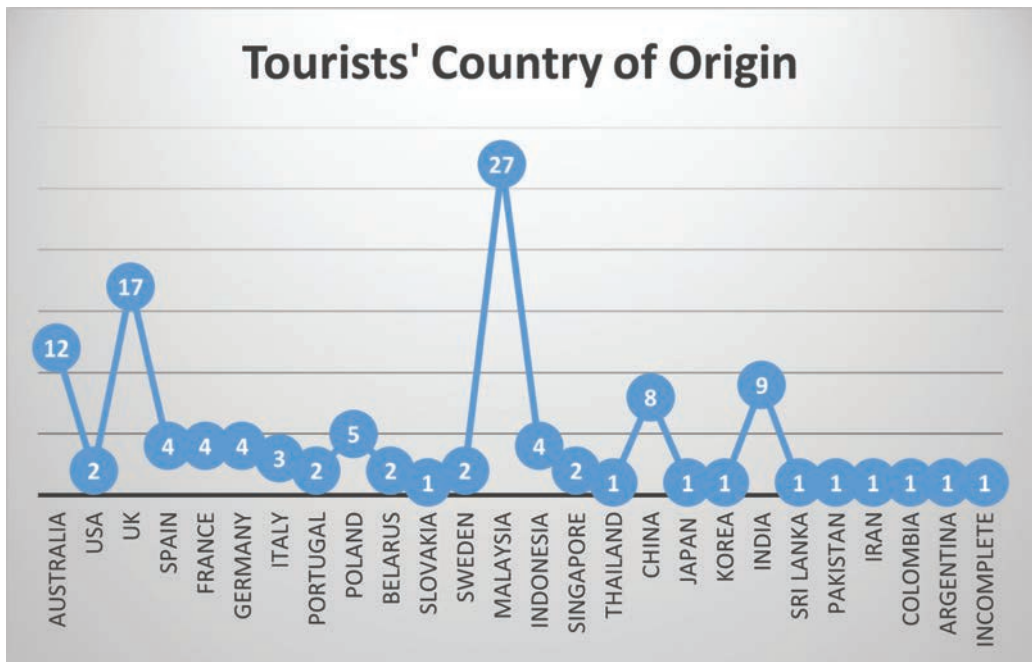


Figure 7. Respondents' country of origin.

Most respondents traveled with family (32%), followed by as a couple (30%), by themselves alone (18%), and with friends (13%).

As for nationality and ethnicity, the survey options were open-ended, as the responses were unlimited. In the keyword frequency calculation, certain terms were used interchangeably, for example, “white” and “Caucasian”.

The respondents consisted of both local and international tourists, with 23% of respondents being domestic tourists from Malaysia, while 77% of respondents were international tourists. In terms of ethnicity, the two major groups of respondents were the ethnic Chinese (21%) and Caucasian (21%). Continent-wise, 48% of respondents were from Asia, 38% were from Europe, 10% were from Australia, 0.02% were from the United States of America, and likewise 0.02% were from Latin America. However, only 0.07% of respondents claimed to be from China or Hong Kong.

Hypotheses

Table 2. Research Hypotheses

Hypotheses	Statements	Pearson’s r	p-value	Result
H0: There is no relationship between respondent’s attitudes towards historical buildings and their visits to CSSYKL.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H1: Respondent visited CSSYKL because it looks historical, due to respondent’s interest in historical places.	Statement 1: I visited this place because it looks historical. (Objective authenticity) Statement 2: Historical places interest me. (Objective authenticity)	0.829	<0.001	Strong, positive relationship, reject H0.
H2: Respondent thinks that historical buildings should be preserved, due to respondent’s belief that cities should highlight their unique culture besides their development.	Statement 9: I think that historical buildings should be preserved. (Constructive authenticity) Statement 10: I think that cities should highlight their unique culture, besides their development. (Constructive authenticity)	0.892	<0.001	Strong, positive relationship, reject H0.

H3: Respondent visited CSSYKL because it looks historical, due to their belief that historical buildings should be preserved.	Statement 1: I visited this place because it looks historical. (Objective authenticity) Statement 9: I think that historical buildings should be preserved. (Constructive authenticity)	0.789	<0.001	Strong, positive relationship, reject H0.
H4: Respondent visited CSSYKL because it looks historical, due to their belief that cities should highlight their unique culture, besides their development.	Statement 1: I visited this place because it looks historical. (Objective authenticity) Statement 10: I think that cities should highlight their unique culture, besides their development. (Constructive authenticity)	0.775	<0.001	Strong, positive relationship, reject H0.
H5: Respondent would also recommend CSSYKL to other visitors, because the respondent visited CSSYKL as it looks historical.	Statement 6: I would recommend this place to others. (Constructive authenticity) Statement 1: I visited this place because it looks historical. (Objective authenticity)	0.755	<0.001	Strong, positive relationship, reject H0.
H6: Respondent believes that cities should highlight their unique culture, besides their development, because the respondent is interested in historical places.	Statement 2: Historical places interest me. (Objective authenticity) Statement 10: I think that cities should highlight their unique culture, besides their development. (Constructive authenticity)	0.81	<0.001	Strong, positive relationship, reject H0.

Table 3. Scale Reliability

Scale Reliability Statistics			
	mean	sd	Cronbach's α
scale	2.406	1.401	0.716

For the reliability analysis, the value of 0.716 shows that the survey items are reliable since a Cronbach's alpha of 0.70 is the cut-off value for being acceptable (Santos 1999). Several relationships between the statements were observed. It was found that respondents who were generally interested in historical sites visited CSSYKL as it appeared to be a historical building. These tourists also believed that historical buildings should be preserved, and that cities should highlight their unique culture besides their development. Thus, these tourists would recommend CSSYKL to other tourists. There is also a relationship between objective authenticity and constructive authenticity in the case of tourist behaviour in visiting CSSYKL, as evidenced by several statements under both categories demonstrating a strong, positive relationship with values between $r = 0.7$ to 0.9 (Navarro & Foxcroft & Faulkenberry 2019) and small p -values of <0.001 indicating strong evidence against the null hypothesis (Zhu 2016). This indicates that tourists visiting CSSYKL believe that the authenticity of their external reality can be confirmed by the projections of socially constructed knowledge regarding historical tourist sites. This also relates to the construction of "hot authenticity", where continual (re)enactment of one's external reality is necessary for the perpetual transformation, or augmentation of the attraction, as opposed to the "museumisation" and stagnation of interest in a historical site (Cohen & Cohen 2012). Similarly, a significant amount of interest in historical sites can be observed according to the Tourism Malaysia (2018) statistics, in which tourists engaged in visiting museums (30.6%) and visiting historical sites (36.8%). Cultural events and festivals meanwhile made up 16.1% of tourist activity.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Lovell (2019: 448) makes an original contribution to debates about authenticity by asking how tourist experiences of the medieval historic environment are linked to fairy tales, providing a new way for tourists to imaginatively authenticate heritage. According to this argument, the architecture of some historic cities is preponderantly medieval, an era which is strongly associated with fairy tales, as can be seen in the fantasy narratives of Harry Potter and Game of Thrones, which creates a "fluid magi-heritage simulacrum" (Lovell 2019: 448). Lovell's findings imply that "in an era when the fantasy genre is increasingly

popular, the experiential authenticity of heritage tourists may be enhanced by the ‘heritage marvellous’” (Lovell 2019: 448). This applies to the case of film tourism as enabled by media such as the “Longest Day in Chang’an”, which has attracted tourists interested in re-enacting historical scenes through the use of costume, architecture, scenery and *wuxia* or “kung-fu flying” contraptions in present-day Xi’an.

Hovi (2014) also explains how “Dracula-tourism” combines fiction with history and acts as a gateway into Romanian history and culture; he explains that its associated fiction includes all narratives connected to the fictitious Count Dracula, and to the image of Romania and Transylvania in popular culture, though not in official narratives. From this viewpoint, the folkloric perspective of Chinese cultural heritage acts as a path to understanding and appreciating Chinese culture from a material and also from an experiential standpoint. Of course, Hovi (2014) also notes that the acceptance of the “Dracula-tourism” phenomenon, while classifiable as heritage tourism, is not without some reluctance on the part of stakeholders in Romanian culture and history (Light 2012: 135–136, as cited in Hovi 2014).

Of course, such activities may well be regarded as merely a simulacrum of reality, as Baudrillard (1983) proposed. Indeed, the film site as well as its associated tourist spots may be merged to form hyper-reality, a blend of the post-modern with the traditional. It is post-modern because barriers to participating in such historical re-enactments have been removed, through the facilitation of technology where props are concerned; and it is also historical in its narrative and backdrop. Thus, it is such that the folklore of Chinese cultural heritage becomes constructed. A new form of tourist authenticity is created. Nonetheless, Jansson (2002) also observed another layer to this, that in the mediatisation of tourism, even tourism catalogues, travel magazines and Internet sites are simulations of reality as well as of already simulated environments (Eco 1986; Bennetta 1994; Ritzer 1999: 126–128).

Jansson (2002) noted the importance of discussing the relationship between media practices and touristic practices, where the former might bring about the “end of tourism”, or “post-tourism”. Indeed, in doing so, Jansson (2002) was referring to how the lines were blurring between the idea of “home” and “going away”, linking it to the notion of “homelessness” within studies of diaspora and migration. This is where the concept of “authenticity” became problematised. Given the widespread Chinese diaspora, this also challenges whether “Greater China” remains as a source of identification for the Chinese overseas (Chan 2020). The “Chinese overseas” are the ethnic Chinese who live outside mainland China, but acknowledge their Chinese origins (Wang 1993), for example the Malaysian Chinese (Chan 2020). Yow (2005) argues, however, that Southeast Asian Chinese in general have been distancing themselves from the ancestral homeland in China, and that they are instead increasingly rooted in the new host countries (Chan 2020). Likewise, Li & Tucker & Chen (2021)

also point out that the Eurocentric epistemological trend in studying the tourist gaze, has been to overestimate the importance of “Chinese-ness” as a set of cultural values and traditional philosophies guiding it.

In this context of ethnic diversity, especially with regards to “cool and hot authenticity”, there is a parallel conceptual framework developed by a Malaysian social anthropologist, who refers to “authority-defined” and “everyday-defined” social reality (Shamsul 1996). Both of these frameworks deal with the conceptions of external realities and the process of their legitimisation. While the former deals with the authenticity of tourist experiences, the latter relates to macro- and micro-sociological social actions as a whole. In the “authority-defined” and “everyday-defined” social reality approach, Malaysian tourists visit these cultural heritage sites in order to appreciate the cultural and ethnic diversity of their fellow citizens, from a “bottom-up” or “everyday-defined” perspective, alongside “authority-defined” initiatives to encourage unity among Malaysians. While the management and marketing of these sites as official tourist destinations is overseen by Tourism Malaysia, these historical sites also perform their own grassroots efforts to attract historical enthusiasts, such as in the case of CSSYKL which organises cultural festivals, educational outreach and guided tours to domestic and international tourists. A recent development in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic is to conduct these activities online, by hosting cultural and historical talks about the CSSYKL through its own official Facebook Live channel, garnering thousands of views (with a likely international audience). This in turn represents a form of constructive authenticity similar to film tourism, which mitigates the re-enactment of tourists’ projection of authenticity upon toured objects.

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NOTE

- 1 Wuxia refers to a genre of Chinese language literature, which typically features a hero of humble origins adventuring through a world of martial arts and Chinese cultural heritage, bildungsroman-style, set in a pre-modern era (Chan 2023; 2017).

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