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A Content Analysis of the Chinese Destinations Portrayals in the National Geographic From 1980-2013

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UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE CHINESE DESTINATIONS PORTRAYALS IN
THE *NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC* FROM 1980-2013

By

Qinran Pan

A THESIS

Submitted to the Faculty
of the University of Miami
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

Coral Gables, Florida

May 2014

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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THE *NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC* FROM 1980-2013

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A Content Analysis of the Chinese Destinations Portrayals
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With the development of Chinese tourism during the past few decades, China has become one of the top destinations of American travelers. *National Geographic Magazine* is a representative in foreign destination portrayals. However, there was little research on the portrayal of Chinese destinations in U.S. magazines. This research paper was aimed at providing a consensus of Chinese destination portrayals in *National Geographic*, using the method of content analysis. All 111 articles in *National Geographic* from the years 1980 to 2013 were studied, which yielded 896 photographs. The cultural aspect of Chinese destinations was a dominant theme used by most of the articles and the photographs. Future researches could use this paper as a starting point to evaluate the effectiveness of the portrayal of Chinese destinations, and make comparisons to the portrayals of other destinations.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Tourism is becoming an indispensable part of people's life nowadays. A main part of the lifestyle aspect is tourism. The travelers would prefer to have a better understanding of different destination choices before making the final decision of the travel destinations.

Over the past few decades, the portrayal of foreign destinations in media has experienced a pattern transformation, that foreign country news reporting has gradually converted into articles with more visual representation of the foreign destinations. Several dimensions of the foreign destinations are commonly used for visual representations in the article, such as landscape, culture, recreation, and services.

Among all the dimensions, one will always be conceived more effective than the others. The most effective portrayal dimension, however, will depend on the case of the different destinations. Usually, that most frequently used portrayal dimension particularly, will appear to be more attractive to the travelers, so that they have more eagerness for the destination.

This research will focus on the visual representation of Chinese destinations in *National Geographic* magazine, which will represent U.S. magazines. China has always been a mystery in the eyes of people from other parts of the world, for its long history, oriental culture, and exotic landscape. Moreover, with the rapid development of the economy in China during the past few decades, China has become another top choice for travelers globally. Geographically, China is always divided into six regions in travel; each of them has unique and different attractions.

The Importance of the Research

The research is important by conducting a consensus of portrayals of Chinese destinations in a U.S. magazine. Although obvious on the surface, no researcher, however, has provided empirical data on the dimensions of examined the actual percentage of each theme category used in the articles about foreign travel destinations.

The strong standing of Chinese tourism industry relies greatly on the increasing amount of international travelers, according to the China Tourism Academy (Xinhua, 2012). The proactive and effective articles on foreign travel destinations are one of the most important components of the integrated campaign, including news reports, TV promotions and implicit strategies. This research will help Chinese tourism practitioners have a better idea in the current situation of the portrayals of Chinese destinations, for the case of future promotion.

Scholars and researchers can view the result of this content analysis as a starting point to examine the effectiveness of a particular theme and the reason for the popularity. Because the stories about foreign destinations are on the rise, the competition of the effectiveness among different themes is also fierce.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

An Overview of Tourism Development Worldwide and in China

Tourism has enjoyed a surge in development. During the past 30 to 40 years, have an exponential rise in tourism globally was witnessed, with leisure and tourism becoming an important social activity as well as a significant component of the world economy (Elfriede & Kavoori, 2001). Tourism gradually developed into a deep and diversified section, and enjoys one of the most rapid growing economic sectors worldwide (Organization, 2014).

Globally, tourism is on surging. Tourism internationally has continuously increased in the aspect of international tourists' arrivals. According to the latest United Nation World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) World Tourism Barometer (2013), "International tourist arrivals grew by 5% in 2013, reaching a record 1,087 million arrivals" (UNWTO World Tourism Barometer and Statistical Annex, 2013). It also shows that international tourism continued strongly in 2013, "with an additional 52 million international tourists travelling the world in 2013" (UNWTO, 2014).

According to the data collected by the World Tourism Organization (WTO), worldwide, all tourism sectors have experienced growing number of international tourist arrivals. Also, if we take a closer look at the international arrivals numbers from 1990 to 2010, Asia and the Pacific had the second highest annual rate of growth with an average of 4.11% (The World Bank, 2013).

The WTO expects international arrivals to increase by a respectable 4% in the next 20 years. Since 1990, international arrivals have enjoyed an annual growth rate of about 4.3% (see Table 2.1).

	International Tourist Arrivals (in millions)							
	1990	1995	2000	2005	2008	2009	2010	Annual Growth Rate (%)
Europe	261.5	304.1	385.6	439.4	485.2	461.5	476.6	4.11
Asia and the pacific	55.8	82	110.1	153.6	184.1	180.9	203.8	13.26
Americas	92.8	109	128.2	133.3	147.8	140.6	149.8	3.07
Africa	14.8	18.9	26.5	35.4	44.4	46	49.5	11.72
Middle east	9.6	13.7	24.1	36.3	55.2	52.9	60.3	26.41

(UNWTO, 2014)

Table 2.1: International Tourist Arrivals

In the near future, developing countries, especially the ones in Asia, will gradually join with their advanced counterparts in the tourism industry as travel destinations (Conrady & Buck, 2012). The *Travel Gold Rush 2020* has pointed out that the rise of China and India and other emerging economies will become a main drive of international tourism within 20 years (Phillippe, 2010).

China, as one of the most promising travel destinations, has experienced a great increase in tourism in term of the international tourists. According to the World Bank, the international arrivals at China in the year 2011 were 57,581,000, which was 37,547,000 more than the year of 1995 (The World Bank, 2014). It has become the third largest travel destination worldwide, right after France and United States.

According to *Travel China Guide*, the largest online tour company in China, “In 2012, the total revenue of China tourism reached CNY 2,570 billion, increasing by 14%

on 2011” and “the inbound tourists still reached an amazing 132.4053 million bringing revenue of 50.028 billion USD.” (Travel China Guide, 2014)

According to the data collected by *Travel China Guide*, among all tourist source countries, the United States is the second-largest non-Asian country, right after Russia (Travel China Guide, 2014).

The Popularity of Chinese Tourism

An important year for Chinese tourism development was 1980. First of all, in the late 1980s, China began an educational tourism market (Jia, 2010). It was a starting point for the development of professional tourism practitioners in China, with an emphasis on the teaching and learning of tourism education. Second, China carried out a “Reform and Opening up” policy in 1978. According to Shen (1992), six tourism areas in China experienced substantial development and benefited from the policy, including Chinese inbound tourists, foreign currency revenue, tourism infrastructure development, sustainable tourism resource, and the building of tourism service teams (Shen, 1992). Third, with tourism’s vigorous growth, the Chinese government decided that tourism would be a main power for economic and regional growth (Jia, 2010).

China’s Regional Division and Tourism

Geographically, China is divided into six parts when examining tourism, which are East China, North China, Northeast China, Northwest China, South-central China, and Southwest China. Table 2.2 shows the area, population, and the provinces in each region.

	Area	Population	Provinces
East China	795,837 km ²	384,364,968	Shanghai, Anhui, Fujian, Jiangsu, Jiangxi, Shandong, Zhejiang
North China	1,556,061 km ²	164,823,226	Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei, Shanxi, Inner Mongolia
Northeast China	793,300 km ²	109,520,844	Heilongjiang, Jilin, Liaoning
Northwest China	3,107,701 km ²	96,644,038	Gansu, Qinghai, Shanxi, Ningxia, Xinjiang
South Central China	1,014,354 km ²	2,383,559,808	Guangdong, Hainan, Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Guangxi, Hong Kong, Macau
Southwest China	2,365,900 km ²	192,979,243	Chongqing, Guizhong, Sichuan, Yunnan, Tibet

Table 2.2: China Regional Division

Tourism as a Main Part of Lifestyle

A main part of lifestyle is tourism. Travelers would prefer to have a better understanding of different destination choices before making the final decision of the travel destinations. There were studies about news portrayals of other countries over the last hundred years, but this type of study was not the focus of foreign destination studies until the 1960s (Folker, 2014). During the past 20 years, as people started to pursue better life quality by enjoying increasing leisure time, lifestyle elements have been emerging and developing into a main section in most Western newspapers (Hanusch, 2011).

Tourism articles are oftentimes found in the lifestyle section in the news media, while foreign news is getting less coverage (Riffe, Aust, & Jones, 2000). Actually, travel sections have been playing a pivotal role in lifestyle content, because of the exponentially increasing demands of tourists, as a result of global economic development.

The competition among and between different destinations is also fierce. As Cochran (2008) summarized in her book, the reasons include, first, tourism is crucial in the national development, and second, within the tourism industry internationally, the promotional aspects of the travel destinations, are always the same (Cochran, 2008). As a result, the complete and thorough understanding of the way destinations are portrayed has become a necessity for engaging in tourism development.

Images of the Destination

There are a number of definitions for destination image, for example, Hunt (1971) defined destination image as “Impressions that a person or persons hold about a state in which they do not reside” (Hunt, 1989); and “Image is comprised of the ideas or conceptions held individually or collectively of the destination under investigation” (Johann & Buttle, 1989). The most-widely accepted concept is “a compilation of beliefs and impressions based on information processing from a variety of sources over time” (Crompton, 1979)

Baloglu and McCleary’s research pointed out that understanding the destination largely depends on the image of the destination, thus the image of the destination has always influenced the decision-making process for the tourists (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999).

Furthermore, destination image has a positive relationship with destination loyalty. Labato argued that future attitudes and repeating visits increase with the satisfaction with the destination image (Hernandez-Lobato, Solis-Radilla, Moliner-Tena, & Sanchez-Garcia, 2006).

The importance of the tourist destination's image is universally acknowledged, since it affects the individual's subjective perception and consequent behavior and destination choice (Chon, 1990). This importance has led to a growing body of research on the Tourism Destination Image (TDI) (Ayad & Ye, 2013).

The Image Formation of the Destinations

There are several steps in the formation of the destination image, and as Mercer (1971) claimed in his research, the initial stage before the trip is the most important (Mercer, 1971). Also, the amount and the type of information sources become key factors for destination promotion. The stimulus factor of the destination image can be sorted into three categories (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999):

- Information sources, including the amount and the type
- Previous experience
- Distribution

Previous studies suggest that, among all kinds of other factors, information sources have a profound influence on perceived destination image and the intention of destination choice (Seoho, 1990). Photographs of the destination are one of the most manifest factors among the information sources, which will be illustrated in the following section.

Photographs as a Main Visual Representation Tool for the Image Formation

The visual representation of destinations has a crucial marketing aspect in the tourism industry (Kim & Richardson, 2003). Photography has maintained a dominant position among the visual representation techniques. As technology advances, and especially in tourism, photographs are used ubiquitously (Albers & James, 1988). It is important to define photographs, before further illustrating the significance of them in tourism. While definitions of photographs vary a lot in literature, the one most perfectly fit for this research is that, “Photographs are the result of an active signifying practice in which media-makers select, structure, and shape what is going to be registered on film and further alter and alter and edit what is eventually printed” (Hall, 1983). Photographs convey meaning, through which people relate to visual images, and make them a primary source of knowing (Albers & James, 1988).

Photographs are widely used in all kinds of channels in imagery tourism, including advertising brochures, souvenir booklets, and magazines, because the photographs “serve as a preliminary source for understanding the form, meaning and process of photographic representation in tourism” (Albers & James, 1988); and they constitute “a way of seeing” (Barthes, 1981). Photography is a major force in the communication between the destination and the tourists; its importance relies on its ability to influence the viewer without appearing to do so (Hall, 1983). Indeed, the portrayal of foreign places and cultures has been the focus for travel journalists and the scholars for some time (Folker, 2014).

The Crucial Role of Magazine in Destination Portrayals

Among the various channels of destination portrayals, the magazine has a ubiquitous position in tourism. As a unique medium in print media, magazines contribute to the formation of social ideology. Furthermore, magazine subscribers constitute a high percentage of media outlets subscriptions in United States (Holmes & Nice, 2012). With the assistance of high quality photos, magazines' importance have gradually overtaken the traditional form of news media, the newspaper, in the field of lifestyle, because magazines offers "best examples of in-depth reporting, stylish writing and meticulously edited stories" (Gordon, 2014). For example, *National Geographic* has a large subscription base because of its extremely high standards for photography. As early as the beginning of the 20th century, *National Geographic* stood out with its employ of the rarely used technology, color photography, at that time.

Photographs Measurement Methods

To stand out from the photographs, the majority of which are on foreign destinations, the portrayal dimensions of the photographs become crucial. From the existing studies, for example, the *Destination Image: Towards a Conceptual Framework* by Gallarza (Marina, 2002), and *The Measurement of Destination Image: An Empirical Assessment* (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993), it can be summarized that the way to examine the dimensions varied a lot. Moreover, among all the dimensions, one will always be conceived more effective than the others.

As the measurements of dimensions vary, one widely cited—Dilley (1986)—provides framework, including the main themes and the subcategories, after examining tourist brochures from 21 countries (Folker, 2014). Dilley sorted the photographs in the

travel stories into four categories of themes: (Table 2.3 shows the detailed sub-categories of each dimension.)

- Cultural theme
- Landscape theme
- Service theme
- Recreation theme.

Daye, followed the framework to study the travel stories about islands in Caribbean, demonstrated the effectiveness of the framework, with the findings that UK newspapers have concentrated dominantly on the recreational aspects and the portrayal of the landscape stereotyped (Daye & Chambers, 2008).

Destination Photographs Themes

The theme of the destination photographs is hard to define, due to its complexity and multidimensionality. Furthermore, it is hard to assess the theme because it always involves invisible elements and may vary with different persons (Marina, 2002). As a result, “images are more important than tangible resources,” because “perceptions, rather than realities are what motivate consumers to act or not act” (Guthrie & Gale, 1991).

At the same time, the dimensions of foreign destination portrayals are becoming a critical topic in tourism scholars’ studies (Folker, 2014). For example, Pan and Ryan (2007) developed an analytical framework that would allow destination marketers to assess travel stories’ value to them (Pan & Ryan, 2007). They found that the main attraction of the Pirongia Forest to tourists in New Zealand is the facilities.

Main Category	Sub-categories
Landscape	Costal Mountain Rural Urban Flora Fauna
Culture	History and Art Entertainment Local People Local Economy
Recreation	Skiing Hiking Scuba Diving
Service	Tourist Facilities Reassurance

(Dilley, 1986)

Table 2.3: Widely-cited framework by Dilley (1986)

What is more, since the very beginning of the use of photographs in magazines, certain destinations are always featured with certain stereotypes in a particular dimension; for example, South Africa is always portrayed by photographs of the rain forests (Putz & Holbrook, 1988). Usually, that portrayal dimension particularly will appear to be more attractive to the travelers (Folker, 2014).

This research will focus on the visual representation of Chinese destinations in *National Geographic Magazine*. China has always been a mystery in the eyes of people from other parts of the world for its long history, oriental culture, and exotic landscape.

Moreover, with the rapid development of China's economy the past few decades, China has become another top choice for travelers globally.

Review and Analysis of Photograph Measurement Methodologies

Table 2.4 summarizes the measurement methodologies used in the studies on photographs. Basically, it is divided into two methodologies: qualitative techniques and content analysis. Free elicitation and open-ended questions, focus groups, and in-depth interviews and experts discussions are the most commonly used qualitative methods, while the second category is essentially content analysis based on either promotional materials or the previous studies.

Qualitative Techniques	Free Elicitation/ Open ended questions	
	Focus Groups	
	Indepth Interviews/ Discussion with Experts	
Other Techniques	Content Analysis	On promotional materials On previous results

Table 2.4: Analysis of Photographs Measurement Methodologies

(Gallarza, Saura, & Gar, 2002)

The Lack of Quantitative Research

Studies on the visual representations of foreign destinations are relatively few. The empirical data in such analyses are also insufficient. There is a distinct gap existing between the importance of the visual representation of the destination and the studies of how they are portrayed in the field of travel journalism (Folker, 2014).

From the limited number of the studies conducted, one meta-review of the destination image research has suggested the lack of visual representation studies, in contrast to the emergence of structured surveys of human respondents, the mixed-methods approach advocated by Echtner and Titchie (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993). Based on

this lack of research, the following questions regarding travel promotion and the use of pictures in Chinese travel destinations are posed.

Statement of Research Questions

RQ₁₋₁: How many articles about foreign travel destinations portrayed the Chinese travel destinations in the dimension of culture in the *National Geographic*?

RQ₁₋₂: How many articles about foreign travel destinations portrayed the Chinese travel destinations in the dimension of landscape in the *National Geographic*?

RQ₁₋₃: How many articles about foreign travel destinations portrayed the Chinese travel destinations in the dimension of recreation in the *National Geographic*?

RQ₁₋₄: How many articles about foreign travel destinations portrayed the Chinese travel destinations in the dimension of nature in the *National Geographic*?

RQ₂: Which region of China is portrayed the most in the destination photographs?

RQ₃: What is the trend of articles about foreign travel destinations in *National Geographic* in term of the dimensional aspect from the years 1980 to 2013?

RQ₄: What were the sources of the photographs?

RQ₅: Does the outline reflect the dimensional aspect of the photo?

RQ₆: Among the photos with cultural theme, which angle is used most often?

RQ₇: What is the trend of cultural aspects in *National Geographic* in term of the dimensional angle from the year 1980 to 2013?

Chapter 3: Research Method

This thesis seeks to better understand how photographs are used in the portrayal of China as a travel destination and to answer seven research questions dealing with a number of portrayal dimensions found in *National Geographic*.

An Overview of the Research Method

In order to answer the research questions, a content analysis was conducted. Content analysis of foreign travel destinations articles has been the most common type of study undertaken in travel studies thus far (Hanusch, 2009).

The research will take *National Geographic* as the sample magazine. Although *National Geographic* is not a travel magazine by strict definition, it is aimed at educating people about the geography worldwide. Also, very high-quality photographs representing foreign destinations are published in the magazine. In addition to its leadership in photographic technology and storytelling more than 130 years, the magazine's photographs have documented various cultures and discoveries all across the world.

The year 1980 was chosen to be the starting year of the sample, because China tourism did not enjoy the open-up policies until 1978 and really begin to develop. Although, in the early 19th century, China's tourism was prosperous, it was a different China that we find nowadays.

The purpose of this content analysis was to compare the number of the cultural themes to landscapes, services, recreation, and nature themes in articles about foreign travel destinations about China in U.S. travel magazines, the *National Geographic*, to be specified. The unit of analysis is manifest, consisting actual photographs. Considering

that under most circumstances, more than one photograph is used in one article, the theme of the article will depend on the theme of the mostly used photographs in that article.

It is reasonable and logical to use photographs to represent themes for two reasons. First, most of the articles about foreign travel destinations contain photographs, and the theme of photographs is easy to be sorted into categories. Second, a distinct gap in the literature exists examining how destinations are portrayed visually in travel journalism, despite the fact that images play an important role for every article about foreign travel destinations. However, some studies in the tourism literature do exist that examine images in tourism advertising.

In this research, the long-standing framework of studying foreign destinations by Dilley (1986) was followed and another theme — nature was added, after a pilot test of the coding sheet, which indicated a high presence of Chinese precious animals and unique natural plant. So, the photographs in the articles about foreign destinations were placed into six categories according to their themes: 1) cultural; 2) landscape; 3) service; 4) recreation; 5) nature, and 6) other (Dilley, 1986).

Definition of Variables

- *Cultural photographs*: Photographs showing the cultural aspect of travel destination.
- *Landscape photographs*: Photographs showing the natural beauty, sceneries of the travel destination.
- *Service photographs*: Photographs encouraging travelers participating in exotic local events of the travel destination.

- *Recreation photographs*: Photographs focusing on attractions and recurrences of the travel destination.
- *Nature photographs*: Photographs showing the natural and wild world of the travel destination.

Operationalization of the Variables

- *Cultural photographs*: Photographs of the Chinese places of interests, historical sites, art galleries, architectures, local people, living styles, and local economy and political figures, such as the Great Wall, Terra-cotta Warriors, and Silk Road.
- *Landscape photographs*: Photographs of the China coastal, mountain, rural, urban, flora and fauna scenes, such as Himalaya peak, and Jiuzhaigou in Sichuan Province.
- *Service photographs*: Photographs advertising attractive facilities of luxury standard or assuring readers that they could expect comforts they enjoyed at home, such as comfortable hotel rooms.
- *Recreation photographs*: Photographs of local recreational attractions, such as swimming or scuba diving, and photos encouraging travelers being a spectator in exotic local recreational events, such as Beijing 2008 Summer Olympic Park.
- *Nature photographs*: Photographs showing the natural sites and rare animals in the nature.
- *Other*: Photos cannot fall in any categories listed above.

Design of Coding Sheet

Two sets of coding sheet were designed. One was to analyze the articles, and the second one was to analyze the photographs (see Appendix A).

After horizontal comparison among the different themes in the articles about foreign travel destinations, the total number of each dimension was calculated, and then a longitudinal comparison of the trends used in the cultural aspect in the articles about foreign travel destinations from 1980 to 2013 was conducted.

Reliability and Validity

The validity of the coding process can be guaranteed as it satisfied the three dimensions of validity criteria. First, the unit of analysis was concrete and accurately defined. Second, the category system was treated systematically, was exhaustive, and exclusive. The category system also well reflected the purpose of the research, which was to examine the theme of the travel stories by the photographs they contain. Third, the sampling process is scientific and employed a systematic random sampling procedure.

Two layers of reliability need to be ensured in the research. First, the number of errors made when placing content into categories needs to be examined. Two coders were used in this study. Both coders were of Chinese nationality and worked together to ensure that coding decisions were made uniformly.

Second, the reliability of the sample was well evaluated. There are three types of errors in sampling: coverage error, sampling error, and measurement error. Since the primary coverage error problem lies in incomplete or out-of-date sample lists, and the researcher had access to all issues of *National Geographic magazine* from Volume 158, Issue No.1, to Volume v. 223, Issue No.5, covering the intended time frame of 1980-

2013, the coverage error was avoided. (See Appendix B for the Publication Index) Also, the sampling errors can be estimated. Sampling error is defined as error produced when you do not sample from all members of the sampling frame. So the biggest issue concerning errors decreasing the reliability of the research is the measurement error, which by definition is the error found when people misunderstand or incorrectly respond to questions. Although it is found primarily when sampling people, the problem does exist in this research. Because the coders in the research were Chinese students, they may put the travel stories into wrong categories due to a potential preconception, including the cultural, natural, and other aspects associated with this study. The reliability will be tested before any analysis of the data.

Data Processing and Analyses

The data from the content analysis coding were inputted into IBM SPSS Statistics, version 21.0. The data were entered by the researcher, reviewed, and cleaned before data analyses were conducted. The results of the content analyses are reported in Chapter 4, Results.

Chapter 4: Results

This study examined destination portrayals of China as a travel destination through a content analysis of photographs printed in *National Geographic* from 1980 to 2013. The data collected were coded and entered into the SPSS data editor. The following variables for the articles were analyzed, year of publication, number of photos, and regions; and the following variables for the photos in the articles were analyzed, theme of the photo, theme of the cutline, category of the photo, source of the photo. The variables listed above were all treated as nominal variables.

Pilot-test

The first 15 sets of the coding results were used for a pilot test. The agreement of the main variables between the two coders on the categories ranged from .952 to .972. The results indicate that the reliability of the operational definition is high.

Coding Reliability

Twenty sets of randomly selected coding sheets (18 percent of the sample) were selected to test coding reliability. The estimate of the actual agreement was set at 95%, which was 5 percentage points higher than the minimum required reliability, 0.90, ensuring a more rigorous test. The variables were tested separately for the reliability, using Kappa in SPSS. The reliability of the theme of the photos, cutline theme, and the cultural aspect, ranged from .900 to .922, which indicated a good agreement between the two coders.

Data Analysis

Two different content analyses were conducted. The first looked at the number of articles that focused on Chinese travel destinations, providing a descriptive evaluation of

National Geographic's coverage of China. The second analysis looked specifically on the themes identified in the photographs published in the magazine.

Data Analysis on Articles

From the year of 1980 to 2013, the word “China” was mentioned in 111 articles in the *National Geographic*. Sixty-four articles were on Chinese destinations, while in the other 47 articles, China was served as part of the story as a geographic spot or a historical transition. For example, in Volume 221, No. 3, the article *Rhino Wars* mentioned China because the reporting team went to China for Rhino horns. The data analysis was based on the 64 articles (57.7%), which were mainly about Chinese destinations, and the 896 photos in those articles.

From the year of 1980 to 2013, on average 2.13 articles per year were about Chinese destinations. Every year at least one article mentioned China. The most number of stories occurred in 2008, with eight stories in different issues (see Table 4.1).

To examine the trend of the coverage of the Chinese destinations, a frequency analysis was run. The number of stories on China was pretty consistent. However, there were several periods during which coverage was lower. To be specific, from 2001 to 2003 there were no stories on Chinese destinations, while China had a normal presence rate on the magazine from 1999 to 2000, with four articles over two years, which was two per year, and slightly under the average, 2.13; all five articles from the year of 1998 to 2000, are one page. Also, there was no Chinese presence of China in the year of 1987.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	
Valid	1980	4	3.6	3.6	3.6
	1981	4	3.6	3.6	7.2
	1982	4	3.6	3.6	10.8
	1983	1	.9	.9	11.7
	1984	6	5.4	5.4	17.1
	1985	2	1.8	1.8	18.9
	1986	4	3.6	3.6	22.5
	1987	3	2.7	2.7	25.2
	1988	7	6.3	6.3	31.5
	1989	1	.9	.9	32.4
	1990	2	1.8	1.8	34.2
	1991	2	1.8	1.8	36.0
	1992	4	3.6	3.6	39.6
	1993	2	1.8	1.8	41.4
	1994	2	1.8	1.8	43.2
	1995	1	.9	.9	44.1
	1996	4	3.6	3.6	47.7
	1997	1	.9	.9	48.6
	1998	3	2.7	2.7	51.4
	1999	4	3.6	3.6	55.0
	2000	3	2.7	2.7	57.7
	2001	2	1.8	1.8	59.5
	2003	3	2.7	2.7	62.2
	2004	2	1.8	1.8	64.0
	2005	1	.9	.9	64.9
	2006	3	2.7	2.7	67.6
	2007	1	.9	.9	68.5
	2008	8	7.1	7.2	75.7
	2009	5	4.5	4.5	80.2
	2010	5	4.5	4.5	84.7
	2011	5	4.5	4.5	89.2
	2012	7	6.3	6.3	95.5
	2013	5	4.5	4.5	100.0
	Total	111	99.1	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.9		

Table 4.1: The coverage of Chinese destinations from 1980-2013

Forty-eight (75%) of the 64 articles used two and more than two themes of photos. Twenty-nine out of 64 articles (45.3%) used three and more photo themes to portray the Chinese destinations, and the trend, however, was that the numbers of themes used in one article has becoming less. Figure 4.2 shows the trend of the change of theme numbers over year.

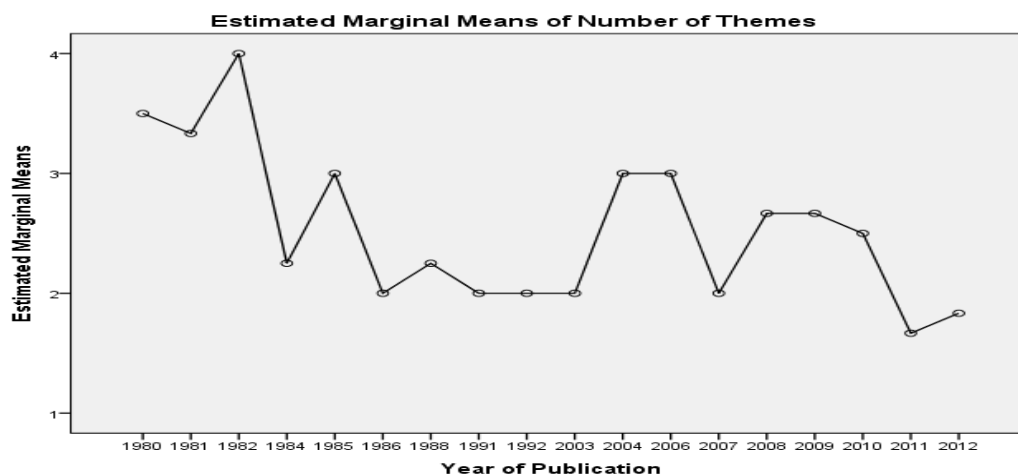


Figure 4.2: The change of theme numbers over year

While there might be more than one theme of photos used in an article, there was always a dominant theme in each article. As is stated in Chapter 3, the theme of the article will be decided by the use of most used photo category. Culture was the dominant theme of the articles. Figure 4.3 shows the article theme distribution, with 42 articles (63.6 %) was on cultural theme, 11 (16.7 %) were on nature theme, 6 (9.1 %) were on recreation theme, and 5 (7.6 %) were on landscape theme.

China was divided into six regions when examining the portrayal of the destinations. Figure 4.3 shows the distribution of the regions in the articles. Southwest China was covered the most, with 26 stories (40.6%) in that region, followed by 10

stories (15.6%) in Northwest China, 9 stories (14.1%) in east China, 4 stories (6.3%) in south-central China, 2 stories in (3.1%) northeast China, 1 story (1.6%) in North China, and the rest 12 stories (18.8%) were nation-wide. Figure 4.4 shows the regional distribution of the article.

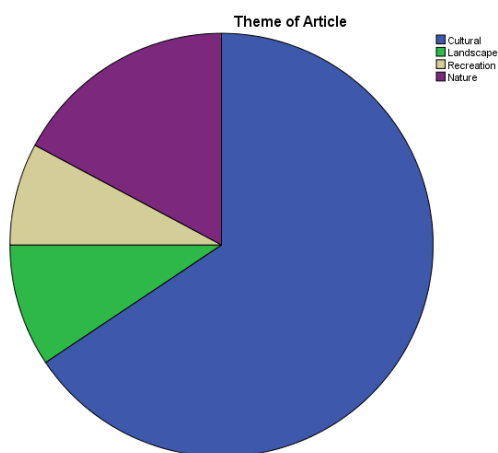


Figure 4.3: Theme of Articles Some themes were used more in particular regions than the other regions. For example, the articles about south-central destinations were mainly with nature theme. And the recreation theme was more frequently used in the southwest region, and most of the coverage was about Himalaya, and the Mount Everest.

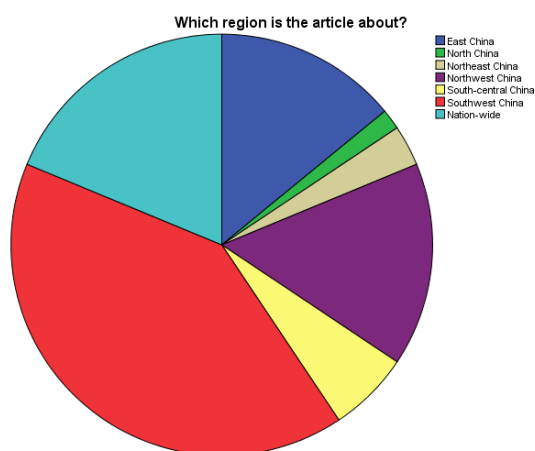


Figure 4.4: Regional Distribution of the Articles

Data Analysis on Photos

In these 64 valid articles, in which Chinese destinations were portrayed, a total of 858 valid photos were analyzed, including the categories of photographs, artistic illustrations, maps, and graphics. An average of 14 photos were used per article to portray Chinese destinations.

Themes of the Portrayal Dimensions of the Photos

A frequency test was run to illustrate the use of the photographs themes. Table 4.5 shows the result. Among a total of 858 photos, 612 (71.3 %) of them were portrayed a cultural aspect, 71 (8.3 %) were portrayed in the landscape aspect, 3 (0.3%) were portrayed in the service aspect, 49 (5.7 %) were portrayed in the recreational aspect, 74 (8.6 %) were portrayed in the nature aspect, and 48 (5.6 %) fell in the other aspects, including mainly the energy, and environmental aspect. The table also shows that there were 83 photos missing. The reasons include that the 47 articles, which were not about China, were put in the SPSS for data analysis, and the variable “phototheme” was left blank.

Other than photographs, art illustration, and graphics were frequently used as categories of photos in *National Geographic*, to give the readers a better understanding of the geography, history and so on. There were 41 maps (64.1%) used in the 64 valid stories on China. On average, every 1.5 articles had one map in it. Meantime, thirteen artistic illustrations and three graphics were observed.

A pattern of how the editors tend to arrange the photos were discovered: maps were usually found around the 4th or the 5th photo in the article.

		Photo Theme			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	0	1	.1	.1	.1
	Cultural	612	65.0	71.3	71.4
	Landscape	71	7.5	8.3	79.7
	Service	3	.3	.3	80.1
Valid	Recreational	49	5.2	5.7	85.8
	Nature	74	7.9	8.6	94.4
	Other	48	5.1	5.6	100.0
	Total	858	91.2	100.0	
Missing	System	83	8.8		
Total		941	100.0		

Table 4.5: Theme of Photographs

The main source of the photos about Chinese destinations in *National Geographic* came from the *National Geographic* photographers, which makes up 82.3 percent of all the photos. Other agencies, such as the NG maps, NGS Cartographic department, and the NG Art division were the main sources for the maps. In the early 1980s, the maps were painted or drawn by the NG art division, instead of printed. Not until the year of 1991, did the maps were printed.

Cutline and Photographs

The theme of the cutline for each photo was also examined in order to see if the cutline reflected the photo theme accurately. The correlation between the theme of the photos and the cutline was tested with the Pearson correlation. The two-tailed Pearson correlation is .839. The cutline, therefore, reflected the photos pretty well.

Cultural Theme Trends in Portraying Chinese Destinations

From the perspective of the theme of the photographs, the theme of culture was the dominant way of portraying the destinations. On average, the photos with cultural theme take up 71.3 percent. From 1980 to 1984, 198 out of 270 (73.3 %) photos used culture theme; from 1985 to 1989, 29 out of 68 (42.6 %) photo used the culture theme; from 1990 to 1994, 80 out of 97 photos (82.5 %) use the cultural theme; from 1994 to 1999, 22 out of 32 (68.8 %) photos used the culture theme; from 2000 to 2004, 57 out of 69 photos (82.6 %) use the cultural theme; from 2005 to 2009, 113 out of 157 photos (72.0 %) use the cultural theme; from 2010 to 2014, 113 out of 165 photos (68.5 %) use the cultural theme. It can be shown by figure 4.5 that except for the period, 1985 to 1989, the percentage of the culture theme fluctuated around the average percentage within 11.3 percentage points. It indicated the dominance of cultural theme throughout the years.

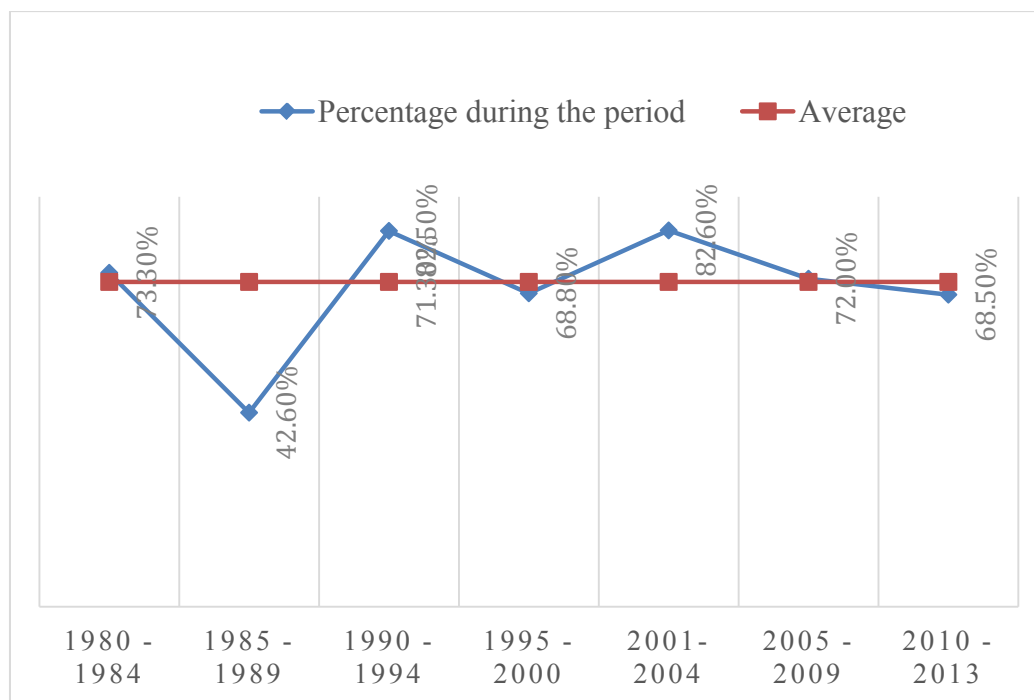


Figure 4.5: Longitudinal Trend of Cultural Theme Use

There was no clear longitudinal correlation found between the time and the use of photograph themes. However, there existed a regional correlation between the destination and the use of photographs. While cultural theme was used throughout all the 6 regions to represent the destinations, the other five themes tended to have a focus of the portrayal angle. The photos of recreation theme mainly represented East China. All four articles of south-central China were portrayed in the nature theme, by sixteen photos of natural theme. Most of them were pictures of pandas in Sichuan Province. Northwest China was mainly portrayed from the Landscape angle.

Elements Used in Cultural Theme Photographs

The majority of photos expressed a cultural theme. So all photos with the cultural theme were collected, and analyzed one step further to find out what elements were used in the photos. The photos with cultural themes yielded eight subcategories: cultural heritage sites and historical places of interest, art galleries and museums, architectures, local people and live styles, local economy, local political figures, and others.

Among a total of 612 photos with cultural theme, 452 of them used the local people and live styles elements, taking up 48 percent of all; 57 photos used cultural heritage sites and historical elements, becoming the second largest portion of the cultural theme photos; 42 used the local economy elements; 19 used architectures elements; 10 used local political figures; and 3 used art galleries and museums.

Chapter 5: Discussion

From 1980, Chinese destinations were portrayed in the *National Geographic* with different themes. The framework created by Dilley (1986) was found to be valid in examining the foreign destinations.

Practically, this research paper provided some insights to *National Geographic's* coverage of Chinese destinations. The portrayal of Chinese destinations focused mainly on the cultural aspect, which was logical considering China has always been a mystery with exotic background and long history in the eyes of Westerners. But that may lead to a theory of orientalism, which is defined as “a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient’s special place in European western experience” (Said, 2003). Stereotypes could be easily constructed based on orientalism, which is basically biased understanding of a certain culture (Xu & You, 2012). Figure 5.1 summarized how the effectiveness could be evaluated.



Figure 5.1: Effectiveness Evaluation

Culture is used overwhelmingly to portray Chinese destinations, especially within the past several decades. It indicates that the editors in *National Geographic* found that the cultural aspect of Chinese destinations is more attractive to the readers. The portrayals

of Chinese destinations are effective if they match the readers' interests. To ensure the effective two-way communication, the classic Public Relations R.O.P.E model (Hayes, Hendrix, & Kumar, 2013), may be adopted, while the first three steps: research, objectives, and programming have already well applied by the *National Geographic*, the last step, evaluation should be included to.

Researchers could take this meta-analysis as a starting point, to evaluate the effectiveness of the portrayals of Chinese destinations, by conducting surveys among the *National Geographic* readers. Figure 5.2 presents two angles for future studies.

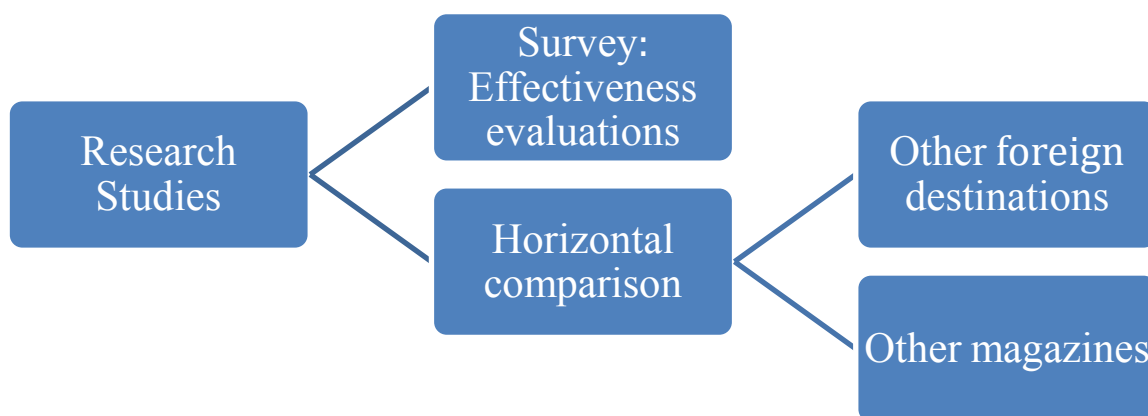


Figure 5.2: Future Research Studies

Academically, this research summarized the coverage and trends in the articles of China. While there is no clear longitudinal change of the photography themes over the 24 years (from 1980 to 2013), cultural aspects take a dominant place, with the appearance of local people and lifestyles. Future study should further investigate the portrayal of local peoples as part of their culture.

Also, future research might compare the articles about China to the ones about other countries. This topic of coverage in the *National Geographic Magazines* is not new. For example, *The Ideology of Empire in National Geographic Magazine's coverage of the Philippines* (Tuason, 1999) summarized the portrayal of the Philippine destinations in *National Geographic*, and *National Geographic Expands Trails Illustrated Coverage of California* focused on the illustration of Californian places of interests. Also, future researches could compare the result of this content analysis on *National Geographic* to other magazines, to first examine whether there is a difference in the portrayal ways, and second to yield a more generalized result of the Chinese destination portrayals in U.S. magazines.

The numbers of the articles in a particular year, or during a period of time, about China can be an indicator of the impact of China at the certain time. For example, 2008 stood out with 8 articles on China in that year; the reason might be that the summer Olympics was held in Beijing in that year. China became the very focus of the world that year. The main contribution of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games for China has been an enhancement of understanding about the country worldwide.

Similarly, there was no coverage of Chinese destinations in the year of 2003, when SARS spread out all over China, and China once again became an isolated island because of the highly contagious virus.

Suggestions

From the year of 1980 to 2013, large changes have been undertaken in China politically, economically, and ideologically. People from Western countries began to have a more thorough and objective understanding about China with the opening up and

the rising of China. The portrayal of Chinese destinations in *National Geographic* may refer to changes in China, considering one of the major missions of the magazine is to educate readers about other places on the planet. For example, the subcategory of local economic, such as economic development, could be used more frequently. It can be used as a comparison to the laid-back lifestyle in the remote countryside, other than using the all photographs of remote countryside in one article in the 21st century. This way, the readers from outside China, could get a better understanding of the development in China.

The portrayal of Chinese destinations could be with more diversity and tailored to the readers' preferences. By cross comparing with the portrayal of other countries, trends among other articles might be found. No studies have been conducted by the *National Geographic* on readers' feedback on the portrayal of destinations. To target to the audience better, the section of reader feedback could be enhanced to collect thoughts from the readers, to ensure a better two-way communication.

Limitations

The content analysis used the framework created by Dilley (1986) who examined tourist brochures in Australia. Although the reliability test indicated that the category system worked well, the application of a framework created for Chinese tourism would yield even more convincing results.

The results presented in this paper were based on only one U.S. magazine, *National Geographic*. Therefore, generalization of the findings is not possible (although they do provide insights into the portrayal of the Chinese destinations).

Furthermore, the mega-events, like the 2008 Beijing Olympics were not excluded from the study, which may cause some system error in the study.

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Appendix A – Coding sheet

Coding sheet 1 (Article)

Coder's name _____

Magazine number _____

Number of photos _____

1. Is the story mainly occurred in China?

- 1. Yes
- 0. No

2. Is there a photograph or more than one photographs accompanying the article?

- 1. Yes
- 0. No

3. Which region is the article about?

- 1. East China
- 2. North China
- 3. Northeast China
- 4. Northwest China
- 5. South-central China
- 6. Southwest China
- 7. Nation-wide

Coding sheet 2 (Photographs in the article)

Photo number _____

1. What is the theme of the photograph(s)? (Select one or two dominant one at most)

1. Cultural theme
 2. Landscape theme
 3. Service theme
 4. Recreation theme
 5. Nature theme
 6. Others, please specify
-

If 1,

2. What elements are used in the photos to approach the cultural aspects?

1. Cultural heritage sites and historical places of interests
 2. Art Galleries and museums
 3. Architectures
 4. Local people and live styles
 5. Local economy
 6. Local political figures;
 7. Others, please specify
-

3. What is the theme of the cutline?

1. Cultural theme
 2. Landscape theme
 3. Service theme
 4. Recreation theme
 5. Nature theme
 6. Others, please specify
-

4. What kind of photograph is this?

1. Photo
2. Artistic Illustration
3. Map
4. Graphic

5. Is the photo color or black and white?

1. Color
2. Black and white

6. What is the source of the photograph?

1. *National Geographic* photographers
2. Chinese agencies

Appendix B – Magazine index

4/15/2014

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LARGE TEXT



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1. [Can Coal Ever Be Clean?](#)

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC magazine

Web Site: Explore an online adaptation of this article at <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2014/04/coal/njhuis-text>

Page Span: 28-61
Volume: v. 225, no. 4

2014

2. [China's Ancient Lifeline](#)

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC magazine

Web Site: Explore an online adaptation of this article at <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2013/05/chinas-grand-canal/johnson-text>

Page Span: 126-141
Volume: v. 223, no. 5

2013

3. [Excavation Impossible](#)

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC magazine

Page Span: 130-131
Volume: v. 224, no. 5

2013

4. [Maxed Out on Everest: How to Fix the Mess at the Top of the World](#)

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC magazine

Web Site: Explore an online adaptation of this article at <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2013/06/125-everest-maxed-out/jenkins-text>

Page Span: 84-103
Volume: v. 223, no. 6

2013

5. [Our Fertilized World](#)

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC magazine

Web Site: Explore an online adaptation of this article at <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2013/05/fertilized-world/charles-text>

Page Span: 94-111
Volume: v. 223, no. 5

2013

6. [The World's First Skiers](#)

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC magazine

Web Site: Explore an online adaptation of this article at <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2013/11/125-first-skiers/charles-text>

http://shadow.ngs.org/se/arch/searchresults.aspx?ctx=5.1033.0.0.3&type=Keyword&term=china,%20people%27%20republic%20of&by=KW&sort=PD_TT&lim... 1/14