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ABSTRACT

Like most units of the National Park Service (NPS), Grand Teton National Park (GRTE) is witnessing a rapid increase in visitation and changes in the types of visitors over recent years, including an increase in international visitors. Previous research shows that international tourists may have different experiences interacting with resources in national parks when compared to domestic tourists. Compared to tourists from the U.S., Chinese tourists hold distinctive beliefs and values, and they may perceive wildlife, the environment, and the matters of natural preservation differently. However, the decision-making processes, expectation, and visitation behaviors of Chinese tourists in U.S. national parks are poorly understood.

This study contains interviews with 58 groups of Chinese tourists and 11 tour guides conducted in GRTE during the Summer of 2018. It provides a qualitative analysis of the interview transcripts in order to identify factors that influence Chinese tourists’ decision-making processes, expectations, levels of satisfaction, and intentions to revisit U.S. national parks.

According to the results of the study, Chinese tourists’ information sources and reasons for visiting GRTE are influenced by national technical infrastructure and policies. Their decisions for visiting GRTE are very ad-hoc in nature. The expectations and experiences of Chinese tourists, such as places they were planning to visit and activities they were planning to participate in, are influenced by high levels of collectivism, and large power distance: acceptance and expectation of unequal power distribution. The study shows that Chinese tourists’ sense of complacency, respect for nature, comfort with remoteness from nature, and beliefs in fate and destiny affect their satisfaction with their experiences, compared to their domestic counterparts.

Meanwhile, tour guides play an important role for tourists on tour busses. The study then provides a conceptual model to show how these factors affect Chinese tourists’ decision-making processes, expectations, satisfaction, and intentions to return in the future.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Like most units of the National Park Service (NPS), Grand Teton National Park (GRTE) is witnessing a rapid increase in visitation over recent years (NPS, 2017). This includes not only general increases in visitation, but also changes in the types of tourists, including an increase in international visitors. For instance, according to a recent study in Yellowstone National Park (YELL), 34% of all international visitors (17% of all visitors) consist of Chinese visitors (NPS, 2017). Previous research shows that international tourists may have different experiences with resources in national parks when compared to domestic tourists (Miller, Freimund, & Blackford 2018). This is exemplified by the testimonies of the Chinese tourists in that they hold distinctive beliefs and values (Samovar & Porter, 1991), and so perceive wildlife, the environment, and matters of natural preservation differently. In the context of visitor use management, these cultural differences may lead to misunderstanding and confusion, thereby increasing the likelihood of regulation violations and conflicts. And of course, language barriers between Chinese tourists and management may also increase the likelihood of these difficulties.

There are many studies about tourists’ experiences at particular destinations. But for one, most of these only focus on domestic population. And for another, most studies only provide quantitative analyses of factors influencing, tourists’ experience, overall satisfaction, and likelihood of a return trip. There is thus little research examining international tourists’ decision-making, expectation formation, satisfaction, etc. for a visit to a U.S. national parks; and few works that provide qualitative analyses of these factors.

The limited amount of work on these topics indicates the need for research on international tourists, not to mention those examining Chinese tourists. And since most of the
above studies were conducted in the 1980s and 90s, there is also a need for up-to-date research on the topic. There is also little research studying the role of tour guides in cross-cultural trips, especially in the context of Asian tourists to Western countries. Finally, few studies look at different cultural constructs influencing tourists’ experiences.

The purpose of this thesis is to better understand Chinese tourists’ decision-making processes, expectation formation, satisfaction, and future revisiting intentions with a case study in GRTE. This thesis addresses the following two questions:

1. What role do cultural differences play in influencing Chinese tourists’ cross-cultural trip, including their information sources, reasons for visiting GRTE, expectation formation, experience, satisfaction, and future revisiting intentions?

2. What are tour guides’ role in their visitation to GRTE?

Understanding these elements of their visiting experiences will help to better protect park resources while providing quality experiences for this unique population. Informed by this research, managers can better reach Chinese tourists prior to their visits, convey managerial and environmental information to them during their visit, and help Chinese tourists reach a higher level of satisfaction.

This study contains interviews with 58 groups of Chinese tourists and 11 tour guides conducted in GRTE during the summer of 2018. The scope of this thesis evolved during the interview process. It provides a qualitative analysis of the interview transcripts in order to identify factors that may influence Chinese tourists’ decision-making processes, expectations, levels of satisfaction, and intentions to revisit U.S. national parks. This thesis employs Dedoose – a web application for managing, analyzing, and presenting qualitative and mixed method research data (Dedoose Version 8.1.8, 2018) – to analyze the data after all 69 recorded interviews were transcribed.
In the next chapter, this thesis provides a literature review on four domains of past research that are relevant to this study: tourists’ decision-making; tourists’ expectation formation, experience, and satisfaction; tour guides’ role in travel experience of Chinese tourists; and cultural influences of their trip. In chapter three, the methodology this study employed is introduced. In chapter four, results of this study are elaborated, differences among individual tourists and group tourists are compared, and cultural influences on Chinese tourists’ cross-cultural trip are illustrated. Chapter five provides a conclusion and discussion based on the results. Two hypothesized models as well as theoretical and practical implications are given in this chapter.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter reviews these domains of past research: (1) tourists’ decision-making process, (2) tourists’ expectations, experiences, and satisfaction, (3) tour guides’ role in tourists’ experience, and (4) cultural influences on tourists’ experience and satisfaction.

Tourists’ Decision-making Process

Stages of Consumers’ Decision-making Process

Past researchers have proposed four models of consumers’ decision-making processes. The first is a normative approach, in which decision makers are viewed as economic agents and make decisions based on benefits and costs of each alternative product (McCabe, Li, & Chen, 2015). In the context of tourism, tourists calculate the values of relevant attributes of each destination and form preferences for potential destinations (McCabe, et al., 2015).

The second is a structure process approach, which employs a choice-set model to argue that the decision-making process of tourists is a three-stage process: first, consumers develop an initial set of destinations, the so-called “awareness set”; then they form a smaller consideration set of choices from the awareness set, called the “evoked set” (Bradlow & Rao 2000); from which they ultimately select a destination (McCabe, et al., 2015).

Other researchers have argued that the choice-set model oversimplifies consumers’ decision-making process to structured outcome stages (McCabe, et al., 2015) or to a binary logic (Decrop, 2010). As a result, these critics have developed a third approach, the theory of planned
behavior (TPB). This is a psychological approach, holding that (1) attitudes towards a behavior, (2) subjective norms, and (3) perceived behavior control can all shape the actual behavior. In the context of tourism, TPB shows that tourists’ attitudes usually consist of their perception of different attributes of a certain destination (Yoo & Chon, 2008). The subjective norms consist both of a tourist’s perception of support of his or her reference group to travel to certain places as well as the likelihood of a tourist’s compliance with those norms (Ajzen & Fishbein 1980, McCabe, et al., 2015). Finally, the perceived behavior control concerns the perceived ease or difficulty of traveling to certain destinations (McCabe, et al., 2015).

The fourth approach, often overlooked by tourism research, is called the “dual-system theory.” It claims that there are two modes of cognitive processing behind consumers’ decision-making: (1) an intuitive, rapid, and effortless process of accepting and understanding given information; and (2) a rational, slower, and effortful process that concentrates on more elaborate information searching and processing (Chaiken & Ledgerwood 2012). It stresses both the intuitive and emotional components of decision-making beyond rationality.

**Information Sources for Consumers’ Decision-Making Process**

During decision-making process, tourists may utilize different sources of information. Some are traditional sources, including travel agencies, paper media such as books, magazines, or newspapers; recommendation by returned family members or friends; etc. In our digital era, consumers are relying more and more on e-word-of-mouth (eWOM), or other people’s online comments about certain destinations.

According to Litvin, Goldsmith & Pan (2008), WOM originates from the “opinion leader,” who engages with particular product fields on mass media and interprets the meaning of media content for others (Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008). Originators of WOM, who can be
either close friends, family, relatives, or acquaintances or strangers and those who have had satisfactory experience, spread positive WOM (as cited in Litvin et al., 2008, p. 459). While WOM plays an important role in tourists’ decision-making processes, there are also several other factors that can mediate WOM. From the originator’s perspective, these include customer-employee relationships, consumer involvement, and surprises. From the listener’s perspective, tourists’ evaluation of the sources, brand familiarity, sociometric integration, and memory can mediate their reception of WOM. While much research has already shown that positive WOM may increase the probability of purchase and negative WOM may decrease it, some other research has shown that WOM may also influence consumers’ product evaluation and their brand loyalty to certain products (Litvin et al., 2008).

While there is much literature on tourists’ information sources and decision-making processes, there is limited research on international tourists’ information sources for visiting U.S. national parks. Uysal, McDonald, and Reid (1990) studied several of the most common information sources for tourists from the United Kingdom, West Germany, France, and Japan, concluding that the relative importance of different information sources varies from country to country (Uysal, McDonald, & Reid, 1990). They found that (West) German and French tourists rely on WOM from friends and relatives and professional advice from travel agents, that tourists from the U.K. prefer recommendation from travel agents to WOM, and that Japanese tourists rely heavily on print media such as books, brochures, and pamphlets (Uysal, McDonald, & Reid, 1990). They argue that up-to-date and multilingual information packages should be developed; multilingual signs and services should be implemented; certain platforms should be utilized more in certain countries to provide travel information, such as utilization of libraries in Japan for current information dissemination (Uysal, McDonald, & Reid, 1990).

Uysal, McDonald, & Reid’s (1990) research shows that different types of information sources influence tourists from different countries. However, the same results and
recommendations may not speak for Chinese tourists to U.S. national parks; the cultural differences, in this case, are different. Additionally, their study, being twenty years old, needs to be updated.

**Factors that Influence Consumers’ Choice of Utilization of Different Information Sources**

Much research has tried to identify factors that influence consumers’ choice of information sources. Adopting the theory of reasoned action (TRA) of Fishbein & Ajzen (1980), Davis (1989)’s Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) shows that an individual’s attitudes towards a piece of technology depend on its perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (PEOU) (Davis, 1989). This model is widely used by different researchers in contexts of internet usage, social media usage, online banking, e-learning, and e-government (as cited in Erkan & Evans, 2016, p. 48).

Based on the TAM model, Erkan & Evans (2016) develop an Information Acceptance Model (IACM). They argue that the usefulness of eWOM contributes to the adoption of eWOM information, and that both adoption of eWOM and consumers’ attitudes towards eWOM information may positively influence consumers’ purchase intention (Erkan & Evans, 2016). Moreover, they found evidence that the quality and credibility of eWOM information, and the needs for it, are all related to its usefulness (Erkan & Evans, 2016). In the context of tourism and hospitality, Ladhari & Michaud (2015) found that comments generated on Facebook will not only influence tourists’ hotel booking intentions, but also influence their attitudes and trust towards a hotel, as well as their perceived quality (Ladhari & Michaud, 2015).
Tourists’ Expectations, Experiences, and Satisfaction

The concept of tourists’ satisfaction is a multi-faceted concept (Reisinger & Turner, 2011). This section first elaborates on some influential constructs on tourists’ satisfaction, a review on domestic or international tourists’ satisfaction to parks or natural areas then follows.

Difference between Expectation and Experience/Perception

Comparing expectations to actual experience impacts the levels of satisfaction (Reisinger & Turner, 2011). Engledow (1977) argues that only when expectations are met or exceeded does satisfaction occur (as cited in Pizam, Neumann, & Reichel, 1978, p. 315). Similarly, according to Hughes (1991), the likelihood of dissatisfaction increases as the disparity between expectations and experiences increases (Hughes, 1991). Hughes also identifies three levels of positive satisfaction: very satisfied, quite satisfied, and satisfied. Tourists experience higher levels of satisfaction when their expectations and experience are very similar, yet not as much when they are only somewhat similar (Hughes, 1991). In the third circumstance, when expectations are not fulfilled, the level of satisfaction decreases significantly (Hughes, 1991).

Based on these terms, researchers also study ways to create high levels of customers’ satisfaction. Knutson uses surveys carried out in hotels to demonstrate that the best way to satisfy customers is to exceed their expectations and then proposes thirteen pieces of advice to improve guest satisfaction (Knutson, 1988). Although his suggestions vary for different demographics, all thirteen pieces aim to exceed or at least match customers’ expectations.

Some other authors use another construct, perception, to replace experience. Chon (1989) defines satisfaction as the extent to which tourists’ initial expectations match their perceived evaluations of overall experience (Chon, 1989). Hughes (1991) also argues that a tourist’s
perception is a determinant of satisfaction (Hughes, 1991). Although these definitions differ somewhat from wordings based on expectation and experience, they all measure the disparity between customers’ expectation prior to their actual experience and their actual evaluation after they have received the service.

However, in this study, given the cultural differences and lack of familiarity with destinations among international tourists, they may have either few or no expectations of a destination prior to their trip. This may, in turn, impact their satisfaction levels after the actual experience.

**Perceived Quality and Satisfaction**

Besides expectations, another well-known construct closely related to tourists’ satisfaction is their perception of service quality (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). While closely related, perceived quality is not equal to satisfaction. This is because perceived quality refers to a *global* attitude about the excellence of the service, while satisfaction concerns only *specific* transactions (Parasuraman, et al., 1988). That is, attitudes differ from satisfaction because attitudes refer to a consumer’s relatively long-lasting affective orientation towards certain products or service, while satisfaction refers to the consumption-specific emotional reaction (Oliver, 1981).

One of the most famous instruments to measure perceived quality is SERVQUAL, a 22-item instrument, which consists of the following five dimensions. These dimensions include *tangibles*: physical facilities and appearance of personnel; *reliability*: capability of providing the promised service; *responsiveness*: how responsive the service is and employees’ willingness to help customers; *assurance*: capabilities of employees to build trust; and *empathy*: individualized
attention to and caring for customers. Each of these five dimensions consists of several more specific items that can measure one’s perception of service quality (Parasuraman, et al., 1988).

**Customer Loyalty: Result of Tourists’ Satisfaction?**

Customer loyalty refers to a customer’s repeated purchasing behaviors of a product from the same organization (Edvardsson, Johnson, Gustafsson, & Strandvik, 2000) due to the customer’s commitment (Auh, Bell, McLeod, & Shih, 2007). In the context of tourism, customer loyalty is usually defined as destination loyalty. Much literature argues that customer loyalty is one of the outcomes of a high level of satisfaction (Casaló, Flavián, & Guinalíu, 2008) and it is thus important for companies to improve their quality of the service or products in order to gain customers’ loyalty.

Customer loyalty helps a company to both retain existing customers and to obtain free word-of-mouth (WOM) advertising agents (Chi & Qu, 2008). Similarly, Casaló, Flavián, & Guinalíu argue that customer satisfaction has two outcomes: (1) customer loyalty, and (2) positive WOM (Casaló, Flavián, & Guinalíu, 2008). They argue that customer loyalty can be analyzed using two different components: (1) the attitudinal component, referring to the psychological link between customers and certain products and service, and (2) the behavioral component, including relatively physical aspects like the frequency of visits to a store or the percentage of expense (as cited in Casaló, 2008, p. 402). Kassim & Abdullah (2010) also study the impact of WOM upon customers’ loyalty. They found that both Qatari and Malaysian customers’ satisfaction and trust are positively related to WOM and retention intentions, while WOM is an antecedent of future intentions of revisiting certain places or repurchasing certain products (Kassim & Abdullah, 2010).
Many studies have tied customer loyalty to company success, and loyalty development has been a central aim of many different companies (Andreassen, 1999). Some researchers argue that high satisfaction ratings do not necessarily lead to customer loyalty (Chi & Qu, 2008). One study shows that tourists who are a little unsatisfied with their visits return more frequently than people with the highest satisfaction (Reisinger & Turner, 2011). A possible reason is that tourists who have certain complaints about their trip want to make up for regrets on their visits, while highly satisfied customers feel no need to return because everything was already perfect. As a result, these researchers argue that tourist satisfaction should be replaced by customer loyalty, which is a better predictor of customers’ actual behavior (Chi & Qu, 2008).

While there are many studies examining destination loyalty and satisfaction within a certain area, there are comparatively few that concern the relationship between international tourists’ satisfaction and destination loyalty and the influence of geographic and other barriers upon them. Given the length of the journey from China to the U.S. and the steep costs of time and money, it remains questionable whether the satisfaction of Chinese tourists guarantees destination loyalty.

Finally, tourism and hospitality in context of the national parks differs from that of many other destinations or businesses within tourism and hospitality industry. While attracting tourists and trying to keep them loyal to certain destinations is important, park managers also need to emphasize the preservation of natural or cultural resources. This requires, for instance, attracting the right type of tourists, regular and effective communication with tourists and effective management of tourists’ behaviors, especially in a cross-cultural context.
Tourists’ Satisfaction to Parks or Natural Areas

There is much research that studies influential factors for tourists’ satisfaction to parks or natural areas. Many researchers argue that there is a relationship between visitor use level and their satisfaction. Manning (2001) defines carrying capacity as the amount and type of use that can be accommodated in parks and related areas without bringing unacceptable influences on natural resources and/or visitor experience (Manning, 2001). Beyond a certain level of visitor density, the quality of visitors’ overall recreational experience diminishes (Manning & Ciali, 1980). In regarding to domestic tourists satisfaction level to recreation areas, Manning & Ciali (1980) argue that visitor density influences tourists’ satisfaction. They use a conceptual method that asks tourists to rate their satisfaction from hypothetical use densities and find that there is an evident negative relationship between density and satisfaction; however, this relationship proves to be non-existing when they use empirical data on site to test the same statement (Manning & Ciali, 1980). They explain the differences in results with the following four hypothesis: (1) dissonance: Tourists adopt coping behaviors by giving high ratings to their overall experience no matter what the actual conditions are to reduce internal conflicts; (2) no expectations: Recreationists with little or no experience have no expectations of appropriate density levels and thus have higher satisfaction level; (3) product shift: Increasing density may bring changes to tourists’ experience and cause recreationists to alter their normative definition of density, thus, tourists with more experience may be less favorable towards high use densities; and (4) displacement: recreationists who become dissatisfied with density would move to less crowded areas or visit the same area during weekdays, where and when there are less visitors (Manning & Ciali, 1980). Although they do not find strong support for each of these four hypotheses, their arguments can provide insights into influential factors on domestic tourists’ satisfaction for a recreational experience.
Regarding international tourists, Akama & Kieti (2003) define satisfaction as the difference between tourists’ expectation and what they eventually perceive to have received from different service quality attributes (Akama & Kieti, 2003). They research 29 SERVQUAL attributes of expectation and perception of international tourists’ to Tsavo West National Park, Kenya, and find that there is a positive gap among 26 out of 29 attributes (Akama & Kieti, 2003). They arrive at the conclusion that Tsavo National Park offers relatively high-quality tourism product and services (Akama & Kieti, 2003). Wade & Eagles (2003) use the importance-performance analysis (IPA) to measure tourists’ satisfaction to a Tanzanian national park in the following areas: low level of litter, security from theft, knowledge of the guide, friendliness of the guide, group harmony, friendliness of porters, convenience of registration, security from wildlife attack, availability of information, low level of crowdedness, cleanliness of washrooms, friendliness of Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA) staff, and accommodation (Wade & Eagles, 2003). Similarly, Tonge & Moore (2006) also utilize the IPA to measure tourists’ satisfaction and perceived importance of different attributes of Swan Estuary Marine Park, Australia (Tonge & Moore, 2006). They find out that for most of the attributes such as parking places, presence of signs, presence of dogs, etc., satisfaction exceeds importance and thus no management attention is needed; however, for some other attributes, including condition of the Swan River and associated dual-use paths, presence of litter and wildlife etc., more management is needed (Tonge & Moore, 2006). Fletcher & Fletcher (2003) argue that tourists’ satisfaction to 25 Florida’s state parks is strongly related with maintenance of the park as well as behaviors of park personnel (Fletcher & Fletcher, 2003). Besides, park cleanliness is also important to tourists (Fletcher & Fletcher, 2003). Lee, Graefe, & Burns (2004) use data of tourists visiting Umpqua National Forest, Oregon and find that service quality is an antecedent of satisfaction, and the latter is a mediator between service quality and behavioral intentions (Lee, Graefe, & Burns, 2004). They thus suggest that forest managers could focus on specific attributes that increase tourists’
satisfaction, which can contribute to their behavioral intentions (Lee, Graefe, & Burns, 2004). Arabatzis & Grigoroudis (2010) use items in the following five major categories to measure tourists’ satisfaction to Dadia–Lefkimi–Souflion National Park, Greece: personnel, natural characteristics, infrastructure, recreation facilities, and information-communication (Arabatzis & Grigoroudis, 2010). Chen, Lee, Chen, & Huang (2011) survey tourists to Kinmen National Park, Taiwan, and find evidence that there is a positive relationship between tourists’ satisfaction and each of the following constructs: personal interaction, physical environment, technical quality, and access quality (Chen, Lee, Chen, & Huang, 2011). They argue that customer satisfaction and loyalty can lead to intentions of recommendation and repeat visits (Chen, Lee, Chen, & Huang, 2011). Crilley, Weber, & Taplin (2012) use two approaches to predict overall satisfaction of tourists to Kakadu National Park, Australia: (1) service quality approach: using the IPA that consists of a range of visitor service quality items; (2) benefits approach: measuring the desire and attainment of perceived benefits related to tourists’ recreation experience (Crilley, Weber, & Taplin, 2012). They find out that tourists view guides, maps, directional signage, park infrastructure, clean and well-presented toilet facilities and access to toilet facilities, and availability of a broad range of experiences as highly important, yet these items also need better management (Crilley, Weber, & Taplin, 2012). Meanwhile, the overall ratings of benefits tourists attained are higher than the ratings they gave for their desired experience (Crilley, Weber, & Taplin, 2012). Rodger, Taplin, & Moore (2015) collect data at Karijini National Park, a remote park in north-western Australia, and find that two service quality attributes, ranger presence and provision of an information sheet, can significantly change service quality performance, yet they do not have a statistically significant effect on overall satisfaction or loyalty (Rodger, Taplin, & Moore, 2015).

Within the realm of tourists’ satisfaction, Hwang, Lee, & Chen (2005) focus on tourists’ interpretation satisfaction, or tourists’ satisfaction to interpretation service in those parks (Hwang,
Lee, & Chen, 2005). They use data collected in different natural resources preservation orientated parks in Taiwan, and find that tourists’ perceived place attachment positively influences their involvement, and the latter has a positive significant relationship with tourists’ interpretation satisfaction (Hwang, Lee, & Chen, 2005).

In summary, previous studies argue that satisfaction level of tourists to parks and recreation areas is related to different constructs. They include: visitor use level or tourist density (Manning, 2001, Manning & Ciali, 1980); different SERVQUAL attributes (Akama & Kieti, 2003); different attributes within a park or recreation area that can be measured by IPA (Wade & Eagles, 2003, Tonge & Moore, 2006); other attributes including maintenance of the park, park personnel (Fletcher & Fletcher, 2003, Arabatzis & Grigoroudis, 2010), natural characteristics, infrastructure, recreation facilities, and information-communication (Arabatzis & Grigoroudis, 2010), interpretation service (Hwang, Lee, & Chen, 2005) etc.; desire and attainment of perceived benefits related to tourists’ recreation experience (Crilley, Weber, & Taplin, 2012).

Instead of using measurements such as SERVQUAL and IPA, this thesis is a qualitative study that uses interview transcripts to study constructs that are important to Chinese tourists to natural setting under cultural influences. This thesis aims to study if there are any differences in these attributes of service quality, and how cultures play in Chinese tourists’ satisfaction and revisiting intentions.

**Tourists’ Decision-making, Expectations, Experiences, and Satisfaction to GRTE**

Previous researchers have carried out visitor surveys regarding various aspects of visiting GRTE. Among those surveys, the Grand Teton National Park Visitor Study carried out by Braak, Hollenhorst, Holmes, Papadogiannaki, & Steop (2010) in July 2008 investigates certain trip characteristics of visiting GRTE. This study consists of 90% of U.S. tourists, and among all
tourists, 60% are first-time visitors, 21% have visited GRTE two or three times, and 16% have visited the park five or more times (Braak, Hollenhorst, Holmes, Papadogiannaki, & Steop, 2010). In regarding to tourists decision-making process, this study finds that the majority of visitor groups (89%) obtained information about GRTE prior to their visit, and the most common information sources for these information are: previous visits (47%), maps/brochures (41%), friends/relatives/WOM (40%), travel guides/tour books (39%), and park website (36%) (Braak, Hollenhorst, Holmes, Papadogiannaki, & Steop, 2010). Besides, visiting YELL was the most common reason for visiting the area for 48% of visitor groups, GRTE was primary destination for 28% of tourists, and GRTE was one of several destinations for 74% of the tourists in their travel plan (Braak, Hollenhorst, Holmes, Papadogiannaki, & Steop, 2010). In regarding to tourists’ experience, the most common sites they visited were Jenny Lake (70%), Colter Bay (48%), Moose (46%), Snake River (46%), Jackson Lake Lodge (42%), and Moose-Wilson Road (32%); and the most common activities tourists participated in were scenery/scenic drive (77%), hiking/walking (52%), wildlife/nature viewing & studying/birdwatching (42%), visiting visitor centers/museums (41%), viewing roadside exhibits (37%), and shopping in park bookstores (32%) (Braak, Hollenhorst, Holmes, Papadogiannaki, & Steop, 2010). In regarding to tourists’ satisfaction, 96% of the visitor groups rated overall quality of visitor facilities, services, and recreational opportunities in GRTE as “very good” (58%) or “good” (38%), and only 1% of all tourists rated the overall quality as “very poor” or “poor” (Braak, Hollenhorst, Holmes, Papadogiannaki, & Steop, 2010).

The Grand Teton National Park Focused Visitor Survey conducted in the summer of 2010 at Moose and Colter Bay as well as filled out by tourists at home after the trip also studies similar aspects of tourists’ visit to GRTE. This study involves 85% of white participants and 15% of non-white participants; 44% of the tourists are first-time visitors to GRTE, while 56% are repeating visitors (Williams, Darville, & Legg, 2012). In regarding to tourists’ decision-making,
this study finds that over half of the tourists at Moose indicated that GRTE was their most important destination, while about 30% of tourists at Colter Bay believed GRTE was their primary destination (Williams, Darville, & Legg, 2012). In regarding to tourists’ expectation and experience, it finds that the top ten most important recreational activities at Colter Bay for tourists are: observing wildlife, observing nature, walking, photography, day hiking, camping, picnicking, visiting visitor centers, participating in ranger programs, and visiting museums (Williams, Darville, & Legg, 2012). Tourists’ top ten reasons for visiting Colter Bay included: experiencing nature, wildlife viewing, experiencing wilderness, rustic nature, visiting the lake, experiencing peace and quietness, using marked trails, accessibility, and family friendliness of Colter Bay (Williams, Darville, & Legg, 2012).

Tour Guides’ Role in Tourists’ Experience

Cohen (1985) describes the role of the modern tour guide as one of both pathfinder and mentor (Cohen, 1985). He argues that, in order to play both roles well, tour guides must meet the following four components of their overall task (Cohen, 1985): (1) the instrumental component: the tour guide must smoothly complete the tour. This role consists of leading the way for the other tourists, providing tourists access to non-public places, and ensuring the security of the group; (2) the social component: the tour guide bears some responsibility for the cohesion and morale of the tour group. This involves managing group tensions, socially integrating the tour group; keeping tourists in high morale and in good humor, and encouraging tourists to undertake various activities on the itinerary; (3) the interactionary component: the tour guide must mediate between the tour group and the local population. In other words, guides are responsible for representing both the tour groups and the local communities by interposing himself between them and helping to make the services and amenities of the local communities available to his party;
(4) the communicative component: the tour guide must, finally, select which objects of interest would be most appealing to tourists. S/he must also be careful to provide proper information, transcultural interpretation, and sometimes fabrication of certain objects. Cohen (1985) then distinguishes between four categories of tour guides: (1) the original guide, whose primary responsibility is to fulfill the instrumental component; (2) the animator, who emphasizes the social component; (3) the tour leader, who primarily manages the interactionary component; and (4) the professional guide, who focuses on the communicative component.

Tour guides play an important role in the context of international travel. According to Laws (1995) and Weiler & Ham (2001), the main motivations for tourists to follow a tour guide are, first, to have rewarding yet unfamiliar intercultural experiences; and second, to avoid difficult interactions with the host culture due to unfamiliarity (as cited in Yu, Weiler, & Ham, 2001, p. 76-77). This also explains why many Chinese tourists prefer joining tour groups while visiting the U.S..

Tour guides are also valuable language translators and cultural interpreters (Yu, Weiler, & Ham, 2001). Some researchers argue that they play the role of a “cultural mediator” (Taft, 1981), while others use words like “go-between”, “cultural broker”, and “cultural buffer and intermediary” (as cited in Yu, Weiler, & Ham, 2001, p. 77). In short, the cross-cultural experiences of foreign tourists in tour groups is at least partially filtered and structured by their tour guides (Pearce, 1982). This highlights the important role of tour guides for Chinese tourists traveling in tour groups to GRTE.
Cultural Influences on Tourists’ Experience and Satisfaction

A Review on Cultures and Cultural Dimensions

This section provides a general review of various definitions of culture, the differences between China and U.S. cultural dimensions, and the cultural differences in the context of tourism.

To begin with, culture is a “complex multidimensional phenomenon” and is never in lack of definitions in different research areas (Reiginger & Turner, 2011). Its broad scope increases the difficulties for researchers in sociology, psychology, anthropology, and intercultural communication to reach a consensus on its definition (Reiginger & Turner, 2011). Kluckhohn (1944) argues that culture is a “theory” (as cited in Reiginger & Turner, 2011, p.4); Moore and Lewis (1952) state that culture is an abstraction operator for various social phenomena or a name of a class.

Tylor’s (1924) classic definition for culture is “that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (p.1). Another common theme is “human origins” (Moore & Lewis, 1952). Hofstede (1980) argues that cultures are “the most complete human groups” (p. 26).

Some other researchers define cultures from a behavioral perspective. Barnlund and Araki (1985) state that culture is an abstraction of commonalities among the behaviors of people (Barnlund & Araki, 1985). Cultures can guide an individual’s behavior and help him or her to interpret the behavior of others (Kim & Gudykunst, 1988). Functionalists emphasize the function of cultures in helping members of societies understand rules and reasons for certain behaviors (Reiginger & Turner, 2011). Culture can also be defined from a cognitive perspective. In this context, Hofstede (1980) provides the canonical definition for culture: “the collective
programming of the mind, which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another” (Hofstede, 1980, p. 5).

Hofstede proposes several well-known dimensions of cultures: Individualism versus Collectivism, Large versus Small Power Distance, Strong versus Weak Uncertainty Avoidance, Masculinity versus Femininity (Hofstede, 1984). Trompenaars (1994) adds two more: Achievement versus Ascription, and Universalism versus Particularism. These cultural dimensions differ among countries, generally, but especially among Eastern and Western countries. To simplify matters, Table 1 (below) provides a summary of definitions for different cultural dimensions and Table 2 summarizes how these dimensions may vary across U.S. and China.

Table 1: Definitions of Different Cultural Dimensions based on Hofstede (1984) and Trompenaars (1994)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Dimension</th>
<th>Specific Definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individualism vs Collectivism:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualism: Emphasis on independent accomplishments.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collectivism: Emphasis on interdependent accomplishments.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Power Distance:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large Power Distance: Tolerance &amp; expectation of unequal relationships among people/groups.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Power Distance: Rejection of unequal power distribution among different people/groups.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Uncertainty Avoidance:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Uncertainty Avoidance: Acceptance of uncertainty or risks.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak Uncertainty Avoidance: Little tolerance for uncertainty or risks.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Masculinity vs Femininity:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculinity: Emphasis on achievement.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Femininity: Emphasis on nurture.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Achievement vs Ascription:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement: Status assignment on the basis of achievements.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ascription: Status assignment on the basis of birth.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Cultural Dimensions in U.S. and China based on Hofstede (1984) and Trompenaars (1994)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Dimension</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
<th>China</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individualism vs Collectivism:</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Collective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power Distance:</td>
<td>Small Power Distance</td>
<td>Large Power Distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainly Avoidance:</td>
<td>Weak Uncertainly Avoidance</td>
<td>Strong Uncertainly Avoidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculinity vs Femininity:</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>Feminine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement vs Ascription:</td>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>Ascription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universalism vs Particularism</td>
<td>Universal</td>
<td>Particular</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows that U.S. and China differ across all six cultural dimensions. Samovar and Porter (1991) argue that U.S. and China are among the countries holding the most contrasting cultural dimensions (Samovar & Porter, 1991). In addition, people in different countries have different mental programming, and so may find certain items in an international arena unusual or improper (Hofstede & Bond, 1988). Elements that may vary among different cultural groups include ideology, history, beliefs, languages, development of a country, and geographic locations, etc. (Reiginger & Turner, 2011). With vast cultural differences, the scales used to measure cultural dimensions of Western countries may not have the same validity when applied to Eastern cultures.

These definitions and cultural dimensions not only show the complexity and broad scope of the word “culture,” but also indicate the need for park managers to broaden the scope of tourists’ behavior management beyond merely domestic populations, and to avoid generalizing tourists’ behaviors using a homogenous population. It is important for them to study international
populations to better understand their behaviors and experiences. This will help them to construct and communicate better regulations to tourists and will enhance tourists’ satisfaction with their stay, while preserving natural and cultural resource.

Cultural Differences in Tourism Context

Cultural Differences in the Context of Tourism

Given the likelihood that cultural differences influence the tourist’s behaviors and attitudes, the study of cultures has become an increasingly popular topic among tourism and hospitality researchers (Pizam, 1999; Reisinger, & Turner, 2002).

Cultures and social norms usually have a strong influence on tourists’ expectations and feelings of satisfaction. People from different cultures may hold different views towards the same destination. According to Pikkemaat and Weiermair (1999), tourists’ own cultures play an important role in their destination choice and experience (as cited in Weiermair, 2000, p. 403). The authors argue that tourists visiting new cultures typically do not have social support systems and networks from their original culture. This creates a discrepancy between their expectations and actual experiences, fostering feelings of disappointment, fear, loneliness, or incomprehension toward the host culture (Weiermair, 2000). Cushner & Brislin (1997) argue that these negative sentiments may, in turn, lead to cross-cultural conflicts (as cited in Weiermair, 2000, p. 399).

Cultures in Context of Chinese Tourists’ Trip to GRTE

This thesis defines “culture” as a construct that encompassing social factors such as values, beliefs, social norms, economic and political conditions of a country, geographic
locations, and other different aspects of life. This thesis argues that the cultural backgrounds of Chinese tourists may uniquely influence their cross-cultural trip to U.S. national parks. Using the qualitative data collected from this case study, this thesis then tries to identify which constructs of this “complex whole” (Tylor, 1924) most significantly influence Chinese tourists during those visits.

**Summary**

Based on the literature review above, the general decision-making and visitation process of a tourist to a certain destination can be summarized using a linear model below (Figure 1). After tourists make their decision and arrive at the destination, several factors can influence their satisfaction with the trip. The two most important among them are tourists’ expectations and actual experiences. Tourists’ satisfaction will also influence their future revisiting intentions. For those who are traveling in tour groups, tour guides are the mediator of the tourists in their cross-cultural trips. They can play an instrumental, social, interactionary, and communicative role in the tourists’ experience.

![Figure 1: A Linear Model of Tourists' Travel Experience](image)

Based on Figure 1, this research aims to identify the exact role of cultures and tour guides using the qualitative data in a cross-cultural trip. This study will identify more specifically those concrete constructs that most significantly influence tourists’ decision-making, expectation
formation and experience, satisfaction, and future revisiting intentions under the broad scope of “culture.” This study also examines the influence of tour guides on Chinese tourists’ experience.
Chapter 3

Methodology

Research Questions

This project addresses the following two main research questions:

1. How do cultural differences influence Chinese tourists’ information sources, reasons for visiting GRTE, expectation formation, experience, satisfaction, and future revisiting intentions?

2. What are tour guides’ role in influencing Chinese tourists’ cross-cultural trip experience?

As a means to answering these questions, this thesis identifies influential cultural constructs by seeking similarities and central themes within the interview transcripts. This qualitative analysis hopes to yield an updated model with which to grasp in the cross-cultural experiences of Chinese tourists in U.S. national parks.

Research Methods

To address the research questions, this study involves the following concrete steps:

Determination of Populations

One of the most unique characteristics of Chinese tourists is that, compared with other populations, a large proportion of them travel in groups led by Chinese-speaking or Chinese tour guides. The decision-making processes, expectations, and experiences of individual tourists, when compared with group tourists, may thus differ. Thus, to get a better understanding of both
groups, the researcher interviewed two populations: Chinese tourists and tour guides. The former can be further divided into two sub-groups: individual tourists and group tourists.

Screening Question

Chinese tourists are not easy to identify, since there are many second-generation American Chinese, or people from other Asian countries visiting GRTE that look like native Chinese tourists in appearance. Moreover, cultural values and behavioral norms of these second-generation American Chinese are often different from native Chinese tourists, and people from other Asian countries hold different values and cultural norms. In contrast, people who were born and raised in mainland China or from regions including Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan share similar values and beliefs. Thus, the researcher used a screening question to separate different populations. Prior to the interview, the researcher asked tourists whether or not they have Chinese nationality or are from regions of Hong Kong, Taiwan, or Macau. If they were not from mainland China or these regions, the researcher excluded them from the interview and did not further continue the interviews.

The researcher did not apply this screening criteria to tour guides, since the tour guides leading Chinese tourists in GRTE are more likely to possess U.S. nationality to legally work in U.S. During the interview process, the interviewer also found that many of them were born and raised in China and share similar values and beliefs with native Chinese people.

Interview Process

This project employed two separate semi-structure interview guides targeted at these two populations (Appendix A and B). Questions in these interview guides are related to tourists’
decision-making processes, expectations prior to their visit, their actual experiences at GRTE, their overall satisfaction, future intentions of re-visitation, and the role of tour guides during this trip.

The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews in GRTE from June 15th, 2018 to August 15th, 2018. The interception areas were around Colter Bay Visitor Center and public areas in Jackson Lake Lodge. The above-mentioned two locations were chosen in collaboration with park staff. They are two of the most popular destinations for Chinese tourists. Many Chinese visitors stop at Colter Bay Visitor Center to take a walk, to utilize the restroom, or to wait for tour guides to purchase tickets to GRTE. Similarly at Jackson Lake Lodge, Chinese visitors are taking a walk and viewing sceneries around, having lunch, and using the restrooms. These two locations are indicated by “Interception Location 1 (Colter Bay Visitor Center)” and “Interception Location 2 (Jackson Lake Lodge)” in figure 2. With the interviewees’ permission, the researcher recorded the conversation for further transcription and data analysis.
Figure 2: Interception Locations: Colter Bay Visitor Center and Jackson Lake Lodge (National Park Service, 2016)
Data Coding Process

All 58 interviews with Chinese tourists – 34 interviews with individual tourists and 24 interviews with group tourists – and 11 interviews with tour guides were conducted in, transcribed, and initially coded in Chinese. This is because Chinese is the primary language of tourists and tour guides. However, some meaning may be lost during translation, due to fundamental linguistic differences between the two languages.

Data analysis followed a six-step process: (1) preliminary coding, (2) development of two sets of codebooks for tourists and tour guides, (3) coding of interviews, (4) coding reliability testing, (5) further identification of a set of codes, and (6) analysis of excerpts marked with codes identified in (5).

In (1), three researchers cross-coded 7 randomly selected interviews with tourists and 3 with tour guides. In (2), two sets of codebooks were developed separately based on a discussion of the preliminary coding results. Using the codebooks, researchers then (3) coded interviews with all 58 groups of tourists and 11 tour guides; each researcher was responsible for approximately 23 interviews. When new themes emerged that were not originally included in the codebook, the researchers marked these new codes and discussed them among the group. A consensus was then formed about whether to add new codes or modify existing codes. In (4), researchers randomly cross-coded some of the interviews to ensure inter-coder reliability. After all 69 interviews were coded, the data were analyzed using the software Dedoose, an online platform for analyzing qualitative and mixed methods research with text, photos, audio, videos, and spreadsheet data (Dedoose Version 8.1.8, 2018). Finally, (5) and (6) were conducted after certain parameters were identified. In (6), researchers only read excerpts, sentences, and any other
relative paragraphs that fell within the scope of the study, and included and discusses in this thesis. Only those excerpts marked with the relevant codes were analyzed. There are questions that focus on other aspects of Chinese tourists’ cross-cultural trip in the initial interview guide, or questions that focus on practical park management required by the park administration. Those questions that were not analyzed in this thesis.
Chapter 4

Results

Demographics

From June 2018 to August 2018, the researcher interviewed 58 groups of Chinese tourists – 34 groups of individual tourists and 24 groups of tourists on tour buses – and 11 tour guides. Table 3 shows the demographics of all 69 groups of interviewees. Although some of the interviews started with one specific tourist, their peer tourists would join in the interviews, unsolicited, when they heard their family members or friends being interviewed. The same group of tourists showed similar attitudes towards the same question; thus, this thesis only counts the number of tourist groups in the coding process, instead of the number of all the interviewees. This method of grouping also has the advantage of avoiding biases: during an interview, some people may answer different numbers of questions. Thus, counting the times a theme appeared by the number of interviewees may have biased the results.

In total, 49 interviewees were female and 30 were male, and all of the tour guides were males. In Table 3, the total number of interviewees by gender adds up to more than 58, as do the numbers of interviewees by age group and education level: this is also due to the grouping effect. Some tourists refused to give out their age or education level. Even within the same group of tourists, some chose to share demographic information while others did not. The same case also applied to the 11 tour guides we interviewed.
Table 3: Demographic Information of Tourists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee Types</th>
<th>(Groups of) tourists: 58</th>
<th>Tour guides: 11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Female: 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Male: 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ways of traveling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Groups of) individual tourists: 34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Groups of) tourists on tour buses: 24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24: 14</td>
<td>30-34: 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34: 18</td>
<td>35-39: 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44: 19</td>
<td>40-44:1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54: 14</td>
<td>45-49:1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64: 8</td>
<td>50-54:3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;65: 3</td>
<td>55-59:1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown: 3</td>
<td>Unknown: 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Education level   |                          |                 |
| High school or less: 11; |                 | High school or less: 1; |
| College level: 32; |                          | College level: 10 |
| Master’s degree: 20; |                          |                 |
| Ph.D. degree: 8   |                          |                 |
| Unknown: 8        |                          |                 |

Results in table 3 shows that the population of Chinese tourists to GRTE during this time period tended to be younger and better educated compared to China’s overall demographics (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2018). Travel to a foreign country, especially one possessing evident cultural differences from China and where most residents do not speak Chinese, requires certain language skills and cross-cultural literacy. This would explain the higher educational level among tourists. The time, cost, and physical stamina of the trip also require that tourists be of rather high economic status, in good physical health, and more willing to travel abroad. This can explain the younger age distribution of the interviewees. On the other hand, it is also possible that younger and better educated people were more likely to participate in the interviews.
Despite the fact that there were more females than males among interviewed tourists, all eleven tour guides we interviewed were males. According to the author’s observation, there were no female tour guides leading big groups of Chinese tourists in GRTE in summer 2018.

**Decision-making Process**

**Chinese Tourists’ Usage of Information Sources**

This thesis analyzed two components of Chinese tourists’ decision-making process: information sources Chinese tourists consulted prior to their visit, and their reasons for choosing GRTE as their destination. In particular, it aims to identify the significance of cultural differences and other influential factors that influence the decision-making process of Chinese tourists.

When researching destinations during the planning stage, or when seeking information for travel to GRTE, Chinese tourists often used the information sources shown in the table below:

**Table 4: Information Sources for Visiting GRTE of the Interviewees**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Sources</th>
<th>(Groups of) tourists</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Popular Search Engines</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>E. g. Baidu (9), Google (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel Blogs</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Most popular: Mafengwo (14), Qiongyou (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation by Others</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Others include family members or friends living currently in the U.S. or past tourists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official Website of GRTE</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>In addition, 13 knew about the website but had access issues or language barriers; 8 could not load the website in China or website too slow to load</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour Companies</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15 out of 24 traveling on tour buses, and 1 individual traveler</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It was difficult to completely separate information sources tourists consulted for researching YELL from those tourists consulted for GRTE because the two parks were frequently studied together. Instead of directly searching for GRTE, many of the tourists only searched for YELL initially, saw recommendations about GRTE, and decided to add GRTE to their travel plan. The frequent appearance of GRTE alongside YELL on these information sources may thus had influenced Chinese tourists’ decisions.

Unsurprisingly, Chinese tourists preferred different information sources than those utilized by tourists from the U.S.. For example, popular search engines in China such as Baidu (mentioned by 9 groups of interviewees), Chinese travel blogs on different websites such as Mafengwo (14) and Qiongyou (7), recommendations of others (17), and tour companies (15 groups of tourists traveling on tour busses and 1 individual tourists). Among all 58 groups of Chinese tourists, 17 mentioned visiting the official website of GRTE. However, the main reason for using the official website was to book hotels/lodges within GRTE or YELL. Many claimed that the information provided on the official website was not specific enough, or only containing very general information. Chinese tourists needed more specific information: for instance, hiking recommendations for families with small kids, elderly people, or tourists who are short of time and only staying in GRTE for a few hours. Besides these 17 groups of interviewees, 13 others mentioned that they knew about the existence of the official website of GRTE, but did not use it either because it was hard to access the website from China, or because of language barriers. Eight groups mentioned that they were not able to access the website because it was too slow to load or did not load at all. Some interviewees specifically mentioned that they work in a foreign company in China and thus have the opportunity to use a VPN to access the official website.

Interviewee no. 36 said:
“I didn’t use official websites of national parks here... We traveled here from China, we can’t load many websites in China and it’s pretty troublesome, including [booking]¹ lodges in YELL... Initially I planned to stay in YELL, but I have no way to... Plus I am busy at work...”

Interviewee no. 41 said:

“It [using official website of GRTE or other foreign websites] is very inconvenient for people from mainland China... We can’t load certain websites because of VPN issues. However, I worked for a foreign company in China and can access official websites... ”

It is worthy to note that a great proportion of the interviewees utilized certain kinds of WOM or eWOM during their information search. Altogether 48 groups of tourists reported using at least one kind of WOM (30 groups using travel blogs and 18 following the recommendations of others). The 31 groups of interviewees who used Chinese search engines may also have viewed WOM on the search engine results page.

**Chinese Tourists’ Reasons for Visiting GRTE**

Below is a table that shows reasons the interviewees chose to visit GRTE:

---

¹ Notes and words not presented on the recording are added by the researcher to the transcripts in order to facilitate better understanding, and are marked in brackets in this thesis. All interview transcripts in this thesis are presented in English, however, they are translated from Chinese into English by the researcher.
Table 5: Reasons for Visiting GRTE of the Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for visiting GRTE (Groups of) tourists</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reputation of YELL 28</td>
<td>Reputation of YELL or close distance between GRTE and YELL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business related 7</td>
<td>Business trips to cities nearby, attending meetings in cities nearby, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special programs 6</td>
<td>Work and Travel (WAT), study abroad programs between some Chinese universities and U.S. universities, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other 14</td>
<td>Visiting relatives in the U.S., attending family members’ performance nearby, recommendations of friends and family members who have visited Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE) before, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many of the individual tourists mentioned about accidentally learning about GRTE during their online research for YELL. That is, when reading travel blogs or other online articles, they learned that GRTE was recommended by previous tourists and is in close proximity to YELL, and so decided to add GRTE to their original travel plan. For example, interviewee no. 4 answered:

“We know [i.e. are well aware of the reputation of] YELL. We have also heard of GRTE before, and since it is on the way to YELL, so [we decided to visit GRTE as well although it is not our major destination]. Being the first national park of the U.S., YELL is famous, right?”

The conversation between the interviewer and interviewee no. 40 revealed a similar theme:

“Interviewer: Why did you choose to visit this park [GRTE]?

Interviewee: We are going to YELL, and we are stopping by here.

Interviewer: So you decided to come to GRTE because of YELL?

Interviewee: Yes, yes...
Interviewer: So you know about this park because of YELL?

Interviewee: Well, no... Other tourists wrote about GRTE in their travel blogs...

Interviewer: You mean when you were searching for travel information for YELL, you also saw information regarding GRTE?

Interviewee: Yes, yes...”

Interviewee no. 21, a recent graduate from a U.S. university, responded as follows when asked why she chose to visit GRTE:

“Interviewee: My parents came to visit me because I am graduating.... I think all the parents of students want to visit YELL...

Interviewer: You mean you learned about GRTE because of YELL?

Interviewee: Yes. ”

For those traveling in groups, many stated that their main destination was YELL, and GRTE was included in the tour, but was not an intentional destination. Most of them chose to travel with tour groups because of the convenience – for instance, it saved them the time and energy involved in researching by themselves – and they did not conduct in-depth research prior to this visit. Many of the interviewees said that they only “stopped by” or “dropped by” GRTE during their visit to YELL. For example, interviewee group no. 57 said:

“First Interviewee: We first of all know about YELL ... then GRTE ... GRTE is not our major destination...

Second Interviewee: They are close ... Since we are already here, then we will take the opportunity to visit both. ”
Some tourists even considered GRTE a part of YELL due to unfamiliarity with the parks. For example, interviewee group\(^2\) no. 53 mentioned that:

“Originally when I saw our travel plan, I thought that GRTE was part of YELL…”

For these 28 groups, their initial set of destinations mainly consisted of YELL and other well-known national parks. However, their decision-making process differed from the one mentioned in the choice-set model: instead of forming a smaller set of destination choices from the awareness set, they added GRTE as a destination when they later discovered the close distance between GRTE and YELL or learned of the highly recommended sceneries in GRTE. There was even one interviewee who learned about GRTE upon his/her arrival – at an airport near YELL – and then decided to add GRTE to his/her itinerary.

The popularity of YELL and the relatively unsung reputation of GRTE is a common reason for these tourists’ ad hoc decision to visit GRTE. Instead of gradually narrowing their final destinations from a broader set, they added new destinations to their original set of destinations. During their destination modification process, others’ recommendations or experience seem to have strong influences on their choices. For example, when Chinese tourists read travel blogs strongly recommending a visit to GRTE along the trip to YELL, they were more likely to add GRTE to their itinerary. Some other factors, including the perceived ease or difficulty of visiting, or perceived behavior control may also have been influential. For example, tourists were more likely to visit GRTE upon finding out that YELL and GRTE were located closely to each other, and so would be easy to travel to.

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\(^2\) Those interviews that involve several people are marked as interviewee group no. XX.
Major Differences for Decision-Making among Individual Tourists and Tourists on Tour Busses

Most characteristics for decision-making among individual tourists and tourists on tour busses are similar, however, some major differences among these two populations are illustrated in the table below:

Table 6: Major Differences for Decision-Making among Individual Tourists and Tourists on Tour Busses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information sources</th>
<th>(Groups of) Individual Tourists</th>
<th>(Groups of) Tourists on Tour Busses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Travel Blogs</td>
<td>25 (83.3%), including:</td>
<td>5 (16.7%), including:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mafengwo (11), Qiongyou (7),</td>
<td>Mafengwo (3), Ctrip (1),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TripAdvisor (6), Ctrip (2),</td>
<td>Redbook (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Booking (1), Aribnb (1),</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feizhu (1), Redbook (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search engines</td>
<td>21 (70%), including: Baidu (5),</td>
<td>9 (30%), including: Baidu (4),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Google (6)</td>
<td>Google (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official Website of GRTE</td>
<td>15 (88.2%)</td>
<td>2 (11.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour Companies</td>
<td>1 (6.3%)</td>
<td>15 (93.7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reasons for visiting GRTE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for visiting GRTE</th>
<th>(Groups of) Individual Tourists</th>
<th>(Groups of) Tourists on Tour Busses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special Programs</td>
<td>6 (100%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business-related</td>
<td>5 (71.4%)</td>
<td>2 (28.6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) More percentage of groups of individual tourists (25, 83.3%) referred to travel blogs as well as other social media platforms including Qiongyou, Booking, Mafengwo, etc. than tourists on tour busses (5, 16.7%). Except the fact that there was one individual tourist and one group of tourists that utilized Redbook, for all other types of travel blogs and social media platforms, the percentage of individual tourists that chose to utilize that kind of platform exceeds the percentage of tourists on tour busses.
(2) More percentage of individual tourists utilized search engines including Baidu, Google, etc. Twenty-one groups of individual tourists (70%) utilized certain search engines, while only 9 groups of tourists on tour busses (30%) referred to search engines during their trip-planning process.

(3) More percentage of groups of individual tourists (15, 88.2%) utilized official website of GRTE than tourists on tour busses (2, 11.8%).

(4) More percentage of tourists in tour groups utilized tour companies as one of their information sources. Among all the interviewees, only 1 group of individual traveler (6.3%) mentioned that she utilized tour companies as one of her information sources, while 15 groups of people in tour groups (93.7%) have consulted tour companies during their decision-making process.

(5) In regarding to reasons for visiting GRTE, more percentage of individual tourists visited GRTE because of special programs (6, 100%) or business-related reasons (5, 71.4%) compared to tourists on tour busses (0, 0%, 2, 28.6%). There are no evident differences when comparing the number of tourists for both groups that visited GRTE because of the reputation of YELL.

Cultural Influences on Chinese Tourists’ Information Sources

Besides factors such as different cultural dimensions proposed by Hofstede (1984) and Trompenaars (1994), in a broader sense, culture is a “complex whole” (Tylor, 1924) and encompasses things like language, national economy, policy, and political systems.

There are several potential factors motivating the different preferences for information sources among Chinese tourists. First, according to TAM theory, Chinese tourists’ PEOU of
platforms in the U.S. (e.g. Google or the official website of GRTE) were low because of accessibility issues from China. Baidu, the dominant search engine in China, and famous Chinese travel platforms such as Mafengwo and Qiongyou are much easier to access. For example, interviewee no. 41 mentioned that:

“I know [about the official website of GRTE], yet I didn’t utilize it. When I was searching for information for this trip in China, it was not that easy for me to access foreign websites...”

Similarly, interviewee no. 33 said:

“We can’t use it [the official website of GRTE] in China. I am not satisfied with that.”

Second, Chinese tourists’ perceived usefulness of the Chinese platforms is higher than that of the U.S. platforms because the Chinese platforms have a high reputation and credibility in China. And again, as access to the U.S. platforms is limited, Chinese tourists are just more familiar with the Chinese websites, and so trusted them more. For example, interviewee no. 57 said:

“We are Chinese and thus we prefer to utilize Chinese platforms, such as Ctrip, Mafengwo, etc.”

Interviewee no. 34 answered:

“...we choose to use Mafengwo and Qiongyou more often in China.”

Third, language barriers added to the difficulties of consulting untranslated English websites or non-Chinese books or travel blogs. For example, interviewee no. 8 mentioned that:

“[We didn’t use official website of GRTE.] First of all, we did not know about it well. Secondly, the information [on the official websites] is all in English.”
Interviewee no. 11 answered the following when asked why they did not choose to use the official website of GRTE:

“Yes, because of language barriers.”

In short, due to differences in cultures, national economy, and policy, information searches of Chinese tourists are different from U.S. domestic tourists.

**Cultural Influences on Chinese Tourists’ Reasons for Visiting GRTE**

Among all the interviewees, the most common reason for visiting GRTE was actually the reputation of YELL. The short location between GRTE and YELL compelled Chinese tourists to add GRTE to their travel plan, while YELL was actually their main destination.

This phenomenon partially resulted from the Chinese tourists’ unfamiliarity with U.S. national parks. As a result of the large cultural distance between the U.S. and China, Chinese tourists are more familiar with and more eager to visit only the most symbolic American sites, making YELL a more desirable destination than GRTE. International tourists typically learn about the most iconic landmarks of a country first, and often choose to visit those places during their first several visits. The geographical and cultural distance between U.S. and China have influenced international tourists’ choices of destinations.

**Expectations of Chinese Tourists**

After searching for information about U.S. national parks and making decisions about places to visit, tourists usually form certain expectation about their destinations. The current study has asked tourists to state their expectation prior to their visit. Table 7 shows the interviewees’ expectation in the following five main categories.
Table 7: Expectations of the Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expectations of interviewees</th>
<th>(Groups of) tourists</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wildlife &amp; Natural sights</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>E. g. Mountains (28), Wildlife (25), Lakes (13), etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>E. g. Boating/kayaking/taking the cruise ship (14), hiking (10), photography (9), walking around (8), camping (5), horseback riding (3), fishing (2) etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With specific sights/destinations in mind</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Specifically named places tourists wished to see in GRTE when asked.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without specific sights/destinations in mind</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Tourists did not specifically name places they wished to see in GRTE when asked. These tourists either indicated that they did not have specific places in mind or used general wordings such as “I will just follow my group to whatever places they are going to.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Other expectations: e. g. to improve English; to make friends with people within the tour group and from around the world; to enjoy better environmental quality, etc. Please see below.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Particularly noteworthy are the 16 groups of tourists who told the interviewer specific places they have visited or were going to stop at in GRTE. They included Jackson Lake, Jenny Lake, and Signal Mountain, among others. However, some mentioned sights or activities that actually belong to YELL instead of to GRTE: for instance, viewing geysers, visiting Grand Prismatic, visiting Old Faithful, and so on.

The 31 groups of interviewees who had no specific expectations about GRTE also bear mentioning. This includes Chinese tourists who did not have a specific idea of where they are going to in GRTE, who only chose to stop at random places within the park, or who followed the tour group passively without specifically knowing what he or she would like to see. For instance, Chinese tourists used statements like:
“I just followed the tour group [instead of doing research by myself]”
(Interviewee no. 53);

“I don’t know where we are going to as the next stop” (Interviewee no. 56);

“I can’t remember the names of places we are going to” (Interviewee no. 33);

“We will just stop at random places that we find beautiful.” (Interviewee no. 7).

### Major Differences for Expectation Formation among Individual Tourists and Tourists on Tour Busses

Most characteristics for expectation formation among individual tourists and tourists on tour busses are similar, however, major differences for these two populations are shown in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(Groups of) Individual Tourists</th>
<th>(Groups of) Tourists on Tour Busses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wildlife &amp; Natural sights</td>
<td>30 (63.8%), including: Mountains (21), Wildlife (21), Lakes (13) etc.</td>
<td>17 (36.2%), including: Mountains (7), Wildlife (4), Lakes (0), etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>29 (69%), including: Boating/kayaking/taking the cruise ship (12), hiking (10), walking around (6), photography (4), camping (3), horseback riding (3), fishing (2) etc.</td>
<td>13 (31%), including: Photography (5), boating/kayaking/taking the cruise ship (2), walking around (2), camping (2), hiking (0), horseback riding (0), fishing (0) etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With specific sights/destinations in mind</td>
<td>15 (93.8%)</td>
<td>1 (6.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without specific sights/destinations in mind</td>
<td>20 (65%)</td>
<td>11 (35%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(1) More percentage of groups of individual tourists (30, 63.8%) than tourists on tour busses (17, 36.2%) were expecting to see wildlife & natural sights.

(2) More percentage of groups of individual tourists (29, 69.1%) than tourists on tour busses (13, 31%) were expecting to participate in different kinds of activities.

(3) More percentage of groups of individual tourists (15, 93.8%) than tourists on tour busses (1, 6.2%) were expecting to see certain places in GRTE or were traveling with specific sights/destinations in mind.

(4) More percentage of groups of individual tourists (20, 65%) than tourists on tour busses (11, 35%) were traveling without specific sights/destinations in mind.

Cultural Influences on Chinese Tourists’ Expectations

The author argues that culture influences tourists’ expectations in both narrow and broad senses. Conceived narrowly, the word “culture” directly encompasses constructs related to different cultural dimensions and values, such as those proposed by Hofstede (1984) and Trompenaars (1994). In its broader sense, culture is a “complex whole” (Tylor, 1924) encompassing physical and cultural distances among different countries. We may thus conceive of cultural influences upon the expectations of Chinese tourists as follows. According to the narrow sense of the term, cultural dimensions like collectivism will influence the expectations of Chinese tourists. Instead of expecting to participate in solitary activities, for instance, hiking or kayaking alone, many of the tourists' anticipated activities were collectivistic in nature: for instance, wildlife viewing or photography with others. Moreover, many tourists expressed a preference to follow groups or peer members when visiting places. They were simply planning and expecting to see whatever their peers were going to see. Many of them gave answers
such as “I will follow the group. (Interviewee no. 53)” Secondly, cultural distances also influenced Chinese tourists’ expectations. Due to relatively large cultural distances between the U.S. and China, many Chinese tourists were not familiar with U.S. national parks and thus had no specific expectations prior to their visit.

Satisfaction Level and Future Revisiting Intentions of Chinese Tourists

The satisfaction level of Chinese tourists was relatively high. Two questions were directly related to satisfaction level of Chinese tourists: (1) For first time visitors: It seems to be your first time to GRTE. What did you expect to experience and see here? Have you seen them already? (If not,) Are you disappointed? What do you think national parks could do to lessen your disappointment/enhance your satisfaction? (Question No.5 in the interview guide) (2) If I asked you to give a score, from 1 to 10, to your trip this time, what score would you give? (The research assistant would then prompt interviewees for reasons for missing points.) (Question No.10 in the interview guide)

After learning about the satisfaction of the Chinese tourists, the interviewer also asked them whether and why they planned to revisit GRTE. The section below elaborates on their satisfaction levels, future revisiting intentions, and reasons for satisfaction or lack of intentions for re-visitation.

Mean Score for Chinese Tourists’ Satisfaction Level in GRTE

Interviewees rated their satisfaction level for their GRTE trip from 1 to 10, with 1 indicating the lowest and 10 the highest level of satisfaction. Among 58 groups of interviewees, 45 groups of interviewees, or 46 tourists gave a score for their satisfaction level; this includes two people in the same group that gave a different score (one gave a 6 or 7, while the other person gave an 8). If
tourists mentioned a score such as “6 or 7”, the researcher averaged their scores. Thirteen groups of interviewees did not give a score. This was due either to a lack of time to answer, an unwillingness to answer because their trip had not yet started, they were staying in GRTE for a very short time, or to the interviewer’s forgetting to record the answer during the interview. The mean score for the 46 interviewees was about 8.3 out of 10. This score should be interpreted cautiously since this is a qualitative study.

Although the high score indicates a high level of satisfaction, there are reasons to believe that the interviewees’ scores may have been somewhat biased and so may not reflect the tourists’ actual satisfaction. While the question explicitly asked about tourists’ satisfaction with GRTE, many of the interviewees still rated their trip to both YELL and GRTE together, rather than rating GRTE alone. Many answered that since they were staying in GRTE for a very short time, they were unable to provide a score separately for GRTE, but gave us an overall rating instead. As already stated above, this can be explained by the fact that GRTE was not the main destination of many.

**Reasons for not being Disappointed**

After asking tourists to rate their satisfaction level, the researcher continued with the question, “it seems to be your first time at GRTE. What did you expect to experience and see here? Have you seen them already? (If not,) Are you disappointed?” The researcher used a follow-up question if tourists said they were disappointed: “What do you think the national parks could do to lessen your disappointment/enhance your satisfaction?” Below are some of the reasons Chinese tourists gave for being either not disappointed or somewhat disappointed.
Twenty-one groups of Chinese tourists mentioned that they were not disappointed about their experience even if some of them mentioned that they did not see things they were expecting to see. These are some of the reasons they gave, organized into seven categories:

(1) Tourists attributed their seeing or not seeing wildlife to “Yuan,” or “Yuanfen,” or “Suiyuan,” that is, to pure luck or fate (3 groups of interviewees). For example, after mentioning that they had not yet been able to see the wildlife the expected to see, interviewee no. 38 added that:

“...whether or not we are able to see them depends on luck and ‘Yuan’.”.

(2) Tourists emphasized or exemplified the traditional Chinese values of satisfaction, contentedness, or acceptance of one’s situation (7 groups of interviewees). These interviewees all mentioned being satisfied with what they already had. For example, below is a conversation between the interviewer and interviewee group no. 40:

*Interviewer: What are you expecting to see here in GRTE?*

**First interviewee:** We want to see wildlife such as moose, deer, and bears.

**Second interviewee:** We are expecting to see [those animals], but haven’t. We are also expecting to see some geological sights.

**Third interviewee:** Mountains covered by snow.

*Interviewer: Have you seen them all yet?*

**First Interviewee:** Not yet, except moose.

*Interviewer: If you don’t see those animals by the end of your trip, will you be disappointed?*

**First Interviewee:** No. Sights here are fairly good.

**Second Interviewee:** I think we won’t be disappointed. We are satisfied with our current status. It’s good here.
Third Interviewee: We reconcile ourselves to our situation.

Another conversation between the interviewer and interviewee group no. 17 ran as follows:

Interviewer: So did you see things you were expecting to see?

First Interviewee: Not really. Probably because of sights shown in TV shows such as <Animal World>... [I am expecting to] see animals from a relatively close distance, yet it’s not like this in reality...

Interviewer: Are you disappointed then?

First Interviewee: Well ... Not really. First Interviewee: Well ... Not really.

Second Interviewee: I am not disappointed. I think having the chance to visit GRTE is fairly good already.

Third Interviewee: Fairly good.

Second Interviewee: Be satisfied.

Third Interviewee: Sights here are fairly good.

Interviewer: So you are saying that when you travel, your actual experience doesn’t necessarily need to fully speak to your expectations ...

Second Interviewee: Yes. I think we just need to travel spontaneously. I think I am relaxed and happy when I am traveling ...

(3) Tourists argued that they should be in awe of nature, accept the fact that humans cannot get too close to certain natural things, and it is understandable if they should not see or get close to sacred things (1 interviewee). Interviewee no. 42 mentioned that she was expecting to hike on snowy mountains. But she did not dare to go, ultimately, because of the sacred nature. She said:

“No [I am not disappointed], this is what nature is like. [We should have] a sense of awe. If you are not allowed to approach something sacred, then
you shouldn’t approach it."

(4) Some tourists reported either that their expectations had already been met, that they did not have very concrete expectations (6 groups of interviewees). Besides mentioning that views in GRTE were beautiful, or that they have been lucky enough to view certain wildlife already, many gave such relatively general answers as:

- *It is pretty good, so I am not disappointed.*
- *It is ok, I am not disappointed.*

(5) Due to the lack of knowledge about GRTE, some tourists either had no or low expectations prior to their visit. For these tourists, their actual experience easily met or exceeded their expectations (4 groups of interviewees). For example, interviewee no. 18 answered:

*First Interviewee:* We just arrived and don’t know [what we are going to see], yet views here are beautiful already ...

*Interviewer:* So you are not disappointed?

*First Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* If you can’t see wildlife you are expecting to see, will you be disappointed?

*First Interviewee:* Well, it’s ok for me. I think we come here to ...

*Second Interviewee:* Our main purpose this time is to have a good rest.

*First Interviewee:* Yes, our main purpose to is have a good rest. We are not actually expecting to see certain things.

Interviewee no. 7 also said:

“I am not demanding too much this time, anyways. I am not staying here for long.”
(6) If they were not totally satisfied with this trip, tourists would “transfer” more expectation onto future trips in a way that dampened disappointment for the current trip. For example, interviewee no. 39 mentioned s/he was not disappointed about being unable to see bears during their first visit to the GYE. However, this was his/her second time visiting GRTE; and as s/he still did not see a bear, s/he now felt disappointed. Some tourists showed understanding for their unmet expectations during their first visit. But again, this indicates the possibility that they transferred some of their unrealized expectations onto future visits, which may result in their being more disappointed later.

(7) Tourists were understanding and accepting of uncontrollable factors that contributed to certain disappointments during their trip; as a result, they were generally more tolerant of contingencies. For example, some of the interviewees mentioned that although they would prefer better weather conditions or to see more wildlife, there is not much park managers can do about that. For example, no. 10 interviewee answered the following:

“It is impossible [and improper] if the park uses cages to trap wildlife for tourists to see. [Laugh]”

In summary, the first three categories of reasons are more or less related to traditional Chinese cultures, attitudes, and values. We may thus conclude that traditional Chinese cultural values influence Chinese tourists’ satisfaction. The fourth and fifth categories of reasons indicated that the tourists’ original expectations may have influenced their satisfaction level. Previous research had found that meeting and exceeding expectations contributes to higher levels of satisfaction. But in the current study, it was those tourists with only general expectations, low, or no expectations at all that were most likely to feel satisfied at the end of the trip. The sixth category also concerned the expectations of tourists, but concerned the transfer of current unrealized expectations onto future visits. This, we found, generally explained a low degree of disappointment
for first-time visitors. The last category examined tourists’ understanding for uncontrollable factors that arise in many kinds of trips, regardless of the destination, length of travel, types of tourists, etc.

**Reasons for Disappointment**

When asked about whether or not tourists were disappointed about their trip, 9 groups of interviewees mentioned that they were disappointed or somewhat disappointed because of unfulfilled expectations. The reasons for their disappointment or dissatisfaction can be summarized according to the following three categories:

1. Unable to see things they had anticipated seeing. More specifically, among these nine groups of interviewees, five claimed to be disappointed because they did not see kinds of wildlife they expected to see. For example, interviewee no. 39 mentioned:

   “I am expecting to see a bear... I’ve been here before once and also didn’t have the luck to see a bear at that time. It depends on luck... I feel like I would be disappointed if I still couldn’t see a bear this time. I wasn’t able to see a bear during my first visit here, it was ok for me.”

   Others expressed disappointment about not seeing wolves, elks/moose, etc.

2. Certain uncontrollable factors, like bad weather conditions, prevented tourists from being satisfied. Among unsatisfied tourists, three mentioned that they were feeling bad because of the bad weather conditions. For example, Interviewee no. 19 said:

   “Yes, we are disappointed about certain things ... We planned to make a four-day hike in a loop. However, it is too slippery due to heavy snow at our original destinations and it is so dangerous to go there that we can’t make it this time. We have to change our hiking plan to go to one
place a day, come back [to the hotel where we are staying and go to
another the next day], which means we simplify our original plans.”

No. 14 interviewee mentioned that:

“We stayed in Yellowstone for four to five days. However, it happens to be
rainy all the time ... We are pretty sad about it. I took my mom to some
famous places, but the weather is pretty frustrating ...”

(3) There were several other miscellaneous reasons. One of the nine interviewees
mentioned that she is somewhat disappointed because:

“After seeing the views, I feel like they are not that impressive. Yet I still
feel like I should come and visit the parks by myself in person.”

When disappointed tourists were prompted to think about how the park might lessen their
disappointment, many understood that their feeling was due to uncontrollable factors and park
managers can do nothing to alleviate the situation.

**Future Revisiting Intentions of Chinese Tourists**

Although the satisfaction level of Chinese tourists is high, many tourists reported being
unlikely to revisit GRTE in the future. For example, interviewee no. 17 said:

“[We are not probably not going to revisit GRTE.] First of all, GRTE is
too far away [from China]; Secondly, to make a trip like this requires a certain
economic status. I was here today and I have already gained certain impressions
of GRTE. If I am going to make another trip in the future, I will probably prioritize
other places [that I haven’t visited before] first. For example, I’ve been to North
America; maybe I will visit South America in the future ...”
Many previous studies argue that a high level of satisfaction will lead to a high likelihood of re-visitiation. But according to the results of this study, highly satisfied Chinese tourists were reluctant to revisit GRTE, as it requires more physical efforts, financial resources, and more time, and so on. And when tourists make the required efforts and spend money and time to travel abroad, they are more likely to prioritize places they have not visited before. We may thus conclude that some cultural constructs, including geographic boundaries and physical distance, can influence the revisiting intentions of even highly satisfied tourists.

**Cultural Influences on Chinese Tourists’ Satisfaction and Future Revisiting Intentions**

Chinese tourists tend to have a high satisfaction level after their visit, which is strongly influenced by culture. Certain uncontrollable factors, such as weather, influenced their satisfaction level and their perception of service. However, the traditional Chinese beliefs in fate and destiny, contentedness, and the sanctity of nature acted as a buffer even when tourists’ original expectations went unmet. That is, these beliefs mediated between higher expectations and tourists’ actual experiences, lessening their negative reactions. As a result, most Chinese tourists left with a positive impression of U.S. national parks.

Despite their high satisfaction levels, many Chinese tourists would not choose to revisit GRTE because of the physical distance between the two countries. Geographic boundaries create the obvious physical obstacles, but also require a significant investment of time and money. These conditions thus mediate between tourists’ satisfaction and future intentions. Contrary to previous research pairing high satisfaction levels with high revisiting intentions, this thesis found that cultural constructs including physical boundaries impact revisiting intentions, even when tourists are highly satisfied.
The author also admits that national parks belong to “once in a lifetime tourism destinations”, and are on the bucket list for some western tourists and some of them may not visit a same national park a second time despite a high satisfaction level (Rivera & Croes, 2010, Pinkus, Moore, Taplin, & Pearce, 2016).

**Comparison of Chinese Tourists and Domestic Tourists to GRTE**

Based on a comparison of travel characteristics between Chinese and domestic tourists reviewed before, this study finds the following similarities and differences:

(1) In regarding to tourists’ information sources, many U.S. tourists obtain information from previous visits, maps & brochures, and park websites, while Chinese tourists rely more on certain Chinese search engines and travel blogs, which can be explained by different national technical infrastructure and policies. Both population rely heavily on WOM, including recommendation from family and friends.

(2) One of the most important reasons for both U.S. and Chinese tourists to include GRTE in their travel plan is the willingness to visit YELL. However, while the primary destination of about 30% - 50% of domestic population is GRTE, GRTE is not the primary destinations for almost all the Chinese interviewees. This can be explained by cultural distances between the two countries.

(3) In regarding to tourists’ expectation and experience, while some places and activities mentioned by both populations overlap, such as Jenny Lake, Colter Bay, wildlife and nature viewing, etc., there are also some differences between domestic and Chinese tourists. For example, many domestic tourists are expecting to visit Moose, Snake River, or participate in activities such as birdwatching or shopping in park bookstores, while few or no Chinese tourists.
mentioned these places or activities. This can also be explained by cultural distances between U.S. and China, as well as by certain cultural dimensions such as collectivism.

(4) Finally, in regarding to tourists’ satisfaction, both populations are highly satisfied with their visit to GRTE. While some constructs such as pride for U.S. national parks might explain for high satisfaction level of domestic tourists, this thesis uses qualitative data to identify those influential cultural dimensions and values that may result in a high satisfaction level of Chinese tourists.

Influences of Tour Guides

For those who traveled in a tour group to GRTE, tour guides played an important role. The author interviewed 11 tour guides about the role they were playing during Chinese tourists’ cross-cultural trip and their influences on tourists. Below are themes in the results:

Influences of Tour Guides on Chinese Tourists’ Expectation Formation

Some tour guides mentioned that they have an influence on what Chinese tourists traveling on tour busses were expecting to see. Among the 11 tour guides interviewed, two lacked the time to respond to the question. The other 9 tour guides mentioned following themes:

(1) Tourists were expecting to see sights and wildlife tour guides mentioned, except those who have done research by themselves prior to their visit. For example, tour guide no. 5 answered:

“*What tour guides say together with information tourists see at certain places [will influence tourists’ expectation]. Let me give you an example: when tourists see signs showing footprints of bears, they ask me whether or not there are bears in*
this park; and when I answer yes, tourists begin to expect an encounter with a bear...”

(2) Tourists were expecting to hear about U.S. cultures or stories told by tour guides, which were relevant to sights they saw in GRTE. Tour guide no. 10 mentioned:

“Both [U.S. and China] have amazing sights. Tourists not only come to U.S. to see its sights, but also to experience its cultures... When you see a tree or a mountain in a foreign country, it has different meanings [with the ones you see in your own country]. Simply taking photos of a sights or mountains is boring, however, when they relate the sights they are currently viewing with the cultural stories tour guides told them, it becomes interesting.”

In short, tour guides viewed themselves as the source of certain expectations for Chinese tourists. Chinese culture has a larger power distance, for instance, as those traveling on tour buses viewed tour guides as an authority, accepting the power distance between them. They were also likely to be influenced by the words of the tour guides, with their expectations often shaped or even created by tour guides. This was especially the case for those who had not made specific plans and did not have specific expectations.

Influences of Tour Guides on Chinese Tourists’ Behaviors and Actual Experience

Tour guides mentioned that they influence Chinese tourists’ behaviors and actual experience using methods such as introducing park information and regulations, facilitating and leading the trip, correcting tourists’ misconception about U.S. or U.S. national parks, and correcting tourists’ improper behaviors etc. Below are relevant themes mentioned by tour guides when asked about their role in facilitating the trip and influencing Chinese tourists’ experience:
(1) Introducing different aspects of U.S. culture to Chinese tourists, including history, geography, and cultures; facilitate communication between two different cultures. For example, Tour guide no. 9 mentioned that:

“My role is to convey U.S. cultures, [information about] sceneries, U.S. customs to Chinese tourists.”

(2) Playing the role as a “leader” and take Chinese tourists to different places, including beautiful places to visit and service facilities such as restrooms. Tour guide no.1, together with the bus driver, mentioned:

“Interviewee: “My role is a leader…. I lead them to different places of interests...”

Interviewee: “We take tourists to visit some famous places.

Interviewer: What are those places in GRTE that you take tourists to?

Interviewee: In GRTE... Jenny Lake... Jackson Lake, and Lewis Lake...”

(3) Playing the role as a translator or coordinator. Tour guide no. 7 said:

“For tourists from mainland China, tour guides play the role of a coordinator. They coordinate among tourists and local restaurants, hotels, etc. Some tourists do not speak English and you need to help them to order food.”

No. 1 tour guide said:

“If tourists need help, we will help them and make sure their problem is solved, before letting them to view the sceneries on their own.”

“Sometimes tourists can’t find the restrooms or restaurants, and [due to limited cellphone service] they can’t successfully make a call [to me to ask about that]. In these cases, if the tourists need to order something [at a restaurant], we need to arrange that in advance.”
(4) Correcting improper behaviors of Chinese tourists in the U.S. For example, No. 9 tour guide mentioned that:

“Most people in this tour group are good-mannered... However, there are some people in some tour groups that are ill-mannered. We have to educate those people...”

No. 7 tour guide said:

“[I convey GRTE regulations to tourists] during our visit. Many times what to remind tourists of and what might happen are beyond your expectation. I will communicate about some common sense regulations to tourists, such as you are not allowed to feed wildlife in U.S. national parks, you are not allowed to take flowers, stones, twigs with you.... I will correct improper behaviors of some tourists, such as [I told them that] you should stand in a line, you should not be too loud, you should wait in a line to take photos...I will remind them of these things.”


No. 4 tour guide mentioned that:

“...To lead them to learn more about park regulations and raise their environmental awareness.”

No. 2 tour guide said:

“[I need to] remind them to pay attention to safety. There are a lot of wild animals here, especially in a national park. Tourists get excited when they see wildlife. I have to play the role as a “bad guy” and remind them not to be too close to wildlife.”
In short, tour guides can influence Chinese tourists’ expectation formation by recommending certain places to visit or activities to participate in; or conveying U.S. cultural stories to tourists. Besides, they can influence Chinese tourists’ behaviors and actual experience by introducing different aspects of U.S. cultures; playing the role of either a leader, a translator, or a coordinator; correcting improper behaviors of tourists by education; or introducing park regulations to tourists that may to some extent change their visitation behaviors.
Chapter 5

Conclusion and Discussion

Conclusions on Culture’s Impact on Chinese Tourists

Based on the qualitative analysis, the study concludes that cultures and tour guides impact Chinese tourists’ visits to U.S. national parks. This impact ranges over every part of the journey, from their initial decision-making processes to their post-trip intentions to revisit. The most influential cultural dimensions include geographic boundaries and distance, cultural distances, national technical infrastructure and policies, and different cultural values.

China’s national technical infrastructure and policies contributed tourists’ lack of familiarity with U.S. national parks. As a result, Chinese tourist’s decision to visit GRTE was more ad hoc in nature and often an add-on to YELL. The large cultural distances between the two countries left many of the interviewees without specific expectations about GRTE. Cultural dimensions, including collectivism and high power distance, influenced their expectations and experiences. Tourists’ experience and satisfaction level was influenced by unique Chinese cultural values, including collectivism, contentedness, beliefs in fate and destiny, and the sanctity of nature. Finally, after their trip, despite a high satisfaction level, the physical distance left many tourists reluctant to revisit GRTE. For those travelling in groups, tour guides proved to have a strong influence over tourists’ expectations and experiences.

Due to influences of cultures and tour guides, international tourists show different travel behaviors and characteristics when compared to domestic tourists. This, in turn, demands different management practices from park managers.
Hypothized Models

Based on the results, Figure 3 offers a hypothesized model. The contribution of the conceptual model is its emphasis on influences of different constructs of cultures.

Figure 3: A Modified Model: Influential Factors of International Tourists’ Cross-cultural Travel Experience

This thesis argues that, in a narrow sense, the word “culture” encompasses the different cultural dimensions and values proposed by Hofstede (1984) and Trompenaars (1994). In the current context, China and the U.S. stand on opposite ends of the cultural dimensions of collectivism vs. individualism and large vs. small power distance. This study found that these cultural values and dimensions influence tourists’ expectations. China’s collectivist values led Chinese tourists to form collectivistic expectations of site activities. They are more willing to participate in activities together with their family members and friends. Similarly, these cultural values and dimensions can also influence Chinese tourists’ actual experiences, as they were more
likely to visit sights that involving more collective engagement or to participate in more collectivistic activities in GRTE.

Besides, traditional Chinese cultural values also influenced tourists’ satisfaction level. Whether or not tourists’ expectations were met, Chinese tourists tended to have a high satisfaction level. Cultural values such as contentedness, the awe and sanctity of nature, and acceptance of distance from certain natural/sacred sights, and strong beliefs in Yuanfen/Yuan all contributed to their high satisfaction level.

On the other hand, the broader sense of “culture” also encompasses political factors such as national technical infrastructure, nation-specific policies, physical boundaries, cultural distances, languages, etc. According to Tylor (1924), culture is “that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (p.1).

In our case, national technical infrastructure and political factors influenced tourists’ choices of information sources. Since Google and many other websites are blocked in China, most Chinese tourists did not use Google as their major search engine and did not utilize the official websites of GRTE and YELL. Instead, they utilized local search engines such as Baidu and consulted local Chinese-language websites.

Second, cultural distances also influence Chinese tourists’ choices of destination during the decision-making process. Since they were not familiar with U.S. national parks, tourists’ main reason for visiting GRTE was its proximity to YELL. Many tourists made ad hoc decisions about visiting GRTE, adding it to their itinerary during their trip.

Third, because of cultural distances between the two countries, many interviewees were not familiar with GRTE and did not have specific expectations prior to their visit.

Finally, previous research argues that good experience and a high level of satisfaction on one visit positively impacts tourists’ future visiting intentions. However, this thesis found that the
geographic boundaries between the U.S. and China left Chinese tourists feeling unable or unwilling to revisit GRTE; and this was despite their high level of satisfaction. Instead, they tended to prioritize visiting other destinations around the world, given enough time and money.

Figure 3 provided a general framework of influential factors for Chinese tourists’ experiences in GRTE. However, we also found some differences between individual tourists and group tourists. China is a country with relatively high level of collectivism and power distance, and tour guides play an important role in the overall cross-cultural experiences of group tourists. Since only those traveling in tour groups depend on tour guides, tour guides only play a key role for this population.

Figure 4: A Modified Model: the Role of Tour Guides for Chinese Tourists on Tour Busses

Figure 4 highlights tour guides’ influences on Chinese group tourists. Chinese tourists chose to join a tour group mainly for the conveniences of relying on a tour guide for trip planning. Many also lacked English language skills, American cultural literacy, and familiarity with the destinations. Tourists recognized their guides as “authorities” during the trip, and the
large power distance within Chinese culture meant that Chinese tourists were more likely to be influenced by what tour guides told them. This, we saw, was especially so for those without specific expectations and those most unfamiliar with U.S. national parks. Tour guides also possessed the capacity, at least in part, to regulate tourists’ behaviors inside the park and to influence their participation in park activities. In short, tour guides serve as a buffer during cross-cultural trips and have a strong impact on tourists traveling in groups.

**Theoretical Contributions**

The first contribution of this study is that it identifies several influences of cultural dimensions on international tourists’ cross-cultural trip. This research looks more closely at impacts of different dimensions of culture from both a narrow and a broad sense. The construct “culture”, or this “complex whole” (Tylor, 1924) is broken into more concrete dimensions and their influences on different stages of a cross-cultural trip were analyzed.

Our second contribution is the provision of a revision of decision-making models. Different from the choice-set model (Bradlow & Rao 2000, McCabe, et al., 2015), This study found that instead of gradually narrowing destinations from a broader set, Chinese tourists added new destinations to their original set of destinations due to cultural distances between China and the U.S..

Our third contribution is that contrary to previous research, this research found that high satisfaction level of Chinese tourists’ may not necessarily lead to high revisiting intentions. Due to geographical barriers between two countries, Chinese tourists are not as likely to revisit U.S. national parks despite a high satisfaction level. This finding indicates that some previous findings may not hold true in a ubiquitous context when taken cultural influences into consideration.
The fourth contribution is that this thesis looks more closely at the role of tour guides for Chinese tourists traveling on tour busses. Most research have focused on tourists themselves instead of taking this cultural mediator into consideration. Tour guides can strongly influence tourists’ expectation formation, actual experience, which will further influence their level of satisfaction during a cross-cultural trip. Thus, tour guides are worth further research with different population or at different destinations in future research.

**Practical Implications**

Based on the results of the study, park managers may adopt the following to both improve the satisfaction level of Chinese tourists and to protect natural resources:

**Practical Implications in regarding to Tourists’ Decision-making Process**

(1) Since Chinese and domestic visitors utilize different information sources (Table 4), park managers could choose appropriate platforms to reach Chinese visitors and communicate information about visiting GRTE. These should include those search engines (Baidu, etc.) and tourism platforms popular among the Chinese (WeChat, Mafengwo, Ctrip, etc.).

(2) Since a great proportion of the interviewed tourists relied on WOM (Table 4), and given the popularity and credibility of some of the WOM platforms mentioned, WOM is a useful platform in which to educate Chinese tourists about proper behavior and regulations, so that they may be better stewards of the park during their visit.

(3) The main reason Chinese visitors choose to visit GRTE is the reputation of YELL (Table 5). Due to this, GRTE managers may want to work with YELL managers to provide travel
and regulation information jointly, preferably through commonly used sources of information noted above.

Practical Implications in regarding to Tourists’ Expectation Formation, Experience, and Satisfaction

(1) Since Chinese visitors are expecting to participate in more collectivistic activities in nature, such as wildlife viewing or photography with others (Table 7), park managers could better facilitate and manage those activities.

(2) Most Chinese visitors stay in GRTE for a very short period time and do not conduct extensive research beforehand (Table 7). It would be especially helpful to provide information about places to visit or activities that are tailored to different populations or to people with different needs: for instance, families with kids, young people, elderly people, or people seeking adventure. If some of the information is available already, park managers may try to make it more user-friendly to Chinese tourists.

(3) Since more individual tourists than tourists on tour busses were expecting to see wildlife and natural sights or participate in different kinds of activities (Table 8), tourists on tour busses could be encouraged to participate in more varieties of activities, including wildlife and natural sights viewing, in order to be better engaged with rich resources in GRTE. This could be done through better communication with tour companies and tour guides, or through different educational signs or brochures available or distributed to tourists on tour busses.

(4) Since group visitors are strongly influenced by tour guides, better training for tour guides can facilitate park managers with visitor management. Well-trained tour guides can mediate between park officials and visitors, can break down language barriers and minimize cultural
misunderstandings between these two groups. Better education and training can also help tour
guides to more effectively convey park information and regulations to Chinese visitors. For
example, tour guides could be more knowledgeable about places to take visitors, and could learn
cultural and natural stories that would better inform visitors about U.S. national Parks. It would
also be helpful for tour guides to emphasize park regulations when introducing visitors to the park’s
natural and cultural sights.

(5) Information translated into Chinese language may lessen language barrier issues for
Chinese visitors. However, because Chinese visitors may also have different beliefs and values
associated with park resources, different messaging strategies than the ones used with domestic
visitors may be needed to increase compliant behaviors. In other words, simply translating
messages from English into Chinese may not be sufficient for Chinese visitors, as concepts like
“wild”, “wildlife”, and perceptions of danger may have very different annotations in Chinese
cultures.

(6) The satisfaction level of Chinese tourists in GRTE is high and only a limited number
of tourists were actually disappointed. However, there is still potential for park managers to
enhance tourists’ experience based on their reasons for disappointment, such as providing more
updated or real-time information about wildlife appearance via different channels, including flyers,
screens or boards at the visitor center, newspapers, different websites or APPs.

**Limitations and Future Research**

Although this study contributed to existing literature, certain aspects require further
investigation. First, the word “culture” encompasses many other constructs that differ across
countries. Future researchers need to investigate the impact of other cultural constructs on
tourists’ experiences. These constructs might include religion, food, clothing, etc.
Second, this study is limited in the number of interviewees, the places of interviews, the time period over which it was conducted, and the nationalities of interviewees. More data investigating different populations at different places and times is needed to identify other influential factors of cultures under different circumstances.

Third, due to the research design and procedure of the study, and the limited time some tourists would like to spend with us, some of the answers tourists gave were not in-depth enough. This was especially true for group tourists and tour guides, since they were on a relatively tight schedule. Thus, they would rather spend more time sightseeing than being interviewed. Future research would require interviewing tourists over a longer time period, in order to gain more informative answers to some of the research questions. Besides intercepting tourists on site, future research is needed that reaches out to potential interviewees both before and after their trips.

Fourth, due to the interview procedure and the collectivistic culture of Chinese tourists, some of the peer tourists of our interviewees would join in the interviews, unsolicited, when they heard the author interviewing their family members or friends. This may somehow bias the interviews. Future research that utilizes other methods interview tourists is needed to possibly avoid negative influences of this grouping effect.

Fifth, all the tour guides the author interviewed during summer 2018 are males. Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to study the reasons for and influences of this phenomenon, future research that explores possible reasons and impacts is needed.

Finally, since the research is a qualitative study, it is unable to further identify quantitative relationships among different constructs shown in figure 3 and 4. Future quantitative research is needed to better understand relationships among these constructs.
Appendix A

Survey and Interview Guideline for Chinese Tourists Traveling on Tour Busses/Individual Tourists

I. Self-introduction 自我介绍
My name is Rui and I’m a graduate student in Penn State University working on a summer research project on understanding Chinese visitor’s behavior to GRTE. The results will be used by GRTE to understand Chinese visitors and improve their service. Would you mind answering a few questions? You can talk as long as you want to or stop at any time. (if Yes) May I record the conversation? The recording will be deleted after the completion of the project and your answers will stay anonymous and confidential.

您好，我叫李睿，是宾州州立大学（Penn State University）休闲、公园和旅游管理专业的研究生。我们正在进行一项研究，希望访谈一些中国游客，研究成果会被大提顿国家公园用来了解他们在公园内的旅游行为，改进公园服务，提高他们的游览体验。不知您是否愿意参与我们的访谈呢？只要您愿意，访谈没有时间限制，您也可以随时停止访谈。（如果您同意），我将会对您的访谈进行录音。录音会在项目完成后删除，您的回答不会被泄露，会被匿名保存。

II. Screening question 筛选问题
What country/area/province from China/ are you from? (Screening question. Stop if he/she is permanent resident of U.S.)

请问您来自哪个国家 / 地区 / 省份呢？（如果对方是美国永久居民，停止访谈）

III. Behavioral questions 旅游行为问题
1. When did you make the decision to come to GRTE (Grand Teton National Park)?
   Why did you choose to visit GRTE?
   How did you find out about GRTE?

您是什么时候决定要来大提顿国家公园的？
为什么你选择了大提顿国家公园呢？
您是如何知道大提顿国家公园的呢？
2. Please tell me the rough plan of your current visit to the U.S.
If they missed anything below, prompt them to answer:
How long are you going to stay in the U.S.?
What cities/places do you plan to visit during this trip?

请告诉我一下您这次来美国的大致旅游计划。
如果他们没有谈到下列问题，可以给出以下提示:
您大概会在美国呆多久？都会参观哪些地方 / 城市呢？

3. Please recall any materials that you have used to obtain information for your visit to GRTE prior to this visit.
Do you know the official website of GRTE? Do you find it helpful?

请回忆以下您来大提顿国家公园之前都用了哪些材料收集信息呢？
知道公园官方网站吗？觉得公园官网对你帮助大吗？

4. Please tell me about some of your previous experience to national parks/nature-based destinations/outdoor recreation in the U.S. and in China.
If they missed anything below, prompt them to answer:
Any thoughts/Do you find any differences from here?

请告诉我一些您之前在美国或者中国参观国家公园 / 自然旅游景点 / 户外旅游的经历。
如果他们没有谈到下列问题，可以给出以下提示：
有什么感想吗？ / 和这里的不同？

5. For repeated visitors: please tell me something about your previous experience within GRTE. What makes you come to GRTE again this time? What do you expect to be different/remain the same?
For first time visitors: It seems like to be your first time to GRTE. What did you expect to experience and see here? Have you seen them already? If not, are you disappointed?

For repeated visitors: 请告诉我一些您之前在大提顿国家公园的旅游经历。是什么让您决定再次来访？您希望这次来大提顿国家公园有什么不同 / 保持不变？
For first time visitors: 您似乎第一次来大提顿国家公园。您期待在大提顿国家公园体验和看到什么？您已经看过这些了吗？如果没有，您失望吗？
What do you think national parks can do to lessen your disappointment/enhance your satisfaction?

针对非第一次来大提顿国家公园旅行的游客：请告诉我一些您之前在大提顿国家公园旅行的经历。为什么您选择再次来这里旅行呢？与之前来的旅行相比，您期待这次旅行有什么不同 / 相同的地方？

针对第一次来大提顿国家公园旅行的游客：看起来您是第一次来这里旅行。您期待在这里看到或体验到什么呢？都看到您想看的东西了吗，（没有看到的话），会觉得失望吗，您觉得国家公园能够做什么减少您的失望？

6. What places did you visit in GRTE this time? Why do you choose to visit these places?

在大提顿国家公园内，您都参观了哪些地方呢？为什么您选择参观这些地方？

7. What do you think about the service provided here? Anything you like or dislike?

您觉得这里的服务如何？您有什么喜欢 / 不喜欢的地方吗？

8. Any activities that you anticipate to participate in GRTE? Any activities that stand out?

您期望在公园内参加什么活动吗？您有没有什么印象深刻的活动？

9. Please tell me about your overall experience within GRTE this time. Anything that stands out? Anything do you like/dislike?

您这次的总体旅游体验是怎样的？有什么您喜欢 / 不喜欢的地方吗？

10. If I ask you to give a score, from 1 to 10, to your trip this time, how many scores will you give? Prompt for reasons for missing scores.

如果我让您给此行打分，如 1 到 10 分的话，您会给这次旅行打多少分呢？追问扣分原因。
11. How are you sharing your experience during this trip with others on your trip?

您在这次旅行的过程中，是如何与他人分享您的旅行体验的呢？

12. Imagine you are back home, how are you going to share your visit experience with family and friends back home?

请想象您旅行之后回到了家中。您将如何与亲朋好友分享您的这次旅行经历呢？

13. Do you have other comments/suggestions/recommendations for GRTE?

您对大提顿国家公园有什么其他的评价/意见/建议吗？

14. How has this trip changed your feelings towards nature-based destination/outdoor recreation/national parks in the U.S. and China?

本次旅行是如何改变您对中美自然旅游景点/户外娱乐/国家公园的看法的呢？

15. If you would like to visit GRTE again, what are you probably going to change about your next visit? E. g. planning methods, materials used, traveling mode, traveling transportation, places visit, length of stay, activities within GRTE, etc.

(If interviewee indicates that they would not likely to visit GRTE again :)

Why will you not visit GRTE again?

如果您以后还想再来大提顿国家公园旅行，您希望下次旅行有什么改变呢？如，您的旅行计划方式，使用的参考资料，交通工具，游览的景点，旅行的时间，在公园内参与的活动等。

（如果受访者表示他们不太可能再来大提顿国家公园旅行：）

为什么您不会再来这里旅行了呢？

16. Do you have other comments/thoughts you want to add?
IV. Some Concrete questions for facilities within GRTE
有关大提顿国家公园内一些具体的问题

1. What is your expectation for safety within GRTE?
   If they are not sure about the answers, prompt them to answer:

   E. g. Unsafe places/trails/roads should be clearly marked with signs or be forbidden to enter, park rangers should be around unsafe places, people should take their own responsibility of not entering unsafe places, etc?

您对公园内安全的期待是怎样的？

如果他们没有谈到下列问题，可以给出以下提示：

如，危险的地方应该有标识、管理员应该在危险的地方管理游客、游客应该对自己的安全负责，等。

2. What do you believe is the safe distance of viewing or photographing wild animals?

您觉得观看或者拍摄野生动物的安全距离是多少？

3. Given the nature of the park and locations of facilities, some restrooms have to be pit toilets with no running water, In regards to the restroom facilities without running water, what could be done to better facilitate your experience?

由于公园地理位置偏远和条件限制，公园内很多洗手间是没有流动冲水的旱厕。您对这个问题怎么看待？您觉得什么样的洗手间设施可以更好的辅助您公园内的如厕体验？

4. What are your thoughts on the quality of the food provided in Grand Teton National Park?

您觉得公园内的饮食质量如何？

V. Demographic questions 基本信息

1. Observe the gender of the interviewee;
记录受访者的性别；

2. In what year were you born, if you are comfortable to answer?

如果您愿意回答，您是在哪年出生的呢？

3. What is the highest level of formal education you have completed?

您的最高学历是什么？

4. With whom are you traveling?

您这次是和谁一起旅行的呢？

5. What is your English proficiency?

您的英语程度如何呢？

6. (For tourists on tour busses) How well do you think your tour guide does when showing you around this area?

（对于参团的游客）您觉得导游的能力如何呢？
Appendix B

Survey and Interview Guideline for Chinese Tour Guides

I. Self-introduction 自我介绍
My name is Rui and I’m a graduate student in Penn State University working on a summer research project on understanding Chinese visitor’s behavior to GRTE. The results will be used by GRTE to understand Chinese visitors and improve their service. Would you mind answering a few questions? You can talk as long as you want to or stop at any time. (if Yes) May I record the conversation? The recording will be deleted after the completion of the project and your answers will stay anonymous and confidential.

您好，我叫李睿，是宾州州立大学（Penn State University）休闲、公园和旅游管理专业的研究生。我们正在进行一项研究，希望访谈一些中国游客，研究成果会被大提顿国家公园用来了解他们在公园内的旅游行为，改进公园服务，提高他们的游览体验。不知您是否愿意参与我们的访谈呢？只要您愿意，访谈没有时间限制，您也可以随时停止访谈。（如果您同意），我将会对您的访谈进行录音。录音会在项目完成后删除，您的回答不会被泄露，会被匿名保存。

II. Questions 问题
1. What is your role in planning this trip? 在计划本次旅游的过程中，您扮演了怎样的角色？

2. What do you see your role in facilitating this trip and in influencing visitors’ experience? 您认为您在辅助游客游览并影响游客行为的过程中，扮演了怎样的角色？

3. What are the challenges when you are leaving a group of Chinese visitors? 当您需要离开您所带的旅行团的时候，您遇到了什么样的困难？

4. How do you communicate GRTE attraction information to visitors? 您是如何向中国游客传递大提顿国家公园的景点信息的呢？

5. How do you communicate GRTE regulations and rules to visitors? 您是如何向中国游客传递大提顿国家公园的旅游管理规则的呢？
6. How do you communicate with tourists when you have conflicts, if any?
   和游客有争执的时候，您是如何和游客进行沟通的呢？

7. What do you think are the expectations of Chinese visitors’ who visit Grand Teton National Park?
   您认为中国游客对他们的大提顿国家公园之旅抱有什么样的期待？

8. Do you have any other comments? Other thoughts you want to add?
   您有什么其他评论吗？您还有什么其他想说的？

III. Demographic questions 基本信息
1. Observe the gender of the interviewee;
   记录受访者性别；

2. In what year were you born, if you are comfortable to answer?
   如果您愿意回答，您是在哪年出生的呢？

3. What is the highest level of formal education you have completed?
   您的最高学历是什么？

4. What is your English proficiency?
   您的英语程度如何呢？

5. What kind of training have you received from your company? Have you had any experience related to GRTE? How well do you think you know about GRTE?
   您获得了什么类型的工作培训？您是否有关于GRTE的相关经验？您认为自己对GRTE了解程度如何？
您接受了公司的何种训练呢？您自己有什么在这个公园的经历吗？您觉得您自己对公园的了解程度如何？
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