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**THE EXAMINATION OF IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN TOURISM
REPRESENTATION DISCOURSE**

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by
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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to explore the complex and volatile nature in the construction of identity manifested in tourism representation discourse. The study is composed of three parts. The first part focuses on how the Mosuo people represent themselves and their community, Lugu Lake, and examines the identity constructed in their self-representation discourse based on their gender. The second part targets how the state represents the Mosuo people and Lugu Lake and then locates the national identity reflected in its representation discourse. The third part discusses how tourists represent the Mosuo people and Lugu Lake and detect their identity as revealed in their representation discourse. The data for the first part of the study include two autobiographical books written by a local woman and weblog narratives from a local male weblog host; the data for the second part of the study comes from official newspaper articles reporting on the Mosuo people and Lugu Lake, and the data for the last part of study are travel accounts posted by tourists on weblogs about their travel experiences in Lugu Lake. To analyze the data, Critical Discourse Analysis was employed. The study findings indicate that identity constructed in tourism representation discourse is differential according to sociocultural contexts. One of the most significant contributions of the present study is its support to poststructural theorization of identity by proving that identity as a rhetorical being is unstable and molded by complex social circumstances; future studies are needed to examine such complex social circumstances more critically.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	vi
LIST OF TABLES	vii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	viii
Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
Overview	1
Statement of the Problem.....	2
Purpose of the Study	5
Research Questions	6
Limitations	7
Delimitations.....	7
Definitions.....	8
Chapter 2 EXAMINING THE SUBALTAN’S SELF-ETHNOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION: THE CASE OF THE MOSUO PEOPLE.....	10
Introduction.....	10
Literature Review.....	12
The Construction of Other as Subaltern in Tourism	12
Alternative Approach in Theorizing Tourism Representation	16
The Construction of Other in China.....	19
The Mosuo	22
Study Methods	25
Method	26
Literary Expression of Self	27
Findings and Discussion	31
The Primitive Home Village and the Pristine Lugu Lake Area	31
The Shy vs Emancipated Mosuo People	32
Sameness and Rationalization of Local Customs.....	36
Conclusion	40
Chapter 3 THE STATE’S REPRESENTATIONS OF THE INTERNAL OTHER: THE CASE OF CHINA’S MATRIARCHY	43
Introduction.....	43
Literature Review.....	46
The Postmodern Construction of Self	50
Tourism Development in Post-Mao-Era China.....	53
The Mosuo	57
Study Methods	59
Method	59
Data	63
Findings and Discussion	63

The Feminized Other.....	64
Economic Growth	67
Authenticity Issue.....	68
Conclusion	72
Chapter 4 AN EXAMINATION OF TOURISTS' SELF-IDENTITY IN TOURIST WEBLOGS	75
Introduction.....	75
Literature Review.....	77
Identity Construction as a Discursive Practice.....	77
Weblog as an Innovative Way to Access the Travelers' Self-Identity.....	80
Self-Identity in the Postmodern Condition.....	82
The Post-Mao-Era China.....	83
The Mosuo	86
Study Methods	87
Method	88
Data	91
Findings and Discussion.....	92
The Urban Self-Identity	93
The Alternative Identity	95
Conclusion	99
Chapter 5 CONCLUSION.....	102
Overview of Study	102
Overview of Study Results	103
Part One.....	104
Part Two.....	106
Part Three.....	107
Significance of Study.....	108
Recommendations of Future Studies	110
Conclusion	111
Bibliography	113

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2-1: Map of predominant Mosuo region.....	23
Figure 3-1: Map of predominant Mosuo region.....	58
Figure 4-1: Map of predominant Mosuo region.....	86

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4-1: Major Foci of Articles	93
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Overview

Tourism as an experiential industry is different from other traditional industries in that its products are the intangible experiences one has in a tourism destination. Tourists cannot see the concrete products when they plan to purchase. Consequently, representation has become a critical vehicle to make tourism products familiar and known to tourism customers. In the representation process, the tourism destination and a unique travel experience are portrayed in rhetorical form. Scholars, nevertheless, have identified that such tourism representation process constructs a specific way of talking rather than reflecting on objective knowledge (Cohen, 1993; Echtner and Prasad, 2003). They argue that by managing the way that the images are projected about a tourism destination and the manner that travel experiences are described, tourism representation becomes a source for the production of certain meanings (Britton, 1979; Mellinger, 1994). Therefore, it has raised researchers' attention to examine the meanings constructed in the tourism representation process, in particular, to expose people's identities upon which these meanings are built.

Based on the understanding from the symbolic interactionist perspective, the identities refer to "the meanings one has as a group member" (Stets and Burke, 2005, p. 132); thus the meanings constructed in the tourism representation process become the critical focus of identity studies. Meanwhile, since the ability of the tourism representation process to produce meanings is made possible by language (Hall, 1997), to study people's identities, it is necessary to examine

the linguistic practices in the tourism representation process. Nevertheless, when the tourism representation process produces specific meanings, language is not only employed as a form of communication to share the meanings, but as a way of practice to form a specific way of talking. Therefore, in representation studies, the term “discourse” is used to replace “language” to refer to such dual functions. As a result, the study of people’s identities actually is the examination of discourse as a system of representation.

Since discourse as a way of practice can decide what meaning should be produced by constructing a specific way of talking, people as subjects can take a specific discourse to present their identities, which encapsulate the meanings they claim as group members in the form of symbols. Scholars have identified that the tourism representation process is composed of three major parties, which include the state, tourists, and local people (Hall, 1997; Jenkins, 2003). Each party as an independent group can construct a specific discourse to claim its own identity, and each identity encompasses a specific meaning reflected in that constructed discourse; however, it is not known whether each party really claim its own identity by constructing a specific discourse. In particular, since tourism representation discourses focus on interpreting the meanings imbued to tourism products, the complexity of meanings constructed in representation discourses should be examined. Furthermore, based on poststructural notion about the dynamic, fluid, and multiple nature of subjectivity, the identity building upon a specific subject position also bears the same characteristics. Therefore, how tourism representation discourses demonstrate such nature of identity needs to be explored.

Statement of the Problem

According to Hall (1997), representation refers to the process of producing meanings about the concepts in people’ minds through language. Since tourism is an experiential industry,

its products have to be introduced to its potential customers through the representation process which, in turn, confers the meanings to tourism products. Consequently, representation has become one of the major topics studied in the tourism field. However, previous tourism representation research has primarily focused on the representation discourses constructed by either state or trade media. No doubt, the state and trade media, which control the mass media, have obtained the predominant power in constructing representation of tourism products. Nevertheless, it cannot be ignored that the local people of tourism destinations and tourists, who are the other two critical parties composed of the representation process, also have initiative to raise their own voices because tourism representation involves complex power struggles among different stakeholders based on their various motivations (Bruner, 1996; Hasty, 2002; Leong, 1989).

Furthermore, it is the discourse that enables the representation process to create meanings. Both local people and tourists can use language to communicate and construct their own ways of talking; thus, they can utilize discourse to create meanings. In particular, the meanings they create as two independent groups should be different so as to make its own group distinguishable from the others. In other words, they have their own identities. Even if the state or trade media, local people, and tourists as three major parties composed of the tourism representation process have been widely recognized as three independent entities, such a notion is taken for granted, and there is a lack of in-depth examination of their identification. In particular, it is unknown on how all of them as subjects employ tourism representation discourses to construct their identities. Given that meanings produced in the tourism representation process deeply influence people's interpretation about tourism products, their motivation and satisfaction for travel, and mutual understanding among peoples between the home and host societies, it is necessary to explore how these three parties construct their interpretation in their identification process.

Apart from the limitation of the previous tourism representation research in providing a panorama view of the whole tourism representation process by merely focusing on studying the representation discourses of state or trade media, a more critical view of identities constructed in representation discourses is also necessary. Essentially, the previous tourism representation research has held a dualism notion when studying identity constructed in representation discourses. For example, by emphasizing the practice of representing host communities and local people as a completely different counterpart of the mainstream society in the state or trade media representation discourses, both the host and home societies are treated as monolithic entities and their identities are interpreted as opposing and clear-cut. Such understanding of identity is actually embedded in the essentialist view of self which is treated as a unified, static, and simple entity. As a result, the nuance and complexity of identities constructed in representation discourses are ignored.

Based on poststructural thought, self is a complex and volatile conglomerate composed of various subject positions (Lacan, 1997). Therefore, a person can change and take multiple positions or role relationships in society as he/she interacts within the context of a complex and differentiated society. Since an identity would be formed when self as subject holds a position in society, there are multiple identities a person can claim. Those identities are also unstable. For instance, self as son is an identity, as is self as student, and self as any of the other possibilities corresponding to the different positions one may hold. Meanwhile, the same self can change the identity from son to father, from student to teacher when one takes a new social position. Thus identity bears the nature of complexity, fluidity, and multiplicity. Furthermore, such nature can be detected by examining tourism representation discourses because discourses are imbued with the meanings one constructs based on a specific or multiple position(s) in society.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims at exposing the complex, fluid, and multiple nature of identity by focusing on examining tourism representation discourses. Going beyond previous research built upon modernist essentialism, this study anchors its theoretical framework on the poststructural conceptualization of identities. Since identities are the reflection of subject positions one holds in a complex and differentiating society, one can claim multiple identities simultaneously and change the identities to correspond to the various roles one may play. Concerning the local people in a host community, the state, and the tourists as the three major parties composing the whole tourism representation process do not exist in a vacuum but emerge in social interaction within the context of a complex and differentiated society, it is necessary to have an in-depth understanding about how they construct their identities.

The present study includes three parts. The first part focuses on examining the heterogeneous nature of identities constructed in self-representation discourses of local people based on their gender factor. In this part, the unique social and cultural systems practiced by local people known as the Mosuo are taken into account in examining self-representation discourses; in particular, it is concerned with whether the local officially-recognized matriarchal systems contribute the heterogeneous nature of local people's identities. The second part explores the fluid nature of identities demonstrated in the state representation discourses. This part of the study aims at examining how China, which is experiencing a social-transition period, constructs national identities by representing the Mosuo people and their community. The purpose of this study is to identify whether the transitory characteristics of societal development may contribute to the complex and fluid nature of identities. The last part of the study targets locating the multiple nature of identities exposed in representation discourses of tourists concerning the local people and host community. Given that tourists traverse between their home

and the host societies, which have different social norms and cultural values, it needs to be investigated whether their plural social positions may facilitate exposing the multiple nature of identities.

Different from previous tourism representation research, which merely focused on the discourses of state or trade media, the present study examines the discourses of all three major parties composing the whole representation process. They include the self-representation discourses of local people, tourists' representation discourses about local people and host community, and the official representation discourses from the government. To capture these multiple voices, the data in this study include official newspaper articles about tourism in the Lugu Lake area, written materials from the Mosuo people in both published autobiographies and a personal weblog, and tourists' travel weblog accounts about experiences in the Lugu Lake area.

Research Questions

Q₁: Does the self-representation discourse of the Mosuo people reflect their agency in constructing the images about themselves? Does such self-representation discourse demonstrate the heterogeneous nature in representing themselves based on the structural forces (refers to the gender factor)?

Q₂: Is the subjectivity shaped in the official representation discourse about Lugu Lake and the Mosuo people fragmented? Do such multi-faceted voices reflect the fluid nature in the construction of national identities during the social-transition period?

Q₃: Do the tourists' accounts of their travel experiences in Lugu Lake and their interaction with the Mosuo people demonstrate the plurality of their social situations? Does this result reveal the multiple nature in the construction of self-identity?

Limitations

Limitations of this study pertain to the adequacy of study data sources and the characteristics of China as the study setting. Although a thorough collection of official newspaper articles about the Mosuo people and the Lugu Lake area has been done, it is not guaranteed that such collection obtains all official representation discourses. Due to the increasing ability for local people and tourists to represent themselves, probably some other self-representation forms besides autobiographies and blogs are not captured in the present study. In particular, this study is restricted to the self-ethnographic documents in Mandarin and English, whereas, an examination of the discourses in other languages could make a significant contribution to the current study. Additionally, since the state-control on speech and censorship of published texts is not uncommon, future research needs to be concerned about which media is controlled, sanctioned, or just tolerated by the state. Furthermore, unlike previous research, the present study focuses on China, a developing country experiencing a dramatic social transformation, its unique socio-cultural characteristics should be considered when study results are applied to other contexts. Last but not the least, since critical discourse analysis is an interpretative approach and interpretations are often subjected to the given context and available information, there is no ending in research employing critical discourse analysis; it is always open to new contexts and new information.

Delimitations

The delimitations of the present study encompass the types of representation discourses selected for the analysis, the influence of authors' socio-cultural characteristics on the

interpretation of data, and dependence on the conceptualization about the engagement of representations with sociopolitical values.

Definitions

Representation is the production of meaning through language (Hall, 1997, p. 16).

Discourse is an entity of sequences of signs in that they are enoncements (enoncés) (Foucault, 1969, p. 141).

Social Transformation refers to the change of society's systemic characteristics (UNESCO, 2009).

Identity refers to “the meeting point, the point of *suture*, between on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to ‘interpellate’, speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be ‘spoken’” (Hall, 2005, p. 5-6).

Postmodernity refers to a particular set of generalized developments that may constitute a new cultural paradigm and social consciousness (Uriely, 2005, p. 200).

Matriarchy¹ refers to a society of economic reciprocity at the economic level, a non-hierarchical, horizontal society of matrilineal kinship at the social level, egalitarian society of consensus at political level, and a sacred society at the cultural level (Goettner-Abendroth, 2005).

Matrilineality¹ “refers to a system of reckoning descent through the female line” (Sered, 1996, p. 48).

¹ Matrilineality as a societal system focuses on the kinship structure which is built upon maternal lineage and involves the inheritance of title and/or property from one’s mother or one’s maternal ancestors. However, matriarchy does not only focus on the matrilineal kinship, but also relates to the power controlled by one’s mother’s lineage in social and economic contexts. Although no places have been known as an unambiguous matriarchal society, the Mosuo culture has been officially classified by the Chinese government as a matriarchal culture, and local people have used this official categorization to attract tourism. The present study examines tourism representation discourses built upon this official

categorization; therefore, the author selects this official way of defining local culture. However, this study did not investigate the extent to which the Mosuo culture is matrilineal and/or matriarchal, which is potentially a very contested discussion for a different kind of empirical examination.

Chapter 2

EXAMINING THE SUBALTERN'S SELF-ETHNOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION: THE CASE OF THE MOSUO PEOPLE

Introduction

With the fast growth of the tourism industry, places for tourists to visit are rapidly increasing. In the promotion of tourism destinations, their touristic representation and image construction has become a critical issue. Destination image directly influences potential tourists' decision making and the satisfaction levels for their experience (Chon, 1992; Cohen, 1993; Gartner, 1993; Mellinger, 1994; Schein, 1997). Building their understanding of tourism representation from the marketing context, tourism scholars have predominantly focused their research of tourism representation on the state and tourism trade media. Nevertheless, despite the widely recognized importance of local people's roles in the representation process, there is a scarcity of recent research examining how local people construct meanings through their self-representation discourse. Since representation is a meaning construction process through language which is not determined by dominant mass media but affected by the interpretation of local people through their interaction with tourists (Hall, 1997; Jenkins, 2003), it is important to understand the local people's way of talking by analyzing their self-representation discourse.

Furthermore, Foucault has asserted that "power does not 'function in the form of a chain' – it circulates" (Hall, 1997, p. 49). A number of scholars have argued that representations of tourism destinations and local people are not static but negotiated, and local people have the agency to resist the dominant representation about them (Adams, 1984; Bruner, 1996; Cohen, 1993, 2001). However, previous studies of self-representation discourse follow the essentialist

view of the local people and treat them as a homogeneous entity (Duncan and Sharp, 1993; Spivak, 1988). Consequently, the complex and differential nature of subjectivity constructed in self-representation discourse based on the different social positions of local representatives is neglected (Adams, 1984; Bruner, 1996; Cohen, 1993, 2001). Such limitation reflects the postcolonial nature of researchers' theoretical positioning. In particular, such postcolonial nature of theoretical positioning prevents people from having a more critical view of self-representation discourse.

Thus to have a deeper understanding of self-representation discourse does not merely require the shift of research focus from the mainstream representation discourse to the local people's discourse, but also needs to understand the heterogeneous character of subjectivity constructed in self-representation discourse. In other words, by recognizing the multiple and complex nature in the construction of identity built upon various social positions of local representatives, the plural meanings constructed in self-representation discourse can be identified, and differential practices regulated by these meanings can be understood (Duncan and Sharp, 1993). Particularly, counting against essentialism, poststructural feminists have raised the issue about the gendered nature of representation discourse (Aitchison, 2000; Spivak, 1988). According to the thesis of poststructural feminists, women and men are different and such difference is constructed in language and discursive practice (Butler, 1990). However, it is not known how local people construct such gender difference in their self-representation discourse.

Additionally, in the current postmodernism world and with the development of the large-scale domestic tourism market within developing countries, social power relations constructed in the process of representation are increasingly complex and cannot merely be reflected in the relation between the former colonized and their colonizers, but also significantly influence the development of national identity in a place like China (Gladney, 1994; Schein, 1997), an "Oriental" country with a tradition and history of resistance to Western colonialism and

dominance and a country with a complex history of internal disputes of ethnic and ideological dominance and subversion. In other words, how local people construct gender difference by employing self-representation discourse in a unique sociocultural setting warrants further examination.

This study expands upon previous representation studies by focusing on the local people's discourse rather than the discourse of the state or the tourism industry, and it further identifies how local people speak for themselves in the self-representation process. In particular, rather than treating local people as a uniform essentialized entity and being circumscribed by the dominance of dualism in conceptualizing Othering, the complexity of local people in fighting against the hegemonic representation of themselves is examined by analyzing the texts written by both local men and women and published in the mainstream mass media. Additionally, the poststructural feminist perspective is drawn in this research to theorize the gendered nature of the self-representation process. More significantly, different from most previous research focusing on international tourism, this study aims at studying how people from a Chinese ethnic minority group officially recognized as matriarchal resist external dominant representations.

Literature Review

The Construction of Other as Subaltern in Tourism

Tourism is different from any other industry in that its products, the intangible experiences in tourism destinations, are not available for consumption until tourists arrive at their particular destinations. Therefore, the decision making process of potential tourists and the level of satisfaction for their experience are heavily dependent on tourists' pre-trip perceptions about the destinations. To construct such perceptions about tourism destinations in tourists' minds and

make the intangible products more concrete, a variety of promotion materials are employed to construct desirable images of the destination (Morgan and Pritchard, 1998). In other words, tourists' imagined experiences are manifested in the images and discourse introducing the tourism destinations. To understand how the tourism industry influences tourists' perception about tourism destinations, a number of researchers have studied the image construction of tourism destinations in promotion materials (Bandyopadhyay and Morais, 2005; Buzinde, Santos, and Smith, 2006; Morgan and Pritchard, 2000).

In regards to both international and domestic tourism promotions, researchers have identified that the meanings attached to tourism destinations and local people reflect the marketing and promotion strategies adopted by the tourism industry which aims at providing places and people as pleasure products for tourists to take interest in (Britton, 1979; Echtner and Prasad, 2003; Schein, 1997; Urry, 2002). No matter whether tourists seek authenticity or hedonistic pseudo-events, they are nevertheless engaged in consuming and (re)producing images and experiences that contrast with their usual life. Based on such tourist-oriented promotions, tourism destinations, particularly those in marginalized places, are generally portrayed as backward, archaic, stagnant, and sensual in contrast with the tourists' Self who is the symbol of being superior, advanced, dynamic, and rational (Cohen, 1993; MacCannell, 1976).

Such a representation practice reflects upon the construction process of the Other, or Othering, which refers to "defining where you belong through a contrast with other places, or who you are through a contrast with other people" (Rose, 1995, p. 116). Tourism scholars have built almost exclusively their theoretical conceptualization of Othering on the work of Said (1979) about the western social construction of Orientalism. Said defines Orientalism as a way of thinking that reflects the "Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (1979, p. 3). According to Said's notion of Orientalism and broader postcolonial theory (Young, 2001), the West's representations of non-West places and people as primitive,

backward, exotic and sensual are inherently related to the colonial ideology. These representations automatically valorize the West as the signifier of superiority in contrast to the backward Orient. Based on such theorization, tourism researchers attributed these representations prevalent within tourism promotion materials (e.g., post cards, travel brochures, magazine and newspaper travel articles) as a manifestation of the colonial discourse that justifies the West's use and rule over the Orient (Bandyopadhyay and Morais, 2005; Cohen, 1993; Echtner and Prasad, 2003).

Furthermore, the process of constructing Otherness is closely related to the construction of dualisms. Such a relationship is manifested in three perspectives (Aitchison, 2001). First, the construction of the Other heavily relies on a parallel construction of "the Same," something on the opposite side of the Other. Second, this relationship is a manifestation of power relations, which featured more power on the 'Same' side than on the 'Other'. Last, this relationship also reflects gender relations whereby "Otherness is projected on to women by, and in the interests of, men, such that we [women] are constructed as inferior and abnormal" (Wilkinson and Kitzinger, 1996, p. 4). Therefore, the process of Otherness in tourism representation discourse is widely regarded as much more than promotion and rather as a manifestation or even as a mechanism supporting contemporary power relations of dominance and dependence between people and countries (Cohen, 1995; Enloe, 2001).

Nevertheless, tourism scholars, particularly cultural and feminist geographers argue that tourism studies within the social sciences has been severely circumscribed by Western hierarchical dualisms which are built upon the post-Enlightenment dichotomies of culture/nature, public/private, urban/rural, masculine/feminine, and Self/Other (Aitchison, 1999; Johnston, 2001). The following is an explanation of the dualistic nature of representing Others from social and cultural geography perspectives:

A dualism is a particular structure of meaning in which one element is denied only in relation to another or others. Dualisms thus usually involve pairs, binaries and dichotomies, but not all pairs, binaries and dichotomies are dualisms. What makes dualisms distinctive is that one of the terms provides a 'core', and it is in contrast to the core that the other term or terms are denied. Thus dualisms structure meaning as a relation between a core term A and a subordinate term(s) not –A. . . . dualisms are very often gendered and hierarchised, so that the core term A is masculinised and prioritised, and the subordinate term(s) not – A are feminised. . .and postcolonial accounts of the colonisers' Other are also describing a dualistic relation (Gregson, Kothari, Cream, Dwyer, Holloway, Maddrell, Rose, 1997, p. 84–85).

Furthermore, Butler (1990) in her discussion about the nature of social and cultural discourse has asserted that:

the boundaries of analysis suggest the limits of a discursively conditioned experience. These limits are always set within the terms of a hegemonic cultural discourse predicated on binary structures that appear as the language of universal rationality (Butler, 1990, p. 9).

According to Spivak (1988), the binary nature of hegemonic cultural discourses is also prevalent in postcolonial studies conducted by western intellectuals and eastern scholars educated in the West and deeply influenced by positivist paradigm and Western logocentrism. Based on her notion, having been obsessed with the pursuit of truth and certainty, those researchers neglect the diversity in the nuances of micro and marginal cultural phenomena, and ultimately may reinscribe neo-colonial imperatives of political domination, economic exploitation, and cultural erasure on their work. Consequently, due to the dominance of dualism in conceptualizing Othering, the complexity of the Others in fighting against the hegemonic representation of themselves is neglected and, as a result, they are treated as uniform essentialized subaltern.

The term subaltern refers to a cohort of people that possess a different cultural identity from that of the dominant group, and they construct and own a space of difference (de Kock, 1992). Subaltern people include oppressed minority groups whose identities are central to the definition of the dominant majority and those who may be involved in forms of resistance and subversion towards the majority (Bhabha, 1996). Even if the exploration of the Other's voice is

increasingly important with the development of globalization and social interaction, the Other can become a totally silenced subject by merely treating the Other as a homogeneous entity.

Consequently, some researchers have taken over the Other's right or opportunity of raising their voice or speaking for themselves. As Hooks has addressed:

I am waiting for them to stop talking about the 'Other', to stop describing how important it is to be able to speak about difference. It is not just important what we speak about, but how and why we speak ... Often this speech about the 'Other' annihilates, erases: 'no need to hear your voice when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you, I write myself anew. I am still author, authority. I am still the colonizer, the speaking subject, and you are now at the center of my talk. (Hooks, 1990, pp.151-152)

Such control on voice and the perpetuation of Otherness reflects the objectifying of a hegemonic representation discourse that parallels the valorization of gender and political hierarchies and the legitimization of dominance over the subaltern. In particular, such an approach to theorizing the Otherness grants little scope for the subaltern to speak (Spivak, 1988) or catalyzes the emergence of agents of their own stories.

Alternative Approach in Theorizing Tourism Representation

Tourism as a product of gendered societies is constructed, presented, and consumed through a gendered process (Rao, 1995). Tourism literature has argued that tourism is the most gender-role stereotyped industry in the world (Adkins, 1995; Craik, 1997; Enloe, 2001; Kinnaird and Hall, 1994). Tourism destinations, attractions, and landscapes serving as the spaces through which power, identity, and meaning are constructed, negotiated, and renegotiated according to social-cultural dynamics are a reflection of such gendered space (Aitchison and Reeves, 1998). Researchers have critically analyzed the gendered nature in the construction of tourism spaces

from different perspectives. Some of them focused on the economic characteristics of female employment in the tourism industries (Enloe, 2001; Scott, 1995), and some others examined the nature of relationships between hosts and guests in tourism destinations. The topics range from the sexual and romantic relations between hosts and guests (Pruitt and Lafont, 1995) to the social and cultural impacts of tourism on host societies (Swain, 1995).

Those studies do not only recognize women's marginalized position in the employment of the tourism industry despite their dominant number in the industry, but also acknowledge the importance of analyzing gender relations in tourism practices. For instance, Enloe (2001) pinpointed the effects of notions about femininity and masculinity on creating and sustaining global inequalities and oppressions; Wearing and Wearing (1996) argued that gender relations reflect and reinforce social norms underpinning men's dominant power position over women; and Pritchard and Morgan (2000) demonstrated the gendering of tourism experiences, images, and destinations as a part of the discursive framework which is embedded in the complex and multi-dimensional cultural, social, and historical systems, and they considered tourism as a cultural arena reflecting the configurations of power.

Built upon such understanding about relationship between gender and tourism, postcolonial feminists extend the tenets of poststructuralist and feminist theory in tourism studies, and challenge the masculinity of postcolonial theory (McClintock, 1995). First, they challenge the authority and representativeness of traditional white feminist theorizing by going beyond the Western domain and adopting a global scope. Second, they argue that hegemonic discourses can be subverted through the construction of alternative value systems in the process of engaging and communicating with mainstream discourses (Brooks, 1997). In other words, rather than directly rejecting the dichotomous opposition constructed in the mainstream discourses, subaltern people can undermine the justified underpinning on which the representation about them in the hegemonic discourses is built by constructing their own voices and demonstrating their value

system. Last and particularly important, postcolonial feminists have built their own theory to overcome the limitations of the traditional feminist and postcolonial theories (Aitchison, 2001).

Spivak's work (1985, 1987, 1988) stands in particular contrast against the work of white Western feminists' and postcolonial scholars who tended to see Third World women as a homogeneous entity. In *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, Spivak (1988) states that any outside efforts to improve the Other's condition by granting them collective speech invariably will encourage a heterogeneous group of people to form a logocentric assumption of cultural solidarity, and also will develop their dependency on western intellectuals to speak for them rather than raising their own voice. As she argues, subalterns will remain in their subordinate position in society if they are given a collective cultural identity. Therefore, based on her argument, any efforts to grant the Other's uniform voice without recognizing their heterogeneous nature are the ethnocentric extension of Western essentialism and will consequently perpetuate their social marginality.

Although postcolonial and poststructural feminist provides an alternative approach in theorizing the Othering process and may give greater agency to actors, studies accounting for the heterogeneity of the Other and conveying local subaltern voices are rare. Although Spivak encourages the efforts of the subaltern studies group, she criticizes their focus on locating and re-establishing a collective voice or homogeneous agency among the subaltern people in postcolonial India. Therefore, the complexity of the subaltern people's voices and their heterogeneous agency in the process of Othering warrant further research.

Furthermore, as Aitchison (1999) asserts, most researchers in the area of tourism anthropology and sociology build the theoretical conceptualization of Othering on postcolonial theory that, as a literary theory, has mainly dealt with literature produced in the former colonies or by colonized people. Therefore, building upon such theoretical orientation, research on the Other has exclusively been engaged with colonialism. However, in the current postmodernism world and with the development of a large-scale domestic tourism market within the developing

countries, social power relations constructed in the process of Othering are increasingly complex and cannot merely be reflected in the relation between the former colonized and their colonizers. Furthermore, such complex social power relations also significantly influence the development of national identity in a place like China (Gladney, 1994; Schein, 1997), an “Oriental” country with a tradition and history of resistance to Western colonialism and dominance and a country with a complex history of internal disputes of ethnic and ideological dominance and subversion.

The Construction of Other in China

China as an oriental country did not avoid the clash with western colonial powers in their pursuit of capital accumulation and colonial occupation. Under their military and commercial attack, China was defeated and became a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society (Mao, 1939). However, different from those colonized countries or regions whereby the colonial ideology has been internalized, China, as a long centralized political entity supported by deep-rooted Confucius philosophy, responded to such Western assimilation so complexly that colonialism never successfully shaped a conclusive discourse about China (Mohanty, 1999). On the other hand, the Chinese blamed traditional culture for the dramatic and rapid fall of China into a subordinate international position. They carried out a series of cultural movements from the New Culture Movement to the Cultural Revolution so as to abandon the Confucian approach (Gentzler, 1977). Such attempts to erase traditional Chinese culture reached its heyday after Mao Zedong initiated the Cultural Revolution in the 1960's (Wong, 1976).

Under the leadership of Mao Zedong, who was passionate for totalistic iconoclasm, a radical and fundamental rebuff of social and cultural tradition (Wong, 1976), the Chinese government enthusiastically suppressed old ideas, old culture, old customs, and old habits (*po sjiu*) which represent “feudal superstitions” and are regarded as the major culprit for China's

backwardness (Sofield and Li, 1998). As a result, Chinese traditional culture was attacked and destroyed at an unprecedented level, and the Chinese people lost the attachment with their cultural roots. Furthermore, in the post-Mao era, the development of economic reforms advocated by Deng Xiaoping, who initiated “open door” policies to invite foreign involvement into the Chinese economy, facilitated the rapid influx of foreign culture and values which the Chinese people did not find affinity with (Schein, 1997) and precipitated their feeling of being lost in their cultural and national identities (Sofield and Li, 1998). Such results triggered people’s needs of seeking their cultural roots and defining their national identities – the *Xungen* movement which was initiated in the late-1980s in China, involved a renewed interest in extant local and minority cultures.

With the onset of the *Xungen* movement, Chinese domestic cultural tourism grew rapidly, the Chinese people, who are mostly composed of the Han, did not only begin to travel to traditional Han Chinese cultural heritage sites to seek their cultural roots, but also visited Chinese ethnic minorities who are seen as survivors of cultural homogenization policies implemented during the Maoist era (Gladney, 1994). As Anderson stressed, “nationalism has to be understood by aligning it...with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which – as well as against which – it came into being” (1991, p. 12). In the post-Mao era, the state attempted to re-imagine the nation by making a sharp contrast to the state’s vigorous suppression of ethnic diversities during the Maoist era and has tried to represent China as a “nation of many nationalities” (Chao, 1996, p. 211). This new imagining of the nation facilitates the promotion of images of plurality and ethnic difference. Therefore, Chinese ethnic minorities serve as an important actor in defining Chinese national identities, though they make up no more than 9% of the whole population of China. Meanwhile, to build Han Chinese modern national identities, Chinese ethnic minorities are presented as the Other who is old, naïve, and grotesque (Schein, 1997).

Like the research of national identity in other countries within a context of discourse of internal orientalism (e.g. Jansson, 2005), researchers examining the mainstream discourse about Chinese ethnic minorities have also identified that domestic tourism in China facilitated the development of internal orientalism, which refers to the Han's predominant imaging of Chinese ethnic minorities as culturally primitive and political dependent (Schein, 1997). On the other hand, researchers also asserted that the ethnic minorities as a proactive entity are not a docile object of representation but rather active subjects engaged in the construction of self-representation which is not perpetual and static but transient and evolutionary (Bruner, 1996; Cohen, 1993).

As Gladney (1994, p. 117) has stressed, "minorities, too, by allowing the objectivizing gaze of the state-sponsored media, establish their identity and right to a voice in their own affairs, appropriating and turning, whenever possible, these objectivizing moves to their own benefit. In this way, the maintenance and assertion of minority "culture," no matter how exoticized or contrived, may be seen as a form of resistance." Extending this thesis, it can be argued that tourism representation becomes a way for minorities to demonstrate their resistance. Namely, by following the same images constructed by the state-sponsored media about themselves in their own representation discourse, minorities accept the objectivizing gaze of the state-sponsored media. Essentially, minorities construct a way for them to reserve their culture and express their values to the mainstream society by demonstrating their unique culture and representing themselves.

Although previous research on mainstream representation of ethnic minority peoples has examined how ethnic minority people and their cultures are represented and consumed by the state and argued the existence of ethnic minorities' agency in the construction of their representation, there is lack of a critical examination on how and why they speak for themselves. In particular, the study on subaltern people's voice equipped with postcolonial feminist theory is

rare. Drawing on Spivak's criticism on previous subaltern research for possessing a structuralist essentialism understanding of the Other, this study focuses on the heterogeneous gender characteristics of subaltern people and examines the difference in the subaltern people's self-representation made by a man and a woman. Additionally, previous representation research on ethnicity in China has primarily focused on the ethnic minorities having evolved into a patriarchal society; however, there is lack of examination on the minority groups having been officially classified as matriarchal. This study targets the Mosuo people, who have been classified as matriarchal by the Chinese government (Yan and Song, 1983) and who are actively involved in tourism.

The Mosuo

This study focuses on a unique Chinese ethnic minority group known as the Mosuo people, who are classified as a subgroup of the Naxi. The Mosuo people inhabit the Lugu Lake area near the Sichuan-Yunnan border in the southwestern part of China with a population of approximately 40,000 (Shih and Jenike, 2002). Although the Mosuo people are classified as a subgroup of the Naxi by the Chinese government, they consider themselves as more closely related to the Tibetans than to the Naxi. The Mosuo people speak a Tibeto-Burman language, and their dominant religion is Tibetan Buddhism (Walsh, 2001). Please see Figure 2-1 for geographical location of the Mosuo people.

daughters and so on (Shih and Jenike, 2002). The belongings and business of the family are managed by the family's matriarch and is inherited equally by all members of the household (Zhang, 1990). At home, only the matriarch and female family members can live in the main rooms, and there are no permanent bedrooms for male family members (Song, 2006). Additionally, due to their control on production, the Mosuo women do not only have a high reputation at home but also enjoy a superior social status.

However, these cultural traits form an utter contrast to China's modern society which is mainly made up of a patriarchal and monogamous marriage system. Hence, these cultural traits have served as proofs of studying the Mosuo people as "living fossils" in Chinese social science based on Morgan and Engels' stage evolutionary theory (Mathieu, 1999). In particular, they have been used to identify how much the Han Chinese society has developed (Gladney, 1994). According to Chinese anthropological research, the Han Chinese, who occupy 91.96 percent of China's population according to the 1990 census and comprise the mainstream society in China, are defined as the cultural and technical vanguard, and their society has reached somewhere near the modern end of a Marxist social evolution process through which China's minorities must pass (Fei, 1981). Consequently, minority studies in China have become a vehicle to validate stage evolutionary theory, an avenue for proving the "primitivity" of minority societies and, ultimately, a tool verifying the superiority of the Han Chinese (Gladney, 1994).

Meanwhile, such understanding about minorities' cultural practices on the basis of Morgan and Engels' stage evolutionary theory also deeply influences the mainstream representation discourse about minorities. As a result, the Mosuo people's unconventional cultural phenomena significantly affect their images in mainstream society. Like most of the mainstream discourse introducing the Mosuo people, their traditional values are represented as primitive, backward, and inferior. For example, in Ding Fenglai's book, *The Mysterious Kingdom of Daughters* (2002), as a Han literati, he states that:

In modern civilization, the Mosuo people make significant progress in their thoughts. Such change is the result of an unprecedented conception revolution. People in here are no longer conservative. They fully recognize how primitive, conservative, and backward they were in the face of market economy development, young people demonstrate strong desire to change their traditional beliefs, the old and backward status.

As illustrated in the above text, the Mosuo people are generally portrayed as a subordinate people living at a lower stage of the socio-evolutionary ladder which they need to climb up in order to catch up with the pace of modernization. Based on such representation of the Mosuo people in mainstream discourse, this study will examine how select Mosuo people react to such dominant representations of them through self-representations targeting China's mainstream society.

Study Methods

To examine how the Mosuo people represent themselves, the self-ethnographic texts written by a Mosuo man in a weblog and autobiographic texts written by a Mosuo woman in two non-fiction books were collected and examined. The Mosuo man named Bin Ma is the first and the only native person using weblog to introduce his hometown and the Mosuo people to outsiders. Additionally, the Mosuo woman, whose name is Yang Erche Namu, is recognized as the first native person making the Mosuo people well known to the world. Both of them employ the mainstream mass media to represent their people, and both have obtained credibility among their readers and blog browsers. In particular, the well-established self-representation constructed by the local woman in her autobiography and its large readership in the mainstream society, as well as the increasing popularity of weblog as a vehicle of disseminating and searching for information about tourism destinations for both hosts and guests, validate the importance of the data collected from these two local people's texts.

Method

The texts from both the weblog and books were examined by employing the critical discourse analysis method so as to locate themes in these self-representations. Tourism discourses have complex layers of meaning (Kaplan, 1990) that represent complex socio-cultural underpinnings; therefore, a critical approach of discourse analysis is needed for their full interpretation. Accordingly, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 1995) was the method utilized in this study to analyze the data and the three-dimensional approach to discourse developed by Fairclough (1989, 1992, 1995) was adopted. This approach focuses on analyzing discourse as *text*, as a form of *discourse practice*, and as *social practice*. The “text” dimension of the CDA approach mainly aims at revealing how meaning is represented in discourse by locating the types of processes encoded in the discourse and the types of participants involved in it. Therefore, from this dimension, the complex representational structure of discourse can be systematically interpreted.

The “discourse practice” dimension targets examining the positions of the authorship of a given discourse. Since discourse may convey many potential meanings and since one meaning tends to be privileged over others (Denzin, 1995), the self-representation discourses of the Mosuo people may reflect specific meanings while neglecting other unfavorable meanings. Last, the “social practice” dimension focuses on analyzing the macrostructural context within which the discourse is embedded. In this study, the macro social context with which both the author of autobiography and the weblog host are bound in their construction process of self-representation was analyzed. This dimension of CDA approach helps unveil how power relations might influence the self-representation of the Mosuo people in both weblog and autobiography.

Several steps were taken to minimize the bias in analyzing the data. Initially, the author and his advisor did a preliminary reading of these articles to familiarize themselves with the data

and to locate the major foci of article topics. Then a “close reading” was followed. This step aimed at identifying the critical themes and forming an interpretation by analyzing the meanings reflected in representation discourse and contexts in which the discourses are embedded. In this step, the different nationalities of the author and the researcher bring cross-cultural perspectives to the analysis. The author is Chinese and possesses a critically reflexive view of data based on his multiple identities. As a Chinese, the author recognizes the cultural bubble with which he is deeply involved in the process of data analysis. Meanwhile, as a scholar trained in a North America academic institution for higher education, he believes it is important to achieve a type of self-reflexiveness in examining discourse. Therefore, rather than being affected by his subjectivity in data analysis, the author is rendered an in-depth understanding of the data by his multiple identities. Furthermore, the advisor working with the author is a Western scholar with rich experience in tourism research in the Lugu Lake area, and is himself a diasporic individual with complex self identities.

After the “close reading” step, a list of codes were obtained, such as “archaic”, “mysterious”, and “carefree”. Then, both the author and his advisor made constant comparison of their findings and did not stop until they reached a consensus on the interpretation. Following the three dimensions of the CDA approach (Fairclough, 1995), the themes and interpretations in general were also examined in search for evidence of identities constructed in the self-representation discourse.

Literary Expressions of Self

There are numerous studies of tourism representations of host communities and peoples. However, most of these studies focus on external representations of the subaltern tourees in the destination. This study aims at examining self representation by individuals belonging to the host

community; therefore, the data consisted of narratives originated from members of the Mosuo ethnic group. In the case of the Mosuo, the self ethnographies that have reached the Han masses included the autobiography authored by Yang Erche Namu and a blog hosted by Bin Ma.

Yang Erche Namu was born in a small village near Lugu Lake. She left Lugu Lake at age thirteen and joined a local singing troupe in Yanyuan County of Sichuan Province. Later, she won a scholarship to study music with the Shanghai Music Ensemble and began her singing career at the end of the 1980's. As early as 1991, she obtained the public's attention by being featured in an article in *National Geographic Magazine*. Later, she married a *National Geographic* photographer and moved to the United States. Marital difficulties followed by divorce and health problems lead to the loss of hearing in her right ear, which brought her singing career to an end in the mid 1990's. In 1997, she wrote her best-selling book, *Leaving the Kingdom of Daughters*, which is one of the autobiographies selected for this study. This book describes her early life in Lugu Lake and introduces the local lifestyles, customs, and culture, as well as her experiences in the outside world. This book is very well-known among Chinese people and is credited for the transformation of Lugu Lake from an unknown region into a chic tourist destination (Forney, 2002). Yang's other autobiography, *Returning to the Kingdom of Daughters*, was also selected for this study. This book focuses on her home-coming experience. Her books' profound impact on introducing and promoting the Mosuo people and their culture to the outside world is widely recognized by the Mosuo and by scholars. For example, Bin Ma (2006), the host of local weblog, writes "No matter if you like Yang Erche Namu or not, she has made great contributions for the Mosuo people. It is her who makes Mosuo culture and Lugu Lake well known. We thank her for what she has done."

Bin Ma, the host of the travel weblog titled "Under Ge Mu Mountain, by Lugu Lake, Old Mosuo Villiage – My Paradise and Home" at *Tianya.cn*, is also a native Mosuo from Lugu Lake. According to a self introduction in his blog, he lives in the Xiao Luo Shui village, which is far

away from the major tourism development zones in Lugu Lake area. He currently works as a tour guide in Li Jiang of Yunnan Province and frequently travels between Lugu Lake and Li Jiang. In his blog, he explains that the purpose of hosting this blog is to “hope more people know my hometown” and “hope more people know the real Mosuo culture and walk in the real Mosuo people’s world, a paradise as pure as the water in Lugu Lake” (Bin Ma, June 19, 2006). He also expresses his perplex and harassed feelings as a guide, as well as his willingness to host visitors like friends without remunerated return. In his blog, besides providing travel information to his village, he also provides a detailed introduction to his village, the local customs, culture, and also comments on the changes happening in Lugu Lake with the development of tourism. His blog is of great significance since it is the only one hosted by a local Mosuo and focuses on introducing Lugu Lake and the Mosuo people.

Since discourse as a way of practice always constructs a specific way of talking, the positionalities of both the female autobiographer and the male blog host in constructing their representation discourses should be taken into consideration. Although both of them are natives of the Lugu Lake area, their representation discourses are based on their personal experiences, and so their subjective interpretation may not represent a unified voice of the Mosuo people. However, given that the Mosuo people are a diverse and geographically dispersed group, it would be inevitably flawed to try to capture a generalizable voice. Nevertheless, the local female autobiographer’s popular reputation as the representative of the Mosuo people in China’s mainstream society and the native male blog host’s position as the purveyor of updated information about the Mosuo to numerous blog browsers have prominently positioned their discourses as the primary local voices shaping the widespread images of the Mosuo people among China’s mainstream society.

As introduced before, the autobiographic texts written by Yang Erche Namu were selected and analyzed. Autobiography, like other types of travel writings, is based on the author’s

experiences of a place. Therefore, autobiography is also a common resource for most tourists to obtain knowledge about tourism destinations. On the other hand, concerning the restricted censorship of publishing and market-oriented characteristics, compared with travel writings on weblogs, such publication may be more vulnerable to pressures to meet market and state preferences. Furthermore, unlike travel blogs, autobiography is one-way communication and does not have interactive communication with its readers. As a result, when the image of Otherness is mystified or exoticized in traditional tourism marketing promotion materials, those writers usually take advantage of personal authority to clarify such Otherness. Meanwhile, with the development of ethnic tourism in remote areas of China, indigenous people's writings about their own cultures and places are becoming a new trend.

Like the autobiographic texts published in mainstream society, weblogs are emerging as a new forum for self-representation. Weblog refers to a Web page where the author 'logs' select comments and web content (Blood, 2004). Usually each weblog hosts a specific topic shared and discussed by the Web logger and other browsers. Since its emergence in the 1990s, weblogs have become a popular phenomenon on the Internet. As of October 2004, 4.2 million weblogs were created worldwide (Rosenbloom, 2004), and each day 40,000 new blogs are created (Baker and Green, 2005). In particular, with the advancement of the Internet in China, the country with the largest number of web browsers, weblogging has become a major venue for Chinese people to extend their social interaction. Due to its characteristics of mutual interaction, weblog has been frequently adopted by travelers to share or obtain travel experiences and information. In particular, due to the rapid economic growth and improvement of infrastructure in remote areas of China, the involvement of local people in these areas with the development of weblogs has been increasingly intense. Therefore, weblogs as newly-formed interactive spaces between local people and travelers are becoming a contentious site for the construction of local voices.

Findings and Discussion

To examine the self-representation of the local Mosuo people, a weblog hosted by a Mosuo man and a Mosuo woman's autobiographies were analyzed. The analysis revealed that both the weblog host and autobiography writer focused on some of the same topics in their introduction to the Mosuo people and Lugu Lake. Some similar themes within those shared topics were also identified. On the other hand, some differences between them in their intricate ways of constructing narratives and the power and identity dynamics were also evident. In the following findings section, the similarities shared by blog host and autobiography writer are introduced first, followed by their differences.

The Primitive Home Village and the Pristine Lugu Lake Area

The first and also the most prominent topic in both the blog and the autobiography was their home villages and Lugu Lake area. Although the blog host and autobiography writer are from different villages in the Lugu Lake area, they share the same impression about their home villages and delineate them as primitive, traditional, and unexploited. For instance, the autobiographer recalls that "there was nothing that represented modernity with no electricity and transportation, no radio broadcast or T.V., no schools and post offices, no shops and money, and so it can be said that anything from the outside world is not available here."

Meanwhile, the descriptions of the blog host echoes the same feelings. For instance, "My hometown, Xiao Luo Shui Village, is a primitive Mosuo village at the border between Sichuan Province and Yunnan Province. The village is so traditional and archaic that there are no shops and no well-established lodging but only the authentic Mosuo people." From the discourse dimension, an analysis of the above two quotes indicates that such same impression about their

home villages and the Lugu Lake area reflects the same angle taken by both autobiographer and weblog host in their observation. Furthermore, the analysis at the social-practice level demonstrates that both of them select the same macrostructural context upon which their impression is built. Such context is the outside world they have known.

However, the analyses at the discourse and social-practice levels also expose the differences in the above two quotes. For example, the weblog host emphasizes the unique legacy of his village, “the real live Mosuo people.” Since he hosts the weblog with a purpose of attracting more people to visit the Lugu Lake area, such emphasis demonstrates his marketing purpose in introducing his village to other bloggers. Furthermore, concerning his major audiences would be the people from mainstream society and their ultimate purpose of visiting is to have an authentic experience, the weblog host has to raise the authenticity issue in his representation. As shown in such in-depth analysis, the exposed nuance in the emphasis of self-representation discourse reveals the complexity in the construction of images about self.

The Shy vs Emancipated Mosuo People

The second major topic shared by both the blog host and autobiographer is the description of the local Mosuo people. When the host describes the local people, he focuses on their characteristics, such as simple, honest, friendly, warm-hearted, hospitable, happy, and carefree. He states, for example, that “if you do not mind living with a local family, you will have the chance then to be hosted by the warm-hearted Mosuo people. It is totally free and safe because the Mosuo people believe in Buddhism, which means that they tend to be very honest and simple.” However, the host also describes local people as shy and conservative. For instance, “As for our taboo, it is not allowed to swim without clothing because we are shy.” In

particular, the host attributes the reason for them to adopt the walking marriage custom to their shy characteristics. For example:

Our Mosuo people are shy in nature. We have adopted the walking marriage practice totally due to our “shy culture.” When my girlfriend and I walk together in the village, I would feel uncomfortable if we were too close to each other, even if we do not hold hands at all. In particular, facing our parents, brothers, and sisters, we would not mention any issues related to girlfriends and sex. This is a taboo conversation topic for the Mosuo people.

Similar to the blog host, the autobiographer also introduces the local people’s characteristics. For example:

Such beautiful pastoral scenery is like being in a fairyland. As it is said, “one place can specifically raise one group of people.” Such beautiful and fertile environment nurtures our Mosuo people’s characteristics of being optimistic, open-minded, outspoken, industrious, brave, honest, hospitable, mutually respectful and helpful, cohesive, harmonized, friendly. They also give us a love for singing and dancing.

Interestingly, in the above description of the Mosuo people’s characteristics, unlike the weblog host, the autobiographer does not mention the shy characteristics of local people at all. On the contrary, she mentions that local people are outspoken, natural, and extroverted. The author stresses such characteristics in the following excerpt which discusses the Coming of Age Ceremony:

Every girl eagerly longs for the day of the Coming of Age Ceremony. It indicates that a girl has reached puberty and can now look for A Xia and have sex after passing through the ceremony. Thus every girl hopes to grow quickly and experience the Coming of Age Ceremony. This is an important event for girls...The most unique, exciting, and impressive part of our Coming of Age Ceremony is to show oneself nakedly. The other ethnic groups do not have such a custom...All men and women spontaneously marveled at my beautiful body when I stood nakedly and beautifully in front of people. My God! How does the God grant Namu such a pretty and attractive figure? Everyone highly praised me. I did not feel shy but proud and arrogant when I showed my mature beauty and let people see the private parts of my body out in the open.

Apparently, the autobiographer introduces the Coming of Age Ceremony based on her own experiences and makes it sound like a ceremony only for girls. In fact, based on other researchers’ observations (e.g. Ding, 2002; Wang, 2004), both boys and girls participate in this

ceremony when they reach the age of thirteen. Such an approach resonates with the characteristics of travel writing which recovers the author's memory and "a means of traveling backward; the experience of the journey remembered and reconfigured consciously as well as unconsciously, via our cultural imagination" (Fullagar, 2000, p. 60).

Here, it is important to identify why they have such completely opposite accounts of Mosuo shyness versus sexual emancipation. First, based on the text dimension, it is apparent that both of them focus on the same issue – sex and privacy, and talk to the same audience – tourists or outsiders who are dominantly Han people, though they demonstrate different attitudes towards this issue. Second, from the discourse practice dimension or the positions of authorship, it indicates that they attempt to represent for the whole local community from their own gender perspective. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the autobiographer portrays the ceremony based on her personal experience and expresses the impression on behalf of herself or local women rather than local men. Meanwhile, the weblog host utters his unwillingness to mention his girl friend and sex issues in public, and he employs "we" to represent the whole host community, but apparently such representation excludes local women. Therefore, the different versions of representation apparently are built upon the writer's own gender perspective.

Far more than these analysis results from the text and discourse practice dimensions, an analysis from a social practice dimension can provide a more meaningful explanation for their dissonant accounts. From the autobiographer's perspective, the Mosuo people were rarely known to the public when Yang Erche Namu wrote her autobiography in 1990's, and she often publicly expressed her strong desire of increasing her ethnic group's popularity in the mainstream society. Even in the above excerpt from her autobiography, such intention can be easily tracked. For example, she states, "the most unique, exiting, and impressive part of our Coming of Age Ceremony is to show oneself nakedly. The other ethnic groups do not have such a custom." Therefore, she utilizes such a bold approach in describing the local custom to distinguish her

ethnic group from the others. Furthermore, by constructing such a difference with other peoples, particularly the Han women who regard personal restraint as meritorious, the autobiographer shows her defiance towards China's mainstream society. She attempts to construct an autonomous self image by affirming that the Mosuo women show their bodies under their own control and at their pleasure.

Meanwhile, from the weblog host side, his shyness account is not based on his own thought but rather the reproduction of the thesis posited by Huashan Zhou, a Chinese scholar who conducted research about the Mosuo people. Even in his weblog the host recommends this researcher's book, *The Kingdom without Father and Husband* (2001), elucidating his conception of a local shy culture as the cause of adopting the walking marriage. In other words, the weblog host borrows the researcher's thesis to support his argument. By doing so, he attempts to show his objectivity and authoritativeness. Furthermore, a gendered analysis indicates that the weblog host's shyness accounts expose his instinct as a man to keep his dominance in personal privacy and control over his internal affairs from outside meddling. Such an approach echoes Chatterjee's (1989) thesis about the importance of control over their families for the Indian males to counteract the competition with the imperial males in the outer world. Therefore, following this intention of having control over their personal privacy, the tamed or disciplined characteristics become the desired values.

These observed dissonant accounts also demonstrate the different strategies adopted by them in constructing self-representation. The blog host attempts to represent the local unique custom by utilizing the prevalent ideology in the mainstream society. In other words, to prevent outside people from perceiving the Mosuo people as promiscuous, the blog host attempts to explain local unique customs rationally and also construct a sophisticated image of the Mosuo people. For example, responding to the outsiders' derogatory perception of the Mosuo people, the blog host comments "that chaotic and so-called walking marriage phenomenon is purely the

result of urban people's misunderstanding... we believe in Lamaism, and we have a strict moral code." In contrast to the blog host, the autobiographer constructs her self-representation by accepting the images portrayed in the mainstream discourse about the Mosuo people but arguing against its underpinning epistemology that contradicts the values upheld by the subaltern people. For instance, she states that "making love is a very holy, natural, and lovely phenomenon...rather than a mysterious, vulgar, and shameful thing. Outside people distort, exaggerate, and smear our lifestyle." Thus, she builds her self-representation by unreservedly eulogizing the Mosuo people's values. In this way, the autobiographer attempts to prevent readers from conceiving the Mosuo people as promiscuous.

From the above analysis, it can be concluded that, while both voices attempt to dismiss the derogatory images created by outsiders about the Mosuo people, their discursive forms of resistance differ according to their different gender perspectives and positioning. The female autobiographer opts to construct an image of Mosuo women as empowered members of a gender-balanced society in contrast with China's mainstream patriarchal society that she characterizes as oppressive towards women. Contrastingly, the male weblog host dismisses perceived images of sexual emancipation among Mosuo women by indicating that the unique social practices of the Mosuo people are misunderstood by most observers, and are rather caused by the Mosuo people's extreme shyness and virtue – an explanation that is more desirable for the Mosuo males.

Sameness and Rationalization of Local Customs

As the weblog host elaborates on some local customs, such as the Worshipping Kitchen Range, Coming of Age Ceremony, and Walking Marriage, he makes frequent analogies between local customs and Han customs because most readers of his blog are Han people. For example, when he introduces the Worshipping Kitchen Range, he writes "We never have the Ceremony of

Sweeping Tombs, but we keep parts of each of our meals in the kitchen range everyday and say “*Chong Duo*” (which means to offer food to ancestors and to the God of Fire). This is the Ceremony of Worshipping Kitchen Range.” Another example is in his description of Walking Marriage.

When the relationship becomes fixed, we will worship kitchen range by presenting cigarettes and liquor to the family of the girl in her home. In other words, that is the way to worship the ancestors and spirits. It is comparable to the Han engagement ceremony. When a child is born, we will hold a great Son Recognition Ceremony. That is similar to the Han wedding ceremony.

In these examples, the host serving as a cultural broker borrows Han people’s notions and phrases in his elaboration of local cultural phenomena and makes his elaboration easily understood.

The autobiographer utilizes the same strategy in her introduction to local customs. She rationalizes the local custom by borrowing mainstream notions and transforms the local custom to be the conventional and easily acceptable social phenomena for mainstream readers. For example:

Both men and women have equal rights in their selection of lovers. It is the same as free love for Han people. The A Xie relationship is not established arbitrarily or without bounds. Besides, both sides are willing to make friends and care about the ability, sagacity, and family property, and so they must strictly comply with the principle of no kin marriage. Such a principle meets our governmental principle of healthy propagation and scientific nurture and avoids posterity dysphasia caused by kin marriage. So, it seems our Mosuo people have long known about healthy propagation and scientific nurture.

As indicated in the above autobiographer’s accounts, she first asserts that the love relationships among the Mosuo people are the same as those of the Han people. Then she explains how scientific the Mosuo marriage custom is by linking with the state’s marriage policy. By borrowing from mainstream ideologies, the autobiographer rationalizes local customs and constructs an alternative self-representation which creates rational, scientific, and even advanced images of the Mosuo people. Meanwhile, from the social practice dimension, her approach to addressing local marriage custom reflects her position as an author attempting to have her book

pass state censorship. By acknowledging the official marriage policy, in particular, concerning that the majority of the readers of her book are Han people and other Chinese minority groups, she plays an education and acculturation role for the state.

Furthermore, the web log host employs some strategies to dislodge the negative images of his people. For example, when he comments on some immoral phenomena happening in Lugu Lake area, he writes:

Furthermore, that chaotic and so-called walking marriage phenomenon is purely the result of urban people's misunderstanding and also is the copy of a one-night stand from cities with the development of tourism... However, nowadays the Mosuo people are influenced greatly by the Han people. Some break up the family and live apart, some do not have any beliefs, and some cheat on girls and use the name of walking marriage. We feel very sad.

In this example, when the host introduces the local custom, he emphasizes the influences from the Han people and, particularly, the impacts of mainstream Chinese values on local people. The host attributes the immoral phenomena and negative parts of tourism development to sinization – or the acculturation of the Mosuo people to the dominant Han cultural practices. By adopting such strategy, the host attempts to claim that all the negative things are brought by Han people, and the Mosuo people are pure for love and innocent of vulgarity.

Compared with the blog host, the autobiographer goes further and touches some sensitive parts of local customs that the blog host does not mention. She introduces such sensitive issues by comparing with Han people's conception of love relationships. For example:

We have got used to A Xia marriage and do not feel shocked by it. We do not feel unhappy for sharing one lover with others. For most so-called normal Han people, it would not be accepted to have several lovers and sleep with them in turn. If they do so, they must fight with each other or even may kill each other. At least, social norms and public opinion would criticize them.

As indicated in the above excerpt, although the autobiographer admits the existence of coincident multiple love relationships among local people, she contends that such a phenomenon is built on local people's willingness and the manifestation of lovers' harmonious relationships.

Furthermore, she argues that Han people cannot have such custom due to restricted social norms and laws. In other words, she rationalizes such a phenomenon as a result of human nature or natural instinct. Following her argument, the Mosuo people become the representation of freedom, openness, and sincerity, and in contrast the Han people appear conservative, standoffish, and hypocritical.

Additionally, the autobiographer at times utilizes the same discursive strategies in her self-representation as those observed in outsider representations of the Other. Namely, the author introduces the local lifestyle and custom by generating dichotomous opposition with the modern urban mainstream ideology:

Our custom is so good that there are no closed households, and no one pockets anything lost on the road. No burglary, fighting, gambling, and crime happen ever. Everyone feels safe, and it can be said that our place is a peaceful Shangri-la. We lead an honest and decent life. We do not entertain our hopes and demands beyond our ability because we do not have lofty ideals, higher pursuits, or any material things to lure us. We live naturally, easily, freely, and happily compared to those pursuing worldly fame and fortune, money, and social status. No one among us disputes such a peaceful, poor, self-contented life; on the contrast, we all feel happy to live this way.

By adopting such a strategy, the autobiographer does not merely cunningly construct a positive image of the Mosuo people but also negates the values of the Han people. Therefore, unlike the weblog host who follows the dominant values of the mainstream society, the autobiographer creates the rationale for her people's unique custom to count against the social norms of mainstream society. Such an approach resonates with Chatterjee's (1989) thesis about the role played by the colonized women in the construction of self-representation against the colonial discourse about the subaltern. Based on his thesis, the nationalist resists colonial domination by creating the image of local women that are superior to Western women. In this study, the autobiographer utilizes her own rationale to dislocate the mainstream discourse and construct a superior image of Mosuo against Han.

By analyzing both the travel weblog hosted by a Mosuo man and an autobiography written by a Mosuo woman, it is clearly revealed that both the local men and women have demonstrated agency resisting to the negative projection of the Mosuo people. Nevertheless, in adopting the strategies which resist the negative images of the Mosuo people and construct the self-representation, the local woman writer apparently is more dexterous. And particularly, due to different social positions and personal experiences, as well as the different social groups they represent for, they construct dissonant representations about the Mosuo people. Such results prove the complexity of self-representation among the subaltern people and the dynamic representation construction process (Spivak, 1988).

Conclusion

Subaltern people have been systematically portrayed as archaic, backward, mysterious, and sensual in both international and domestic tourism discourses (Bandyopadhyay and Morais, 2005; Gladney, 1994; Schein, 1997). Previous research has identified the colonial and nationalist nature of such representations (Echtner and Prasad, 2003; Gladney, 1994; Wang, Morais and Buzinde, 2009). Meanwhile, a number of researchers have argued that the images and representation of subaltern people are not static but negotiated (Adams, 1984; Bruner, 1996; Cohen, 1993, 2001). In particular, by adopting postcolonial and poststructural feminist theory, researchers have stressed the complexity of self-representation of subaltern people (Aitchison, 2001; Spivak, 1988). Therefore, critical gendered examinations of the self-representation by subaltern people may provide a glimpse into its complexity.

The findings reported in this study bring additional support to the claim that subaltern people indeed have the agency in constructing self-representations (Adams, 1984; Bruner, 1996; Cohen, 1993, 2001). Furthermore, the findings expose the complexity of subaltern peoples' self-

representation and extend the study of postcolonialism and poststructuralism in tourism. This line of inquiry has been severely circumscribed by Western hierarchical dualisms and has neglected to consider the inherent complexity in the construction of self-representation among heterogeneous subaltern people. Most importantly, this study reinforces postcolonial feminists' argument for the neglect of gender issues in mainstream postcolonial thought (Mills, 1998). This study has not only located the different strategies adopted by subaltern people in constructing self-representation, but also identified the mechanisms underpinning the different versions of self-representation between a local man and a local woman.

By utilizing critical discourse analysis, this study goes beyond the traditional content analysis restricted in text dimension and exposes the macro social structure in which such self-representation discourses are embedded. In particular, this study circumscribes the analysis of the interrelationship between subaltern discourses and construction of national identity in the context of post-Mao-era China. Concerning postcolonial feminists' argument against any attempts of universalizing female experiences, this study is aiming at identifying the heterogeneity in the subaltern self-representation from a gender perspective provides a glimpse of a gendered struggle against dominant representations in a non-Western society.

Furthermore, this study brings light to the role of travel weblogs in democratizing the creation and dissemination of tourism information at a global scale (Blood, 2002). Travel blogs create opportunities for local voices to reach mass audiences and are, as a result, becoming a growing source of information for potential travelers searching supposedly unfiltered and non-commercialized information about tourism destinations of their interest (Rosenbloom, 2004). According to Powazek (2002), weblogs are an emerging form of mass media thought to soon occupy a dominant position, fueled both by some individuals' long suppressed need to share opinions to broad audiences, and other individuals' desire to access information that has not been censored or manipulated for profit. In the act of blogging, people reflect their consciousness in

their life, provide personal interpretations about their home places, and construct their self-representation (Buhalis, 2003; Pudliner, 2007). As a result, weblogs do not only serve as a depository of travel information but also become a space for people to represent themselves (Blood, 2002). Robinson and Andersen (2002, p. 6) also assert that such narratives “can legitimately be analyzed to see how they reflect and shape the economic, political, and socio-cultural realities of the world.” Therefore, weblogs provide researchers a new access to study people’s personal voices and how such voices represent and construct social realities. Furthermore, a critical analysis of self-representation discourses and a deeper level of understanding about the self-representation mechanisms underpinning both travel blogs and local writings might facilitate the formation of more negotiated destination images.

This study provides additional insight into our understanding of tourism representation and its underlying complex mechanisms. In addition, however, the findings allow us to engender a research agenda to inform future advances in this subject. Namely, while Spivak (1988) already noted the importance of understanding the heterogeneity of the subaltern people and the complexity of their self-representation process, a more in-depth study on the representation of different subaltern groups in the tourism destinations is needed. In addition, while weblogs are emerging as an important source of information shaping pre-trip destination images, tourists have utilized strategies that encompass the use of other mass media tools such as travel brochures, mainstream media controlled by travel agencies and state nations. Therefore, it would be important to examine the whole representation process influenced by various multiple media and to examine to what extent each of these media is characterized with a particular form of ideological bias.

Chapter 3

THE STATE'S REPRESENTATIONS OF THE INTERNAL OTHER: THE CASE OF CHINA'S MATRIARCHY

Introduction

With the fast growth of the tourism industry, more and more places have become popular tourism destinations. The representation of their images has become a critical issue in the promotion of tourism products because it both influences potential tourists' decision making and determines the ultimate satisfaction levels for their experience. In addition, its representational dynamics reflect the complex power relations in the construction of destinations' cultural and social identities (Chon, 1992; Cohen, 1993; Gartner, 1993; Mellinger, 1994). As identified in previous research, representation of tourism destinations is not objective or value-free but subjected to mainstream cultural systems and dominant ideologies (Bandyopadhyay and Morais, 2005; Buzinde, Santos and Smith, 2006; Santos, 2004). Thus it is critical to discover the concealed mechanisms underpinning representations framed by tourism marketing.

To expose the complexity of tourism representations, researchers have analyzed major international tourism promotion materials (i.e. brochures, postcards, magazines, and newspapers) and found that there is a tendency to create an imagined and authentic Other that serves as the benchmark for evaluating the progress of modern society (Mellinger, 1994; Schein, 1997). For example, some studies have argued that developing countries are typically represented as archaic, backward, sensual, untouched, and static with a focus on its past (Britton, 1979; Cohen, 1993). Furthermore, in promotions for domestic tourists, less developed and culturally distinct regions are also portrayed as the "Other." For instance, Pritchard and Morgan (1995, 2001) reported that

the UK media portrayed Wales as Other for promoting a market attracting domestic tourists to escape urban alienation. Jansson (2005) also argued that the American South had been represented as fundamentally different from the rest of the United States to construct its national identity. Likewise, some studies of ethnic tourism in China have revealed that ethnic minority people are portrayed as primitive, exotic, colorful, and subordinate to legitimize the Han majority's dominance and superiority over minorities (Gladney, 1994; Schein, 1997; Swain, 1990; Walsh, 2001).

To explain these findings, tourism researchers have generally adopted postcolonial theories from the field of applied linguistics developed from the examination of the Western-centric biases inherent to international literature (Pratt, 1992). In particular, Said's work of *Orientalism* has influenced much of the conceptual arguments about this approach to tourism representation. According to the concept of *Orientalism*, the West portrays the non-West as the contrastive opposite of itself and, in such practice, it legitimizes its purportedly superiority and advanced hierarchical position in relation to the inferior Orient (Said, 1979). Borrowing such a thesis, Schein (1997) studied Chinese domestic tourism in ethnic minority regions and developed the notion of "internal orientalism." As she examined how Chinese Han majorities and the state objectivized peripheral regions and marginalized people, she argued that a superior identity of the Han people is constructed by representing ethnic minority people as being exotic, backward, and archaic. Both notions focus on the process of "Othering", which is built upon the conception that "other cultures and environments are everything that our cultures and environments are not" (Mowforth and Munt, 1998, p. 59). Based on such a theoretical framework, researchers in tourism representation studies have adopted an exclusive approach in constructing a superior self contrary to an inferior Other. And such an approach results in dualities. In other words, nuances and complexities are ignored as the Other is represented as a homogenized entity, and a unified Enlightened self is also constructed.

However, the introduction of postmodern epistemologies has exposed the problematization of the dichotomy of self and Other since no one is culturally pure (Duncan and Sharp, 1993). Built upon cultural pluralism, postmodernism opposes modernist theories that view societies as totalities (Denzin, 1991). By adopting postmodern epistemologies, researchers from anthropology, sociology, and geography have raised concerns over the critique of representations. They criticize modernists' simplistic approach in dealing with the complex relationships among diverse stakeholders involved in the representation process. They also argue that modernist conceptualizations built upon the essentialism of Western humanism are limited in interpreting the differentiating nature of identity construction (Aitchison, 1999; Clifford, 1988; Duncan and Sharp, 1993). For example, based on poststructural feminist theory, Aitchison (2000) argued against the dichotomous social and cultural analysis in leisure and tourism by highlighting the tremendous heterogeneity in women identities. She also criticized the authoritative position taken by radical white feminists in treating women as a holistic entity and their assumed control over the voices of other diverse women groups in representing themselves. The argument for the notion of one single theory capable of explaining the Other's position across space and throughout time has raised researchers' awareness of the need to adopt a wider structuring of the Other analysis. Meanwhile, the complexity and heterogeneity in the construction of the Other also make the notion of a pure self, whose identity is built by contrasting with Other overly simplistic (Duncan and Sharp, 1993). Furthermore, tourism representations do not exist in a vacuum but are rather intricately enmeshed in a circuit of culture where representations employ and reflect identity and images that are constantly evolving (Hall, 1997). In other words, the hegemonic culture upon which the identities of self are built is not a stable structure but a negotiated process. In this process, the identities of self are constantly reshaped through representing the Other. Therefore, the representation of self should be dynamic rather than static (Clifford, 1988).

Since the changes in a dominant culture are more dynamic in times of rapid social transformation, the fluid, heterogeneous and complex nature of identities is particularly evident when a nation-state is experiencing a transitional period (Leung, 2003). As its hegemonic culture is being contested and transformed, the identities of self, reflected in the representation of the Other, are inevitably fluid, heterogeneous, and complex (Light, 2001). Therefore, an in-depth examination of tourism representation with a focus on the complex construction of self warrants further study. This study aims at exposing the nature in constructing the identities of self by focusing on the complex power relations in the politics of representation about the Other. Furthermore, different from the majority of previous research focusing on international tourism representations, this study aims at studying how a developing country – China in the post-Mao era – constructs the image of self by representing a Chinese ethnic minority group well known for its matrilineal customs. The analysis focuses on articles related to this minority group's tourism development published in official Chinese newspapers.

Literature Review

In both international and domestic tourism promotion materials, researchers have identified that the meanings attached to tourism destinations and local people reflect the marketing and promotion strategies adopted by the tourism industry, which aims at providing places and people as pleasure products for tourists to consume (Britton, 1979; Echtner and Prasad, 2003; Schein, 1997; Urry, 2002). No matter whether tourists chase authenticity or seek out pseudo-events, they are engaged in consuming and (re)producing experiences that differ or contrast with their normal living settings. Based on such tourists-oriented marketing and promotion strategies, tourism destinations, particularly those in peripheral places, are often represented as the desirable Other to be consumed by tourists, usually rich and sophisticated

males from first world urban areas (Cohen, 1993; MacCannell, 1976). Rose (1995, p. 116) describes this construction of the Other (Othering) as “defining where you belong through a contrast with other places, or [defining] who you are through a contrast with other people.” Therefore, since international tourism has been a trait of the wealthy and mobile western societies, tourism destinations in developing countries and remote regions, are generally portrayed as backward, archaic, stagnant, and sensual in contrast with the tourists’ desired self characterization as superior, advanced, dynamic, and rational.

The process of constructing Otherness is closely related to the construction of dualisms. Such relationship is manifested in three perspectives (Aitchison, 2001). First, the construction of the Other heavily relies on a parallel construction of “the Same”, something on the opposite side of the Other. Second, this relationship is a manifestation of power relations usually favoring the ‘Same’ over the ‘Other’. Last, this relationship also reflects gender relations whereby “Otherness is projected on to women by, and in the interests of, men, such that we [women] are constructed as inferior and abnormal” (Wilkinson and Kitzinger, 1996, p. 4). Therefore, the construction of Otherness in tourism representation discourse serving for tourists exploring tourism destinations socially and culturally reflects the unbalance power relations between the mainstream society and tourism destinations. Through representing tourism destinations as the Other, the mainstream society exerts social and cultural power to construct the images of local people and host communities (Britton, 1979; Silver, 1993). Consequently, such representation practice becomes the manifestation of neo-colonialism (Cohen, 1995; Enloe, 2001).

Tourism researchers have built almost exclusively their theoretical conceptualization of Othering on anthropology and cited Said as the creator of the concept of the Other based on his work on the western social construction of Orientalism, which he defines as a way of thinking that reflects the “Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (1979, p. 3). According to Said’s notion of Orientalism and broader postcolonial theory

(Young, 2001), the West's representations of non-Western places and people as primitive, backward, exotic and sensual are inherently related to the colonial ideology. These representations automatically valorize the West as the signifier of being superior and advanced in contrast to the backward Orient. Based on such theorization, tourism researchers attributed these representations eminent within major promotion materials in tourism marketing (e.g., post cards, travel brochures, magazine and newspaper travel articles) as a manifestation of the colonial discourse that justifies the West's use and rule over the Orient (Bandyopadhyay and Morais, 2005; Cohen, 1993; Echtner and Prasad, 2003).

Nevertheless, tourism researchers, particularly cultural and feminist geographers, argue that tourism studies within the social sciences have been severely circumscribed by Western hierarchical dualisms which are built upon the post-Enlightenment dichotomies of culture/nature, public/private, urban/rural, masculine/feminine, and self/Other (Aitchison, 1999; Johnston, 2001). The following is an explanation of the dualistic nature of representing Others from social and cultural geography perspectives:

A dualism is a particular structure of meaning in which one element is defined only in relation to another or others. Dualisms thus usually involve pairs, binaries and dichotomies, but not all pairs, binaries and dichotomies are dualisms. What makes dualisms distinctive is that one of the terms provides a 'core,' and it is in contrast to the core that the other term or terms are denied. Thus dualisms structure meaning as a relation between a core term A and a subordinate term(s) not –A. . . . dualisms are very often gendered and hierarchised, so that the core term A is masculinised and prioritised, and the subordinate term(s) not – A are feminised. . .and postcolonial accounts of the colonisers' Other are also describing a dualistic relation. (Gregson *et al.*, 1997, p. 84–85)

Furthermore, Butler (1990), in his discussion about the nature of social and cultural discourse asserted that:

the boundaries of analysis suggest the limits of a discursively conditioned experience. These limits are always set within the terms of a hegemonic cultural discourse predicated on binary structures that appear as the language of universal rationality. (Butler, 1990, p. 9)

Such a critique on the binary nature in the hegemonic cultural discourse is also echoed in the comments of Spivak (1988). Namely, she noted that postcolonial studies were largely conducted by western intellectuals and by eastern scholars educated in the West and also deeply influenced by the positivist paradigm and Western logocentrism. According to Spivak (1988), these scholars were obsessed with the pursuit of truth and certainty and, as a result, they ignored the diversity in the nuances of micro and marginal cultural phenomena and ultimately reinscribed neo-colonial imperatives of political domination, economic exploitation, and cultural erasure in their scholarship. In particular, with the advent of a postmodern scholarship that welcomed fragmentation, diversity, and diffusion in all aspects of human life, the dualism as an accurate reflection of human world and the core of theoretical conception of Othering was challenged (Bondi, 1992; Butler, 1990).

Since ethnographers have identified that in modern society no traditional (Other) culture is isolated from outer interference and the preservation of its pure form is impossible, the notion of a homogeneous self whose identity is built by contrasting with Other would be impossible (Duncan and Sharp, 1993). Furthermore, literature as a site of representation has served postcolonial writers as a vehicle to undermine every Western dualism and argue against “the practice of realism through a self-conscious concern with representation” (Stratton, 1990, p. 148). Those writers negotiate their dual or multiple identities and have presented cultural hybridity as the core value of postcoloniality and exposed the interdependency of cultures as a result of cultural contact. Therefore, the dualism approach based on an essentialized conception of the Other is incompatible with a cultural pluralist construction of the self.

The Postmodern Construction of Self

As previous researchers asserted, representation is socially constructed and closely related to particular contexts (Spivak, 1998). Accordingly, tourism researchers argued that the representation of tourism destinations is constructed in the guests' context rather than the hosts' context. In particular, the travel narratives do not freely reflect the sociocultural meanings and values in tourism destinations but are closely aligned with the sociocultural paradigms shared by writers and their imagined readers (Chick and Donlon, 1992; Santos, 2004). For readers, the potential tourists, tourism representation discourse generates the projected images about tourism destinations to satisfy their desire for pursuing personal identities. At the national level, tourism representation discourse serves as the vehicle of inscribing dominant values and ideologies, which "provide us with the means of 'making sense' of social relations and our place in them" (Hall, 1995, p. 19). Therefore, in essence tourism representation is the manifestation of constructing the identity of self.

Nevertheless, such construction of self is not static but dynamic (Bhabha, 1994; Bruner, 1996; Santos, 2004). In particular, as a type of discursive practice, the construction of self is becoming more contested, and the identity of self is more fluid in the postmodern condition. As Jean-François Lyotard (1984) asserts, postmodernity represents a time in which "the grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses" (p. 37). Studies in tourism representation have identified that the multiplicity of agendas from the government, tourism sector, and academic fields contribute to the fragmentation of the grand narrative. For example, as examined by Bandyopadhyay, Morais, and Chick (2008), the Indian state's discourse about colonial history focusing on resistance against colonial powers and the demolition of Muslim violence is challenged by narratives of the tourism trade and popular media that provide a

sanitized colonial history ready for public touristic consumption. Such contrasts expose the complex and diverse nature of the construction of self identities in tourism representations.

To comprehend such complexity in the construction of self identity, it is critical to develop and adopt the notion of “postmodernist modes of theorizing” (Bauman, 1987, 1992; Denzin, 1991; Hollinshead, 2002). Postmodernist modes of theorizing are characterized by deconstruction, subjectivity, skepticism, intertextuality, and relativity (Flax, 1990; Frazer, 1989; Ryan, 2002). Aiming at deconstructing modernist-like grand theories and criticizing the notion of a totalizing pattern of the social system, postmodern theorists emphasize the plurality of life and diversity (Denzin, 1991; Frazer, 1989). In particular, postmodern theories stress the constitutive characteristics of power rather than its negative role in the negotiation of meanings in tourism experiences (Frazer, 1989). Furthermore, the postmodernist discourse is characterized by a compromising nature and emphasizes the relativity of truths in conceptualizing reality based on its non-dualistic and anti-hierarchical logic (Lather, 1991). As a result, postmodern theories open the door for the cultural pluralist and hybrid nature of identities.

As asserted by Hall (1997), tourism representations do not exist in a vacuum but closely get involved in a circuit of culture where representations employ and reflect identity and images that are constantly evolving. Tourism scholars have for long held the belief that tourists are attracted by pure, whole, and integrated cultures. However, in fact ethnographers have identified the pristine, intact, and well-bounded cultures in the world almost never exist (Tedlock and Mannheim, 1995). Fortunately, tourism researchers have increasingly realized that most cultural experiences are built upon ambiguous circumstances. As a result, scholars argue that:

“the practice of culture and the representations of ethnicity are not so much things which are mechanically reproducible from a set of thoughts and traditions made resolutely and unchangeably available to a given population over time, rather it is a *lived* (rather than a formerly learned) mix of posture, movements, and actions through which these aggregating individuals tacitly express themselves given the temporal (rather than the historical) constraints they face at any point” (Hollinshead, 1998, p. 123).

Even though tourism representation has been identified as a reflection of dominant ideologies and in representation discourse the identity of self is always assumed, since representation is socially constructed and related to particular contexts, its construction process is negotiated and constantly re-evaluated, and the identity of self is differential and unstable (Chang and Holt, 1991; Duncan and Sharp, 1993). Nevertheless, the dynamic characteristics in the construction of self do not negate its significant relationship with the larger sociocultural forces but demonstrate the unstable wider socio-political framework. A number of tourism researchers have recognized that tourism representations can reflect economic, socio-political and cultural change. For example, Morgan and Pritchard (1998) commented that the meanings of African-American cultural attractions in the U.S. have changed in parallel with changes in social power structure in that country. Meanwhile, some researchers focus on the transformation of cultural politics in post-Soviet nation-states and examine how the states have attempted to change their representations to the Western world in the marketing of tourism destinations (Hall, 1994; Light, 2001; Palmer, 2006).

Furthermore, tourism representation can also reflect the impact of tourism development as an economic practice on changing power structures in the nation-states. For instance, Henderson (2003) has examined how Malaysia government attempts to represent Malaysia as a multicultural nation in tourism promotion regardless of the state-level affirmative discrimination towards the Malay people. Her study demonstrates that the state may compromise the ideological function of tourism representation in constructing its identity of self in exchange for maximum economic benefits. Consequently, the identity as a multicultural nation constructed in tourism representation challenges and overshadows the uni-racial underpinning supported by socio-political structures. Therefore, it is critical to examine and locate the unstable identity of self and expose the mechanism underlying such construction of self in postmodern condition. In particular, previous research has indicated that the dynamic characteristics in dominant discourses

of identity are more apparent when a nation-state is in a transitional period (Pritchard and Morgan, 2001). This study focuses on such a country, China, which is currently experiencing considerable transformation in economic, social, political, and cultural perspectives. In particular, as addressed by Chao (1996), Chinese ethnic cultural diversity plays a significant role in the re-representation of China's national identity in the post-Mao era. This study aims at examining the identity of self reflected in the state discourse representing ethnic minority people.

Tourism Development in Post-Mao-Era China

In the last quarter of the 20th century, China transformed from an ardent pursuer rigidly complying with the socialist values of Marxist-Leninism in Maoist era to a vigorous reformer targeting the revitalization of the economy in the post-Mao era. Under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping's theory of modern-day Marxism, China implemented "open door" policies to mobilize its modernization initiative and commence its drive of building socialism with Chinese characteristics. To foster the economic reform movement, Deng redefined politics in China and made substantial modifications of the nation's ideological framework (Mackerras, Taneja, and Yong 1994). Under the impact of these political and economic reform policies, tourism was accepted as an appropriate form of economic activity and emerged as a critical strategy significantly contributing to the transformative socio-cultural change in China (Lew, Yu, Ap, and Zhang, 2003; Morais, Yarnal, Dong, and Dowler, 2005; Sofield and Li, 1998; Wen and Tisdell, 2001; Xu, 1999).

As an effective and efficient way of earning foreign exchange and accelerating domestic currency circulation, tourism has been adopted by China, like most developing countries, as a solution to maximize economic benefits. Based on an analysis of Deng Xiaoping's official talks about tourism, Xiao (2005) reported that the themes exposed in the talks conspicuously reflect an

emphasis on the contribution of tourism to China's national economy. Additionally, Xiao also reports Deng's intention of utilizing tourism as a signifier or showcase of reform and open policies to demonstrate the social, economic, and cultural changes happening in China. As Leong (1997) asserts, tourism can play a significant role in presenting nationalist policies, especially in promoting cultural heritage and history. Based on such findings, tourism not only served as a vehicle for China to achieve economic growth but also served as a means of projecting and affirming its post-Mao identities.

Nevertheless, as discussed in previous research, the construction of post-Mao identities is a complex and contested process (Sofield and Li, 1998; White, 1997). The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) defined cultural values as the critical determinants in every perspective of life in China (Sofield and Li, 1998). Led by the dominant socialist values of Marxist-Leninism, the CCP government led by Mao Zedong underwent a process of revisionism of traditional Chinese culture and endeavored to establish a socialist culture, which was regarded as scientific, democratic, and revolutionary. By accepting such socialist ideology, the CCP government criticized traditional Chinese culture for being unscientific, backward, and antisocialist and condemned it as a major obstacle of achieving progress. Consequently, Chinese traditional culture was ruthlessly suppressed under Mao's pursuit of "totalistic iconoclasm" during the Cultural Revolution (Lin, 1979).

However, as China moved to a market economy with Deng, the rigidity of socialist culture became the most significant barrier to modernization. As Sofield and Li state that:

"Deng had to redefine politics in China and while this change of direction undercut some of the Maoist principles, it was nevertheless essential to reaffirm the primacy of socialism to justify the legitimacy and right of the CCP to govern. Thus, changes had to be rationalized in the context of their capacity to serve socialism. In this way, Deng was able to rehabilitate China's heritage as a valuable resource which was needed to assist in the tasks of restoring national unity after the dissension and trauma of the Cultural Revolution; and revitalizing the economy, in this case by making tourism an acceptable form of development" (Sofield and Li, 1998, p. 370).

As a result, visitation of heritage places in China became a focus in official tourism promotion.

Meanwhile, Chinese people who are mostly composed of the Han do not only travel around traditional Han Chinese cultural heritage sites to seek their cultural roots. They also visit Chinese ethnic minorities which are seen as survivors of cultural homogenization policies implemented during the Cultural Revolution. In the post-Mao era, China is officially represented as a “nation of many nationalities” (*duominzu guojia*) (Chao, 1996) by featuring the plural images and ethnic diversity to form a sharp contrast against the uniformity of the Maoist past (Heberer, 1989). In other words, in the post-Mao era, the state constructed a new national identity based on ethnic cultural diversity. As Anderson has suggested, “nationalism has to be understood by aligning it ...with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which – as well as against which – it came into being” (Anderson, 1991, p. 19). Therefore, ethnic representations have become a critical source of national identities in the post-Mao China.

Such volatile characteristics of ethnic representation in constructing national identities support Duara’s notion about nation in his deconstructive analysis of China. Duara (1993) proposed that a nation cannot be considered as a homogeneous subject and its identity is built upon a constantly changing relationship between self and Other. His focus on *fluid* relation in conceptualizing the nation echoes Werner Sollors’s (2008) definition of ethnicity, which does not refer to a thing-in-itself but to a relationship. This relationship includes both the inclusive meaning, “people in general”, and the dissociated sense, “other people”. Furthermore, the Chinese understanding of ethnicity focuses on “people” and “nationality”; therefore, ethnicity and nationhood are deeply ingrained and intertwined (Zhang, 1997).

In the study of Chinese ethnicity and nationhood, the political hierarchies in the self/Other representation have been widely recognized. As Gladney (1994) asserted in the study of representing nationality in China: “Minority is to the majority as female to male, as ‘Third’ World to ‘First,’ and as subjectivized to objectivized identity” (p. 93). However, such a

generalized address has been questioned in James Clifford's (1988) critique of Edward Said's work on Orientalism. He states that Said's thesis of Orientalism "frequently relapses into the essentializing modes it attacks and is ambivalently enmeshed in the totalizing habits of Western humanism" (Clifford, 1988, p. 271). It means that Said's work extended in Gladney's research needs a "developed theory of culture as a differentiating and expressive ensemble rather than as simply hegemonic and disciplinary" (Clifford, 1988, p. 263). Therefore, the hegemonic culture upon which the self/Other representation is built should not be conceptualized as a "self-stabilizing structure but rather as negotiated, present processes whereby the geopolitical boundaries of centers and margins are periodically redrawn and the localized differences tactfully articulated." (Zhang, 1997, p. 82).

Built upon such an argument about the conceptualization of hegemonic culture, the representations of ethnicity are far more than the manifestation of the polarizing paradigm of hierarchy and progress. Thus an in-depth examination of ethnic representations in the mainstream discourses is necessary and critical. In particular, given that China is experiencing a transitional period in economic, social-political, and cultural perspectives (Leung, 2003), the national identities constructed in the representations of ethnicity are more complex and volatile. However, previous representation research in the tourism field is built upon Said's work on postcolonial representation and limited by essentialism interpretation about the meanings in representations of ethnicity. Facing the increasing complexity in constructing the identity of self in postmodern condition and the fluid nature in the relationships between self and Other in transitional China, the representations of ethnicity is warranted for further examination in a more critical way.

Previous research on representations of ethnicity in China has primarily focused on the ethnic minorities having evolved into a patriarchal society; however, there is lack of examination on the minority groups having officially been classified as matriarchal. This study targets the

Mosuo people who have been classified officially as a matriarchal society by the Chinese government (Yan and Song, 1983) and who are actively involved with tourism development. Furthermore, different from most previous research that examines the mainstream representation of ethnic minorities in China by examining local material goods, music, art, and films, as well as personal observation, this study targets the mainstream tourism representation discourses about the Mosuo people, such as the official newspaper articles about local tourism development. According to Homi Bhabha's (1990) theory of "nation as narration", nationhood is articulated through a variety of narratives and discourses, and so an examination of governmental discursive representation of the Mosuo people may expose the mechanism in constructing national identities in post-Mao-era China and provide a better understanding about the nation-state.

The Mosuo

This study focuses on the Mosuo people, a unique ethnic minority group in China. "Mosuo people" has been their official name since the 1980s (Mathieu, 2003). Currently consisting of a population of 40,000, the Mosuo people mainly reside near the Sichuan-Yunnan border in the southwestern part of China where Lugu Lake is one of the primary geographical features (Walsh, 2005). Although the Mosuo people are officially placed as a branch of the Naxi Nationality by the Chinese government, they consider themselves more closely related to the Tibetans than to the Naxi (Mathieu, 2000; Shih, 2001). The Mosuo people practice Tibetan Buddhism as well as their own native religion, *dabaism*, and they speak a Tibeto-Burman language (Walsh, 2005). Please see Figure 3-1 for the geographical location of the Mosuo people's habitat.

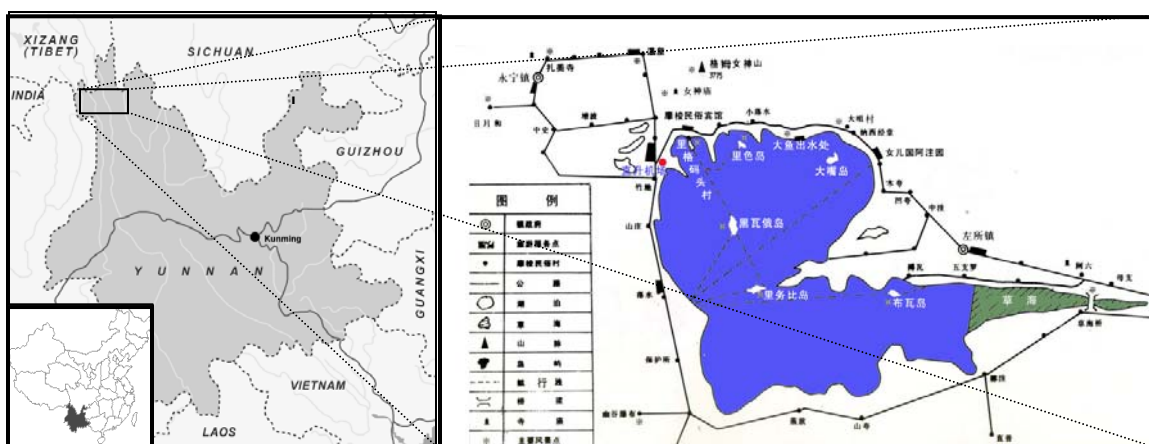


Figure 3-1: Map of Predominant Mosuo Region

The Mosuo people had had a typical slash and burn economy; however, since the 1990s, tourism has become a major income source for the local community (Walsh, 2005). Besides beautiful landscapes, the exotic Mosuo culture is an important draw for tourists visiting the local community. The best known cultural traits of the Mosuo people are their matriarchal family system and their system of marriage known as the walking marriage, *Zouhun* (Walsh, 2005). Based on the state representation of the Mosuo people, the oldest women are the household heads or *dabu*. The belongings and business of the family are managed by them and inherited equally by all members of the household (Zhang, 1990). As the dominant social group, women not only are at the center of both the society and family but also are imbued with unlimited autonomy in reproduction (Shih and Jenike, 2002).

One of the local social practices rendering such reproductive autonomy is known as the walking marriage, a type of traditional sexual partnership practice popular among the Mosuo people. By adopting this relationship, the Mosuo women may host her lover at her boudoir in the evening with the understanding that her lover will return to his mother's house the next morning (Walsh, 2001). This type of relationship is also called *tisese*, which literally means "walking back and forth." People practicing *tisese* usually keep social and economical attachment with

their natal households, and their children are kept in the women's family and take on her family's name (Shih and Jenike, 2002). It is reported that these relationships are more firm now than in the past (He, 2000; Walsh, 2003). Generally speaking, the matriarchal family structure and walking marriage are two conspicuous features of the Mosuo cultural identity that have been intensely featured in tourism representations of the Mosuo people (Walsh, 2005).

Study Methods

To examine the complex and plural nature of self identity constructed in the representation discourses about Other, this study focuses on analyzing the representation of the Mosuo people in the state discourses of China. According to the official report on tourism promotion plans in Lugu Lake area, local authorities have adopted newspapers as one of the major tools in promoting tourism (Ning Lang County Tourism Bureau, 2008). Therefore, official newspaper articles about the Mosuo people and Lugu Lake were selected as the major resources for the analysis of the mainstream representation of the Mosuo people in this study. Then, texts from newspapers were examined by employing the critical discourse analysis method so as to locate the themes in the mainstream representation of the Mosuo people. Tourism discourses have complex layers of meaning that represent complex socio-cultural underpinnings (Kaplan, 1990); therefore, a critical approach of discourse analysis is needed for their full interpretation.

Method

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is not like other sociolinguistic approaches (e.g., conversational analysis, ethnography, narrative analysis, and rhetoric), which merely target examining the usage of language and exposing the meanings embedded in the language, but

rather, it renders researchers able to perceive and identify the social inequality embedded in society through linguistic practices (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997). In particular, as Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) assert, the social and economic changes “are to a significant degree ... transformations in the language and discourse” (p. 4). Therefore, CDA has a particular contribution in theorizing transformation and reminding people “of what is, how it has come to be, and what it might become, on the basis of which people may be able to make and remake their lives” (p. 4).

In this study, the three-dimensional approach to discourse developed by Fairclough (1989, 1992, 1995) was adopted. This approach focuses on analyzing discourse as *text*, as a form of *discourse practice*, and as *social practice*. The “text” dimension of the CDA approach mainly focuses on “the linguistic analysis in terms of vocabulary, grammar, semantics, the sound system, and cohesion-organization above the sentence level” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 57). By analyzing how social practice is represented, how writer and reader identities are constructed, and how the relationship between writer and reader is built, the analysis at the “text” dimension targets at revealing how meaning is represented in the discourse, “categories of participant, constructions of participant identity or participant relations” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 58). In the analysis of data for this study, the following questions are asked: Who or what is the subject of the discourse and the other components composing the discourse? What does the subject represent? What is the meaning of the subject’s representation? Therefore, in the “text” dimension, the ideas embedded in the texts representing the social practice, the emphasis in the construction of identity, and relations of the participants can be systematically identified.

The “discourse practice” dimension targets interpreting the evidence provided by the linguistic features of texts. According to Fairclough, “discourse practice straddles the division between society and culture on the one hand, and discourse, language, and text on the other” (p. 60). In this dimension, the identification of norms and codes that underlie the text and construct

its fundamental coherence is the main purpose. In other words, the discourse analysis in this dimension focuses on analyzing the intertextual properties of the text since it is assumed that texts “may be linguistically heterogeneous” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 189). Therefore, in this dimension, the data are analyzed by asking the following questions: What are the underlying structures that connect the statements together? How does the text produce “effects of truth?” (Rose, 2001, p. 154), and what are the omissions or “significant silence” in the text? (Echtner and Prasad, 2003).

Last, the “social practice” dimension focuses on analyzing the macrostructural context within which the discourse is embedded and linking the gap between micro- and macro-levels of society by interpreting discursive practice in specific social contexts (Van Dijk, 2002).

According to Fairclough (1995), the analysis in this dimension should concentrate on three aspects of sociocultural context in an account of communication: political, economic, and cultural. Although he does not think it is necessary to conduct analysis at all levels, any level may “be relevant to understanding the particular event” (P. 62). In this case, the specific social context with which the authors of newspapers are bound in their construction process of representation is analyzed. This dimension of the CDA approach helps unveil how broader power relations might influence the representation of the Mosuo people in newspapers.

Furthermore, it should be kept in mind that discourse analysis is an interpretive process in nature. Therefore, the analysis and interpretation for the representation of the Mosuo people in the mainstream discourses can never create the final and perpetual correct themes. As Packer and Addison (1989) address, “a self-consciously interpretive approach to scientific investigation does not come to an end at some final resting place, but works instead to keep discussion open and alive, to keep inquiry under way” (p. 35). Hence, the themes identified in the mainstream discourses about the Mosuo people should simply be considered as a systematic understanding about the dynamic nature of dominant representation of ethnic minorities under the changing socio-economic, cultural, and political conditions, rather than being treated as the only way of

interpreting the representation of the Mosuo people. The interpretations provided by this study, like the other interpretations, serve as a proof of demonstrating this transformation process.

Several steps were taken to minimize the bias in analyzing the data. Initially, the author and the author's advisor did a preliminary reading of these articles to familiarize themselves with the data and to locate the major foci of article topics. Then a "close reading" was followed. This step aimed at identifying the critical themes and forming an interpretation by analyzing the meanings reflected in representation discourses and contexts in which the discourses are embedded. In this step, the different nationalities of the author and the other researcher bring cross-cultural perspectives to the analysis. The author is Chinese and possesses a critically reflexive view of data based on his multiple identities. As a Chinese, the author recognizes the cultural bubble with which he is deeply involved in the process of data analysis. Meanwhile, as a scholar trained in a North America academic institution, he believes it is important to achieve a type of self-reflexiveness in examining Chinese tourism discourses. Therefore, rather than being affected by his subjectivity in data analysis, the author is rendered an in-depth understanding of the data by his multiple identities. Furthermore, the advisor working with the author is a Western scholar with experience in tourism research in the Lugu Lake area, and is himself a diasporic individual with complex self identities. After this step, a list of codes was developed, such as "local custom", "travel information", and "tourism policy". Then, both the author and his advisor made constant comparison of their findings and this step did not stop until the interpretive exhaustion and consensus in the interpretation were reached. Following the three dimensions of CDA approach (Fairclough, 1995), the themes and interpretations in general were also examined in search for evidence of ideographs – expressions or ideas reflective of ideological dynamics.

Data

To examine the state representation of the Mosuo people in official tourism discourses, articles published in Chinese newspapers addressing the Mosuo people and Lugu Lake were collected and analyzed. A total of 34 articles published between 1990 and 2008 in major Chinese newspapers (i.e., 15 in China Daily, 4 in People Daily, 2 in Xinhua News, and 13 in regional newspapers) were identified through an electronic keyword search for “Mosuo” or “Lugu Lake,” in the LexisNexis Academic news database and the Google search engine. These newspapers, widely recognized as setting the national agenda, provide an appropriate study sample of state sanctioned representation of the Mosuo people to the national population. Since tourism has begun to play a significant role in local economy from the 1990s (Walsh, 2005), this study selects a timeframe starting from 1990 to analyze the state representation of the Mosuo people and their community.

Findings and Discussion

A close reading of the 34 articles by applying the CDA approach with its three dimensions was conducted. Three major themes were identified, and the mechanism applied in the construction of meanings as well as the socio-cultural structure under which the meanings are embedded were also discussed. The three themes include the feminized Other, economic growth, and authenticity issue.

The Feminized Other

The first theme is annotated as the feminized Other, the most frequently identified theme. The Mosuo people and everything relating to them are portrayed as feminine. For example, one of the writers comments that “in Lugu Lake, beauty is feminine, everything is feminine, female, maternal, the mountain is a maternal mountain, the lake is a maternal lake, the holy spirit is female, the head of the family is the hostess, the future of the clan relies on girls” (People’s Daily, 2001). By describing Lugu Lake and the Mosuo people as the symbol of femininity, the local socio-cultural characteristics related to matriarchal practices are emphasized. Meanwhile, such a feminized representation of the local community stresses its difference against the patriarchal society in which writers and readers live. For instance, the same writer stresses the uniqueness of the Mosuo people’s matriarchal practices in the following comments: “Even ‘Mr. History’ does not understand why up to now he leaves the land for the tribe practicing the primitive matriarchy in the world, keeps the unique walking marriage practice, and preserves a living fossil of matriarchy...they are the last matriarchal tribe” (People’s Daily, 2001). By emphasizing the distinctiveness of the Mosuo people’s social-cultural characteristics, and particularly their difference from the mainstream society, the identity of writers and readers is constructed by contrasting with the feminized Other image.

Such construction of self by representing the Other as feminine resonates with well-known findings in tourism representation research. For example, many cultural and feminist geographers have asserted that landscapes are often endowed with feminine characteristic in representation discourses (e.g. Aitchison, 1999; Rose, 1993). In particular, such a theme identified in this study is also consistent with other researchers’ observation in their research of China’s representation of its ethnic minorities, who are often feminized in the process of comparison with the Han Chinese (e.g. Glandney, 1994; Schein, 2000).

Furthermore, in the process of constructing the feminized Other, writers also take a patronizing and domineering position towards the local community. For instance, a writer depicts that “Every morning, as the first thread of sunshine comes out of the thick fog and shoots over Lugu Lake, the Xin Li Ge Village is like a sleeping child. Under the protection of Ge Mu Goddess Mountain, the village sleeps in the maternal arms of Lugu Lake. The soft tides gently kiss the Island of Li Ge Lian Ti extending into the lake” (People’s Daily, 2006). In the above excerpt, the writer takes a patron’s position by looking down at the local village and portrays the village as a child to be protected and cared for. Such typical authoritative description of landscapes resonates the narrative style coined by Pratt (1992) as “the monarch of all I survey” which refers to the relation of mastery between the viewer and the viewed.

Additionally, like the “imperial stylistics” revealed in the investigation of Western travel narratives about the explored places and the mystified image of Third World constructed in tourism promotion, such “estheticized” description also echoes the characteristics of the imperial expeditors’ travel writing and the ubiquitous theme in tourism advertisements, which are featured with the writers’ and tourists’ desires to find the untouched and mysterious places (Britton, 1979; Pratt, 1992). For example, “Although the journey is tough and dangerous, we do not have fear but expectation in our minds because we will uncover the mysterious veil of Lugu Lake” (Jing Hua Times, 2006). In the above excerpt, the writer is portrayed as a proactive explorer while the local community as a passive and veiled entity waiting to be being explored. Such a description demonstrates the gendered and hierarchical nature in the dominant discourses representing the Other (Aitchison, 1999; Johnston, 2001).

Moreover, from the discourse analysis dimension, it can be concluded that the statements for the local matriarchal system built the foundation for the representation discourses about the feminized Other. For example, to stress that the local matriarchal system has been well preserved, writers frequently make the affirmative assertion based on their personal judgment and

observation. One writer states that “The Mosuo people still preserve a matriarchal family life ...In the Mosuo society, it is a woman’s world. Women control finances, own property and settle disputes” (China Daily, 2007). Moreover, “In the Mosuo tradition, only daughters can be heirs in a family. Caoshidamu pays close attention to the healthy growth of the younger generation in the family, particularly the daughters. Now all three of her daughters are in school” (Xinhua News, 2000). By employing such authoritative narratives, writers attempt to produce the effect of truth. This strategy of claiming authoritativeness for their personal vision is coined by Pratt (1992) as “what they see is what there is” which refers to the writers’ intention of neglecting the limitations of their interpretation. However, what is not revealed are the conditions under which such a judgment is made. Apparently, such a judgment is consistent with the state representation of the Mosuo society; and the writers’ affirmative assertions also reinforce the image of local community represented in the mainstream discourses.

Furthermore, in analyzing the representation discourses about the local socio-cultural practices, the emphasis on the uniqueness and rareness of the matriarchal system and walking marriage practice is located. For example, “The place has become something of a legend because of the matriarchal system that it still upholds even today. This is the only place in China that still abides by this system...This method of love-making is the most unique characteristic of the Mosuo culture” (China Daily, 2004). As indicated in the above excerpt, the rareness of the Mosuo social system and their culture is emphasized. By taking an approach of discourse analysis from the social practice dimension with an emphasis on cultural perspective, it can be exposed that such stress on the uniqueness and rareness of the local social system and cultural practice may aim at demonstrating how diverse and colorful the social system and culture in China are. Furthermore, this emphasis on plurality and ethnic difference in tourism representation resonates the cultural policies in post-Mao-era China (Sofield and Li, 1998). In

other words, this representation discourse reflects the post-Mao-era national identity as a “nation of many nationalities” (Chao, 1996).

Economic Growth

The next theme identified from the mainstream representation discourses is termed economic growth. Under this theme, tourism is portrayed as an effective way of improving local living standards. For instance, “A dozen years ago, the Mosuo people had no contact with the outside. They lived by fishing and growing crops, but many did not have enough to eat...The rapid development of local tourism has greatly transformed the traditional lifestyle of the Mosuo people and added more business and wealth to their previously modest lives” (China Daily, 1998). This excerpt indicates that tourism has been considered as the major solution for maximizing economic benefits in the local community. The writer, speaking for the mainstream society, highlights the positive impacts of the outside world on the local community. In other words, this description indirectly eulogizes Deng’s reform movement.

An analysis from the discourse practice dimension indicates that the second theme stressed in the mainstream discourses about the Mosuo people and their community is built upon writers’ observation of the improvement in the local living standard. For instance, “Tourism has become so profitable that many Mosuo families in the area who have opened their homes have become wealthy. Caoshidamu’s family has a color TV, stereo, washing machine, and lots of other modern household conveniences” (China Daily, 2000). In this description of the improved living conditions, the writer demonstrates the stereotyped image of being wealthy in the ethnic minority regions so as to create the effect of truth. However, compared with the modern life standard in the mainstream society, particularly, with Han Chinese families’ typical wealthy images, such as carrying laptops, owning private cars, and using iPhones, etc, the writer’s

description about the affluence of local families appears modest. In other words, the writer does not put minority people at the same standard as the people in the mainstream society but at a lower level. Thus this representation reflects the unbalanced power relations between minority people and mainstream society.

An analysis at the social practice dimension on the second theme reveals that such description emphasized the economic benefits the local community obtains from tourism does not only aim at showing governmental efforts on improving local living standards, but also attempts to eulogize the wise leadership of government. For instance, a writer quotes one local person's comments on solutions taken by the local authority to improve tourism development as follows:

Zhi Xiangdong, a young Mosuo person having attempted to make a living wandering outside of his village and then eventually came back to his village, expressed his innermost thoughts and feelings: 'In the past, we developed tourism by focusing on the short-term benefits, which is not far reaching. Now, the government helps our village plan and design. This is our village's opportunity. With the support from the government, our village will be more and more beautiful (People's Daily, 2006).

As shown in the above quote, by using a local Mosuo's praise of the wise leadership of local authority, the writer emphasizes the importance of governmental administration in local tourism development. Based on the discourse analysis at the social practice dimension, it is clear that the improved living standard in host communities can obtain the local people's support for authority, and ultimately can reinforce the legitimacy of government in administrating minority people.

Authenticity Issue

Nevertheless, the economic growth generated by tourism development in local communities is not the only purpose for central government to promote tourism. One of the major aims of embracing tourism industry in post-Mao-era China is to mitigate the influence of

Western culture and values by reinforcing traditional Chinese culture and heritage (Sofield and Li, 1998). This cultural policy focusing on preserving traditional culture is manifested in the theme identified as authenticity issue. Under this theme, the Mosuo people are portrayed as the strong holders of their traditions and the local community as a tourism destination is represented as an authentic Other that is mystified and stereotyped as exotic, pure, and hospitable. For instance, a writer comments that “They have retained the thousand-year-old walking marriage custom, girls waiting in their boudoirs for their lovers, and the lake, folklore, and the Mosuo people’s love are all pure... the Mosuo people are hospitable. They would host every visitor arriving to Lugu Lake by chance, would show you the lake by rowing the “pig trough” canoes, and would invite visitors to join in their gala party” (Xin Jing News, 2005). This strand of authenticity discourse creates an untainted image of the host community and the well-preserved traditional culture, heritage, and landscape with the development of tourism.

This authenticity discourse working with the discourse featuring the economic growth together constructs a favorable image for the positive impact of tourism development in the host community to eulogize the progress made in China under the wise leadership of the CCP in the post-Mao era. However, ironically, these two types of discourse have been identified as contradictory with each other (MacCannell, 1976). On the one hand, tourism development in host communities can promote local traditions and preserve their heritage by marketing tourism products based on local cultural and natural resources. On the other hand, with the development of tourism, traditional lifestyles and local values could also be significantly affected by the outside world due to tourists’ “demonstration effects.” Consequently, some scholars believe that what tourists have experienced in host communities is not the genuine demonstration of local people’s life but the staged performance provided for tourists (MacCannell, 1976). However, some other researchers argue that the judgment of authentic tourists’ experiences cannot be built upon the toured object but rather on tourists’ personal or intersubjective feelings (Wang, 1999).

In other words, tourists consider their experiences as authentic “not because they find the toured objects are authentic but simply because they are engaging in non-ordinary activities, free from the constraints of the daily” (Wang, 1999). Therefore, such understanding about tourism authenticity based on tourists’ personal feelings explains why people visiting the same place have different perceptions about whether their experiences are genuine. Meanwhile, the fluid and negotiable nature of authenticity also makes it important to form a consensus of the criteria for authenticity judgment so as to have a consistent representation about the host communities.

Without the commonly accepted criteria for authenticity, it would be difficult to reach a consistent representation about the authenticity of a host community. For example, according to one writer’s report, a volunteer living in the local community for a long time comments that “Compared with the Mosuo communities deep in the mountains, Luoshui Village, the most accessible and open to tourists, has been more or less commercially “contaminated” and is, therefore, less authentic than other Mosuo villages. “In a way I am a witness to how modern society is affecting this special ethnic community, mainly through tourism,” Wang said” (China Daily, 1999). Such dissonant narratives about the impact of tourism form an alternative image about the host community. Another article directly criticizes the changes happening in the host community by quoting a traveler’s comments. “The Mosuo people living by the lake are apparently wealthy now, but few people are willing to host visitors complementarily. It is said that no more than 30% of the Mosuo people actually keep the archaic custom of the walking marriage, and such an exotic custom is gradually becoming the pretence for some ugly business under the influence of commercialization” (Xin Jing News, 2005).

Apparently these dissonant comments about the host community focus on the stereotyped images projected in the mainstream discourses. In other words, the people from the tourist-sending society often make the judgment about the authenticity of their touristic experience based on the expectations, preferences, and projected images they hold about the visited culture or

toured Others. Thus the experience of authenticity is pluralistic and depends on tourists' personal understanding and interpretation of authenticity (Wang, 1999). As tourism researchers argue that authenticity is not absolute and static but relative and contested, the same thing can be interpreted and represented differently from multiple perspectives (Bruner, 1994; Cohen, 1988; Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983). As a result, the dissonant versions of representation about the same host community are formed when people adopting different projections of their consciousness raise their voices. As Bruner states that: "No longer is authenticity a property inherent in an object, forever fixed in time, it is seen as a struggle, a social process, in which competing interests argue for their own interpretation of history" (1994, p. 408).

Therefore, this different articulation within the hegemonic culture of authenticity issue demonstrates the dynamic nature in the construction of representation, which is a social process (Brunner, 1994). Furthermore, such contentious narratives may function similar to what Homi Bhabha (1990) calls "minority discourse," which often emerges at the transitional period of the national culture, reflects the dynamic nature of national culture, and exposes the complex struggle between the dominant discourses and other dissenting voices. It is critical to know that a "minority discourse" stands at a strategic "marginality" position that inquiries and challenges the "centrality" of official discourses. According to Bhabha (1990), although "minority discourse" is a marginalized voice, it does mean the voice is not insignificant. In particular, he believes that such a voice can argue against the authoritative speeches by undermining its legitimacy.

Based on the above articulation of the "minority discourse", it can be concluded that the dissonant representation for the authenticity issue located in mainstream discourses demonstrates an example of "minority discourse" in post-Mao-era China. As a country experiencing a transitional period, China is re-presenting itself as a nation of many nationalities in the post-Mao era in contrast to the uniformity of the Maoist past. Tourism, particularly ethnic tourism, is utilized as a vehicle to reinforce such a newly-emerged national identity. To emphasize the

cultural diversity of the ethnic minority, the authenticity of tourism representation is stressed in the state grand narratives even though, as a major solution of maximizing economic growth, tourism has been adopted by the state to bring the ethnic minorities into mainstream economic development. However, the individuals' accounts of their personal experiences in the host community challenge the rhetoric of the state discourses and structure a subtext underneath the eulogized surface of a state grand myth (Zhang, 1997). In other words, the individual visitors serve as the "performative subject," whose personal narratives published in the state discourses break the holistic subjectivity into the diverse fragments. Consequently, the dissonant narratives expose the state grand discourses as a staged representation and raise people's attention to the images behind the scene.

CONCLUSION

Representation of tourism destinations involves dynamic and often complex struggles among groups in making their voices be heard (Bruner, 1996; Cohen, 2001). Previous research in tourism representation has identified the dominant position of the mainstream discourses in constructing the images and identities of host communities as tourism destinations (Cohen, 1993). In particular, tourism researchers have primarily adopted Said's work on Orientalism in interpreting the construction of the Other in contrast to the self (Bandyopadhyay and Morais, 2005). Such an essentialist approach to analyzing the opposing relationship between Other and self reflects a dualist nature that treats both Other and self as a holistic entities (Aitchison, 1999). However, this approach neglects the fluid and contested nature in the construction of identities and culture. In particular, under the postmodern condition, the entities at both the personal and state levels are increasingly plural and volatile. Therefore, the essentialist approach based on Enlightenment belief in unmediated knowledge of reality in tourism representation research is too

limited to help understand the differentiating nature of culture and, consequently, cannot detect the complex reality in the construction of identity.

Focusing on post-Mao-era China, a country experiencing a transitional period, this study aims at locating the differentiating nature of hegemonic culture by analyzing narratives in the state newspaper articles about tourism development and the Mosuo people and their community. The study results indicate that the official representation of local people and community resonates with the major cultural and tourism policies in post-Mao-era China. The three themes identified in this research reflect the purposes of developing tourism in contemporary China. They include re-presenting China as a nation with many nationalities, bringing minority people into mainstream economic development, and preserving traditional culture to mitigate the influence of Western values. Moreover this research reveals that the mainstream discourses represent the Mosuo people and their culture as exotic, archaic, and feminized. This finding is consistent with the previous research on the representation of Other, which represents the colonized and gendered subject. However, the in-depth analysis of individuals' accounts on their personal travel experiences exposes the differentiating nature in hegemonic culture. In particular, by adopting Bhabha's notion of minority discourses, this research demonstrates the significance of individualized subject in reassessing the culture of the nation by challenging the state grand myths.

Concerning the dynamic social transformations in post-Mao-era China, the study results also reveal the contested nature in the construction of national culture. Although the CCP is endeavoring to re-imagine the nation by constructing against the Maoist era, the intruding Western values and the accelerating modernization are challenging its efforts in revitalizing traditional culture and promoting cultural plurality. The dissonant representations identified in this research demonstrate the complicated and multiple positions the hegemonic culture represents for in contemporary China. In addition, however, the findings allow us to engender a

research agenda to inform future advances in this subject. First, a more intense study on the mainstream tourism representation discourses in various nation-states, in particular, those closely involved in tourism development, should be conducted. Additionally, besides newspapers, nation-states are also employing other types of mass media tools to construct tourism representation. Therefore, it would be important to have a deeper understanding about the images and identities constructed in various media and examine to what extent each of these media are characterized with a particular form of cultural construction.

Chapter 4

AN EXAMINATION OF TOURISTS' SELF-IDENTITY IN TOURIST WEBLOGS

Introduction

For centuries, tourists have adopted journaling as a popular means of recording their travel experiences, sharing their feelings and impressions about the places they visited and their interactions with their hosts (Pudliner, 2007). However, due to the limitation in economic resources, social status, educational level, and development of travel infrastructure, the authorship of such travel writing is usually constrained to a select group of people (Towner, 1985). This situation change little until mass tourism came into being, and tourism became an individual act. In particular, the development of technology and the emergence of the Internet have made it possible and popular to post and publish personal travel experiences on weblogs (Buhalis, 2003). By 2005, there were 31.6 million blogs in the Internet (Pan, MacLaurin, and Crotts, 2007) and, each day, 40,000 new blogs are created online (Baker and Green, 2005). The easy access to weblogs and the popularity of blogging, virtual journaling, enable the formation of personal voices. As Powazek (2002) states:

Here is the mother lode of personal expression – the one place in our lives that we (as people lucky enough to have [web] access) can say whatever we want, about anything we want (p.3).

In the act of blogging and virtual journaling, people reflect their consciousness in their life as tourists, provide personal interpretation about their experiences, and construct their self-identity (Buhalis, 2003; Pudliner, 2007). As a result, weblogs do not only serve as a depository of travel information but also become a space for tourists to define and represent themselves and to share their interests with others (Blood, 2002). Meanwhile, Robinson and Andersen (2002, p.

6) assert that such travel narrative accounts “can legitimately be analyzed to see how they reflect and shape the economic, political, and socio-cultural realities of the world.” Therefore, weblogs provide researchers with a new access to study tourists’ personal voices and a way to discover how such voices represent and construct social realities. In particular, such a voice would never have been so easily and widely located without the popularity of blogging.

Tourism researchers have realized the increasingly significant impacts of weblogs on tourism. However, to date, most research on weblogs in the tourism field has narrowly focused on studying weblogs as a marketing tool. Such research merely aims at understanding tourists’ perceptions of tourism products and assessing weblogs’ effectiveness in affecting potential tourists’ decision-making by analyzing and studying travel accounts and comments posted on the blogs (e.g. Crotts, 1999; Lin and Huang, 2006; Pan, MacLaurin, and Crotts, 2007). There is nevertheless a conspicuous lack for a deeper level of examination for the nature of tourist experiences. As MacCannell posits, “all tourists desire this deeper involvement with society and culture to some degree; it is a basic component of their motivation to travel” (1999, p. 10). In other words, to discover greater meaning is the rudimentary purpose for travel.

Travel accounts posted on weblogs go beyond the boundaries of traditional written publications and provide bountiful resources for studying tourists’ self reflection, self-discovery, and self-identity. Weblogs supply individuals with sufficient space to share the inner feelings and interpretation of their personal journey of discovery. Nevertheless, such journeys based on personal experiences are uniquely different for each tourist, and each interpretation for the journey is also not the same (Pudliner, 2007). Consequently, the diverse travel discourses and unique interpretation of personal travel experiences reflect the complex characteristics of postmodernity (Uriely, 2005). According to Jean-François Lyotard (1984), postmodernity refers to a time in which “the grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses” (p. 37). Therefore, the study of personal voices raised in weblogs can provide

a glimpse of the complexity in the meanings of tourist experiences. Furthermore, by focusing on individuals, researchers may locate common threads of thoughts (Pudliner, 2007).

This study aims at exposing the nature of travel experiences for tourists based on their personal travel accounts posted on weblogs. Such research goes beyond previous studies about weblogs in tourism by examining the deeper level of meaning about the personal travel experiences and identifying how self-identity is constructed in the touristic journeys of self-discovery. Meanwhile, concerning the fluid and fractured characteristics of personal identity in postmodern society, this study applies postmodernist theorizing in the conceptualizations of the subject about tourist experience. More significantly, rather than focusing on the Western tourists as prevalent in previous research on this subject, this study targets non-Western tourists by examining the travel accounts posted by Chinese tourists on travel blogs about their experiences of visiting a Chinese minority group - the matriarchal Mosuo. Moreover, since tourism in China is not merely considered as a vehicle to achieve economic growth but also a means of projecting and affirming new identities of mainstream society as China is experiencing a transformational period (Leong, 1997), this study will provide insight into the dynamic creation of China's middle class identity, arguably the largest and most important social group of our times.

Literature Review

Identity Construction as a Discursive Practice

Identity as a social construct has been one of the major foci in tourism research (Palmer, 2005). It has been utilized to examine the role of tourism in constructing the cohesiveness of human beings at different levels and from various social positions. For instance, the relationship between tourism and identities manifested in cultural practices is explored in the collection edited

by Smith (1978). In this collection, identities are regarded as a static, simple, and acquired object which previously exists. Nevertheless, such a notion of pre-existing identity has been challenged in the recent collection edited by Abram, Waldren, and Macleod (1997). Based on their understanding, tourism does not annihilate a pre-existing identity but accelerate a continued and nonstop process of identification. They believe and some researchers also argue that the identities of both hosts and guests are constructed in their interaction through tourism (Bruner, 1991; Kohn, 1997).

Such a more dynamic, constructive, and adaptable conceptualization of identity echoes the standpoint of Hall (2005) in his understanding of identity. He utilizes the term identity to

refer to the meeting point, the point of *suture*, between on one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to ‘interpellate’, speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be ‘spoken’ (2005, p. 5-6).

Therefore, according to the above argument, identities not only are merely the result of a constructive process, but also heavily rely on the discursive practices which serve to construct subject positions. In other words, the construction of identities reflects on the process of assimilating the subject in the flow of the discourses and shaping the subjective positions through discursive practices.

Meanwhile, discourse as a practical form of language is not neutral but subjected to the social conditions in the production and consumption of meaning. As Foucault (1969) conceptualizes, discourse serves as a tool of exploring knowledge in the cultural domain and constituting people’s social life through institutionalizing signs and practices. Furthermore, Fairclough asserts:

Different discourses are different perspectives on the world, and they are associated with the different relations people have to the world, which in turn depends on their positions in the world, their social and personal identities, and the social relationships in which they stand to other people. Discourses not only represent the world as it is (or rather as it is seen to be), they are also projective

imaginaries, representing possible worlds which are different from the actual world, and tied in to projects to change the world in particular directions (2003, p. 123).

As a result, identities built upon discursive practices are more the product of complex and contested discourses of power and control than the representation of a simple and naturally-formed entity. As Hall (2005) addresses:

Precisely because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies (2005, p. 4).

Therefore, the examination of identities shaped in discourses has been one of major issues in the tourism field in the past decades (e.g. Bandyopadhyay and Morais, 2005; Buzinde and Santos, 2008; Desforges, 2000; Urry, 1995). Tourism researchers' endeavor of exploring identities in discourses is built upon the close interrelation between tourism and discourses.

Dann (1996) in his seminal work, *The Language of Tourism*, argues that "tourism is grounded in discourses and should be viewed as a language in itself" (1996, p. 2). According to his argument, a language is a form of symbolic representation of sounds, pictorial images, and words that can be used to share one's own experience. Applying such an understanding of language in tourism, Dann states "... verbal descriptions, along with the glossy displays of photographs and film footage, collectively constitutes a very special type of communication, one which differs from other forms of human exchange" (1996, p. 1). Therefore, tourism has its own language and forms its unique way in verbal and written communication. To explore the uniqueness of writing and communication in tourism, tourists' descriptions of their own travel experiences have been the major foci in tourism research. In particular, such exploration of tourists' travel accounts provides a glimpse of tourists' identities shaped in their descriptions about other places, since telling the story about one's own is one of the major ways for people to

construct their own identity and reflect who they are (Gergen, 1994; Giddens, 1991). As Dann states:

... it focuses on the inner feelings they [tourists] experience and communicate, along with the questions of self-identity they rhetorically pose in their descriptions of far flung places, sentiments which have the cumulative effect of physically and psychologically distancing themselves and their readers from the more familiar voyager of today: the tourist. (1999, p. 160).

Nevertheless, researchers in the tourism field have decried the limited research on the identity of tourists through studying their tourism experiences (Palmer, 2005, p. 7). Although there are some exceptions (e.g. Desforges, 2000; Noy, 2004), such research rarely is based on the actual tourists' description of their travel experiences but on the interviews of selected social groups. Even if some studies (e.g. Dann, 1999; Galani-Moutafi, 2000) focus on tourists' accounts about their experiences, they merely target at the privileged travelers rather than the ordinary tourists. In particular, the development of mass tourism and the multiplicity of tourist experiences reflected in the discourses of postmodern tourism make the research on the identity of mass tourists and the understanding of its complexity increasingly imperative (Galani-Moutafi, 2000; Uriely, 1997). To explore tourists' identities through tourists' discourses of their travel experiences, it is necessary for researchers to have an access to such discourses. The popularity of posting personal travel experiences on weblogs among ordinary tourists provides such access.

Weblog as an Innovative Way to Access the Travelers' Self-Identity

Weblog refers to a web page where a web logger can compile and constitute related links, compose and communicate personal thought, and sift web content (Blood, 2002). Usually each weblog hosts a specific topic shared and discussed by the web logger and other browsers. With its easy access and relative freedom in speech, a weblog becomes a popular place for people to express themselves. Powazek (2002, p. 6) states "I love weblogs because they're yet another way

for people to express themselves online. Sure, they're full of links. They're also full of lives.” Furthermore, Katz (2002) remarks that the web creates a personal space where people can identify themselves and it becomes possible for people to construct, locate, and network with information they are interested in and with other humans sharing their interests. In particular, such an innovative way of expressing selves, communicating with others, and collecting information also create a new access to reach people's inner world. As Conhaim (2003, p. 27) articulates “online journal writing is a new way of reaching out to people who care enough to read an account of a person's thoughts and feelings.”

With the popularity of the Internet in people's daily life, weblog, since its emergence in the 1990s, has demonstrated its extraordinary attractiveness for humans. By 2005, there have been 31.6 million blogs on the Internet (Pan, MacLaurin, and Crotts, 2007) and each day 40,000 new blogs emerge online (Baker and Green, 2005). In particular, as a major travel information resource, weblog also provides a platform for demonstrating one's perceptions of tourism destinations. For example, many popular websites, such as TravelBlog.Org, Travelpod, Travelpost.com, and Realtravel.com, offer easy access to travel blogs so that travelers can upload photos and describe their travel experiences as well as exchange information with other people. As a result, weblog becomes a place where tourists can tell their personal travel stories, express their own thoughts, and demonstrate their self-understanding and selfhood (Pudliner, 2007). In particular, with the easy access to weblog, it is possible for mass tourists to raise their voice about themselves. Therefore, locating tourists' personal travel stories posted on weblog becomes a new approach to explore tourists' identities and goes beyond the boundaries of traditional written texts of tourism, such as guidebooks, brochures, travel writing in newspapers, and elite travel journals.

Self-Identity in the Postmodern Condition

Furthermore, as previous researchers have asserted, the identities are not pre-existing but constructive (Abram, Waldren and Macleod, 1997). In particular, as a type of discursive practice, the construction of identities is becoming more contested and the self-identity is more fluid in the postmodern condition (Hall, 2005). For the individuals in postmodern society, they find themselves in a state of instability with regard to their surrounding world. Consequently, their personal identities become more fragmented and hybrid (Bhabha, 1994). To manifest their multiple identities, postmodern customers demonstrate great flexibility in their patterns of consumption. At the macro social level, postmodern markets take over the traditional Fordist practice, which is recognized as standardized and rational, and become characterized as diverse and volatile (Harvey, 1990). In tourism, the multiplicity of tourist motivations, experiences, and environments has become the major features of postmodern tourism (Uriely, 1997). Thus the tourists' travel accounts posted on weblogs may provide a glimpse of the complexity of tourists' identities in postmodern society.

To comprehend such complexity in the construction of self-identity, it is critical to develop and adopt the notion of "postmodernist modes of theorizing" (Bauman, 1987, 1992; Denzin, 1991; Hollinshead, 2002). Postmodernist modes of theorizing are characterized by deconstruction, subjectivity, skepticism, intertextuality, and relativity (Flax, 1990; Frazer, 1989; Ryan, 2002). Aiming at deconstructing modernist-like grand theories and criticizing the notion of a totalizing pattern of the social system, postmodern theorists emphasize plurality of life and diversity (Denzin, 1991; Frazer, 1989). In particular, postmodern theories stress the constitutive characteristics of power rather than its negative role in the negotiation of tourism experiences' meanings (Frazer, 1989). Furthermore, postmodernist discourse is characterized by the compromising nature and emphasizes the relativity of truths in conceptualizing reality based on

its non-dualistic and anti-hierarchical logic (Lather, 1991). As a result, postmodern theories open the door for the cultural pluralism and the hybrid nature of identities.

Nevertheless, so far most of the generalizing conceptualizations of identities are built upon the Western tourists' experiences, and so there is a need to explore other voices (Elsrud, 2004; Uriely, 2005). Meanwhile, with the development of globalization, the frequent migration has disturbed the relatively fixed character of many peoples and cultures. In particular, as a constructive social construct, identities "are constantly in the process of change and transformation" (Hall, 2005, p. 4). And such transient trend of identities appears more apparent when a nation-state is in a transitional period (Pritchard and Morgan, 2001). Furthermore, identity as a discursive practice is constructed within a historical and sociocultural context (Hall, 2005). Therefore, an examination of identities based on a specific historical and sociocultural setting is necessary. This study focuses on such a country, China, which is currently experiencing a considerable transformation in economic, social, political, and cultural perspectives in the post-Mao era, and aims at exposing the Chinese tourists' identities reflected in the description about their travel experiences in Chinese minority regions.

The Post-Mao-Era China

In the last quarter of the 20th century, China has transformed from an ardent pursuer rigidly complying with the socialist values of Marxist-Leninism in the Maoist era to a vigorous reformer targeting at revitalizing the economy and rebuilding the socialist culture with Chinese characteristics in the post-Mao era. Under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping's theory of modern-day Marxism, politics in China is redefined, and substantial modifications of the ideological framework are made (Mackerras, Taneja, and Yong, 1994). With the implementation of these political and economic reform policies, tourism is accepted as an appropriate form of economic

activity and has emerged as a critical strategy significantly contributing to the transformative socio-cultural change in China (Lew, Yu, Ap, and Zhang, 2003; Morais, Yarnal, Dong, and Dowler, 2005; Wen and Tisdell, 2001; Xu, 1999). As a result, tourism policies in China do not merely focus on the economic contribution of tourism, but also stress its significant role in facilitating the implementation of nationalist policies, especially in promoting the representations of China as a “nation of many nationalities” (*duominzu guojia*) (Chao, 1996; Xiao, 2006).

Such emphasis of tourism policies on promoting cultural pluralism in the post-Mao era reflects the significant change from the uniformity in the Mao era which features the practice of fervent repression of ethnic variance (Dreyer, 1976; Heberer, 1989). Under Mao, the ethnic minorities were categorized into different states of society on the basis of their different stages on the evolutionary path to communism. Regardless of their different stages, the central government endeavored to “uplift” them and bring them out of their state of relative backwardness and into the “progressive” socialist fold as quickly as possible. In keeping with Marxist interpretations of historical development, the traditional culture, social values, and heritages possessed by minority ethnic peoples were regarded as the symbol of backwardness and primitiveness. Since the 1950s, the minority ethnic peoples have undergone certain major social movements and political campaigns such as the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. During this period of time, the indigenous culture was challenged and suppressed dramatically. The state obliterated old ideas, old culture, old customs, and old habits (*po sijiu*) which represents “feudal superstitions” so as to achieve its egalitarian ideals of communism (Sofield and Li, 1998).

However, as China moves to a market economy undertaken by Deng, the rigidity of the socialist culture has become the major barrier to modernization. Therefore, to rebuild the socialist culture with Chinese characteristics required by the reform movement in the post-Mao China, the state has attempted to create a new imagination of the nation by contrasting it with the Maoist era. As Anderson (1991, p. 12) has stressed, “nationalism has to be understood by

aligning it ... with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which – as well as against which – it came into being.” “This re-creation has entailed an appropriation of what the Maoist era had sought to destroy: ethnic difference, historical landmarks, imperial antiquities, Confucian obedience, and even religious systems” (Chao, 1996, p. 212). As a result, the state actively advocates the development of tourism as a way to vitalize economy, preserve traditional culture, and represent ethnic diversity (Sofield and Li, 1998).

Consequently, visitation of heritage places in China has become a focus in official tourism promotion and domestic tourism has rapidly begun to develop (Pine, Zhang, and Lam, 2005). As Chinese people which are mostly composed of the Han travel around the country, they do not only visit traditional Han Chinese cultural heritage sites to seek their cultural roots, but also visit Chinese ethnic minorities which are seen as survivors of cultural homogenization policies implemented during the Mao era. Visiting Chinese ethnic minorities enables the Han people to explore the exotic culture, interact with local hosts, and discover self-identity. As Said (1979, p. 3) states “the construction of identity involves establishing opposites and “others”.” The contrasts between places are critical to the construction of identity, which emerges in the “universal practice of designating in one’s mind a familiar place which is “ours” and an unfamiliar space beyond “ours” which is “theirs” ” (Said, 1979, p. 54). Thus “study of tourism, as an arena for the discursive recreation of opposites and others, may reveal much about how we come to understand places, nature, ourselves and mundane social life” (Urry, 1990, p. 3). This study targets travel accounts posted on weblogs by Chinese travelers about their travel experiences in Lugu Lake and their interaction with the local hosts – the Mosuo people who have been carrying out matriarchal practices based on Chinese government’s classification (Yan and Song, 1983).

The Mosuo

This study focuses on the Mosuo people, a unique ethnic minority group in China. “Mosuo people” has been their official name since the 1980s (Mathieu, 2003). Currently consisting of a population of 40,000, the Mosuo people are mainly residing near the Sichuan-Yunnan border in the southwestern part of China, of which Lugu Lake is one of the primary geographical features in this area (Walsh, 2005). Although the Mosuo people are officially placed as a branch of the Naxi Nationality by the Chinese government, they consider themselves more closely related to the Tibetans than to the Naxi (Mathieu, 2000; Shih, 2001). The Mosuo people practice Tibetan Buddhism as well as their own native religion, *dabaism*, and they speak a Tibeto-Burman language (Walsh, 2005). Please see Figure 4-1 for the geographical location of the Mosuo people’s habitat.

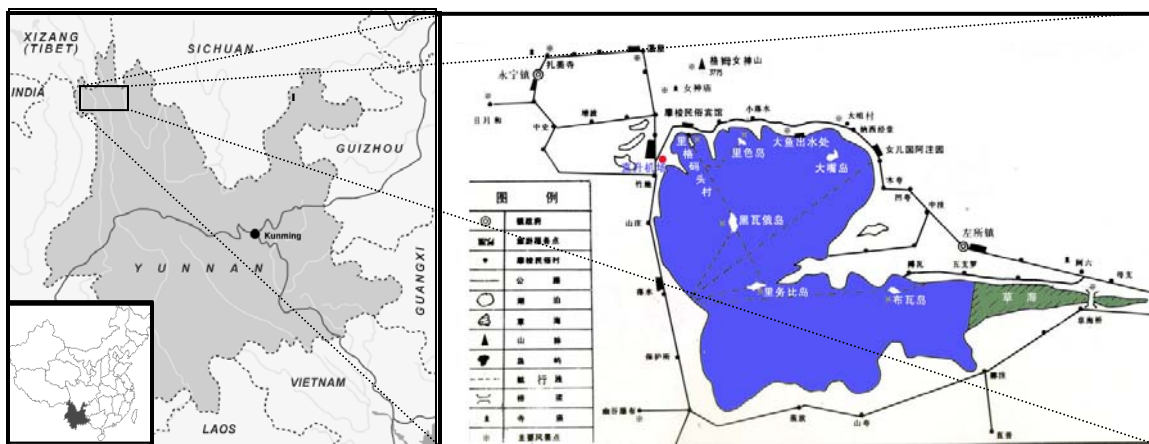


Figure 4-1: Map of Predominant Mosuo Region.

The Mosuo people used to have a typical slash and burn economy; however, since the 1990s, tourism has become a major income resource for the local community (Walsh, 2005). Besides the beautiful landscapes, the exotic culture practiced by the Mosuo people is also the

major reason for tourists visiting the local community. The best known cultural traits of the Mosuo people are their matriarchal family system and walking marriage, *Zouhun* (Walsh, 2005). Based on the state representation of the Mosuo people, the oldest women are the household heads, *dabu*, the belongings and business of family are managed by them and inherited equally by all members of the household (Zhang, 1990). As the dominant social group, women are not only situated at the center in both society and family but are also imbued with the unlimited autonomy in reproduction (Shih and Jenike, 2002).

One of the local social practices rendering such reproductive autonomy is known as the walking marriage, a type of traditional sexual partnership practice popular among the Mosuo people. By adopting this relationship, the Mosuo women may host her lover at her boudoir in the evening with the understanding that her lover will return to his mother's house the next morning (Walsh, 2001). This type of relationship is also called *tisese*, which literally means "walking back and forth." People practicing *tisese* usually keep social and economical attachment with their natal households, and their children are kept in the women's family and take on her family's name (Shih and Jenike, 2002). It is reported that *tisese* relationships are more firm now than in the past (He, 2000; Walsh, 2003). Generally speaking, matriarchal family structure and walking marriage as two major features of the Mosuo cultural identity have well been adopted in tourism representation about the Mosuo people (Walsh, 2005).

Study Methods

To examine tourists' identities constructed in their search for the Other, this study focuses on analyzing the representation of Mosuo people in tourists' travel accounts posted on weblogs. According to the *2006 Report of Weblog in China* released by the China Internet Network Information Center (2006), by the end of August 2006, China has 17.5 million weblog owners,

nearly 34 million registered weblogs, while 75 million people can reach weblog, and the active bloggers (that is, at least the weblog is updated once a month) are up to 54.7 million. From 2002 when weblog was initially introduced to China, the size of weblog in China had increased 30 times by 2006. Based on the report, among such an enormous size of weblog, tourism is the fourth most popular topics. In particular, the weblogs related to tourism are one of the major targets of Chinese blog readers. The report indicates that over 20% of the weblogs which Chinese blog readers browse are related to tourism. Furthermore, according to the report, over 83% of blog owners create blogs for expressing their feelings and opinions.

Such hard data demonstrate that weblog has become one of the major vehicles for Chinese tourists to record their travel experiences, represent the host communities, and share their meanings with others. Furthermore, different from the traditional written publications, weblogs enable writers to remain unidentified by the ability to use a pseudonym. Such characteristics allow writers to describe their experiences and express their opinions freely. Therefore, travel articles posted on weblogs about the Mosuo people and Lugu Lake were selected as the major resources for the analysis of the tourists' identities constructed in their representation of the host community. Then, texts from weblogs were examined by employing the critical discourse analysis method so as to locate the meanings reflected in the tourists' travel accounts. Tourism discourses have complex layers of meaning that represent complex socio-cultural underpinnings (Kaplan, 1990); therefore, a critical approach of discourse analysis is needed for their full interpretation.

Method

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is not like other sociolinguistic approaches (e.g., conversational analysis, ethnography, narrative analysis, and rhetoric), which merely target

examining the usage of language and exposing the meanings embedded in the language. It renders researchers able to perceive and identify the social inequality embedded in society through linguistic practices (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997). In particular, as Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) assert, the social and economic changes “are to a significant degree ... transformations in the language and discourse” (p.4). Therefore, the CDA has a particular contribution in theorizing transformation and reminding people “of what is, how it has come to be, and what it might become, on the basis of which people may be able to make and remake their lives” (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999, p.4).

In this study the three-dimensional approach to discourse developed by Fairclough (1989, 1992, 1995) was adopted. This approach focuses on analyzing discourse as *text*, as a form of *discourse practice*, and as *social practice*. The “text” dimension of the CDA approach mainly focuses on “the linguistic analysis in terms of vocabulary, grammar, semantics, the sound system, and cohesion-organization above the sentence level” (Fairclough, 1995, p.57). By analyzing how social practice is represented, how the identities of writers are constructed, and how the relationship between writers and local hosts is built, the analysis at the “text” dimension targets revealing how meaning is represented in the discourse, “categories of participant, constructions of participant identity or participant relations” (Fairclough, 1995, p.58). Therefore, from this dimension, the idea embedded in the text representing the social practice, the emphasis in the construction of identity, and relations of participant can be systematically identified.

The “discourse practice” dimension targets interpreting the evidence provided by the linguistic features of texts. According to Fairclough, “discourse practice straddles the division between society and culture on the one hand, and discourse, language and text on the other” (p.60). In this dimension, the interpretation of changes in text as it goes through the production and consumption process is the main purpose. In other words, the discourse analysis in this dimension focuses on analyzing the intertextual properties of the text since it is assumed that texts

“may be linguistically heterogeneous” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 189). Therefore, in this dimension, the analysis targets exposing the relations between statements (Foucault, 1969), identifying the mechanism of text in producing “effects of truth” (Rose, 2001, p.154), and demonstrating the omissions or “significant silence” in the text (Echtner and Prasad, 2003, p.661).

Last, the “social practice” dimension focuses on analyzing the macrostructural context within which the discourse is embedded and linking the gap between micro- and macro-levels of society by interpreting discursive practice in specific social contexts (Van Dijk, 2002).

According to Fairclough (1995), the analysis in this dimension should concentrate on three aspects of sociocultural context in an account of communication: political, economic, and cultural. Although he does not think it is necessary to conduct analysis at all levels, any level may “be relevant to understanding the particular event” (p.62). In this study, the macro social context with which the bloggers are bound in the construction process of representation is analyzed. This dimension of the CDA approach helps unveil how broader power relations might influence the construction of self-identity of tourists in their travel accounts.

Several steps were taken to minimize the bias in analyzing the data. Initially, the author and the author’s advisor did a preliminary reading of the travel accounts to familiarize themselves with the data and to locate the major foci of accounts topics. Then a “close reading” followed. This step aimed at identifying the critical themes and forming an interpretation by analyzing the meanings reflected in representation discourse and contexts in which the discourses are embedded. In this step, the different nationalities of the author and the other researcher bring cross-cultural perspectives to the analysis. The author is Chinese and possesses a critically reflexive view of data based on his multiple identities. As a Chinese, the author recognizes the cultural bubble with which he is deeply involved in the process of data analysis. Meanwhile, as a scholar trained in North America academic institution, he believes it is important to achieve a type of self-reflexiveness in examining discourse. Therefore, rather than being affected by his

subjectivity in data analysis, the author is rendered an in-depth understanding of the data by his multiple identities. Furthermore, the advisor working with the author, is a Western scholar with rich experience in tourism research in the Lugu Lake area, and is himself a diasporic individual with complex self identities.

After the “close reading” step, a list of codes were obtained. Then, both the author and his advisor made a constant comparison of their findings, and this step did not stop until the interpretive exhaustion and consensus in the interpretation were reached. Following the three dimensions of the CDA approach (Fairclough, 1995), the themes and interpretations in general were also examined in search for evidence of identities constructed in tourists’ travel accounts.

Data

To examine the identities constructed in tourists’ travel accounts, the blogs posted on weblog sites by travelers about their travel experiences in Lugu Lake were collected and analyzed. A total of 69 blogs with the topics related to travel experiences in Lugu Lake were identified from 16 weblog sites through an electronic keyword search for “Mosuo” or “Lugu Lake,” in the Google search engine. Most blogs were posted in the following three weblog sites, www.yododo.com (27 blogs), www.dailytravel.163.com (12 blogs), and www.blog.sina.com (5 blogs). These sites, either the most popular websites in China or a professional website featuring travel information, provide an appropriate study sample of travel accounts about Lugu Lake. Furthermore, since weblog was not introduced to China until 2002, this study selects a timeframe starting from 2005 to analyze the travel blogs about Lugu Lake.

Findings and Discussion

Among the 45 articles, four major foci of article topics were located (Table 4-1). Almost all the writers describe their fascination with the natural beauty of the local landscape. In their description, writers reflect upon the fresh air, peaceful lake, and pure atmosphere. Such concentration on the impressive local beauty demonstrates the writers' strong desire for recuperating what is missing from their everyday existence. Meanwhile, their accounts resonate the images of the local community represented in the dominant discourse which emphasizes the difference of the local natural landscape from the mainstream society. Therefore, such coincidence demonstrates the influence of the dominant discourse on the way tourists consume and project the images of places they visit. Similar to the first focus, the second major topic concentrates on the description of local customs and culture, such as matriarchal society, walking marriage practice, and local ceremonies, which also emphasizes how unique and different the local culture is from the dominant culture in mainstream society. Such insight about the aboriginal exotic culture and unusual beauty reflects the traditional tourism marketing strategies portraying tourism destinations as the places for tourists to escape from modernity and revive their nostalgic feelings for the past as well as their curiosity for exploring the alien periphery.

Following the same strategy as reflected in the first two major topics, the third major topic which targets the local people produces the representations of local people as simple, hospitable, honest, and promiscuous. By representing the places they visit and the hosts they interact with as something different and exotic, the writers locate a way of mediating their experience of modernity and establishing images of the self which are on the opposite side of the Other. Therefore, the writers' enticing accounts do not only reflect the marketing function, but also reveal writers' subjective feelings about the local community. And such subjective nature of personal narratives is based on a context familiar to readers. In other words, writers are imbued

with the ability to assume the readers' agreement and acceptance due to the sociocultural contract. By applying such a sociocultural contract in long-held common narratives, writers do not merely draw readers together in their shared beliefs, but also inscribe the dominant values in the representation discourses. Additionally, information and advice for vacation planning is also a major focus.

Table 4-1: Major Foci of Articles.

Natural landscape
Customs and cultural practices
Local people
Information and advice for vacation planning

The Urban Self-Identity

As mentioned previously, the major foci in the description of writers' travel experiences in the Lugu Lake area, the local enticing and thrilling landscape is the most popular topic in their accounts. When writers portray the local natural beauty, they do not merely directly delineate what they have seen but also frequently compare it with their life in their home cities. For example, "After the party, we sat by the lake quietly. I looked up the sky full of many bright stars. They were so beautiful as to make sky multi-level and three-dimensional. Such a scene cannot be seen in the city at all, and it is very impressive" (One Day, 2006). Besides the natural beauty, the local life style is also the target of writers for comparison. One of the writers, nicknamed Clear Sky, states that:

The couples emphasize their feelings. Their marriage is not arranged by others, and their communion and divorce are free. They live with their mothers individually, and their children belong to the women's family. Without the arrangement of matchmaker and parents, there is no argument between mother-in-law and wife and no dispute for property but a mutual respect and harmonious relationship. I feel a little puzzled about such different lifestyles existing under the same sky. Although I cannot judge which one is superior due to their

difference in culture, should the material society with so many problems not learn something from their lifestyle? (Clear Sky, 2008)

By making such a comparison, the writers attempt to emphasize the uniqueness and preciousness of the beautiful nature and local lifestyle in the host community.

Meanwhile, by making such a comparison, the writers also define their own identity.

Based on the above examples, the writers portray the host community as a pastoral area featuring unique customs, while they represent the urban people from the material world. Therefore, in the process of “othering”, which is built upon the conception that “other cultures and environments are everything that our cultures and environments are not” (Mowforth and Munt, 1998, p.59), a self-identity which is totally different from the Other is also constructed. However, contrary to the argument in Said’s (1979) work of *Orientalism* and Schein’s (1997) *Internal Orientalism*, the writers of the above excerpts do not portray the host community as the inferior Other to legitimize their’ superiority but rather demonstrate their appreciation of the local lifestyle.

Further analysis of the writer’s comments on the difference in the lifestyles between the local community and the material world indicates that writer’s favorite attitude towards the local lifestyle is embedded in the recognition and concern for social problems in the material world. By contrasting with the status quo of the local community, the writer stresses the social problems caused by the marriage practice in the material world. Such criticism of the material world demonstrates the writer’s puzzlement for the so-called advancement of modern society. In particular, the writer’s puzzlement exposes the clash in the construction of socialist culture between the Mao era and the post-Mao era. In the Mao era, the ethnic minority was represented as backward and in need of salvation from such status, while the cultural practice of ethnic minority is promoted in the post-Mao era for tourism development. Therefore, as previous researchers argue, the identities of tourists are not pre-existing but constructed in a fluid relationship between Self and the Other (Bruner, 1991; Kohn, 1997).

The Alternative Identity

By comparing the writers' experiences in the host community with their life in their home cities, the writers illuminate their identity as urban people from the material world. However, the romantic scenery and idealistic human relation in the host community form a sharp contrast with the writers' home society, which is entangled with multiple social problems, and trigger their puzzlement for their own society. With such puzzlement, writers in their travel accounts demonstrate the strong desire to escape the modern secular society. For example, one of the writers comments that "Thirty years have passed! I happened to find on one night that many strange things happened in my city, and only I know how strange they are...I really want to visit Lugu Lake again and hope the kingdom of daughter is still tranquil. I believe birds and fish will meet, perhaps for the escape or because my life is as transparent as the water in the lake" (Sanyadentist, 2007). In the above excerpt the writer expresses embarrassing feelings about the social changes happening in the hometown and illustrates the purpose of visiting Lugu Lake is to escape such uncomfortable feelings.

Meanwhile, an analysis from the discourse practice dimension provides more in-depth meaning from the writer's text. First, the thirty years here refers to the timeframe starting from the late 1970's when the economic reform movement led by the Chinese government began. Therefore, the changes or the "strange things" mentioned by the writer directly refer to the consequence of the economic reform movement. Second, although the writer does not say what those strange phenomena are, it is clear that all of them happened in the writer's daily life, and the writer's judgment for them is based on personal feelings. Based on such a revelation, it can be deduced that the text expresses the writer's uneasiness for not being able to avoid witnessing such changes and, particularly, the writer's loneliness and helplessness in making such a judgment facing the perplexing social transformation in the mainstream society. Last, by demonstrating the

strong interest in the tranquility and purity of Lugu Lake, the writer reveals what is missing from the daily existence and expresses an unfavorable attitude towards such changes.

Furthermore, the analysis of the above text at the social practice dimension indicates that the changes happening in China from social, cultural, and economic perspectives are significantly influencing people's personal life. The writer, as a traveler visiting Lugu Lake, does not merely convey the uncomfortable feelings for such social transformation happening in the daily existence, but also clarifies the reason for appreciating Lugu Lake. Insulated from the impacts of changes happening in the writer's society, Lugu Lake, in the writer's eyes, represents for the Other that which is totally different from the place the writer is from and serves for the writer as a coordinate to relocate the self position in a volatile and transient society. Therefore, the representation of Lugu Lake and hosts in the writer's travel discourse becomes a vehicle for the writer to discover self and construct the self-identity in the post-Mao-era China.

In representing Lugu Lake and the local Mosuo people, travel writers emphasize the stable and peaceful lifestyle, as well as the simple and pure human relations. For instance, one of the travelers describes that:

The sunshine is permanently unchanging, the water in the lake is permanently unchanging, and the life is also permanently unchanging. From generation to generation, girls grow up and get old. From generation to generation, boys enjoy the domination of their girlfriends...Boats cross the lake day after day, monks on the Li Wu Bi Island turn the wheels of scriptures year after year. The peaceful life is the best. What impresses me in Lugu Lake is the power of such peace (Papaya, 2008).

Such representation of Lugu Lake forms a conspicuous contrast with the images of the writers' home society. For example, in the comments of modern lifestyle, one of the writers states that "in our whole life, how many people would we meet, then see off and never get to touch again, even without any information about them. We do not know whether they are well and even if they are still alive..." (Four Three Two One, 2007). By comparison with the description of local lifestyle

in Lugu Lake, the identity of writers as the people from modern society which is characterized with frequent migration and loose human attachment is formed.

Although travel writers make comparisons between the local community and the mainstream society in their description of travel experiences, they do not construct their self-identity by totally negating their attachment with the local community. Contrarily, in the self-discovery journey, many writers represent themselves as an inseparable part of the local community. For instance, one of the writers describes the following: “In the courtyard of Mosuo tavern whose scene in autumn is like an oil painting, every leaf shone by sunset tells of the warmth and hospitality of Mosuo families, I feel the gentleness surrounded by the golden streamers. I think this must be a rendezvous arranged in our previous existence; otherwise, we cannot feel so inseparable. As I dress in the Mosuo traditional clothing and row the boat in Lugu Lake, such an illusion is so real and exiting that I believe I must be a local genius in singing and dancing” (Yunnan Tourism, 2008). Such expression of personal feelings about the close attachment with the host community demonstrates the writer’s meditation process through which the writer traverses to a different social situation and creates a new identity to fit the new social role.

Bearing with this new identity, the writer does not represent the person from the mainstream society anymore but becomes a member of the local community. The emergence of the writer’s new identity is achieved through the travel experiences and revealed in personal travel accounts. Such revelation demonstrates that self-identity is not some kind of essentialist entity, but a complex and fluid network of various subject positions and people are rhetorical beings. As Hall (2005) argues:

We can no longer conceive of the ‘individual’ in terms of a whole, centered, stable and completed Ego or autonomous, rational ‘self’. The ‘self’ is conceptualized as more fragmented and incomplete, composed of multiple ‘selves’ or identities in relation to the different social worlds we inhabit,

something with a history 'produced' in process. The 'subject' is differently placed or positioned by different discourses and practices (2005, p. 226).

Therefore, the interlocking dimensions of time and space make the journey an effective way for the writer to create and represent a new self-identity. Such alteration of self-identity counter against the modernity conceptualization of self-identity which is considered as simple, settled, and static, and demonstrates the fluid and fractured characteristics of personal identity in the postmodern society.

Furthermore, such alternative representation of self-identity by diluting the margin between hosts and guests also demonstrates the writer's contingency of subject positions. For example, one traveler writes that "All of us, men, women, elders, and youth circle around the bonfire hand in hand, and we run around like a dragon dancing and laughing delightedly. This is the most primitive human relation, this is the most direct communication, and this is the simplest source of happiness. I feel like reverting back to childhood. I think I have come back home again- the place that always appears in my dream" (Blogger, 2006). Based on the analysis at the text practice dimension, it is clear that the hosts' simplicity, honesty, and hospitality make the writer's stay like home. Additionally, the analysis from the discourse practice dimension reveals that the home referred by the writer in here is not a physical entity but some psychological feelings which always appear in the writer's dream. Nevertheless, the most interesting question is raised from the analysis in the social practice dimension. That is, why the writer feels the stay at Lugu Lake is like home.

The following excerpt from another traveler's accounts may well answer this question. The writer states that "Everyone who visits Lugu Lake cannot help to take off the long-held mask, remove the dust on his heart, and ignore the fame and power which are the trimmings of the secular world. Here, the relationships among people have reverted to the simplest natural state and are manifested with cordiality, friendliness, and harmony; here, you will be indifferent

to fame, wealth, and worldly wisdom, and quietly enjoy calm and ease. Lugu Lake, my dreaming paradise on the earth, is the home of human soul” (Lucky Star, 2007). In the writer’s notion, Lugu Lake has become the “home of human soul”, while the mainstream society is regarded as the “secular world” from which the writer is alienated. Such personal confession exactly answers the question raised in the above. In describing the personal travel experiences, the writers create the interlocking dimensions of time and space which make the journey a potent metaphor symbolizing the discovery of self (Galani-Moutafi, 2000, p. 205).

The examination of travel accounts posted on weblog about the personal travel experiences in Lugu Lake provides an in-depth understanding about the complexity of self-identity in the post-Mao-era China. Since the last quarter of the 20th century, China has experienced a dramatic social transformation. Facing the tremendous changes in political, economic, and cultural perspectives, the Chinese people are in a search for a new coordinate to relocate self-identity. The visitation of Chinese minority people becomes a vehicle of the people from mainstream society to discover self. The analysis of travel accounts posted on weblog provides an access to expose the self-identity constructed in this specific historical and institutional site. The study results indicate that travelers in their accounts express strong anxiety for the social changes happening in the mainstream society. They feel such changes are undermining the value systems which underpin the settled traditional society. With the detachment with the mainstream society in mind, travelers relocate their “home of soul” in the search for the Other and construct a new identity for themselves.

CONCLUSION

With the rapid development of the Internet, weblog as a new medium in which individuals can easily express personal thoughts and feelings has become one of the critical tools

adopted by mass tourists to share their travel experiences and demonstrate their personal values. Through studying the travel accounts posted on weblog, researchers can reach out to the ordinary tourists and locate their subjective positions reflected in their discursive practice. Tourism as a language in itself serves people as a vehicle to demonstrate the process in search for the meaning of life and self-discovery journey. By sharing their travel stories and personal feelings with the peer readers, travel writers reach the “point of suture” and constitute the self-identity rhetorically posed in their description of tourism destinations. Meanwhile, based on the postmodern conceptualization of self-identity, travel writers as rhetorical beings do not demonstrate a given and pre-existing self-identity but create an unstable one molded by complex social circumstances (Giddens, 1991). Therefore, the examination of self-identity, which is rhetorically constructed, has to be put into a specific historical and institutional context (Hall, 2005).

This study focuses on the travel accounts posted by Chinese tourists who are experiencing a dramatic social transformation (Leong, 1997). Facing the tremendous changes in economic systems, social structures, and cultural values, Chinese tourists attempt to regain their coordinate for constructing self-identity in the transient China by visiting and searching for an absolute Other which is symbolized by Chinese minority peoples in the Chinese mainstream discourse. Portrayed as the survivor of Mao’s pursuit of ruthless suppression of traditional Chinese culture during the Cultural Revolution, Chinese minority people and their inhabitable place become the targets of Chinese tourists to redeem their attachment with traditional social roles and cultural values. As the major inhabitable area for the Mosuo people, one of the unique Chinese minority peoples, Lugu Lake is selected for this study. The travel accounts recording Chinese tourists’ experiences visiting Lugu Lake and their encounter with the hosts is analyzed to identify the self-identity constructed in the tourists’ discursive practice.

The study results indicate that rather than simply representing the local community and hosts as the inferior entity, writers recognize the difference in natural landscapes, cultural

customs, and social systems between the host community and the mainstream society. Additionally, travel writers demonstrate their in-depth thoughts about such difference and puzzlement for the changes happening in the mainstream society, as well as the detachment from the material world. Furthermore, with the interlocking dimensions of time and space in the self-discovery journey, travel writers traverse their social roles and cultural values in the mainstream society and create an alternative self-identity with a close psychological attachment with the local community and hosts. Such findings support the postmodernity conceptualization of self-identity, which is complex, contested, and constructed, rather than being already there, waiting to be selected. Also, this study demonstrates travel provides people a vehicle to claim multiple subject positions. Therefore, identity is not prescribed to people anymore but built upon a complex and fluid network of various subject positions (Giddens, 1991). Such volatile characteristics of self-identity open a new space for tourism research in this subject.

In future research, the in-depth examination of tourists based on their social-cultural characteristics should be conducted since the construction of identity is closely related to people's social roles and cultural values. For example, the travel accounts can be further analyzed based on writer's gender, the type of travel they adopted, and characteristics of destinations they visited. Furthermore, since identity is a fluid and contested social construct and its formation directly relies on the various social contexts, it warrants further study to examine the contingency characteristics of self-identity among tourists as both the local and mainstream societies evolve. Last, but not the least, the previous research in the tourism field about self-identity almost primarily focuses on the tourists from first world or mainstream society. However, it is becoming increasingly imperative to understand the construction of self-identity among the tourists from the third world or marginalized regions as the modern travel and tourism are no longer the popular practice merely adopted by the elite or privileged people.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

Overview of Study

Representation is one of the most popular study subjects in the tourism field. Since representation as a major vehicle for projecting images of tourism destinations is widely utilized in tourism promotion, previous tourism representation research building upon the marketing context has predominantly focused on the state or tourism trade media. Nevertheless, scholars have identified that tourism representation is not a simple straight process overwhelmingly determined by the dominant mass media but a complex network involving tourists and local people (Jenkins, 2003). Furthermore, since each story has multiple sides, tourism representation involves complex power struggles among different stakeholders based on their various motivations (Bruner, 1996; Hasty, 2002; Leong, 1989). Therefore, to obtain a comprehensive understanding about tourism representation, the examination of the voices of tourists and local people, as well as the official one, is inevitable.

Meanwhile, representation, as a process of constructing meanings through language, does not reflect only one meaning or image like a regular mirror, but produces and constructs multiple meanings based on different “cultural codes” (Hall, 1997). Therefore, state, tourists, and local people, as the three indispensable parties composing the tourism representation process, select and take their own meaning which fits for their positionality. As state, tourists, and local people take the particular meaning and create their own interpretation to mark out the sameness within and the difference between parties, their own identity would form because identity refers to “the meanings one has as a group member” (Leary and Tangney, 2005, p. 132).

Nevertheless, identity is socially constructed and is differential and unstable (Woodward, 1997). For example, some tourism scholars have identified that national identity would be “reconfigured” to fit socio-political, economic and cultural changes (Hall, 1994; Light, 2001; Prichard and Morgan, 2001). Furthermore, socialist Anthony Giddens (1991) argued that people’s identity would be increasingly complex as they experience a set of different social situations which have different values and norms. Last, but not least, according to the thesis of poststructural feminist, gender is a sociocultural construct, and construction of gender identity would be increasingly complex as the sociocultural settings become diverse (Aitchison, 2000; Mills, 1998). Therefore, based on these study findings, thesis, and argument, one should examine how the identity constructed by the state, tourists, and local people in the tourism representation network reflects its volatile and complex nature.

To study the volatile and complex nature of identity, it is necessary to examine the representation discourse formed by the state, tourists, and local people. As Hall (1997) asserted, discourse “‘rules in’ certain ways of talking about a topic, defining an acceptable and intelligible way to talk, write, or conduct oneself...” (p. 44). Therefore, by representing a topic in a specific way, discourse also constructs a specific meaning to interpret the topic. Furthermore, “meaning is what gives us a sense of our own identity, of who we are and with whom we ‘belong’ ...” (Hall, 1997, p.3). Thus by critically analyzing representation discourse, the multiple meanings can be located, and the complex and volatile nature of identity would be identified. In other words, the study of identity actually is the examination of discourse as a system of representation.

Overview of Study Results

Since the tourism representation process is composed of the state, tourists, and local people, this study includes three parts. The first part focuses on how local people utilize self-

representation discourse to demonstrate the gendered nature of identity construction about themselves. The second part looks at how the state representation discourse about the local people and host community reflects the volatile nature of national-identity construction as the state is experiencing a social-transition period. The last part targets how tourists' travel accounts, as a form of discursive practice, demonstrates the plural nature of their identity as they traverse between their home and host societies. In the following part, a brief introduction of each part including its finding and conceptual contribution is described.

Part One

In this part, the study purpose was to identify how local people demonstrate their gendered nature in the construction of self-identity through the self-representation discourses in a local sociocultural setting. First, the sociocultural setting on which the study is based was selected. The study focuses on the Mosuo people, a Chinese minority group officially classified as matriarchal. Then, the narratives originated from a local male weblog host and a local female autobiographer were chosen as the study data. To capture the multiple meanings constructed in their representation discourses and the heterogeneous nature of identities based on their different gender positions in the local sociocultural setting, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was employed.

The study results indicate that both the weblog host and autobiographer focused on projecting a positive image about their own community and constructing a rational interpretation about local cultural traits to count against the mainstream representation of the local community as the "Other". However, their self-representation discourses created different versions of interpretation and meanings about local cultural traits based on their different gender positions. For example, the male weblog host attempted to portray the local unique cultural traits as the

reflection of the local male's dominance in personal privacy and control over their internal affairs from outside meddling. On the contrary, the female autobiographer interpreted the local cultural practices as the result of the local women's control over their own bodies and their pursuit of human nature. Consequently, their different versions of interpretation about local cultural traits reflect upon their different gender identity. In other words, they construct meanings based on their different gender positions. Furthermore, by employing CDA, the macro sociocultural contexts on which their interpretation was built were taken into consideration. The results indicate that the male weblog host built his interpretation on the values of the mainstream society which follows patriarchal practices, while the female autobiographer constructed her meaning based on the local dominant matriarchal values.

Such results counted against the essentialist view of identity as a holistic entity and supported the fragmented nature in the construction of identity demonstrated in self-representation discourses. In particular, the findings resonated with the thesis of poststructural feminism about the gendered nature of discursive practices. The study results indicated that the male weblog host and the female autobiographer employed their self-representation discourses to construct the local people's identity based on their different gender positions. Consequently, the local people's identity formed in their representation discourses is not unified but fragmented. The study identified that such fragmented identity is built upon different sociocultural settings. All in all, the research questions for this part of the study are answered. The self-representation discourses of the Mosuo people reflect their agency in constructing the images about themselves, and such self-representation discourses demonstrate the heterogeneous nature in representing themselves based on the gender factor.

Part Two

The second part of the study attempted to examine how the state representation discourses demonstrated the fluid nature of national identity while the sociocultural setting is in an unstable status. First, to locate the unstable sociocultural setting on which the national identity is built, China, as a country well known for experiencing a social-transition period, was selected as the study target. Then, the state newspaper articles about Lugu Lake, a tourism destination growing in popularity during this social-transition period, were chosen as the study data. Similar to the first part of the study, CDA was used to capture the fragmented voices formed in the state representation discourses and identify the fluid nature of national identities constructed in the transforming sociocultural setting.

The study results indicated that there were three major themes in the state representation discourses about the local community. They included the feminized Other, economic growth, and authenticity issue. The first theme focused on the gendered nature of the state representation of the local community. By portraying Lugu Lake and the local Mosuo people as feminized, a gender hierarchy was built, and the superiority of the mainstream society was constructed. The second theme emphasizes the economic progress of the local community obtained from tourism development. Under this theme, the wise leadership of the central and regional authorities was eulogized. The last theme was the authenticity issue. By representing the local community as a place with well-preserved traditions and a cultural heritage, the state discourses attempted to construct a post-Mao-era China as a nation with a long history and rich culture. However, such discourse about the well-preserved community was challenged by dissonant representation narratives which argued about the negative impact of tourism development on preserving traditions and heritage. As a result, this different articulation within the state discourses about the authenticity issue demonstrated the fragmented nature in the construction of representation.

Meanwhile, such multifaceted voices in the state representation discourses also revealed the fluid nature in the construction of national identity. Although the Chinese government was endeavoring to re-imagine the nation by constructing against the Maoist era, the intruding Western values and the accelerating modernization were challenging its efforts in revitalizing traditional culture and promoting cultural plurality. The dissonant representation narratives identified in this research demonstrated the unstable status of the national identity in contemporary China. Therefore, this part of the study answers the research questions that the subjectivity shaped in the official representation discourses is fragmented, and such multi-faceted voices reflect the fluid nature in the construction of national identities during the socio-transition period.

Part Three

This part of the study examined how tourists' travel accounts, a form of discursive practice, reflected the plural nature of their identity as they traversed between different sociocultural contexts. First, to capture the different sociocultural contexts, Lugu Lake, which is a tourism destination officially recognized as having a matriarchal society, was selected. By doing so, the sharp difference in the sociocultural aspect between the mainstream society and local community was constructed. Then, the travel accounts posted by tourists on weblogs about their travel experiences in Lugu Lake and their interaction with the local Mosuo people were chosen as the study data. Similar to the other two parts of this study, CDA was conducted to capture the multiple identities formed in tourists' representation discourses and identify the plural nature of tourists' identity as they traversed between different sociocultural settings.

The study results indicated that tourists recognized difference in natural landscapes, cultural customs, and social systems between the host community and the mainstream society;

however, rather than simply representing the local community and hosts as the inferior entity, they demonstrated their in-depth thoughts about such difference and puzzlement for the changes happening in the mainstream society, as well as the host community's detachment from the material world. Furthermore, with the interlocking dimensions of time and space in the self-discovery journey, tourists traverse their social roles and cultural values in the mainstream society and create an alternative self-identity with a close psychological attachment with the local community and hosts.

Such findings supported the postmodernity conceptualization of self-identity as complex, contested, and constructed, rather than being already there, waiting to be selected. Also, this study demonstrated that travel provided people a vehicle to claim the multiple subject positions by creating a set of different sociocultural settings between which tourists could traverse. Therefore, the findings in this study supported the thesis that identity is not prescribed to people any more but built upon a complex and fluid network of various subject positions to fit for different sociocultural settings (Giddens, 1991). Consequently, the examination of tourists' representation discourses made it possible to locate such volatile characteristics of self-identity in the diverse sociocultural contexts. In sum, the findings in this part of the study have indicated that the tourists' representation discourses demonstrate plurality of their social situations, and such results reinforce the multiple nature in the construction of self-identity.

Significance of Study

By critically analyzing the sociocultural contexts in which tourism representation discourses were embedded, the current study did not only examine the usage of language and expose the meanings embedded in the texts, but also obtained the insights of human society represented in discourses. First, the analysis of self-representation discourses of the Mosuo

people indicated the existence of their agency in constructing the images about themselves; furthermore, the findings exposed the complexity of subaltern peoples' self-representation by locating multiple strategies adopted by subaltern people in constructing self-representation; and particularly, the study results reinforced postcolonial feminists' argument for the neglect of gender issues in mainstream postcolonial thought by identifying the heterogeneous nature in the construction of self-identity based on the gender factor. Second, the examination of official representation discourses about the Lugu Lake area and the Mosuo people revealed the fragmented and differentiating nature in shaping the subjectivity of hegemonic culture; the discovery of multi-faceted voices in the state discourses demonstrated the significance of individualized subject in reassessing the culture of the nation by challenging the state grand myths; and the identification of dissonant representations also shows the unstable status of the national identities for a nation experiencing a social-transition period. Third, the study of tourists' travel accounts about their experiences in the Lugu Lake area supported the postmodernity conceptualization of self-identity, which was not prescribed to people but built upon a complex and fluid network of various subject positions. Such research outcomes made a significant contribution to the development of knowledge about representation and identities in the tourism field.

Furthermore, by utilizing critical discourse analysis, the present study went beyond the traditional content analysis restricted in text dimension and exposed the macro social structure in which the representation discourses were embedded. In particular, this study was built upon the analysis of the official representation discourses, the Other's voices, and tourists' travel accounts, so it provided a panorama view of the whole representation process. Such an approach of including diverse versions of interpretation about the same social-cultural practices also contributed an in-depth understanding about representation. Nevertheless, studies taking a similar approach are rarely seen in the previous research on tourism representation. Furthermore,

this study brought light to the role of travel weblogs in democratizing the creation and dissemination of tourism information at a global scale (Blood, 2002). Travel blogs create opportunities for local voices to reach mass audiences and for tourists to express themselves based on their travel experiences, as a result, travel blogs are becoming a growing source of information for researchers to study people's personal voices and how such voices represented and constructed social realities.

More significantly, this study went beyond previous research on identities and anchored its theoretical framework on the poststructural theorization of identities, rather than the Enlightenment belief in unmediated knowledge of reality and the essentialism position, which viewed identities as a given and pre-existing entity. The study findings supported this theoretical positioning and identified that identity as a rhetorical being was unstable and molded by complex social circumstances. Thus the present study engendered a more critical view of identity. Furthermore, concerning postcolonial feminists' argument against any attempts of universalizing female experiences, this study identified the heterogeneity in the subaltern self-representation from a gender perspective and provided a glimpse of a gendered struggle against dominant representations in a non-Western society. Meanwhile, the findings also made it possible to engender a research agenda to inform future advances in this subject.

Recommendations of Future Studies

As Spivak (1988) stresses the importance of understanding the heterogeneity of the subaltern people and the complexity of their self-representation process, future studies can extend the present study by examining the self-representation discourses of other host communities, so as to improve understanding about this subject. Particularly, since tourism as a substantial social force can significantly contribute to a nation's social-cultural changes, a more intense study on

the mainstream tourism representation discourses in various nation-states, in particular, those closely involved within tourism development, should be conducted.

Weblogs are emerging as an important source of information shaping pre-trip destination images. Tourists have utilized strategies that encompass the use of other mass media tools such as travel brochures, mainstream media controlled by travel agencies and state nations. Therefore, it would be important to examine the whole representation process influenced by various media sources and to examine to what extent each of these media is characterized with a particular form of ideological bias.

An in-depth examination of tourists based on their social-cultural characteristics should be conducted since the construction of identity is closely related to people's social roles and cultural values. For example, the travel accounts can be further analyzed based on the writer's gender, the type of travel he/she adopted, and characteristics of destinations he/she visited. Furthermore, since identity is a fluid and contested social construct and its formation directly relies on various social contexts, it warrants further study to examine the contingency characteristics of self-identity among tourists as both the local and mainstream societies evolve. Last, but not least, the previous research in the tourism field about self-identity almost primarily focuses on the tourists from the first world or mainstream society. However, it is becoming increasingly imperative to understand the construction of self-identity among the tourists from the third world or marginalized regions since modern travel and tourism are no longer the popular practice merely adopted by the elite or privileged people.

Conclusion

The findings of this study provide support for the postmodern theorization of identities and prove the fragmented nature of identities built upon the complex power relations reflected in

the politics of representation about the Other. Tourism as a substantial social force significantly affects the social-cultural development of a country. In particular, as China is transforming to the post-Mao era, the interpretation of social-cultural practices in the tourism field appear more diverse and fluid. Consequently, identities constructed in tourism representation discourses are becoming complex and contested. The present study captures such nuances and complexities in the construction of identities. With the development of globalization and the popularity of mass tourism, the research focusing on identities will apparently provide a glimpse of the increasingly complex social-cultural changes happening in human society.

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