

Factors of Intermarriage in Tourist Destinations: Case Study of Yangshuo

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Abstract

Host-guest relationship in tourist destinations is a type of cross-cultural communication in nature, within which intermarriage is the most significant form of interaction and communication. Intermarriage refers to inter-ethnic and transnational marriage, which was seldom studied in tourism contexts compared with one-night stands (hereafter referred to as “ONSs”) and love affairs in tourist destinations. In Yangshuo, intermarriage is a unique phenomenon as these couples are more than those of other counties with approximate population. The reasons why intermarriage exists in Yangshuo are the questions of the study. Ethnographic research paradigm and qualitative analyses are applied in the study with particular research methods such as participating observation and in-depth interview etc. More than 70 interviewees are interviewed in the field trip of 140 days in the case. Conclusions are as follows: 1) cultural capital is the main attraction, which consists of physical attraction, language proficiency in English and cultural image in personality, 2) Yangshuo is a unique destination whose external factors, such as countryside landscape, low consumption rate, friendly local tour guides and cross-cultural tourist products and comprehensive communities, facilitate intermarriage. Theories such as cultural capital, social adaption and mobility are involved in conclusion and discussion.

Keywords

Intermarriage, Host-Guest Relationship, Tourist Destination, Factors, Intercultural Communication

1. Introduction

Intermarriage, which refers to marriage between people from different religions,

ethnic groups or countries, is a typical topic in sociology. Perspectives are various concerning the original society, motivation and migration, social integration, labor market, identity legislation, domestic violence and cultural accommodation, all of which are dominant topics in intermarriage (Kalmijn, 1998). Intermarriage in tourism contexts is seldom studied in academia, though ONSs and love affairs are common among hosts and guests. Exotic experience and liminality are usually regarded as motivation of love affairs in the research on tourism (Cave, Ryan, & Panakera, 2003; Oppermann, 1999). Unordinariness, novelty and cultural differences are important driving forces for tourists (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2005; Moscardo, Dann, & Mckercher, 2014). ONSs and love affairs have been discussed in previous studies which suggest that risk taking and exotic experience be the main purpose of these activities in the destinations (Bauer & McKercher, 2003; Trauer & Ryan, 2005; Zhang & Sun, 2016), while long-term relationship is shed light on with perspectives of resources exchange, which emphasizes on individual resources, such as physical attraction, social capital and political capital etc. Some researchers made a comparison between the original regions of both sides and found that the gap of social development drove the couples to move to the more developed regions for living (Cohen, Hitchcock, King, & Parnwell, 1993; Jacobs, 2009). The external factors of such intercultural communication are not paid enough attention to, which makes Yangshuo become a special case of intermarriage between hosts and guests. Yangshuo is a small county with only 160,000 residents in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in South-west China. Except for consumer behavior pattern, Yangshuo's environmental and cultural atmospheres lead to the significant host-guest relationship, some of which has developed into intermarriage. In addition, some couples decide to reside in Yangshuo after marriage. In order to find out the factors of intermarriage in tourism contexts, particularly in the case of Yangshuo, the study applies ethnographic paradigm and utilizes qualitative approach to gather and analyze the data. The findings will be illustrated into two parts, namely, internal factors and external factors of Yangshuo's intermarriage.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Studies on Intermarriage in China

Intermarriage, or transnational marriage, inter-ethnic marriage, is a typical topic in sociology. The first term is usually used in studies on the attachment and behaviors that partners or couples may have in relation to their countries of birth or residence. The other two usually describe spouses belonging to different ethnic groups although they are in a same country, which emphasizes cultural issues between ethnic groups (Lee, Williams, & Arguillas, 2016; Wang & Chang, 2002). Some scholars point out that there are three topics in intermarriage among global academic research, they are: patterns of intermarriage, intermarriage & migration as well as intermarriage & social and economic integration (Kalmijn, 1998). In China, Transnational marriage, statistically, includes mar-

riage between citizens of China and other countries, as well as citizens from mainland and Hong Kong, Macau and Chinese Taipei, which is similar to the international terms. But in Chinese academia, transnational marriage only focuses on spouses who were born and raised in different countries and have different nationalities instead of those between China Mainland and Hong Kong and Macau (Yang & Shi, 2015).

Cross-border marriage, which is also called intermarriage in the border area, is most common in intermarriage in China (Yang & Shi, 2015). Chinese-Vietnamese in Guangxi Autonomous Region, Chinese-Burmese in Yunnan Province, and Chinese-Korean in the Provinces of Northeast China, etc., are keywords. Some researchers focus on intermarriage in urban areas and inland provinces (Gao, Zhang, & Zhu, 2013; Li, 2015; Zhou & Li, 2016). Intermarriage attracts scholars' attention in Chinese demographic and sociological research. The themes can be generated in the demographic situation of the intermarriage in different regions (Gao et al., 2013; Jiang, 1999; Liu, 2011; Qin, 2015; Quan, 2004; Wang, 2015; Yang, 2011, 2014; Zhang, 2012), motivations of intermarriage (Jin, 2013; Luo, 2006; Wu, 2012; Xiao, 2010; Zhao & Yang, 2016), identity of foreign spouses (especially women) (Luo, 2010; Quan, 2006; Wang, 2016), social adaptation of foreign spouses (Li, 2015; Zhou & Li, 2016), legal issues (Liu, 2015; Long, 2013), political management (Ren & Ji, 2016; Xie & Luo, 2016), second generation issues (Xiong & Yang, 2016), and social changes (Bai & Li, 2011; Luo, 2006; Piao & Wang, 2015; Zheng & Yang, 2009), etc.

Motivation of intermarriage in boarder area is studied based on economic perspectives. Poverty and underdeveloped society drives foreigners to marry Chinese residents. Some marriages can be seen as a transaction of resources. Chinese males in rural areas find difficulties marrying local females because there is imbalance between the populations of males and females (Luo, 2010; Xiao, 2010; Yang, 2014). Women in Laos, Vietnam, and Myanmar want to get rid of poverty in their societies. Social adaptation and cultural identity are two main topics of intermarriage in China. Foreign spouses, especially women, are discovered to have difficulties adjusting themselves to their husbands' societies economically and socially. Some studies also investigate in foreign spouses' cultural identities and discuss the second generation's education issues (Luo, 2010; Quan, 2006; Wang, 2016; Xiong & Yang, 2016). Fuzzy cultural identity is not only rooted in the cultural background but also is related to the legitimate identity in nationality due to the legal issues.

In China, research on intermarriage is mostly occupied by international marriage in the border area, applying the statistics and anthropology method for investigating in the phenomenon of intermarriage. Smaller-scale Research focuses on urban areas and inland provinces. Utilitarian motivation is always discussed in the intermarriage in border areas, romantic factors are commonly neglected. Studies conducted in urban areas and focused on other types of intermarriage are needed.

2.2. Intermarriage in Tourist Destinations

Yangshuo is the first object of intermarriage in tourist destinations, as few academic discussions are started in intermarriage of tourist destinations in China (Zhang & Sun, 2016). However, intermarriage is common in global tourist destinations, some of which have been investigated. Relevant research is briefly reviewed in the following part.

Relationship in destinations, especially the love affairs, is seldom studied in tourism research, which remarks that intimate relationship in travel is a temporary and one-off experience as people are in liminal status (Oppermann, 1999; Smith, 2012; Trauer & Ryan, 2005). Tourists relax themselves without considering moral restriction because of the unordinary environment during the trip. However, the liminal has its own boundary which separates the journey and home which makes intimacy during travelling be temporary and end after the journey.

However, some scholars find that intimacy between hosts and guests can be developed into long-term relationship, some of which may lead to marriage (Phillip & Dann, 1998; Pruitt & La Font, 1995; Smith, 2012). Prostitution is studied in 1970s as host-guest intimate relationship (Cohen et al., 1993). Cohen defined that prostitution is a long-term personalized relationship which develops from pure sex service, and that progress is based on emotion and economic benefit. In 1980s, Cohen found that some transnational marriage took place between western tourists and Thai local prostitutes, long-term intimate relationship develops from one-off sex transaction.

Romance tourism is considered as a prerequisite of long-term intimacy and marriage. Jacobs and Karkabi studied on sex and romance between female tourists from first world and the local males in Sinai Island in Africa (Jacobs, 2009, 2012; Karkabi, 2011). They found that female tourists tried to experience ordinariness in some pre-modern destinations; motivations of such travel are basically the same as North American female tourists in Caribbean (Mullings, 1999). From the perspective of modernity, Jacobs suggested that difficulties in matching spouse and social gender stereotypes marginalized these females in their society (Jacobs, 2009). This argument is similar to the research conducted by Herold and Taylor. The difference is that romantic tourism in Caribbean is seldom transformed into marriage while most of those in Sinai would become couples (Herold, Garcia, & DeMoya, 2001; Taylor, 2001). Through researching on marriage of senior western females and young Egyptian males, which developed from tourism for sex, Karkabi points out that marriage is a compromise between the two sides as they found difficulties in finding favorite martial partners in their society. They chose to overcome the cultural dissimilarity to maintain the relationship with financial capitals, social capitals or cultural capitals (Karkabi, 2011).

Intermarriage takes up a small portion of studies on intimacy in tourism. Inaccessibility and consumption in time in investigating in long-term relationship

are obstacles in such studies. In the global liberalism, intimate relationship has been treated as a product in tourism contexts, one-off sex trade and temporary romantic experience are usually discussed in academic research. Long-term and serious relationship is seldom taken into consideration. Yangshuo is the first object regarding long-term intercultural intimate relationship which develops from host-guest relation, a type of cross-cultural interaction, in nature.

3. Methodology

Transnational marriage is a complex phenomenon occurring in tourist destinations. Tourist contexts are complicated because there are a number of stakeholders and other parties. So it deserves a more sophisticated approach to investigate in the process and dynamic relationship in intermarriage and relevant phenomenon. Qualitative research is chosen as an appropriate approach to illustrate the case and solve the puzzle of the dynamic situation (Phillmore & Goodson, 2004; Riley & Love, 2000). Researchers' critical thinking and reflexivity, both of which helps build the frame of research from its conceptual foundation and interpret the data from the informants, give a more specific description of the cases (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2005; Denzin, 1997; Evans, 1988; Harding & Hintikka, 2013). Research paradigm drawn from thick description introduced by Geertz helps reveal the culture and its representations in the case with multiple ethnic groups (Geertz, 1973).

The study was conducted from 2012 to 2015 as a part of the author's doctoral program. During this period, qualitative methods based on ethnographic approach are utilized, which include participating observation, conversation, in-depth interview amongst local people, foreign residents, Chinese immigrant workers/entrepreneurs and tourists in Yangshuo. During a five-time field trip which lasted for 63 days in Yangshuo, one of the authors worked an English learning center, an outdoor tour company and a roof-top bar as a volunteer so as to observe and talk with informants. The number of informants grew as time went by with snowball techniques.

Observation involves tracking daily activities of different ethnic groups in different scenarios such as working places (English center/tourist small business entrepreneurs and outdoor tour company) and leisure places (bar/coffee shop/Tai Chi school), both of which are major spots for intercultural communication between Chinese and foreigners. Casual conversations are made during the observation, in which key statements and evidences are quoted into ethnographic journal entries.

In this study, 74 interviewees were accessed, including 11 local people, 24 foreign residents, 39 Chinese immigrant workers/entrepreneurs in Yangshuo. There are 11 couples of intermarriage. Not only intermarriage couples but also their friends, relatives, workmates, employees/employers are interviewed. A panorama of their social networks can be drawn and triangulation is applied in testing its reliability. Interviews were conducted in English, Mandarin and Can-

tonese given their mother tongues respectively. Bilingual or multilingual conversations were common as the interviewees switch their codes freely according to the context and scenario. In-depth interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed into notes while observation, casual conversation and contextual information are summarized in the field journal. In all, 74 interviewees are involved in the field trips, and it is found that some of them knew each other as they are friends, employers/employees or relatives. Some diagrams which illustrate their social networks would be presented in the discovery part. Through participant observation and in-depth interviews, multiple facet information can be accessed including the destination contextual information, interactions between multiple stakeholders in Yangshuo, dating process, marriage decision and domestic life of the transnational marriage. In addition to the observable information listed above, idea and decision that influences the transnational romantic relation or intermarriage can also be attained through in-depth interviews. However, moral justice may make an impact on the authenticity of the interviewees' ideas, so triangulation is applied in verifying the interview material.

4. Case Study: Yangshuo's Tourism and Transnational Marriage

Yangshuo is a famous international destination which is known for the karst landscape and the Lijiang River. Since the opening up policy in 1978, Yangshuo has been among the first destinations open to tourists in mainland China¹. At the same year, it was selected as the sightseeing destination for diplomatic reception, receiving diplomats of 20 countries including Prime Minister of Canada and President of United States². According to the Bureau of Statistics, from 1979 to 2015, Yangshuo has received more than 22 million inbound tourists (**Table 1**) in mainland China, most of whom are backpackers. The word of mouth among backpackers has made Yangshuo a famous backpackers' destination.

In early 1980s, Yangshuo was a small town with only one commercial street which is called Xijie (Western Street). Business was not so ubiquitous that some peasants sold their products with low price. They welcomed the backpackers to accommodate at their homes. These services are components of prototype of hostels or b&bs for the tourists. The low expenditure was one important reason why the backpackers were willing to stay longer in Yangshuo.

"At that time, the guys (backpackers) stayed in Yangshuo for at least a month, 2.5RMB for a sandwich, 20 RMB a bed in a dorm, 2RMB a cup of coffee, they liked staying here." (L06-M)³

Low expenditure attracted western backpackers to visit and stay longer in Yangshuo. An interviewed backpacker visited Yangshuo seven times and at least stayed here for two weeks. The number of backpacker increased sharply from 1980s (Bao & Qiu, 2006), so that facilities such as hostel, internet-café, sandwich

¹Source from Yangshuo County Annals, 2003 edition.

²Source from Yangshuo County Annals, 1988 edition.

³The owner of a western style restaurant which runs for over 20 years; L06-M (L for local people, M for male).

Table 1. Numbers of Inbound Tourists in Yangshuo.

Year	Number (thousands people)	Year	Number (thousands people)
1979	88.8	1998	170
1980	62	1999	340
1981	2.5	2000	380
1982	2.7	2001	370
1983	21.3	2002	390
1984	220	2003	230
1985	320	2004	385
1986	330	2005	638
1987	420	2006	820
1988	470	2007	865
1989	300	2008	899.3
1990	460	2009	1000
1991	410	2010	1238
1992	500	2011	1553
1993	420	2012	1712
1994	290	2013	1880
1995	230	2014	1981
1996	300	2015	2021
1997	300		

bar and café grew to cater tourists, especially backpackers. The café and bar in the outdoor, hostel, internet café and some other backpacker's facilities were located in Xijie, which is 517 meters in length and 8 meters in width. More than 150 small enterprises were open in Xijie, which is now famous for its multi-cultural atmosphere. Local people are motivated to learned English to communicate with and do business with foreign tourists. English learning centers were also open in Xijie so that local people can learn English and backpackers can get a part-time job. Multi-cultural atmosphere and foreign teachers now become two characteristics in educational tourism in Yangshuo.

The number of intermarriage in Yangshuo is higher than the one of other counties with similar population. Before 21st century, most intermarriages took place between local people or some villagers nearby and the tourists. But nowadays, an increasing number of intermarriages happen between foreign tourist and Chinese citizens from other places outside Yangshuo. From 1989 to 2003, the number of intermarriage was 580 in Yangshuo (**Table 2**). Intermarriage was reported in newspaper and magazines with attractive titles such as "British and American Ladies Compete for Yangshuo Peasant Boy for Husband." "Beyond Language: Love without Boundary." "American Girl marries Yangshuo Boy." Numerous inland tourists and romantic stories build a multi-cultural atmosphere

Table 2. Numbers of Inter-marriage in Yangshuo.

Year	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Numbers of Inter-marriages	1	4	3	1	8	14	17	13	20	31	44	69	124	134	97

in Yangshuo, which is named “global village”, “Lane of Foreigners”, “Romantic Xijie” etc. (Zhu, 1998).

5. Findings

5.1. Exotic Appearance, Language Proficiency, Image in Personality as Cultural Capitals in Cross-Cultural Encounter

Exoticism is one of the most important motivations in tourist behavior. Culture experience and otherness are two driving forces for tourists, especially backpackers. Previous studies showed that appearance is a main factor in inter-ethnic dating or marriage (Harris & Kalbfleisch, 2000; Levin, Taylor, & Caudle, 2007; Murstein, Merighi, & Malloy, 1989). Appearance is considered as cultural capital in exchanging resources in marital market according to exchange theory in sociology. Exotic experience is what backpackers are chasing for during the journey, while physical appearance is a typical representation of exoticism. Both Chinese or Caucasian faces and figures evoke good impression to each other.

In an interview with an owner of a music bar, Mrs. L⁴, who married an Australian male, mentioned that the exotic appearance was a unique selling point of her bar. In the Golden Weekend⁵ in 2013, she suggested setting up a take-away stand in front of her bar with her Australian husband as bartender. Mr. L offered performance of cocktail in the stand to attract tourist. This proved to be successful in attracting tourists and generating benefits. It was observed that more than a hundred cups were sold in the stand in one evening. Some tourists firstly stayed in front of the stand to watch the cocktail performance by Mr. L, a bartender with pale skin and blue eyes, then they bought a cocktail and asked for a photo with Mr. L. Xijie is famous for its multi-cultural atmosphere, some tourists come to Yangshuo to experience exotic life. Foreigners, bars, coffee shops and some western life-style activities make tourists feel like aboard. The success of cocktail stand make points in illustrating that exotic appearance and cocktail are symbols of western culture, both of which connote the exotic experience. Mrs. L also mentioned some phenomena in her bar: the Caucasian appearance is attractive to the Chinese. “*Some tourists are easily attracted by the foreigners, especially the Caucasian appearance. The girls incline to talk with foreigners in English.*” (Mrs. L)

When she was asked for the reason of intermarriage, she smiled and answered with tease. “*He is a handsome boy.*” The couples got to know each other thanks to their mutual friend. Mr. L was attracted by Mrs. L because she is a girl from

⁴C05-F, Mrs. L (C for Chinese resident, F for Female).

⁵1st of May, Labor Day in China is a Golden weekend holiday.

Henan Province with a typical oriental face appearance, which is flat face and single-edged eyelid. Mr. L is fond of Chinese culture and he has learnt Chinese language in Guilin. He said that Chinese girl is mild and thoughtful. Chinese cultural is an important factor among their dating.

In the interviews, wives are not easily to tell that they are attracted by their husbands because of their good looking. According to the observation in the English learning center and roof-top bars, Caucasian feature's look are more attractive to the Chinese. However, aesthetics is not the same between local people and foreigners. Some local girls who are not pretty according to their own community attract foreigners' attention.

"She is not beautiful, sometimes we think that she is ugly. But the Canadian boy likes this type and pursuing the girl unceasingly." (L03-M)⁶

Exotic appearance makes good impression on each other in intermarriage, it also satisfies their expectations in searching exoticism.

Language competence is another attraction for couples in intermarriage at the dating stage. As mentions above, English learning is popular among Yangshuo people for business purposes (Bao & Qiu, 2006). There are a lot of English learning centers in Xijie, where foreign teachers, most of whom are tourists, give lessons to the locals. As time goes by, Yangshuo earns the reputation of global village and English center, where is adequate for English learning.

"We have foreign teachers in class, they teach people pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. When class is over, students go outside and talk to the tourists from all over the world. This is why we think we make it work." (L08-M)⁷

More than five couples interviewed pointed out that their encounters are more or less related to language learning.

"I was a student majoring in English in senior year. We are assigned to a hotel for internship. I didn't like working there. So I quitted (that internship) and found a part-time job in Yangshuo. English is my major, so I think that it is good opportunity to practice my English as so many foreigners in Yangshuo." (Mrs. R)

In other cases, foreigners start to learn Chinese, which also facilitates the encounters between different ethnic groups and people with different cultural background. With the development of both tourism and English, Yangshuo earns its reputation in language learning. English learning center has developed the curriculum for foreign students learning Chinese. Students who want to learn English and those want to learn Chinese can make a perfect match in learning by chatting and mutual teaching. Cross-cultural communication processes smooth as they benefits from each other. Language learning is a motivation of both Chinese residents and foreign tourists. Some intermarriage relationships begin with conversations in such scenario.

Cultural image is a crucial factor in cross-cultural communication. Chinese has mild personality, which makes a submissive wife or a considerate husband.

⁶He was a journalist, and now works in government and is in charge of publicity of government.

⁷The principal of the earliest established English center.

In the interviews of couple P⁸, who got married in 2014, which was only a year ago before the interview, they have fresh memory of how they encountered and fell in love with others.

"She is cute and smiles all the time." said Mr. P when he was asked about the first impression of Mrs. P.

During his first stay in Yangshuo, Mr. P had good impression of Mrs. P, as she treated him kindly. *"She was considerate and takes good care of others."* It was the first time Mr. P visited Yangshuo as a backpacker, he travelled all around the western part of China and south-east Asia. He had beard all the chin and looked filthy. According to Mrs. P, he seemed not to have taken a shower for months. He stayed in the couch of the hostel and paid the smallest fee. Mrs. P was pity for him, so sometimes she would offer him a cup of coffee. Mrs. P was a part-time waitress in that hostel as the owner is her brother-in-law. Mr. P was impressed by Yangshuo's landscape and people. He remarked that he was moved by the coffee offered by Mrs. P.

F11-M is a chef of a lounge in Xijie, who comes from Germany. He is a single man around 40 years old. He has worked and stayed in Yangshuo for more than 6 years. He was interviewed.

"I prefer a Chinese girl, they are much milder. Girls in my countries are too independent." (F11-M)

As the feminism upsurges in western countries, women grow up with the idea of independence and self-sufficiency. They are tough and ambitious in self-development and career path, which makes man less advantageous. In Chinese culture, most girls are taught to be reserved and submissive especially for their family. They are inclined to depend on husband and family after marriage, which makes them obedient wives and also satisfies westerners' demands for oriental women. Cultural image enables Chinese girl to build a positive advantage in martial market, which contributes to their features in cross-cultural encounter in tourist destination.

However, appearance as a cultural symbol is attraction in the early stage of dating, which is only the initial period of a romantic encounter. Exotic appearance, language proficiency and image pulls people from different cultural background and ethnic groups closer, which helps them overcome cultural shock and adjust themselves in intercultural communication, as they are eager to and expect in cross-cultural encounters. Tourists who look for exoticism and unordinariness prepare themselves for interacting with other cultural groups. Oriental appearance, mild nature in personality and sometimes language proficiency in Chinese are attractions for the Caucasian tourists in Yangshuo. Caucasian physical feature and language proficiency in Chinese are two driving forces for Chinese residents in interethnic dating as most of them have motivation in English practice in Yangshuo in that they stayed in Yangshuo as part-time workers. Exoticism is like a seed breeding the romantic relationship and intimacy between

⁸F02-M & C02-F, Mr. P are British and Mrs. P are from Hunan Province of China.

hosts and guests, between people with different cultural background.

Other destinations, such as Pattiya in Thailand, Caribbean Islands in South American and South Sinai in Africa have similar romantic tourism but seldom intermarriage. One-off romantic encounter or temporary intimate relationship ends up when the trip ends. How does romantic encounter progress into intermarriage in Yangshuo? Why are the couples willing to reside in Yangshuo after marriage instead of moving back to the developed countries? The following findings will answer these questions.

5.2. The Soil of Transnational Marriage-Yangshuo as a Tourist Destination

Yangshuo is a unique destination in which a large amount of transnational marriage takes place. There are five factors boosting the transformation of romantic encounter into marriage relationship, which respectively are unique landscape, low consumption, friendly tour guides, cross-cultural tourist products as well as an open multi-cultural community.

• Unique Landscape

Yangshuo has unique countryside scene with karst landscape and Lijiang River. Sometimes mist rises from the river and shrouds the karst hills, making the scene look like a Chinese traditional ink painting, which is attractive for tourists. Foreign tourists are impressive by the countryside and karst landscape in Yangshuo. Most of the interviewees mentioned that the natural landscape is their top priority of travelling in Yangshuo.

“Yangshuo can be described in three words, mountainous, relaxed and natural.” (F19-M).⁹

Inland tourists are highly satisfied with the natural resources in Yangshuo, and intended to recommend their friends and families to visit Yangshuo. All the foreign spouses in interview agreed that Yangshuo is a suitable for living given its good environment. This is an important reason why they intended to reside in Yangshuo. Natural landscape is also a reason for a second visit for tourists. After their first visit, some of them extended their length of stayed or returned to Yangshuo. Longer stay and more frequent visits offers opportunities for longer and more in-depth interactions between hosts and guests, which enhance the success rate of dating. Mr. T¹⁰ and Mr. P recalled that they fell in love with their spouses in their second visits to Yangshuo. Some interviewees mentioned that Yangshuo's landscape match their imagination of traditional China, which they have seen from media.

• Low Expenditure

Low expense makes it possible to stay longer for the western backpackers. Travelling with limited budget is an important characteristic of backpackers. Yangshuo is a popular destination among backpacker's community for its low expenditure. Backpackers expect to communicate with other backpackers, expe-

⁹A backpacker comes from Britain.

¹⁰F15-M, from Belgium.

rience different lifestyles and participate in ordinary life of the local community. At the preliminary stage of tourism development, business models in tourism fits the preference consumption behavior of backpackers.

Cheap accommodation is a reason of long stay for backpackers in Yangshuo. According to the interview script, each bed in the local hostel cost only 2 US dollars in 1990s, which was preferred by the backpackers because they could stay in Yangshuo longer with a limited budget.

“Laowai backpackers travel individually, all they ask is the cheapest accommodation and food. They rent bicycles to ride around, which enables them to go and stop whenever and wherever they want.” (L13-M).

The longer they stayed in Yangshuo, the more in-depth interaction between the hosts and guests. Before 2000, most of the intermarriages took place between foreign backpackers and Yangshuo local people.

“Laowai who come to Yangshuo stay for more than one month. Some of them will stay longer, so they have gotten familiar with local people.” (L03-M)

Longer stay means enough time and opportunities for the interaction between hosts and guests. Low living expense in early stage of tourism of Yangshuo is an important exterior factor of intermarriage.

“I slept in the couch, over there, for exchange, I ran some errand(s) for the owner.” (Mr. P)

Mr. P said Yangshuo's expenditure is low with high-quality food and hospitality, which enables him to stay longer. Nice girls (Mrs. P) and natural environments are factors influencing his second visit in Yangshuo. However, the expenditure is no longer low because the domestic tourists have flown into Yangshuo since 2003. With the development of tourism, capital flows in continually. The rent and level of consumption has risen, reputation of backpackers paradise are no longer suitable for Yangshuo.

• Friendly Tour Guides

Tour guide bridges the cultural gap between hosts and guests and smoothes the cross-cultural communication. There is a unique feature in Yangshuo: the countryside tour guides. Generally, tour guides are required to pass a qualification test. However, Yangshuo's system of tour guide was established in 2005 to formalize the peasant tour guides in countryside. Before the establishment of this system, some peasants volunteered to direct the way for backpackers who were looking for attractions. In the early development stage of tourism, numerous backpackers came to Yangshuo and enjoyed hiking and riding a bike in the countryside, where road signs were not clear. Hence, local peasants were qualified in directing the way for the backpackers.

“As we said, the (countryside) attractions in Yangshuo are found by the backpackers, and the path is stepped by their feet (discovered by the backpackers). The country tour guides are to show them the way.” (L05-F)

Country tour guides usually waited for backpackers at the coach terminals and the wharfs. If some backpackers were interested in their service, the guide would

discuss the itinerary and bargain about the fees in English with them. Local tour guides arranged the itinerary according to the request of the backpackers. Nowadays, some famous attractions such as Moon Mountain are found by the backpackers with the help of tour guides. According to the westerners' aesthetics, backpackers and tour guides discovered some stunning landscapes which are widespread among backpackers. From 1980s to 1990s, accommodation and restaurant services were not mature so that some local tour guides invited their guests to stay in their own houses for accommodation and food with low price. Many backpackers were satisfied with experience of staying overnight in the local cottages.

"Many of them (peasant guides) take the backpackers back home, offer them countryside-style meals such as self-grown chicken, pork and vegetables. Backpackers like them so much. Some Laowai want to stay in the farm houses for one or two nights to experience Chinese country life." (L05-F)

Interaction between local peasants and backpackers became active and in-depth, which promotes the cross-cultural communication and understanding. Peasant guides usually offer one-to-one guide service, which means that a peasant local guide is only responsible for one backpacker or a family. Compared with traditional tour guides, who serve more than 10 tourists, peasant guides have more opportunities to communicate and interact with the guests, and some of them may have a deeper understanding of each other.

"I bring them to the Moon Mountain and introduce it to them. Sometimes I sing a song, they feel very happy." (L02-F)¹¹.

Peasant guides usually serve the backpackers for 3 to 4 days, during which the host-guest interaction is frequent.

Except for the economic factors, peasant guides are driven by the proud of being a tour guide, so they are honest and enthusiastic in hosting the backpackers.

"I can earn money by showing around the backpackers, which is better than sowing in the field. Foreigners like me, they like my smile." (L02-F)

In 2002, Yangshuo county government implemented the "Country Guild Management Policy" to reorganize market orders. Yangshuo became the only location to issue tour guide certificates in addition to national certificates. Local tour guide system enables elites to enter the tourism industry, and offer them a platform of in-depth host-guest interaction. Through one-to-one customized services, backpackers are impressed by the local's honesty and hospitality, attitude of accepting foreign cultures and safe environment. Tourists are willing to have a deeper communication and interaction with the local. A famous case regarding intermarriage between a Canadian backpackers and a local guide was reported in newspaper (Zhu, 1998).

• Cross-Cultural Tourist Products

Cross-cultural tourist products enhance intercultural communication. Yangshuo's natural landscapes lay a foundation for cross-cultural products, which fa-

¹¹A peasant tour guide, more than 70 years old, fluent in English, know a little French and German.

cilitate the hosts-guest interaction and build a platform of intermarriage. Rock-climbing and Tai Chi schools are two examples illustrating that the tourist products are an external factor influencing intermarriage.

There are abundant resources for rock-climbing in Yangshuo for both amateurs and professional rock-climbers. There are more than 200 routes in 40 crags, most of which are discovered by backpackers. Some of them are attracted by this activity and extend their length of stay, while some came to Yangshuo mainly for rock-climbing. Both types of tourists usually stay in Yangshuo for a month, during which rock-climbers and local people can have a long and close interaction. In some cases, intermarriage begins with rock-climbing.

"We met in crags. I come from Yunnan (Province), but Yangshuo has some more interesting routes that Yunnan does not have. So I came here for rock-climbing and Tai Chi. and I met W in the crags" (C20-F)¹²

Some couples mentioned that rock-climbing is the platform of communication in their romantic encounters. At the sites, no matter what nationalities and ethnic groups they are, the climbers are enthusiastic about practicing and discussing issues about rock-climbing, which offers a good chance for two persons to communicate. They can also meet people with the same interests, namely, rock-climbing. Natural landscapes make Yangshuo become a suitable site for rock-climbing, which is an important platform of cross-cultural communication.

Tai Chi training courses in itinerary is another platform of cross-cultural communication. There are two types of courses in Tai Chi schools in Yangshuo, short-term training for experiencing and long-term training. The former is usually embedded in the itinerary, where tourists go to school with teachers and an interpreter and have a two-day or three-day training. After that, some tourists become interested in Tai Chi, so they will stay longer or revisit Yangshuo for longer training. In some cases, long-term students choose to reside in Yangshuo.

"Some long-term Tai Chi students live in Yangshuo because of the environment. There are a lot of foreigners here, and they can easily communicate with each other." (C11-M)¹³

In the interview, C11-M points out that natural environment, living condition and cross-cultural atmosphere are reasons why students choose Yangshuo for Tai Chi training. Among 14 couples, five are interested in Tai Chi training. They find that Tai Chi is one of the reasons they visit and reside in Yangshuo. They all regard that Yangshuo is an ideal place for Tai Chi training as the environment is tranquil.

Tai Chi is one of the traditional Chinese cultures, which attracts tourists. Hence, Tai Chi training is a platform of cross-cultural host-guest interaction. Tourists who are fond of Chinese cultures are intended to communicate with Chinese people to know more about China. Tai Chi serves as lubricant to reduce cultural difference caused by different languages and concepts of value. Tai Chi training alleviate cultural shock for foreign tourists. Intermarriage is a result of a

¹²From Yunnan Province, marry an American male.

¹³Principal and instruction of Taichi School.

series of communication between two cultures, and Tai Chi schools offer opportunities for Chinese and foreign cultural communication.

English learning center is also a good platform for intercultural communication.

"We have an activity called social night on Thursday evening, when they can talk and make friends, which offers them more opportunities to know each other." (L08-M)

Yangshuo has the reputation for language learning as the English/Chinese learning center offered good curriculum and after-class activities.

- **Open and Inclusive Community**

An inclusive community welcomes a variety of lifestyles. Different concepts of value and multi-cultural lifestyles are accepted by the local community, which is vital of intermarriage. Concepts of value concerning honesty and hospitality among Yangshuo people make tourists feel at home during their travel.

"The menus (in the restaurants) are printed the same in English and Chinese version, there is no difference between the prices for domestic and foreign tourists." (L07-F)

Yangshuo people love are proud of their hometown, so they are enthusiastic about introducing landscapes and attractions, activities, accommodation and food to tourists.

"Honesty, enthusiasm, taking care of them as our own family, it's simple." (L05-F)

Besides, some long-term foreign tourists have contributed to the development of local community, which includes subsidizing the local youth to start up business and supporting local English education. Beneficial interactions between hosts and guests help develop trust and good relationship, which makes tourists be willing to stay longer. Equal, safe and friendly environment facilitates the in-depth communication between hosts and guests.

Business areas make Yangshuo a multi-cultural destination. Chinese residents, foreign residents and inland tourists can find their leisure spaces in Yangshuo, which is a mixture of different cultures brought by tourists from all over the world. Different kinds of stores such as Chinese restaurants, cafés, bars, music lounges and book stores etc. with cultures can be found along the West Street, where backpackers enjoy their lazy afternoon with coffee or beer in 1990s.

"At that time (1990s), lots of Laowai got sun tank and chatted in the coffee shop for a whole afternoon, it seemed that they didn't have any other things to do." (L08-M)

"We can enjoy a coffee in the countryside, which is quiet and nice. Sometimes we go to Mojo, relaxing ourselves." (F03-M)

Language proficiency in English of local residents in Yangshuo is another representation of multi-cultural community. In 1990s, local people learned English from foreign tourists. Later, Government established funds for English training and made it general. Average level of language proficiency in English is the

highest among counties in the same size. As Lingua franca, English is widely used in international tourist contexts. Multi-cultural communication requires a mutually-understandable language. Among the interviewed couples, foreign spouses live in Yangshuo without any language barrier as local people understand simple English. It is said that English is everywhere in Yangshuo. People with different cultural backgrounds and languages communicate with each other without obstacles thanks to the language environment for host-guest interaction.

Intermarriage contributes to the multicultural atmosphere of the local community which reversely develops into an inclusive one for other cultures. The diagram showed below illustrates an example of a social network of an intermarried couple in Yangshuo. **Figure 1** indicates the social network of Mr. and Mrs. T. They are employers of Mr. T and Mr. I, both of whom are foreign spouses living in Yangshuo. Because Mrs. T and Mrs. P are sister, couple P and couple T are close in blood relationship. Mr. T takes a long-term Tai Chi course. Miss J, who is from Russia and Mr. M, an Australian male, are his schoolmates with a same teacher C11-M. Miss J is in love with a person from Guangdong Province, while Mr. M marries a woman from Hong Kong.

Multi-cultural community and business areas build a home for the foreign spouses, which ease their nostalgia. They also meet friends who have the same situation so that they can discuss some issues such like self-adjustment, job opportunity, issue of visa with each other.

6. Conclusion and Discussion

6.1. Cultural Capital Surmounts the Barriers in Cross-Cultural Communication and Is an Attraction in Intermarriage.

As cultural features, appearance, language proficiency and images appeal to both foreign tourists and Chinese residents in Yangshuo. Cultural capital drives them to adjust themselves in cross-cultural communication and become tolerant in cultural misunderstanding. Cultural capital is rooted deeply in ethnic culture and education, which can be analyzed from two perspectives in the case of Yangshuo. Exotic symbols such as appearance and figure magnetize people with different cultures, because novelty seeking is one of the major driving forces of tourists. Foreign tourists expect to meet oriental cultures in Yangshuo while

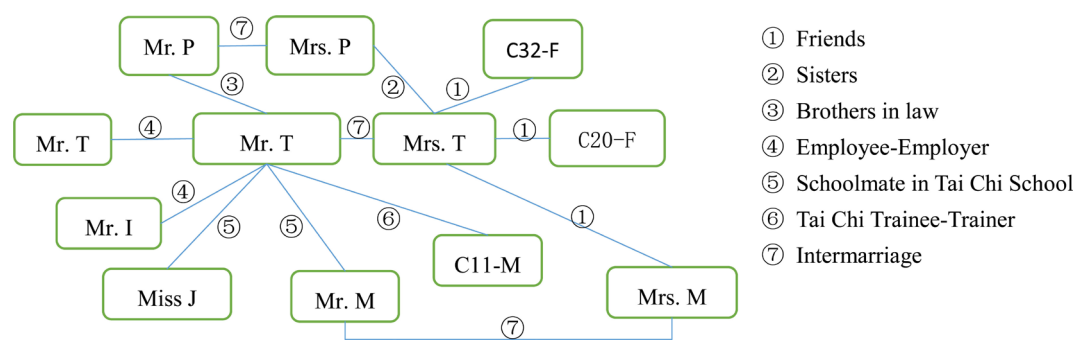


Figure 1. Social Network of Couple T.

Chinese tourists and residents hope to communicate with foreigners. Exotic appearance is a cultural feature that can easily be identified in the first impression. In nature, host-guest relationship is cross-cultural communication. Tourists and residents prepare for and are eager to interact with “otherness” tourist destination. But this seems to be the common explanation for the exotic and romantic experience in destinations all over the world as tourists are in liminal and hosts are driven economically.

Moreover, language proficiency is a unique driving force in host-guest relationship in this context. Yangshuo has its own reputation in language for both English and Chinese. Either tourists or residents are motivated to learn a language so as to talk to people with different cultural backgrounds. Tourists who have an advantage in English attract Chinese to learn English. Intern, part-time employees and some students in English center prefer sharing ideas with tourists as it is a language training process. They are encouraged to chat with foreigners to improve their cross-cultural communication skills. This does not mean that language learners target foreign tourists as objects of practice. The motivation of language learning gives them courage to overcome the shyness and language barriers in cross-cultural communication, which smoothes the process of such encounter.

6.2. Natural and Social Uniqueness Makes Yangshuo a Destination with Inter-marriage

Inter-marriage and romantic experiences occur in many tourist destinations globally. But some intimacy relationships cease as their journey ends (Bauer & McKercher, 2003; Oppermann, 1999; Trauer & Ryan, 2005). Yangshuo is famous for maintaining healthy and long-term intimate relationships thanks to the natural attractions and social environment.

Yangshuo is endowed with karst Landscape and Lijiang River, which is picturesque like a traditional Chinese ink painting. Tourists, especially backpackers, are fond of destinations symbolizing Chinese cultures. Natural landscapes in Yangshuo also offer a great environment for intercultural activities such as Tai Chi and rock-climbing, which facilitates cross-cultural encounters and interactions. Natural landscapes are not only a part of attraction as destination image, but also provide an environment for the cultural activities which may facilitate inter-cultural communication and make tourists stay longer. The rate of long-term relationship raises because of the fluent communication and sufficient time for interaction.

Social factors also contribute to long-term intercultural relationship. Multi-cultural atmosphere and the comprehensive community is willing to embrace different cultural group to reside in Yangshuo. Multi-cultural atmosphere and tourist mutually benefits each other. A growing number of tourists from other cultural backgrounds travel and stay in Yangshuo, boosting multi-cultural services and creating a good atmosphere. The more diverse cultural services offered

in Yangshuo, the more tourists will choose Yangshuo as their destination, as they find no difficulties in communicating with local people and staying in Yangshuo. Low expenditure and English skills of local people make it possible and easier for backpackers to stay longer. Local community is open to intermarriage and intercultural relationships. Their attitudes enable the long-term relationship between different cultures to develop into marriage. Intermarried couples find it comfortable to live in Yangshuo owing to the multi-cultural society and hospitality of the local community. Thanks to the tourism industry in Yangshuo, intermarried couples can also earn their livings according to their advantages regarding multiple languages and cultural capitals.

6.3. Limitations and Discussion

Limited budget and sensitive private information are limitations in the study. Intimate relationship is private so that it cannot easily be shared with strangers. It takes researchers a long time to get credits in the field and earn interviewees' trust. The couples are seldom fully convinced that their private information would be treated confidentially. Immoral motivations and behaviors may be concealed in their interviews. To improve this imperfection, triangulation is applied for alternative information offered by relevant interviewees. Limited time in the field trip makes the relationship with interviewees less concrete. Thanks to the social network software, updates of destinations and interviewees can be observed at distance. Instant message system also helps researchers keep in touch with interviewees.

Internal factors such as tourists' motivation of searching for novelty and external factors such as natural landscapes, inclusive society and cross-cultural products are concluded in conclusions that are drawn from the first-hand materials in the field trip and can be interpreted in a broader social background such as mobility in the future. Mobility can be seen as a social background for intermarriage in Yangshuo, which is asserted as the features of modern society (Bauer & McKercher, 2003; Urry, 2007). The number of tourists is growing with the impact of mobile characteristics on global society. Individuals, a mobile cultural representation, travel globally to destinations. Cross-cultural communication occurs more frequently as host-guest interaction is ubiquitous. Capital, goods and information are fluid in mobile society which supports and facilitates tourist services. In the future, further studies should be conducted in the perspective of mobility which influences the phenomenon holistically with consideration the unique characters in Yangshuo.

Future discussions can be cultural and social adaptation of foreign spouses in the course of their residency in Yangshuo. Cultural adaptation in immigration is a popular topic in sociological and cultural scope, and most studies suggest that foreign spouses find difficulties in identifying and mingling in society. But the situation in Yangshuo seems to be different, which deserves further academic research in the future.

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