Research Article

Exploring Visitors' Subjectivities toward Authenticity of the Suzhou UNESCO Heritage Site Using Q-Method

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ABSTRACT

This article was designed to investigate the perceived authenticity of World Heritage Site located in Suzhou, China. With a history of over 2000 years, the Classical Gardens of Suzhou was recognized as World Cultural Heritage by UNESCO for its elegant embodiment of Chinese traditional culture. A brief overview of the development of World Heritage Site and authenticity leads us into the discussion of examining the gap between the objective authenticity defined by UNESCO and the perceived authenticity identified by visitors. Through applying Q method, we analyzed and interpreted heritage tourists' subjectivities on the perceived authenticity, integrity, protection and tourism management at Suzhou UNESCO heritage site. The findings indicated the perceived authenticity can be divided into four different clusters. By defining the clusters, some implications can be suggested to better manage Suzhou UNESCO heritage site and refine the development of heritage tourism to make Suzhou a global world heritage city.

Keywords: Authenticity; Heritage; Heritage tourism; Subjectivity; Suzhou; UNESCO

INTRODUCTION

Since the first 12 world cultural and natural heritage sites were announced in 1978, the number has been expanding rapidly in the last two decades. In 2016, the total amount of world heritage properties reached 1052, among which 814 are cultural, 203 are natural and 35 are mixed sites UNESCO. With the increasing attention on World Heritage Sites, many countries begin to develop heritage tourism as a significant tool to promote their popularity as tourism destinations [1-3].

Moreover, it will bring along economic benefits to the local industry. Among all the tourism attractions, those places of interest which are entitled to World Heritage Sites (WHS, hereafter) by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, hereafter) are especially attractive to international visitors [4]. Previous studies also indicated that heritages have been proved to be a significant element in tourism [5,6].

So far, China has a total number of 50 WHSs nationwide, only second to Italy's 51. With 9 Classical Gardens listed as WHS, Suzhou, the southern cultural city of China, is chosen to conduct this study. The city with more than 2500 years of history has become the hottest tourism destination for the reputation of world cultural heritage since 1997. The Classical Gardens of Suzhou are acknowledged as artistic masterpieces that reflect "the profound metaphysical importance of natural beauty in Chinese culture in their meticulous design" (UNESCO).

According to the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, "Protection and management of World Heritage properties should ensure that the outstanding universal value, the conditions of integrity and/or authenticity at the time of inscription are maintained or enhanced in the future". This indicates that UNESCO considers authenticity as one of the measurements while identifying World Cultural Heritage sites.

Authenticity has been one of the important attributes for tourism destinations to present the history and identity while promoting heritage sites. It is also a crucial concept concerning the protection, management, and display of the historic environment [7]. Generally, authenticity is an alternative to present the history and the meaning behind the property. However, with the momentum of urbanization, the understanding of authenticity has been undergoing development in recent years. The concept of authenticity evolves from objective authenticity to subjective authenticity. The objective authenticity of WHS in this paper is the standard set by UNESCO World Heritage Committee while the perceived authenticity is the authentic experience at the historic attractions based on different personal values. To conclude, this study argues that there is a gap between the authenticity promoted

by UNESCO and the perceived authenticity experienced by tourists.

This paper aims at investigating the subjectivity of heritage visitors, by learning their perception of heritage authenticity and their perspective on the heritage site in Suzhou. Unlike,sole quantitative or qualitative studies in the past [8-11], Q method is an integrated methodology specifically designed to analyze subjectivity, is applied in the article. The research is conducted onsite at the Suzhou UNESCO heritage site. The sample covers a small group of domestic and international heritage visitors. Research goals are:

• To understand the concept and value of UNESCO and background information of World Cultural Heritage. By in-depth analyzing the criterion and requirements of the heritage sites, the official opinions of the cultural heritage can be concluded.

• To look into individual visitors' interpretation of the authenticity of heritage site and heritage tourism in Suzhou using Q method.

• To distinguish heritage tourists by cluster based on their subjective opinions of authenticity through their interaction with Suzhou World Heritage Sites using mathematical and interpretive analyses.

• To employ the results of visitors' subjectivities to generate practical implications to help refine the local heritage protection and management, then further develop heritage tourism. Moreover, to better satisfy the needs of visitors and attract more international tourists.

The background: Tourism development in China and Suzhou

After its opening-up since 1978, China's tourism industry has undergone gigantic development. The successful holding of international mega-events such as 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and 2010 Shanghai World Expo has made the country one of the most popular tourism destinations in the globe. China has become the fastest growing tourism market in the last decade due to United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). Domestic tourism occupied 71% of the total market share while 8% came from inbound travel according to the data from China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) in 2015.

This suggests that there is still much space to improve in the inbound sector. The most welcomed destinations on tourism websites include China's ancient capitals like Beijing and Xi'an, well-known historical and cultural cities like Suzhou and Hangzhou, and scenic spots of natural beauty like Guilin and Zhangjiajie. Unlike the West, Chinese tourism consists of "the spot businesses" which stands for a network of scenic spots, or "lu yóu jing dian" in Chinese, ranging from royal palaces and revolutionary memories to natural reserves [12].

In fact, not until 1980 has Chinese tourism market awoken. In 1986, China began to take actions to facilitate the infrastructure and service level in the pursuit of international tourism development as part of the national plan [4]. Since 1990, bustling international visitors are attracted to the spectacular scenic spots, historical sites annually [13]. Among the above attractiveness, international tourists particularly show interest in the scenic spots on the World Heritage List (hereafter, WHL) recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Yang et al. [4] evaluated the influence of World Heritage Sites (WHSs) in China and concluded that WHSs bring economic benefits by attracting more international arrivals.

Dubbed 'Venice of the East', Suzhou is a modern and prosperous city located in southeastern China with over 2500 years of history. Most notable among the city's achievements is the nine classical Chinese gardens inscribed on UNESCO's WHL, namely the Humble Administrator's Garden, Lingering Garden, Net Master's Garden, the Mountain Villa with Embracing Beauty, the Canglang Pavilion, the Lion Grove Garden, the Garden of Cultivation, the Couple's Garden Retreat, and the Retreat and Reflection Garden. Those gardens are acknowledged to be masterpieces that reflect "the profound metaphysical importance of natural beauty in Chinese culture in their meticulous design" (UNESCO).

With rich cultural tourism resources, Suzhou has become a world-class tourist destination by attracting millions of tourists at home and abroad annually. However, faced with the environment of globalization and the competition with other nationwide tourist cities, the tourist industry of Suzhou slowed down recently. As the representative attraction of Suzhou, it has become imperative to seek enrichment in the WHSs. Song et al. [14] stressed that the key to developing cultural tourism is to learn and experience. Yin [15] then suggested strengthen the tourist experience and the interaction between the visitors and the site. Based on the world heritage development, the government aims at transforming from single into a diversified-tourism brand on a global scale by combining multicultural resources.

World cultural heritage

The introduction of World Cultural Heritage is divided into two parts. Part one introduces UNESCO and the origin of World Heritage Site. Part two explains World Heritage List and the selection criteria for World Heritage Site, which proves the credibility of the list and its impact on tourism on a global scale.

UNESCO

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) was founded on November 16, 1945, as a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN). A decade later, the construction of the Aswan High Dam in Egypt inspired UNESCO to take a further step to implement the World Heritage Convention in 1972 [16,17].

The convention is aimed at identifying and protecting cultural and natural sites that contribute to the humanity on a global scale [18,19]. Two advisory bodies assist UNESCO with implementation of the convention: The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Respectively they represent evaluations of cultural heritage nominations and natural heritage nominations according to the Operational Guidelines (2015). The Convention empowers the Intergovernmental Committee to the Protection of the Cultural and Natural Heritage of Outstanding Universal Value.

The World Heritage Committee (WHC) defined "Universal Outstanding Value" (hereafter, OUV) as: "cultural and/or natural importance so exceptional that it transcends national borders and that it presents the same invaluable character for present

generations and future of all humanity". And also, to be qualified as outstanding universal value, a property should meet the standards of integrity and/or authenticity and possesses a complete protection and management system [20]. The Committee will access the value and decide which nominations to accept as a WHS [21].

World heritage list and its impact

Ratified by 187 countries so far, the WHL has been growing rapidly in recent years. So far, it includes 1052 properties (814 cultural, 203 natural and 35 mixed, i.e. combining cultural and natural) in 165 countries. The list has become an influential tool to legally protect the natural and cultural heritage [22]. In addition, 55 WHSs are included on the List of World Heritage in Danger, which calls for the international communities to take efficient actions to address the threat.

Even though the main goal of the WHL is to safeguard the most outstanding natural and cultural heritage around the world, UNESCO heritage is nowadays widely promoted to develop tourism [23]. Many scholars have agreed that World Heritage recognition can play a significant role in attracting more visitors [2,24,25]. Shackley [24] indicated that being on WHL means a guarantee for considerable visitors to the site. Zhou pointed that fame and popularity are one of the main reasons for the Chinese to visit heritage sites (Figure 1).

As a result of increasing tourist arrivals, the local tourism industry

is boosted as well. Besides the income from the historical spots, more jobs are created, better service is offered and then the future behaviors of visitors are induced [26]. Overall, WHS is not only culturally affected, but also socially and financially benefited in the long term. However, in order to enter the WHL, it is compulsory for a site to meet at least one of ten criteria set by the WHC (Table 1).

If qualified under the criteria, a WHS with an outstanding universal value can be inscribed on the WHL by UNESCO. Three categories of cultural, natural and mixed properties are classified under UNESCO World Heritage. Take Classical Gardens of Suzhou as an example, it belongs to cultural property, which category that the heritage site in this paper focuses on, consists of the three categories according to UNESCO: Monuments, Group of buildings and Sites. As World Cultural Heritage, Classical Gardens of Suzhou was qualified as a WHS based on Criterion (i) to (v) (Figure 2).

Authenticity and integrity

Integrity and/or authenticity is/are the compulsory condition to meet when measuring OUV. The evaluation requirements of authenticity went through a long and tough period since 1978. The Nara Conference on Authenticity in 1994 became the most important conference in defining "authenticity". The Nara Document on Authenticity interpreted the term "authenticity" to:

Figure 1: Map of world heritage sites in China.

Table 1: Selection criteria for world heritage sites.

Selection criteria
(i) Represent a masterpiece of human creative genius;
(ii) Exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;
(iii) Bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;
(iv) Be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;
(v) Be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;
(vi)   Be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance.
(vii) Contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;
(viii) Outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features;
(ix) Be outstanding examples representing significant ongoing ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals;
(x) Contain the most important and significant natural habitats for *insitu* conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.

Nine Classical Gardens of Suzhou inscribed on WHL:

The Humble Administrator's Garden (拙政园); Lingering Garden (留园); Net Master's Garden (网师园); The Canglang Pavilion (沧浪亭); The Lion Grove Garden (狮子林) The Garden of Cultivation (艺圃); The Couple's Garden Retreat (耦园); The Retreat & Reflection Garden (退思园); The Mountain Villa with Embracing Beauty (环秀山庄)

Figure 2: 9 Classical gardens of Suzhou on the WHL.

using different dimensions that cover the values attributed to the elaboration of architectural heritage [27,28].

Authenticity and integrity have slight different meanings. Authenticity is evaluated within the cultural heritage context itself [29]. The integrity of cultural sites was first put forward in Operational Guidelines in 1988, and was introduced as a second concept to the evaluation concepts in 2005 [30]. The concept of integrity refers to maintaining all the cultural attributes intact at the site [29]. To distinguish integrity from authenticity, the Operational Guidelines announced a framework to make clear about the criteria of authenticity and integrity to all state parties in 2015. According to the Operational Guidelines of WHC, Integrity and/or authenticity is/are listed as conditions for sites nominated under criteria (i) to (vi) (Table 1).

The development of authenticity

In the academic field of tourism, it generated a variety of debates on the concept of authenticity in the past four decades [31]. To summarize, previous tourism researches can be mainly divided into three groups: objective authenticity, constructive authenticity and existential authenticity [32-35]. Objective authenticity represents the authenticity of toured objects [32,35], while the other two are related to authentic tourism experience [36,37].

In general, objective authenticity is defined as inherent attributes of cultural heritage [38], which stands for the credible genuineness of the cultural property [39]. It outlined that the authenticity of the heritage site is not commodified and can be measured to an undistorted standard [34,40]. The critics argued about this for the standard set by the experts and scholars may not go along with the authenticity perceived by tourists [41].

Constructive authenticity, or perceived authenticity is conceptualized as "socially constructed and individually negotiated" Ivanovic [10] values of tourists [10,33]. According to Cohen [33], the perception of authenticity should be regarded as a dynamic process. He proposed staged authenticity which ranges from true to false for the reason that tourists tend to change their opinions in the pursuit of authentic tourism experience [41]. For example, a cultural product which is perceived to be inauthentic in the past may become accepted as authentic as time passes by [33].

Existential authenticity, however, was first discussed in the philosophical researches and then applied to the tourism field in the 1990 [42]. It is defined as experience-oriented subjectivity which is produced in the participation of tourism activities [10,34]. Wang [34] argued that existential authenticity has nothing to do with the authenticity of toured objects but is more related to self-realization.

The development of the discussion on authenticity shows that the emphasis is transformed from objective authenticity to subjective authenticity. The debate still continues but it is hard to classify authenticity as single one of them. In fact, both objective and subjective authenticity should be paid attention because they are complementary. The latest Operational Guidelines is generally accepted as a professional and fair standard containing broad terms in order to measure the objective authenticity of WHC [29]. Hence, this paper will apply the standards listed on the Operational Guidelines to be the objective authenticity. Unlike objective authenticity, perceived authenticity does not have

a specific criterion. Limited researches are conducted on the perceived authenticity of WHS in China as well as Suzhou. Thus, efforts should be made to collect visitors' subjectivities toward authenticity of WHS.

Objective authenticity of WHS

As mentioned in the last part, the Operational Guidelines is employed as the objective authenticity in this paper. The "authenticity" described in the Guidelines refers to evaluating whether the information source of value attributed to the heritage site is credible or truthful. Here, information sources are defined as "all physical, written, oral, and figurative sources, which make it possible to know the nature, specificities, meaning, and history of the cultural heritage". Accordingly, to understand those sources and the original story and meanings behind the cultural heritage is the basic evaluation requirements of authenticity. There is no unified criterion to access the value and credibility attributed to cultural heritage. For cultural heritage sites, it all boils down to tracking back to the cultural source.

Based on the categories of cultural properties, the conditions of authenticity that State Parties are required to meet are divided into 8 items:

- Form and design

- Materials and substance

- Use and function

- Traditions, techniques and management systems

- Location and setting

- Language, and other forms of intangible heritage

- Spirit and feeling

- Other internal and external factors

Based on the official description by UNESCO, the authenticity of Suzhou Classical Gardens (Figure 2) can be summarized as followed:

- Form and design/Location and setting: Historic evidence is found in the physical environment in the gardens (eg. ancient trees, plaques, couplets etc.).

- Materials and substance/Use and function: Comprehensive record of retrospective verses, poems, paintings and maps of each historical period since the 11th Century.

- Traditions, techniques and management systems/Language, and other forms of intangible heritage: Traditional gardening techniques and values have been inherited. The garden displays the design concept and wisdom of ancestors by achieving a perfect balance between nature and local condition.

- Traditions, techniques and management systems: Garden owners of each dynasty stick to using traditional materials and techniques to repair and maintain these gardens.

- Spirit and feeling/Other internal and external factors: The local government has made efforts to prevent the gardens from the negative impact of urbanization and kept working on cultural continuity.

Integrity

Integrity is to keep the natural or cultural attributes of the site complete according to the Operational Guidelines. It also requires all the State Parties to meet the condition of integrity to enter the WHL. Three conditions in total are listed on the Guidelines as below:

- Includes all elements necessary to express its Outstanding Universal Value;

- Is of adequate size to ensure the complete representation of the features and processes which convey the property's significance;

- Suffers from adverse effects of development and/or neglect.

Cultural heritage needs to keep the physical objects in good status and the declination under control. The site should contain a large percentage of the attributes that deliver the full meaning to the public. In addition, in order to preserve the unique feature, attention should also be paid to maintain the links and dynamic functions showed in cultural properties.

Based on the official description by UNESCO, the integrity of Suzhou Classical Gardens can be summarized as below:

- The cultural attributes of Classical Gardens include all elements to express its OUV.

- The heritage site represents the history between the 11th and 20th century with detailed materials.

- Basic elements of the property including rivers, streets, alleys, vernacular residences as well as a cultural atmosphere, all have been survived at the edge of "buffer zone".

In comparison with the heated debate on authenticity, the integrity received less concern so far. WHC also mentioned that "authenticity" and "integrity" are both key concepts of World Heritage Convention and are essential to protect WHSs from modernization [29].

Protection and management of heritage site in Suzhou

It has been nearly 20 years when Classical Gardens of Suzhou was inscribed to the WHL on the 21th World Heritage Congress in 1997. The State Council named the Classical Gardens as State Priority Protected Sites is not only an honor to the city, but also an important task which UNESCO has entrusted to Suzhou. The local government therefore has to strictly protect and manage the sites by obeying different laws and regulations.

Since 1997, the protection and management of the Gardens entered a new era. Faced with the increasing principles, regulation and broad concern from the society, Suzhou government has to bring up the preservation to a satisfactory level. Therefore, Management and Protection Regulations of Suzhou Garden and the Conservation Plan was established to protect the WHS in the long run. The efforts are affirmed fully by UNESCO. It spoke highly of the measures taken to keep the heritage sites from possible damage in the process of urbanization. "The ultimate goal is to guarantee the scientific, orderly conservation and management of these classical gardens of Suzhou" (UNESCO).

According to Xin Hua Daily's report in June 2016, the latest action is to legislate the classification of Classical Gardens, including

those excluded from the WHL. During the last 50 years, the number of garden decreased year by year from 91(1959) to 53 (2013). In response to the disappearance of Gardens, Jiangsu Provincial Government declared that specific laws will be released to classify different Gardens in 2016. For example, on a functional scale: public type, internal-used type, mixed-type or private type; on a protective scale: rescuing conservation, repairing conservation or relics protection. A universal standard should be set under the premise of respecting the property rights.

Heritage tourism

By combining heritage and culture with leisure tourism, heritage tourism is now perceived as the most important segment of tourism industry. In recent years, both the demand and supply parts of heritage tourism have arisen much attention. There have been many studies regarding heritage tourism focus on the supply elements of culture and heritage, which present the history of historic places to tourists. However, in order to understand heritage tourism wholly as a social phenomenon, it is of great significance to study the demand component of heritage tourism. Different from the supply side, the demand side stresses digging into the nature of visitors, for instance, to discover their real needs, motivation, travel experience and their relationship with the heritage site. A visitor perspective can be regarded as the key to look into the mutual relationship between visitor and resource [5,43]. And also, faced with the fierce competition between heritage destinations, understanding heritage visitors on a deeper level can be helpful to the preservation and management of the resource [44]. Furthermore, it will attract more tourists and bring considerable economic return to the tourism industry.

Heritage, with an increasing interest among a range of disciplines, is now regarded as one of the most notable and fastest growing segment of tourism industry [45,46]. Apart from the material elements of cultural heritage sites and the consumption of intangible cultural heritage attributes, heritage tourism has also been used to describe experiences of travelers at destinations. For the study purpose of this paper, heritage tourism is specifically referred to "visits by persons from outside the host community motivated wholly or in part by an interest in the historical, artistic, scientific or lifestyle/heritage offerings of a community, region, group or institution" according to [47].

There is still a lack of studies concerning the link between the individual and the heritage spots, especially the subjective nature of heritage tourists' experience. Yet a few studies investigating the relationship of people and the environment have given rise to numerical scales and statistical models that offer little insight into the subjective nature of peoples' experience [48-50]. Based on the purpose of this paper, to explore the subjectivities of heritage tourists will be essential to understand the core of heritage tourism.

METHODOLOGY

Q method

Q method is applied to this study for it is a useful tool to dig into the subjectivity of human-beings [51,52]. Q was first theorized by William Stephenson [53] in 1935. Studies applying Q methodology were mostly focused on psychology and political science during 1980-

2000 [54-57]. In the last decade, the method became more familiar among researchers from different academic fields like marketing, politics and tourism [58-60]. Unlike any other methods, Q method enjoys the advantages of both quantitative and qualitative methods [61]. It owns a special statistical analysis program McKeon et al. [55] which is "statistically interpretable" [62]. Thus, Q requires the researcher to have a good command of both methods.

Q method is able to identify the similarities and differences of the viewpoints people hold toward an issue [63]. The viewpoints can reflect the cultural, social, and historical contexts of the topic [64]. In Q method, subjectivity has a structure that is "observable as an expression of one's behavior" [65], hence the result can be revealed through the interaction between the respondents and the statements.

The flow of Q method includes five steps Hunter [66] (Figure 3):

- The first step is to generate a concourse which concludes representative statements that respondents might have about the topic [53];

- The second step is to identify a sample of around 42 statements that researcher captured from the concourse, namely Q-set which includes symbols of the public.

- The third step is to select P-set: Respondents who express their opinions on Q-set.

- The fourth step is to perform the Q-sort. Respondents have to express their views on the topic by sorting all statements presented into a pre-structured Q-sort table [67].

- The final step is to analyze and interpret data, which involves the sequential application of three statistical procedures: correlation, factor analysis, and the computation of factor scores [68].

In this research, the concourse is generated from the descriptions of authenticity of Suzhou WHS by UNESCO officials, the local tourism department and visitor experience as well as regarding literature reviews. According to [69], if a Q-set covers all-around dimensions, the respondents will be able to share a comprehensive viewpoint on the topic. In addition, the P-set can also share their opinions around any topics by following the flow of communicability. All the statements in the concourse generally derived from theories interpreted by the authority as well as the views of tourists. For this study, a total number of 42 representative statements are selected from the concourse to constitute the Q-set, respectively "World Cultural Heritage, authenticity and integrity" (21 items) and "tourism, protection and management" (21 items).

For the P-set, or P-sample, this study applies purposive sampling among a population of 30 visitors at UNESCO WHSs in Suzhou. Purposive sampling here means the P-sample in the study is not selected by random but by carefully choosing based on the respondents' quality and the possibility that they may produce a different subjectivity [67]. 32 respondents chosen in this study contain 18 domestic and 14 international (both Asian and non-Asian) visitors. In this case, the similarities and differences of subjectivities between these two groups can be compared. Furthermore, among each group, package tour and individual visitors are both included. Meanwhile, equal population of male and female, a relative higher educational level sample are also taken into consideration on the basis of previous studies on heritage tourists (Figure 4).

For the Q-sort, 32 valid Q-sorts were collected after a series of interviews from 17 October to 1 November in different Classical Gardens of Suzhou onsite. Before Q-sort, 32 participants were introduced to the study and the whole procedure detailedly. Then they were required to put the 42 cards of each statement on the bell shape Q-sort table presented as Likert scale from "Most disagree to "Most agree". In order to avoid miscommunication and improve accuracy, the Q-set has both Chinese and English versions
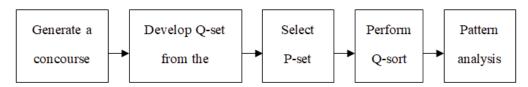

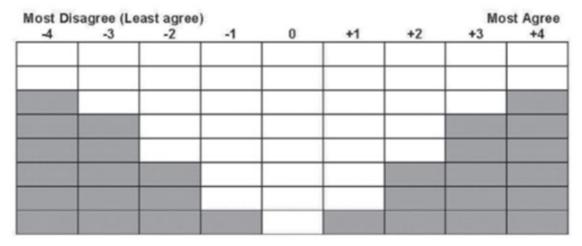
Figure 3: The flow of Q-Method.

Figure 4: Q-sort table.

for the visitors to express their subjectivities clearly. After Q-sort, all respondents had brief interviews to make comments on the Classical Gardens of Suzhou. The whole process was controlled within 30 minutes for each individual (Figure 5).

After performing Q-sort, the 32 Q-sorts were collected and analyzed with PCQ software. The statistical analysis produces several clusters, which ensures that each of them represents a certain type of subjectivity held by the participants [70]. After applying PCQ software to do data analysis, it generated four factors through judgmental rotation. 25 out of 32 sorts contributed to the four factors, the remaining 4 were confounded and 3 were not significant. The results and each cluster will be analyzed and interpreted in the next section.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total number of 32 sorts were input in the PCQ software, and eventually 25 sorts were accounted for in four clusters after

graphical rotation. The level of significance ranged from 0.82 to 0.42; 4 sorts were excluded because they were significant in more than one factor: Sort 2 and 22 were both significant in factor A and C while sort 21 and 23 were significant in factor A and B; 6 sorts were not significant in any of the four factors. The four factors accounted for 47% variance and 15.12 eigenvalues in total. Other detailed results and descriptions were all shown in Table 3.

The 32 Q-sorts consisted of 20 female and 12 male tourists. 18 Chinese and 14 international tourists were included. In the category of 20s and 30s, it contained 10 participants each; in the category of 40s and 50s plus, 6 participants each did the Q-sort. 7 participants are full-time undergraduate and graduate students while 13 have occupations such as teacher and office worker, the rest of 2 are retired office worker and housewife. In addition, the majority of the P-set at least have a bachelor degree. In general, the P-set is relatively balanced in the demographic section as the researcher planned (Table 4).

Figure 5: Q-sort cards in Chinese and English and the process of Q-sorting.

Table 2: WHS criteria (i) to (v) for classical gardens of Suzhou.

WHS criteria
Criterion (i): The classical gardens of Suzhou that have been influenced by the traditional Chinese craftsmanship and artistry first introduced by the freehand brushwork of traditional Chinese paintings, embody the refined sophistication of traditional Chinese culture. This embodiment of artistic perfection has won them a reputation as the most creative gardening masterpieces of ancient China.
Criterion (ii): Within a time span of over 2,000 years, a unique but systematic form of landscaping for these particular types of gardens was formed. Its planning, design, construction techniques, as well as artistic effect have had a significant impact on the development of landscaping in China as well as the world.
Criterion (iii): The classical gardens of Suzhou first originated from the ancient Chinese intellectuals' desire to harmonize with nature while cultivating their temperament. They are the finest remnants of the wisdom and tradition of ancient Chinese intellectuals.
Criterion (iv): The classical gardens of Suzhou are the most vivid specimens of the culture expressed in landscape garden design from the East Yangtze Delta region in the 11th to 19th centuries. The underlying philosophy, literature, art, and craftsmanship shown in the architecture, gardening as well as the handcrafts reflect the monumental achievements of the social, cultural, scientific, and technological developments of this period.
Criterion (v): These classical Suzhou gardens are outstanding examples of the harmonious relationship achieved between traditional Chinese residences and artfully contrived nature. They showcase the life style, etiquette and customs of the East Yangtze Delta region during the 11th to 19th centuries.

<p align="center">**Table 3:** Factor analysis results and sample description.</p>

Sort	A (18)	B (4)	C (1)	D (2)	Descriptions
	25 sorts have been accounted for in 4 factors out of 9; 4 sorts significant in two or more factors (confounded)				
9	0.82				F C I 48 Teacher
10	0.79				M C I 36 SOE worker
20	0.78				M I I 28 IT (Serbia) (Business trip)
7	0.76				F C G 20 University Student
19	0.76				M I G 56 Office worker (UK)
1	0.74				F C I 20 University Student
16	0.71				F C I 34 Office worker
25	0.69				F I I 41 Office worker (UK)
3	0.67				F C I 20 University Student
24	0.66				M I G 39 Office worker (Belgium)
4	0.65				M C I 45 Businessman (Business trip)
32	0.64				F C I 26 Master Student
8	0.6				M C G 22 University student
26	0.58				F C I 30 Office worker (Business trip)
18	0.52				F I G 51 Office worker (UK)
17	0.47				F C I 34 Office worker
15	0.41				F C G 45 Worker
30	0.4				F I I 28 Researcher (Italy)
5		0.66			F I I 34 Teacher (South Africa)
28		0.6			F I I 40 Office worker (France)
29		0.48			F I I 35 Housewife (South Korea)
27		0.46			F I I 56 Retired office worker (UK)
14			0.42		F C G 31 Employee
12				0.46	M C G 22 University student
13				-0.42	M C G 25 University graduate
	Sort 2,21,22,23 confounded; 6,11,31 not significant				
	Eigenvalues and explained variance between clusters				

9 factors	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	Totals
Eigens	9.75	2.75	1.33	1.29	1.01	1	1.02	0.76	0.68	19.59
% variance	30	9	4	4	3	3	3	2	2	60

*Descriptions key: Gender: M=Male, F=Female. Ethnicity: C=Chinese, I=International. Type of tourist: I=individual, G=group. Age n=Age. 'Teacher', etc. Short statement describing respondent (sorter) by occupation.

Statistical analysis

As shown in Table 3, Cluster A contained 18 sorts, Cluster B accounted 4 sorts, Cluster C and D accounted 2 and 1 sort respectively. These four clusters shared similar subjectivities on the P-set consensus statements. Table 4 indicated there were 5 consensus statements in this research: 2 from the domain of "World cultural heritage, authenticity and integrity" and 3 from "Tourism and management". Item no.7 "The gardens are poetic and artistic", item no.31 "The local government contributes to the gardens." and no.32 "The explanations in the gardens were not exact." had a score of between -1 and 2. This suggested that all the respondents had similar opinions towards these statements, or they were not sure about the related issues. Item no.14 "There is nothing creative about the gardening to me" and item no.38 "Local residents do not recognize the value of the gardens." had a score of around -3 and -2, which indicated that the P-set mostly disagreed with the two statements. They all agreed the Classical Gardens of Suzhou are creative gardening masterpieces of ancient China as a World

Cultural Heritage Site. This matched one of the criteria for WHS Classical Gardens of Suzhou (Table 2) and outlined the uniqueness of the gardens. And also, they found out that the local residents do treasure the cultural value of the Classical Gardens. Item 31 indicated the truth that visitors did not pay attention to the actions of local government. And item 32 suggested it is likely that the visitors were not familiar with the cultural and historical meanings of the WHS. Distinguishing statements contained statements for each cluster that all participants in that cluster went along with [71]. The extreme scores (± 3/± 4) distinguished one cluster from other clusters with key differences in the P-set's subjectivities, there were 4 distinguished statements found in this study (Table 5).

The characterizing statements were the strongest opinions (± 4) of each cluster (Table 5) which allow comparisons with other three clusters. The distinguishing and characterizing statements of each cluster are interpreted in detail in the next part. Furthermore, the four clusters are defined based on their own characteristics (Table 6).

Interpretation of cluster A-buying the UNESCO view

The characterizing statements were the strongest opinions (± 4) of each cluster (Table 5) which allow comparisons with other three clusters. The distinguishing and characterizing statements of each cluster are interpreted in detail in the next part. Furthermore, the four clusters are defined based on their own characteristics (Table 6).

Cluster A that is buying the UNESCO View, is the largest group with 18 participants sharing similar subjectivities. This cluster contains 12 female and 6 male tourists, 12 of them are Chinese domestic tourists and the rest 6 are international tourists. It is also worth mentioning that 6 people in this cluster are group tourists. Cluster A all strongly agreed that "I get tranquility and relief in the refined environment of the gardens." (item 23), which reflected they were able to get inner peace and spiritual relief while touring the Classical Gardens. This can be understood as they have sought authentic experience at the WHS. More evidence was shown in the characterizing statements: I cannot feel the cultural atmosphere

in the gardens (item 19). That suggested they all felt the cultural atmosphere on a deep level staying in the gardens. As mentioned in the second chapter, "spirit and feeling" is one of the objective authenticity conditions. According to UNESCO, the Suzhou government is believed to give good performance remaining the cultural resource and preventing the gardens from the negative impact of urbanization. Indeed, Cluster A did not show obvious attitude towards item 26 "I think urbanization ruins the gardens." either.

Meanwhile, "Buying the UNESCO View" deemed Classical Gardens of Suzhou as authentic Chinese gardens for they strongly disagreed with item 13 "The gardens are not authentic Chinese gardens". In other words, they agreed that the gardens "have been influenced by Chinese craftsmanship and artistry first introduced by the freehand brushwork of traditional Chinese paintings, embody the refined sophistication of traditional Chinese culture" (UNESCO). Moreover, they all found "The scenery inside of the gardens is delight from every angle and view." (Item 8). This not only indicated the gardens combined the diverse architecture well

Table 4: Consensus statements.

Item	P-set consensus statements (5)	Score			
		A	B	C	D
World cultural heritage, authenticity and integrity					
7	The gardens are poetic and artistic.	1	2	1	1
14	There is nothing creative about the gardening to me.	-3	-3	-3	-2
Tourism and management					
31	The local government contributes to the gardens.	0	0	1	1
32	The explanations in the gardens ware not exact.	-1	0	-1	-1
38	Local residents do not recognize the value of the gardens.	-2	-1	-2	-2

Table 5: Distinguishing statements and characterizing statements.

Distinguishing Statements for clusters A, B, C, D			Score			
Item	Cluster	4 distinguishing statements	A	B	C	D
23	A	I get tranquility and relief in the refined environment of the gardens.	4	0	-1	-3
10	B	I saw history and culture of different periods in the gardens.	0	-4	0	0
40		The entrance fee of the gardens is too high.	-1	4	-3	-2
33	C	The water in the gardens is severely polluted.	-1	-1	3	-1
Characterizing statements (extreme scores) identified by cluster			**Score**			
Item	Cluster	9 characterizing statements	A	B	C	D
8	A	The scenery inside of the gardens is delight from every angle and view.	4	2	2	0
13		The gardens are not authentic Chinese gardens.	-4	-3	-1	-1
28	B	There are too many visitors in the gardens.	1	4	2	1
19	A, B	I cannot feel the cultural atmosphere in the gardens.	-4	-4	-2	-2
34	C	The local government should control the number of tourists in the gardens.	2	2	4	2
36		I did not need much time to tour the gardens.	-3	0	4	2
41		Some gardens are too remote and inconvenient to go.	-2	-1	-4	-2
12		The gardens are authentic mix of old and new Suzhou.	0	-2	1	-4
24	D	The information I learnt in the gardens raised my interest in Chinese history and culture.	2	-1	0	-4
27		Tourism makes the gardens too commercial.	0	3	-3	4
26	C, D	I think urbanization ruins the gardens.	-1	1	-4	4

Table 6: Defining the four clusters.

Items	Cluster A buying the UNESCO View	Score
Distinguishing statements		
23	I get tranquility and relief in the refined environment of the gardens.	4
Characterizing statements		
8	The scenery inside of the gardens is delight from every angle and view.	4
13	The gardens are not authentic Chinese gardens.	-4
19	I can feel the cultural atmosphere in the gardens.	-4
Items	Cluster B An Individual View	Score
Distinguishing statements		
10	I saw history and culture of different periods in the gardens.	-4
40	The entrance fee of the gardens is too high.	4
Characterizing statements		
28	There are too many visitors in the gardens.	4
19	I cannot feel the cultural atmosphere in the gardens.	-4
Items	Cluster C The Pragmatic Tourist	Score
Distinguishing statements		
33	The water in the gardens is severely polluted.	3
Characterizing statements		
34	The local government should control the number of tourists in the gardens.	4
36	I did not need much time to tour the gardens.	4
41	Some gardens are too remote and inconvenient to go.	-4
26	I think urbanization ruins the gardens.	-4
Items	Cluster D Anti-Urban View	Score
Characterizing statements		
12	The gardens are authentic mix of old and new Suzhou.	-4
24	The information I learnt in the gardens raised my interest in Chinese history and culture.	-4
27	Tourism makes the gardens too commercial.	4
26	I think urbanization ruins the gardens.	4

with the nature, but also suggested the cultural objects have been preserved well throughout the history.

Overall, for Cluster A, their subjective authenticity generally corresponded to the criteria set for objective authenticity by the officials. During the short interviews with some participants in Cluster A, they showed deep interest and affection for the gardens as well as Chinese traditional culture. This explained why they tended to spend more time capturing the authentic experience in the gardens. Moreover, most "Buying the UNESCO View" made positive and complimentary comments about the Classical Gardens. Their subjectivities, accounted for the majority of respondents, were likely to represent the mass subjectivities of great significance to the development of local tourism. The results seemed to be close to the objective authenticity widely applied to attract tourists.

In conclusion, "Buying the UNESCO View" showed respect for the authenticity and integrity of Classical Gardens of Suzhou as a WHS. People of this view believed the gardens are authentic legacy originating from Chinese traditional culture. The cultural deposits helped them acquire authentic experience and even feel connected to the cultural atmosphere of the gardens. The heritage tour has reached their expectation and satisfactory level compared to what they have expected after reading the official propaganda before the trip.

Interpretation of cluster B-an individual view

In conclusion, "Buying the UNESCO View" showed respect for the authenticity and integrity of Classical Gardens of Suzhou as a WHS. People of this view believed the gardens are authentic legacy originating from Chinese traditional culture. The cultural deposits helped them acquire authentic experience and even feel connected to the cultural atmosphere of the gardens. The heritage tour has reached their expectation and satisfactory level compared to what they have expected after reading the official propaganda before the trip.

Cluster B, defined as "An Individual View", contains 4 people and they are all international individual tourists. Similar to Cluster A, this group also felt the cultural atmosphere in the gardens with the strongest score of -4 (item 19). This verified the authenticity of the cultural heritage on the aspect of "spirit and feeling" due to UNESCO. But Cluster B went against the objective authenticity regarding the showcase of cultural evidence of each historical period. They made it clear item 10 "I saw history and culture of different periods in the gardens." was not true. One fact is possible to explain the view, that is, Cluster B consisted of all individual tourists. They visited the gardens on their own without a guide to help them understand the history and cultural meaning behind

the gardens. In addition, respondents in this cluster all came from different cultural backgrounds, which made it more difficult for them to break the cultural barriers to understand the underlying meanings. However, the truth was they preferred travelling by themselves with a guidebook. They are free spirits who "hate to be controlled and listen to the guide talking the same contents written on the books" according to one of the respondents.

Above all "An Individual View" represented tourists who were still authentic seekers but of a character. They were extremely unsatisfied with the crowds and noises in the gardens. They complained "There are too many tourists in the gardens." (Item 28). It seemed that they were eager to explore authentic experience without disturbance. The bustling environment partially affected their authentic experience and their pursuit of tranquility in the gardens. The respondents expressed that comparing with the most popular gardens, for example, the Humble Administrator Garden, they found it more relaxed and delightful in the less popular ones. Ironically, the Humble Administrator Garden is listed as the must-go Classical Garden and it has the highest entrance fee. One of the persuasive facts was that none of the P-set skipped the Humble Administrator Garden, proving its unshakable popularity among the 9 Classical Gardens. Unfortunately, the real experience disappointed the individuals and they felt unworthy of the money. The may be one of the reasons they strongly agreed with item 40 "The entrance fee of the gardens is too high".

An Individual View, in a word, valued the freedom and individualism in the process of seeking authenticity. Individuals in this cluster cared about the authenticity of the heritage site but they had a personalized canon to measure the experience. They may not fully understand the Chinese history and culture reflected in the gardens but refused to follow the guide. Likewise, they partly agreed with the objective authenticity but remained personal opinions towards certain issues. For "An Individual View", self-realization was more important than the cultural objects in terms of authentic experience.

Interpretation of cluster C-the pragmatic tourist

Cluster C only has one group tour respondent. This cluster, namely "The Pragmatic Tourist", represented one kind of subjectivity focusing more on management than authentic experience in the context of cultural tourism. For example, the respondent pointed "The water in the gardens is severely polluted." (Item 33) while the other clusters did not even look attentively. Meanwhile, authentic outsider certainly agreed with the statement "The local government should control the number of visitors in the gardens." with scoring 4 (item 34). In comparison with authentic experience, Cluster C put the emphasis on the management part of the gardens. The respondent's opinions on the authenticity and integrity of the gardens were not obvious and strong. However, her subjectivity toward tourism and management was straightforward and meaningful.

"The Pragmatic Tourist" gave the highest score to "I did not need much time to tour the gardens." (Item 36) partly because she did not have much passion for the authentic culture and historic meanings of the heritage. On the other hand, as a group tourist, she only had limited time admiring the scenery. In spite of time limitation, package tour has its own advantage, such as the

respondent found "Some gardens are too remote and inconvenient to go." was not the case in her position (Item 41). In addition, Cluster C strongly disagreed that "Urbanization ruins the gardens" (Item 26). In other words, there is a good possibility that she believed urbanization has a positive impact on the development of local heritage tourism. And also, she disagreed with "Tourism makes the gardens too commercial" (Item 27). This meant she did not find commercialization harmful to the gardens. However, she was not very satisfied with the government's management on the protection of the gardens. As a matter of fact, protection and management are another crucial requirement for WHS according to UNESCO. Cluster C's subjectivity suggested the government should pay more attention to the details of the environmental protection in the gardens.

Urbanization has always played a subtle role in tourism industry. Cluster C's strong attitude to this point suggested a realistic subjectivity. It is concluded that the perceived authenticity of "The Pragmatic Tourist" stemmed from a practical point of view. While "The Pragmatic Tourist" was visiting the gardens, cultural evidence was of no great significance compared with tourism infrastructure and management. This group jumped outside of the traditional authentic zone and provided a realistic perspective to heritage tourism.

Interpretation of cluster D-anti-urban view

Cluster D consists of two Chinese domestic respondents going on a package tour. Defined as "Anti-Urban View", the respondents were doubtful about the authenticity of the gardens. A score of -4 demostrated their passive attitude toward the educational meaning penetrated through the tour at the WHS. What is more, they gave a strong point at 4 on two statements regarding the influence of commercialization and urbanization: "Tourism makes the gardens too commercial." and "I think urbanization ruins the gardens". It is highly possible that they noticed tourism and urbanization has caused damage to the gardens. As described on item 12, they found the gardens losing their authenticity when combined with modern culture. In the view of "Anti-Urban View", the Classical Gardens failed to achieve a balance between the old and new culture.

To conclude, the commercial tourism left "Anti-Urban View" a broken image of authenticity. The result indicated that Cluster D doubted the credibility of objective authenticity promoted by the officials. In other words, Cluster D was disappointed at the negative consequence resulting from urbanization and commercialization. In their opinion, heritage tourism became a profitable tool to earn the city economic value at the cost of its authentic cultural value. It is clear, however, UNESCO has recognized Suzhou government to have maintained the originality of traditional culture when facilitating urbanization. In that case, the opposite view held by "Anti-Urban View" may unveil some potential problems. Their lack of faith in the local government was probably a consequence of weakness in the policy. For example, the government may not push heritage tourism forward in a sustainable and continuous direction. "Anti-Urban View" represented the opposite perceived authenticity versus the standards of objective authenticity.

In this paper we have investigated the perceived authenticity at the Suzhou UNESCO heritage site after conducting Q method to explore the subjectivities of heritage visitors. By dividing and defining different subjectivities, the gap between objective

authenticity versus perceived authenticity has been illustrated. Inscribed on the WHL since 1997, the Classical Gardens of Suzhou keeps making efforts to build a world-class tourism mechanism to attract more tourists as well as promoting Chinese traditional culture. According to the outcome of this study, it implies some practical suggestions to refine the heritage site in a bid to sustainable development in the tourism industry.

Findings were generated from the four clusters by applying Q method. The four clusters all recognized Suzhou heritage site as a creative masterpiece of Chinese traditional culture, which laid a solid foundation for the authentic perception. Mass visitors noticed the underlying philosophy and art behind the architecture (item 7). It revealed a positive result that the local government is playing a sound role in the development of tourism with an invisible hand. Results showed that the tourists did not pay attention to the contribution of the government, but they also did not find urbanization destroying the heritage resource. In fact, it can be concluded as a win-win condition. Undoubtedly, Suzhou government has performing the duty of protecting the heritage from possible negative impact from urbanization. This is also listed on the criteria for integrity of Suzhou WHS by UNESCO. Furthermore, the local residents are aware of the cultural value hidden in the gardens owing to the daily promotion and education from the government. It can be inferred that the cultural identity and cultural pride of the local people can be strengthened as their recognition rises. As a result, the residents will take the initiative to help protect and promote the heritage tourism in Suzhou. Eventually, a virtuous cycle will be formed in the aim of balancing the old and modern culture in a sustainable way.

The mainstream subjectivity indicated a link was well maintained between visitors and the heritage site. Cluster A and B were generally in favour of the authenticity and integrity of the WHS, and the gap mainly produced in terms of tourism management. For these two types of opinions, the perceived authenticity was not far from what they have learnt from the objective authenticity interpreted by the authority. This is important for Suzhou tourism to move forward in the general right direction. Some issues should be focused on when it comes to entrance fee and number of visitors in the gardens. And also, the cultural explanation should be improved to raise visitors' interest in Chinese history and culture. Cluster C and D provided with a special angle to the development of heritage tourism. Their points of view were no less importance than Cluster A and B. Cluster C stressed the pollution of water resource in the gardens, which may be ignored by most of the tourists. However, it functions an alarm bell to the local government to put emphasis on conserving nature in the gardens. After all, the perfect combination of water and architecture conveys the goal of building a harmonious relationship between human-beings and nature since ancestor's time. Cluster D criticized that the authenticity was vanished in the process of urbanization. They claimed that the mix of old and new culture ruined the authenticity. The tourism became too commercial to respect the historic authenticity. Even Cluster D represented the minority group, it reflected the potential threat of the economic development.

In conclusion, findings of the study have identified several problems that the tourism researchers may ignore in their academic studies. More importantly, it clarified some items that local government may neglect in the management of Suzhou heritage tourism. For tourism researchers, more studies should be conducted to the subjectivities of visitors. Q method is an effective and operant tool to investigate the subjective opinions held by individuals combining the openness of qualitative and quantitative analysis [72].

Implications

There is a bias associated with studying subjectivities. Q method, a methodology to define subjective opinions, is underestimated in the academic fields. With a diversified and fast-paced trend leading up in the discourse of enhancing global tourism, Q method is expected to be employed more frequently to tourism fields to discover subjectivity. In order to narrow the gap between objective and perceived authenticity and refine the current heritage management of Suzhou UNESCO heritage site, subjectivities should be taken seriously into account. The overall results of this study indicated four types of opinions from different dimensions, which broadened global horizon and vision for the government as well as the tourism industry.

In general, tourism has to keep pace with globalization no matter in the perspective of academic or practical fields. The focus of the academic studies is transforming from the product to the customer. This requires more researches related to the subjectivity of people, so that the results could be applied to the market needs. Take tourism field as an example, an increasing number of tourists are eager to be regarded as "individuals" and jumped out of the zone of the "mass". Identifying individual opinions will help explore different ways of thinking, and probably even open up a niche market. As a counterpart to "mass tourism", niche tourism represents diverse and different market needs [73]. It may only appeal to a certain type of tourists but they are able to dominate the market by offering specialized experience. As a result, niche tourism can stand the destination out with a cutting-edge advantage. In order to build an edge in the globalization, innovation is the key to success. Heritage tourism itself is also a form of niche tourism concentrating on seeking for authentic cultural experience and fulfilling the interaction between tourists and the heritage site. Nowadays, it is becoming a social phenomenon. In a word, in order to better satisfy various kinds of tourists, more studies should be done on the subjectivities of each existing special category.

On the other hand, for the Suzhou government, specific policy is needed to improve the infrastructure construction. For instance, historical and cultural background introduction displayed in the Classical Gardens should be polished to intriguing and reliable explanations in different languages. Especially for international visitors, it is very crucial to translate the names and stories in an exact and understandable way. One method to address this difficulty is to avoid using Chinese pinyin to translate the names or descriptions because non-Chinese speakers will be confused. It is suggested to relate translations to a similar culture that western society shared, or a universal phenomenon that creates resonance. In that case, not only Chinese culture is promoted, but also its educational meaning is permeated through cultural tourism.

CONCLUSION

There are two possible ways of handling the problems of entrance fee. Firstly, the Suzhou government might consider controlling the number of tourists inside of the gardens if they do not have a

competitive entrance ticket price. According to the feedbacks, the authentic experience was severely disturbed as a result of overloaded visitors. If the government limits the number, their experience may be improved to a higher level. Secondly, the government should consider funding the heritage site. Some sponsored events can be implemented collaborating with popular travel websites or social networks. Most importantly, urbanization and commercialization, the all-time controversial issues in the advancement of tourism, should be carefully facilitated in a maintained steady momentum. In the long term, a cautious attitude to the economic and cultural development is necessary to ensure sustainable development. The economy, tourism and environment should be co-existed and develop evenly into a steady triangle.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

It should be noted that this study has been primarily concerned with heritage tourists. Therefore, more detailed classification can be applied to the Q sorts. For instance, group tour and individual tourists can be developed into two groups of P-set. In that case, the subjectivities will be more specified and accurate. The findings of this study were restricted to the perceived authenticity of heritage tourists at Suzhou WHS. For future researches, continuous studies should be conducted on the subjectivities of local residents. After that, a complete comparison can be made between the two groups to better improve the local heritage tourism. Furthermore, this method is not only applied to Suzhou WHS. More WHSs should be included in the studies to help the heritage sites achieve a balance between cultural and economic development. A deeper understanding of the world heritage will enhance the connection and communication across the globe. In the long run, every world citizen should be engaged in protecting the cultural relics.

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