

**Travel with a wedding dress: Exploring the
experiences of Chinese couples travelling to Australia
and New Zealand for bridal photographs**

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Abstract

Bridal photography tourism is a unique practice in Taiwan and mainland China - it is an emerging form of personalised and Special Interest Tourism (SIT) with the goal of shooting bridal portraits and enjoying honeymoon simultaneously in the same trip. It is usually done ahead of the wedding, although sometimes it can also take place when the couple has "just married". Bridal photography tourism can also be combined with destination wedding, bridal photo-shooting, and even the honeymoon itself, which directly replaces the custom of having a traditional wedding. The aim of this study is to gain an understanding of the experiences of Chinese couples travelling to Australia and New Zealand for bridal photographs, through discovering and exploring their travel blogs and online forum posts.

This research adopts an interpretive approach, using qualitative internet research and unobtrusive data collection methods to obtain 20 relevant blogs and online forum posts, 10 for each destination. The selected data analysis methods include narrative inquiry involving the approach of thematic analysis for examining the data. Main themes and concepts were revealed in the analysis process of two destinations (Australia and New Zealand), including motivations for bridal photography tourism, and the methods of photographing bridal portraits. The findings draw out key meanings of the couples' experiences of bridal photography tourism, such as capturing fun and happiness in their relationship, capturing and reminiscing romance, exotic dreams and being there, and nature and naturalism, with a focus on highlighting the concepts of framing the bride's beauty and the 'bridal gaze'. These outcomes lead to a deeper overall understanding of bridal photography tourism, and help to gain knowledge of this emerging form of tourism by examining their experiences.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|------|
| Abstract | ii |
| Table of Contents | iii |
| List of Figures | vi |
| List of Tables..... | vi |
| Attestation of Authorship..... | vii |
| Acknowledgements | viii |
| Chapter 1: Introduction | 1 |
| 1.1 Research context | 1 |
| 1.2 Research aim and objectives | 2 |
| 1.3 Research paradigm and methods used | 3 |
| 1.3.1 Research paradigm | 3 |
| 1.3.2 Research methods..... | 3 |
| 1.4 Dissertation structure | 4 |
| Chapter 2: Literature | 5 |
| 2.1 The need for personalised services and tourism experiences..... | 5 |
| 2.1.1 Experience economy | 5 |
| 2.1.2 The tourism experience | 6 |
| 2.1.3 The links between tourist experience and motivation..... | 8 |
| 2.2 Wedding-related tourism and honeymoon travelling..... | 9 |
| 2.2.1 Wedding-related tourism..... | 9 |
| 2.2.2 Honeymoon travelling..... | 10 |
| 2.3 Bridal photography..... | 11 |
| 2.3.1 Bridal photography in China..... | 11 |
| 2.3.2 Bridal photography in tourism | 15 |
| 2.3.3 The bridal gaze..... | 18 |
| 2.4 Conclusion | 19 |
| Chapter 3: Methods | 20 |
| 3.1 Research philosophy | 20 |
| 3.1.1 Ontology, epistemology and axiology | 21 |
| 3.1.2 Philosophical paradigm of interpretivism | 21 |
| 3.1.3 Inductive approach..... | 22 |
| 3.2 Qualitative research strategy..... | 22 |
| 3.2.1 Narrative Inquiry | 23 |
| 3.2.2 Thematic analysis..... | 24 |
| 3.2.3 Visual data to support the textual narrative analysis..... | 25 |
| 3.2.4 Research approach | 26 |
| 3.3 Data collection | 27 |
| 3.3.1 Social media..... | 27 |
| 3.3.2 Unobtrusive measures of data collection and analysis..... | 29 |

| | |
|--|----|
| 3.3.3 Research on blogs and online forum posts..... | 30 |
| 3.3.4 Collection of blogs and online forum posts | 31 |
| 3.4 Data analysis | 33 |
| 3.4.1 Thematic analysis approach | 33 |
| 3.4.2 The analysis process..... | 34 |
| 3.5 Ethical considerations | 36 |
| 3.6 Limitations | 38 |
| Chapter 4: Findings - Australia and New Zealand..... | 40 |
| 4.1 Findings - Australia..... | 40 |
| 4.1.1 Travel bloggers and online forum users..... | 40 |
| 4.1.2 Motivations for bridal photography tourism..... | 41 |
| 4.1.3 The methods of bridal photo-shooting | 43 |
| 4.1.4 Capturing fun and happiness..... | 48 |
| 4.1.5 Recording and reminiscing romance..... | 49 |
| 4.1.6 Exotic dreams and being there | 50 |
| 4.1.7 Nature and naturalism | 50 |
| 4.2 Findings - New Zealand..... | 52 |
| 4.2.1 Travel bloggers and online forum users..... | 52 |
| 4.2.2 Motivations for bridal photography travel | 53 |
| 4.2.3 The methods of bridal photo-shooting | 54 |
| 4.2.4 Capturing fun and happiness..... | 59 |
| 4.2.5 Recording and reminiscing romance..... | 60 |
| 4.2.6 Exotic dreams and being there | 61 |
| 4.2.7 Nature and naturalism | 63 |
| 4.3 Conclusion | 64 |
| Chapter 5: Discussion | 65 |
| 5.1 Introduction..... | 65 |
| 5.2 Motivations for bridal photography tourism | 65 |
| 5.3 Experiences of bridal photography tourism | 66 |
| 5.3.1 The methods of bridal photo-shooting | 66 |
| 5.3.2 Capturing fun and happiness..... | 68 |
| 5.3.3 Recording and reminiscing romance..... | 69 |
| 5.3.4 Exotic dreams and being there | 70 |
| 5.3.5 Nature and naturalism | 72 |
| 5.4 The similarities and differences between two destinations..... | 73 |
| 5.4.1 Similarities | 73 |
| 5.4.2 Differences | 73 |
| 5.5 Bridal portraits and the bridal gaze | 74 |
| 5.5.1 The role of bridal portraits | 74 |
| 5.5.2 Framing the bride's beauty | 75 |

| | |
|---|----|
| 5.5.3 The bridal gaze | 76 |
| 5.6 Conclusion | 79 |
| Chapter 6: Conclusions | 80 |
| 6.1 Concluding remarks | 80 |
| 6.2 Implications and recommendations..... | 82 |
| 6.3 Recommendations for future research | 84 |
| References | 85 |
| Appendices..... | 96 |

List of Figures

| | |
|--|----|
| Figure 1: Taiwanese movie star Vivian Hsu's bridal photographs in Australia..... | 13 |
| Figure 2: Inductive approaches to the research process..... | 22 |
| Figure 3: An inductive approach for thematic analysis: | 34 |
| Figure 4: Tianxin's bridal photograph in Melbourne | 43 |
| Figure 5: One of Rain's bridal portraits - Australia..... | 45 |
| Figure 6: Nizi's bridal photo in Sydney | 47 |
| Figure 7: Jolin's self-shot bridal photo at the Twelve Apostles | 51 |
| Figure 8: One of Yuner's bridal photos taken by a photographer - New Zealand .. | 56 |
| Figure 9: Hangtai's self-shot bridal photo - New Zealand | 58 |
| Figure 10: One of Qdx's bridal portraits - New Zealand..... | 60 |
| Figure 11: One of Huangtai's bridal photos by a photography studio in Wanaka .. | 62 |
| Figure 12: One of Qdx's wife, Angelina's bridal portraits -New Zealand..... | 64 |

List of Tables

| | |
|---|----|
| Table 1: Summary of research discussion..... | 26 |
| Table 2: Thematic framework - sorting basic themes into themes and concepts.... | 36 |
| Table 3: Chinese bloggers and forum users - Australia | 40 |
| Table 4: Motivations for bridal photography tourism - Australia..... | 41 |
| Table 5: The methods of bridal photographs shooting - Australia..... | 44 |
| Table 6: Chinese bloggers and forum users - New Zealand | 52 |
| Table 7: Motivations for bridal photography tourism - New Zealand..... | 53 |
| Table 8: The methods of bridal photographs shooting - New Zealand..... | 54 |
| Table 9: URLs of five blogs and five online forum posts - Australia..... | 96 |
| Table 10: URLs of five blogs and five online forum posts - New Zealand..... | 97 |

Attestation of Authorship

“I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning”.

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Jing Jia

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research context

Bridal photography, also known as pre-wedding photography, is a unique practice that originated from Taiwan in the 1980s, involving the production of couple photos set in fantasy themes ahead of the wedding (Adrian, 2006). By the mid-1990s, bridal photography had become a virtually unavoidable wedding expense (Adrian, 2004). The carefully selected bridal photographs are generally displayed at the wedding banquet for the guests to admire, and later framed and hung in the newlyweds' new house or flat (Constable, 2006). Taking pre-wedding or bridal photos is a unique custom and cultural phenomenon in Taiwan and mainland China, creating an image-centered and wedding-related visual presentation for the wedding reception (Constable, 2006). This established custom has since fostered the growth of the bridal photography industry, while the value-added services and sophistication techniques have packaged the experience into a world-leading cultural and creative industry (Huang, 2010). From the role of passively recording the wedding on video to actively creating innovative services to suit each couple, this bridal photography industry, dominated by photography studios, has gradually been changing the wedding culture in Taiwan and mainland China.

With the accelerating rate of globalisation, consumers are increasingly demanding personalised services and experiences, and more businesses are struggling to design and sell experiences with unique props and themes (Gretzel & Jamal, 2009). The consumption habits and lifestyles of individuals make them increasingly attracted to the promotion of individualistic psychological and spiritual products and services (Hultman, 2009). The bridal photography industry is a cross between artistic creation and profitable business which produces personalised and thematic products (Adrian, 2006; Huang, 2010). In recent years, bridal photography has been combined with tourism,

allowing the couples to enjoy a unique tourism experience while taking memorable pre-wedding bridal photos, thus giving rise to the new trend of 'travel with a wedding dress'.

Bridal photography tourism is an emerging cultural and creative sector of tourism - it is more like a combined trip for both the honeymoon and bridal photographs. The biggest demand is for beach-based holidays where the main purpose is for relaxation and luxury, however, many Chinese couples seek more activities or adventure to incorporate into their journey, to make it an enjoyable and unforgettable once-in-a-lifetime experience. Australia and New Zealand are well-known and attractive to many Chinese couples, owing to the numerous globally-recognised nature-based attractions and dramatic sceneries. Although there is currently a lack of official statistics on this emerging form of tourism, it has been observed that an increasing number of Chinese have been travelling to Australia and New Zealand for personalised bridal photographs - this study intends to examine their travel experiences based on these two destinations.

With relatively few studies based on bridal photography in China (Lai, 2012), it is important to explore this popular phenomenon, by examining the key factors that influence Chinese couples' intention for bridal photography tourism, and exploring their experiences of travelling with a wedding dress. In this research, Chinese couples travelling to Australia and New Zealand for bridal photographs reveal an emerging trend of wedding-related photography for capturing their romantic journey and personal love stories - this dissertation attempts to gain a deeper understanding of this phenomenon.

1.2 Research aim and objectives

The overall aim driving this research is to gain an understanding of the experiences of Chinese couples who travel to Australia and New Zealand for bridal photographs.

The objectives addressed in this study for achieving this research aim are:

- To gain an understanding of the motivations for Chinese tourist couples to 'travel with a wedding dress' to Australia and New Zealand for bridal photographs;
- To identify similarities and differences between the couples' experiences in Australia and New Zealand; and
- To explore the meanings of bridal photography in these Chinese couples' experiences.

1.3 Research paradigm and methods used

1.3.1 Research paradigm

Interpretivism is regarded as philosophical paradigm in this dissertation. In association with this tourism research subject, I intend to explore the phenomenon of these Chinese tourist couples who travel to Australia and New Zealand for bridal photography. This research project focuses on gaining an understanding of the experiences of these travellers, which is regarded as a qualitative study where meaning is constructed by these tourists themselves (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004). The qualitative-interpretive approach is considered to be an appropriate method as it focuses more on the individuals in this study.

1.3.2 Research methods

Social media specifically blogs and online forums posts, was used as the main data sources, as they are popular forms of online interaction in virtual communities. Both weblogs and online forums are forms of social media that allow users to post content online and share it with others, enabling users to broadcast and share their feelings, thoughts, emotions and experiences openly with other users. An unobtrusive data collection method was adopted, so the bloggers and online forum users can openly present their thoughts, emotions, and experiences publicly in an online domain, and so the issue of reactive measurement effects in research can be avoided (Hine, 2011).

Moreover, an inductive interpretive-qualitative method should be an appropriate approach to analyse the data: Narrative analysis is identified to be the proper data analysis method, and thematic analysis is adopted as the appropriate method in the process of data analysis.

1.4 Dissertation structure

This dissertation is divided into six chapters. The first chapter introduces and establishes the outline and structure of the dissertation. The second chapter reviews and discusses the background literature published about 'travel with a wedding dress'. Following the literature review is the Methods chapter which firstly positions the ontological and epistemological philosophy of this dissertation, and then discusses the qualitative research approach of this paper, including the unobtrusive data collection method used on blogs and online forum posts, and using the thematic analysis approach to examine the narrative content. Chapter Four outlines the findings of the qualitative data collection method together with addressing findings from the sample data, and presents the findings from blogs and online forum posts about Chinese couples' experiences of bridal photography tourism in Australia and New Zealand. Chapter Five presents the analysis and discussion of the findings from Chapter Four. Chapter Six concludes this dissertation by revisiting the research aim and objectives, and presenting the overall understanding of this research. Specific implications of this research are also discussed, and several recommendations are proposed for future research directions.

Chapter 2: Literature

In China, travelling with a wedding dress for bridal photographs is often regarded by couples as a combined trip to enjoy their honeymoon while completing the bridal photography (Lai, 2012). In the search for relevant literature, these theoretical aspects formed the background for this dissertation: The need for personalised services and tourism experiences, wedding-related tourism and honeymoon travelling, bridal photography in China, and bridal photography in tourism.

2.1 The need for personalised services and tourism experiences

2.1.1 Experience economy

The experience-based economy is described by Pine and Gilmore (1999) as a model which regards "goods as props", "service as a stage" and experiences as the main economic offer (p. 98); this experience-based and service-as-drama statement is also emphasised by Morgan et al. (2009). According to Pine and Gilmore (1999), the experience economy has become the final phase of an economic progression that has evolved through the stages of commodities, goods, and services economies. In this rapidly changing world, consumers increasingly seem to desire unique experiences, and businesses continue tirelessly to design and sell these unique experiences. According to Sundbo and Darmer (2008), individuality and personality are emphasised in the experience economy; the achievement of self-enjoyment, self-development, and self-actualisation are of vital importance. This emerging form of economics becomes more humanized as individuals' psychological satisfaction is emphasised and respected. Customer-unique value and authoritative performances are outlined by Poulsson and Kale (2004), who state that 'true self' and individual existence are specific experiences which directly affect consumer involvement with and participation in a service or product.

Described as 'transformation' by Pine and Gilmore (1999), the reflection or introspection of mankind's well-being and happiness represents a tendency to return to aesthetics and perceptivity. In the era of agricultural economy, happiness, to a large extent, meant abundant food, viability and self-sufficiency; during the era of an industrial economy, an individual's well-being heavily depended on their wealth and development; however, these are no longer sufficient to sustain a happy and fulfilling life in this new economical era, where aesthetics of everyday life and self-actualisation have become peak experiences (Quan & Wang, 2004), and mental hedonism has become a pre-requisite for happiness. One defining characteristic of the experience economy is the emergence of experiential need and supply - Wang (2002) describes a higher type of consumer role known as 'peak consumption', where consumers are in pursuit of constraint-free fantasy experiences. To this extent, travelling with a wedding dress for bridal photographs is becoming a growing niche; it is a typical example of the experiential economy and peak consumption of tourism in China, which plays an increasingly important role in the development of Chinese domestic and outbound tourism.

2.1.2 The tourism experience

The concept of the tourism experience is a focal point for current tourism research and management, as tourism is increasingly seen as a function of memorable experiences (Tung & Ritchie, 2011; Uriely, 2005). The term 'tourism experience' is defined by Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier (2009) as a socially-constructed overall experience, with the meaning associated with multiple interpretations of the social and environmental components. Quan and Wang (2004) state that there are two general approaches to the study of the tourist experience: the social science approach and the marketing/management approach - both approaches focus on some essential dimensions of the tourist experience, but only partially portray the essence of the tourist experience.

According to Quan and Wang (2004), the tourist experience is understood as a "pure", "net" or "peak" experience in social science literature, in order to contrast the daily experience. Those experiences are regarded as the extension of the daily experience to the tourist journey - tourists travel to experience something different from their daily lives, rather than the "mixed", "gross" or "supporting" daily experience such as accommodation, food, transport, and so on (p.297). However, in the marketing/management literature (Mossberg, 2007), the tourist is completely regarded as a consumer, and the marketing significance of the tourist activity lies in the tourism consumption. Thus, the tourist experience is regarded as a consumer experience in contrast to the daily experience; even the peak experience is regarded as part of a consumer experience (Quan & Wang, 2004). The experience of a tourist is viewed in four key aspects, according to Xu and Chen (2010): being unique, personalised, homely, and of fine quality. Based on different dimensions and viewpoints, different interpretations of tourist experiences are explored by various authors, which illustrates the variety and complexity of tourism activities and experiences that exist in today's economy.

Owing to enduring research and exploration, the profound significance of the tourism experience have been recognised and valued by an increasing number of researchers. According to Quan and Wang (2004), the tourist experience is far richer than seeing, listening, smelling, and tasting - it is more about active participation and amusing memories, changes in emotions and interactions with personality, authentic and aesthetic enjoyment, educational and experiential acquirement, spiritual and psychological satisfaction, and then pursuing a sense of belonging and shaping of identity via self-realisation, and eventually achieving self-actualisation (Andersson, 2007; Lin, et al., 2014; Lu, et al., 2015; Wang, 1999). Overall, the tourist experience is a

holistic experience; as stated by Williams (2006), it can be regarded as both the peak experience and the supporting experiences.

Based on these researchers' views and statements, the tourist experience can be identified as different categories: for example, an experience of pleasure (Brunner-Sperdin et al., 2012), education (Sørensen & Jensen, 2015), escapism and authenticity (Quan & Wang, 2004), aesthetics (Wang, 2002), empathy (Macionis & Sparks, 2009), and an experience aiming at the pursuit of dreams (Morgan et al. 2009). In general, the tourist experience is derived from a wide range of personal requirements, and the instinct of seeking spiritual freedom is the original and powerful motive (Xu & Chen, 2010). By understanding this advanced approach, a new perspective to studying tourists' behaviour and psychology is realised in this research. One objective of this dissertation is to gain a better understanding of Chinese couples' travel experiences in Australia and New Zealand for bridal portraits. Chinese couples may expect access to more enjoyable and personalised services, and may desire unique and memorable bridal photography experiences in the future, which means that the study of current experiences is imperative and necessary.

2.1.3 The links between tourist experience and motivation

Quan and Wang (2004) state that the tourist experience is regarded as a consumer experience from a marketing/management approach, and it is usually studied from a consumer behaviour approach (Mossberg, 2007). Studies on tourist behaviour and tourism motivation focus on the tourists and the decision making process, while tourist behaviour theories concentrate on "how tourists behave and in what kind of activities they participate" during their travel, and tourism motivation theories seek to explain "why tourists travel and the underlying psychological process" (Robinson et al., 2011, p.31). According to Huang (2010), tourist motivation is considered a complex

psychological concept that lacks widely-adopted and commonly-accepted theoretical framework and validated measurement.

Goossens (2000) states that most discussions of tourism motivation have traditionally tended to revolve around the concepts of push and pull motives, where the push and pull factors of tourist behaviour are regarded as "two sides of the same motivational coin" (p. 302). Typically, the push motives are conducive to explaining the desire to go on a holiday, while the pull motives are useful for explaining the destination choice - both factors are connected by the concept of emotion (Goossens, 2000). In this light, tourists are pushed by their emotional and experiential needs, and pulled by the emotional benefits of tourism activities. Therefore, experiential processes including emotions, desires, fantasy and daydreams, play a major role in the hedonic tourism consumption (Goossens, 2000). Extrinsic tourist motivation is often influenced by a need to escape from the pressures of life and break the routine in a tourist's home society (Sharpley, 1994). Wang (2002) also describes a higher type of consumer role, "peak consumption", and state that tourism is the best example of peak consumption, where tourists are regarded as peak consumers in the pursuit of constraint-free, utopian, or fantasy experiences.

2.2 Wedding-related tourism and honeymoon travelling

2.2.1 Wedding-related tourism

Wedding-related tourism is becoming an important topic in the discussion of cultural and creative tourism globally - it is becoming a prevalent part of the tourism industry with honeymoon travelling and overseas wedding activities growing rapidly. Honeymooners, wedded couples, vow renewal couples, and dating couples who take romantic trips to celebrate love are also called romantic tourists by some researchers (Herjanto & Gaur, 2014). The wedding-related and honeymoon tourism market refers to

domestic or international trips taken by tourists to either get married or celebrate their wedding as 'exoticism' (Seebaluck et al., 2015; Zhao, 2009). Whilst global data on this aspect of the tourism industry does not exist, there are certain elements of the wedding-related market that will experience particular growth on a global scale, especially in China (China Wedding Expo 2013, 2013). Simply put, the wedding-related tourism niche, is a high-yield market with a huge growing potential in China.

Countries and regions that have strongly marketed and promoted themselves to Chinese newlyweds as destinations for wedding-related tourism include: European countries (e.g. France and Italy); Australia; New Zealand; Asian countries (e.g. Thailand and Japan); and famous island destinations such as Hawaii and the Maldives (Kim & Agrusa, 2005; Lee et al., 2010). As a new area of growth, there is an ever-increasing trend of Chinese couples taking a wedding-related tour before or after the wedding (Constable, 2006; Chen, 2014). Consequently, there is more inclination to travel further, and for a longer period of time, especially when a customised or personalised trip is taken. The emerging phenomenon shows that the Chinese newlyweds who are most predisposed to travel abroad to celebrate a wedding, have sufficient wealth to take a holiday abroad and enjoy their honeymoon while simultaneously doing their pre-wedding or wedding photography shoots. Although the biggest demand is still for beach-based holidays where relaxation and luxury are the main purposes, many Chinese newlyweds also seek a more active or adventurous element to their journey, so they can enjoy an unforgettable, possibly once-in-a-lifetime experience, to celebrate their marriage.

2.2.2 Honeymoon travelling

Although honeymoon tourism is acknowledged as an essential part of the tourism sector, it has received insufficient scholarly attention. The honeymoon is widely known as special holiday undertaken by newlyweds to celebrate their marriage, usually following

a wedding ceremony (Lee et al., 2010). Like their marriage, many honeymooners see the honeymoon as an unforgettable once-in-a-lifetime experience, thus, newlywed couples on their honeymoon represent a vital part of the tourism industry (Winchester et al., 2011). Tourism Intelligence International (2009) indicated that the global market size for weddings and honeymoons is worth an estimated three to six million trips annually. This niche segment maintains a growth rate of at least 12% per annum from 2010, compared to the 10% per annum growth over the 2002–2007 period (Lee et al., 2010). Although going on a honeymoon started as a western tradition, it is becoming a very popular practice amongst many Asian countries.

Different aspects and perspectives of honeymoon tourism have been the focus of various studies: Kim and Agrusa (2005) investigated the competitiveness of seven overseas honeymoon destinations, and their positioning among potential Korean tourists - they pointed out that although such overseas honeymoon tours were only limited to newlyweds with high incomes until the early 1990s, it has since become a 'must' for seeking romance and enjoying a once-in-a-lifetime experience, especially for a memorable start to a happy marriage. In their honeymoon trip, newlyweds would consider taking a complete rest and having fun with adventurous activities as the main purposes (Lee et al., 2010). Some researchers argue that since there are so few studies on honeymoon tourism (Kim & Agrusa, 2005; Lee et al., 2010; Lai & Fang, 2012), these studies are expected to stimulate interest among academics and practitioners in this field.

2.3 Bridal photography

2.3.1 Bridal photography in China

Photography has long been used to capture events as they unfolded, and is regarded as a tool for preserving the precious moments and memories in life. For decades in Chinese

culture, the wedding-related photography was always separated into two different phases - in addition to taking photographs on the wedding day (Bezner, 2002), there was also a unique practice of bridal photography usually done several months prior to the wedding (Adrian, 2003; Chan & Xu, 2007). In Asian region such as Taiwan (Adrian, 2003), mainland China (Constable, 2006), Hong Kong (Cheung, 2006), and Singapore (Chan & Xu, 2007), it is typical for soon-to-wed couples to incorporate an amount of money from their wedding budget for professional bridal photographs, then framing them in special wedding albums for their own (and others') enjoyment. These bridal photographs portray the couples in different formal wedding attire and elaborate costumes, with hairstyles and make up done by specialised bridal professionals, and set in different scenic backdrops either inside or outside of the studio.

2.3.1.1 Wedding photography and bridal photography

Wedding photography is the photographing of wedding-related activities, including on the actual wedding day (Bezner, 2002) - it includes photographs of the couple before marriage (for announcements, wedding albums, portrait displays, or thank you cards) as well as coverage of the actual wedding and reception (sometimes referred to as the 'banquet' or 'wedding breakfast') (Constable, 2006; Cohen, 2010). It is a major commercial endeavour that contributes to the bulk of the business activities for many photography studios or independent photographers (Hurter, 2010; Johnson, 2011). Overall, wedding photography is about the passion and honour, and a gift that newlyweds can return to their families on the wedding day.

A pre-wedding photo shoot (or bridal photography) is an artistic photo session held a few months (or even earlier) before the wedding. While the wedding photo shoot is the day planned for celebration with the newlyweds' family and friends (Cohen, 2010), the pre-wedding shoot is solely focused on the newly-married couple (Johnson, 2011; Kim,

2011; Montagna, 2003), and can be set where the couple got engaged, had their first date or a memorable date, or at the place they first met; the location could be at a beach, or even their regular coffee shop - the photographers are able to create a particular theme or bring props to the location for the bridal photographs (Hurter, 2010; Shaw, 2008; Westwood, 2011). Figure 1 presents a famous Taiwanese movie star, Vivian Hsu, who had her bridal photos taken in Australia, and uploaded publicly so they can be searched online. Images included in this dissertation are only used for the purpose of illustrating an example.

Figure 1: Taiwanese movie star Vivian Hsu's bridal photographs in Australia



Source: (Retrieved from http://news.ifeng.com/a/20140511/40243859_0.shtml)

Bridal art photos are usually taken a few months prior to the wedding ceremony, therefore, bridal photography can also be considered 'pre-wedding' photography. Although in China, Chinese couples do not only take bridal photos before the wedding day (Constable, 2006), researchers tend to refer to this type of themed photography as 'bridal photography' or 'pre-wedding photography', in order to differentiate it from the 'wedding photography' that takes place on the actual wedding day.

2.3.1.2 The development of bridal photography

It is generally recognised that wedding photography in Taiwan started in the late 1970s along with the economy booming and the society developing, however, bridal

photography and wedding photo shoots were not done separately until the late 1980s in Taiwan, and eventually evolved from just being the simple act of taking photos to capture memories of the wedding (Adrian, 2003). In an effort to reinvent and boost their business, photographic studios introduced the idea of taking bridal photos prior to the wedding in the late 1980s (Huang, 2010); by the mid-1990s, it had become an integral part of almost every wedding banquet in Taiwan and mainland China (Adrian, 2006). This concept eventually proliferated through the entire eastern Asian region and even spread to North America, Australia and New Zealand, where many Chinese families have emigrated to (Adrian, 2006). This transnational image-centered practice can be described as a visual commodity of fantasy, which combines trendy or artistic styles of fashion photography with the influence from foreign visual cultures. Bridal photography is a service offering that requires a team of photographers, make-up artists, lighting technicians, and even wedding gown and costume suppliers, for the photo shooting - this level of teamwork flourished to become a strong influence, even for the wedding ceremony itself.

In China, the bridal photography business (one of the fastest-growing segments in wedding industry) has been developing for over twenty years, and today still enjoys continued potential growth and promising prospects (Adrian, 2003; Constable, 2006). With the rapid development of China's wedding market, wedding tourism activities, such as couples travelling overseas to take bridal photographs, are booming and expanding into a fast-growing new niche market in Taiwan and mainland China in recent years (Adrian, 2003; Grail Research, 2008; Zhao, 2009). According to Zhao (2009), around 10 million couples are getting married each year in China, and total expenses for Chinese weddings are estimated to cost around 50 billion dollars in 2009. Traditionally, most Chinese couples like to shoot a series of bridal art photographs to capture their love visually - this type of art photography is generally taken either

indoors or outdoors by professional photographers from different photographic studios. Bridal photographs are not only about wedding-related experiences, but also visually portray each couple's unique personalities and the beauty of their relationship.

2.3.2 Bridal photography in tourism

2.3.2.1 Tourism and online sharing of tourist-generated photography

Travel photography is classified by Lo (2012) into two categories: photography for the tourists (i.e. brochures and postcards), and photography by the tourists, which is also generally referred to as tourist photography (Robinson & Picard, 2009), and includes tourist photographic practices and their artifacts. Tourist photographs invoke arousing and pleasant feelings (Pan et al., 2014), form the visual experience of a trip, reinforce the 'tourist gaze', and become the visual representation of places (Garrod, 2008; Urry & Larsen, 2011). Online photo sharing through social media enhances the bond with others in the online community (Lo et al., 2011), and stimulate as well as magnify the feelings of fun and pleasure.

Urry (1990) introduces and develops the paradigm of the 'tourist gaze' that emphasises the production of tourism and destination imagery, objectified and reproduced as a socially constructive phenomenon, through examining the relationship between tourism as a construction system and photography as a tourist practice (Garrod, 2008). As a widely-used medium and a particular way of seeing the world, tourist-generated photography also plays a vital role in framing the 'tourist self' (Robinson & Picard, 2009), staging and shaping travel memories (Lo et al., 2011; Urry, 2002), and in the construction and exploration of the meaning of the 'tourist gaze' (Garrod, 2008; Urry, 2002; Urry & Larsen, 2011). Consequently, tourist-generated photography now plays a significant role in the study of tourists behaviours and experiences (Lo, 2012), and thus tourist photographic practices and online photo-sharing has become a focus for research

in recent years.

Lo and McKercher (2015) also claim that several authors regard tourist photography as a performance of tourism, and a visual medium between the audiences and the self (Yeh, 2009), which relocates the 'tourist gaze' into a more meaningful and personal context (Urry & Larsen, 2011). Owing to the emergence of social media and the digitalisation of photographic technology, various researchers realise that travel images are now shared online with a large number of audiences beyond the borders of time and space (Donaire et al., 2014; Garlick, 2002; Haldrup & Larsen, 2012; Noy, 2014; Osborne, 2000; Palmer, 2010; Pan et al., 2014; Pocock, 2009; Stylianou-Lambert, 2012; Van House, 2009; Winston, 2013). This represents a richer and more polarised meaning of (and for) photography, and has transformed tourism, changing the way travellers experience time, place, and their tourist self, as well as the way they interact with their social media audiences.

2.3.2.2 Bridal photography tourism

The content of bridal photography can be described in a formula (Huang, 2010): "Bride+ groom + costume + background + lighting + retouching =Bridal photography". In this formula, the groom is considered to be a foil to the bride, and does not necessarily appear in every picture, revealing that bridal photography features a female-leading model, and that the main aim of bridal photography is really to frame the bride's beauty. Huang (2010) describes the links between exotic elements and bridal photography, as creating the imagination of a journey and its experiences. While only some couples can actually afford to travel abroad to shoot bridal photos in front of real landscapes or sceneries, exotic themes have been commonly used as backgrounds of bridal portraits to evoke an exotic feeling, such as posing the couples in front of painted backgrounds or constructed scenes to achieve a dramatic image in the studio. However,

an increasing number of Chinese couples no longer satisfied with just shooting portraits in front of artificial backgrounds nowadays, and actually prefer to personally visit those exotic places and 'be there', rather than pretend to be. Bridal photography tourism enabled these Chinese couples' bridal portraits to match their honeymoon destinations, which is an accomplishment, or an "(exotic) dream come true".

The bridal portraits were generally taken several months prior to the wedding and were once a separate activity from honeymooning in China (Adrian, 1999; Constable, 2006). Now that this bridal photography tradition is creatively combined with the honeymoon in recent years, it has become a special holiday undertaken by couples to celebrate their romance during the special period when they would be "married soon" or have "just married". As a combined trip for the honeymoon and shooting of bridal portraits, bridal photography tourism has been attracting more Chinese couples to creatively experience, explore, innovate, and facilitate the development of fresh elements in this type of tourism.

The creation of photographic representations in tourism and online photo-sharing has garnered interest for research, which is why one of the objectives of this study is to examine the role of bridal photography in the experiences of Chinese couple tourists who 'travel with a wedding dress' (Chen, 2014), who also post and share their stories and photographs on travel blogs and online travel forums. Bridal photography is a significant reason for Chinese couples to travel with a wedding dress to Australia and New Zealand - in this sense, these couples are regarded as both producers and performers (Lo, 2012), and social media (including travel blogs and online travel forums) are regarded as platforms or stages, while the content of their posts (including text narratives and tourist photographs) is considered to be the connecting medium that attracts large audiences online, who may be targeted or non-targeted actual viewers.

Bridal photography (Adrian, 2003), as a form of tourist photography in the 'travel with a wedding dress' niche, has become a powerful and persuasive medium, and plays a major role in understanding these couples' behaviours and experiences. Chinese couples travelling for bridal photographs reveals an emerging technique of bridal photo-shooting to visually document personal love stories, capture their chemistry, and illustrate the intimate bond of couples on the trip, usually set against phenomenal landscapes as the backdrop. However, there is a lack of academic research in this area - even in recent years, studies on bridal photography tourism in China generally concentrated on investigating and revealing the growing potential in the industry from the perspectives of tourism providers and operators (Lai, 2012), and rarely focusing on the travellers' perspectives. Therefore, this dissertation aims to bridge the gap between the tourists' practice and the academic literature in this field.

2.3.3 The bridal gaze

In terms of encounter and interaction, the notion 'gaze' is a way of seeing, and implies that the object or the environment is not only passively seen but is filled with meaning by the viewers and spectators (Urry, 1990). The concept of the 'tourist gaze' can be defined as the systematic ways that tourists see, experience, and consume signs, symbols, and places when they are travelling, since tourism is predominately a visual practice for tourists (Urry, 1990; Urry & Larsen, 2011). The concept of the 'bridal gaze' is introduced by Chan and Xu (2007), which refers to "an eclectic way of seeing, encountering, and understanding" the bridal photographs, and the way of seeing and explaining the bridal portraits bears "social, cultural, and normative significance" (p. 88).

The 'bridal gaze' is different from the 'tourist gaze', which refers to the way bridal arts are structured around and for the pleasure of the female viewer rather than a masculine

viewer or a 'male gaze' (Pritchard & Morgan, 2000), and the female gender role is actively emphasised in the bridal gaze. The concept of the 'bridal gaze' is similar to that of the 'female gaze' (Gamman & Marshment, 1988), in that a bridal gaze is constructed from a female perspective and in terms of a female's attitudes, revealing the empowerment of women through bridal photography tourism (Lin et al., 2012). Bridal photographs are the objects of the bridal gaze, which are primarily viewed by brides and female spectators, and bridal gaze is also considered to be the aggregated outlook of the wider audience, including family, kin, friends, schoolmates, and colleagues.

2.4 Conclusion

Currently, although no official figures are available, it could be observed clearly that an increasing number of Chinese couples tend to travel abroad to take bridal photographs, (either by themselves or by using the services of professional photographers from different studios) to visually document their romantic love and unique experiences (Chen, 2014). 'Travel with a wedding dress' investigates this emerging form of tourism. Unlike the traditional wedding tour, destination wedding, or honeymoon trip, it is more a combination of the honeymoon and the bridal photo shoots (Lai, 2012). Bridal photography has become one of the leading factors and main purposes for the travel that couples and photographers (and related photography services) may be involved in. However, there currently is a gap identified between this emerging form of tourism and the relevant academic research in the tourism sector, therefore, this study will focus on analysing this specific type of Chinese tourists who travel to Australia and New Zealand for bridal photographs, and attempt to bridge the gap in literature by exploring their experiences through the examination of their travel blogs and online forum posts.

Chapter 3: Methods

This methods chapter first outlines the research aims and objectives. Then discusses the chosen research philosophy through examining the ontology and epistemology positions of interpretivism and the qualitative research design. The choice of interpretive-qualitative research strategy and the inductive reasoning approaches are then interpreted in this chapter, followed by the research methodology segment, which covers the use of narrative inquiry and visual method to support the narrative analysis. Thereafter, the data collection methods, such as unobtrusive research measures, are elaborated based on a qualitative research approach, and the choice of data and method of sampling are justified. This is followed by a discussion on the data analysis, where the method and procedure of thematic analysis is presented. This chapter ends with a look at the ethical and legal considerations involved in online research methods, and presents the limitations of this study.

Designing a study starts from the research questions. The research questions, thoughtful matching data sources, data collection, and data analysis methods, are all fundamental to the quality and success of any study. The main aim driving this research is to gain an understanding of the experiences of Chinese couples who travel to Australia and New Zealand for bridal photographs. The objectives addressed in this study to achieve this research aim are:

- 1. To gain an understanding of the motivations of Chinese tourist couples to 'travel with a wedding dress' to Australia and New Zealand for bridal photographs;
- 2. To identify similarities and differences between the couples' experiences in Australia and New Zealand; and
- 3. To explore the meanings of bridal photography in these Chinese couples' experiences.

3.1 Research philosophy

The term 'knowledge' is a comprehensive concept, and the term 'tourism' is a complex

phenomenon. As a typical position of viewing knowledge, the discussion of interpretivism paradigm is the focus of this section - it will discuss about the adoption of paradigms and the choice of research methods involving the considerations of ontology, epistemology and methodology (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Gray, 2009). As researchers are guided by their philosophical paradigms, one's adoption of research methods are secondary to one's identification of a paradigm position (Scotland, 2012). Regarding the considerations of ontology, epistemology, and axiology issues, my interpretivism position of this research will be justified in this section.

3.1.1 Ontology, epistemology and axiology

The interpretivism is a distinctive paradigm to positivism (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Interpretivism (or constructivism) advocates that the multiple realities can only be accessed through social constructions, and that knowledge can only be accumulated through sophisticated individual reconstructions (Myers, 2010). This position emphasises on the factors of subjectivity and the context in a study. I personally favour interpretive approaches to studying tourism (rather than positivist), since tourism spaces are more about socially constructed and individually reconstructed experiences, and the complicated tourism phenomena are largely based on the interactions between individuals (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004). Epistemology is about the nature and forms of knowledge, or what can be known (Scotland, 2012); Axiology shows the role of the researcher's values when researching the social world (Bryman & Bell, 2011); and interpretivism puts forward the significance of the subjective meaning and the context of behaviour in terms of the researchers' values in the process.

3.1.2 Philosophical paradigm of interpretivism

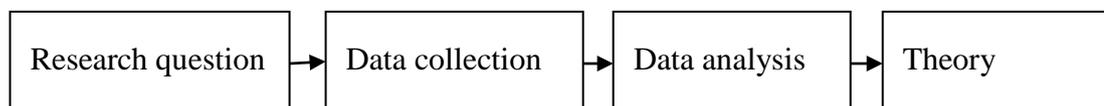
The tendency to use interpretivism as a philosophical paradigm has been previously elaborated on in the above discussion. Rakic and Chambers (2012) consider

interpretivism, with its relativistic ontology and subjectivist epistemology, to be the most viable philosophical position within a qualitative tourism research, and I strongly advocate the epistemology and ontology position of interpretivism in this study.

3.1.3 Inductive approach

Bryman and Bell (2011) explain that there is no distinct boundary between inductive and deductive reasoning methods, it is more a matter of the tendency of different viewpoints to swing between theory and research. Deductive reasoning is generally referred to as a 'top-down' logic which links premises with conclusions; conversely, inductive reasoning is referred to as a 'bottom-up' logic which is viewed as a process from the specific to the general (Bryman & Bell, 2011). O'Hearn (2010) notes that social research might involve both inductive and deductive processes in one project, but Bryman and Bell (2011) argue that the process of induction is moving from observation, pattern, and tentative hypothesis, to theory generalisation.

Figure 2: Inductive approaches to the research process



Source: Myers, (2010)

Known as a "bottom up" approach, there are four steps included in inductive approaches, as shown in Figure 2.

3.2 Qualitative research strategy

The methodology is related to a plan of action, and answering the question of "how to find" - it is the philosophical foundation for providing the context and theory in a research process (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004; Neuman, 2011). Qualitative researchers tend to be inductivists and interpretivists, and an inductive reasoning approach is generally the higher preference. This research adopts the inductive reasoning approach,

epistemological position of interpretivism, ontological tendency of constructionism, and axiological position of being value-laden; consequently, the methodological position of this study supports the use of a qualitative research strategy (Garrod, 2008; Gibbs, 2007; Neuendorf, 2001; Rakic & Chambers, 2012; Vaismoradi et al., 2013; Veal, 2011). Associated with the aim and objectives of this research, this tourism research focuses on the social phenomena, and seeks to understand the subjects' actions in certain social contexts; thus, an inductive interpretive-qualitative method is identified to be an appropriate approach to this study.

'Travel with a wedding dress' is a relatively new and complex phenomenon emerging in recent years amongst the Chinese-speaking population. As mentioned previously, there exists a gap between this specific phenomenon and the available literature. Prior research had focused more on the views of the phenomenon of bridal photography, or marketing strategies and the growing potential of this market from business operators' perspectives, however, few studies emphasise on the personal experiences of bridal photography tourism, and the sharing of experiences through social media. Thus, the interpretive-qualitative method, as a more person-focused approach, is adopted in this study to address the gap.

3.2.1 Narrative Inquiry

According to Gray (2009) and Butler-Kisber (2010), a 'narrative' is the way individuals account for actions and events that shape their everyday experience, and it can be used as a means for examining their experiences, thus, narrative inquiry is identified as an appropriate method (or methodological approach) to analyse online travel blogs and online forum posts (Gray, 2009). According to Thomas (2012), a written or oral narrative is like life itself - a part of the human experience, it is "present in every age, in every place, in every society", and is a verbal "representation of the human experience

of time" (p. 209). It is a way of understanding experience or making sense of experience (Butler-Kisber, 2010), which is considered to be one of the "most fundamental ways of making meaning from experience" (Thomas, 2012, p. 209). According to Thomas (2012), narrative inquiry is the study of story, interpretation, and discourse, which examines the significance of a story, and how the story is told or shared at a specific time. Chase (2005) asserts that individual experiences captured through narrative inquiry allows a greater insight into their thoughts and interpretations, and provides an understanding of broader social phenomena.

Narrative inquiry is considered to be a widely-used methodological approach for analysing the text content of travel blogs and online travel forum posts (Banyai & Glover, 2012). As a typical interpretive-qualitative research approach, narrative inquiry is considered to be a subjective research methodology that is more inclined to 'finding meanings' rather than 'discovering facts' (Chase, 2005). According to Banyai and Glover (2012), narrative inquiry is commonly used to gain insights into tourist-constructed identities, and how they generate meanings associated with their travel experiences. Narrative structure analysis allows the researcher to identify meanings from the textual data of tourists' blogs and online forum posts, including their feelings, thoughts and sensory experiences as presented in the texts, therefore, it is an appropriate method of analysis in this study. The narrative analysis process includes deconstructing the stories into episodes and quotations, coding, and interpreting the interrelationships between the codes. In this study, the approach adopted to conduct narrative analysis of textual data is thematic analysis.

3.2.2 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is considered as a well-established research method used to analyse issues in tourism studies, and involves the approach of collecting and analysing the data

(Marks & Yardley, 2004). The content of sample data to be analysed can include words, symbols, images/pictures, or any other communicated or informational message (Bernard, 2013; Neuman, 2011). Qualitative thematic analysis is identified to be detailed and systematic, using rule-guided techniques to analyse the informational contents of textual data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Guest et al., 2012; Marks & Yardley, 2004). This method is a descriptive presentation of qualitative data (Penney et al., 2011), and according to Marks and Yardley (2004), thematic analysis is similar to content analysis as they share many similar principles and procedures, however, thematic analysis focuses more on the qualitative aspects of the material analysed. In qualitative thematic analysis, data is grouped using categories and codes that are usually generated inductively, and then applied to the data through close reading, (such as counting words or analysing texts statistically to detect patterns and codes in the data) before analysing and coding them to understand their meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Every reasonable attempt was made to employ names for themes from the actual words contained in the data, and to group themes in a manner that directly reflected the texts as a whole.

3.2.3 Visual data to support the textual narrative analysis

Bridal photographs, as major reason and 'performance' of Chinese couples' travel, play a significant role in their travel experiences. In addition to textual data, several bridal photographs (as visual data) were used to support the narrative analysis of the textual contents. Scarles (2009) asserts that the visual and visual practices are fundamental to tourism, and has proliferated and attracted a steady attention from a variety of disciplines. Scarles (2010) also mentions that since text and image form a complementary relationship in tourism, the role of the photograph as a visual fragment of experience has become very significant.

Rakic and Chambers (2012) state that tourism research can involve the collection and study of "published (secondary) visual data" (p. 5), including travel photographs or videos posted online through social media or social networking sites (Jokela & Raento, 2012). Tourism researchers can also create visual data themselves in the form of photography, film or video (Scarles, 2010), however, this study only focuses on the richness of bridal portraits (photography) posted on travel blogs and online travel forums. In this research, textual components and visual photographic elements are presented in the data on blogs and online forum posts, which are seen as openly accessible forms of online textual and visual materials. Bridal photographs (as visual data) are used together with textual data within the interpretive-qualitative approaches in this study.

3.2.4 Research approach

Unobtrusive measures will be used to collect data from blogs and online forum posts (including both textual and photographic content), and the thematic analysis approach will be adopted to conduct narrative analysis of textual data. Table 1 illustrates the summary of research approaches and discussions in this chapter.

Table 1: Summary of research discussion

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Research ontology | Interpretivism |
| Research Epistemology | Constructivism |
| Axiological position | Value-laden |
| Research approach | Inductive |
| Research strategy | Interpretive-qualitative method |
| Research Methodology | Narrative inquiry |
| Data collection methods | Unobtrusive data collection method (travel blogs and online forum posts) |
| Data analysis methods | Thematic analysis |

3.3 Data collection

3.3.1 Social media

The Internet has become a convenient medium, enabling people (users) to share information and exchange knowledge, and reshaping the way they consume and plan for travel (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010; Kang & Schuett, 2013). Social media usage includes sharing of experiences and opinions through blogs, micro-blogging; interaction on online social networking sites (e.g. Facebook and Twitter), online forums (e.g. bbs.quer.com), online virtual social worlds, virtual game worlds; the social sharing of knowledge tools (e.g. Wikipedia), podcasts, video-casts, and photo sharing sites (e.g. YouTube and Flickr), as well as online review sites (e.g. TripAdvisor.com), and other user-generated content aggregators (Leung et al., 2013; Kiráľová & Pavlíčka, 2015; Nezakati et al., 2015; Osatuyi, 2013; Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). Social media is one of most powerful online networking tools and has changed the way people interact with each other, even revolutionising the communication processes in tourism, which is a highly knowledge-based and information-intensive industry.

3.3.1.1 The popularity of social media

As a computer-mediated and internet-based communication technology, social media has become an increasingly popular and reliable platform for sharing and exchanging information (Kang & Schuett, 2013). Social media changes the boundaries of social interactions, the way people think and make decisions, and enables individuals to interact with each other based on common interests (Ayeh, Au, & Law, 2013; Dijkmans et al., 2015; Ma & Yuen, 2011; Zhou & Wang, 2014); it provides a platform to support individual communication, unrestricted by the constraints of time and space. Online social media also plays a significant role in travellers' information sharing and decision making (Cox et al., 2009; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Blogs and internet forums, as two

typical forms of social media (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014), are internet or mobile-based applications that enable users to easily create, edit, access and link to content, and surf the internet with other individuals. Along with the growth and popularity of various social media platforms, the number of blogs and online forums on the internet have increased exponentially.

3.3.1.2 Travel blogs

A blog (shortened from 'Weblog') is like an online diary, or more specifically, a frequently updated website where content (text, pictures, or sound files) is posted on a regular basis and displayed with a date-stamp and in reverse chronological order (Sharda & Ponnada, 2008). Blogs can provide specific demographic information and a fascinating insight into the lives of social media users, and travel blogs with their recent explosive popularity, have demonstrated their enormous potential in promoting tourism development (Azariah, 2012; Mack et al., 2008). Classified as personal journals, blogs record (sometimes in detail) the daily life events, experiences, thoughts and feelings of their authors.

Travel blogs are defined as frequent publications on the web that combine texts, images, videos, audios, links, and other tools, to share authors' commentaries, experiences, and news while they travel (Volo, 2010). With regard to the disclosure of personal information, bloggers' motivations for blogging are usually for self-expression, networking, and identity management, and many individuals conduct at least part of their social communication via social media (Schmalleger & Carson, 2008). The content of featured travel blog posts have been examined extensively in tourism literature, due to its complex conceptual nature and its important role in influencing tourist decision making (Law, 2009; Zehrer et al., 2011). Indeed, studying travel blog information has become a much more complex process than ever before.

3.3.1.3 Online travel forums

An internet forum, or message board, is an online discussion site where users can hold conversations in the form of posted messages (Law, 2009). Blogs are usually managed by one 'owner', but provides the possibility of communication and interaction with other users through the addition or 'posting' of comments (Volo, 2010). Online forums are regarded as less formal (in structure and tone) than blogs, and users can exchange information and interact with fellow travellers more freely on like-minded topics (Law, 2009). A good forum-based community has, for a long time, proven to be an indispensable platform for knowledge exchange and information sharing, as well as for socialising activities (Aschoff et al., 2011). Several academic researchers have investigated the role of online forums and the impact of such travel communities, as tourism information providers and travel-related content aggregators (Casaló et al., 2010; Chalkiti & Sigala, 2008; Fjelstul & Severt, 2011; Lee et al., 2012). Travel blogs and online travel forums are widely-used platforms for travellers and tourists for creating and sharing travel-related experiences, opinions, and comments.

In this study, I employ a systematic analysis of the content on certain blogs and online forum posts containing text and image data posted by Chinese couples who travel to Australia and New Zealand for bridal photographs. These travellers' information sharing, their growing mobility, and active use of social media in turn greatly diversify their travel experiences.

3.3.2 Unobtrusive measures of data collection and analysis

The internet offers unrivalled access to the details of certain users' daily life, and enables researchers to use non-reactive approaches or unobtrusive methods to gather and analyse the data online (Hine, 2011), or "naturalistic" data rather than "artificial"

product of a formal questionnaire or interview process (Smith, 2010, p. 202). The reactivity of measurements has been a research concern for a long time, and the reactive nature of data collection is demonstrated with the phenomenon of the "Hawthorne effect", where people tend to change their behaviour when they know they are being observed or interviewed (Marrelli, 2007, p. 43). Rather than reactive methods such as interviews and questionnaires (Lee, 2000), this study attempts to use internet research and unobtrusive methods as a form of data collection, in order to reduce measurement reactivity, and to avoid the challenges of managing the consequences brought on by reactive data collection processes. According to Hine (2011), unobtrusive methods can be used to collect data for a qualitative research study, by using selected data on the internet to explore an individual's experience or inform the researchers' understanding of a cultural phenomenon.

3.3.3 Research on blogs and online forum posts

The source of data collection in this study are identified as Chinese travel blogs and Chinese online forum posts, where the textual content is written and elaborated in the Chinese language on the internet by online users. Because I am a native Chinese speaker and also speak English as a second language, there will be minimal language barriers when reading, understanding, and translating the data for this research, making possible the collection and analysis of sample data, and the generating of findings from it. Travel blogs and online travel forum posts can be initially located online through typing in keywords or key phrases in Chinese in search engines, such as Baidu and Google - these keywords or key phrases may include "travel blogs" and "travel forums".

There are millions of blogs and online forum posts presented online daily (Goyal, 2012; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), and numerous samples of related data for this research can be identified on the internet, however, the quantity and quality of information-rich posts

that can be found, are limited. Based on the preliminary search online, I have chosen 10 travel blogs and 10 forum posts as sample data that are strictly related to Chinese couples' experiences of bridal photography tourism. The time frame of posted data to be collected is limited to 2010 - 2015, which qualify as 'recent' and homogeneous typical sampling.

3.3.4 Collection of blogs and online forum posts

The primary data that underpins this research project is collected through Chinese keyword searches, and an audit of blogging and forum websites in order to identify relevant blogs and forum posts written by Chinese couples who travel to Australia and New Zealand for bridal photographs.

3.3.4.1 Data collection methods

Travel blogs can be located on specific blog hosting websites in China, which allow Chinese keyword searches, enabling users to browse site contents and search for specific posts through the search menu. These websites may include, for instance (in alphabetical order): Ctrip (<http://you.ctrip.com/travels>), Douban (<http://site.douban.com/ifamorechina>), Mafengwo (<http://www.mafengwo.cn>), Pintour (<http://www.pintour.com>), Sina (<http://blog.sina.com.cn>), Sohu (<http://blog.sohu.com>), Tianya (<http://blog.tianya.cn>), Tuniu (<http://trips.tuniu.com>), Blog 163 (<http://blog.163.com>), and other online blogging websites.

Online forum posts can be located on specific travel forums websites, for example (in alphabetical order): Aoxintong (<http://www.aoxintong.com/>), Qyer (<http://bbs.qyer.com>), Tianya (<http://bbs.tianya.cn/list-travel-1.shtml>), Tuniu (<http://bbs.tuniu.com>), 19lou (<http://tour.19lou.com>), and other online travel forums. Specific posts can also be located via typing in keywords (in Chinese) through the

'search' tool; As the process of data collection is completed in the Chinese language, keywords are used to locate the targeted blogs and travel forums posts when searching for online posts via online search engines (e.g. Baidu, Google), specific blog hosts websites, and travel forums websites, must also be in the Chinese language.

3.3.4.2 Data collection process

The identification of relevant content from travel blogs and online forum posts (texts, photos) took place from January 2015 to May 2015, starting with a stratified purposeful sampling method to illustrate relevant subgroups, and a thorough initial reading was undertaken in this stage. The total number of potential blogs and online forum posts that were read was not recorded, it would be more than 100 posts. The review process involved skim reading over searched blogs and online forum posts, firstly, ensuring that the blogger or online forum user was depicting in detail a bridal photography trip to Australia or New Zealand; secondly, personal feelings or emotions toward his/her bridal photography travel experiences must have been given.

Several major coding schemes were also used to meet the research objectives, namely: posting time, overall trip planning for bridal photography, destination choices, travelling routes and activities, the methods of bridal photo-shooting, the quantity and quality of bridal photos posted online, and the tone and language of description used on posts - naturally, blogs with information-rich and in-depth content (texts and photographs) took preference. The posts used in this research must have: included the detailed trip planning for bridal photography in either Australia or New Zealand; provided detailed descriptions on travelling routes and activities closely related to bridal portraits shooting; described the methods of bridal photo-shooting in detail (such as bridal photos were shot by photography studios, by their friends, or by themselves); and been written and viewed in Chinese, with fluent expression and high-quality bridal portraits posted online.

After highlighting the information-rich and in-depth content provided by bloggers and forum users, the initial blog and forum posts sample was narrowed down to 10 blogs and 10 forum posts, including five blogs and five forum posts for Australia (Appendix 1), and five blogs and five forum posts for New Zealand (Appendix 2). These 10 blogs and 10 online forum posts represent 20 different Chinese couples who travelled to Australia and New Zealand for bridal photographs.

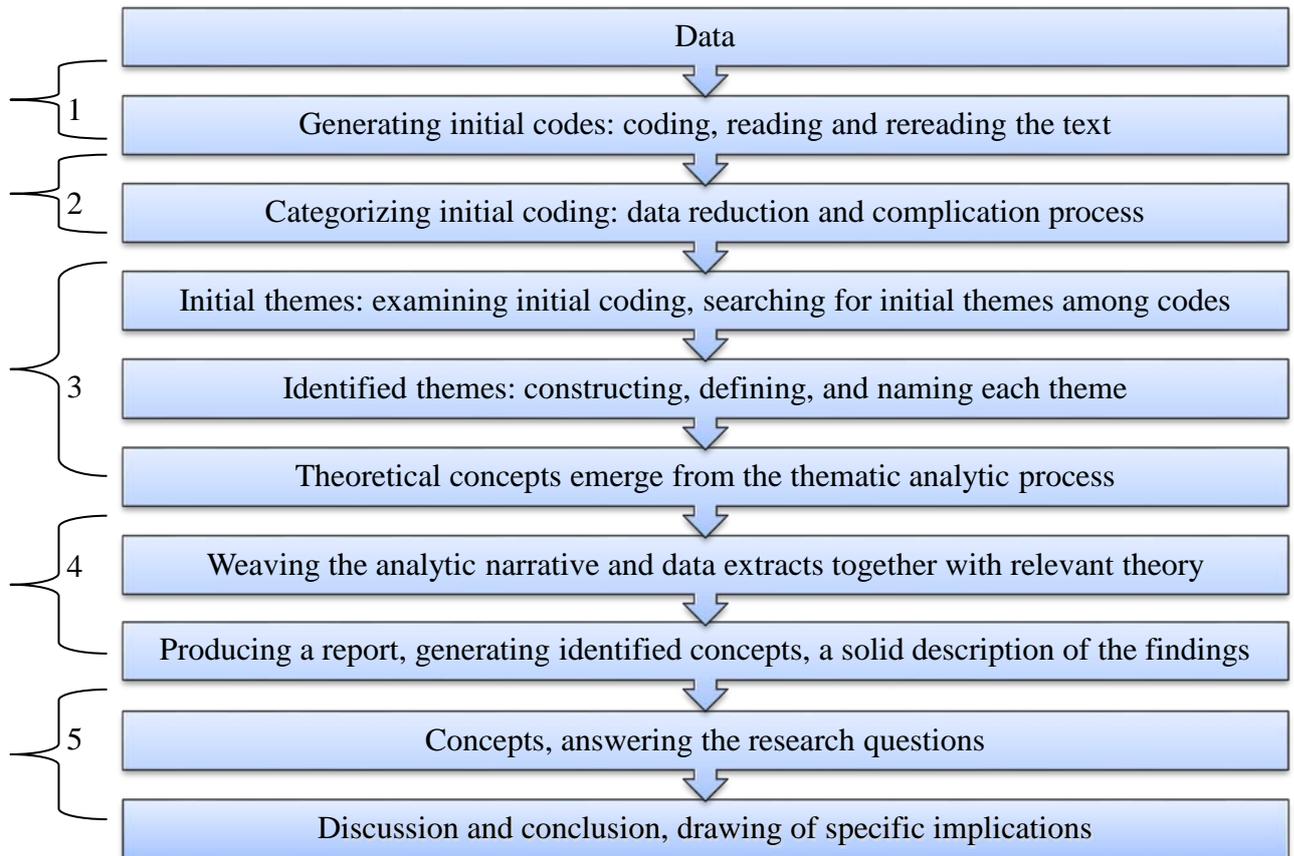
3.4 Data analysis

After the process of sampling data sources and data collection, the sample data is then used for referencing, coding, examining, and extracting the core findings of the study. The data from the blogs and online forum posts must be further classified, sorted, abstracted, and refined in the next step of data analysis through the appropriate analytical approach - as previously mentioned, the thematic analysis approach is adopted as an appropriate way of data coding and data analysis.

3.4.1 Thematic analysis approach

The data analysis procedure should be rigorous, thus, a step-by-step inductive method of the thematic content analysis approach is detailed in Figure 3.

Figure 3: An inductive approach for thematic analysis:



Source: Adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006) and Guest et al., (2012).

The steps of thematic analysis used to analyse the data must follow a strict inductive qualitative approach (Butler-Kisber, 2010). According to Figure 3, the entire process of thematic analysis can be divided into five steps, which are elaborated on in the next section. The thematic analysis process for this research was done in two separate sections for the two destinations: Australia, and New Zealand.

3.4.2 The analysis process

Step 1: Getting to know the data

The process of analysis started with the elimination phase where skim reading was used to reduce the data to a total of 10 blogs and 10 online forum posts, followed by the process of reading and re-reading the blogs and online forum posts. Re-occurring words

and personal thoughts were highlighted to investigate potential links to the literature relating to bridal photography tourism.

Step 2: Generating initial codes

Each blog and online forum post was then read and re-read, highlighting important words and phrases as initial coding along the way. Since coding and themes were driven by the content of data, a coding manual was constructed for collecting the code words. Based on the coding manual, initial codes were refined as they emerged from reading and re-reading the text. The initial codes were then organised and annotated according to high frequency items in the blogs and online forum posts.

Step 3: Discovering initial themes

Obtaining the succinct codes and high frequency items involved coding the entire dataset to identify the potential themes, which were then jotted down in the coding manual for the construction of initial themes. Initial themes and concept clusters gradually emerged from the initial coding and flexible categorisation process; the initial themes were noted down in the coding manual and later became the titles of code words.

Step 4: Weaving themes

Once the coding manual was complete with all codes sitting under a relevant theme, the next process was to 'weave' and connect the different themes. During this phase, themes were reviewed and refined, and web diagrams were designed to illustrate how certain themes were connected to each other. In this process, themes were further divided into main themes and basic themes (sub-themes of main themes), and then connected based on their context and subject meaning (see Table 2 for details on the thematic framework for sorting basic themes into themes and concepts).

Step 5: Constructing concepts

The last step of the thematic analysis was to finalise each theme and construct an overarching concept, and then report on the identified patterns generated, with the purpose of justifying the meaning across a dataset, so as to answer the research questions posted at the beginning of the study. These themes and concepts constitute a bigger picture of the entire dataset, as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: Thematic framework - sorting basic themes into themes and concepts

| Initial themes | Themes | Concepts |
|--|---|--|
| Motivations for bridal photography tourism | Motivations | Motivations |
| Bridal portraits by photography studios Self-shot bridal photographs | The methods of bridal photo-shooting | -Understanding the experiences of bridal photography tourism |
| Capturing fun and happiness Recording and reminiscing the romance Exotic dreams and being there Nature and naturalism | Meanings of bridal photography in tourism experiences | -The 'bridal gaze' |
| Bridal photographs sharing online | Bridal photographs | -Framing the bride's beauty |

3.5 Ethical considerations

As a relatively new concept in research, internet research or online research is faced with different opinions regarding ethics (Ess, 2007). To a large extent, it can be argued that ethics approval for research on social media in this study should not be required, because the archived material on the internet is publicly available anyway, and the data in blogs and online forum posts adopted for online research would only be used for the purpose of academic study rather than commercial purposes (Hookway, 2008). In terms

of this study's research method, which is identified as internet-based research (IBR), the process of data collection and data analysis is solely dependent on the internet-based blog data sources. The diversity and complexity of internet communication is such that the issues discussed should be thoroughly addressed before the IBR commences (Convery & Cox, 2012). Weblog content and the online forum posts are usually uncensored, unmediated, and tend to take on an uncontrolled voice (in terms of their ability to filter and disseminate information to a widely dispersed audience). Weblog and online forum posts usually allow comments and resources to be shared, and generally, the internet is considered a public place, where public online behaviour does not necessarily require informed consent, or approval.

The “Regulation on the Protection of the Right to Network Dissemination of Information” CLI.2.76727 (EN) (2006) was adopted at the 135th executive meeting of the State Council on May 10, 2006 in China, and was thereon promulgated, effectively coming into force as of July 1, 2006 for the purpose of protecting the right to network dissemination of information by the copyright owners, performers, and producers of audio-visual products. According to the relevant copyright laws and regulations in China, (for example, Article 12 of the “Regulation on the Protection of the Right to Network Dissemination of Information”), it is stipulated explicitly that the relevant technical measures may be avoided when work published on the internet gathered solely for the purpose of teaching or scientific research, rather than commercial purposes. In this research, weblog posts and online forum posts published on the internet were used as source materials - the collected data is publicly available for use in academic (or any kind of) research, and is freely accessible anyway via internet search engines. Therefore, ethical approval for this study (which is based on data source from blogs and online forum posts) is not required.

3.6 Limitations

There still remains though, several inevitable limitations of this study. Firstly, the sample data and their major factors cannot be examined through an objective process of quantitative analysis, and since the research findings are notoriously subjective rather than objective, they cannot be repeated nor verified by other researchers. The second and main limitation of this dissertation relates to the size and language of the data sample - a total of only 20 travel blogs and online forum posts for Australia and New Zealand were collected for this research, so considering the numerous blogs that exist on the internet, it could be regarded as a 'missed opportunity' to overlook (or ignore) other online blogs and forum posts by other Chinese couples; also, all the blogs and forum posts were written in Chinese, so there could be slight variations when quoting or translating the narrations. Another limitation was that the analysis of the motivation factors of these couples for bridal photography tourism were only based on their simple statements made online, making it almost impossible to perform a more specific and in-depth analysis of their motivations.

Furthermore, the unobtrusive use of “found” data such as blogs and forum posts on social media will often lack depth in research and be of less ethical concern than in-depth qualitative studies such as personal interviews (Hine, 2011), since the participants are not usually aware of being researched by the researcher, although they are aware of being observed. The unobtrusive measures of Internet-derived data may also lead to difficulty in defining biases (Wouters & Gerbec, 2003), for example, using search engines that do not index the entire Internet, and can therefore lead to a biased portrayal of the target data online. A further concern about the unobtrusive use of internet-derived data on social media in this study is that it might reflect personal bias, which usually solely focuses on conveying the positive experiences and instigating worthwhile motivations, so that the research findings would end up only emphasising on the

positive sides of the tourist experience.

In addition, this research emphasised on the bridal photography experiences, it loses sight of analysing other potentially valuable content such as the travel photographs posted online by these couples, since most of them are amateur photographers and a number of travel photographs with varying themes are uploaded on their blogs and forum posts. Another limitation identified is that this research focused on the experiences of these couples' bridal photography journey, without further exploring the attribute of their travel as their honeymoon. Finally, this study only started with a simple introduction of bridal photography in China, without delving into the background details such as the origins, development, and the significance of bridal photography, owing to the limited scope of this dissertation; there is definitely opportunity to further explore the details for future research.

Chapter 4: Findings - Australia and New Zealand

This chapter presents the findings of Chinese couples' experiences when they 'travel with a wedding dress' in Australia and New Zealand. The findings are based on the results from the thematic analysis process; the themes and concepts within the thematic framework that transpired, will correspond to the headings in this findings chapter.

4.1 Findings - Australia

4.1.1 Travel bloggers and online forum users

The 10 bloggers and online forum users presented in this section were given online names, with the year and the gender of authors also listed, as per Table 3. These bloggers and online forum users are given online names, some of these given names are pinyin or acronyms of their Chinese online nicknames.

Table 3: Chinese bloggers and forum users - Australia

| | | Online name | Year | Gender |
|--------------------|----|-------------|------|--------|
| Blogs | 1 | Eric | 2011 | Male |
| | 2 | Mochuan | 2014 | Female |
| | 3 | Nizi | 2012 | Female |
| | 4 | Tianxin | 2015 | Female |
| | 5 | Xiaoxi | 2013 | Female |
| Online forum posts | 6 | Chris | 2013 | Male |
| | 7 | Jolin | 2014 | Female |
| | 8 | Rain | 2015 | Female |
| | 9 | Xbt | 2014 | Female |
| | 10 | Yexiaonuo | 2014 | Male |

Each online name represented a couple, and the gender of the author indicated whether the wife or the husband wrote on the blogs and forum posts - evidently, there were seven female authors and three male authors representing the 10 couples who experienced bridal photography tourism in Australia. The 'year' indicated the time frame of the selected blogs and online forum posts were made - the earliest selected post was uploaded online in 2011, and the most recent post was made in 2015.

4.1.2 Motivations for bridal photography tourism

One of the themes that emerged from the thematic analysis of the selected blogs and forum posts, was the motivation factor. Motivations for bridal photography tourism to Australia appeared to be varied - in the 10 selected blogs and forum posts, these couples all expressed different motivations and reasons for travelling to Australia for bridal photographs. These motivations and reasons were then divided into six categories, as presented in Table 4 (in alphabetical order):

Table 4: Motivations for bridal photography tourism - Australia

-
1. Cliché of traditional bridal photographs
 2. Dream of travelling with a wedding dress
 3. Flight ticket promotion
 4. Natural scenery lovers
 5. Photography lovers
 6. Relatives or friends living in Australia
-

'Travel with a wedding dress' is described by several couples as a combined trip for their honeymoon and to do their bridal photography. Blogger 'Nizi' stated that *"I remembered one friend in Shanghai phoned me before departure, and I told him I would travel with a wedding dress during our honeymoon trip"*. 'Yexiaonuo' who had relatives living in Australia and New Zealand, wrote that *"we should thank our open-minded family members who support our decision of cancelling the wedding banquet, and choosing this new way to celebrate our wedding"* - evidently, this couple thought the traditional wedding and bridal photographs were too cliché and lacking novelty, so, they decided to travel to Australia and New Zealand to shoot their bridal photos, by themselves, during their honeymoon.

Several other bloggers and forum users mentioned their motivation as taking advantage of a flight tickets promotion: Blogger 'Eric' wrote that *"The initial reason we decided to visit Australia for the second time is that I found the flight ticket promotion on the web*

which the price of the return ticket was only RMB1600"; 'Tianxin' also had friends living in Australia, and mentioned that "because of the RMB3000 return ticket promotion, I decided to fly to Australia".

'Eric' and his wife love photography and natural scenery, so they visited Australia for eight days during the Chinese 'golden week' in October (a 7-day public holiday to celebrate China's National Day) - this trip was their second time to *"travel with a wedding dress"*. 'Eric' wrote and posted 10 blogs online to record their bridal photography travel in Australia. 'Xbt' and her husband also love photography and natural scenery, and she wrote on their online forum post that *"one of the main purposes of travelling to Western Australia is to shoot bridal photographs, since I have dreamed of travelling with a wedding dress for years"*; this was also the second time for the couple to *"travel with a wedding dress"* - they hoped the bridal photographs they took by themselves in Australia could be used in their wedding which was scheduled for the following month.

Figure 4: Tianxin's bridal photograph in Melbourne



Source: (Retrieved from <http://you.ctrip.com/travels/melbourne312/2394969.html>)

Figure 4 shows Tianxin's bridal portrait taken by the photographer in Melbourne. Blogger 'Tianxin' described her dramatic bridal photography experience: she was offered the chance to shoot a set of bridal photographs for free by friends from a photography studio in Melbourne; she expressed *"it is a pleasant surprise for me"*, because she was still single before her departure to Melbourne, and so it was not a honeymoon trip for her, however she and her male friend became lovers during their travel in Australia, and ended up travelling to Melbourne, got dressed up and had their bridal photographs taken together as a couple.

4.1.3 The methods of bridal photo-shooting

This section discusses the methods used by Chinese couples to shoot bridal photographs, as presented in Table 5:

Table 5: The methods of bridal photographs shooting - Australia

| | | Online name | Ways of bridal photo-shooting |
|--------------------|----|-------------|-------------------------------|
| Blogs | 1 | Eric | Friends |
| | 2 | Mochuan | Friends |
| | 3 | Nizi | Self |
| | 4 | Tianxin | Photography studio |
| | 5 | Xiaoxi | Self |
| Online forum posts | 6 | Chris | Photography studio |
| | 7 | Jolin | Self |
| | 8 | Rain | Photography studio |
| | 9 | Xbt | Self |
| | 10 | Yexiaonuo | Self |

Of the 10 couples, five took their own bridal photos in Australia, two couples had their friends help to shoot the bridal photos, and another three couples invited professional photographers (including bridal make-up artists from photography studios) to shoot the bridal photos for them.

4.1.3.1 Bridal portraits by photography studios

According to Table 5, some couples used the services of professional photographers from local photography studios in Australia, to shoot their bridal portraits, and had the photography studios and their teams involved in the bridal photography 'package' travel experience, such as including the combination of hair and makeup artists, the selection of gowns, professional photographers, and lighting equipment and techniques. These couples generally had higher expectations on the quality of these bridal photographs.

'Chris' promised his wife they would shoot a set of bridal photos during their honeymoon in Australia, so they invited a photography studio in Sydney to assist - he wrote that *"we rented wedding dresses from the studio in Sydney, but didn't take our own dresses, because we wanted to change several sets of dresses when taking bridal portraits, and they were quite heavy to bring by ourselves"*. They gained pleasant memories in the process, and he expressed that *"I had to say that shooting bridal photos*

on the trip was hard work, but it was an enjoyment and release of soul when seeing the beautiful natural sceneries".

'Rain' and her husband invited photography studios in Sydney and Melbourne to shoot bridal photos for them in the winter season, and they were quite pleased with their photographers and the results, stating that *"it needs a great courage to take bridal photos in winter, because it was cold and I had to take off my down jacket when I was photographed outdoors"*. She also mentioned that they only had one day to drive through the Great Ocean Road before returning to Melbourne, and their photographers also became their drivers. They then took another day in Sydney for bridal photo-shooting, where she changed into a wedding dress that her friend had brought to Sydney; their photographer took them to several famous scenic spots, such as the Opera House, Harbour Bridge, St Mary's Cathedral, and the Quadrangle of the University of Sydney to shoot the bridal photos. Figure 5 shows one of their bridal portraits taken in Sydney using the night scene of the city as a backdrop.

Figure 5: One of Rain's bridal portraits - Australia



Source: (Retrieved from <http://www.aoxintong.com/thread-33480-8-1.html>)

The couples who invited studios to shoot bridal photos for them were generally satisfied with their services, with the photographers being described as *"very professional"*, and helped them frame and capture the brides' beauty, the scenic beauty, and helped them create wonderful and unforgettable experiences.

4.1.3.2 Self-shot bridal photographs

Other than the involvement of photography studios in Australia, other common themes like self-driven independent travel, self-prepared photographic equipment, and self-shot bridal photography came out in the writings of several couples. Blogger 'Nizi' wrote on her blog that when they arrived in Australia, her husband did not realise that he would be the *"tour guide, translator, chef, driver, photographer, assistant makeup artist and bodyguard"* on their trip; she also expressed how special it was to shoot bridal portraits by themselves: *"This was our first time to take bridal portraits in this way, I made up by myself, we changed our own wedding dresses in a Chinese restaurant, used our own camera, tripod and reflector to shoot bridal photos in front of the landmarks of Sydney, although these pictures were not as beautiful as the photos taken by photography studios, they were distinctive and unique for us"*. Figure 6 shows the couple's self-shot bridal photograph, including equipment like their camera, tripod, and reflector in the shot.

Figure 6: Nizi's bridal photo in Sydney



Source: (Retrieved from http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_54c68a970100x14w.html)

Other bloggers and forum users 'Xiaoxi', 'Yexiaonuo' and 'Jolin' also had bridal photography experiences similar to 'Nizi', as they all travelled with their wedding dresses to South Australia to do self-shot bridal portraits. 'Xiaoxi' expressed that they decided to shoot bridal photos after arriving in Australia, choosing the Ashcombe Maze in Mornington as a location, and wrote that "*we met many people saying congratulations to us* " after she put on the wedding gown.

'Mochuan' and 'Eric' travelled with their friends, so their bridal portraits were taken by friends, who were "shutterbugs" (not professional photographers from studios, but amateur photographers) who shot bridal portraits for friends for free. Phillip Island was chosen as one of the photo locations, with Eric's wife being the protagonist in the photos - he wrote on his blogs that "*our friend was our driver, guide and photographer, we had to wait for the good weather for taking bridal photos, my wife had to find the place to*

make up and change her wedding dress". Even though they encountered rainy days, the bad weather did not stop their enthusiasm from directing and taking their own bridal portraits.

4.1.4 Capturing fun and happiness

The theme "capturing fun and happiness" in the relationship emerged from the thematic analysis of the experiences of bridal photography travel. 'Xiaoxi' highlighted the words "fun" and "happy" as she wrote on her blogs several times. When taking couple photos, her husband had to adjust the camera, then run to her and pose with her - she stated that *"Every time, he only had several seconds to run to me, and must pretend to be a relaxed groom and find a most comfortable posture, it was so funny!"* 'Xiaoxi' and her husband also preferred the scenic route when self-driving, saying *"it was a great fun to drive along the Great Ocean Road, and to enjoy the scenic coast view"*. She also wrote that their *"DIY tour"* and *"independent travel"* was interesting and creative - they thoroughly enjoyed the process of self-made bridal portraits, and gained many memories of fun and pleasure.

'Jolin' and her husband drove with a wedding gown to the Great Ocean Road, and created natural and happy-looking pictures - in addition to taking bridal photos (their main purpose there), they also happily photographed with koalas in the forests on the way to Cape Otway Lighthouse. When taking bridal portraits, 'Nizi' and her husband met a group of Australian Aborigines who helped them to choose scenes and compose postures, saying *"we danced with Aborigines friends, it was a enjoyable shoot"*; they even photographed and framed the exciting moment together. 'Eric' described an account of their bridal photography experience, blogging that they took off their shoes after his wife had put on the wedding gown, and *"we walked, ran and jumped on the beach again and again, we laughed over and over when shooting photos, and found*

everything was so beautiful in life". Fun and happiness were the essential factors when these couples were shooting their bridal photos, and they are regarded as the provision of a dramatic experience which does not simply capture fun and happiness, but rather captures the happiness that is generated by the actual photographing process.

4.1.5 Recording and reminiscing romance

Wedding, bridal photography, and honeymoon are always associated with romance and love. The honeymoon is the beginning of married life, so it should be a memorable and impressive experience for the couples. 'Travel with a wedding dress' is considered as a special and new way for couples to record and memorise their romance in the impending beginning of married life, and shooting bridal photographs is regarded as a romantic practice by these Chinese lovers and couples, when they enjoy their honeymoon.

'Yexiaonuo' and his wife spent one month travelling around Australia and New Zealand to enjoy their honeymoon, and drove, cooked, and photographed together. He wrote on the travel forum that *"we enjoyed the slow and quiet life there, we love the blue sky and clean beaches."* They took many photos of natural sceneries and put them in their online posts to document their romantic journey. 'Tianxin' travelled to Australia with one of her male friends - they fell in love with each other during the trip, and began their love story with a set of bridal portraits that were shot in Melbourne. 'Nizi' wrote that they took self-shot bridal photos in Darling Harbour on the evening of Valentine's Day: after she changed into her wedding gown in a Chinese restaurant, the *"waiters and guests began to bless us"*, and they saw *"Valentine's day fireworks in the sky"* as they were shooting bridal portraits at Darling Harbour; she expressed on her blog that *"this was a wonderful and romantic evening for us"*. Each couple may have a different understanding of what romance means to them, however, they all considered Australia

and New Zealand as romantic destinations, owing to their natural beauty and cultural diversity.

4.1.6 Exotic dreams and being there

'Nizi' blogged that *"I always expect to see the fantasy world under the sea, this time it was a dream come true, I was excited of actually being there"* - it was a pleasant surprise for the couple to drive along the Great Ocean Road to enjoy the seaside landscapes and beach views; she even expressed that *"we were shocked, nothing can be compared to actually being there, we decided to go back to the places again in future"*. Blogger 'Mochuan' wrote in his blog that when they went dolphin watching, they truly experienced the *"harmony of human, nature and animals"* in Australia; they felt calm in *"such a different and beautiful place"*, and were able to escape from the pressure of the daily routine of work.

'Eric' wrote that *"being here helped us to realise the huge difference in the social and living conditions between Australia and China"*; as they admired the different sceneries, *"it was like a dream, life here was simple"*, but he always felt that they did not belong to this place. 'Tianxin' stated that although Melbourne was a multicultural city, she found that *"actually being there"* was completely a different feeling from just reading the information and introductions of the city from travel books.

4.1.7 Nature and naturalism

In a location shooting, it has always been a trend for bridal photography to use nature as the background against which the couple can pose in a way that relates to the naturalism of bridal photographs. Using nature in bridal photography has two purposes - the first is using the natural scenes just as the background; the second refers to creating photos which are not too exaggerated so that the bridal photo has a natural looking feel (Huang,

2010). The brides would be dressed in gowns and the grooms may just wear casual shirts, and they would pose together against a backdrop of natural sceneries for the bridal portraits. Figure 7 shows Jolin's bridal portrait taken by her husband at the lookout of the Twelve Apostles. 'Jolin' expressed that "*we made a special trip to see the sunset at the Twelve Apostles, and shot bridal photos in that special moment, we wanted to establish a connection between the nature and our newly-married life*". Her picture also presents a fun and creative way of celebrating the new marriage, and recording a romantic honeymoon journey.

Figure 7: Jolin's self-shot bridal photo at the Twelve Apostles



Source: (Retrieved from <http://bbs.qyer.com/thread-1007990-1.html>)

Nature and naturalism in bridal photography tourism also brings out the nature-lovers in those who travel to Australia and New Zealand in their honeymoons, as they desire to get closer to nature during their travelling. 'Yexiaonuo' wrote that "*we met rainbow in a morning, it was beautiful and like a dream, because we had not seen rainbow in Shanghai for many years*". When driving along the coast, they were easily attracted by the blue sky and coastal sceneries, saying "*you cannot imagine how splendid the view is*

until you are actually being there". 'Jolin' described a special experience on the trip when *"the wind blew my veil, I stood at this dream land surrounded by trees and flowers, just closed my eyes to take a deep breath of fresh air"*. 'Xbt' wrote on the travel forum that *"the unique natural sceneries"* of Western Australia was the top reason that attracted them to visit and shoot their location bridal photos there. Although it was *"extremely hot"* when they visited the Wave Rock, they still enjoyed the unique experience of shooting photos there, and thought it was *"a cool thing"* - indeed an unforgettable experience for their honeymoon.

4.2 Findings - New Zealand

4.2.1 Travel bloggers and online forum users

In this section, 10 bloggers and online forum users represented 10 Chinese couples travelling to New Zealand for their honeymoon and bridal photography. Among these couples, 'Huangtai' and her husband travelled to New Zealand together with another couple.

Table 6: Chinese bloggers and forum users - New Zealand

| | | Online name | Year | Gender |
|--------------------|----|-------------|------|--------|
| Blogs | 1 | Angel | 2015 | Female |
| | 2 | Bdbg | 2014 | Female |
| | 3 | Fcbar | 2012 | Male |
| | 4 | Yinying | 2014 | Female |
| | 5 | Yongshi | 2010 | Female |
| Online forum posts | 6 | Connie | 2012 | Female |
| | 7 | Huangtai | 2015 | Female |
| | 8 | Qdx | 2012 | Male |
| | 9 | Winnie | 2014 | Female |
| | 10 | Yuner | 2014 | Female |

Table 6 outlines the online names, year of posting, and gender of the travel bloggers and online forum users - evidently, eight of the 10 writers were female, and only two of them were male. This meant that the experiences of their bridal photography travel were mainly recorded from a female perspective, or the female gaze.

4.2.2 Motivations for bridal photography travel

This section presents the motivations of these Chinese couples to travel to New Zealand for bridal photography. Several couples expressed the motivations and reasons for choosing travel to New Zealand for bridal photography - these motivations and reasons are listed in Table 7.

Table 7: Motivations for bridal photography tourism - New Zealand

-
1. Chinese star Yao Chen's destination wedding in Queenstown
 2. Cliché of traditional wedding and bridal portraits
 3. Dream of travelling with a wedding dress
 4. Dream of visiting the Middle-earth
 5. Flight ticket promotion
 6. Natural scenery lovers
 7. Photography lovers
 8. Relatives living in New Zealand
-

'Bdbg' and her husband are photography and natural scenery lovers, and had been in New Zealand twice before returning for bridal photographs; flight tickets promotion was another motivation for them, although this time, they chose to drive themselves around New Zealand, and to shoot the bridal photographs by themselves. A Chinese movie star, Yao Chen, also chose New Zealand for her destination wedding in 2012, and this attracted the attention of 'Huangtai' and her friends, so the two couples travelled to New Zealand for their destination wedding, location bridal photographs, and their honeymoon. Another blogger 'Angel' said she thought the bridal photographs shot in Taiwan studios were quite fixed in form and monotonous in style, tend to over-use similar themes or sceneries as the backgrounds, so she decided to 'travel with a wedding dress', and creatively shoot a set of bridal portraits with a studio in Queenstown. Similarly, 'Fcbar' and 'Connie' disliked the clichéd techniques of bridal photo-shooting in China: 'Connie' stated that *"we thought the bridal photo-shooting in New Zealand was unique in style with bright personality"*, and 'Fcbar' also promised his wife they would shoot "a set of unique bridal portraits" in New Zealand.

Blogger 'Yinying' had relatives living in New Zealand, and having previously studied in Auckland for three years, decided to take a nostalgic trip with her husband to the "dream land of the Middle-earth" for bridal portraits. 'Yuner' had also dreamt of visiting "the Middle-earth" for a long time; determined to go on a honeymoon in New Zealand, she wrote that "we are natural scenery lovers and fans of the movies *The Lord of the Rings* and *the Hobbit*, and we dreamed of taking a set of special bridal photos using the unique natural sceneries of the Middle-earth as the backgrounds". 'Winnie' and her husband were amateur photographers and natural scenery lovers, and mentioned that "as the locations of the movies *The Lord of the Rings*, New Zealand attracted our attentions for years"; so instead of the traditional wedding celebration, they decided to travel with a wedding dress to the Middle-earth.

4.2.3 The methods of bridal photo-shooting

This section examines the methods that couples shoot their bridal photographs, as presented in Table 8.

Table 8: The methods of bridal photographs shooting - New Zealand

| | Online name | Ways of bridal photo-shooting |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------------------------|
| Blogs | 1 Angel | Photography studio |
| | 2 Bdbg | Self |
| | 3 Fcbar | Photography studio |
| | 4 Yinying | Photography studio |
| | 5 Yongshi | Photography studio |
| Online forum posts | 6 Connie | Photography studio |
| | 7 Huangtai | Self and photography studio |
| | 8 Qdx | Photography studio |
| | 9 Winnie | Self |
| | 10 Yuner | Photography studio |

Among these 10 couples, seven took bridal photos in New Zealand by using professional photographers and make-up artists from photography studios, two couples shot bridal photos by themselves, and the other couple, 'Huangtai' (and her friends) did

both professional and self-shot bridal photography.

4.2.3.1 Bridal portraits by photography studios

Among the 10 selected blogs and forum posts, Table 8 indicates that more Chinese couples chose to shoot bridal photographs using local photographic studios in New Zealand. The involvement of professional photographers and make-up artists were vital in the process of bridal photo shooting for these couples.

'Angel' stated on her blog that after dressing up in elaborate costumes and flawless hairdos at the studio, *"the photographer taught us several postures, and then drove us to several secret scenes of Queenstown"*; the photographer, who was quite familiar with the scenery in Queenstown, *"always knew where to take best photos in different weather conditions"*. 'Angel' was very pleased with their services and respected their professional attitude, however, she also mentioned that taking bridal photos consumed a lot of time and energy, so they were all exhausted after just one day shooting. 'Fcbar' selected several Auckland locations for their bridal portraits, and even shot photos on a rainy day, saying *"we were impressed by the photographer's service, they even worked in the rain for capturing a perfect moment of night view"*; the studio also offered them a 'package' for sightseeing and bridal photo shooting around Auckland. 'Yinying' also took a combined 'package' trip for sightseeing and photographing provided by one studio, and they chose beaches, bridges, botanic gardens, forests, and European style streets as the backgrounds of their bridal portraits. 'Yuner' wrote on the travel forum that *"the working staffs of the studio were actually nice, they first recommended Waiheke Island as one scene"*, and after shooting photos on Waiheke Island, they continued in South Island, visiting Queenstown, Lake Tekapo, and Dunedin, and spent another two days shooting bridal portraits; they were very pleased with the studio and the photographers' service. Figure 8 shows one of Yun'er's professional bridal photos taken

at the Church of the Good Shepherd (Lake Tekapo), using the church and the expansive starry night sky as the backdrop.

Figure 8: One of Yuner's bridal photos taken by a photographer - New Zealand



Source: (Retrieved from <http://www.19lou.com/forum-291-thread-11201355049132846-1-1.html>)

'Qdx' also invited a photo studio to shoot professional bridal portraits in the South Island - their bridal photos were taken in Queenstown, Coronet Peak, Arrowtown, Oamaru, and Lake Tekapo by photographers in spring season, and she wrote that *"we visited this dream land and took bridal photos for three days, it was a unforgettable romantic journey for us"*. 'Yongshi' and her husband wanted a set of winter themed bridal photos in New Zealand with the snow mountains as background, and expressed on her blog that although the most impressive memory of their four-day bridal photography travel in July was *"freezing cold"*, they still chose a church in Auckland, and lakes and snow mountains in South Island as scenes of their bridal photos. She wrote that *"I had to take off my down coat and only wear thin wedding gown when shooting bridal portraits,*

although I wore snow boots, it was extremely cold, the photographers and tourists were all surprised by my courage", however, she also expressed that it was worth going through the trouble in winter to get a set of unique bridal portraits.

4.2.3.2 Self-shot bridal photographs

The theme "self-shot bridal photographs" emerged from the thematic analysis of the selected blogs and forum posts of New Zealand. 'Bdbg' and her husband travelled with a wedding dress and drove through the North and South Islands of New Zealand. As amateur photographers, 'Bdbg' and her husband brought their own photographic equipment and shot the bridal portraits by themselves. She wrote on her blog that *"it was not easy to change the wedding dress on the road, so we took many bridal photos every time when dressing up in the wedding gown"*. Similar to the couples who engaged in self-driving travel and took self-shot bridal photos in Australia, Bdbg's husband was the driver, photographer, tour guide, and planning for the trip. When travelling around the North Island, they used Lake Taupo, Huka Falls, and Tongariro National Park as the locations for their bridal portraits.

'Winnie' and her husband travelled around for longer, spending 17 days driving through the South Island of New Zealand with their wedding dresses. They are also amateur photographers and natural scenery lovers who brought their own photographic equipment, and once they passed through a location with fine views, they would stop their car to shoot landscape photographs and bridal portraits. She wrote on the forum that *"on the way, we have encountered many Chinese bringing their own digital SLR cameras on their travels - photography seems to be a national hobby in China"*. However, they still thought that travelling with a wedding gown and taking self-shot bridal photographs was *"a cool thing"*, because they were able to use *"the stunning landscapes of the Middle-earth"* as backgrounds for their bridal portraits.

For 'Huangtai' and her friends, 'travel with a wedding dress' meant a combination of destination wedding, bridal photography, and honeymoon. 'Huangtai' and her husband had a destination wedding on a mountaintop in Wanaka, and professional photographers were invited to their wedding to take wedding photos on the wedding day. After the wedding, they started their self-driving honeymoon with a purpose of shooting bridal portraits in the South Island; she stated that *"we cherished the chance to get close to nature and to start our marriage life in this way, self-driving travel and self-shot bridal photos made us learn a lot, we must learn the importance of cooperation and the division of labour in the course of our marriage, travel with a wedding dress was a perfect practice for us"*.

Figure 9: Hangtai's self-shot bridal photo - New Zealand



Source: (Retrieved from <http://bbs.qyer.com/thread-1073545-1.html>)

Figure 9 shows one of Huangtai's bridal portraits - in the photo, she dons a wedding

gown, a pair of flats, and sun glasses, and stands on the side of the road with a casual pose.

4.2.4 Capturing fun and happiness

"Capturing fun and happiness" in this section has two meanings: the first is capturing funny and happy moments when shooting bridal photos, and the second is recording the wonderful experiences during their bridal photography travel. Winnie and her husband visited an alpaca farm and the world's steepest residential street (Baldwin Street) in Dunedin, and wrote that *"we posted with alpacas and views, recorded many happy moments in photographs on the trip"*. 'Angel' highly praised her photographer who was adept in catching every funny and exciting moment, and capturing even the most casual gestures for them when shooting bridal portraits. 'Fcbar' and his wife took a helicopter journey to see the glacier and went to the Kawarau Bridge Bungy, she described their trip as *"full of fun, adventure and excitement"*.

Blogger Yinying's bridal photography travel was a combination of leisurely sightseeing and bridal portraits shooting, and their photographer also became their tour guide and driver, taking them to Kaikoura, a top location for watching whales and dolphins, and the Mt Cook salmon farm. She expressed on her blog that *"it was a special travel experience for us, it was an adventure full of fun and amusement, our photographer made a short video for us to record these happy moments with whales, dolphins, little seals and salmons"*. 'Yongshi' described her experiences of bridal photography travel to New Zealand (from Sydney) in the winter season: *"it was an enjoyable and exciting journey for us despite the biting cold weather, we were photographed with marvellous sights, especially with the lakes and snow mountains of the South Island, I thought our bridal photographs were unique and special, this made sense to me"*. Almost every blogger and online forum user used keywords such as *"fun"*, *"happy"*, *"exciting"*,

"enjoyable" and *"wonderful"* to describe their trips and experiences - clearly indicating that happiness was a core element of their experiences of bridal photography travel in New Zealand.

4.2.5 Recording and reminiscing romance

Romance is another essential element of the experiences of bridal photography tourism - in these bloggers' and forum users' descriptions, every photographer and amateur photographer struggled to capture the romantic elements and moments on their trip. 'Qdx' and his wife visited New Zealand for bridal portraits in early spring in the Southern Hemisphere, which was the cherry blossom season, and the studio shot a set of cherry blossom-themed bridal portraits for them as the treasured mementos of their romantic journey; he expressed that *"it was lucky to travel to New Zealand in a lovely season, the cherry blossom made our bridal photos full of romantic and pure feeling"*.

Figure 10: One of Qdx's bridal portraits - New Zealand



Source: (Retrieved from <http://bbs.qyer.com/thread-754554-1.html>)

Figure 10 shows one of the cherry blossom-themed bridal portraits of 'Qxd' and his wife,

where they were dressed up, standing under the cherry trees and staring into the distance - he wrote that *"thanks to our photographer, this series of bridal photos were filled with romantic ambience"*.

When 'Winnie' and her husband went to see the night starry sky of Lake Tekapo, she said *"we had encountered the most beautiful and romantic starry sky there, you could see a sky full of stars, if you love someone, you must take him/her to see the night sky of Lake Tekapo"*. 'Huangtai' and her husband took a helicopter to a mountaintop of Wanaka and had a romantic wedding there, describing it as *"a dreaming wedding, it was exactly the same as my dreams"*. They also invited a professional photographer to shoot wedding photos and bridal portraits on the mountaintop, which captured the once-in-a-lifetime romantic experience for them.

4.2.6 Exotic dreams and being there

Several Chinese couples expressed that they had dreamt of travelling to *"the wonderland of the Middle-earth"* for years before actually visiting New Zealand. 'Huangtai' wrote on the forum that *"no matter how many times I looked at the photographic images and imagined how it could be, it could not compare to actually being there"* - the experiences of travelling with a wedding dress to New Zealand meant the fulfilment of this exotic dream for her. Figure 11 presents a professional bridal photo of 'Huangtai' and her husband in Wanaka, where they were dressed up, standing atop a mountain, holding hands and staring into each other's eyes, with the Lake Wanaka and the surrounding mountains as the background for them in the picture. She stated that *"this picture was important for us, it symbolised a new married life had begun from this moment"*.

Figure 11: One of Huangtai's bridal photos by a photography studio in Wanaka



Source: (Retrieved from <http://bbs.qyer.com/thread-1073545-1.html>)

'Yongshi' and 'Connie' had a dream of taking bridal photos in front of a church in New Zealand, saying *"I thought and fantasized over and over to shoot my bridal portraits in a beautiful white church"* - local bridal photography studios helped to make their dream come true. The Church of St Peter Queenstown has become famous in China because a Chinese movie star, Yao Chen, had her wedding there; another popular church for Chinese couple travellers is the Church of the Good Shepherd in Lake Tekapo.

'Bdbg' blogged about how impressed they were by the natural beauty of the South Island of New Zealand: *"actually being there gave us a true and unique feeling and a fully immersive experience"*. 'Fcbar' expressed that *"we were happy to come to the Middle-earth to actually see and experience the unique natural landscapes, and the richness and diversity of culture"*; he also said that he *"had been impressed with the natural beautiful sceneries"* - and being there was entirely different from seeing landscape pictures or watching the descriptions on TV. 'Yuner' and her husband went to Waiheke

Island for bridal photographs, visited a vineyard, and took bridal photos in the lavender garden, *"it was an exotic location with distinctive Mediterranean flavours"* - they could not imagine this place existed in New Zealand before visiting there.

4.2.7 Nature and naturalism

Based on the accounts on their blogs and forum posts, it could be seen that these Chinese couples were all natural scenery lovers: 'Huangtai' wrote that *"we enjoyed the blue sky and quiet life here, the Lake Wakatipu and Lake Tekapo were pure and quiet like mirrors, surrounding by small villages with colourful houses, this moment we felt as staying in wonderland"*; 'Fcbar' stayed in the South Island for six days, and visited the Mt. Cook and Fox Glacier, emphasising on his blog that *"we visited most attractions of the South Island and took bridal portraits there, the beautiful natural sceneries were stunning and unforgettable"*. As amateur photographers, 'Bdbg' and her husband cherished the chance to actively get closer to nature: *"the best moment of travelling was to escape from busy city life and to vent emotions in nature, the once-in-a-lifetime experiences were important and meaningful to us"*. They did self-driving travel with a wedding gown for their honeymoon, and took a series of photographs of different attractions in New Zealand.

'Qdx' and his wife Angelina also shot bridal photos in the South Island - Figure 12 presents one of their bridal portraits taken by the photographer on the top of a mountain. In the picture, Angelina was dressed in a pink wedding gown, standing and smiling on the mountaintop, and holding a bouquet of flowers - this photo used the natural scenery of snow-mountains as the background, and 'Qdx' explained that *"Angelina was dressed up as a goddess of snow-mountains, the picture looked natural and beautiful, many friends were very interested in the locations of our bridal photo shooting"*.

Figure 12: One of Qdx's wife, Angelina's bridal portraits -New Zealand



Source: (Retrieved from <http://bbs.qyer.com/thread-754554-1.html>)

The original and magnificent natural sceneries impressed these couples deeply; evidently, New Zealand's natural beauty was a major reason for them to shoot their bridal portraits against a backdrop of various natural scenes around New Zealand.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the findings of bridal photography tourism based on the travel blogs and online forum posts of Chinese couples travelling to Australia and New Zealand. Key themes that have emerged through the thematic analysis of the selected blogs and online forum posts, include: the motivations for bridal photography tourism, bridal portraits by photography studios and self-shot bridal photographs, and the main outcomes and meanings of bridal photography tourism, such as capturing fun and happiness, recording and reminiscing romance, exotic dreams and being there, and nature and naturalism. The following chapter will discuss the findings of these Chinese couples' bridal photography travel experiences in Australia and New Zealand, and includes the discussion of the concepts of 'framing the bride's beauty' and 'the bridal gaze', which have also emerged from the thematic analysis process.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the main research findings or outcomes from Chapter Four, and outlines the bridal photography tourism experiences (and their final outcomes), which emerged through the process of thematic analysis based on the 20 travel blogs and online forum posts. These couples' experiences (as described in the findings chapter), will first be outlined, before leading on to a deeper understanding of bridal photography tourism.

5.2 Motivations for bridal photography tourism

The main motivations for bridal photography tourism in Australia and New Zealand were identified through examining these couples' blogs and online forum posts, and were outlined in the findings chapter. These motivations were classified into two categories: bridal photography-centred motivations (e.g. "cliché of traditional bridal photographs", "dream of travelling with a wedding dress", "Chinese star Yao Chen's destination wedding", and "natural scenery and photography lovers"); and other motivations where bridal photography was seen as secondary (e.g. "flight ticket promotion", "relatives or friends living in Australia or New Zealand", and "dream of visiting the Middle-earth"). Bridal photography is considered to be a subjective and positive experience accompanied by pleasurable emotions and feelings of fun, happiness, and romance.

An important factor identified was the "cliché of traditional wedding and bridal portraits", indicating that these Chinese couples preferred to shoot bridal photographs overseas and be close to nature during their honeymoon, rather than take bridal portraits the traditional way - standing in front of a staged scene in a fixed location inside a photography studio. It was also revealed that most of these couples were natural scenery

lovers and some of them amateur photographers, who had always dreamt of travelling with a wedding dress to a natural landscape-based destination.

For the Chinese couples who travelled to New Zealand, many were inspired and motivated by the 'The Lord of the Rings' and the 'Hobbit' movies which were filmed in New Zealand, and have long dreamed of visiting New Zealand to shoot their bridal portraits. This type of tourism is also referred to as film-induced tourism (Beeton, 2005; Macionis & Sparks, 2009; Sellgren, 2010), where travellers were film-specific tourists motivated by the elements of escape, romance, and fantasy from film viewing. Several couples were also motivated by Chinese star Yao Chen's destination wedding in Queenstown, and flight ticket promotions were also identified to be another positive factor for destination choices. Overall, the motivations and reasons for bridal photography tourism are quite varied.

5.3 Experiences of bridal photography tourism

The overall experience of bridal photography tourism was considered to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience for these Chinese couples who travelled abroad to shoot their bridal photographs during their honeymoon. Since it would be a once-in-a-lifetime experience for them, many would insist on participating in bridal photography tourism despite the high costs involved - the following segment discusses these couples' experiences in Australia and New Zealand.

5.3.1 The methods of bridal photo-shooting

Among the 20 online Chinese tourist couples, 10 had shot the bridal portraits through photography studios, nine took the bridal photos by themselves (or their friends), and only one couple chose a combination of both these methods of shooting bridal portraits on their trip. It could be seen from the research findings, that travellers visiting

Australia preferred self-shot bridal photographs (taken by themselves or their friends), whereas honeymooners travelling to New Zealand preferred to shoot bridal portraits by using the services of professional photographers from studios. The different methods of bridal photo-shooting revealed different features in their travel experiences.

5.3.1.1 Bridal portraits by photography studios

Based on the research findings, half of the 20 Chinese couples involved the services of professional photography studios or bridal salons in their bridal photography travel in Australia and New Zealand. As Adrian (2006) described, some bridal photography studios offered 'one-stop-shop' packages for bridal photo-shooting which included the rental of gowns and costumes, complete hair and make-up styling for the bride, a photo shooting session (set number of hours) involving a professional photographer, a specified number of retouched studio portraits, and a set number of colour-printed photos in photo albums of different sizes. According to the couples' requirements, bridal photography studios in Australia or New Zealand generally spend a day or more, shooting bridal portraits using different scenes and locations as backgrounds. Some studios even provide guided tours and travel services (similar to travel agencies), and offer a combined tour package for both leisure travel and shooting the bridal portraits for couples - in this case, photography studios play a vital role in this aspect of bridal photography tourism, and also in these couples' travel experiences in Australia and New Zealand.

5.3.1.2 Self-shot bridal photographs

Other than the couples who had their bridal photographs taken by professional studios, the other couples were 'shutterbugs' and preferred to travel with a wedding dress and shoot bridal portraits by themselves. The couples who preferred self-driving travel and self-shot bridal photographs on their trip, generally play a major role in the tourism

transformation process, and thoroughly enjoy physically involving, actively participating, and intellectually seeking experiential opportunities - they expected to experience a different and unusual honeymoon with unique bridal photo-shooting opportunities, and wanted to create a series of unforgettable memories on their 'DIY' trips. They are thus considered to be the 'creative tourists' (Gretzel & Jamal, 2009), who always want a hand in building their own experiences, and participate actively in the process of tourism and visual consumption - all these make their experiences of 'travel with a wedding dress' more personal, individualised, distinctive, and diversified.

Additionally, since the epistemic curiosity is part of human nature, these creative honeymooners' bridal photography activities embody a perfect combination of hedonism and value creation. These couples also tend to seek a higher level spiritual experience, emotional feelings, and psychological satisfaction, and have higher demands for aesthetics, authenticity, and distinctive experiences in touristic activities (Uriely, 2005; Zhu, 2012). Their lifestyle is more about the desires for the active and unique, aesthetic and authentic, meaningful and innovative experiences, which make up the fundamental elements in the travel narratives of their experiences. Although the quality of their 'DIY' bridal portrait-shooting may not necessarily compare to that of professional photography studios, the experience would have brought spiritual pleasure to them, creating more unique memories and profound feelings throughout the process.

5.3.2 Capturing fun and happiness

"Capturing fun and happiness" describes the key element of bridal photography tourism, for instance, the couples aimed at achieving fun and happiness in the process of gaining the peak experience and taking the best bridal portraits of their travel, that fun and happiness had become the essential ingredient, and had been captured in their bridal photographs. Through the different ways of combining travel with bridal photo-shooting,

these couples enjoyed resting and releasing pressure (decompressing), and at the same time, enjoyed the emotional experiences it brought to them, such as fulfilling their bridal photography fantasies and daydreams (Wang, 2002). Shooting bridal photographs, sightseeing, and shopping on the trip are considered to be typical leisure activities for these couples - these activities form the basic patterns of leisurely experiences of pleasure, amusement, and hedonism.

For these couples, the process of bridal portrait-shooting is also the process of capturing happiness, while seeking entertainment and incorporating a lively expression with elements of fun and happiness in their portraits. Bridal photo-shooting sessions being separated from the stressful wedding day, radically changes the genre of bridal pictures, which is now considered an 'enjoyable experience' rather than a necessity on the 'wedding to-do list'. Huang (2010) compares the process of bridal photography to a deposit box for the happiness and joy of a new marriage; a symbol of marriage and happiness. On their bridal photography tour, the couples involved in the study were more relaxed and concentrate on being the subjects of their photos in order to capture the happy moments, and exude facial expressions with interesting emotional messages, to create better bridal portraits on their journey. Additionally, these trips also helped the couples reduce their pressure and anxiety caused by wedding preparations. The experience of self-driving travel and self-shot bridal portraits is considered to be a creative course of tourism by many travellers - a self-narrated experience full of fun and joy, where their memorable moments are captured and framed in their bridal portraits.

5.3.3 Recording and reminiscing romance

For the couples involved in this study, the bridal photography tourism was not only a honeymoon trip but also a romantic adventure for shooting their bridal portraits. Romance was an essential element for these honeymooners' bridal photography

experiences, and their bridal portraits were always shot with various romantic themes, for instance, the cherry blossom-theme, the maze garden-theme, the church-theme and the snow mountain-theme used in these couples' bridal photo-shooting. In their photos, the brides are modelled in a dazzling assortment of western-style white wedding dresses and ball gowns or imperial Chinese robes, and the grooms usually wear suits or tuxedos to match the bride, these bridal photographs aim to glorify romantic love, and frame the bride's feminine beauty (Adrian, 2003; Leshkovich, 2004). Without parents, siblings, relatives, or friends in the photographs, the bridal portraits are truly only about the bride and groom, and rarely include images of others.

With photos taken by themselves or by professional photographic studios in stunning locations on the trip, these bridal albums featured brides made up so elaborately that they were hardly recognisable to the point of 'flawlessness' - it seemed that the themes of these bridal pictures have taken a page from the romantic aesthetics used in international fashion or advertising. In addition to documenting the romantic love, these highly-stylized romantic bridal photographs also in some way compensates the bride for her 'loss of status' upon marriage (Adrian, 2003): Several female writers mentioned on their blogs or forum posts that their bridal photography journeys were especially planned for them by their grooms; it would appear that these bridal photo-shooting experiences are the groom's sacrifice to the bride for romance and love (Adrian, 2004), as only a man in love would spend money to fulfill a woman's fantasy to be a celebrity or a fashion model in their pictures on the trip.

5.3.4 Exotic dreams and being there

Huang (2010) explains that 'exotic dreams' in bridal photography refers to the use of western architectural backgrounds such as an exotic scene, churches, or buildings, to evoke an exotic feeling in their portraits. In recent years, an increasing number of

Chinese couples can realistically afford to travel extensively, and they prefer to visit the actual destinations abroad for the shooting of bridal photos, so as to add exotic elements into their portraits. Churches with western architecture, and unique natural and cultural landscapes are common backgrounds that evoke an exotic feeling in the bridal photography for these couples. Almost all couples commented on the nature and culture of their choice of destination, with many stating that they had wanted to be immersed in another place and culture, or to experience something completely different from their normal life. For the Chinese couples who travelled to Australia and New Zealand for their honeymoon and bridal photo-shooting, their travel was aimed at the pursuit of exotic dreams and self-fulfilment, which illustrated the deep level of tourist experiences such that it gave them the sense of 'being there'.

5.3.4.1 Authenticity of being there

The tourism experience of being in an exotic place, embodies the experience of escapism and authenticity (Wang, 1999) - an authentic experience of bridal photography tourism means that couples actually visit a foreign place for bridal photo-shooting, and feel like they are in touch with both the real world and with their real selves. According to Quan and Wang (2004), individuals have a burning desire for a break from the routine of normal life, to pursue change, novelty or non-routine adventure; their travel is all about the experience of their true self. These Chinese couples travelling to Australia and New Zealand for bridal photographs desired the truly authentic experience of being in an exotic destination - they preferred to actually 'be there' rather than use "fake" painted exotic themes as backgrounds for their bridal portraits.

The study revealed that several Chinese couples related to being 'film-induced' tourists, who were inspired by the 'Middle-earth' movies which were filmed in New Zealand (Sellgren, 2010), to the stage that they actually preferred to personally visit New

Zealand and use the natural sceneries as backdrops for their bridal portraits. Their aesthetic, joyful, and emotional feelings in the peak experience also resulted from the empathy of actually visiting and photographing there, and reconstructing the scenes of the movies; this "real" experience is vastly different from the bridal photo-shooting set against the fake scenery settings inside a photography studio. For the couples who preferred the self-driving tour and self-shot bridal portraits, they gave up the visual consumption served by photography studios, and chose to shoot bridal portraits by themselves, thus creating unique memories of their 'DIY' travelling routes. Their bridal photo-shooting excluded any involvement of professional studio photographers, and their experiences thus became more authentic and about the "real" places and their 'true' self.

5.3.5 Nature and naturalism

In bridal photography tourism, the bridal portraits using nature as a background, was actually a departure from the original 'naturalistic' idea, as the Chinese couples do not actually engage with the surrounding natural environment - it would appear as if they did not belong there with those clothes in nature. Huang (2010) argued that although bridal pictures with nature backgrounds do not look realistic or logically sound, couples preferred to create romantic and beautiful images rather than convey the truth about nature, as the final goal was to create beautiful pictures far removed from routine working life, and the natural scene suited this preference well. The Chinese couples who travelled to natural scenery-based destinations for their bridal photography, also enjoyed sightseeing the natural landscapes, and loved their bridal portraits with nature as the background, because these pictures recorded their trips of 'being there', and represented their experiences of nature aesthetics and emotional empathy. Besides, many of these travelling couples were amateur photographers, so one of main purposes of their travel would have been to capture the natural beauty of Australia and New Zealand with their

own cameras. Since these couples were all natural scenery lovers, their esthetical perceptions and visualisations were established upon seeing, listening, smelling, tasting, and photographing the natural beauty at their chosen destination.

5.4 The similarities and differences between two destinations

This section describes the similarities and differences between the destinations Australia and New Zealand, through analysing the couples' experiences of bridal photography tourism.

5.4.1 Similarities

The Chinese tourist couples' bridal photography travel experiences in Australia and New Zealand had some similarities - in both destinations, the bridal portraits were taken in two ways - either by the professional photographers from local studios, or by themselves. Bridal photography travel was a combination of both location bridal photography and honeymoon for the couples, with the purpose of sightseeing, leisure travelling, and shooting bridal portraits together. Both in Australia and New Zealand, there were some couples who chose to do self-driving tours and independent travel through the country. All the couples travelled to shoot bridal portraits in different seasons, showing no distinct seasonal preference. It also seemed that all those Chinese couples were natural scenery lovers, and some were even amateur photographers with their own equipment. Furthermore, the main factors or elements in their bridal photography travel in Australia and New Zealand were similar, which included capturing fun, happiness, romance, exotic feelings, and nature.

5.4.2 Differences

Several distinct differences were also identified between these couples' travel experiences in these two destinations. Firstly, more couples were involving professional

photography studios in their bridal portraits in New Zealand compared to Australia; conversely, more couples chose to do self-driving travel and self-shooting bridal photos in Australia. When shooting bridal portraits, more couples in New Zealand used natural sceneries as backgrounds for their photos, whereas, several couples in Australia used both urban landscapes and natural scenes as backgrounds, (for example, the city views of Melbourne and Sydney). Most of the couples who visited Australia chose the self-driving routes to South Australia, and only one couple visited Western Australia, whereas every couple that travelled to New Zealand had travelled both to the North Island and South Island for shooting bridal portraits - some even travelled with their photographers, while others chose to take the self-driving tour through the South Island.

The motivations and reasons for travelling to these two destinations were different and varied, for example, a few couples visiting Australia for bridal portraits were highly motivated by flight ticket promotions, whereas most couples travelling to New Zealand had been deeply influenced by 'The Lord of the Rings' and the 'Hobbit' movies, as well as the Chinese movie star, Yao Chen's destination wedding in Queenstown. Additionally, most of the couples flew to either Australia or New Zealand from mainland China, with only two couples travelling through both countries together, and only one couple travelled to New Zealand from Australia to shoot their snow mountain-themed bridal portraits.

5.5 Bridal portraits and the bridal gaze

5.5.1 The role of bridal portraits

Based on these couples' experiences of bridal photography tourism, bridal photo-shooting and honeymoon appeared to be the two main purposes of their trip abroad. Bridal portraits play a major role in their travel experiences, which was reflected and illustrated on their blogs and forum posts online. As the main subject and purpose on

their trip, these couples usually spent a day or two on photographing the bridal portraits, and then the rest of their time on sightseeing and enjoying their honeymoon. This combined tour was considered to be creative, full of fun, and enjoyable for these Chinese couples, and each couple in the study had posted a number of bridal portraits online, and described their photography journeys in detail on their blogs and forum posts.

5.5.2 Framing the bride's beauty

On the basis of the formula of bridal photography by Huang (2010), the bridal photography tourism for these Chinese couples who travel with a wedding dress, can be described in a new formula:

Bride + groom + wedding dress + bridal portraits + honeymoon travel = Bridal photography tourism.

However, the elements in this formula do not cover all the essential factors and key meanings of these Chinese couples' experiences of bridal photography tourism, such as 'capturing fun and happiness', 'recording and reminiscing romance', 'exotic dreams and being there', 'nature and naturalism', and 'leisure and adventure'. For these Chinese couples at least, the focus on framing the bride's beauty is still regarded as the foremost element and the primary goal of bridal photography tourism.

The bride is considered to be the core of this formula, and the main function and purpose of bridal photography is to frame and visually record the bride's beauty. In bridal photography, the bride portrait should convey the bride as a celebrity or a romantic heroine (Adrian, 2003), affirming that the bridal photograph represents a celebration of the bride's beauty. Consumption in contemporary bridal photography is based on self-image realisation and the collectively shared culture of the bride (Lin et al.,

2012). As bridal photography tourism is a once-in-a-life-time experience for the couples, every bride became the focus of bridal photo-shooting, and was treated like a movie star or a fashion model in the photographing process. Through examining the bridal portraits of these Chinese couples, it was seen that the bride's image was more beautiful than the bride herself, and was virtually unrecognizable through the manipulations of stylists and the post-production by the photographers. Beautiful bridal photography, as a visual aesthetic consumption for the bride, enables the bride to fulfill her dream and become anyone she aspires to be.

5.5.3 The bridal gaze

The concept of 'the bridal gaze' has emerged from the corresponding themes through the thematic analysis of the blogs and forum posts for Australia and New Zealand. In light of the findings from this research, the bridal gaze refers to three meanings or layers: Firstly, the bridal photographs were bride-centred, aiming at framing and recording the bride's beauty, which has been discussed in the previous section; Secondly, the bridal photography travel experiences were mainly seen by the brides from the gender (i.e. female) perspective - of the 20 examined blogs and online forums, 15 were written by the brides, and only five were written by the grooms. The female bloggers and forum users generally elaborated on more details of their travel experiences from a woman's perspective. Thirdly, the bridal photographs shared online would be perceived by an even wider audience and viewers on the internet - viewers who are mainly female.

In the concept of the bridal gaze (in the case of bridal photos), the couples are regarded as the hosts or performers, and their friends, relatives, and other audience are identified as the viewers - this process is analogous to the tourist gaze (Chan & Xu, 2007). The bridal photographs are shown on blogs and forum posts online, which make them public information that can be read freely on the internet - this means that the bridal portraits

may be seen, or "gazed" at, not only by their family members, friends and relatives, but also by the even wider audience including unknown and unconnected individuals on the internet. In this sense, the information from online reviews and comments also becomes an integrated component of the bridal gaze.

Bridal portraits have also gradually changed family portrayal from collectivism to individualism, enabling couples to create the romantic concept of their ideal self through photographic techniques. In these couples' experiences of bridal photography tourism, the gaze of the bridal images showed the attributes of storytelling and diversity of the bridal portraits shot by these Chinese couples, and embodied the creative and individualised development of bridal photography and honeymoon in China.

5.5.3.1 Women empowerment through bridal photography tourism

The concept of the 'bridal gaze' is assumed to be exclusively for women, and is associated to the empowerment of women through bridal photography tourism. Bridal photography tourism transforms the couple's affection into memorable tourism experiences (Tung & Ritchie, 2011), and focuses on the 'performance' of bride, who is expected to dress up in costumes 'in character', with the desired beautiful and youthful look. In many bridal portraits of the Chinese couples, the bride was dressed in wedding gowns or a variety of exquisite clothing, posing in numerous settings, whereas the groom may wear casual clothes so as not to upstage the bride - this again emphasises the leading role and focus of bridal photography on the bride rather than the groom. This phenomenon has been closely linked to unequal gender stereotyping and social expectations (Lin et al., 2012); This is also further reflected in the process of shooting these couples' bridal photographs as for the couples who took bridal portraits by themselves on the road, the groom was always the photographer and driver for the bride, but did not appear in every bridal portrait.

Taking bridal photographs abroad has become a new ritual for some of these Chinese couples, not only replacing the traditional Chinese wedding, but also showing the contemporary Chinese woman's rite of passage to being a married woman. The consumption of bridal photography is one way that brides and grooms seek to express status distinctions and construct identities (Adrian, 2006; Lin et al., 2012). Based on Chinese traditional values, women should be a passive participant in a marriage - in ancient China, the brides were always required to bow their head with the red veil and not gaze directly at the audience on the wedding day, however, contemporary women today take a leading role in bridal photography and bridal photography tourism, signalling their independence in playing the bride role.

The goal of bridal photography is to create a fantasy with symbols which liberate the couple from the responsibility of the "married life" in reality, but the female-leading role and the focus of the bride is actually unrealistic and contrary to reality, as marriages in China usually are male-led. However, a bridal portrait illustrates the youth and beauty that a wife that has given to her husband and his family, and represents the last time that the bride gets to 'shine' as an attractive lady before she is subsumed into her husband's paternal family line (Adrian, 2003). Furthermore, based on the accounts of the 20 couples, it appeared that the wives were more influential in the consumption decisions of the bridal photography tourism experience, which ultimately reflects on the independence and confidence of the visual and travel consumption of contemporary young women, who are no longer willing to be restricted to a "traditional marriage" lifestyle.

The wedding costume is a product with distinct female attributes and aesthetics (Lin et al., 2012), and the visual consumption of costuming is more influenced and decided by

women, which reflects the self-realisation in their daily life. In the process of shooting bridal photos, as the brides are dressed up and made-up, they are treated like stars or celebrities, and this helps a woman to construct her self-image, increase her confidence, and make her more feminine, more outgoing, and ultimately more attractive - these are all influential in constructing gender relationships and interactions.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented a discussion on the experiences of these Chinese couples' bridal photography tourism in Australia and New Zealand, outlining different elements that encompass their experiences. The main themes presented in the findings chapter (Chapter Four) have been argued against relevant literature, demonstrating how current knowledge is linked to the findings in this research, including the findings of the main elements of bridal photography tourism, such as capturing fun and happiness, recoding and reminiscing romance, exotic dreams and being there, and nature and naturalism. Bridal photography tourism experiences expressed by the bloggers and forum users, are related to the deeper concepts of framing the bride's beauty and the 'bridal gaze'. This chapter also discussed the similarities and differences of these couples' experiences between the two destinations - Australia and New Zealand. The next chapter concludes the research by stating the implications of this research and potential future study.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

6.1 Concluding remarks

The purpose of this research is to gain an understanding of the experiences of Chinese couples who travel to Australia and New Zealand for bridal photographs, the objectives addressed in this study to achieve this research aim are: to understand the motivations for Chinese tourist couples to ‘travel with a wedding dress’ to Australia and New Zealand for bridal photographs; to identify similarities and differences between the couples’ experiences in Australia and New Zealand; and to explore the meanings of bridal photography in these Chinese couples’ experiences. In order to achieve this research aim, an insight into the narratives and experiences of Chinese couples travelling to Australia and New Zealand was gained through the examination of their blogs and online forum posts.

Qualitative analysis methods were used to examine these blogs and forum posts, and the process of thematic analysis of the textual data revealed several main themes and concepts for both of the two destinations, including motivations for bridal photography tourism, the methods of shooting bridal photographs, and the key elements and meanings of experiences, such as capturing fun and happiness, recording and reminiscing romance, exotic dreams and being there, and nature and naturalism. Ultimately, two main concepts, the framing the bride's beauty and the bridal gaze, emerged from the thematic analysis of these couples travelling experiences. This study also examined the similarities and differences of these couples' experiences between the two destinations (Australia and New Zealand). The overall understanding gained from the Chinese couples' experiences of bridal photography tourism is underlined by the love, happiness, and romance factors, signifying the beginning of a married life, and also relates to the creative and individualised development of bridal photography and the honeymoon in contemporary China.

It was identified in this study that bridal photography tourism was a combined trip for the couples' honeymoon and bridal photo-shooting, and involved the visual and travel consumption of aesthetics, fantasy, happiness, and romance. Bridal photography tourism in Australia and New Zealand is a unique practice of creative tourism, capturing fun and happiness, romance and love, and for pursuing the dream of being in a foreign (sometimes exotic) destination, which contributes to the process of making an exotic dream come true. As a symbol of a happy marriage and a creative art form using beautiful sceneries as backgrounds, bridal photography instantly freezes time, capturing the moments of fun, happiness, and romance for the couples, and turning them into visual evidence and a faithful representation of their love and marriage.

The Chinese couples' authentic experiences of "being there" provided them an opportunity to shoot bridal portraits in front of the real landscapes, instead of the fake staged or painted scenes in a studio - this evokes more enjoyable and memorable true feelings between the couples. Also, the Chinese couples who travelled with a wedding dress were identified as creative tourists, and bridal photography tourism is recognised as a creative and exuberant event for these couples - their creative consciousness is stimulated in the process of visual and travel consumption. Their demands for authentic, experiential, diversified, and individualised experiences are increasingly emphasised, and they always seek to introduce fresh elements into the process of their bridal photo-shooting.

Bridal photography tourism also features a female-lead model, and framing the bride's beauty becomes the primary goal of their travel, a concept which is closely related to the current gender roles in contemporary China. Bridal photography tourism witnesses the romance and happiness of the couples' travel experiences, and also provides the freedom

and the opportunity for the bride to fulfill her dream of becoming a beautiful bride dressed up like a movie star or a fashion model. The experiences of bridal photography travel serve as a once-in-a-lifetime memory of the bride's youthful beauty, and her final shining moments as an unmarried woman.

In the process of shooting the bridal photos, romance and love temporarily subverts traditional gender status hierarchies - women are no longer the passive roles or simply the visual products in a marital relationship. Bridal photography tourism becomes a customised trip specifically designed for the bride by the groom, and the groom serves as a foil to the bride's beauty. Bridal photography gives brides a licence to do what they dream or aspire to do, for the sake of being and becoming themselves. Bridal gazing refers to the act of looking at brides and bridal portraits that deal with the voice of brides and how an audience views the brides' presentation. The concept of the bridal gaze portrays the female-leading role and the sole focus of the bride in bridal photography (and bridal photography tourism), which presents women both as the watchers and the watched in the 'gaze'. This also demonstrates the empowerment of women, the female consciousness, and the transformation of women's social status and identities, which are all related to the deeper meaning and underlying impact of globalisation and western culture on the modern Chinese society.

6.2 Implications and recommendations

As a new form of tourism activity, bridal photography tourism is considered to be a type of special interest tourism (SIT) or 'thematic tourism' in some researchers' papers (Lai, 2012). Bridal photography started as a unique custom in Taiwan and mainland China, which has fostered the prosperity of the bridal photography industry, making it a world-leading cultural and creativity industry in the past few decades. When bridal photography is combined with tourism, an emerging form of personalised tourism

enables the travelling couples to experience the bridal photo-shooting, romantic honeymoon, and to enjoy leisure activities, all at the same time on the same trip. This research examines and explores the Chinese couples' bridal photography tourism experiences in Australia and New Zealand, and holds positive significance for photographic studios, travel agencies and even the destination tourism market, helping them to gain a better understanding of this type of travellers' tourism behaviour and their demand of individualised services. From the marketing/management perspective, these tourists are regarded as consumers, and their marketing significance is based on their consumption. The findings reveal the influences of promotional activities through examining their travel motivations and behaviours, for example, the flight ticket promotions were identified to be motivating factors for Chinese couples travelling to Australia and New Zealand; and the image of New Zealand, as a romantic destination, has been positively enhanced by a celebrity, such as the Chinese star Yao Chen who was known to have had a destination wedding in Queenstown.

For the couples using the services of professional photographic studios in their bridal photo-shooting in Australia and New Zealand, the findings from this research reveals that an abundance of natural sceneries (to use as backgrounds), convenient transportation, high quality wedding dresses, and professional services (offering all the key elements of bridal photography experiences such as capturing fun, happiness, and romance), make up the critical success factors behind bridal photography tourism. For the couples who participated in the self-driving tours and the self-shooting their bridal photos, their experiences of 'travel with a wedding dress' were identified to be more personal, distinctive, and diversified, indicating that these tourists have very particular demands of unique bridal photograph-shooting requirements, to create a series of personalised memories in their once-in-a-lifetime experiences.

6.3 Recommendations for future research

Bridal photography tourism is a new form of tourism, and as an emerging cultural and creativity industry in Taiwan and mainland China, has attracted more attention to the aesthetics, marketing promotions, and photography and tourism management, however there has been insufficient relevant studies in mainland China. This study only used Australia and New Zealand as research subjects, and research into bridal photography tourism experiences can also be applied to other popular bridal photography destinations, such as European countries, island destinations and southeast Asian countries. As stated in the limitations section, it is recommended that future studies possibly focus on the motivations of Chinese couples travelling for bridal photographs by using other research methods such as a quantitative analysis approach, and also to explore the honeymoon attribute as well in future studies for bridal photography tourism.

This study emphasises on exploring the tourist understandings and experiences of bridal photography tourism, and discusses the concepts of framing the bride's beauty and the 'bridal gaze'. It is also recommended that future research can focus on an in-depth and further the study of concepts such as the 'bridal gaze', the globalisation and localisation of bridal photography, and the empowerment of women through bridal photography tourism.

Additionally, a qualitative method of internet research on blogs and online forum posts was used in this dissertation; although traditional research methods are necessary, internet research methods are also needed in order to adapt to the changing circumstances, since an increasing number of individuals especially travellers are choosing to express themselves on the internet. Overall, in order to gain a better understanding of the bridal photography tourism, the proposed recommendations above are strongly encouraged for future research in this area.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Table 9: URLs of five blogs and five online forum posts - Australia

| | | Online name | Online ID | Year | URLs of blogs and online forum posts |
|--------------------|----|--------------------|------------------|-------------|---|
| Blogs | 1 | Eric | EPL | 2011 | http://providenteric.blog.163.com/blog/statistic/481247201129101159271/ |
| | 2 | Mochuan | Mochuan | 2014 | http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_6f38b0400102uzzd.html |
| | 3 | Nizi | Nizi | 2012 | http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_54c68a970100x14w.html |
| | 4 | Tianxin | Tianxin | 2015 | http://you.ctrip.com/travels/melbourne312/2394969.html |
| | 5 | Xiaoxi | HXYL | 2013 | http://www.mafengwo.cn/i/2896945.html |
| Online forum posts | 6 | Chris | Chris_rogger | 2013 | http://bbs.qyer.com/thread-759033-1.html |
| | 7 | Jolin | JolinGuan | 2014 | http://bbs.qyer.com/thread-1007990-1.html |
| | 8 | Rain | rainrain | 2015 | http://www.aoxintong.com/thread-33480-1-1.html |
| | 9 | Xbt | XBTD XFE | 2014 | http://bbs.qyer.com/thread-919212-1.html |
| | 10 | Yexiaonuo | kobeiori | 2014 | http://club.autohome.com.cn/bbs/thread-o-200042-36867580-1.html |

Appendix 2

Table 10: URLs of five blogs and five online forum posts - New Zealand

| | | Online name | Online ID | Year | URLs of blogs and online forum posts |
|--------------------|----|--------------------|------------------|-------------|---|
| Blogs | 1 | Angel | Angel | 2015 | http://coupine650520.pixnet.net/blog/post/252048928 |
| | 2 | Bdbg | BDBG | 2014 | http://www.dgtle.com/article-7330-1.html |
| | 3 | Fcbar | FCBar | 2012 | http://trips.tuniu.com/t1380295 |
| | 4 | Yinyin | Yinyin | 2014 | http://www.mafengwo.cn/i/3044931.html |
| | 5 | Yongshi | Yongshi | 2010 | http://maiyoungshi.blog.163.com/blog/static/1232647042010730103531100/ |
| Online forum posts | 6 | Connie | Connie | 2012 | http://www.babytree.com/community/club201104/topic_3345723.html?b=1 |
| | 7 | Huangtai | MAIZ | 2015 | http://bbs.qyer.com/thread-1073545-1.html |
| | 8 | Qdx | QDDD | 2012 | http://bbs.qyer.com/thread-754554-1.html |
| | 9 | Winnie | Mihuat | 2014 | http://bbs.qyer.com/thread-919973-1.html |
| | 10 | Yuner | Yunerp | 2014 | http://www.19lou.com/forum-291-thread-11201355049132846-1-1.html |