

# **Authenticity of Ethnic Tourism: Ethnic Villages in Sichuan**

**Wentian Hu**

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## **Abstract**

Ethnic tourism provides ethnic minority residents with an opportunity to display their culture, customs and heritage, but has also caused a series of controversies. The concept of authenticity has been a focus of discussion by tourism researchers. Tourists pursue the pleasure of tourism on the basis of authenticity in ethnic tourism, and hope that what they feel in an ethnic tourism destination is the existence of real culture. However, in the actual development of national tourism, excessive commercialisation will affect the authenticity of tourism. Therefore, only by thinking about “authenticity” can ethnic tourism developers find a balance between commercialisation and the protection of national culture.

Taking minority villages in Sichuan as an example, this dissertation explores the development and protection of ethnic tourism based on authenticity. Firstly, this dissertation summarises the current situation of authenticity studies of ethnic tourism, and then explains the related concepts and theories. Based on the summary and related theories, this dissertation takes Jiuzhaigou Tibetan Village and Taoping Qiang Village as examples in an analysis and exploration of the authenticity of ethnic cultural tourists’ experience.

In the study of authenticity of national culture, this dissertation interprets the authenticity of national culture of minority villages in Sichuan in three aspects: material culture, behavioural culture and spiritual culture. In the study of the authenticity of the tourist experience, based on secondary data, the authenticity of the experience and the satisfaction of tourists are analysed, and the influence of different ethnic cultures on the tourist experience is discussed. The significance of authenticity to the protection of ethnic cultures and tourism development is confirmed.

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## **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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## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

Today, with the rapid development of the tourism market, ethnic tourism is increasingly favoured by more and more tourists. Ethnic regions have joined the ranks of tourism development, and ethnic tourism has become a new concept in the tourism field.

Ethnic minority villages are the main places where ethnic groups live and work. They are the concentrated embodiment of their wisdom in their survival and aesthetic psychology. They are also the vital organisms that inherit culture and play a social role in the internal interactions of ethnic minorities. The customs, architectural features and livelihood patterns can reflect the local cultural characteristics and socio-economic development characteristics of the ethnic minorities in a particular region, and can reflect the historical and regional characteristics of ethnic minority settlements. Therefore, the villages of minority peoples are the places that can preserve ethnic culture in a region, and also serve as an important resource for speeding up the development of ethnic areas.

Ethnic tourism has now become an important tourism market segment. However, the development of ethnic tourism has also brought a series of prominent problems, such as: With the development of national tourism, will national culture be destroyed? Can tourism enhance the authenticity of national culture? How can minority groups benefit most from ethnic tourism?

By introducing tourism as a theory, this dissertation studies aspects of ethnic tourism destination and tourist experience, and analyses what factors affect the authenticity of the tourism experience, so as to explore coordinated progress in ethnic cultural protection and tourism development. The aim of this dissertation is to analyse the factors that affect the authentic experience of tourists in minority villages in Sichuan through secondary data. Meanwhile, through the investigation and analysis of the authenticity of minority villages in Sichuan, this research seeks a balance between tourism development and cultural protection in Sichuan, so that commercialisation does



not endanger the sustainable development of culture and has a positive impact on the life cycle of ethnic tourism.

The research investigates Tibetan village in Jiuzhaigou and Taoping Qiang village in Lixian. This dissertation compares tourists' understanding of ethnic tourism and the authenticity of tourism in the two villages.

### **1.1 Ethnic Minority Villages Surveyed**

The dissertation investigates the following two minority villages: Jiuzhaigou Tibetan Village and Taoping Qiang Village in Lixian County. The reasons for choosing these two villages are: (1) The geographical location of the two ethnic minority cultural tourist attractions is different. Both Jiuzhaigou and Taoping Qiang Village are located in Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, but Jiuzhaigou is on the northern edge of Sichuan Province, adjacent to Gansu Province; Taoping is in the middle of Sichuan Province, only 158 kilometres from Chengdu. (2) There are differences in the perceived authenticity of the two ethnic villages: the natural scenery of Jiuzhaigou and Tibetan customs have a unique charm, but the “stage” and “commercialisation” of their national culture are relatively advanced; at present, Taoping Qiang Village has retained the authenticity of its national cultural tourism resources more completely, but many social problems brought about by tourism development have gradually emerged.

#### **1.1.1 Jiuzhaigou Tibetan Village**

Jiuzhaigou is located in Jiuzhaigou County, Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province. The inhabitants of this area are mainly Tibetans. Before Jiuzhaigou was officially opened to the outside world in 1984, Tibetans in this area lived a self-sufficient life of agriculture and animal husbandry, and this was one of the poorer areas in Sichuan. In 1992, Jiuzhaigou was listed on the World Natural Heritage List and attracted many Chinese and foreign tourists. The development of tourism has brought tremendous changes to Jiuzhaigou. Outside Jiuzhaigou there is a variety of “modern”-style hotels. Last year, an airport was built, which brought greater convenience to tourists and local people. Jiuzhaigou is named after nine Tibetan villages

in the valley: Shuzheng, Lotus Leaf, Guwa, Panaya, Heijiao, Zechawa, Pengbu, Jianpan and Panxin, among which Shuzhengzhai is the most prosperous. The main services provided by the village to tourists include selling Tibetan handicraft, Tibetan ornaments, local herbal medicine, etc. Although Jiuzhaigou has unique natural scenery and Tibetan customs, many tourists who have visited Jiuzhaigou have not noticed that there are Tibetan villages in the valley, let alone that Jiuzhaigou is named after nine Tibetan villages. After entering Jiuzhaigou, tourists mainly take sightseeing cars to enjoy the natural scenery. Singing and dancing performances are usually held in hotels outside scenic spots, and the performers are mostly Han people from other places. Most tourists think that the natural scenery of Jiuzhaigou is quite charming. However, some tourists think that the commercial atmosphere of Jiuzhaigou is too strong and its ecological environment is deteriorating (Li, 2005). At the same time, many tourists who have visited Jiuzhaigou do not know that it is in a Tibetan area. On average, Shuzhengzhai receives about 400 tourists a day (about 5% of the total number of tourists in Jiuzhaigou). They usually spend about 30 minutes visiting villages and buying souvenirs (Zhu, 2009).

### **1.1.2 Taoping Qiang Village**

Taoping Qiang village has a history of more than 2,000 years, being founded in 111 B.C. (China National Minority Committee, 1986). It is located in Taoping Township, Lixian County, Aba Prefecture, on the banks of the Zagunao River in the upper reaches of the Minjiang River. Its elevation is 1500 metres. The buildings in the village are built on the hills with distinct layers. Taoping Qiang village is 163 kilometres away from Chengdu and 41 kilometres away from the county seat. There are 98 families in the whole village. It is the most complete and primitive “living fossil” of Qiang village architectural culture and art in the world, and is known as “the mysterious oriental castle”. Taoping is a typical Qiang village. Taoping is a Chinese name and in Qiang language it is called “Cut Zi” (China State Council Information Office, 2000). According to the statistics of the Taoping Township Government in 2018, the total population is 2860.

Taoping Qiang village used to have more than 270 hectares of cultivated land and 170 hectares of tourism development (China National Minority Committee, 1986). In the past, it was a village dominated by agricultural production. The initial stage of tourism development was also the transition period of its production mode from traditional grain farming to economic forest planting. Although Taoping Qiang village has a large range of Tibetan and Qiang folklore experiences, its geographical location lacks natural scenery resources for sightseeing. According to Luo (2018), it is rich in national architecture and folk resources, and it is also being developed as a folk tourism village. Through the tourism propaganda of Taoping Qiang village, it can be seen that the tourism resources developed in Taoping include village settlement environment, Qiang folk houses, folk songs and dances, ethnic customs, ethnic family receptions, and ethnic handicraft. Almost all of the six links of food, housing, transportation, travel, shopping and entertainment in tourism development are involved (Luo, 2018).

In the first half of 2017, 35,500 tourists were received in Taoping Qiangzhai, with an admission revenue of 1.219 million yuan (Yang, 2017). Villagers' living standards have been greatly improved, but the development of tourism has made the Qiang culture change. Villagers' values have also changed significantly from those of earlier times. The commercialisation and staging of national culture are all potential threats to maintaining the authenticity of Qiang culture.

## **1.2 Research Significance**

### **1.2.1 Theoretical Significance of the Dissertation**

The theoretical significance of this dissertation is, firstly, that it can help in understanding the essence of tourism as an academic discipline. Through the study of the authenticity of tourism, the interpretation of tourism phenomena needs the support of a variety of disciplines and multi-disciplinary participation. Tourism science is bound to be interdisciplinary, and should be regarded as a multi-disciplinary synthesis, which

requires the integration of different theories, so as to promote the study of the whole tourism phenomenon and pursue a deeper understanding of the tourism field.

Secondly, this dissertation can promote the development of tourism and enrich the research into the authenticity of national culture. This study combines secondary data to explore the authenticity of national culture and further explain and deepen relevant theories.

### **1.2.2 Practical Significance of the Dissertation**

The practical significance of this dissertation is, firstly, in the study of the authenticity of ethnic tourism, which is of great significance to the inheritance and protection of ethnic culture. In the process of national tourism development, economic perspectives usually play a leading role, which leads to the alienation and commercialisation of national culture. Ethnic tourism undoubtedly provides an opportunity for the rapid economic development of ethnic areas. However, the excessive pursuit of economic interests for development, or even the emergence of a “cultural crisis”, can damage national culture. In the development of ethnic tourism, preserving authenticity is very important for future generations inheriting ethnic culture and is an important principle for the development of ethnic tourism.

Secondly, in-depth discussion of authenticity is an objective requirement of making improvements in the quality of tourists’ experience in ethnic tourism destinations. With the increasing demand of tourists for “deep tourism”, their desire for “authenticity” in their tourism becomes more and more apparent. Tourists’ perceptions of authenticity in the process of travelling is often proportional to their satisfaction. Improving the quality of tourists’ experiences in ethnic tourism destinations, and guiding them to enjoy tourism in relatively real ethnic cultures, is conducive to sustainable tourism development and benefits both economic and cultural outcomes.

### **1.3 Outline of the Dissertation**

This dissertation takes minority villages in Sichuan Province as a case study. Chapter One has introduced the research object – two Sichuan minority villages – and also introduced the purpose and significance of the dissertation. Chapter Two introduces three background aspects of the research object: material culture, behavioural culture and spiritual culture. Chapter Three is the literature review; this chapter studies the literature on cultural tourism and ethnic tourism, and summarises studies on the authenticity of ethnic tourism. Chapter Four is the research design; this chapter proposes the research paradigm and the research methods used in this dissertation. Chapter Five presents the findings and discussion based on secondary data. This chapter analyses tourists' perceptions of the three aspects of authenticity, namely material culture, behavioural culture and spiritual culture, and puts forward corresponding suggestions at the end of this chapter. Chapter Six is the conclusion of the dissertation.

## **Chapter 2. Background**

Ethnic tourism enables local residents to benefit directly from tourism, changes the local living conditions, reinterprets the culture of the nation, and can strengthen the people's national identity. For the local residents, the provider of the ethnic tourism experience, its service target is tourists. Therefore, in order to achieve their goals, it is necessary for them to clarify the attitudes and characteristics of tourists. This chapter studies and compares the tourism characteristics and experiences of domestic tourists when they visit Jiuzhaigou Tibetan Village and Taoping Qiang Village.

Mass tourism is the most popular form of tourism in Sichuan. In recent years, small-scale local tourism has become an important form of tourism, but its significance is far from being realised. Although most travel agencies mention ethnic minority tourism programmes in their guidebooks, only a few of them introduce ethnic minority cultural villages and provide information about ethnic minority cultural tourism (D. Lu, 2000). Because most tourists are in groups organised by travel agencies, tourism organisers do not regard the ethnic villages as an important activity. Most tourists get little information about minority cultures, and their visits to minority villages are entirely planned by tourism organisers. Tourists' contacts with local residents are short and superficial.

### **2.1 A Survey of the Cultural Tourism Resources of Sichuan Ethnic Minorities**

Sichuan is a large inland province in southwestern China. The province's terrain is high in the west and low in the east, with plateau in the northwest, mountains in the southwest and a basin in the east. The basin is surrounded by many mountains. Sichuan ethnic minorities mainly live in northwest Sichuan and southeast Sichuan, and include Yi, Tibet, Qiang, Naxi, Bai, Miao, Zhuang, Tujia, Lili, Buyi, Dai, Mongolian, Hui and Manchu peoples, and other 14 ethnic groups as showed in Figure 1 (X. Wang & Pan, 2016).

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Figure 1. *Population, transportation, ethnic minority regions, and hospital distribution in Sichuan Province*

Sichuan is the second largest Tibetan-inhabited area in China and the only Qiang inhabited area. Sichuan is rich in ethnic minority cultural tourism resources, including: rich regional characteristics of traditional festivals, celebrations, ethnic costumes, ethnic handicrafts, dwellings, beliefs, weddings, funerals, entertainment and religious taboos.

### **2.1.1 Material Culture**

#### **2.1.1.1 Traditional Architecture**

The traditional architecture of ethnic minorities is an indispensable part of the attraction of ethnic tourism providing an exotic flavour. In order to adapt to the climate and environment, traditional Tibetan dwellings generally adopt a stone structure which is the same as a fortress. Tibetan architecture is generally simple and harmonious in colour, basically using the original colour of the material, while the wooden parts are painted dark red. The architectural plane of the whole building is relatively concise. While religious buildings are generally magnificent and adorned with different colours, the exterior walls of Buddhist buildings are painted red with a kind of red clay called “Left” (while Sakya sect buildings are painted red, yellow and black).

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Figure 2. *Tibetan Architecture in Jiuzhaigou (Gong, 2012)*

The traditional architecture of Taoping Qiang Village has strong regional and national characteristics. Its traditional Qiang-style residential buildings and towers are the symbols of Taoping Qiang Village and are important tourist attractions and resources for tourism development. Traditional Qiang people’s houses are mostly two- or three-storey stone rectangular flat-roofed buildings with livestock pens on the bottom and living and storage rooms on the second and third floors. In the middle of the second-floor living room, there is a fire pond, which is the centre of family activities. It is built in a room with kitchen, dining room and living room. It is also regarded as a sacred place. The top

floor is “Zhaolou”, which is used to store and hang food. The roof is dedicated to white stone representing the gods.

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Figure 3. *Qiang-style Residential Buildings* (Xiong, 2017)

Before 2000, most of the newly built houses in Sichuan minority villages were built for the purpose of expanding the scale of reception activities (Wu, 2009), but they kept the same appearance and style, and the building materials were a mix of traditional and modern materials. However, since 2000, the expansion and reconstruction of the old village has been strictly prohibited by the government. There are no new houses which have been built in the old villages. Since then, the exterior of the houses in Sichuan minority villages has remained basically unchanged. However, in the process of tourism development, some villagers have changed the interior structure and function of the houses in order to obtain more benefits. A few residents only use local building materials for external repairs and the internal decoration of their houses. Both the inside and outside of these houses are in the traditional style. The rest of the residents still use local building materials for the external maintenance of their houses, but the interior decoration of the houses introduces a modern decorative style. With the increase in the amount of tourism income, furniture and furnishings in villagers’ houses have also changed. Although the house is still a wooden structure, and many families also worship shrines and retain fire ponds, they no longer have the meaning of the past, and are gradually fading out of the villagers’ home life. With the development of tourism, most villagers are now aware that their residential towers are great attractions for tourists, and they are opposed to the unauthorised changing of houses, believing that ancient buildings should not be destroyed for temporary benefits.

The traditional buildings in Sichuan minority villages should be divided into two types. Apart from the courtyards extended by residents in the 1980s and 1990s, the buildings in the old areas basically maintain their integrity and originality. Architecture in the old areas has a long history. The materials, techniques, residential functions, overall layout, architectural style and decoration of the buildings have been maintained. However,



compared with the old buildings, the residential buildings in the new areas are not so traditional. First of all, their history is not long enough. There is no difference between the building technology used in these areas and the modern construction technology of other places. The main function of the buildings is to provide convenience for tourism operations. The buildings maintain an external minority style, but the layout and decoration of the new districts have been completely modernised.

#### **2.1.1.2 National Handicrafts**

Handicraft artworks have been an indispensable part of Tibetan people's lives since ancient times. Clothing, headwear, belts, labour tools, housing decoration and so on are closely related to craft production. Beauty is the nature of the Tibetan people. In their minds, beauty is not only a spiritual need, but also a material symbol. In any part of Tibet, it is not difficult to find a beautifully decorated object. In recent years, driven by the boom of Jiuzhaigou tourism, the national handicraft products with national characteristics have come to be loved by more and more people (Li, 2005). When it comes to Tibet's national handicrafts, people naturally think of the golden top of the temple complex, the gold, silver, bronze and iron wares used in daily life, the high-grade and chic "pine-pa" boots, the cushions of Jiangzi, the Tibetan knives of Lazi, the jades of Renbu, and the wooden bowls and bamboo wares of Kuala Lung.

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Figure 4. *Tibetan Knife in Lazi* (Wang, 2018)

National handicrafts can also reflect an aspect of Qiang village culture, from which people can also extract the symbols of national culture. The national handicrafts of Taoping are also unique, and can reflect the traditional culture of Qiang. For example, the local villagers themselves make cup mats, insoles, and Qiang embroidery, which can reflect the traditional skills of the Qiang people, but handicraft production with national cultural value is not rich in variety at present. The efficiency of production is relatively low, the workmanship is not particularly exquisite, and some work even clearly shows the traces of machine embroidery (Wu, 2009).

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Figure 5. *Knitting and Embroidery Technology of Qiang Nationality (Xin,2017)*

According to Wu (2009), the local villagers do not hesitate to choose economic interests over cultural protection in the process of commercialisation in Sichuan minority villages' national handicraft products. In order to obtain greater economic benefits, they have little time to consider whether the handicraft products were real or not. This is mainly manifested in the fact that a large number of national handicrafts are purchased in Sichuan and a large number of modern tools are used in the production of handicrafts. As an additional product of national tourism, national handicraft can best embody the local national cultural characteristics and become a carrier of national culture. Nonetheless, false handicrafts cannot truly reflect the unique local culture, and make people doubt the cultural authenticity of the national tourism destination. The development of national handicraft is not conducive to the protection of minority culture and the development of tourism.

## **2.1.2 Behavioural Culture**

### **2.1.2.1 Ethnic Songs and Dances**

Jiuzhaigou has set up more than ten National Performing Arts groups, of which "Impression Plateau" and "Tibetan Mystery", are representative of two different styles, showing the national culture to tourists in the form of singing, dancing and the playing of instruments.

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Figure 6. *"Tibetan Mystery" Tourism Performance (Qin, 2014)*

Ancient Qiang ballads began in the *Book of Songs*, which is an anthology of ancient Chinese poetry. Qiang songs are rich in content, including carols, folk songs, love songs, wine songs, celebration songs, etiquette songs, seasonal songs, ritual songs, memorial songs, and historical legends. Singers are often editors, and lyrics are improvisational and random. "Hua Er Na Ji" has been an indispensable song performance item in recent years. Originally, "Hua Er Na Ji" was the collective singing of brides and girls in the village during the wedding of young men and women in the village. The brides and girls

in the village sang their blessings in the “Hua Er Na Ji” and answered questions from the men who received their relatives. This kind of song has a fixed tune, no fixed lyrics, with “Hua Er Na Ji” as the suffix, and the lyrics can be changed and added at will. In order to promote and publicise this participatory and ethnic singing form, in 2005 Taoping Qiang Village held the “Hua Er Na Ji” Western Qiang Love Song Competition Festival (Yang, 2009). Taking the form of “Hua Er Na Ji” folk songs to the stage not only shows the Qiang nationality’s national culture to tourists, but also allows villagers to examine their national culture from a new beginning.

Qiang dance originated from ancient Qiang dance. The most popular and distinctive dance of the Qiang people is “Guozhuang”, a form of singing and dancing around a campfire with ten or more people. The “Guozhuang” of the modern Qiang people still retains the ancient customs. Qiang dance includes self-entertainment dance, etiquette dance, gathering dance, sacrificial dance and so on. The sheepskin drum is the most famous instrument, and it is the most representative of male dance and song of the Qiang nationality. The sheepskin drum used to be a sacrificial dance instrument for Qiang priests. In the past, sheepskin drum dancing was a kind of dance after the priest completed the memorial ceremony. It could not be performed at any time or place. Now the sheepskin drum has lost its important religious significance; it has become a kind of singing and dancing performance to attract tourists, is specially performed for tourists in the peak season and has been rearranged by cultural departments and folk artists.

#### **2.1.2.2 Marriage and Family**

Marriage customs of ethnic minorities vary in form, and tourists are often shocked by the unique marriage customs. Once the marriage relationship between a man and a women of the Qiang nationality has been established and the engagement ceremony has been held, the girl to be married must choose a wasteland to cultivate and grow flax from the beginning of spring to the harvest, which must be accomplished by the girl’s hard work, otherwise she will be regarded as unfaithful and may be despised. The custom of divorce between Tibetan men and women is unique. When a couple agrees to divorce, they fix a date, tie the corners of their clothing together at the fork in the road,

and then cut them with scissors. Then they can be considered divorced after leaving each other.

Early marriage was prevalent in Sichuan minority villages before 1949. Marriage was basically within the scope of the village and surrounding villages. Since the 1950s, because of the implementation of the National Marriage Law and the general improvement of people's awareness, the habit of early marriage and intermarriage between close relatives has been broken (Xu, 1993). With the acceleration of population flow and the expansion of young people's contacts, the marriage circle has also expanded, breaking through the original limitations of geographic relationship. The view of marriage has also changed, from arranged marriage to free love and self-determined "emotional" marriage (Lu, 2000).

After the development of ethnic minority tourism, the opening of the social environment and the change of traditional economic activities led to some changes in the family relations of villagers. The first change is the gradual movement of family power. The rapid development of a commodity economy has impacted the villagers, especially young people, because the younger generations are active in their thinking, and their ability to accept fresh affairs is stronger than that of their parents. Young people play an increasingly important role in the decision-making of family affairs. Second, since the development of tourism, family disputes have increased, young people engaged in tourism economic activities have become mobile, family ties have gradually become alienated, and the generation gap has become more and more significant (Lu, 2000). Moreover, there have been many family disputes around the distribution of tourism income, land expropriation compensation and so on. In addition, changes in family relations have also weakened traditional family education (Xu, 1993).

### **2.1.2.3 National Costume**

Various national costumes are an important part of attracting tourists to appreciate Sichuan national customs. Tibetans are a people that can be easily distinguished by their appearance, because their external characteristics are very distinctive. For example,

women wear long-sleeved gowns in winter, sleeveless gowns in summer, and a coloured apron at the waist. The apron is a unique costume item of the Tibetan people and a necessary ornament for married Tibetan women. Tibetan hats and boots are also important features of Tibetan costumes which are difficult to confuse with the attire of other nationalities. Many Tibetan people will wear a refined Tibetan knife; this is mainly used for cutting food, but also for slaughtering sheep. The Tibetan knife has a long history and exquisite workmanship, and has become a kind of cultural icon.

**Image removed due to copyright**

Figure 7. *Tibetan Costumes* (Ren, 2017)

The traditional clothes worn by the Qiang people in the Qiang village are long gowns, belts with patterns tied at the waist, and blue headdresses wrapped around the head. The traditional women's clothes in Taoping Qiang Village are mainly composed of three colours: blue, navy blue and rose red. They are embroidered with patterns on the skirts, cuffs and edges of the clothes. Young women wear embroidered waistbands around their waists and embroidered shoes or cloth shoes on their feet. Married women tie their hair into side bun and wear black headscarves. Unmarried women are very particular about their headdress wrapping. They usually have to fold several layers before putting on various ornaments. The clothes of the elderly are thicker and warmer than those of the young and middle-aged, and the headdress is longer than that of the young.

**Image removed due to copyright**

Figure 8. *Qiang Costume* (Xinhua News Agency, 2014)

Villagers usually dress up for holidays and weddings. There has been no major change in garment manufacturing, but there have been some changes in material, length and embroidery technology. Before the development of tourism, in order to facilitate agricultural work, ethnic garments became shorter and shorter. After the development of tourism, ethnic garments become longer for the beauty of garments and for as better display of ethnic costume culture. From the perspective of embroidery technology, the patterns on the clothes are more exquisite and beautiful today. In the past, only one or two of the villagers' clothes had very exquisite embroidery, and the villagers would only

wear them on important national festivals. Now almost every one of the villagers' national clothes has embroidery, which has higher ornamental value. The material of clothing is also not like the rough linen in the past, becoming more comfortable and diverse.

#### **2.1.2.4 Festivals**

Rich ethnic festivals are one of the important ethnic tourism resources in Sichuan. The most common belief of the Tibetan people is Buddhism. Whether in leisure or entertainment, or in daily life, Tibetan people seem to be inseparable from their faith. A special pattern, a piece of jewelry, seems to have a special meaning. Therefore, many important Tibetan festivals are related to religious beliefs. The Tibetan New Year is the most important traditional festival for the Tibetan people. Tibetans usually take seven days off work at this time. In addition to wearing festival costumes to worship each other and pray in monasteries, the festival has wrestling, tug-of-war, dancing around fires, throwing spears are the highlights. April 15 is an especially important day as it is the day when Sakyamuni became a Buddha and the Princess of Wencheng arrived in Tibet. Tibetan people hold religious memorial activities to observe this day. In July, there is the "Wangguo Festival", when grain is about to mature. Tibetan people carry religious scriptures walking around the fields, hoping for a bumper harvest of grain.

Every year on the first day of October in the lunar calendar, the residents of Taoping Qiang Village hold the Qiang calendar year, also known as the "Niu Wang Hui". In addition to offering sacrifices to gods and ancestors at home and praying for a good food harvest and the safety of six animals, villagers also have performances, horse racing, singing and dancing activities.

Almost every minority group in Sichuan is good at dancing. Most villagers think that they fully express their national feelings during the festivals. The arrival of tourists does not necessarily affect their emotional expression. Instead of singing and dancing solely to attract tourists, they have more desire to express themselves and feel more confident about their own culture in the presence of an audience.

### **2.1.3 Spiritual Culture**

#### **2.1.3.1 Traditional Values**

In the past, people in Sichuan villages had simple folk customs, solidarity and mutual assistance, and a weak concept of commodities. The villagers' greatest wish was to have a good harvest of grain. People emphasise group strength based on family and village, attach importance to the development of equal and mutually beneficial relationships among people, and have a welcoming and friendly attitude towards "outsiders". According to Lu (2000), the first students to come to Taoping Qiang Village were students from Southwest Academy of Fine Arts, Leshan Teachers' College, in 1996. At that time, the villagers were very enthusiastic about outsiders.

After the development of tourism in Sichuan minority villages, the opening up of the social environment and the changes to traditional economic activities have led to changes in the relationship between villagers and tourists. With the development of tourism, the material living standards of villagers have been greatly improved. The new mode of production and economic resources have made them less dependent on just the land than in the past. At the same time, along with the changes in economic resources, villagers' market awareness and understanding of commodity economy concepts have been greatly enhanced. People hope to get more benefits in the process of tourism development. They are no longer satisfied with the basic life of eating, producing clothing and keeping warm. Market principles in economic behaviour cause competition among villagers. With the development of tourism, the competition among villagers has become more and more fierce. In a period of chaotic management, there are even phenomena of competing with each other in price. According to Lu (2000), when tourists arrive at the village entrance, many villagers take the initiative to ask tourists whether they need to eat and somewhere to stay, and then bring tourists to their own houses to provide them with accommodation and meals. Sometimes they will also charge extra. When the residents of their own homes are not able to receive guests, they will give their guests to other homes and receive a commission. As contradictions in

economic interests often occur, villagers have begun to mistrust and become jealous of each other. A few large-scale residential accommodation providers monopolise most of the visitors in these villages (Lu, 2000). Other villagers are in a weak position with regard to the competition, and the income gap among residents has increased. When Lu (2000) was investigating the “Lao Yang Home Inn” where he stayed, the hostess said to Lu,

*It's very common for me to compete for tourists. I usually go to the village to meet tourists in the morning, but my family has a small population and poor economy, so I can't compete with other big families. They all hire people to compete for tourists. (p. 25)*

Most villagers are dissatisfied with this situation. With the development of tourism, the relationship between villagers and tourists has changed from simple hospitality to economic interests. Tourism activities bring different strangers to Qiang Village. Villagers are accustomed to this kind of short-term contact between people. They pay more and more attention to economic interests rather than reciprocal relations.

More and more contacts with the “other” have led to great changes in the minds of the villagers in Taoping. Most of the local people believe that the middle-aged and elderly people, that is, those aged over 40, are still traditional, and that the ideological values of young people have completely changed at that time (Mo, Huang & Zhen, 1992). Traditional values and behavioural patterns have been deeply rooted in some elderly people. Because their way of thinking does not necessarily meet the needs of tourism management, they cannot participate much in tourism activities. However most young people do not want to stay in the village. The outside world is very attractive to them and they prefer to go out to work and study.

The values of residents have changed greatly under the impact of tourism development and foreign culture. In the face of these impacts, generally speaking, there are two main



points of view: most young people want to completely abandon traditional values, so their national identity becomes blurred; while some of the middle-aged and older people are less impacted by foreign culture, or are unwilling to be influenced by foreign culture, because they do not participate in tourism activities much. Holding on to their traditional values, some even promote the effectiveness of national culture, but these people are very few.

### **2.1.3.2 Religious Beliefs**

To outsiders, the religious beliefs of ethnic groups, such as Tibetan Shamanism and the Naxi Dongba religion, can be considered peculiar and mysterious. Many ethnic minorities have their own religions, including nature worship, ancestor worship, totem worship and so on. The Qiang, Yi, Tibetan and Naxi nationalities all have fire ponds in their houses, which the local people regard as the residence of the God of fire.

The Tibetan people live on a snowy plateau, Mountain Ali, which is the birthplace of Xiangxiang civilization. With an average altitude of more than 4500 metres, Ali is the highest inhabited place in the world, so it is often called “the roof of the world” and “the nearest place to the sun”. Its natural environment is very severe the sun may be shining for a while, but suddenly there will be a combination of rain and wind, snow and storm. On the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, the ancient ancestors’ living conditions were extremely difficult with the continuous mountains, the fast-running rivers, the steep and precipitous gullies, and the unpredictable weather. All of these made the ancient Tibetans feel fearful of mysterious nature. They felt the domination of nature meant that there is a supernatural power in control and so they create the images of gods, and constructed their primitive indigenous religion, that is, Ben religion. Before Buddhism was formally introduced, Ben religion was the spiritual focus of all tribes on the Tibetan Plateau. Benzenism is a polytheistic worship, a belief that all things have souls. Sun, moon, stars, mountains, rivers, cattle, sheep, animals, etc., are all objects of worship (Ramsay, 2016).

In the 7th century, King Songzan Ganbu of the Tubo Dynasty sent troops to destroy the Elephant Kingdom. Songzan Ganbu annexed and unified more than a dozen tribes and established a strong Tubo Dynasty. The Tubo civilization originally worshipped the native Ben religion, but as the power of Ben religion became stronger and stronger, the position and authority of the king was gradually threatened. Therefore, in order to meet the needs of political expansion and religious reform, Songzan Ganbu introduced Buddhism from a strategic point of view (Perdue, 2007). It was under such management and of such as design that Ben religion, once representing a unified plateau, quickly slipped to the margins of the power structure. In the middle of the 9th century, the last King of the Tubo Dynasty, Langdama, banned Buddhism, and Buddhists became the object of repression. In the following years, Buddhism absorbed many of the rituals of Ben religion and successfully achieved localisation, eventually becoming the mainstream religion on the Tibetan plateau, while Ben religion gradually declined. Now there are only a few temples of Ben religion remaining, one of which is Changdu Temple in Jiuzhaigou (Y. X. Wang & Prott, 2016).

Taoping Qiang Village is a transitional area between Han and Tibetan cultures. Therefore, Taoping's religious concepts are not only influenced by its own national witchcraft, but also by Han Taoism, Buddhism and Tibetan Lamaism. Qiang people's unique religious belief is primitive fetishism. They believe that all things are spiritual, having a mountain god, water god, road god, tree god, carpenter god, fire pond god and so on. They worship white stone, which represents the god of heaven in the minds of the Qiang people.

Since the 1990s, with the development of productive forces and the widespread popularisation of scientific knowledge, many ethnic minority villagers' traditional religious concepts have waned. Not only have large-scale collective sacrificial activities disappeared, but even the sacrificial rites at home are becoming simpler and simpler. In the process of the modernisation of ethnic villages, the weakening of traditional religious concepts is an inevitable trend, and the development of tourism has accelerated

its pace of change. According to Zhu (2009), young people seldom participate in religious activities, but for middle-aged and older people, religion still plays an important role in their lives. Although young people do think that religious activities are very important, they still decide to take both traditional and modern worldviews into account when receiving tourists. They hope to arrange the time to observe their beliefs before tourists arrive, which shows that traditional religious beliefs still have a certain position in their hearts and that young people do not want to completely abandon them (Wang & Prott, 2016).

From the external manifestations of religious beliefs and the internal needs of residents, it can be seen that the development of tourism has not significantly affected the religious beliefs of ethnic minorities. The manifestations of religious rituals have changed, but the feelings about traditional religious beliefs of residents have not completely disappeared, and the connotations of religious beliefs have been preserved to some extent.

## **Chapter 3. Literature Review**

### **3.1 Cultural Tourism and Ethnic Tourism**

#### **3.1.1 Culture and Tourism**

Anthropologists believe that culture is the symbolic product of human intelligence. It is created to adapt to the environment and meet human needs. It is also the tradition and lifestyle of human thought and behaviour acquired through learning (Smith, 2014). Culture and tradition, lifestyle, customs and social customs are synonymous. Culture can also be defined as human social heritage, including crafts, beliefs, religions, customs, languages, entertainment, architecture, government forms, business activities, workplaces and forms, education, science and technology (Keesing, 1963). Cultural elements are created by human beings and can be changed. Therefore, cultural change is absolute. Cultural vicissitude refers to the change of a nation's culture caused by the internal development of a nation's society or the contact between different nationalities (Yúdice, 2018). Acculturation is one of the important factors that cause cultural change. Acculturation refers to cultural changes caused by direct contact between members of two different societies. Acculturation can also be expressed as cultural contact (Smith, 2014). Since World War II, tourism has become an important form of cultural contact, which has had a great impact on the society and culture of minority peoples. Tourism anthropologists often regard the tourism phenomenon as the research object of development or cultural acculturation (Yúdice, 2018). Where traditional culture is well preserved, it is usually associated with remote and underdeveloped areas. These remote areas and the traditional culture of the people who live there have a strong attraction for tourists from developed areas.

#### **3.1.2 Cultural and Ethnic Tourism**

Cultural tourism can be defined in a broad sense and a narrow sense. The narrow sense of cultural tourism refers to the basic motivation of people's travel being cultural, such as: watching performing arts, festival travel, visiting memorials and folk events,

pilgrimages and so on. The broad definition of cultural tourism should include all tourist activities, because they meet the needs of tourists to pursue diversification, improve personal cultural accomplishment, increase knowledge and experience, and make friends. Cultural tourism in its narrow sense mainly consists of ethnic tourism, historical tourism, arts tourism and museum tourism (McKercher & Du Cros, 2003).

Ethnic tourism is a special form of cultural tourism which combines natural and cultural resources and exotic ethnic customs. Ethnic tourism is generally defined as first-hand experience in contact with the cultural practices of other peoples (especially indigenous cultures) (Moscardo & Pearce, 1986). This kind of ethnic tourism includes the display and performance of traditional and contemporary ethnic cultures by residents. Swain (1989) defined ethnic tourism as a form of tourism that attracts tourists based on the local lifestyle. Van den Berghe (1980) held that ethnic tourism refers to a form of tourism in which local residents take their own culture (including the local people themselves) as the main attraction and participate directly in activities. Ethnic tourism should be regarded as a group of closely related commodities, including the national atmosphere, hotels and other ethnic facilities, and handicrafts. All kinds of commodities must embody the identity and characteristics of the particular nation. In ethnic tourism, the local people do not simply provide services, they themselves are an integral part of the exotic landscape, which can be watched, photographed and recorded. The motivation for tourists who are interested in ethnic cultures to travel is: to find cultures different from the society of their origin and to observe the cultural expression and lifestyle of people from other countries; to experience the peculiar customs and habits of minority people in remote areas; and to seek untouched, primitive and exotic national sentiment. The interaction between local residents and tourists is considered to be the central part of the definition of ethnic tourism (Van den Berghe, 1992).

The main difference between ethnic tourism and cultural tourism is that ethnic tourism emphasises direct contact between tourists and local residents, and pays attention to communication with local residents. Cultural tourism is usually an indirect display of

culture, while ethnic tourism is a close contact between tourists and local residents, characterised by exotic national customs and habits. The unique culture and handicrafts of local ethnic groups are the main attractions of ethnic tourism.

From the perspective of tourism planning and management, traditional dances, music, drama, lifestyle, beliefs, customs, celebrations, costumes, and economic activities are all important attractions of cultural tourism. However, these traditional cultures are most difficult to show to tourists “authentically” without interfering with the lifestyle of local communities. There is a close relationship between ethnic tourism and disputes about authenticity. Therefore, for the study of tourism it is worthwhile to explore the authenticity of ethnic tourism.

### **3.2 A Summary of Studies on the Authenticity of Ethnic Tourism**

#### **3.2.1 Summary of Authenticity Research**

Modern scholars mainly study the concept of authenticity from the four perspectives of objectivism, constructivism, postmodernism and existentialism. The first three are concerned with the authenticity of the tourist object, and the latter one is concerned with the authentic travel experience of the toured subject. Although objectivism, constructivism, and postmodernism are all related to tourist objects, postmodernism negates the concept of “authenticity” and believes that simulation is more real than the original, and has reached a super-real perfect state (Poster & Murrain, 2002).

#### **3.2.2 Summary of Ethnic Tourism Research**

As a special form of tourism, ethnic tourism has become the focus of academic research. According to Ritchie and Zins (1978), ethnic tourism is the most common form of tourism in the Third World. Scholars have given different definitions of ethnic tourism, from which a common understanding can be found: ethnic tourism is a form of cross-cultural and cross-ethnic tourism exchange. And in the process of national tourism,

there will inevitably be a series of problems caused by the collision and interaction of different cultures.

In recent years, research on ethnic tourism has mainly focused on the psychology and behaviour of tourists, the authenticity of ethnic tourism, and the impact of ethnic tourism. In the research on ethnic tourists, scholars mainly focus on the psychological and behavioral characteristics of tourism. Ritchie and Zins (1978) classified ethnic tourists into two categories, popular tourists and special tourists, according to the purpose of their tourism. The former explore different ethnic cultures, while the latter are only interested in certain ethnic cultures and made special and repeated visits to them. Some scholars have classified tourists who are interested in ethnic tourism through market surveys. McKercher (2002) defined cultural tourists as people who want to visit culture-related places or directly participate in the experience, and classified them according to the centrality of the purpose and depth of experience, as shown in Figure 9.

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Figure 9. *Classification of Cultural Tourists (McKercher, 2002)*

McKercher (2002) classified cultural tourists into five categories: the purposeful, the sightseeing, the casual, the incidental and the serendipitous cultural tourists. He considered that “sightseeing” tourists regard cultural tourism to be a very important factor when the decision is made about where to travel, but the level of experience they want to have remains low. They regard cultural tourism products such as performances and festivals as entertainment, and do not require high authenticity of objects, accepting and appreciating fictional landscapes, even though they know that it is “unreal”. In contrast, “purposeful” tourists want the level of their cultural experience to be high during their holiday. The main aim of purposeful cultural tourists arriving in ethnic areas is to experience the lifestyle of local people and to understand local history, folk customs and other cultural matters. Therefore, local people are required to accurately display their cultural products and have higher requirements in regard to the authenticity of cultural objects.

There have been other approaches to categorising cultural tourists. Pearce and Moscardo (1986) took the aboriginal cultural tourism in Tjapukai, Australia, as an example to investigate the demand characteristics of the tourism market and classified tourists who are interested in ethnic tourism into four categories: relational type, learning type, participation type and curiosity type.

In the research into the authenticity of ethnic tourism, the relationship between ethnic tourism and authenticity has become a focus of discussion. Starting from Heidegger's existentialist theory, some scholars put forward that the concept of objective authenticity of tourism should be abandoned (Brown, 2013). However, from the perspective of the cross-disciplinary characteristics of tourism research and the wide application of objective authenticity in tourism practice, other scholars have questioned the former viewpoint, believing that authenticity includes two aspects: the authenticity of the toured object and the authentic experience of tourists. Nash and Smith (1991) argued that tourism has both positive and negative effects on ethnic tourism. Tourism development can not only promote the economic development of ethnic areas, but also enhance national consciousness and enhance the status of ethnic areas. Jamison (1999) analysed the impact of tourism on the Kenyan islands, indicating that tourism has catalysed the re-recognition of local communities, and tourism development has eased racial conflicts within the community. However, in the process of the development of ethnic tourism, a series of problems will inevitably also arise, such as the commercialisation of national culture, environmental destruction, and image distortion. Dyer, Aberdeen and Schuler (2003) pointed out that indigenous people's self-construction and social interactions were adversely affected by tourism development, and the "non-true" performances of indigenous cultures make visitors think of indigenous peoples as marginal "antiques" that have lost their vitality.

### **3.2.2.1 The Authenticity of Objectivism**

Objective authenticity emphasises the authenticity of toured objects and treats the authenticity of tourist attractions from the perspective of objective standards. The main



points of objective authenticity include authenticity as an intrinsic characteristic of a toured object, which can be measured by an absolute and objective standard. A visit to a real object directly produces a real tourism experience. That is to say, if the toured object is “the reality of the stage”, even if the tourists themselves think that they have obtained the real experience, then this is still considered to be inauthentic (N. Wang, 1999). In a retrospective consideration of ancient elite tourism, Berstin (2002) lamented that today’s tourism is “the lost art of travel”, and that tourists are pursuing superficial, others planned “pseudo-events”. Therefore, what Berstin insists on is the original authentic, which belongs to the concept of objective authenticity. Based on social drama theory, MacCannell (1973) put forward the theory of “staged authenticity”, the “foreground” and “backstage” of the tourism space. MacCannell (1973) held that, in modern tourism development, hosts present their culture as a commodity to tourists, which leads to the staging of the authenticity of the host social life. Stagedness hinders visitors’ real experience. MacCannell’s backstage is linked to truth, intimacy, and authenticity. Stagedness prevents visitors from reaching the background to experience real experiences and the real life of others. Buck (1978) suggested that, under the influence of commercialisation, absolutely true toured objects in tourism activities (especially culture, heritage and folk tourism) are not available. Corner and Harvey (1991) and Urry (1990) also criticised the history of heritage tourism as a false and cheap history. In the conception of originality of objectivism, the measurement standard is based on the judgment of the authenticity of the toured object in the context of the museum, and the authenticity is absolute and non-commercial. In fact, this understanding of the original truth is too one-sided. It limits the judgment of the original truth to the originality of the tourist object, and falls into a dualism of “all or nothing”.

### **3.2.2.2 The Authenticity of Constructivism**

As scholars paid attention to the transition to the authenticity of the subjective experience of tourists, the construction of tourism authenticity was gradually developed. The authenticity of constructivism is a symbolic meaning of the original truth, and the result of social construction. When toured objects are experienced by tourists, it is not that they are truth in fact, but they are regarded as symbols of authenticity. N. Wang

(1999) summarised six common points in respect of this view: (1) denying the static authenticity of absolute meaning; (2) authenticity is the product of social and cultural construction; (3) reality depends on the individuality of the tourist; (4) authenticity is the reflection of the tourist's own ideology, expectation, preference and subjective imagery; (5) non-reality can be transformed to reality; and (6) authenticity is highly correlated with context. It was Bruner (1994) who explicitly put forward the concept of constructive authenticity. He argued that the authenticity of a traditional tourism experience is difficult to explain as a phenomenon of modern tourism experience. Tourist operators can relate scenic spots and organisational activities to tourists' expectations, imagination, preferences and beliefs, in order to achieve authenticity.

Cohen (1988) held that authenticity is a relative and negotiable concept and is the core of tourism sociology and tourism anthropology. In the case of Disney, Cohen explained that even if something is unreal or artificial at first, it will gradually become a natural reality as time goes by. McKercher and Du Cros (2002) suggested that tourism authenticity is made up of various kinds of tourism. Enterprises, marketing agents, tour guides manufacture their products. They think that tourists want to get a real experience, but they are not willing to face the reality of the host society. Constructive authenticity is a concept of social construction. Its social meaning is not given, but rather is relative, changing, negotiable, contextually determined, and ideological.

The authenticity of construction is the mainstream of current tourism authenticity research. Cohen (1988) first proposed the "suspicion of staging" model, emphasising the fundamental difference between the reality of the tourist object and the subjective perception of whether the "object is true or not". He further proposed that, for tourists with different motives, the tourism experience has a collection of continuous states from complete truth to complete falsehood. He then elaborated on five types of tourism patterns: recreational tourism, diversionary tourism, experiential tourism, experimental tourism, and existential tourism. It can be said, therefore, that the tourism authenticity construction process related to tourists includes two aspects: one is the authenticity of

the tourist destination object of the tourist; the other is the authenticity of the subjective experience of the tourist.

The time factor is also an important factor in the construction of tourism authenticity. Cohen (1988) put forward the concept of “emergent authenticity” in correspondence with the “creative tradition” in anthropological theory, emphasising that people will gradually accept the original non-real tourism product over time. In addition, scholars also explored the authenticity of tourism chronologically. Salamone (1997) took the country hostel with Mexican national characteristics as an example, pointing out that real culture is an evolutionary and dynamic concept. Tourism communities and foreign tourism service providers are important factors influencing the experience of tourists. Furthermore, local social and cultural differences have an important impact on the authenticity of tourism experience. Ehrentraut (1993) analysed the authenticity of Japanese folk architecture to link authenticity to local social ideology and social stratification.

In short, scholars with a constructivist view believe that commodification does not necessarily undermine the authenticity of culture. The two are not completely opposite, and “authenticity” should be regarded as “changing” and “emergent”. Authenticity presents itself as a series of constructive, symbolic meanings.

### **3.2.2.3 The Authenticity of Postmodernism**

Postmodernism has obliterated the boundaries between “true” and “false.” Postmodernism encapsulates the view that simulation has become so real, and has reached a perfect state of “super-reality”. Theme parks such as Disneyland are used by Baudrillard (1994) as excellent examples of super-reality. In Disney, there is no clear line between truth and falsehood. Reality can be turned into a fake, and the fake can become true. Perhaps the key to Disney’s success lies in its imagination.

Simulation and simulacra are the two main concepts in Baudrillard’s theory. Baudrillard’s “simulation” is not a real “true”, but a kind of “virtual truth”, which is a

true imitation or simulation. According to Baudrillard (1994), simulation is much more real than real, and it is a super-real truth. Representation is a representation formed by reality. The simulacrum is not a copy of reality, but an image of a replica and a fictional transcript. Similar to simulation, the “image” of the simulacrum is also more realistic than the representation of a real model. Simulation and simulacra are not real, but they are beyond reality, more real than reality, and are in the realm of super-reality. The realm of simulation and simulacra is perfect, that is, it consists of technical perfection and seamlessness.

Postmodernity regards the national culture on the edge as “endangered culture”. Like “endangered nature”, “endangered culture” also needs protection (Taylor, 2001). In the postmodern context, with the acceleration of globalisation, modern technology, industrial products and modern lifestyles have rapidly penetrated into the most remote corners of the world, and it is difficult for ethnic minorities to maintain traditional culture and life. It is hard to maintain the “original taste” without being exposed to the outside world. At this time, a more effective measure to protect national culture and primitive nature may be for it to be staged. Being staged does not mean to deny the importance of cultural protection in authenticity. Because the reproduction still originates from the local culture and highlights local characteristics, it thus becomes a “true replica”. For ethnic minorities in remote areas, the staged landscape plays an increasingly important role. Postmodern tourists are more concerned about the impact of tourism on the fragile host society. The stage as an alternative to the original can actually prevent visitors from entering a fragile cultural area, block the tourist “gaze” and prevent the disruption of the life and culture of the host society (Cohen, 1995).

From the view of postmodernists, stagedness can protect precious and endangered national cultures from the destruction by travellers; and the most attractive part of national culture can be displayed to tourists to meet their expectations. Bruner’s (1994) survey showed that visitors are not opposed to the performances created for them, but they demand high-quality performances, and they also have their own aesthetic

standards. They care about the artistic effects of the stage, not the “disguised” reality. The cultural world and natural environment in remote areas are becoming more and more attractive to researchers, but most tourists have little interest in them. This is true even for the “alternative tourist” who pursues high levels of authenticity. This tourist also accepts the establishment of “living museums”, ethnic villages, theme parks, wild nature parks, and other similar parts of these “fake” or fictional landscapes as substitutes for “natural” landscapes. Moreover, developers and policy makers are increasingly concerned about establishing such landscapes. “Authenticity” is an important topic in the tourism literature, but it is not necessarily important to tourists. Therefore, the question for those generating tourism products is how to make the product convincing, credible and realistic (Bruner, 1994). Postmodernity emphasises that it is the creation of “authenticity”, emphasising the overall harmony and artistry of tourism products, which is worthy of recognition. However, it can be argued that postmodernism completely abandons the concept of authenticity and promotes replicas and human-made landscapes.

#### **3.2.2.4 The Authenticity of Existentialism**

Existentialism did not originate in the field of tourism research. It is mainly related to the meaning of human existence, the meaning of happiness, and the meaning of people’s own meaning (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). When they are in the original state of existence, people feel more real and free than the self in daily life; however, this is not because they discover the authenticity of the toured object, but because they get rid of the constraints of daily life and can participate in extraordinary activities. The original view of existentialism, in the main, includes neglecting the authenticity of the toured object, and emphasising the subjective experience of the tourist and the true existence state of the tourist subject. That is, the real feeling is a feeling combined with true self-experience; the tourists are not concerned about the authenticity of the toured object, and use the tourist activity or the toured object to find the true self.

N. Wang (1999) suggested that even if the object being toured is completely false, the visitor may still be pursuing a kind of authenticity, that is, the true nature of the

existence that is stimulated by the tourism activity. He called for a reduction in the controversy about the authenticity of the object of travel, redefining the term to refer to the first-person experience of the tourist, and he argued that the authenticity of existence can be used to explain more types of tourism, such as nature tourism, ocean cruises, beach vacations, visiting relatives and friends, adventure tourism, family tourism, etc. At this time, the tourist pursues the true self, and it does not matter if the object being toured is real.

Different from the concept of object-related authenticity, the existence of the truth has nothing to do with whether the object being toured is true or not. In the search for the existence of the true tourism experience, tourists are in an “existential state of being” inspired by certain tourism activities; they do not care about the authenticity of the object being toured, and use the tourist activities or tourist objects to find their authentic selves. That is, as noted above, when they are in the true state of existence, people feel that they are more real and free than the self in their daily lives. This is not because they find that the objects being visited are real, but because tourists are free from the constraints of daily life. Therefore, in addition to the objective authenticity and the authenticity of construction, the authenticity of existence is an important source of true tourism experience (Hughes, 1995).

With the fundamental change to social systems, great changes have taken place in the material and spiritual aspects of Sichuan traditional national culture, with different ranges, depths and speeds, but overall showing a dynamic change. Minority people's production, life, way of communication, etiquette and customs, values and aesthetic concepts are experiencing a comprehensive impact due to tourism development. The harmonious coexistence of development and protection of ethnic tourism has become a focus and difficult issue, which has aroused great concern.



## **Chapter 4. Research Design**

This chapter introduces the philosophical and methodological perspectives of this study. This chapter discusses research paradigms, ontology and epistemology, and describes the research methods used in the study.

### **4.1 Research Paradigm**

Thomas Kuhn first proposed the concept of the paradigm (Gutting, 1980) in his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* published in 1963. He used the concept of paradigm to explain scientific revolutions and divided the process of scientific development into pre-paradigm stage, paradigm stage, revolution stage and new paradigm stage. According to Gutting (1980), scientists usually do their research within the framework of a dominant paradigm, but with the gradual increase of abnormal phenomena, it becomes difficult to accommodate and explain these phenomena within the traditional paradigm framework, so they put forward new paradigms, and then replace the old paradigm with a new paradigm. The history of science is the history of paradigm revolution.

According to Mackenzie and Knipe (2006), a paradigm can be understood as a complete conceptual framework for observing and understanding the world. It not only shapes what people see, but also affects people's understanding of these things. When people look at the world, just like looking at framed photographs, the selected frame affects people's view of the photograph and, similarly, the choice of paradigm also affects people's views on research issues. The nature of the paradigm includes some basic elements, such as views on the essence of knowledge, methodology and criteria of validity.

Paradigms are far more complex than theories. People will never be able to jump out of a paradigm to see the world. Everyone sees the world through, and puts the world into, their own "framework".



Social sciences generally have many competing paradigms. There is no absolute right or wrong paradigm among them. There are only differences in popularity, and there is seldom complete denial and abandonment. There are three main paradigms in social science research: positivism, structuralism and interpretivism.

Positivism is a research paradigm of the natural sciences in a broad sense (Davies & Fisher, 2018). Positivism holds that social sciences and natural sciences are identical in nature, and their aim is to find and establish universal laws. Positivism adheres to the principles of objectivity and induction of scientific knowledge, and positivism emphasises the importance of facts rather than value and significance (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

As a research paradigm, hermeneutics often appears in philosophy, art, history, religion, language and other humanities disciplines, emphasising the careful reading or testing of texts, with the aim of revealing the hidden meaning within the texts (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). According to Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano and Morales (2007), “understanding” has become the core method of hermeneutics. Understanding is not an explanation of objective knowledge, but a way of expressing life experience. It involves people’s feelings, attitudes and experiences, and grasps the meaning of life expression.

Contrary to positivism, in ontology, the hermeneutic paradigm opposes positivism’s atomism. It opposes the isolation of human beings and their lives, but emphasises a holistic and interconnected view. It assumes that human behaviour is meaningful behaviour, and research should not only look at the performance of the behaviour, but also reveal the meaning behind the behaviour and form a consensus understanding (Creswell et al., 2007). In epistemology, it is impossible to separate the subject from the object. The relationship between the subject and the object is a process of mutual influence. The subject’s understanding of the object is actually the re-interpretation and construction of the object in the interactive relationship between the subject and the

object. Therefore, methodologically, this paradigm emphasises the point that researchers go deep into the scene being studied, live together with those being researched in the natural environment as far as possible, understand their concerns and listen to their voices. At the same time, this paradigm emphasises how important it is that researchers deeply reflect on the methods they use, and pay attention to the impact of their relationship with those being researched in their work.

This study adopts the hermeneutic paradigm. The purpose of researching the authenticity of minority nationalities is not to seek scientific truth, but to study individuals' thoughts on research issues, and to conduct a comprehensive survey of people and their lives, which requires social interaction between researchers and respondents. The hermeneutic paradigm usually focuses on the problems in the micro-environment of ethnic minorities. In the process of research, researchers and respondents actively carry out dialogues and exchanges, forming a circular interaction between the interpretative intentions of researchers and the research objects, pursuing the "understanding" and meaning construction of the research objects, and thus forming a new blended perspective. At the same time, hermeneutics attaches great importance to the influence of the life history and environment of the research objects on the research objects. Unlike the cold "pure objective research" of positivism, hermeneutics is a kind of research full of "human feelings".

## **4.2 Research Methods**

### **4.2.1 Literature Research Method**

Literature analysis is an important way to obtain real-life information about reality in academic research. To analyse the research status of a problem, scholars can also use the literature analysis method to conduct statistical and other analyses on various studies published in major academic journals, and obtain information on the development of and changes in the selected topics.

In addition, by analysing the use of a particular term in the literature, some important information can be obtained, such as the attention given to a particular problem and research progress on it. A literature review should focus on a research topic and study existing academic achievements. The literature review aims to integrate the information that has been considered and studied in specific areas of a research topic, and to systematically present, summarise, and comment on the efforts of authoritative scholars on this topic (Sekaran & Bougie, 2003).

Before deciding on the purpose of the research, the questions that must usually be addressed are: How much is known about the problem in the field or fields to which the research belongs? What are the completed studies? Have the previous recommendations and countermeasures been successful? Are there suggestions for new research directions and issues?

Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) argued that the basic objectives of the literature review are to:

- familiarise readers with the progress and dilemmas of research in the subject areas of existing research;
- provide follow-up to researchers' thinking;
- ask whether future research can find more meaningful and significant results;
- explain the position of various theories and propose different conceptual frameworks;
- propose, as the basis for a new hypothesis, a research concept, explain possible phenomena and behaviours, and identify premises and assumptions shared between concepts; and
- criticise and improve upon the deficiencies of existing research, launch alternative research, explore new research methods and approaches, and validate other related research.

Specifically, the purpose of literature analysis is to demonstrate the researcher's familiarity with a certain knowledge system so that the reader can judge the researcher's professional ability and knowledge background, and to gain the trust of and convince the reader. Sekaran (2003) argued that the role of literature analysis is to:

- ensure that important variables that have a significant impact on the problem are not ignored;
- find out which variables are the most important, why they are important, and how to study these variables to solve the problem;
- describe the problem accurately and clearly;
- strengthen the testability and repeatability of current research;
- avoid repeating previous research; and
- ensure research issues are appropriate and the study of them is feasible in the scientific field.

Ormrod and Leedy (2005) argued that the literature review describes the theoretical outlook and preliminary research results that are relevant to the research, and its role is to “review again” what other people in each field have done. The specific role is to:

- show that others are investing time, energy and resources in the same research topics, which will greatly enhance people's confidence in the research into the subject;
- provide people with new ideas and bring people close to the research content;
- tell people about the status of the work of other researchers in this field, in order to get in touch with them to get new inspiration and information;
- reflect the logical methods and design ideas adopted by other researchers on the same issue;
- learn about the measurement tools that people have not yet mastered; and
- provide solutions to similar problems.

In the early stage of the present study, a large amount of relevant literature was compiled, and the literature and statistics related to the study were obtained from local government and other relevant government departments' websites.

#### **4.2.2 Data Analysis**

Data analysis refers to the process of analysing and summarising the large amount of data collected by appropriate statistical analysis methods, extracting useful information and forming conclusions. This study uses secondary data from Zhu (2009), Li (2005) and T. Lu (2007), who are experts in the study of ethnic minorities in Sichuan, and a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis is used in their research.

Vartanian (2010) pointed out that secondary data refers to data that already exists because it has been collected by other researchers for other purposes. It includes both raw data and published summaries. Secondary data for this study has been collected from relevant books, library resources, journals, magazines, articles from Sichuan's local tourist newspaper, company data and the Internet (Hinds, Vogel, & Clarke-Steffen, 1997). It has some advantages in saving time and cost. Secondary data, including quantitative and qualitative data, can be used for interpretative and descriptive research.

In the process of studying the changes in the authenticity of Sichuan ethnic minorities in China, quantitative analysis can develop a more precise understanding of the research objects, and thus make it possible to predict the future development trends of national authenticity. Similarly, in their study, Marshall and Rossman (2006) argued that in data analysis, researchers need to break down the data into manageable parts and interpret data which consists of the speech and behaviour of the research participants. Thus, qualitative analysis is also an indispensable analytical method for studying the change of national authenticity.

## **Chapter 5. Findings and Discussion**

### **5.1 Analysis of Traditional Community Structure in Tourism Development**

Tourism is a labour-intensive industry. It creates employment opportunities in the process of changing the local economic structure. Tourism has strong industrial linkage and can promote the development of related industries. According to Bode (2018), for every one yuan of direct income from tourism, the income of related industries can increase by 4.3 yuan, and for every additional direct employee, there are five indirect employment opportunities. Through various secondary data, the changes in economic structure and community structure of minority villages in Sichuan before and after the development of tourism can be observed.

Since the development of tourism began in 1996, the changes in Taoping, a small village with less than 500 people, have been remarkable, and are closely related to the development of ethnic tourism. In terms of economic life, with the deepening development of tourism, the villagers gradually transformed from agricultural production to the tourism economy, and their identity gradually changed from agricultural labourers to tour guides, travelling goods vendors, family hotel operators and so on. As a result of the high degree of participation in tourism, every household has obtained substantial benefits in terms of ticket income, accommodation, reception and sale of ethnic arts and crafts. Villagers' material and economic life and their living conditions have greatly improved. The economic benefits brought by tourism development to Taoping are apparent to all. A comparison of the economic income of Taoping and two nearby villages which have not developed tourism is set out in Table 1, Table 2 and Table 3, below. According to the statistics of Taoping Administration (T. Lu, 2007), the annual income of the larger households involved in tourism activities has exceeded 150,000 yuan, and the smallest household also earns 6,700 yuan. Increasing income from tourism development makes people generally hold a positive attitude of tourism. At the same time, in the process of tourism development, the change to the traditional livelihood mode makes villagers more and more dependent on tourism.

Table 1. *Comparison of the Structure of Economic Income of Taoping, Xiexigou and Kongdiping in 1996*

Variable	Gross income (10,000 yuan)	Agricultural income (10,000 yuan)	Animal husbandry income (10,000 yuan)	Income of catering industry (10,000 yuan)	Service income (10,000 yuan)	Per capita net income (yuan)
Taoping	44.62	20.2	12.52	0.6	1.2	865
Xiexigou	34.16	16.87	9.14	0.4	0.6	872
Kongdiping	15.32	8.73	4.74	0	0	807

Source: Statistics of Taoping Government's Comprehensive Annual Economic Report, 1996 (Lu, 2007).

Table 2. *Comparison of the Structure of Economic Income of Taoping, Xiexigou and Kongdiping in 2004*

Variable	Gross income (10,000 yuan)	Agricultural income (10,000 yuan)	Animal husbandry income (10,000 yuan)	Income of catering industry (10,000 yuan)	Service income (10,000 yuan)	Per capita net income (yuan)
Taoping	85.53	22.9	15.9	34	6	1,639
Xiexigou	39.74	16.9	9.4	4	4	1,146
Kongdiping	15.23	10.1	4.5	0	0	1,090

Source: Statistics of Taoping Government's Comprehensive Annual Economic Report, 2004 (Lu, 2007).

Table 3. *Changes in the Structure of Economic Income of Taoping from 1996 to 2006*

Variable	Gross income (10,000 yuan)	Agricultural income (10,000 yuan)	Animal husbandry income (10,000 yuan)	Income of catering industry (10,000 yuan)	Service income (10,000 yuan)	Per capita net income (yuan)
1996	44.62	20.2	12.52	0.6	1.2	865
2000	50.45	14.1	15.95	2.2	2	945
2004	85.53	22.9	15.9	34	6	1,639
2005	102.39	21.95	19.1	38.5	12.1	2,002
2006	113.2	10.4	17.2	50	15	2,232

Source: Statistics of Taoping Government's Comprehensive Annual Economic Report (Lu, 2007).

The villagers mainly participate in tourism activities in two forms. The first is to become a scenic spot employee. The villagers are engaged as tour guides, give live performances, maintain the environment, and perform administrative work. Secondly,

they participate in tourism by means of catering and making ethnic handicrafts. Thus it can be seen that, in addition to changes in the economic structure, the community structure in the village has also changed. The first is the change in the role of the villagers: the villagers have become employees of the scenic spots, or are self-employed. Before the tourism development, most of the local villagers were working at home to carry out traditional industries such as agriculture and animal husbandry. After participating in the tourism industry, traditional industries have been abandoned or reduced, and household economic income has gradually changed from traditional industries to tourism. Nowadays, with the increase in economic income, the villagers pay attention to material life in addition to their spiritual life. Every family in the village has purchased electrical equipment such as television sets, and at the same time pay more attention to investment in education.

In national cultural tourism, the authenticity required by tourists is related to the cultural elements of the national tourist destination itself. Tourists also use these factors to perceive whether and how authentic the national culture is. These core elements are the soul of a region's national culture. If these core elements are lost, the authenticity of tourism products will inevitably be lost, and the perception of tourists will be greatly reduced.

Zhu (2009) divided the cultural elements of ethnic tourism destinations into several categories (including traditional architecture, ethnic handicraft, ethnic song and dance, ethnic language, etc.) to investigate tourists' perceptions through a survey of 150 people which quantified tourists' perceptions of the authenticity of each cultural factor with a Likert scale. Zhu (2009) divided the authenticity perception of each cultural element into five levels, which were very authentic, authenticity, basic authenticity, not authentic and absolutely not authentic, and assigned 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 points to these responses, respectively, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. *Quantitative table of tourists' perception of the authenticity of various cultural elements in Taoping Qiang Village*



Variable	Very Authentic (N)	Authentic (N)	Basic Authenticity (N)	Not Authentic (N)	Absolutely not authentic (N)	Degree of Authenticity (D)
Traditional architecture	63	72	16	2	2	4.30
National Handicrafts	4	34	73	34	10	2.92
Folk Dances	22	50	65	14	4	3.46
National language	29	61	45	17	3	3.62
Religious belief	36	75	42	1	1	3.93

*Note:* *N* = Number of people; *D* = Degree of authenticity.

Zhu (2009) quantified the authenticity of each cultural element in Taoping Qiang Village (Table 4). It can be seen from the table that tourists have different perceptions of the authenticity of various cultural factors in Taoping Qiang Village. A similar study, Li's (2005) survey (Table 5) of cultural satisfaction in Jiuzhaigou and Taoping, obtained the following findings.

Table 5. *Visitors' Satisfaction with National Cultural Landscape*

<b>Evaluation items</b>	Architectural features	Dance performance	Diet	Commemorative quality	Clothes & Accessories
Taoping	4.4	2.8	3.5	2.7	2.6
Jiuzhaigou	1.6	3.9	2.9	3.0	1.3

*Note:* 1 is the most unsatisfactory, 5 is the most satisfactory.

(1) Tourists have a high perception of the authenticity of Taoping traditional buildings, reaching 4.30, and tourists' satisfaction with Taoping also reached the highest level of 4.4. In Jiuzhaigou, the most satisfying element for tourists is the local dance performance. According to Cao's (2015) interview-based research, almost all tourists expressed their satisfaction with the stage performance in Jiuzhaigou:

*“I come from Lanzhou and travel with travel agencies. This trip is a holiday to take the children out to relax. The scenery of Jiuzhaigou is very beautiful. After the tour guide showed us the performance of Impression Plateau, I thought it was very good and the children were very happy because it was their first time to Tibet. I think the performance is real. It’s almost the same as the Tibetans I imagined. The untrue part is that the performance is too modern, and we feel that we have returned to the real world. But we feel happy to see the performances and understand the national culture. We can feel the happy atmosphere of their singing and dancing with them. We also took many pictures to give our children a different experience and leave a good memory for the tour. That’s enough.” (p. 26)*

(2) The areas that have the lowest perception of authenticity are: national handicraft, language, and religious beliefs. Tourists’ perceptions of these cultural elements are focused on “basic authenticity”. According to Li’s (2005) survey, the lowest satisfaction of tourists is concentrated on the quality of souvenirs and clothing. In his survey, 65% of tourists complained that local residents did not wear traditional clothes. According to an interview by Li (2005), Mr. Huang, a villager who runs a tailor’s shop near Taoping, said that ethnic costumes are basically hand-made and the production cycle is long. Ethnic costumes usually need a large amount of labour and the cost is generally higher than the ordinary clothes purchased in the nearby county markets, therefore the villagers wear modern clothes in their daily lives. He said that

*“In the past, he made ethnic costumes mainly for the elderly or married girls. After the development of Taoping tourism, villagers began to come to shops to order or buy ethnic costumes one after another, but young people still prefer more fashionable clothes.” (Li, 2005, p. 15)*

(3) The findings summarised above are largely consistent with the survey data of Li and Tang (2005). Li and Tang (2005) investigated the Tibetan villages in Jiuzhaigou,

Taoping Qiang villages in Lixian, and Mosuo villages in Lugu Lake in Yanyuan, and evaluated the authenticity of the constituent factors of various ethnic villages (Table 6). In their research data, tourists have a low evaluation of the authenticity of residents' clothing and language. In their evaluation of the authenticity of national costumes, the scores were: Jiuzhaigou 0.5, Lugu Lake 2, Taoping 1; for language authenticity, all three scores were 0.5. According the interviews conducted by Li and Tang (2005), most tourists believed that the residents of the three ethnic minority tourist destinations are no different from the Han people. They did not feel that these residents are not Han people. The inhabitants of the villages wearing ethnic costumes were mainly the elderly. Some tourists were eager to learn the local minority languages; however, to their disappointment, most of the residents could not speak their own languages. For the authenticity evaluation of the buildings, Taoping and Lugu Lake scored far higher than Jiuzhaigou (Taoping 9, Lugu Lake 6, Jiuzhaigou 2).

Table 6. *The authenticity of the constituent factors in Jiuzhaigou, Lugu Lake and Taoping*

<b>Evaluation items</b>	National costumes	Language	Buildings
Lugu Lake	2	0.5	6
Taoping	1	0.5	9
Jiuzhaigou	0.5	0.5	2

*Note:* 1 is the most unsatisfactory, 10 is the most satisfactory.

When Li and Tang (2005) reminded the tourists that many of the actors on the stage were Han people, the tourists still insisted that the dance performance was spectacular and that the actors were wearing high-end national costumes with high authenticity. However, in the study of T. Lu (2007), there was a huge gap in the local residents' understanding of the authenticity of the singing and dancing performance itself (personnel, organisational form, performers, locations) (Table 7) compared with the perception of tourists. Generally speaking, the residents have some recognition of the authenticity of the singing and dancing performance itself, especially the melody and dance gestures, which are mostly considered to be very real. On the contrary, residents

generally disagree with the authenticity of performers, organisational forms, venues and other elements of performance.

*Table 7. The authenticity evaluation results of Jiuzhaigou community residents on local ethnic song and dance performances*

<b>Evaluation items</b>	<b>Youth group</b>	<b>Middle-aged group</b>	<b>Elderly group</b>
Song content	4.0	3.5	1.7
Song melody	4.7	3.9	2.0
Dance content	4.2	3.2	2.7
Dance movement	4.8	4.0	2.9
Performers	1.8	2.0	1.2
Performing	2.1	1.4	2.0
Show Time	3.6	2.3	1.6
Place of performance	1.9	1.7	2.0

*Note:* The numerical value represents the average score, 1 is the least authentic, 5 is the most authentic.

According to T. Lu (2007), the youth group and the elderly group often lie at the two ends of this difference, while the middle-aged group lie between the two, but tend towards the youth group. Young people and middle-aged people mostly think that the content of singing and dancing performance itself is true and relatively authentic, while the elderly group holds the opposite attitude.

## **5.2 Tourists' Perceptions of the Authenticity of Material Culture**

According to the surveys conducted by Zhu (2009) and Li (2005), the authenticity of Taoping Qiang village traditional buildings is attractive to more tourists. The reason why tourists have such a high sense of authenticity about the traditional ethnic buildings in Taoping lies in the fact that the ancient buildings have maintained a high integrity, which is similar to the authenticity of objectivism, and which gives tourists an “authenticity” judgment. Most tourists say that the buildings of Taoping are very special. Both the building materials and the appearance of the buildings are very old, reflecting historical traces. The integrity of ancient buildings has become the primary reason for

tourists' high perception of authenticity. Taoping is the main tourist resource of Qiang buildings. Apart from the maintenance and expansion of individual houses, the increase of sewage pipes and sanitation facilities in the old area, the ancient buildings are relatively intact, and the ancient streets of the entire village are maintained in their original state. The existence of this factor gives tourists a "real" impression of culture, so the authenticity evaluation of traditional buildings in Taoping is higher.

Tourists have a high perception of the authenticity of traditional buildings, but not all of the buildings maintain a high degree of objective authenticity. For example, the buildings in the new area no longer completely use original building materials, but combine modern building materials with national architectural styles. Villagers hope to create a kind of authenticity for tourists in this way (Wang & Prott, 2016). This fictional reality is still accepted by tourists, and has no negative impact on their "real" experience, because they think that the appearance of these buildings and the local environment and atmosphere are well integrated, and they are quite different from their own place of residence. In evaluating the authenticity of Jiuzhaigou Tibetan village buildings, tourists included the architectural features of hotels outside the scenic spots. They thought that the buildings in Jiuzhaigou were full of a commercial atmosphere, so in Li and Wang's (2005) survey, tourists expressed dissatisfaction with the authenticity of Jiuzhaigou buildings.

Table 4 shows that tourists' satisfaction with ethnic handicraft is relatively low. For those tourists who have tourism experience in ethnic minority areas, the ethnic handicraft sold by local villagers has few national characteristics, and the craftsmanship is rough. Most of the local traditional handicraft has not maintained its objective authenticity in terms of production technology, and materials. According to Zhu (2009), the handicraft products sold by villagers are mainly pearl chains, silver ornaments, hanging ornaments, insoles and so on, but most of them are not made by villagers themselves, but bought in batches in other cities (Li, 2005). Tourists have certain requirements for the objective reality of national handicrafts. Therefore, the lack of

objective and real national handicrafts means tourists' perception of authenticity is very low. Tourists are not satisfied with the current situation of outsourcing traditional handicraft products. Most tourists hope that these tourist attractions can have more distinctive handicraft products, which can represent the unique national style of the local tourist souvenirs.

### **5.3 Tourists' Perceptions of the Authenticity of Behavioural Culture**

According to Table 4 and Table 7, Jiuzhaigou tourists and local residents have different opinions on staged authenticity, which shows that the pursuit of "authenticity" is closely related to everyone's cultural taste, cultural quality and aesthetic mood. Most tourists are only interested in tourism products that have been proved to be "authentic" and are labelled "authentic". This level and degree of "reality" can satisfy the curiosity of most tourists. Today, with the vigorous development of tourism, tourists are more concerned about whether tourism activities can bring pleasure and satisfaction. Ancient culture, exquisite craftsmanship and traditional dance are gradually disappearing in the wave of modernisation. Tourists hope that ethnic areas as tourist destinations can provide more convenient and comfortable travel experiences, and also hope that the journey is full of exotic customs. Therefore, they are not pursuing the real culture, but "the reality of performance", which is an example of existential authenticity. The stage provides a bridge between tradition and reality. Tourists can perceive the existence of traditional culture from the stage.

In addition, from the perspective of the residents of tourist destinations, ethnic minorities living in minority areas also expect to live a convenient modern life in developed areas. The modern life that the local people yearn for also means the disappearance of the traditional national culture. Once the national culture as the main attraction of the national tourism disappears, the national tourism will have no prospects for development, and there is no difference from popular tourism. Therefore, the stage provides a platform for maintaining the contradiction between traditional culture and pursuing a modern way of life.

Secondly, some parts of national culture still retain some taboos. For example, the locals are unwilling to show Tibetan celestial burial, which is absolutely not open to tourists at present. So, the stage creates an invisible barrier, dividing ethnic minority areas into “front stage” and “back stage”. The “back stage” is the part of ethnic minority areas that residents are unwilling to show to others. Therefore, the performance of “front stage” not only satisfies the curiosity of tourists, but also avoids the impact on “back stage”.

Thirdly, tour guides, developers and performers are in a symbiotic relationship. In field survey interviews (Peng, 2004), tourist guides said they believed that as long as the stage is based on national culture, rather than deliberately fabricated reality, this is authenticity. Moreover, the income of tour guides comes from staged performances, so from the perspective of stakeholders in stage performances, they will inevitably convey to tourists the signal that “local singing and dancing performances are the most important way for people to understand the rich national culture in a few days’ stay in minority villages” (Peng, 2004, p. 24).

Fourthly, developers, which usually refers to government or tourism companies, are not only the main organisers of national culture stage shows, but also the direct beneficiaries of national culture stage shows. The original intention of developers in creating these stage performances was to provide tourists with a “real tourism experience” and earn income. Of course, the meaning of “real” here is the “authenticity” that can be experienced by tourists. From the perspective of tourists, according to their aesthetic needs and preferred pursuits, the cultural factors that can meet these needs are assembled and condensed.

Fifthly, Jiuzhaigou local residents are not very concerned about the authenticity of national stage shows. The interviews by T. Lu (2007) indicate that the local residents’ understanding of the authenticity of national culture stage shows has two aspects: one is the organiser and performer of the cultural stage shows, the other is the cultural content

of the stage performance. The organisers are not local people from Jiuzhaigou, so it is believed that the stage of national culture is untrue. These singing and dancing performances are organised by tourism enterprises. When they publicise and perform their shows, they all use the background of minority villages. According to the theory of objective authenticity, the villagers of Jiuzhaigou show their culture as a commodity to tourists, which leads to the staging of social life authenticity. Because tourists lack the understanding of local culture, they often regard these performances as the “backstage” of the host community culture. Therefore, from the point of view of tourists, the villages of minority nationalities in Sichuan are the “backstage” of these performances. However, from the perspective of local communities, this is not the case. Local residents have no direct interest in these tourism enterprises. At present, the main source of income of the local residents is the income from the scenic spots and the profits from the sale of tourism commodities. According to Larsen (2010), the villagers are “outsiders” who have nothing to do with the front and back. Because of the lack of a relationship in terms of an economic interest, local residents also lack the basic motivation to pay attention to the authenticity of the singing and dancing performances. Therefore, based on the different perspectives and the different positions of the various interest groups, the perception of whether the national culture stage show is “real” must be different.

From Table 5, compared with the tourists’ satisfaction with Jiuzhaigou ethnic songs and dances, it can be seen that tourists are not satisfied with the authenticity of Taoping folk songs and dances. The singing and dancing performances in Sichuan reflect objective and real elements. Traditional singing and dancing are directly put on the stage. Dancing is practiced by local people in a form which has deep cultural roots. The performances and dancing movements reflect the local people’s life and production. It should be said that the performance of singing and dancing in Sichuan minority villages maintains the core of some national cultures. The content and form of singing and dancing performances change with the change of function, which is also a kind of social construction, reflecting the reality of a kind of construction. In fact, Taoping Qiang Village’s national song and dance performance maintains a relatively high objective



authenticity. According to the official statement of Li County Government (2014), the performers of Taoping are the permanent residents of Qiang Village who are proficient in singing and dancing. The performance mainly reflects the original ecological song and dance of Qiang people's life, such as the "Huaernaji" Western Qiang Song Festival, which was actively promoted by the government.

It should be said that Taoping Qiang Village's traditional singing and dancing performance has a certain authenticity, which maintains the important traditional elements of Qiang's original songs and dances, and can reflect the daily production and life interest of the Qiang people. But for tourists, this kind of singing and dancing performance is mistaken for a "stage" because of its extensive generalisation and tourists' similar previous travel experiences. According to Tian (2006), some tourists believed that some modern audio equipment was used in stage performances during the performance of song and dance, which was unacceptable to them. Some tourists also believed that some dance forms and songs were the same form of performance that they had already seen while traveling in the Tibetan area, but that these had been moved to the performance stage of the Qiang area. These reasons led to a lower perception of authenticity of national songs and dances.

Similarly, after in-depth interviews, Zhu (2009) found that tourists did not think that the song and dance performances directly on the stage were highly authentic. Instead, they felt that the performance was too simple and monotonous. Some tourists who had been to Jiuzhaigou even thought that the performance quality of Qiang village was far inferior to Jiuzhaigou. They thought that Taoping's singing and dancing is not entertaining and ornamental, and lacks local characteristics. From this point of view, directly putting the "background" singing and dancing performance with a low degree of stagedness directly into the "foreground" not only failed to protect the real national life in the background, but also made tourists think that this performance lacked national characteristics. Therefore, if the national dance in the "foreground" was be constructed, refined, adapted and displayed to tourists, so as to protect the real culture of

the background, it would meet the needs of tourists. As advocated by the authenticity of constructivism, reality is the result of human interpretation and construction. It is pluralistic and flexible, and is the result of the construction of many participants. Hosts and visitors should present and experience the charm of Sichuan minority song and dance performances in a process of continuous interaction. The construction of ethnic culture is the result of joint efforts of the government, experts and scholars, tourism developers, community residents and tourists, the development of ethnic culture is also a process of joint participation between different tourists and different hosts.

#### **5.4 Tourists' Perceptions of the Authenticity of Spiritual Culture**

Tourists mainly perceive authenticity through the age of the objective material culture and the living habits of the local residents. In fact, the perception of authenticity relies on the collection of symbolic items. The reason why religious beliefs have a high degree of authentic perception is that tourists can collect more material entities and symbols representing local religious beliefs in ethnic minority areas, such as the white stone of the Qiang people. Tourists are highly satisfied with the authenticity of Taoping Qiang Village's religious rituals. The various acts presided over by the priest satisfy the tourists' curiosity. In fact, the significance of traditional religious culture has been lost, and the specific timing of religious ceremonies has changed into a tourist performance. Many villagers in the area do not understand the classical meaning of recitation because they cannot speak Qiang language.

According to Wright, Wang and Tang (2013), most of the residents living in Jiuzhaigou are Tibetans, and the local Tibetans practice pre-Buddhist Ben-po religion (Zhou, 2007). Prior to 1949, the focus of local religious activities was Rab-den in Jiuzhaigou. Although China banned public displays of religious beliefs during the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese government's attitude toward religion changed significantly after the restoration of the freedom of religious belief policy in 1978 (Peng, 2004). However, for the Tibetan community, the revival of many religious ceremonies and activities has been very slow, and some of the religious ceremonies have changed in

time to become a kind of performance (Peng, 1998). Many local villagers do not understand the content and meaning of their respective religions because they do not speak Qiang language or Tibetan. Other villagers even sell the various instruments used in religious ceremonies to tourists. This is not conducive to the continuation of national culture and it also shows that many tourists do not have a good knowledge of ethnic tourism and have no real understanding of the culture of Sichuan ethnic minorities.

In the previous sections, the cultural elements in Sichuan ethnic tourism have been analysed. Each kind of cultural elements has common characteristics, which can be summarised as existentialism, constructivism and objectivism. In the process of national tourism, the meaning of authenticity is complex and changeable. Cultural elements with different characteristics embody different meanings of authenticity, which play different roles in the development of tourism.

Existential authenticity is a kind of metaphysical cultural complex, which refers to the cultural elements embodying the inherent cultural value and spiritual meaning of the tourist destination in national culture. The tourist commodity constituted by this element is an invisible commodity, and what tourists pursue is the cultural nature embodied in it and the information contained therein. The understanding of such elements cannot stay on the surface of “symbolisation”. No tourists will understand the value and function of national culture to the local people because they have learned some words in a national language or purchased unique tourism products. Existential authenticity is also the main tourist attraction in the development of national tourism, and it is these factors that produce various cultural characteristics. The authenticity of existentialism is very important to the local people. The participation of community residents in the cultural creation and exchange of tourist destinations enables tourists to understand the true meaning of cultural symbols. On the other hand, it can also promote the residents’ understanding of their own culture and assist them in devoting themselves to the development and protection of local culture, rather than the superficial display of cultural images driven by economic interests.

The authenticity factor of constructivism refers to the willingness of some tourism developers to add tourism products and related services designed with a consideration of tourists' tourism preferences and imagination in mind. For example, the singing and dancing performance in Jiuzhaigou mentioned above is an artistic feast specially designed by the tourism company for each individual visitor to Jiuzhaigou. This kind of factor partly reflects the cultural characteristics of the tourist destination and has a strong symbolic meaning. The authenticity of constructivism is mainly reflected in the formation of the image of the tourist destination for the development of the local tourism industry, and it is also an important factor affecting the satisfaction of tourists.

Objective authenticity factor is the person or thing that can objectively reflect the history and culture of the tourist destination. Although many scholars think that the objective authenticity factor is the only authenticity in tourism, there is no ideal objective authenticity in the process of national tourism, as many tourist products have to be screened and packaged before they can be presented to tourists.

Through the above analysis, it can be concluded that tourists pursue different levels of authenticity for different influencing factors. For material culture, tourists pay more attention to its objective reality. The reason why traditional architecture in Sichuan has such high authenticity is that it is close to objective reality. For behavioural culture, tourists pay more attention to its constructivist authenticity and hope to see more wonderful and entertaining performances. Ethnic singing and dancing performances retain a high level of their original ecological factors but, as McKercher (2002) said, sightseeing visitors regard cultural tourism products such as performances and festivals as an entertainment, which does not require high degree of authenticity – they accept and appreciate the performances being constructed. Therefore, the development of behavioural culture should be based on the needs of tourists and constructed on the premise of retaining certain objective truthfulness. For spiritual culture, visitors are more willing to experience a new self through the religious beliefs of ethnic peoples, so

that visitors can experience living away from urban life and returning to a mysterious original culture. Finally, tourists also have certain requirements for the tourist facilities of ethnic tourism destinations, and the catering of ethnic tourism destinations will also affect the real experience of tourists.

## **5.5 Recommendations**

From the perspective of tourism planning, authenticity should be a key concept for planners, organisers and managers. Thinking about how to design cultural tourism products with a high degree of realism, even to achieve the “super-real”, is an important way to improve the satisfaction of tourists and allow them to experience their “true” self. Scenic sight planners and managers should pay attention to the following points when dealing with authenticity issues.

### **5.5.1 Make the Product “Authentic”**

First of all, direct experience allows people to identify daily experiences as “authentic”. For example, eating and communicating with local people rather than other tourists. The second form of authenticity is the authenticity of the object, that is, according to existing knowledge, showing the crafts of the past under the constraints of the original conditions and location. Even this form of authenticity requires careful consideration. No other inconsistent elements may be included in the background. Third, the promotion of “nature” is another aspect of authenticity, for example, promoting mountains, valleys and hot springs around villages. Fourth, further promotion of “authentic” experiences by emphasising location can make visitors feel “it happened here”. Fifth, the traditional way of life and activities should be displayed to tourists in the original, real and traditional ethnic villages as far as possible. For such tours, the number of groups that can be received every day should be limited. Tourism departments should attract research-oriented “guides”, such as volunteers with a background in anthropology, history and archaeology, who will explain local traditions and etiquette. This is also an effective method for anthropologists and historians to study tourism. Sixth, emphasising the sense of place, local values and local

characteristics is the best way to make ethnic tourism products authentic. It is necessary to ensure that the design of hotels and other tourist facilities reflects the local architectural characteristics, so that these facilities can be coordinated with the local cultural atmosphere and create a unique sense of place for tourists. In addition, authenticity can also be promoted through “local myths” and “local origins”. Celebration is another important form of authenticity promotion.

### **5.5.2 Improving Tourism Information Services**

The marketing department should provide enough information about the local national culture for tourists before they arrive at their destination. That is because tourists’ understanding of destination cultural information will determine their judgment of the authenticity of the culture they are visiting and whether they can get a high-quality tourism experience. Generally speaking, the more people know about the destination culture, the more accurately they can evaluate the authenticity of the culture they visit. Tourist information centres can be set up at destinations, and people familiar with local culture can be available to give explanations to tourists. The centre can sell brochures on local conditions and books on local cultural background.

### **5.5.3 Strengthen Education and Training**

As most tourism enterprises cannot conduct in-depth and professional tourism research, on-the-job education and training is particularly important. The development of minority tourist destinations must reflect the wishes of the local people, who have the right to participate in planning and management decisions. In order to effectively manage the cultural heritage of the local people, they should be educated about the history and folklore of their own nation, and how to operate hotels and other tourist facilities with their own national characteristics. Regular tourism training courses should be conducted for local residents so that they can understand the concept, interests and possible problems of real national tourism culture, and know the current tourism development policy, tourism planning, customs, behaviour patterns and value systems of tourists from different cultural backgrounds. Sustainable development is

largely determined by the will of various stakeholders. Therefore, only under the condition of close cooperation among stakeholders can this goal be achieved.

## **Chapter 6. Conclusion**

The authenticity of ethnic tourism and the authentic experience of tourists discussed in this dissertation have become an important research topic with the continuous development of Chinese ethnic tourism. On the basis of the literature collected, the research has analysed the factors affecting the authenticity of tourism experiences and explored the coordinated development of national cultural protection and tourism development. This study selected two ethnic minority villages in Sichuan as a research object, investigated the minority ethnic tourism and development status in Sichuan. Meanwhile, the research has analysed the authenticity preferences of local tourists and community residents, and concluded that tourists pursue different levels of authenticity for different influencing factors. The authenticity of the unique culture of Sichuan ethnic minorities is an important tourism resource for tourists.

As a region with distinct cultural characteristics, Sichuan's unique minority culture is a tourism resource that can create economic benefits. Understanding the factors that affect the authentic experience of tourists in minority villages can have a guiding role for the development of tourism in Sichuan. Tourists have different understandings of authenticity in tourism. They are ready to accept the authenticity constructed by external images and symbols. Inexperienced tourists first use some image symbols as the criteria for judging their tourism experience. Compared with this symbolic system, objective authenticity is more authoritative.

Visitors often focus on the characteristics of certain aspects of cultural products while ignoring other aspects. The stage performance and commercialisation of Jiuzhaigou's dance performances are very serious, but most tourists are very satisfied with the performance and have a high evaluation. Many tourists believe that the traditional dance performed by the local monks in the Qiang village is far less authentic than the dance in Jiuzhaigou. On the other hand, some tourists to Jiuzhaigou, when discussing ethnic villages, mentioned modern buildings outside the scenic spots and expressed obvious dissatisfaction. Therefore, when discussing the authenticity of ethnic tourism, how to



distinguish tangible tourism products such as handicrafts and architecture from intangible activities such as dance and interactive theatrical performances is a crucial question.

Authenticity is closely related to ethnic tourism. Authenticity is a special experience for tourists. The meaning of authenticity is not absolute, but relative. For different types of tourism products, tourists pursue different types of authenticity. For tangible products such as architecture and handicraft, the managers of scenic spots should try their best to achieve objective authenticity, and strive to make the products realistic and highly authentic. However, even the authenticity at this level does not mean that it is absolutely impossible to replicate. For example, for very fragile or valuable tangible cultural heritage, it may be necessary to reconstruct a “real copy” for tourists to visit, while preserving the original for expert research only. Those destroyed that have significance and potential attraction to tourists need to be restored as far as possible, reflecting the traces of history. From this perspective, “authenticity” means realistic reproduction and reconstruction in order to achieve a high degree of realism. For activities and participatory tourism products, it is necessary to root them in history, and pursue innovation, attracting more participants to engage in the “existence of the true nature”.

Today’s cultural tourism relies heavily on the staging (or re-engineering) of ethnic or cultural traditions. The stage should include corresponding modifications to adapt to the present day and geographical conditions. Staged does not mean “unreal”; staged events should not be “superficial” as long as they include the main elements of tradition (Chhabra, Healy, & Sills, 2003). In fact, most tourists evaluate authenticity based on their own feelings. Perceived authenticity is an important aspect of measuring product quality and determining visitor satisfaction (McKercher & Du Cros, 2002). Therefore, authenticity should emphasise “feeling value”. The authenticity of verisimilitude is achieved by satisfying what visitors expect from a certain place in terms of its look or feel. If the travel programme is used as the key to attracting tourists, then it must be

understood how the participants and different market segments can feel the art of the show is “real” (though of course, this “real” is a staged product).

Based on the analysis of the literature on authenticity and the secondary data on the attitudes of tourists in ethnic minority villages in Sichuan, this dissertation has discussed the authenticity of ethnic tourism. An important attribute of ethnic tourism is authenticity. In fact, emphasising authenticity is an important basic principle for the development of such tourism. If a culture wants sustainable development, it needs to change constantly, so as to adapt to the changes in the natural environment and the social environment. Therefore, an authentic culture should be full of vitality, changing with the change of environment. Authenticity is constructed by society and its meaning is relative and flexible. Different ethnic tourist destinations should treat authenticity flexibly according to their own environment, and use tourism authenticity as a tool to strengthen their unique identity as presented to tourists themselves.

How to integrate the protection, management and tourism development of ethnic minority cultural resources according to the needs of the tourism market and develop ethnic tourism through an “authentic” display of ethnic minority culture is a subject that needs further study. This dissertation is only a preliminary discussion. Because this research is based on second-hand data, and does not further investigate the views of local minority residents, tourism enterprises and the government, it is necessary conduct further research to accurately assess the relationship between ethnic tourism and the complex that is “authenticity”, and give more profound and feasible suggestions for the development of ethnic cultural tourism destinations.

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