Analysing Social Media Posts and Tourists' Experiences in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter, China

RUI SONG

2020

School of Hospitality and Tourism

A dissertation submitted to Auckland University of Technology in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of International Tourism Management (MITM)

Supervisor: Dr Hamish Bremner

Abstract

The Xi'an Muslim Quarter, in the central part of Xi'an City, China, is famous for its culture and food. It attracts visitors from all over the world each year. By analysing the contexts of online media, this research investigates tourists' experiences in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter. As a famous tourist attraction, the Xi'an Muslim Quarter fascinates more and more visitors due to the development of the tourism and hospitality industry. However, tourists have mixed attitudes towards the Xi'an Muslim Quarter. The Xi'an Muslim Quarter has yet to maximise the connection between heritage experience and tourists. The lack of tourism management and promotion of traditional culture causes unsatisfactory customer experiences. Specifically, my research dissertation asked in what ways tourists using online media express their experiences of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter. Responding to that question, my qualitative inquiry examined 59 online media uploads about the Xi'an Muslim Quarter. To understand those uploads I used thematic analysis to identify the key tourist themes that emerged from their data. My research found that several factors impacted tourists' experiences in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter. Of particular note in my research findings was the importance tourists placed on: halal food taste; the service encounter and servicescape; and experiencing authenticity and helping community. Fortunately, the Government of Xi'an has planned to renovate the Xi'an Muslim Quarter. With that consideration in mind, this research is timely because it may benefit government agencies with its exploration of tourist experiences. By exploring what tourists think about and experience in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter, this research can contribute to a better understanding of how historical and cultural tourism can be improved in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter. This research may benefit tourism government agencies and small business enterprises alike in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter because it provides a timely insight into tourist experiences

Table of Contents

List of Figures

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.

_____   _____10/12/20_____

Signature   Date

Acknowledgements

As an international student, I have spent two enjoyable years and met a lot of teachers and good friends here at AUT in Auckland, New Zealand. Without them, it is less likely that I could have completed this dissertation. Through the completion of this dissertation, I owe the following people a debt of gratitude for their extremely patient, technical and financial support.

Firstly, I would like to express my great appreciation toward my supervisor, Dr Hamish Bremner, for his constructive advice and support based on his professional knowledge. Without his suggestions, I would not have been able to complete this dissertation.

Secondly, I would like to thank programme leader Dr Shelagh Mooney, and many other staff members and the classmates at AUT who helped me and always were supportive during these past two years.

Additionally, I would like to express my special sincere gratitude to David Parker, for taking the time to proofread my work.

Finally, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to my parents, family and friends. These people have always provided me with emotional support, inspiration and encouragement during these past two years.

Ethics Approval

My research did not involve primary research or data gathering. Consequently, it was not necessary to apply to the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) for ethics approval.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Opening Remarks

The Xi'an Muslim Quarter is one of the famous tourist attractions in my hometown. It attracts many tourists from all over the world every year. The Xi'an Muslim Quarter is not only a historic district, but also a place where Hui people gather together. Hui people have lived in that quarter for over 800 years and developed their culture and business. The development of tourism and the hospitality industry in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter has influenced Hui and other local people's lifestyles. Moreover, international tourism has impacted the social-cultural life of Hui people, and they have changed the quality of their service to tourists and visitors. As some researchers have noted, ethnic tourism has the potential to bring benefits for indigenous people, but it can also negatively impact the culture and sense of identity of ethnic groups (Oakes, 1998; Picard & Wood, 1997).

When I was young, Muslim people gathered together in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter and developed their family businesses, such as opening Muslim restaurants and selling Muslim cultural products. Hui people provided regular services to themselves and local people. They concentrated on Muslim culture and their daily routine. After the tourism and the hospitality industry had developed, the symbol of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter turned to a "food street". In this way, more and more people opened restaurants in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter. Although some of them are not Hui people, and they do not sell Muslim food, they use "Muslim culture" in their marketing strategies. A few Hui people changed their family businesses because of the fierce competition. Tourism also causes littering and noise pollution, which can affect the Hui people's lives. Hospitality industry development changed the layout of the

Hui people's residential area, the authenticity of the historic district and the evaluation of restaurant services by local people. As the development continues, the number of restaurants is increasing. Some restaurants' menus, cuisine flavour and service quality has changed. A few restaurants have changed their decoration and some cuisine flavours have been changed in order to attract more tourists. Recently, the number of negative comments has been increasing due to the decreasing service quality of restaurants in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter. As a historic tourist destination, the Xi'an Muslim Quarter no longer attracts local people. Fortunately, the Government of Xi'an has noticed the importance of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter to ethnic people and they plan to renovate the Xi'an Muslim Quarter.

1.2 Research Aim and Question

My research dissertation explores a sample of Chinese online media commentaries reflecting tourists' experiences of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter in Xi'an City, China. To achieve this, my research considers the following primary question:

What impacts tourist experiences while visiting the Xi'an Muslim Quarter?

Underpinning the primary question are the following secondary questions:

1. In what way do tourists, using online media, express their experiences of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter?
2. What primary themes emerge for tourists in their considerations of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter?
3. What recommendations can be given to improve the tourists' experience?

While I have provided one primary question and three underpinning questions, my three underpinning questions together inform my primary question. In that way, my research questions are positioned as noted in Figure 1, below.
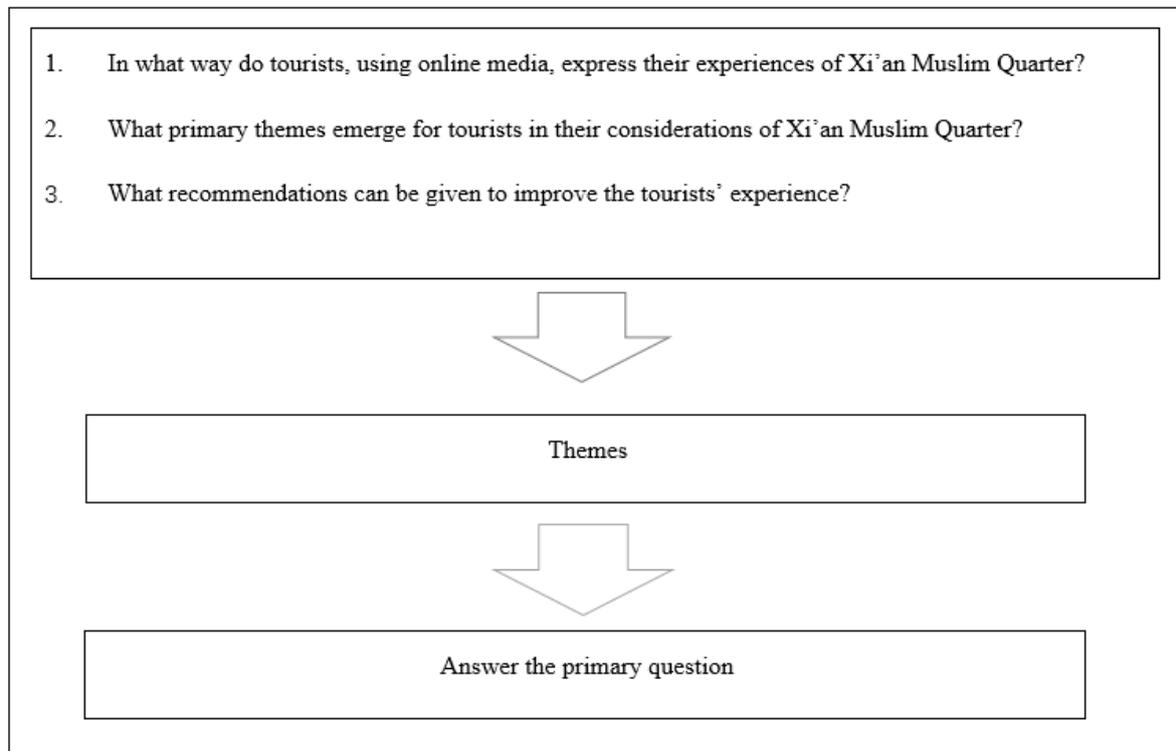
Figure 1. Research questions

1.3 Research Rationale

X. Zhu (2018) has proposed that current popular tourism spots concentrate on immediate interests while overlooking the overriding cultural concept. She believes that the awareness of ethnic tourism culture is shallow. The Xi'an Muslim Quarter owns a rich culture and historical resources. However, as the Xi'an Government pays more attention to effectively combining the Silk Road Economic Belt with the cultural elements of the Han culture, the Tang culture, and the Qin culture, the protection of Xi'an Muslim Quarter is not enough (Ma, 2015). The government tourism plan does not involve the Xi'an Muslim Quarter as it has an uncertain relationship with those culture resources. Besides that, the quality of service in the

Xi'an Muslim Quarter is not high, according to the Destination Competitiveness/Sustainability Model (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). The uncertain positioning and low quality of services can affect the sustainability and competitiveness of a tourism destination. This dissertation will provide some suggestions to raise the competitiveness of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter.

Figure 2. The Destination Competitiveness/Sustainability Model (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003)

1.4 Research Significance

My research dissertation is significant for the following reasons:

- Firstly, my research is the first study to investigate tourist experiences in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter through Chinese online media. This research can contribute to a

better understanding of how historical and cultural tourism can be improved in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter.

- Secondly, my research is significant because it may benefit government agencies with a timely exploration of tourist experiences. The lack of tourism management and promotion of traditional culture causes unsatisfactory customer experiences. Fortunately, the Government of Xi'an has planned to renovate the Xi'an Muslim Quarter.

- Finally, my research contributes toward a more comprehensive understanding of tourist experiences generally in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter.

1.5 Research Methodology: An Overview

To achieve my research aims and to answer the research questions, I used qualitative description as my methodology. A qualitative study inspects a social phenomenon from insiders' perspectives and generally analyses data from contexts, rather than from numbers (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2012). It allows me, as a researcher, to report my participants' comments without the over-interpretation of them. Additionally, a qualitative methodology can promote a close relationship between the readers and the participants' comments through my description. Besides that, as the first research dissertation to investigate tourists' experiences in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter, qualitative description can allow me to contribute theoretically to further research.

Complementing qualitative description, I used thematic analysis to identify the themes in the data. Some researchers suggest thematic analysis can be a foundational method for qualitative analysis and it can be used for identifying, analysing, and reporting themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Those themes provided holistic information that not only formed the basis of my

presentation of my findings but also contributed the information that I used within the Discussion Chapter and the Conclusion and Implications Chapter.

1.6 Dissertation Structure

My dissertation has six chapters. The present first chapter introduces my topic, my research aims and questions, the significance of my research, and the summary of my research methodology.

Chapter 2 presents background information relating to the Xi'an Muslim Quarter, and also introduces the online media in China. By addressing these topics, Chapter 2 emphasises important background information and the context of this dissertation.

Chapter 3 is the literature review. My literature review outlines relevant research publications and other literature related to heritage tourism, ethnic tourism, customer service and satisfaction, and tourism destination image. Adding to those sections, my literature review also discusses tourism and the Internet.

Chapter 4 discusses the research methodology and research method. Specifically, I used qualitative description (M. Sandelowski, 2000) and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Those approaches provide the information presented in Chapter 5, the findings chapter.

Chapters 6 and 7 cover my presentation of the discussion, conclusion and implications. In Chapter 6, I compare and contrast my findings with my literature review. Within that process I relate my work to existing knowledge. In Chapter 7, I identify my contribution to future

studies. Additionally, I explain and discuss my research limitations, suggestions for future research and end my dissertation with a short reflection.

Chapter 2: Contextualising my Research

In this Chapter, I set out some background that provides my readers with a deeper understanding of my topic. In facilitating that understanding, I include: an overview of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter; sections on tourism in Xi'an, and tourism in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter; and an overview of online media in China.

2.1 An Overview of Xi'an

As a historic and cultural city, Xi'an is one of the most popular tourist destinations in China for tourists from far and wide. Xi'an's tourism history can be dated back to the Tang dynasty (678-907 CE) as it served as ancient China's capital for more than ten dynasties (Gang, 2016). It has even been called the birthplace of Chinese civilisation. Multitudes of tourists flock to Xi'an to experience the city's numerous palaces, museums, food sources, and cultural celebrations. Xi'an houses some of China's most valuable archaeological treasures. It has a large number of famous tourist destinations. The magnificent Terracotta Warriors in the Emperor Qin shi Huang's Mausoleum Site Museum is the most famous destination hub which dates back to the Qin Dynasty in the 3rd century BCE. Apart from that, Xi'an has lots of other cultural attractions in the downtown area, such as the Ancient City Wall and the Giant Wild Goose Pagoda. The Xi'an Muslim Quarter is also one of the must-visit places located inside Xi'an city.

2.2 An Overview of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter

Xi'an was one of the most significant points on the ancient Silk Road and, as a result, it attracted a community of Muslim traders from Central Asia who took up residence in the Muslim Quarter and named it the Xi'an Muslim Quarter (Cheyanne, 2017). The primary

street is known as Beiyuanmen Street, and there are some intersecting roads which means The Muslim Food Street is a collective name for a number of different streets including Dapiyuan Street, Xiyangshi Street, North Guangji Street, and Beiyuanmen Street. It is paved with grey-blue flagstones, and contains trees. It also has archaised stores from the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties that are run by the Hui ethnic people. Some of the ancient architectural buildings include the Grand Mosque, Xicheng Gate Tower Cluster, and Hanguang Gate (Cheyanne, 2017). Although this is a tourist spot for foreigners, even the locals regard it as a snack street. It has long lines of food stalls and different restaurants. Some of the stalls specialise in selling barbequed meat on skewers, breads, persimmon donuts, and dried fruit. Visitors can view people making candy and they sell for roughly RMB 25 to 50 a pack.
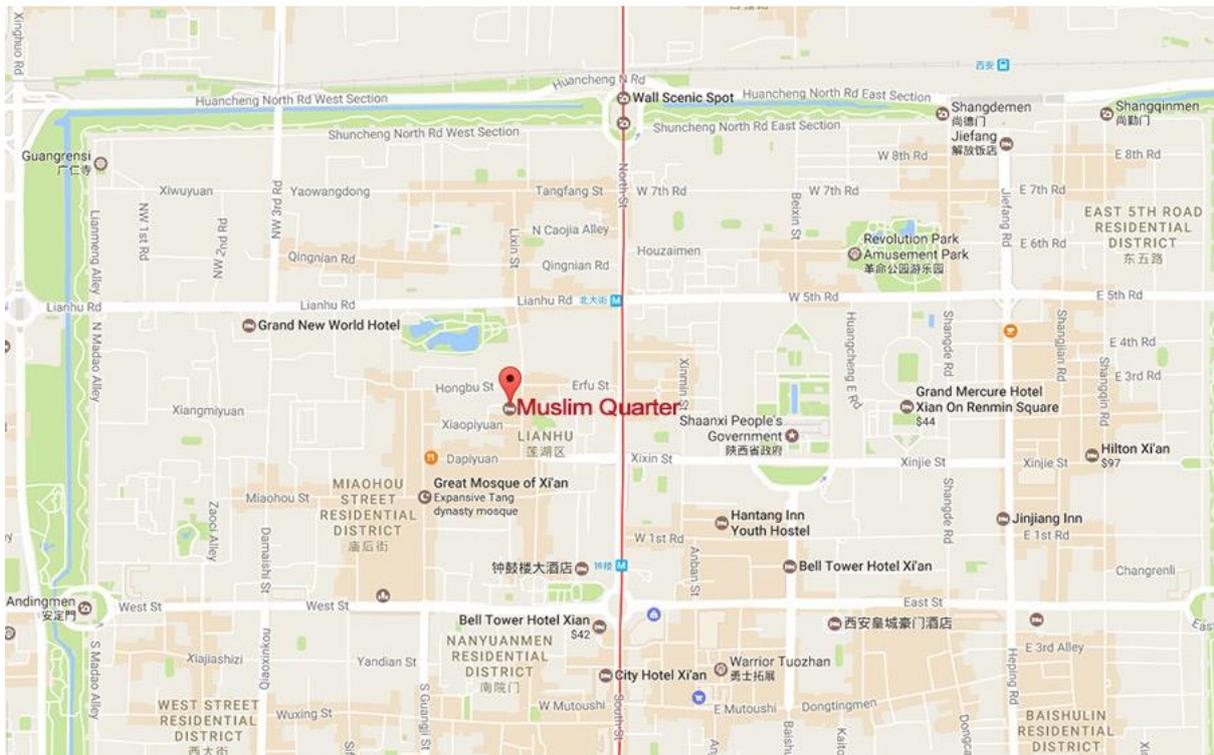
Figure 3. Map of Xi'an Muslim Quarter

2.3 Getting to Know Tourism in Xi'an

Since becoming the leading city of China's Western Development Drive Programme from 2000 (Lai, 2002), Xi'an has become a significant industrial economic centre of the central-northwest region supported by the Chinese Government (X. Zhu, 2018). In this way, Xi'an provides tourists with modern transport infrastructure.

In the past 40 years, Xi'an has achieved a total tourism revenue of approximately 1.2 trillion yuan (Xi'an Tourism, 2019). Tourism has become one of the five pillar industries (Xi'an Tourism, 2019). Tertiary industries, including technology, education, tourism, and culture, have become one of Xi'an's most important industry sectors, contributing over 60% of Xi'an's GDP (Xi'an Tourism, 2019). According to statistics, in the Spring Festival Golden Week in 2018, Xi'an received more than 12 million tourists ("Xi'an National Day Holiday is Full of Tourists," 2019).

2.4 Tourism in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter

The Xi'an Muslim Quarter is a commercial and cultural area where Hui people gather. In 2019, the Muslim population was estimated at around 65,000 (Chen, 2019). Most of them live and work in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter (Chen, 2019). The main tourism attractions are Muslim culture and halal food. However, there are some difficulties with tourism development. The Xi'an Muslim Quarter tourism development model is inconsistent with Xi'an's overall tourism planning since the common ground for the development of other scenic spots mainly revolves around the culture of the Tang Dynasty in Xi'an. Second, the overall building and infrastructure development of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter is not complete (JunYao, 2015). Besides that, the Xi'an Municipal Government's resource development in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter is incomplete (JunYao, 2015). The government does not manage the

unique cultural tourism of Xi'an Muslim Quarter. In this situation, there is a gap between the tourism of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter and the experience of tourists.

2.5 Tourism Policies in Xi'an and the Xi'an Muslim Quarter

Since the turn of the 21st century, the Xi'an Muslim Quarter has become famous for its culture and food. The growing number of tourists visiting the Xi'an Muslim Quarter makes it imperative for both the government and tourist agencies to develop tourism management policies to improve the tourist experience.

The first shareholder in tourism management plans for the Xi'an Muslim Quarter is the Chinese National Government and the Xi'an Municipal People's Government. According to the Xi'an Government (2019), the local government has pledged to transform the cultural and tourism industries. The report details how the Xi'an Municipal Government began its tourism internationalisation action in 2018 to attract more tourists to the Xi'an Muslim Quarter. Zhai and Ng (2013) and X. Zhu (2018) discuss the drawbacks of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter's gentrification, particularly the destruction of Xi'an's authentic tradition. Zhai and Ng (2013) advocate for appropriate public participation and community involvement in urban redevelopment. Similarly, Zhu (2018) posits that the state, private investors, tourists, and Xi'an's local community need to maintain the city's heritage and authenticity. Zhai and Ng (2013) and Zhu (2018) suggest Xi'an's local government should incorporate local wisdom in the plans. Crowd management is another important aspect of the government's tourism strategy. Jin and Pearce (2011) highlight how the rising number of visitors brings problems in site management. Additionally, Jin and Pearce (2011) discuss the social implications of the growth of tourist numbers in an area such as the Xi'an Muslim Quarter. Jin and Pearce (2011) draw attention to how crowding problems in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter might be alleviated

and highlight the value of crowd management for tourists' experience. Being aware of these problems, Xi'an's government will reconstruct the Xi'an Muslim Quarter according to a government announcement (Xi'an Government, 2019). Overall, the government's tourism plans for the Xi'an Muslim Quarter rely on a complex, decentralised, and local process of planning and implementation. This dissertation can also provide some suggestions.

Additionally, the government recognises that tourist visits to the Xi'an Muslim Quarter are essential to the provincial and municipal economy and warrant action to attract tourists. An item featured on CGTN ("Xi'an Strives for Growth in Tourism," 2019) maintains that the Xi'an Municipal Government has set out to promote the integrated development of culture and tourism. Despite the momentum of 2019, the coronavirus pandemic has hampered the government's tourism management policies. Most tourist sites have remained closed for the better part of the year due to the pandemic. However, as China gradually reopens to tourists, the Xi'an Municipal Government plans to promote cultural tourism with new policies. A recent article featured in the news aggregator China.org outlines the municipal government's plan to invest an estimated US$2 billion for 23 cultural tourism programmes this year ("Xi'an Promotes Cultural Tourism Industry," 2020). For instance, the article maintains that the programme contains several policies to develop a stay-at-home economy for domestic tourism through e-sports as part of the cultural tourism industry (Huaxia, 2020). Appealing to domestic tourists during the coronavirus pandemic can help the Xi'an Muslim Quarter stay alive while bringing back its Chinese authenticity before foreign tourists return. All in all, this research is timely because government and tourist agencies have been paying attention to the Xi'an Muslim Quarter.

2.6 An Overview of Online Social Media in China

Online social media is a useful tool to guide visitors to explore their horizon of tourist attractions. In China, tourists use mobile applications frequently. Among all of the mobile applications, Weibo, Mafengwo, and Zhihu are the most popular at the present time. According to Fan, Zhao, Chen, and Xu (2014), more than 500 million users were attracted by Weibo in less than five years. Zhihu and Mafengwo also have more than 100 million users registered (X. Jin & Ye, 2019). By uploading feedback and images, tourists use Weibo, Mafengwo, and Zhihu as the platform to share their tourism experience. Tourists also can find suitable references to the destinations on these platforms. Weibo, Mafengwo, and Zhihu are not only content producing, sharing, and consuming platforms, but also a place of opinion exchange (Shi, Zhao, Guan, & Huang, 2017).

Chapter 3: Literature Review

In this chapter, the literature is reviewed to provide an overview of themes that are precisely related to my dissertation. I have carried out an analysis of literature that includes the following topics: historical tourism; ethnic tourism; customer service and customer satisfaction; and tourism destination image.

Tourism in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter is a significant research topic and worthy of study. This chapter also demonstrates the above-mentioned themes are important because they fulfil three significant goals. Firstly, they determine there is a gap in the literature which this dissertation begins to fill. Secondly, they provide the overall knowledge connected with my topic. Lastly, they assist the progress of the discussion that is presented in the Discussion Chapter.

3.1 Heritage Tourism

The definition of heritage tourism is a complex issue. At the beginning of the 21st century, the definition of heritage tourism was based on the aspect of supply. According to Yale (1991), heritage tourism is a kind of tourism activity centred on the value of historic sites or phenomena which we have inherited. In this context, people will seek anything from historical buildings to arts and crafts and beautiful scenery. In the same vein, Sharpley (1996) also provided a definition of heritage tourism from the perspective of supply, noting that the things which people inherited from the past can literally be defined as heritage. The recent definitions of heritage focus more on tourists' own demands and perceptions. Some researchers suggest that the earlier definitions confuse understandings of historical cultural tourism and heritage tourism. They state that heritage tourism is a subgroup of tourism and its main motivation is based on the perception of the personal heritage of the destination (Poria,

Butler, & Airey, 2001). There are two concepts related to the definition of heritage tourism which need to be discussed when considering heritage tourism: the motivation of tourists and the tourists' perception of the destination (Poria et al., 2001). Two years later, the same authors further emphasised that perception is the core of heritage tourism (Poria, Butler, & Airey, 2003). Additionally, according to Garrod and Fyall (2001), heritage tourism can provide experiences not only to the tourists who regard the heritage sites as belonging to them, but also to people who believe there is no relationship between them and the destination. Tourists can explore any meaning from heritage buildings, landscapes and arts (Garrod & Fyall, 2001).

In order to discuss the term 'heritage tourism' more deeply, it is useful to consider heritage attractions. According to Fyall, Garrod and Leask (2012), 'heritage attraction' not only refers to objective items such as heritage buildings and heritage monuments, but also exists among something which can arouse tourists' emotions and preferences. Tourists' experience of the authenticity of heritage is affected by external factors such as gender, income, education level, social status, place of residence and previous visit experiences (Waitt, 2000). Chhabra, Healy, and Sills (2003) stated that many heritage tourism products rely on the re-creation or staging of cultural traditions. In context, they conclude that the decisive factor of tourist satisfaction is whether the authenticity of the heritage can be perceived (Chhabra et al., 2003). Additionally, Apostolakis (2003) argued that authenticity plays an significant role in the formation of heritage tourism motivation and heritage attraction image. Besides that, tourists have also admitted that heritage tourism can be customised and commercialised (Y. Wang, 2007). All in all, a heritage attraction should promote the culture of heritage, and its own partial authenticity, from the perspective of authenticity.

3.1.1 Heritage Tourism in China

In China, the earliest research related to the concept of heritage tourism is from 1999. D. W. Wang (1999) stated that the concept of heritage can cover all creations since the civilisation of humankind. Heritage tourism includes human and natural heritage resources (D. W. Wang, 1999). According to J. Wang (2008), the particular content of Chinese literature on the subject is divided into eight topics, including the basic theory of heritage tourism, the development and protection of heritage sites, the research on heritage tourists, and heritage tourism education. Compared with the research in other countries, there is insufficient research on the basic theories of heritage tourism in China (J. Wang, 2008). However, the researchers in China reflect different research characteristics. In other words, the different policy backgrounds will influence the main issue of current concern in heritage tourism development.

With the development of cities in China, some contradictions between heritage protection and tourism development are being increasingly seen. Firstly, the spatial contradiction between heritage protection and urban construction in urban development has led to the loss of the heritage characteristics of historical and cultural cities. For example, Beijing's Ming and Qing ancient city blocks were severely damaged because of the development of rapid urbanisation (Kai, 2005). Secondly, the suppliers do not pay enough attention to tourists' travel consumption experience in the process of heritage travel. For instance, the heritage tourism in Xi'an is mainly static sightseeing, as the interpretation system is not perfect, and this greatly reduces the attraction of heritage tourism in Xi'an (J. Wang, 2008). Finally, the over-exploitation of heritage still exists.

3.1.2 Heritage Tourism in Xi'an

Xi'an in the Tang Dynasty was called 'Chang'an' in ancient times, and was the important birthplace of ancient civilisation in the Yellow River basin of China. It is worth mentioning that the Mausoleum of the First Qin Emperor is a world heritage site which is located in Xi'an. In recent years, Xi'an's administration has begun to actively prepare for the declaration of more world heritage sites (J. Wang, 2008). Once the application is successful, the number of world-class heritage sites in Xi'an will greatly increase. Although Xi'an has rich heritage tourism resources, the natural heritage resources are relatively scarce. All in all, the majority of the current historical and cultural heritage of Xi'an is from the Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE). There are only a few Zhou Dynasty (1046-256 BCE) and Qin Dynasty (221-206 BCE) tombs and site foundations left.

3.2 Ethnic Tourism

The first use of the term 'ethnic tourism' is attributed to Smith (1977). He defined ethnic tourism as a tourism aimed at tourists in terms of the "quaint customs of indigenous and often exotic peoples" (p. 2). Since then, many scholars have provided definitions of ethic tourism based on different elements. In this dissertation, drawing on with the reality of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter, I regard ethnic tourism as referring to a short-lived period for tourists to observe, visit and experience an ethnic gathering place that is different from their own culture, language, economic life and psychological characteristics.

Xi'an was one of the most significant points on the ancient Silk Road and, as a result, it attracted a community of Muslim traders from Central Asia. They were referred to as the Hui people by the locals (Cheyanne, 2017). As the 'ethnic culture boom' (Walsh & Swain, 2004) has driven the development of the tourism industry in China, ethnic tourism has also

flourished in recent years based on the Hui people's cultural resources and ethnic tourism attractions in Xi'an. These ethnic resources include the following tourist attractions:

1) Halal food. The Xi'an Muslim Quarter has evolved into a Xi'an foodie nexus as it is famous for halal food.

2) Muslim buildings. There are 10 well-known mosques and Muslim architectural buildings in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter (Kayak, 2020). The Xi'an Muslim Quarter is a very popular destination in Xi'an.

On a completely different and negative note, there is always a potentially dangerous situation in being Muslim in China. Although the Xi'an Muslim Quarter is not experiencing the crackdowns seen in the Muslim area of Xinjiang, one Muslim stated that "you can't be too careful" (Chen, 2019, para. 10). As an example, the previously bilingual signs in Arabic and Chinese at the entrances of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter have been superseded by signs with only Chinese characters (Chen, 2019). However, there is an excellent sense of community in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter. The community used its religious capital against the implementation of a district redevelopment plan. Their struggle compelled the authorities to incorporate the Muslim way of living and conducting business in a revised redevelopment plan (Zhai & Ng, 2013).

3.3 Customer Service and Customer Satisfaction

3.3.1 Tourism and the Internet

For many people in China, life is replete with Internet usage and e-platforms. Searching the Internet is now a valuable source of information on tourism because it has a global scope and, with certain applications, multimedia experiences. It has enabled travellers to make better

choices when they are abroad and also provides a forum for them to relate their own opinions. People can exchange views on modes of travel, accommodation, food, safety, and other aspects of tourism with each other. They can gain knowledge of elements of travel from online reviews viewed on platforms such as Yelp, Trip Advisor, TravBuddy.com, Travellers Point, WAYN, Woophy, and Passport Stamp (Miguéns, Baggio, & Costa, 2008).

Many tourists use online platforms to gain information on the Xi'an Muslim Quarter, especially concerning halal food restaurants. Before the Internet, these ratings were done by food experts or professional food critics. The Internet has the advantage of promoting a more democratic method of obtaining food ratings. The reviewing techniques of two early restaurant critics, Ruth Reichl and Craig Claiborne, have spurred people to become involved in online food evaluations (Goodsir, Neill, Williamson, & Brown, 2014). Goodsir et al. (2014) noted two prominent food review types. These are connoisseurly, which involve the more thorough depictions originating from someone who knows the subject, and procedural, in which evaluations are done either by numbers or the employment of icons. Culinary elements that are important to tourists include the food itself, the service, the ambiance of the setting, décor, menu, and price (Pantelidis, 2010). These restaurant reviews are important in contributing to the previously mentioned social capital and culinary capital in addition to the individual and national identity. Xiang and Gretzel (2010) noted that the use of social media in generating hospitality reviews is creating challenges for the more traditional purveyors of tourist-related information.

Additionally, due to the use of online platforms, the tourism industry's losses were considerably reduced during the epidemic. On July 19, 2020, the Xi'an Municipal People's Government had a press conference and announced the complete resumption of inter-

province tourism in the city. Along with this, more than 570 travel agencies and online tourist operators have resumed group tours. Tourism in Xi'an stayed popular because it was viewed online on the Internet (Xi'an Municipal People's Government, 2020).

3.3.2 Culinary Capital

According to Richards (2015), food tourists look for interactions with local communities by sharing food knowledge and culture. He went on to say that this encourages local communities to preserve their local culture and particularly its culinary contributions. There is also the concept of culinary capital introduced by Naccarato and LeBesco (2013). They regard it as the knowing and showing of knowledge and becoming that embodies food knowledge, food practices, and rituals within socio-cultural settings (Naccarato & LeBesco, 2013). Culinary capital is shown when diners boast about their particular food experiences to other people who lack those experiences. As the Xi'an Muslim Quarter is also popular for halal food, its culinary capital will also be considered in this dissertation.

3.3.3 Servicescape and Service Encounter

The partaking of food and beverages takes place in what is termed a 'servicescape' (Bitner, 1992). More specifically, the servicescape applies to the actual physical location in which the hospitality and service actions take place. It takes into account the spatial arrangement and how the furniture and other items are used, and elements such as lighting, general noise, music, air quality, and temperature. The interactions between the customers and the service employees are called the 'service encounter'. Food reviewers take into account both the service encounter and the servicescape when they make their evaluations. Not surprisingly, servicescape can affect these ratings as soon as customers enter a restaurant (Lin & Mattila, 2010). Lin and Mattila (2010) also noted that perceived congruency between restaurant

appearance and the food served had a positive effect on the pleasure level. Empirical data have been employed to study variances in cultures regarding attitudes to food and commensality (i.e., eating and drinking at the same table) (Fischler, 2011). As many tourists pay more attention to the halal food restaurants, the influences of servicescape and service encounter on the satisfaction of the customer cannot be ignored.

3.4 Tourism Destination Image

Since John Hunt proposed the idea of the image of a tourism destination in the 1970s, the subject has attracted the attention of researchers and experts because it plays a decisive role in the decision-making and behaviour of tourists (Chen, Lai, Petrick, & Lin, 2016). The definition of the concept of tourist destination image has not yet been unified. However, most scholars try to identify it based on the subjective perspective of tourists. Hunt (1975) presented for the first time the view that the image of a tourist destination is people's impression of a non-residential place, and affirmed the importance of the image for the development of tourist destinations. This explanation attributed the destination image to the category of stream of consciousness. Based on this view, Lawson and Baud-Bovy (1977) further combined sentiment analysis and the individual's cognitive perspective. They pointed out that the image of a tourist destination is a personal expression of knowledge, impressions, prejudices, imagination and emotions about a specific event or place (Lawson & Baud-Bovy, 1977). Crompton also promoted this view of the tourist's destination image. He interpreted the image of a tourist destination as the sum of feelings, ideas, impressions, and beliefs about specific things, events, and behaviours (Crompton, 1979). Embacher and Buttle (1989) paid more attention to the significant effect of the cognitive and emotional elements of the evaluation of a tourist destination after travelling. Besides that, tourists could subjectively select a few expected descriptions and impressions to complete the imagination of the

destination from the overall impressions of the public (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991). In recent years, some researchers have regarded the overall evaluation of the image of a tourist destination as coming from the result of the interactive influence of the individual's concept, emotion, thinking and willingness to visit the destination (Tasci, Gartner, & Cavusgil, 2007).

After reviewing the previous literature, four claims about a tourist's destination image are considered here. First of all, Chen et al. (2016) defined the image of a tourist destination as a person's perception of the diversified attributes or activities accessible at a travel destination. This view focused on the cognition and evaluation of various attributes and characteristics of tourist destinations and can provides a theoretical basis for the establishment of the image of tourist destinations, especially the method of measurement of the cognitive image. The second claim regarded the image of tourist destination as the sum of the beliefs, ideas and impressions about the destination (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991). Kim and Richardson (2003) also defined the image of a tourist destination as the totality of the impressions, beliefs, thoughts, expectations and feelings of the destination accumulated over time. This theory explores the emotional components of tourist destination images and provides a method of measurement of the emotional image of the destination. The third theory explains the image of tourist destination as the personal overall impression and attitude (Dadgostar & Isotalo, 1992; Echtner & Ritchie, 1993). It proposes that the image of a tourist destination is stored in memory as a complete pattern, and the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

The last claim is, according to MacKay and Fesenmaier (1997), that a tourist's destination image is the impression of the destination that is woven after experiencing the combination of tourist products, attractions and attributes. Murphy, Pritchard, and Smith (2000) also approve of this opinion. They defined the image of a tourist destination as the sum of associations and

pieces of information associated with a destination. Additionally, some researchers discussed the idea that the destination image is an interactive system which includes individuals' thoughts, opinions, feelings, visualisations, and intention (Tasci et al., 2007). Based on this view, the image of a tourist destination can be regarded as a system formed by the interconnection and interaction of the image elements of the tourist destination. This present study agrees with the last theory, which considers the image of a tourist destination as a system emerging from the the interaction of the basic elements of images. In this way, in this dissertation, customer reviews and comments on Chinese online social media can be regarded as reflecting images of destinations.

3.4.1 Halal Food and the Generalisation of the Muslim Label

Some of Xi'an's most famous dishes are called halal food. Possibly the most well-known is called yangrou paomo which is crumbled flatbread in mutton stew. It is made up of sliced-up mantou that is boiled in lamb broth and served with strips of tender lamb meat with fresh vegetables on top. It is a great dish on a cold winter day. There is also roujiamo, which has been called the world's oldest sandwich. It is made up of halal minced meat placed between flatbread and topped with different spices such as star anise and coriander. Lamb skewers are also a major item in the Muslim quarter. They consist of pieces of lamb that have been seasoned with various spices including Szechuan peppercorns and cumin. They are skewered onto fresh tree branches from a tamarisk tree. One of the best sweet items is osmanthus flower jelly which looks like something between a cake and jelly. Also available to try are bean threads, Xi'an dumplings, cold noodles, frozen yogurt, and pomegranate juice (Bohari, 2017) although, ironically, these food items are not from the traditional cuisine of Hui. Using the logo of halal, the prices of the cuisine can increase a lot. As X. Zhu (2018) commented, imitation products exist in Xi'an's tourism industry.

3.4.2 Model of Destination Competitiveness and Sustainability

According to Meng (2006), the quality of the tourism experience and tourists' perceptions of destination competitiveness have a positive relationship, which means that destination competitiveness can affect the quality of tourists' experiences. In fact, the competitiveness of one tourism destination can be limited by a number of factors. One of them is the core resources and attractors (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). The Xi'an Muslim Quarter is located in a competitive environment. Many tourists visit Xi'an because of the numerous tourist attractions, such as Xian City Wall, Bell and Drum Towers, the Forest of Stone Steles and the famous archaeological discovery which is the Terracotta Army of Qin Shi Huang. However, compared with those tourism attractions, the Xi'an Muslim Quarter is obviously unique due to the Muslim culture and culinary resources. Those resources give the Xi'an Muslim Quarter a competitive advantage in drawing visitors. With its 10 mosques and Snack Street, it is a great area for both shopping and worshipping.

Additionally, according to Ritchie and Crouch (2003), tourist destination image can qualify or amplify a destination's competitiveness. Based on the above discussions, the online comments in the Zhihu, Weibo and Mafengwo reflect visitors' destination images of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter. However, the destination image of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter is not absolutely positive. Thus, the destination competitiveness could be improved. This dissertation will analyse the themes revealed in the comments describing tourists' experiences, in order to make recommendations which could improve the quality of tourists' experiences.

3.5 Concluding the Literature Review

The literature review in this chapter has explored different aspects of destination tourism. Notably, there exists a gap in knowledge when it comes to considering how tourists use social media sites to record their experiences of destinations such as the Xi'an Muslim Quarter. While researchers are aware of the growing role of social media in developing the public image of travel destinations, recent studies have sought to consider how posts on social media platforms may reflect the areas that tourists consider as most relevant to their experiences. In the present study, I will seek to fill the gap in knowledge by reviewing what users post on social media to establish what they consider to be the most important aspects of their experiences in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the methods and methodology used in this dissertation. It begins by presenting my understanding of the concept of research paradigm and the methodology which used in my research: qualitative description. The chapter then presents my research method including how I selected the research sample size, the data collection process and the process of data analysis. Those sections provide information to the reader that facilitates the deep understanding of my Findings and Discussion chapters.

4.1 Research Objectives

The objectives were developed from the gap identified in knowledge of the impact of tourist experiences regarding the Xi'an Muslim Quarter. The gap also shows that Chinese online media provides a large amount of comments from tourists about the Xi'an Muslim Quarter since customers can upload their own feedback on websites straight after they experience the Xi'an Muslim Quarter. The main purpose of this research is to explore the factors affecting guest experiences by analysing online tourists' reviews. This study's major objective is to answer the following question:

What impacts tourist experiences while visiting the Xi'an Muslim Quarter?

Underpinning the primary question are the following secondary questions:

1. In what way do tourists, using online media, express their experiences of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter?

2. What primary themes emerge for tourists in their considerations of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter?

3. What recommendations can be given to improve the tourists' experience?

4.2 Research Paradigm

A research paradigm is an established framework which is shared by a group of researchers in a field of scientific research (Healy & Perry, 2000). It could be described as "the well-known model" that follows a certain type of scientific activity. These models include all things related to scientific research, such as a shared world view, basic scientific theories, and research methods, and provide the reasons for researchers using these methods for observation (Bryman, 2012). According to Gray (2014), a research paradigm is important as it provide guidance on the interrelationship of research philosophies and methods applied in research. For this study, the paradigm contributes the way of thinking about and understanding the influences on tourist experiences.

Gray (2014) argued that there are many research paradigms, such as positivism, interpretivism, and critical inquiry. The term positivism is based on the objective position. Positivism insist that objective items are independent and verified by scientific methods instead of being based on individuals' experience and knowledge (Scotland, 2012). Interpretivism is one of the major anti-positivist stances, and regards the world as not existing without previous individuals' knowledge of it (Grix, 2010, p. 83). According to Gray (2014), critical inquiry offers a different dimension to interpretivism and positivism, and refers to the idea that the world can be changed, and thus the critical paradigm also seeks to change the world. These different paradigms can be used for different understandings of a problem and

to explain complex social phenomena. Paradigm choice is important as it guides researchers to explore the research questions in a particular theoretical way.

Positivism and interpretivism are set against each other. This dissertation will explore these two paradigms which are commonly the basis for research studies. The positivist paradigm is the basis of research conducted to explore relationships between variables in an attempt to identify the causes which can affect results (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Researchers seek the relationships or changes among variables by using the positivist paradigm (Krauss, 2005). Gray (2014) explained that research based on the positivist paradigm normally involves a quantitative approach, for instance surveys and questionnaires, as they are intended to ensure reliability. By contrast, the interpretivist paradigm is based on the idea that there is no absolutely objectivity and it emphasises the difference among individual participants' knowledge (Scotland, 2012). According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019), research based on the interpretive paradigm aims to formulate different clarifications of a social phenomenon based on the diverse viewpoints of people and groups. Gray (2014) suggested that research based on the interpretive paradigm more frequently uses qualitative methods. From all these discussions, it can be seen that the positivist paradigm is inappropriate for the current study. This research needs to explore the areas which impact the experiences of tourists while they are visiting the Xi'an Muslim Quarter, which leads to the choice of interpretivism as the research paradigm. Interpretivism can clarify the background, meaning, motivations and experiences of individuals for researchers (Taneja, Taneja, & Gupta, 2011). Consequently, it can help researchers to analyse different tourists' experiences and explore the themes which emerge for tourists in their considerations of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter. Besides, the rich data used in this dissertation were collected from users' reviews on websites rather than numerical statistics, and the analysis of data was qualitative in order to contribute

the deep meaning of each tourist's review. Therefore, the interpretive paradigm is most appropriate for current study as this research needs to analyse different individuals' tourist experience based on a set of text-based data.

4.2.1 Research Ontology and Epistemology

From the research philosophy perspective, a paradigm includes ontology and epistemology. According to Gray (2014), ontology refers to the study of being; it can be understood as the way of recognising how the world exists, and it is normally divided into two categories. Western thought regards realism and relativism as two opposing ontological categories (Gray, 2014). Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggested that the realist ontology is more related to the social world which views the world from an externally objective position. In other words, this ontology insists that the world is composed of absolutely objective truth (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). However, the relativist regards reality as able to be constructed in multiple ways based on different individuals' views (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). That also means that reality can be shaped by different factors, such as gender, and social and cultural factors (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Therefore, human thought can construct or change reality, which is thus not unique and not regarded as being objective (Saunders et al., 2019).

My research is relativist, based on the exploration of how different tourists explained their thoughts about their tourist experiences in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter via website uploads. Those experiences can reflect realities and actively improve the levels of existing and new knowledge consequent to tourists' experiences in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter. In brief, what tourists wrote about their experiences reflected what they already knew about the reality and what they had come to learn, and this contributes the new knowledge about the Xi'an Muslim Quarter during their stay there.

Ontology and epistemology are inseparable. While ontology emphasises the understanding of being, epistemology asks, "what knowledge means to know" (Gray, 2014, p. 19). According to Hofmann (2013), epistemology provides a theoretical background to decide the types of knowledge known, and includes objectivism, subjectivism, and constructivism.

According to Hofmann (2013), objectivism in research emphasises the researcher's need to exclude their internal feelings and values. The researcher's views should not affect the discovery of objective facts (Hofmann, 2013). In other words, the objectivist regards reality as existing irrespective of human awareness (Gray, 2014). The paradigm most commonly connected to objectivism is positivism. The objectivist epistemology regards reality as existing external to humans and it advocates that research should be based on an extremely scientific approach and the use of scientific words (Gray, 2014). By contrast, the constructivist epistemology rejects the view that truth and meaning always exist in the external world (Scotland, 2012). This epistemology represents the view that meaning and truth are constructed by researchers instead of discovered (Gray, 2014).

In my dissertation, the epistemology is the constructivist epistemology. My participants coming to know the Xi'an Muslim Quarter were subjective and did not rely on any scientific approaches. My participants' previous knowledge about the Xi'an Muslim Quarter was enhanced after they had some experiences. Consequently, the tourists' knowledge base reflects the constructivist epistemology. The combination of relativist ontology and constructivist epistemology contributes to my dissertation making sense in a philosophical way.

4.3 Research Methodology

In this section, I explain my methodological approaches. First of all, this section starts by identifying the most appropriate research methodology for the current study, which is qualitative description. Next, I discuss how I selected my research participants, explore my data collection processes and explain my data analysis processes. Chapter 5: Findings and Chapter 6: Discussion will be based on the combination of these activities.

4.3.1 Quantitative and Qualitative Methodology

According to Gray (2014), a research methodology is a way of gathering data, and includes qualitative and quantitative approaches. A suitable research methodology can provide the way to seek better answers to research questions (Bryman, 2012). Quantitative research usually involves highly specialised approaches, especially those which express results with mathematics and statistics (Kaplan, 2004). A quantitative methodology is often used to verify theories and hypotheses about the world within the objective framework (O'Dwyer & Bernauer, 2014).

Qualitative description is an inductive approach that aims to understand a phenomenon or the worldview of the individuals involved in that phenomenon (Sandelowski, 2000). It can identify their understanding of a phenomenon. As a methodology, qualitative description was first used in qualitative health research (Margarete Sandelowski, 2000). Margarete Sandelowski (2000) stated that it was erroneous to regard qualitative description as lacking validity. She also clarified how the reputation of qualitative description has been misrepresented. Quantitative description is dissimilar to other qualitative methods as it is a richer, straight description of a phenomenon (Neergaard, Olesen, Andersen, & Sondergaard, 2009). Additionally, qualitative description inspects a social phenomenon from insiders'

perspectives and generally analyses data from contexts, rather than from numbers (Lapan et al., 2012). It can allow me to stay close to the data without over-interpreting it. Consequently, qualitative description is the most suitable methodology for my research because it can help me obtain straight comments and data about the Xi'an Muslim Quarter from my participants. Secondly, qualitative description promotes the analysis of who, what, where and why of events (Bolyai, Bova, & Harper, 2005). Moreover, qualitative description can allow me to contribute a theory to further research. As the first researcher to investigate tourists' experiences in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter, I need to seek not only the problem behind the phenomenon, but also a theory linked with the event. As Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005) explained, the strength of using data from personal stories, experiences or memories of individuals is that they can contribute the link between experience to theory. Based on the above analysis, and to answer the research questions, I decided to use qualitative description as my methodology.

4.3.2 Research Methods

Qualitative description and thematic analysis provided the framework for my research and responded to my research questions (see section 4.1):

What impacts tourist experiences while visiting the Xi'an Muslim Quarter?

Underpinning the primary question are the following secondary questions:

1. In what way do tourists, using online media, express their experiences of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter?

2. What primary themes emerge for tourists in their considerations of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter?

3. What recommendations can be given to improve the tourists' experience?

4.3.2.1 Research sampling approach

I used purposive sampling to identify and collect data from my participants via several online social media, such as Weibo, Mafengwo, and Zhihu. Suri (2011) proposed that purposeful sampling makes a unique contribution to qualitative research as it is one of the critical components within qualitative research. According to Patton (2014), purposive sampling allows researchers to effectively use limited resources as it can identify and select information-rich cases.

For my research, the journals, travel notes and documents on specific websites constituted a purposeful sample because these documents represented a population of people who were travelling to the Xi'an Muslim Quarter, then providing feedback on it through those websites. The online social media added validity to my participants' comments because of their interactivity, which means that more posted comments can be added to the website, and argued over, and the information is enhanced. Additionally, those media are all popular forums. Weibo, Mafengwo, and Zhihu listed more than one hundred journals, travel notes and documents. For my research, I narrowed my document list to explore those uploaded on to those platforms from June until August 2019 which discussed the Xi'an Muslim Quarter (a total of 59 documents). Then, after selecting my samples I found they have clearly different focuses based on the publisher and the form of text. Consequently, I categorised the documents in the following ways:

- Journals by expert writers,

- Travel notes by people with no special certification, and

- Documents from official publishers.

4.3.2.2 Data collection and analysis

a) Data collection

For this research I obtained secondary data from online journals, travel notes and documents on Weibo, Mafengwo, and Zhihu by printing the articles and documents posted, and then reading and rereading them. To ensure that those data sets were written by my sampling participants, I looked for key terms (such as 'during traveling at Xi'an Muslim Quarter', or 'staying at Xi'an Muslim Quarter') within those uploads, and also examined the certification of the upload writers on their profiles.

b) Data analysis

For this research, in order to understand deeply what my participants meant, I used thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) regarded thematic analysis as a foundational method for qualitative analysis and indicated that it can be used for identifying, analysing, and reporting themes. Additionally, thematic analysis is a highly flexible approach (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). Consequently, it provided a more accessible form of analysis. Besides that, thematic analysis is suitable for summarising the key features of a large data set (Nowell et al., 2017). In this way, the combination of qualitative description and thematic analysis helps to produce a clear and organised final report (King, 2004). Therefore, thematic analysis helped me not only to examine the perspectives of different research participants, but also to avoid over-interpretation.

In this research, in order to identify the themes within the Chinese online social media posts, reading promoted my familiarity with the comments from my participants. That process allowed me to get close to the key themes in the posts. Next, I created a list of the themes that reflected answers to my research questions. After that, I reread the data several days later and

selected some of more significant themes. Then, I compared my original themes with the new list of themes. Following that, I finalised my themes by synthesising the two lists. After identifying my themes, I paid attention to the positive, negative and other compositional aspects within each theme. That process enabled me to gain a complete understanding of my data in rich and meaningful ways. Then, I explained my themes using participant quotes within each theme and again considered positive, negative and/or compositional contents. That process began the write-up of Chapter 5: Findings. Thus, as I began my write up, I followed the principles of qualitative description. Following is a figure describing the process of data collection and analysis.
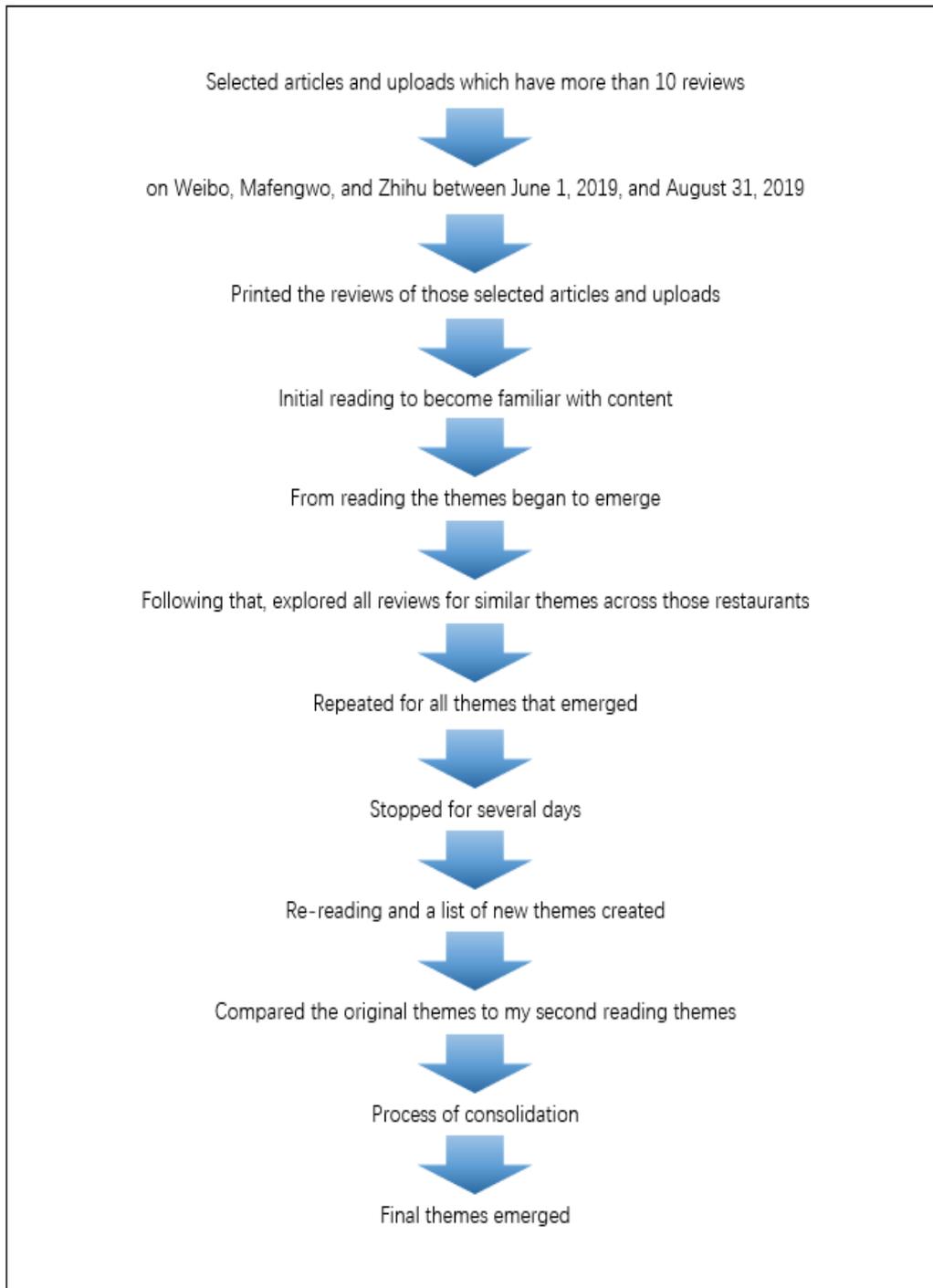
Figure 4. The process of data collection and analysis

Chapter 5: Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of this research. The data was collected from participants' uploads to Weibo, Mafengwo, and Zhihu. Those websites were specifically chosen because they are the most popular tourism websites in China. The feedback from customers was selected between June 1, 2019, and August 31, 2019. As the temperature is not too high and is suitable for being outdoors at that time, it is the peak tourist time in Xi'an. For my research, I narrowed the research objects obtained from the websites' lists to include journals by expert writers, travel notes by people with no special certification, and documents from official publishers. Moreover, the feedback comments were directly translated into English if the language was not English.

The data was selected in order to answer my three underpinning research questions: In what way do tourists, using online media, express their experiences of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter? What primary themes emerge for tourists in their considerations of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter? What recommendations can be given to improve the tourists' experience? Through the analysis of the data, my research findings respond to the above research questions. Furthermore, the information provided by answering the three underpinning research questions responds to my primary question: What impacts tourist experiences while visiting the Xi'an Muslim Quarter? Consequently, the themes identified in my findings reflect all aspects of my research data and arise directly from the feedback of my participants.

5.2 An Internet-famous Site

From the analysis of my participants' data within my database, it is possible to state that tourists generally regard the Xi'an Muslim Quarter as a popular destination in their comments on the Internet, reflecting the fact that the participants were aware of the uniqueness of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter. Their descriptors mainly covered: a landmark; and a label of the city. The following section explores both domains.

Piao noted:

> What is a features of Xi'an? The Muslim Street is one of the **landmarks** of Xi'an. Most of the tourists will visit here the first time they arrive at Xi'an. Most of the restaurants are famous and on the list of advice.

Vvid said:

> The first impression is "Eat Eat Eat" because of multiple famous restaurants are here. Most of the restaurant has been tried. Now I am trying to find another delicious food here. The Muslim Street is become a **label** of Xi'an. It is because most of the foreign tourist will recognize here as their priority. The flow of people is very high. It's good to see the lively environment.

Chai noted:

> The Muslim Street is **labelled** as a food paradise place of Xi'an. Most of the tourists will visit here, including the native as well. There are many delicious foods. It is very difficult to try all the food at one time. My favourite food is Lamb Kebabs.

Bingxia noted:

> The Muslim Street represents as Xi'an Street. The location is *superior,* it's located beside the belfry. The building is classical. Usually the flow of people is very large because most of the delicious foods are gathering here. I felt *antique* when I visit here. It definitely will satisfy you.

The Xi'an Muslim Quarter is one of the famous landmarks of Xi'an City among tourists. However, the overall tourism planning of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter and other tourism plans does not match this status. As Xu and Wan (2009) noted, the current orientation of Xi'an's tourism planning is to create a prosperous style of the Tang Dynasty. In this way, the Xi'an Muslim Quarter tourism development model is inconsistent with Xi'an's overall tourism planning.

The local government has not paid much attention to the management of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter. Based on this situation, if tourists felt they had awful experiences in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter, their opinion of Xi'an City was different. Currently, the Xi'an Government has begun to pay attention to the governance and rectification of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter. As indicated on the government website, some management plans will be drawn up for the Xi'an Muslim Quarter in the future (Xi'an Government, 2019).

5.3 Heritage Culture as Educational Knowledge

One of the noticeable themes within the Weibo, Mafengwo, and Zhihu reviews was the emphasis that tourist's uploads had on the influences of historical culture. Many of my participants mentioned they were willing to bring their children to experience the heritage

culture in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter. The participants mentioned that the architecture of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter can diffuse the knowledge of historical heritage.

Candy commented on the historical culture;

Gao's Grand Courtyard need to visit. There are several beautiful historical rooms to visit and **wonderful Chinese art and decorations**. My daughter also enjoyed the Shadow Puppet Theatre. After that, we bought some Shadow Puppet.

Penguin noted:

Don't miss **Shadow Puppet theatre** at Gao's Grand Courtyard. It is really **interesting** to see that. Even the story has been changed a little bit but it is suited for children. It is very attractive.

Mike wrote:

Personally, I like **traditional Chinese objects**. Shaanxi culture should start with **Shadow Puppet**. The superb craftsmanship of a shadow puppet made us marvel at the ingenuity of ancient people. I hope that these cultures can be spread and accepted by more children.

Rain wrote his view:

The Gao's Grand Courtyard can be seen in the architecture of the ancient large families. There are all of the historical atmospheres. It is suitable for **raising the enlightenment of children**.

Arises also posted:

> The ***Gao's Grand Courtyard*** is inside at Xi'an Muslim Quarter, where you can see ***Shadow Puppet***. It is a very suitable place to bring the children there. It can help children to ***understand the historical and cultural heritage***. Otherwise, after more than ten years, children will forget this history and culture. The inheritance of history requires the efforts of every generation.

Additionally, Nan wrote:

> Children do not want to leave because they have fun here. It is recommended that children can try calligraphy and painting. It is a very unique handmade experience.

Visiting the historical tourism attractions gives many tourists an opportunity to learn more, not only about the history of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter but also about Chinese culture, food and history, as JunYao (2015) noted. In that way, the Xi'an Muslim Quarter brings knowledge to many of my participants, especially the young people. That knowledge added to their recognition of Chinese culture and history, and, in particular, the history of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter. Besides that, my participants believed that this knowledge could increase the enlightenment of their children in regard to Chinese history. In my opinion, the history and culture of Hui Min Street is very significant. However, the government and experts have not paid any attention to the cultural diversity of Xi'an's Muslim Street. Not only has the cultural value of Xi'an's Muslim Street not been fully explored, also the continuity of cultural heritage is not high. Although the historical and cultural district of Xi'an Muslim Street is famous for its cultural resources, there is unclear historical background and a weak sense of Hui cultural identity. A lot of tourists cannot distinguish between Xi'an culture and Muslim culture in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter.

5.4 Ethnic Cultures and Socialisation

One theme that my participant data revealed was that many tourists noticed the cultural blending that has happened in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter. Hui people combined their own culture and Han ethnic culture. Participants' feedback on this phenomenon was positive. Many tourists not only sought to experience the traditional Hui ethnic culture but also tried to add to their engagement within social interaction experiences through exploring this different culture.

Natalin posted his experience of getting to know Hui people's culture:

> The **Great Mosque** in the ancient capital of Xi'an is a unique embodiment of the **historical architecture** of several Dynasties. Walking through the courtyards, pavilion, minaret, fences and memorial gateways, I was amazed by the historical relics, stone tablets with ancient inscriptions in Arabic. It is the first time to experience the combination of **Islamic culture and Chinese culture**. It is truly an ancient amazing temple.

Liu xiaoshun commented:

> Even though this is a tourist attraction one must still be aware of its religious role and be respectful. This mosque is now a national key cultural relic protection unit. As long as you walk into inside, you will find that this mosque is different. The style of this mosque seems like **a traditional Chinese garden**, which is very impressive.

Shanika noted:

> The guide's explanation leads me to have a strong interest in religious architecture.

Zhou particularly enjoyed the activities that he experienced at the Islamic mosque:

> Along the way, I saw a lot of young Hui people rushing to the temple, and they came
> to pray. I *feel honour enough to see them pray*. Besides that, there is a new Muslim
> couple taking a wedding photo and wearing traditional national costumes. I took a lot
> of photos.

Taikoo's post reflected meeting another tourist:

> This temple is an artwork of the combination of Chinese architecture and Islamic
> faith, which is very distinctive. When I was taking pictures, I met Mr Wang, an expert
> in the protection of intangible cultural heritage. *We felt like old friends at the first*
> *meeting and changed WeChat*. It was an unexpected meeting.

Mia noted:

> We met the new couple were taking photos and everyone's emotions were mobilized.
> People followed instructions on helping others and blessed the new couple.

Consequently, connecting with people from a particular culture gave many of my participants
an opportunity to know about the Hui culture. These tourist experiences enhanced
interactivity and communication. Not only were the tourists attracted by a different culture,
but the movements between Han tourists and Hui tourists also enhanced the proper cultural
integration.

5.5 Participant Experiences of the Taste of Food

After I collected and analysed the data from my database, it was possible to conclude that
most of my participants enjoyed the halal food in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter, reflecting that

satisfied customers realised the uniqueness of the halal food. In my findings, I selected and narrowed down the range of adjectives they used which were to describe the cuisine; their descriptors included: delicious, great, classic, particular, tasty, good, luscious, hot, fresh, and authentic. However, some tourists did not enjoy their experiences. They described the food using mediocre, greasy, the smell of mutton, and annoying. The following section explores both domains.

Zhe said:

> I ordered two dishes of beef and lamb soup dumplings. It is ***delicious***, juicy, the meat is very delicate. Also, the dumpling wrapper is chewy. Each bowl of lamb soup dumplings is a pretty large portion. This shop is a time-honoured brand and located in the most prosperous area of Muslim Street. I guess the native would also suggest this shop.

Tang noted:

> One serving has eight soup dumplings. The size of each soup dumpling is bigger than the spoon, the wrapper is light, juicy, stuffing was ***great***. The shop is spacious. There are also multiple floors and I was not worried about the seat. You also can order various types of foods such as braised chicken with gourd, lamb chops, dessert and so on.

Pabloo reported:

> One of the most ***classic*** food in Xi An, the shop is located in Muslim Street. The Soup dumplings are very particular for me, its not sticky. Please be careful, because it is

very ***hot***. However, it is normal for eating soup dumplings. I also suggest the dessert, it was tasty.

Chsbo remarked:

Great reputation shop, must go to try when visit. Honestly, the quality of beef soup dumplings is ***good***, the real stuff, the soup is very plenty. It cost twenty RMB each and serve with eight soup dumplings. For me, it is a bit expensive… and I am used to eating pork dumplings. I guess some of the Han nationality will not be used to eat beef favour. In addition, the dessert was ***tasty*** and rich.

Lis said:

The dish is not greasy. Soup dumpling is ***very delicious***, luscious, very satisfied with it.

Ang said:

One of the well-known halal restaurants is in Muslim Street. A lot of people, most of the people is tourist, the environment is decent, the taste is more ***authentic***. For personal opinion, I feel the beef flavour is ***more delicious***. You can add some cold dish on it. The price is affordable.

Jiu said:

This is a real and old famous restaurant. I keep eating during my childhood, the taste is consistent. ***Very authentic.*** It is very difficult to keep the same taste until now. Sour Plum Soup is my most favourite. Its keep cooking ***fresh*** every day. I will continue to support it.

Dong Kang mentioned:

It is my first time to come to Xi'an. Following the local friends, we ordered the local Hui mutton bread in the soup. The waiter served us some bread. I didn't know how to eat them. My friend told me that I have to tear up the bread. If I want to taste original flavour, I should to tear up the bread into small pieces. It is **an authentic way** to try this dish. I feel it is **not bad** to have my meal in a traditional way.

However, some visitors had negative food taste experiences, As Che noted:

I don't know why it was well-known. I feel very disappointed for it, the taste is so **mediocre** compared to others. Furthermore, the service is very bad, the face was very unhappy when serving me. I hope you guys don't superstitious for propaganda, please search for reality.

Amy added:

Is a Halal restaurant. Overall is decent, the price is affordable. However, the beef soup dumplings contain the **strong smell of lamb**, the **taste has an offensive smell of mutton**. Noodle is too spicy. It is very difficult to find a place and need to share a table.

Dpuser said:

The waiter served two bread cakes to me and did not explain anything. After a while, I realized I should tear up the bread cakes. The bread cake was too hard to tear up. **I wasted too much time.** It is a really strange and **annoying** cooking method.

While most consumers enjoyed eating food in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter, some of them did not. The adjectives that they used to mention the food's taste noticeably reflected their attitudes. Nonetheless, although some participant feedback reflected negative attitudes towards the food in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter, and negative experiences, the majority of participant comments on food experiences were positive.

5.6 The Customer Service and Servicescape

My participants also mentioned customer service in their comments. From the analysis of my participants' data on hostels and restaurants in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter, again the majority of tourists posting on online media had found the service they had received to be enjoyable. In their feedback, many participants used positive words to explain their experiences. These included: enthusiasm, perfect, awesome, nice, great, friendly, classic, helpful, approachable, passion and "a good effort". Additionally, some of my participants also commented on the surrounding environment with negative attitudes.

Cars noted:

> The hostel is located on Muslim Street, it is very convenient. The atmosphere is *perfect*. All of the staffs are *enthusiastic*. They will be interacting with tourists during the night such as play games, singing, and so on. Although the size of the hostel is small, the humanity is strong. I decided I would come again the next time.

Rain said:

> Overall is *excellent*. The main entrance of restaurant is small, hidden at the middle of delicious cuisine, need to find out carefully. The environment is peaceful and suitable for the students' party like me. *Nice*!

Hong remarked:

It is the first choice for me when coming Xi An. Service is ***great***. The hostel has a regular event, it let me feel intimate. Highly recommend it.

Xiao added:

The bed is soft and comfortable. The staff is very ***friendly***. It let me feel ***classic***. The hostel is located at Muslim Street.

Tan said:

I like the vintage feel here, strongly recommend. The location is quiet. The walls are filled with the comment of the guest. The proprietor is very ***passionate*** and likes to entertain us. I can feel everything is prepared diligently and well effort. Furthermore, I can meet a lot of people here. They will play a movie in the hall at night. You also can find a quiet place for reading your book, writing a postcard and drink some milk tea. Overall, this is one of the best hostels.

While most of the feedback was positive, participants also commented on the lack of customer service and the negative attitudes towards the surrounding environment.

Shi Guang said:

The service is good, but the facilities ***need to change***, the surface of desk also has a lot of dust.

Mu Zi Noted:

I will not recommend this. The rooms don't have an independent bathroom. The service quality is ***not meeting my expectation***. I feel a little bit disappointing for it. Not surprising.

Chao Ren said:

It is normal. The location is convenient. The four people bedroom is decent. However, the eight people bed room is worse and messy. Furthermore, the cleanliness of the bathroom is not ideal, it's very ***smelly***.

Mi Feng remarked:

The food is expensive. The restaurant located in the middle of Street. It feel ***very noise*** here, not recommended.

Elf noted:

Definitely a place for mark. However, I felt really average! The ***management is chaotic***. There is one store that selling dried beef. The service attitude is really bad. The cashier won't look at you when you buy less. Furthermore, the waiter gives me a glance when I am asking about the sample for trying. I don't know why it is so famous? Really a ***bad experience***.

Ading said:

The street is ***dirty***, ***disorderly*** and ***poor***. Nothing special, but the price is really expensive. The taste of foods is average, looks ordinary. I am strongly not recommending this place!

Tang Tao remarked:

> The Muslim Street is beside the belfry. It takes around a few minutes to arrive. As some of the comments, the place is **_dirty_**, nothing special. The most confusing place is every store will label the "Most Authentic". It is very difficult to identify which is the "Real Authentic". Also, the place is **_very crowded_** because of huge human traffic. Nothing to suggest…

Although most tourists have a positive attitude towards the customer service of Xi'an's Muslim Street, a small number of customers felt that it needed more management. According to the uploads of my participants, some customers even considered that the ethnic minorities are too arrogant to provided satisfactory customer service. Although some customers feel unsatisfied, they recognised that the negative effects came from the environment, not the food itself.

5.7 Tourism Traps and the Generalisation of Halal

There were many dishes not belonging to Hui Muslim cuisine, and some people used the fame of halal food to label their own food. In fact, many snacks can be eaten outside of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter where the price will be lower.

Sandy said:

> Nothing special, I felt it was **_a trap_** to lie the tourists. Most of the foods can be found in everywhere, not traditional Halal food. The sanitation also terrible. Furthermore, you have to wait a long queue to purchase the Chinese Hamburger. I found only 3

Stars for this restaurant when using the application. I advise to use the application before rather to wait a long queue.

5.8 Summary of Findings

The findings of this study reveal that tourists who visit the Xi'an Muslim Quarter describe different experiences of the location through different social media sites. Descriptions of these experiences span different themes that range across the areas that social media users seem to prefer, the historical and cultural heritage of the tourist destination, experiences with different cuisines and food tastes, the significance of the halal food label and its use in tourist traps, and customer service and servicescape. Based on the findings, the Xi'an Muslim Quarter is among the most popular destinations among social media users on platforms such as Weibo, Mafengwo, and Zhihu. The cultural and historical significance of the tourism site emerges as one of the most important areas of interest for tourists who visit the Xi'an Muslim Quarter. Specifically, as revealed in the statements of the participants, the interaction between the historical Chinese and Muslim identities makes the Xi'an Muslim Quarter an especially relevant tourist destination. Therefore, experiencing how these aspects combine to give rise to unique experiences has been found to constitute an important part of the tourist experiences for people who tour the site.

Another important theme that constitutes a vital part of the experiences of tourists based on the findings is the experience with the different cuisines and food tastes. Based on these findings, tourists express remarkable interest in the cuisines and the tastes of foods that they come into contact with as part of their tour of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter. Using different adjectives to describe the tastes of the foods, the participants in the study summarise their

culinary experiences, indicating the importance of the diverse foods in the overall experiences of tourists who visit the site.

The themes of halal foods and how the label is used by hotel and restaurant proprietors to attract customers also emerges as a uniquely important aspect determining the experiences of tourists who visit Xi'an's Muslim Quarter. Visitors express concerns about their consumption of halal foods as opposed to those that are haram, which also presents a unique selling point for businesses in the destination. For instance, it matters a lot whether or not the food served in a given restaurant is halal or not. Therefore, there are also concerns about the use of the halal food labels among some of the operators of the outlets at the destination to lure customers and also increase the prices of products. Hence, the demand that is created by the halal label has been determined in the findings to impact customer decisions and also the prices of products.

Finally, the findings touch on the subject of customer satisfaction with respect to customer services and aspects of the servicescape. The participants in the study expressed concerns about the service delivery of the staff at the various outlets serving tourists at the Muslim Quarter as well as other aspects of the environment that determine their satisfaction with the area. The next chapter, Discussion, analyses the findings and explores how they relate to existing literature in answering the research questions presented earlier on in this study.

Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the findings are synthesised based on the themes arising from the data and evaluated based on insights derived from the existing literature. In the discussion, I also establish the different ways in which the reviewed posts present answers to the three secondary research questions and the primary research question. Therefore, this chapter serves to establish how the findings of the research can be used to respond to the research questions. The chapter also concludes the study by highlighting its theoretical and practical implications, considering its limitations, suggesting further research, and also summarising my contribution to the knowledge on the subject matter.

6.2 Tourist Destination and Social Media

The role of the Internet in enhancing the experiences of tourists is undisputed. As revealed in the review of literature, the Internet is increasingly becoming a major source of information for tourists seeking to locate tourist destinations that match their preferences. The findings of this study also reveal that the Internet, and specifically social media platforms, is valuable when tourists are seeking to locate places that they need to visit. Therefore, the Internet's role in marketing and conveying information about famous tourist destinations such as the Xi'an Muslim Quarter is growing significantly, based on the findings of this study.

Furthermore, the findings of this study show that tourists gauge their expectations of famous tourist destinations based on the information posted on social media sites. Therefore, whether they perceive a site to be interesting or not is to a large extent based on the information they get from online reviews of the destinations, especially those posted by other tourists. Based

on the reviews that have been analysed in this study, the Xi'an Muslim Quarter is a famous tourist destination, with reviewers exhibiting detailed knowledge of the different places to visit within the site. For instance, Piao described some of the landmark features or attractions on the site that any tourist seeking to visit the Muslim Quarter would no doubt be willing to explore. Similarly, the posts by Chai and Bingxia indicated that most of the tourists visiting the Xi'an Muslim Quarter would be keen not to miss it. Therefore, while the role of the Internet in shaping how tourists may perceive a destination before they visit is clear from the descriptions given in the posts of some of the participants in this study, the review of the literature reveals that the potential of social media sites in shaping the expectations of tourists has not been explored extensively.

A study by Heras-Pedrosa (2020) that seeks to examine the importance of social media in shaping the image of tourist destinations offered some insightful perspectives on the matter. Based on that study by Heras-Pedrosa, reviews on social media sites about a tourist destination may provide important clues about what aspects of the sites are valued by tourists. The information obtained from these online pages may be useful in the development of a more informed and systematic positioning strategy that would enhance not only the image of the site among tourists but also would generate more positive reviews. Prior studies, such as that by Chen et al. (2016), also explore the relationship between the image of a tourist destination and the attitudes and behaviours of tourist. Based on these studies, destinations that receive positive reviews by prior customers are preferred by prospective tourists. The findings of this study are consistent with these other studies in showing that tourist destinations such as the Xi'an Muslim Quarter can significantly benefit from social media reviews in enhancing the popularity of the site.

Reviews posted on social media pages capture important aspects that reflect the experiences that tourists have when visiting a site. A study by Chandralal and Valenzuela (2013) revealed that tourists are more likely to remember the sites or places that impacted the most on their expectations during their visit to the tourist destination. Therefore, the nature of social media and especially the unofficial nature of the platforms make it possible for tourists to record their memories of a tourist destination in the authentic manner that they remember. These posts may play a vital role in determining what tourists value and why they may prefer visiting a certain destination and not another one. This knowledge can be useful when positioning tourist destinations such as the Xi'an Muslim Quarter. Since there are plans underway to renovate the site and make it more appealing to tourists, it is necessary to consider the role that the Internet, and specifically social media sites, play in determining what is important in terms of preserving the memories of tourists.

The findings of this study also reveal the power of the Internet when it comes to marketing tourist destinations and shaping the attitudes of potential visitors. People wishing to visit a given site are more likely to consider the information presented on travel sites and reviews by others who have been on tour in the destination. Therefore, based on the reviewed posts, the Xi'an Muslim Quarter is a popular tourist destination and visitors seem to base their experiences of the destination on different features and attractions on the site. The implication is that other potential tourists seeking to visit the place may to a significant extent base their preferences on where to visit on the information they obtain online. Also, the expectations that people touring the site may have can also be gauged against what they heard or read on social media sites concerning the location. For instance, Che wrote that "I don't know why it was well-known" indicating that the information he obtained concerning the Xi'an Muslim Quarter played a critical role in determining his visit and his expectations of the site.

Therefore, a proven way of ensuring that sites appeal to the preferences of tourists is to ensure that the positive reviews they get from users match the real experiences of other visitors.

The findings of the study, therefore, answer the primary research question by revealing that one of the ways in which tourists express their experiences of tourist destinations such as the Xi'an Muslim Quarter is by recording their satisfaction with specific attractions found on the site. The information may be used to strategically position the destination by improving on the aspects that seem to be favoured more by tourists. Also, the findings of the study reveal that information found on online media, including reviews of tourist destinations, is useful in shaping the perceptions and preferences of would-be visitors to the destination. In other words, tourists visiting the Xi'an Muslim Quarter are likely to rate their experiences based on the information they obtain online before visiting the destination.

6.3 Learning about Heritage and Ethnic Cultures

The findings of this study highlight the important role that cultural and ethnic heritage play in promoting tourism. Cultural heritage is viewed as one of the most important attractions to a tourist destination such as the Xi'an Muslim Quarter. Cultural and heritage tourism in China have been studied extensively with researchers coming to varying conclusions on the question of the role that they play in places such as Xi'an. The unique cultural exchanges that have taken place in the region for centuries make Xi'an one of the most fascinating tourist destinations and also reveal the important role that cultural and historical resources play in shaping the experiences of tourists. In almost all the posts reviewed, tourists seem to consider Gao's Grand Courtyard as one of the most important heritage sites where information concerning the rich history of the Hui people can be obtained. As a result, most of the posts

reviewed indicate that the participants consider it important to bring their children to the site to learn about the rich cultural heritage of the region.

Cultural heritage as a tourist attraction and the use of ethnic tourism to learn about indigenous cultures have been explored extensively in the existing research, with the research confirmed the findings of this study. For example, in a study by Yang and Wall (2009), the importance of ethnic tourism in enhancing knowledge of an indigenous culture has been explored. Compared to destinations where the indigenous cultural resources have been replaced by exotic experiences, tourists are more likely to prefer areas where the authentic indigenous cultures remain (Yang & Wall, 2009). Therefore, among the unseen attractions of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter is the unique culture and heritage that has been preserved through architecture such as Gao's Grand Courtyard, the cuisine, and also the social interactions that the tourists have with the local people.

Concerns about cultural appropriation have, however, been expressed in various studies. When ethnic resources become tourism products, there are concerns that these resources are being misappropriated by the tourists to the detriment of the local cultures. While most of the posts reviewed in this study reveal that tourists consider their visits as amounting to the appreciation of the Hui culture, scholars often express concerns that ethnic tourism should be carried out carefully, to ensure that it does not result in the cultural appropriation of the host culture (Gertner, 2019). Therefore, the findings of this study make it apparent that most of the tourists who visit the Xi'an Muslim Quarter expect to consume the ethnic and cultural resources existing in the destination as part of their experience. Also, their perceptions on what they consider to be authentic ethnic resources in terms of architectural designs, culinary traditions and the practices of the indigenous people play a critical role in determining

whether or not they may consider their experiences at the site to be satisfactory. The experiences are also subject to pre-formed perspectives on how authentic ethnic experiences should be. For example, one of the posts by Mike reads:

Personally, I like traditional Chinese objects. Shaanxi culture should start with Shadow Puppet. The superb craftsmanship of a shadow puppet made us marvel at the ingenuity of ancient people. I hope that these cultures can be spread and accepted by more children.

By considering the post, it is clear that tourists coming to the Xi'an Muslim Quarter have preconceived notions of how their experiences with the local cultures should be. Anything that goes against their expectations may be disregarded as unauthentic and an uninformed imitation of the original cultural phenomena. The importance of authentic cultural or ethnic experiences has been highlighted in several studies, as established in the literature review.

Hence, tourists visiting areas of cultural heritage and ethnic significance such as the Xi'an Muslim Quarter often record their interactions with authentic practices, cuisines, and artefacts as among the most important aspects of their experiences. Such experiences may be enhanced by ensuring that these cultural and ethnic resources, as well as the interactions between the indigenous cultures and the tourists, are safeguarded. The government project aimed at enhancing the performance of the tourist destination should incorporate policies aimed at protecting the ethnic and cultural resources from being misappropriated.

6.4 Experiencing Food in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter

The culinary tradition of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter also emerges as among the most important tourist attractions of the destination. Based on the findings of this study, food tourism is among the most important aspects of destination tourism in Xi'an. As a focal point for some of the best traditional Chinese and Muslim cuisines, the food experiences offered by the Xi'an Muslim Quarter constitute some of the most memorable tourist experiences, as evidenced in the social media posts reviewed in this study.

Tourists use different adjectives to describe the diverse foods found in the destination presenting both a positive and negative perception of the food culture of the destination. For instance, those who have positive experiences employ terms such as "delicious," "great," "classic," "particular," "tasty," "good," "luscious," "hot," "fresh," and "authentic" to describe their experiences with the different foods served at various restaurants in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter. By contrast, other tourists employ terms such as "greasy," "mediocre," and "annoying" to describe food experiences that they did not like.

The fact that food tastes constitute a significant part of the experiences expressed by the research participants coincides with the sentiments expressed by previous researchers. For example, in a study by Ab Karim and Chi (2010), the food image of a tourist destination is considered to have a direct correlation with visit intentions and perceptions of positive experiences among tourists. Therefore, any efforts aimed at optimising the capability of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter by increasing the number of tourists visiting the destination should focus on enhancing the attractiveness of the food offers.

6.4 Customer Service and Servicescape

In posting their experiences in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter on social media sites, the participants paid special attention to aspects of their experiences based on customer service and servicescape. In this regard, most of the reviews examine aspects such as service delivery by the restaurant staff, whether or not communication was effective, and other aspects of the service environment that contributed directly to their experiences. For instance, the post by Cars reads:

> The hostel is located on Muslim Street, it is very **convenient**. The atmosphere is *perfect*. All of the staffs are ***enthusiastic***. They will be interacting with tourists during the night such as play games, singing, and so on. Although the size of the hostel is small, the humanity is strong. I decided I would come again the next time.

The poster considers aspects such as convenience, and the ambience of the environment, as well as the enthusiasm of the service staff, to have contributed to their positive experiences in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter. According to (Lin & Mattila, 2010), the servicescape model pays great attention to the aspects of the physical environment in depicting how they trigger behavioural responses. In fact, based on their experiences with the environment and the services team, the poster indicates their willingness to revisit the destination. These aspects of tourist destination customer service and servicescape have also been found to be important determinants of the positive image of a travel destination and the preferences of tourists in research by Durna, Dedeoglu and Balikçioglu (2015). That study makes it clear that tourist destinations can design and develop servicescapes that portray them in a certain light among customers, and consequently influence their travel decisions.

The findings of the study reiterate the importance of focusing on enhancing customer service and servicescape in the tourism industry, as tourists often consider these aspects to be among the most important part of their travel experiences. Posting these experiences on social media sites makes them accessible to numerous other potential tourists who can also use them in making their travel decisions.

6.5 Muslim Image and Authenticity

Based on the reviewed posts, visitors who tour the Xi'an Muslim Quarter often accord some special importance to the unique Muslim image that is portrayed by the destination. This covers resources such as architectural sites including the mosques and the halal restaurants spread across the destination. An issue of particular concern, however, is the idea of some restaurant owners employing the image of halal food as a label to sell food commodities within the Xi'an Muslim Quarter. In one of the reviewed posts, concerns were expressed over the misuse of the halal label to sell foods at high prices even when tourist do not consider them to be authentic.

In a study by Chhabra et al. (2003), the idea of "staged authenticity" was raised. According to Chhabra et al. (2003), this concept has made it often impossible for tourists to determine what authentic ethnic or cultural resources may look like in the process of engaging with cultural or ethnic tourism. The fact that the authenticity of cultural or ethnic phenomena can be staged to influence the decisions made by tourists is evidence of cultural appropriation or cultural misappropriation. Hence, the fact that halal labels can be used to trap tourists into making certain decisions is evidence of cultural appropriation of the Muslim culture at the destination.

Even with concerns about cultural appropriation or "staged ethnicity" being rife in destination tourism, tourists consider the presence of authentic ethnic or cultural resources as an important consideration when choosing places to visit, as revealed in the findings of this study. Therefore, compared to other tourist destinations that do not have ethnic or cultural significance, the Xi'an Muslim Quarter's success as a tourist destination can be enhanced by ensuring that the authenticity of its ethnic and cultural resources is retained.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and Implications

7.1 Summary

The objective of this study was to answer one primary question: What impacts tourist experiences while visiting the Xi'an Muslim Quarter? Under this question, three secondary questions were formulated as follows:

1. In what way do tourists, using online media, express their experiences of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter?

2. What primary themes emerge for tourists in their considerations of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter?

3. What recommendations can be given to improve the tourists' experience?

Therefore, in answering the secondary research questions, the findings of this study reveal that various experiences posted on the social media sites Weibo, Mafengwo, and Zhihu emerge as the most apparent for anyone visiting the Xi'an Muslim Quarter. These experiences have been determined in the findings of this study to centre on themes of culture and ethnic resources, the unique tastes of the food offerings at the destination, customer service and servicescape, as well as the Muslim image and the authenticity of the ethnic and cultural products. Tourists coming to the destination often rate their experiences and satisfaction based on these aspects. In addition, considering the wide coverage of social media platforms, online reviews of the destination can significantly shape the image of the different tourism resources provided at the site. Therefore, they present unique areas of focus for the tourism managers of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter to improve the experiences of tourists and optimise the tourism potential of the area.

To answer the third secondary question, I have made several recommendations on how the Xi'an authorities can enhance tourist experiences at the Xi'an Muslim Quarter. These include safeguarding the authentic cultural and ethnic resources of the area, enhancing the servicescape of the destination, and also improving the infrastructure to allow for better tourist convenience. Therefore, the findings meet the objectives of the study by answering the three secondary research questions and, by doing so, also satisfactorily answering the primary research question.

7.2 Theoretical and Practical Implications

The findings of the study directly respond to the research questions raised. Therefore, the findings present both theoretically and practically significant insights that can be employed in enhancing the experiences of tourists and the potential of the destination, and also in underpinning further research on the subject.

7.2.1 Theoretical Implications

My research maximised the tourist experience of people visiting the Xi'an Muslim Quarter as seen through Chinese online social media. During the process of reporting their experiences, I increasingly understand how theory can both restrict or enhance research. Best exemplifying the theoretical implication of my research were two aspects: my use of qualitative description (Sandelowski, 2000) and my use of the model of Destination Competitiveness/Sustainability (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). Firstly, this study is the first descriptive study to examine the experiences of people visiting the Xi'an Muslim Quarter. Besides that, it lays the foundation for other in-depth research studies focusing on various aspects of the destination. For

instance, my dissertation partially supports the relationship among destination core resources, destination management, destination planning and destination image.

7.2.2 Practical Implications

The study comes at a time when the Chinese Government and the Xi'an local authorities are planning on renovating the Xi'an Muslim Quarter as way of optimising its potential. Hence, the insights it discusses, especially those related to how tourist experiences are shaped, can inform policy decisions with the aim of providing better experiences for tourists. For instance, since the issue of cultural appropriation, and especially the appropriation of the halal food image, has been determined to be problematic, the government should focus on the preservation of the authentic cultural experiences while doing away with the fake imitations. The insight raised concerning servicescape can also inform decisions on how to make the service environment more welcoming to tourists. Therefore, the present study could not have come at a better time for informing the development of practical solutions to the problems affecting the Xi'an Muslim Quarter as a tourist destination.

7.3 Research Limitations

My study presents some limitations that may have a significant impact on the generalisability of the findings. For example, by focusing on only posts from Chinese social media sites (Weibo, Mazengwo, and Zhihu), the study narrows its scope and fails to incorporate a global outlook. This is especially a concern noting that the Xi'an Muslim Quarter attracts tourists from diverse nationalities. Therefore, the experiences that have been reviewed may not necessarily be reflective of non-Chinese tourists who visit the site. Also, in translating some of the posts that were not originally in English, some contextual meaning could be lost.

Taking into consideration the contextual aspect of the posts, this means that there may be a possibility of misunderstanding what some of the posters said.

7.4 My Contributions to Research and Knowledge

By carrying out this study, I have made some remarkable contributions to research and knowledge. Firstly, my study opens up the Xi'an Muslim Quarter for more research aimed at establishing ways in which tourist experiences can be enhanced by considering what they value the most. Secondly, my study presents some insights into the role that the Internet, especially social media, plays in the spread of information on tourist destinations, influencing their public image, and shaping the decisions of tourists. I have also raised some concerns on how experiences with ethnic and cultural resources should be carefully considered in curbing their misappropriation.

7.5 Suggested Future Research

In future, researchers can base their inquiries on the present study in investigating various phenomena in more depth, such as the influence of the servicescape in Xi'an on tourist satisfaction or even the relationships between service quality at the destination and perceptions of authenticity.

7.6 Concluding Reflections

Before commencing on this research project, my knowledge concerning the experiences that tourists have in the Xi'an Muslim Quarter was limited. Despite Xi'an being my home, I have never had the chance to look keenly into the perceptions that visitors have regarding different things that matter to them as part of their experiences. My view then was that tourists should consume whatever resources are presented to them, as they are, without having to consider

how their expectations are impacted. However, by carrying out this study, I have been fortunate enough to look at tourists' experiences from their perspectives. Also, I have been able to view the role that the Internet plays in shaping the image of tourist destinations such as Xi'an through the views posted by those who have first-hand experience at the destination. Therefore, it is my view that those involved with the renovation of the destination should seek to understand tourist experiences from the same perspective and act on them to enhance the potential of the Xi'an Muslim Quarter to even host more tourists.

References

Ab Karim, S., & Chi, C. G. (2010). Culinary tourism as a destination attraction: An empirical examination of the destination's food image and information sources. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing and Management, 19* (6), 531-555. https://doi.org/10.1080/19368623.2010.493064

Apostolakis, A. (2003). The convergence process in heritage tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research, 30*(4), 795-812. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383(03)00057-4

Bitner, M. J. (1992). Servicescapes: The impact of physical surroundings on customers and employees. *Journal of Marketing, 56*(2), 57-71. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F002224299205600205

Bohari, S. (2017). *8 reasons why Muslim-friendly Xi'an is the hidden gem of China*. Retrieved from https://www.havehalalwilltravel.com/reason-xian-china-muslim-friendly

Bolyai, S., Bova, C., & Harper, D. (2005). Developing and refining interventions in persons with health disparities: The use of qualitative description. *Nursing Outlook, 53*(3), 127-133. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.outlook.2005.03.005

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Bryman, A. (2012). *Social research methods*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Chandralal, L., & Valenzuela, F. R. (2013). Exploring memorable tourism experiences: Antecedents and behavioural outcomes. *Journal of Economics, Business and Management*, *1*(2), 177-181. https://doi.org/10.7763/JOEBM.2013.V1.38

Chen, C.-C., Lai, Y.-H., Petrick, J. F., & Lin, Y.-H. (2016). Tourism between divided nations: An examination of stereotyping on destination image. *Tourism Management, 55*, 25-36. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2016.01.012

Chen, X. (2019, January 15). China's Muslims fear crackdown in ancient city of Xi'an. *The Guardian.* Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2019/jan/15/china-crackdown-fears-xian-muslim-quarter

Cheyanne. (2017). *8 facts travelers should know before visiting Xi'an*. Retrieved from https://www.chinahighlights.com/xian/xian-facts.htm

Chhabra, D., Healy, R., & Sills, E. (2003). Staged authenticity and heritage tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research, 30*(3), 702-719. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383(03)00044-6

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Retrieved from https://search.ebscohost.com

Crompton, J. L. (1979). An assessment of the image of Mexico as a vacation destination and the influence of geographical location upon that image. *Journal of Travel Research, 17*(4), 18-23. https://doi.org/10.1177/004728757901700404

Dadgostar, B., & Isotalo, R. M. (1992). Factors affecting time spent by near-home tourists in city destinations. *Journal of Travel Research, 31*(2), 34. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F004728759203100206

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2008). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (p. 1–32). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Durna, U., Dedeoglu, B. B., & Balikçioglu, S. (2015). The role of servicescape and image perceptions of customers on behavioral intentions in the hotel industry. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 27*(7), 1728-1748. https://doi.org/10.1108/ijchm-04-2014-0173

Echtner, C. M., & Ritchie, J. B. (1993). The measurement of destination image: An empirical

assessment. *Journal of Travel Research, 31*(4), 3-13.

https://doi.org/10.1177%2F004728759303100402

Embacher, J., & Buttle, R. (1989). A repertory grid analysis of Austria's image as a summer

vacation destination. *Journal of Travel Research, 27*(3), 3-7.

https://doi.org/10.1177/004728758902700302

Fakeye, P. C., & Crompton, J. L. (1991). Image differences between prospective, first-time,

and repeat visitors to the Lower Rio Grande Valley. *Journal of Travel Research,*

30(2), 10-16. https://doi.org/10.1177/004728759103000202

Fan, R., Zhao, J., Chen, Y., & Xu, K. (2014). Anger is more influential than joy: Sentiment

correlation in Weibo. *PloS One, 9*(10), e110184.

https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0110184

Fischler, C. (2011). Commensality, society and culture. *Social Science Information, 50*(3-4),

528-548. https://doi.org/10.1177/0539018411413963

Fyall, A., Garrod, B., & Leask (Eds.). (2012). *Managing visitor attractions: New directions*.

London, UK: Taylor & Francis.

Gang, X. (2016). *The research of growth process and evolution tourism destination in Xi'an*.

Shaanxi Normal University. (B25129. Retrieved from

http://cdmd.cnki.com.cn/Article/CDMD-10718-1017242220.htm

Garrod, B., & Fyall, A. (2001). Heritage tourism: A question of definition. *Annals of Tourism*

Research, 28(4), 1049-1052. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383(00)00068-2

Gertner, R. K. (2019). The impact of cultural appropriation on destination image, tourism,

and hospitality. *Thunderbird International Business Review*, *61*(6), 873-877.

https://doi.org/10.1002/tie.22068

Goodsir, W., Neill, L., Williamson, D., & Brown, A. (2014). Journalistic integrity or arbiter of taste? The case study of restaurant critic Peter Calder. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management, 21*, 127-133. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2014.09.001

Gray, D. E. (2014). *Doing research in the real world* (3rd ed.). Retrieved from https://search.ebscohost.com

Grix, J. (2010). *The foundations of research* (2nd ed.). Retrieved from https://search.ebscohost.com

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp.105-117). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Healy, M., & Perry, C. (2000). Comprehensive criteria to judge validity and reliability of qualitative research within the realism paradigm. *Qualitative Market Research, 3*(3), 118-126. https://doi.org/10.1108/13522750010333861

Heras-Pedrosa, C. D. L., Millan-Celis, E., Iglesias-Sánchez, P. P., & Jambrino-Maldonado, C. (2020). Importance of social media in the image formation of tourist destinations from the stakeholders' perspective. *Sustainability*, *12*(10), 4092. https://doi.org/10.3390/su12104092

Hofmann, M. (2013). Ontologies in modeling and simulation: An epistemological perspective. In A. Tolk (Ed.), *Ontology, epistemology, & teleology for modeling & simulation* (pp. 59–87). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-31140-6_3

Hunt, J. D. (1975). Image as a factor in tourism development. *Journal of Travel Research, 13*(3), 1-7. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F004728757501300301

Jin, Q., & Pearce, P. (2011). Tourist perception of crowding and management approaches at tourism sites in Xi'an. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research, 16*(3), 325-338. https://doi.org/10.1080/10941665.2011.572667

Jin, X., & Ye, Q. Y. (2019, January). *Impact of different social media context on attitude polarization of hot topic online*. Paper presented at the 2018 PhD Student New Media Conference. Retrieved from https://scholars.cityu.edu.hk/en/publications/publication(15066562-90d8-403a-97d3-d5e18d586f14).html

JunYao, P. (2015). Research on the development strategy of historical and cultural district based on cultural orientation *Journal of Xiangnan University, 36*(3), 25-29.

Kai, W. (2005). *From "Liangchen Plan" to "Two Axes, Two Belts and Multiple Centers". Beijing Planning and Construction* (1), 32-38.

Kaplan, D. (2004). *The Sage handbook of quantitative methodology for the social sciences*. Retrieved from https://search.ebscohost.com

Kayak. (2020). *You're going to love Xi'an*. Retrieved from https://www.kayak.com/Xi-an.35600.guide

Kim, H., & Richardson, S. L. (2003). Motion picture impacts on destination images. *Annals of Tourism Research, 30*(1), 216-237. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383(02)00062-2

King, N. (2004). Using templates in the thematic analysis of text. In C. Cassell & G Symon (Eds.), *Essential guide to qualitative methods in organizational research*. London, UK: Sage.

Krauss, S. E. (2005). Research paradigms and meaning making: A primer. *Qualitative Report, 10*(4), 758-770. Retrieved from https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/

Lai, H. H. (2002). China's western development program: Its rationale, implementation, and prospects. *Modern China, 28*(4), 432-466. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F009770040202800402

Lapan, S. D., Quartaroli, M. T., & Riemer, F. J. (2012). *Qualitative research: An introduction to methods and designs*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Lawson, F., & Baud-Bovy, M. (1977). *Tourism and recreation development: A handbook of physical planning*. London, UK: Architectural Press.

Liamputtong, P., & Ezzy, D. (2005). *Qualitative research methods* (Vol. 2). Melbourne, Australia: Oxford University Press.

Lin, I. Y., & Mattila, A. S. (2010). Restaurant servicescape, service encounter, and perceived congruency on customers' emotions and satisfaction. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management, 19*(8), 819-841. https://doi.org/10.1080/19368623.2010.514547

Ma, Z. (2015). Research on the dilemma and countermeasures of the development mode of commercial cultural heritage – A case study of Huimin Street in Xi'an. *Economist,* (8), 9-10.

MacKay, K. J., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (1997). Pictorial element of destination in image formation. *Annals of Tourism Research, 24*(3), 537-565. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383(97)00011-X

Meng, F. (2006). *An examination of destination competitiveness from the tourists' perspective: The relationship between quality of tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/handle/10919/25936

Miguéns, J., Baggio, R., & Costa, C. (2008). Social media and tourism destinations: TripAdvisor case study. *Advances in Tourism Research, 26*(28), 1-6. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procs.2017.11.433

Murphy, P., Pritchard, M. P., & Smith, B. (2000). The destination product and its impact on

    traveller perceptions. *Tourism Management, 21*(1), 43-52.

    https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177(99)00080-1

Naccarato, P., & LeBesco, K. (2013). *Culinary capital.* London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Neergaard, M. A., Olesen, F., Andersen, R. S., & Sondergaard, J. (2009). Qualitative

    description – The poor cousin of health research? *BMC Medical Research*

    Methodology, 9, 52. https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-9-52

Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis:

    Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative*

    Methods, 16(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847

O'Dwyer, L. M., & Bernauer, J. A. (2014). *Quantitative research for the qualitative*

    researcher. Retrieved from http://ebookcentral.proquest.com

Oakes, T. (1998). *Tourism and modernity in China*. London, UK: Routledge.

Pantelidis, I. S. (2010). Electronic meal experience: A content analysis of online restaurant

    comments. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly, 51*(4), 483-491.

    https://doi.org/10.1177/1938965510378574

Patton, M. Q. (2014). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and*

    practice. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Picard, M., & Wood, R. E. (1997). *Tourism, ethnicity, and the state in Asian and Pacific*

    societies. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press.

Poria, Y., Butler, R., & Airey, D. (2001). *Clarifying heritage tourism*. Oxford, UK:

    Pergamon-Elsevier Science Ltd.

Poria, Y., Butler, R., & Airey, D. (2003). The core of heritage tourism. *Annals of Tourism*

    Research, 30(1), 238-254. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383(02)00064-6

Richards, G. (2015). Evolving gastronomic experiences: From food to foodies to foodscapes. *Journal of Gastronomy and Tourism, 1*(1), 5-17. https://doi.org/10.3727/216929715X14298190828796

Ritchie, J. B., & Crouch, G. I. (2003). *The competitive destination: A sustainable tourism perspective*. Wallingford, UK: CABI Publishing.

Sandelowski, M. (2000). Whatever happened to qualitative description? *Research in Nursing & Health, 23*(4), 334-340. https://doi.org/10.1002/1098-240X(200008)23:4%3C334::AID-NUR9%3E3.0.CO;2-G

Saunders, M. N. K., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2019). *Research methods for business students* (8th ed.). Retrieved from http://ebookcentral.proquest

Scotland, J. (2012). Exploring the philosophical underpinnings of research: Relating ontology and epistemology to the methodology and methods of the scientific, interpretive, and critical research paradigms. *English Language Teaching, 5*(9), 9-16. https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v5n9p9

Sharpley, R. (1996). *Tourism & leisure in the countryside*. Huntingdon, UK: Elm Publications.

Shi, S., Zhao, M., Guan, J., & Huang, H. (2017). Multi-features group emotion analysis based on CNN for Weibo events. *DEStech Transactions on Computer Science and Engineering*. https://doi.org/10.12783/dtcse/cii2017/17275

Smith, V. (1977). *Host and guests: The anthropology of tourism*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Suri, H. (2011). Purposeful sampling in qualitative research synthesis. *Qualitative Research Journal, 11*(2), 63-75. https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ1102063

Taneja, S.S., Taneja, P.K. & Gupta, R.K. (2011). Researches in corporate social

    responsibility: A review of shifting focus, paradigms, and methodologies. *Journal of*

    Business Ethics, 101(3), 343-364. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-010-0732-6

Tasci, A. D. A., Gartner, W. C., & Cavusgil, S. T. (2007). Conceptualization and

    operationalization of destination image. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research,*

    31(2), 194-223. https://doi.org/10.1177/1096348006297290

Xi'an Municipal People's Government. (2020, July 24). *Xi'an: Xi'an Municipal People's*

    Government. Retrieved from https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/tourism-

    gradually-recovers-in-the-ancient-capital-of-xian-301099349.html

Waitt, G. (2000). Consuming heritage: Perceived historical authenticity. *Annals of Tourism*

    Research, 27(4), 835-862. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383(99)00115-2

Walsh, E. R., & Swain, M. B. (2004). Creating modernity by touring paradise: Domestic

    ethnic tourism in Yunnan, China. *Tourism Recreation Research, 29*(2), 59-68.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2004.11081444

Wang, D. W. (1999). *Review of the TCR Action Plan for Panama's Tourism Industry: An*

    Analysis of the Connotation of the Concepts of Ecotourism and Heritage Tourism.

    Social Science (A07), 12-15.

Wang, J. (2008). *Research on Xi'an heritage tourism development model based on heritage*

    ecology and tourism experience.

Wang, Y. (2007). Customized authenticity begins at home. *Annals of Tourism Research,*

    34(3), 789-804. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2007.03.008

Xi'an Government. (2019). *Reply on "when will Xi'an Muslim Quarter be reconstructed"*

    reflected by people's net users. Retrieved from

    http://www.xa.gov.cn/hd/hygq/5d4930bc65cbd87465ac1530.html

Xi'an Municipal Government. (2018). *Report on the Work of Xi'an Municipal Government 2018.* Retrieved from http://en.xa.gov.cn/government/workreport/1124.htm

Xi'an National Day holiday is full of tourists. (2019, October 7). *WeChat*. Retrieved December 9, 2019, from https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/IygZSm0iEK8U0AHk7_wK4Q

Xi'an promotes cultural tourism industry with new policies amid epidemic. (2020, March 10). *Xinhua.* Retrieved from http://www.china.org.cn/china/Off_the_Wire/2020-03/10/content_75797706.htm

Xi'an strives for growth in tourism, cultural offerings. (2019, March 1). *China Global Television News*. Retrieved from https://news.cgtn.com/news/3d3d414f3449444d33457a6333566d54/index.html

Xi'an Tourism. (2019). *Xi'an*. Retrieved from http://www.xa.gov.cn/xw/rdgz/ly/5d8acfbefd850812b35e2bca.html

Xiang, Z., & Gretzel, U. (2010). Role of social media in online travel information search. *Tourism Management, 31*(2), 179-188. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2009.02.016

Xu, H., & Wan, X. (2009). *The protection and tourism development of ethnic historical districts: Taking Xi'an Muslim Quarter as an example*.

Yale, P. (1991). *From tourist attractions to heritage tourism*. Huntingdon, UK: Elm Publications.

Yang, L., & Wall, G. (2009). Ethnic tourism: A framework and an application. *Tourism Management*, *30*(4), 559-570. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2008.09.008

Zhai, B., & Ng, M. K. (2013). Urban regeneration and social capital in China: A case study of the Drum Tower Muslim District in Xi'an. *Cities, 35*, 14-25. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2013.05.003

Zhu, X. (2018, March). *Analysis on the development problems of Xi'an cultural tourism products under the new situation*. Paper presented at the 2018 International

Conference on Economics, Politics and Business Management (ICEPBM 2018),

Nanjing, China. https://doi.org/10.25236/icepbm.2018.28

Zhu, Y. (2018). Uses of the past: Negotiating heritage in Xi'an. *International Journal of Heritage Studies, 24*(2), 181-192. https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2017.1347886

Apostolakis, A. (2003). The convergence process in heritage tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research, 30*(4), 795-812.

Bitner, M. J. (1992). Servicescapes: The impact of physical surroundings on customers and employees. *Journal of marketing, 56*(2), 57-71.

Bohari, S. (2017). *8 reasons why Muslim-friendly Xi'an is the hidden gem of China*. Retrieved from https://www.havehalalwilltravel.com/reason-xian-china-muslim-friendly

Bolyai, S., Bova, C., & Harper, D. (2005). Developing and refining interventions in persons with health disparities: The use of Qualitative Description. *Nursing Outlook, 53*(3), 127-133. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.outlook.2005.03.005

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology, 3*(2), 77-101.

Bryman, A. (2012). Social Research Methods. United Kingdom: Oxford Uni: versity Press.

Chen, C.-C., Lai, Y.-H., Petrick, J. F., & Lin, Y.-H. (2016). Tourism between divided nations: An examination of stereotyping on destination image. *Tourism management, 55*, 25-36.

Cheyanne. (2017). *8 facts travelers should know before visiting Xi'an*. Retrieved from https://www.chinahighlights.com/xian/xian-facts.htm

Chhabra, D., Healy, R., & Sills, E. (2003). Staged authenticity and heritage tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research, 30*(3), 702-719.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design : qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (Fifth edition. ed.): SAGE. Retrieved from https://ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cat050 20a&AN=aut.b24601627&site=eds-live

Crompton, J. L. (1979). An Assessment of the Image of Mexico as a Vacation Destination and the Influence of Geographical Location Upon That Image. *Journal of travel research, 17*(4), 18-23. https://doi.org/10.1177/004728757901700404

Dadgostar, B., & Isotalo, R. M. (1992). Factors Affecting Time Spent by Near-Home Tourists in City Destinations. *Journal of travel research, 31*(2), 34.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2008). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research.

Echtner, C. M., & Ritchie, J. B. (1993). The measurement of destination image: An empirical assessment. *Journal of travel research, 31*(4), 3-13.

Embacher, J., & Buttle, R. (1989). A repertory grid analysis of Austria's image as a summer vacation destination. *Journal of travel research, 27*(3), 3-7. https://doi.org/10.1177/004728758902700302

Fakeye, P. C., & Crompton, J. L. (1991). Image Differences between Prospective, First-Time, and Repeat Visitors to the Lower Rio Grande Valley. *Journal of travel research, 30*(2), 10-16. https://doi.org/10.1177/004728759103000202

Fan, R., Zhao, J., Chen, Y., & Xu, K. (2014). Anger is more influential than joy: Sentiment correlation in Weibo. *PloS one, 9*(10), e110184.

Fischler, C. (2011). Commensality, society and culture. *Social science information, 50*(3-4), 528-548. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/ 10.1177/0539018411413963

Gang, X. (2016). *The research of growth process and evolution tourism destination in XI'an*. Shaanxi Normal University. (B25129)

Garrod, B., & Fyall, A. (2001). Heritage tourism: A question of definition. *Annals of Tourism Research, 28*(4), 1049-1052.

GGTN. (2019). *Xi'an strives for growth in tourism, cultural offerings*. Retrieved from https://news.cgtn.com/news/3d3d414f3449444d33457a6333566d54/index.html

Goodsir, W., Neill, L., Williamson, D., & Brown, A. (2014). Journalistic integrity or arbiter of taste? The case study of restaurant critic Peter Calder. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management, 21*, 127-133.

Gray, D. E. (2014). *Doing research in the real world* (Third edition. ed.): SAGE. Retrieved from https://ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cat05020a&AN=aut.b13304240&site=eds-live

Grix, J. (2010). *The foundations of research* (Second edition. ed.): Palgrave Macmillan. Retrieved from https://ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cat05020a&AN=aut.b12371373&site=eds-live

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. *Handbook of qualitative research, 2*(163-194), 105.

Healy, M., & Perry, C. (2000). Comprehensive criteria to judge validity and reliability of qualitative research within the realism paradigm. *Qualitative market research: An international journal*.

Hofmann, M. (2013). *Ontologies in Modeling and Simulation: An Epistemological Perspective* (Vol. 44) [Article]. Retrieved from https://ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edselc&AN=edselc.2-52.0-84885612319&site=eds-live. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-31140-6_3

Hunt, J. D. (1975). Image as a factor in tourism development. *Journal of travel research, 13*(3), 1-7.

Jin, Q., & Pearce, P. (2011). Tourist perception of crowding and management approaches at tourism sites in Xi'an. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research, 16*(3), 325-338. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/10941665.2011.572667

Jin, X., & Ye, Q. Y. (2019). Impact of Different Social Media Context on Attitude Polarization of Hot Topic Online Symposium conducted at the meeting of the 2018 Ph. D Student New Media Conference

JunYao, P. (2015). Research on the development strategy of historical and cultural district based on cultural orientation *Journal of Xiangnan University, 36*(3), 25-29.

Kai, W. (2005). 从"梁陈方案"到"两轴两带多中心". *北京规划建设*(1), 32-38.

Kaplan, D. (2004). *The Sage handbook of quantitative methodology for the social sciences*: Sage. Retrieved from https://ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cat05020a&AN=aut.b10861981&site=eds-live

Kim, H., & Richardson, S. L. (2003). Motion picture impacts on destination images. *Annals of Tourism Research, 30*(1), 216-237.

Krauss, S. E. (2005). Research Paradigms and Meaning Making: A Primer. *Qualitative Report, 10*(4), 758-770.

Lai, H. H. (2002). China's western development program: Its rationale, implementation, and prospects. *Modern China, 28*(4), 432-466.

Lapan, S. D., Quartaroli, M. T., & Riemer, F. J. (2012). *Qualitative research: An introduction to methods and designs*: Jossey-Bass.

Lawson, F., & Baud-Bovy, M. (1977). *Tourism and recreation development, a handbook of physical planning*: Architectural Press.

Liamputtong, P., & Ezzy, D. (2005). *Qualitative research methods* (Vol. 2): Oxford university press Melbourne.

Lin, I. Y., & Mattila, A. S. (2010). Restaurant servicescape, service encounter, and perceived congruency on customers' emotions and satisfaction. *Journal of hospitality marketing & management, 19*(8), 819-841.

Ma, Z. (2015). Research on the Dilemma and Countermeasures of the Development Mode of Commercial Cultural Heritage——A Case Study of Huimin Street in Xi'an. *Economist*(8), 9-10.

MacKay, K. J., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (1997). Pictorial element of destination in image formation. *Annals of Tourism Research, 24*(3), 537-565.

Meng, F. (2006). *An examination of destination competitiveness from the tourists' perspective: The relationship between quality of tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness*. Virginia Tech.

Miguéns, J., Baggio, R., & Costa, C. (2008). Social media and tourism destinations: TripAdvisor case study. *Advances in tourism research, 26*(28), 1-6.

Murphy, P., Pritchard, M. P., & Smith, B. (2000). The destination product and its impact on traveller perceptions. *Tourism management, 21*(1), 43-52.

Naccarato, P., & LeBesco, K. (2013). *Culinary capital*: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Neergaard, M. A., Olesen, F., Andersen, R. S., & Sondergaard, J. (2009). Qualitative description - the poor cousin of health research? *BMC medical research methodology, 9*, 52. https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-9-52

Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic Analysis: Striving to Meet the Trustworthiness Criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 16*(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847

O'Dwyer, L. M., & Bernauer, J. A. (2014). *Quantitative research for the qualitative researcher* [Electronic document]: Sage. Retrieved from http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/AUT/detail.action?docID=4334993

Oakes, T. (1998). Tourism and modernity in China Routledge: London.

Pantelidis, I. S. (2010). Electronic meal experience: A content analysis of online restaurant comments. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly, 51*(4), 483-491.

Patton, M. Q. (2014). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice*: Sage publications.

Picard, M., & Wood, R. E. (1997). *Tourism, ethnicity, and the state in Asian and Pacific societies*: University of Hawaii Press.

Poria, Y., Butler, R., & Airey, D. (2001). *Clarifying heritage tourism*. Pergamon-Elsevier Science Ltd.

Poria, Y., Butler, R., & Airey, D. (2003). The core of heritage tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research, 30*(1), 238-254.

Report on the Work of Xi'an Municipal Government 2018. (2018). Retrieved from http://en.xa.gov.cn/government/workreport/1124.htm

Richards, G. (2015). Evolving gastronomic experiences: From food to foodies to foodscapes. *Journal of Gastronomy and Tourism, 1*(1), 5-17.

Ritchie, J. B., & Crouch, G. I. (2003). *The competitive destination: A sustainable tourism perspective*: Cabi.

Sandelowski, M. (2000). Whatever happened to qualitative description? (Vol. 23, pp. 334-340).

Sandelowski, M. (2000). Whatever happened to qualitative description? *Research in nursing & health, 23*(4), 334-340.

Saunders, M. N. K., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2019). *Research methods for business students* (Eighth edition. ed.) [Electronic document]: Pearson. Retrieved from http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/AUT/detail.action?docID=5774744

Scotland, J. (2012). Exploring the Philosophical Underpinnings of Research: Relating Ontology and Epistemology to the Methodology and Methods of the Scientific, Interpretive, and Critical Research Paradigms. *English Language Teaching, 5*(9), 9-16.

Sharpley, R. (1996). *Tourism & leisure in the countryside*: Elm Publications.

Shi, S., Zhao, M., Guan, J., & Huang, H. (2017). Multi-features group emotion analysis based on CNN for Weibo events. *DEStech Transactions on Computer Science and Engineering*(cii).

Smith, V. (1977). Host and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism. Philadelphia: Univ: of Pennsylvania press.

Suri, H. (2011). Purposeful sampling in qualitative research synthesis. *Qualitative research journal, 11*(2), 63.

Tasci, A. D. A., Gartner, W. C., & Cavusgil, S. T. (2007). Conceptualization and operationalization of destination image. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research, 31*(2), 194-223. https://doi.org/10.1177/1096348006297290

Tourism gradually recovers in the ancient capital of Xi'an. (2020, July 24). Xi'an: Xi'an Municipal People's Government. Retrieved from https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/tourism-gradually-recovers-in-the-ancient-capital-of-xian-301099349.html

Waitt, G. (2000). Consuming heritage: Perceived historical authenticity. *Annals of Tourism Research, 27*(4), 835-862.

Wang, D. W. (1999). 巴拿马旅游业 TCR 行动计划述评——兼析生态旅游和遗产旅游概念的内涵. *社会科学*(A07), 12-15.

Wang, J. (2008). *基于遗产生态和旅游体验的西安遗产旅游开发模式研究*. 陕西师范大学.

Wang, Y. (2007). Customized authenticity begins at home. *Annals of Tourism Research, 34*(3), 789-804.

Xi'an National Day holiday is full of tourists. (2019). Retrieved Decembe, 9th, 2019, from https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/IygZSm0iEK8U0AHk7_wK4Q

XI'an tourism (2019). XI'an. Retrieved from http://www.xa.gov.cn/xw/rdgz/ly/5d8acfbefd850812b35e2bca.html

Xiang, Z., & Gretzel, U. (2010). Role of social media in online travel information search. *Tourism management, 31*(2), 179-188.

Xu, H., & Wan, X. (2009). *民族历史街区的保护和旅游发展——以西安回民街为例*.

Yale, P. (1991). *From tourist attractions to heritage tourism*: ELM publications.

Zhai, B., & Ng, M. K. (2013). Urban regeneration and social capital in China: A case study of the Drum Tower Muslim District in Xi'an. *Cities, 35*, 14-25. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2013.05.003

Zhu, X. (2018). Analysis on the Development Problems of Xi'an Cultural Tourism Products under the New Situation.

Zhu, Y. (2018). Uses of the past: Negotiating heritage in Xi'an. *International Journal of Heritage Studies, 24*(2), 181-192.