The Cultural Characteristics in China's Official Online Tourism Advertisements

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Abstract

Tourism advertising is an important approach in providing information about tourism destinations and in attracting potential customers, and in this process, particular cultural factors are usually conveyed. In this thesis, the main intention was to describe the cultural factors reflected in advertising and discover the role that Chinese cultural identity plays in China’s official Internet tourism advertisements to overseas markets using a theoretical framework of diverse cultural issues. The objects of this study are the official tourism advertisements from China National Tourist Office’s (CNTO) websites.

The author researched Chinese cultural characteristics and tried to connect them with the expressional tendencies in tourism advertisements. Using a quantitative content analysis method, the most frequent cultural symbol in advertising was discovered as the basis and general image of the online tourism advertisements. Then the author discussed the external manifestations of cultural factors in tourism advertising in detail and analysed the internal cultural values behind them using the qualitative discourse analysis method. The main conclusions of this study indicated that the most representative cultural characteristic of Chinese culture in tourism advertising is a high-context cultural feature; in addition, at present traditional ideology in Chinese society, such as Confucianism and Taoism, was still being conveyed in tourism advertising. In general, Chinese cultural traditions influenced tourism advertising expressions, both in external manifestations and internal connotations.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Research background

Since the beginning of the economic reform policy in 1978, the tourism industry in China has developed rapidly. Nowadays, an increasing number of visitors around the world are attracted by the rich tourism resources in China and China has become one of the most inviting tourist destinations. In 2010, the number of inbound visitors (not including Hong Kong, Marco and Taiwan visitors) was around 26.13 million and in 2011 the total number of inbound visitors reached 27.11 million. In January 2012 China received 1.82 million foreign visitors alone generating 1.879 billion US dollars. (China National Tourism Administration website, original in Chinese)

As a modern and significant platform, and an ultimate example of global communication, the significance of the Internet is increasing in people’s daily lives as a mass communication field, and of course the Internet is a significant tool to promote tourism. Through the Internet, the convenience and abundance of tourism information is maximized. Tourism administrations and agencies can recommend their tourism destinations and routes or publicize their marketing campaigns on the Internet, and customers can receive valuable information and travel tips.

There are a large number of tourism websites in China providing tourism information about China worldwide and tourism website development in China has begun to be investigated in the last few years. The first tourism website in China was www.ctn.com.cn, and it was established in 1996. At the beginning, the tourism information on almost all the tourism websites was finite, but tourism websites then developed and became more professional. Nowadays abundant and comprehensive information is provided on those tourism websites to meet the globalization trend. (Lu and Lu, 2004)

Tourism advertising on websites is one of the main approaches to marketing tourism destinations to potential consumers. The visual and audio elements in different Internet advertising forms, for example, banners, flashes and videos, could transmit tourism information, attract visitors’ attention and stimulate tourism
consumption. This study will focus on these tourism advertisements on the Internet, specifically on the official advertising expressions.

1.2 Aim of the study

Sometimes culture is used to describe high art including classical music, theatre, painting and sculpture. However, in advertising, culture means “what defines a human community, its individuals, and social organizations.” (de Mooij, 2009) In other words, the definition of culture in this thesis refers to an anthropological cultural outlook. As an anthropological concept, the definition of culture in this thesis involved comprehensive and complex ethnographic contexts, which include “knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” (Tylor, 1958[1871]) The generalized culture is the object of this study.

The main research goal of this thesis is to find out the representative Chinese cultural elements in tourism advertisements and to analyse their relationship with Chinese culture by using both qualitative and quantitative methods. This means that the thesis intends to explore the Chinese cultural identity reflected in tourism advertisements and to examine the relatively stable cultural characteristics which exist in the globalized trend of the intercultural communication approach. In particular, this paper selects one external communication perspective which can embody Chinese cultural identity as much as possible, to consider the connection between culture and mass communication.

This thesis combines several issues, including social and cultural effects, globalization and glocalization, and manifestations of culture in the communication process. The emphasis of the research area is the relationship between national cultural background and expressions of advertisements, in other words, the effect and reflection of national culture identity in advertising communication.
1.3 Research questions and hypotheses

This study aims to investigate the official expressions in online tourism advertisements and to discover the cultural factors in the advertising expressions. Therefore, the main research question of the thesis is:

*In China’s official online tourism advertisements to overseas markets, what is the role of Chinese cultural identity?*

Actually, this research question is a little broad and it could be answered in different ways. The research question pays attention to the tendency and manner that China’s official tourism administrations express Chinese culture in Internet advertisements. In order to answer this question, some sub-research questions should be outlined to help the analysis of different aspects. The sub-questions should combine both theoretical and empirical study.

Therefore, the author propounded three sub-research questions as follows:

1. *What is the identity of Chinese culture in general?*
2. *What are the most representative official expressions of Chinese elements in the Internet tourism advertisements to overseas markets?*
3. *How is the Chinese cultural identity reflected in the employment of Chinese elements in those tourism advertisements, especially in the visual elements?*

In fact, those sub-research questions are supplements and explanations for the main one. The main research question indicates that one of the efforts of this study is to identify China’s own choice of the most representative symbols to communicate national cultural identity; and the relationship between those chosen symbols and Chinese cultural identity will also be discussed. All of the sub-research questions focus on those issues. The first sub-question lays the groundwork for the following and the second sub-question requires statistics and statements of expression characteristics of tourism advertisements. Then the final one is based on the other two sub-questions and explores the inner relationship between cultural identity and advertising expressions. The third sub-research question is the core in this study. The conclusion to the main research question can therefore be found by combining the
answers of those sub-questions.

Following the research questions, specifically focusing on the third sub-question, several hypotheses are posited to help the empirical tests and analyses. All the hypotheses are connected with Chinese cultural identity characteristics and they will be tested in the thesis to answer the main research question. A national culture’s value or connotation is not a single issue, namely, a national cultural identity must be relevant to several detailed representations. The author will explain in brief the basic Chinese cultural characteristics behind those hypotheses and further details on Chinese culture will be given in Chapter 2.

**Hypothesis 1:** China’s tourism advertisements are inclined to construct an entire atmosphere.

Using Edward T. Hall’s culture ranking theory, cultures can be ranked as either high context or low context. The high context culture tends to rely on background and implicit hints in communication processes, rather than use many detailed words to interpret everything (Hall, 1976), and Chinese culture is a representative high context culture. This hypothesis indicates a scarcity of clear-cut merit appeals about the products (tourism destinations in this case) and thus the need to construct an entire picture to move potential consumers.

**Hypothesis 2:** Those advertisements reflect pursuance of harmony and oneness with nature.

The hypothesis accentuates the inextricable relationship between human culture and nature in Chinese cultural values.

**Hypothesis 3:** Traditional Chinese cultural values are not only reflected in the display of man-made cultural elements, but also to a certain extent in the expressions of natural elements in those advertisements.

This hypothesis indicates that some elements in advertising expressions seem not to be relevant to culture directly, but are in fact a medium to express Chinese cultural
identity.

Both hypotheses 2 and 3 reflect one of the most important traditional Chinese philosophical opinions and values: the coexistence of human and nature, which means that human life should be in harmony with nature. It does not treat humans and nature as independent subjects and object, but emphasizes holding communion with nature. Another explanation is that human activity could be seen as a reflection of natural power.

This philosophical opinion is a complicated and significant world view in traditional Chinese society. The coexistence of humans and nature is located in Taoism philosophy, Confucianism, Buddhism, traditional Chinese medicine theories and in many aspects of Chinese culture. In addition, almost all representative Chinese ideologies have their own characteristic explanation of the coexistence of humans and nature in detail, and in the personal opinions of some this could be successive or coordinate, and with several innovations. For example, Master Zhuangzi and his Taoism philosophy mentioned “being in oneness with nature” and later Dong Zhongshu, a Confucian scholar of the Han Dynasty indicated that humans and nature are similar, and humans are formed according to natural construction. Those philosophical ideas are not absolutely identical, but they share a common value. (Liu, 2007, original in Chinese)

Hypothesis 4: The traditional and non-industrial appeals are common and historical elements are stressed.

The hypothesis presumes the concern of expressions of the ancient and traditional elements. Admittedly, this hypothesis could be seen as another expression of the coexistence of human and nature philosophy, and additionally, it reflects another Chinese cultural preference: traditional, ancient things are usually considered relevant as authoritative and valuable.

Hypothesis 5: There are abundant emotional appeals or soft-sell in the advertisements.
The emotional appeal and soft-sell tendency of advertising appeals from Asian cultural backgrounds have been previously studied by researchers. Mueller’s study (1987) compared Japanese advertisements and US advertisements, and indicated that Japanese advertisements tend to use the soft-sell approach more than US advertisements. Chinese culture has similarity with Japanese culture on the aspect of propriety, “when it comes to not being verbally aggressive and always maintaining a modest decorum in sales pitches.” (Lin, 2001) With this understanding, the tendency of using the soft-sell approach in Chinese advertisements is to be expected.

This tendency could be connected with long-term orientation/short-term orientation in Hofstede’s cultural dimensions theory. According to Hofstede’s study (1997), Chinese culture has a strong long-term orientation tendency, which means Chinese culture is “oriented towards rewards, including persistence, saving and capacity for adaptation”. (Hofstede, 1997) The hypothesis is based on this and it suggests that the trend of conservatism and the proposition of implication in traditional Chinese culture are reflected in tourism advertisements.

1.4 Significance of the study

The topic is academically relevant and important as China is a country with rich tourist resources and cultural traditions. Additionally, nowadays China draws millions of tourists from all over the world every year. China’s tourism encounters different people from different cultural backgrounds and the duty of China’s tourism advertising is to attract those potential customers by showing the fascination of China.

As a country with a long history and a rich cultural tradition, stereotypes of Chinese culture and customs inevitably exist. These are often incomplete and sometimes even inaccurate, observing China through a lens affected by those stereotypes. Under such circumstances, it is valuable to distinguish the approach or process of China’s self-expression in a globalized world.

A number of previous studies have examined cultural values reflected in China’s advertisements. To generalize, first, modernity, which is rooted in Western cultural
values, is a universal theme and plays a vital role in Chinese values nowadays. Second, in non-western cultures, the traditional value is still an ordinary element in advertising expressions. Third, modern (western) and traditional (non-western) values interact, and this interaction is a symbol of globalization. (Zhang and Harwood, 2004)

However, tourism advertising has its own speciality compared with other commercials. Overall, to identify a nation, tourism advertising tends to presents the unique and peculiar factors of a nation. (Hummon, 1988) In other words, tourism advertising advocates more cultural speciality and identity than other advertisements. In order to reflect the characteristics of China and attract more overseas tourists, it is common to utilize some unique visual and auditory symbols or elements in tourism advertisements to represent China and the Chinese cultural identity. Those elements are at the heart of tourism advertising.

The study is based on all the situations mentioned. In terms of many non-Western countries in a globalized world, circumstances of conflict, amalgamation and interaction of traditional cultural values with mainstream Western values are unavoidable, and in this China is no exception. Simultaneously, the traditional and local cultural elements always exist.
2. Theoretical approach

In this chapter the author utilized the literature review method, which was done by analysing previously written books, articles and academic theses written by researchers and scholars, to help the construction of the whole theoretical framework. The literature review affords some background knowledge about the whole are of research and provides a theoretical basis for the analysis in this thesis.

There are several questions that are very significant for the whole study and have to be answered to provide a basis for the work. The studies’ results related to definition of culture, identity of Chinese culture and the reflection of national culture in mass communication, especially in advertising, are described and discussed. This thesis has to answer those questions firstly through literature reviews, to give the reader background knowledge, and to lay the foundation for the discussion and analysis.

As mentioned above, firstly, the connotation and denotation of “culture” in this thesis are defined. Furthermore, the author collected books and articles that are relevant to the analysis of Chinese cultural traditions, values and characteristics. Meanwhile, the most significant role of the literature review is to collect previous research related to the interaction of local culture and advertising. The analysed academic papers are related to advertising forms and Chinese culture, or any other country’s national culture, and can be seen as references of this thesis, even though this thesis only deals with advertising expressions and Chinese culture.

2.1 Definition of culture

There no fixed or standard definition of culture, however, the connotation of culture in this thesis has its field and it should be defined to give a clear theoretical basis for the whole study. As the second sub-chapter in chapter 1 mentioned, the understanding of culture in this thesis is rooted in the anthropological approach. Tylor’s definition, which has been mentioned above, is a traditional definition and is widely quoted, and later anthropologies developed the definition of culture based on
this original definition. For example, in 1952, Kroeber and Kluckhohn defined culture as:

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiment in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of further action. (p. 357)

Subsequently, Clifford Geertz (1966) developed the definition of culture as a symbolic issue:

[The culture concept] denotes a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life. (p.89)

Those definitions developed from Tylor’s original idea stress different aspects or details of culture. Through examination of those definitions and via a combination of them, the author believes that the main characteristics of culture could be clarified as:

1. Culture distinguishes the specialty of one certain human group and makes one certain group differentiated from others;
2. Group's behaviours could transmit some meanings and those meanings are presented through symbols. Culture is a system of those symbols;
3. The core of culture consists of the traditional, historical and inherited conceptions and values.

Admittedly, with development of the social environment, culture changes to acclimatize to changing situations. Moreover, the globalization tendency increases cross-cultural contact and promotes communication and interaction between different
cultures gradually. Therefore, “culture is a process, something which happens, and is in a constant state of becoming. It never stands still, or is complete.” (O’Dell, 2010; Guan, 2010) Culture is not a statue, but a flowing stream.

However, when assessing definitions of culture, it is incontestable that tradition always plays a vital role in all cultures. The details of culture could advance or change with time, but the essential core of culture, which means the intrinsic specificity of a culture, are always established in people’s minds and are relatively stable. This essential core reflects a culture’s identity.

2.2 Cultural ranking theory

2.2.1 Cultural dimensions theory

Culture could be seen as a human group or society’s lifestyle in anthropological terms. Individuals’ actions, opinions and values are rooted in their cultural background; namely, culture’s characteristics are reflected in the universality of individuals’ common life. However, this means culture is a coverall issue, however, a cultural system is complicated and multi-dimensional.

The Chinese cultural system is no exception. Therefore, in order to give a better understanding of the analysis, it is feasible to use some cultural ranking theories to locate Chinese culture in a bigger picture. To assess and differentiate Chinese national culture better, several research results and theoretical frameworks are proposed in this study.

First, a helpful theoretical framework is provided by Geert Hofstede’s cultural dimensions theory. In the 1980s, based on “a review of sociological and anthropological theories and work including Geertz (1973), Kluckhohn (1951, 1962), Parsons (1951), Parsons and Shils (1951) and Weber (1946)”, (Harvey, 1997) Hofstede posited and developed his theory of four primary dimensions of culture in his book, Culture’s Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations. The first four dimensions are: Power Distance Index (PDI), Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV), Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI)
and Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS). In addition in 1991, based on Michael Bond et al.’s survey results, Hofstede added a new fifth dimension to his model, namely, Long-Term Orientation versus Short-Term Orientation (LTO). In the same book, also based on Minkov’s World Values Survey data analysis, the sixth dimension has been added, called Indulgence versus Restraint (IVR). (Hofstede’s website)

On Hofstede’s academic websites, all the cultural dimensions are defined and interpreted, and survey data of all the cultural dimensions can also be accessed:

- Power distance is the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. This represents inequality (more versus less), but defined from below, not from above. It suggests that a society’s level of inequality is endorsed by the followers as much as by the leaders.

- Individualism/collectivism is the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups. On the individualist side, the societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after her/himself and her/his immediate family. On the collectivist side, societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, often extended families (with uncles, aunts and grandparents) which continue protecting them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.

- Uncertainty avoidance deals with a society’s tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity. It indicates to what extent a culture programs its members to feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations. Uncertainty avoiding cultures try to minimize the possibility of such situations by strict laws and rules, safety and security measures. People in uncertainty avoiding countries are also more emotional, and motivated by inner nervous energy. The opposite type, uncertainty accepting cultures, is more tolerant of opinions different from what they are used to; they try to have as few rules as possible. People within these cultures are more phlegmatic and contemplative.

- Masculinity/femininity, refers to the distribution of emotional roles
between the genders which is another fundamental issue for any society to which a range of solutions are found. The women in feminine countries have the same modest, caring values as the men; in the masculine countries they are more assertive and more competitive, but not as much as the men, so that these countries show a gap between men’s values and women’s values.

- Long-term oriented societies foster pragmatic virtues oriented towards future rewards, in particular saving, persistence, and adapting to changing circumstances. Short-term oriented societies foster virtues related to the past and present such as national pride, respect for tradition, preservation of “face”, and fulfilling social obligations.

- Indulgence stands for a society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human drives related to enjoying life and having fun. Restraint stands for a society that suppresses gratification of needs and regulates it by means of strict social norms. (Hofstede’s website)

Hofstede’s cultural dimensions theory is a typological culture study. According to the generalization of the scores around world in this research, the commonness and diversity in different countries were recognized. The culture of different countries could be identified according to their scores in the six dimensions; in other words, cultural dimensions theory is a possible tool which can be used to differentiate one country’s culture from another. Based on the understanding of one culture’s particularity, further research could be conducted and applied to the practice. In many culture studies and research on international business and marketing, education and several other domains, Hofstede’s cultural dimensions theory was applied to locate and explain a nation’s cultural features. With Hofstede’s cultural model, better understanding of cultural identity was achieved and more pointed decisions or solutions could be employed in certain cultural backgrounds. (E.g., Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey, 1988; Bartlett and Sumantra, 1999; Berry, 2002; etc.)

The scores of Chinese culture in Hofstede’s survey are 80(PDI), 20(IDV), 30(UAI), 66(MAS), 87(LTO), 24(IVR). (See matrix of dimension scores on Hofstede’s website) The scores of those six cultural dimensions could help the author
in locating Chinese culture and discussing the speciality and identity of Chinese culture. As mentioned above, some basic characteristics were described according to scores in every dimension and those descriptions were reflections of Chinese culture to a certain extent.

Chinese culture has the characteristics of higher power distance index, a collectivism tendency, lower uncertainty avoidance index, a fairly masculine tendency, obvious long-term orientation trend and an intense restraint tendency. This means in the view of Hofstede’s cultural dimensions theory that Chinese culture is as follows in nature: differences between people are accepted and perpetuated; individuals are collectivist automatically; society is less concerned about ambiguity and tries to minimize uncertainty; society emphasizes control, power and competition; people are oriented towards rewards, including persistence, saving and capacity for adaptation; and society has strict social norms.

The cultural dimensions theory is one of the basic tools used to locate Chinese culture and distinguish the cultural traits in this thesis. The theory tested different aspects of culture, so the results are relatively comprehensive. Through the scores in the six dimensions, it is possible to construct a primary conception of Chinese culture straits and its differences with other cultures.

However, it would be incomplete to consider Hofstede’s dimensions theory as the sole criterion on which to base an examination of Chinese culture. Other possible frameworks of culture will also be involved to distinguish Chinese culture.

2.2.2 High context and low context culture

Another helpful standard of culture ranking was posited by Edward T. Hall (1976). Hall ranked cultures as high context and low context in his book Beyond Culture. According to Hall, all information communication system could be divided into three categories in accordance with their characteristics: high, low or middle context. (Dahl, 2004) High context means “most of the information is either in the physical context or initialized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit,
transmitted part of the message.” (Hall, 1976, p.79) When members of a high context society exchange information with others, their common cultural background, namely, cultural context, usually plays a concernful role in the communication process. (Spear and Bacon, 2003) In other words, the shared cultural context is the basis upon which people communication and individuals are accustomed to receiving information from the environment and circumstances. Therefore, in a society with high context culture, direct language is not the only way to transmit information and profound and complicated meaning could be conveyed through implicit messages. (Hall, 1976) Furthermore, in a high context society, the relationship of people is usually more intimate than the relationship of people from a low context society, namely, society members tend to be involved with each other. (Hall, 1976) As a result, individuals have to control themselves in a high context society, their inner feelings are obedient to the society custom or consensus, and Hall (1976) described this situation as the existence of “a structure of social hierarchy”. In high context cultures, “one acts according to one’s role.” (Neuliep, 2005) Namely, in a high context society, individual’s social role is significant for every social member and the social order is maintained by it.

In comparison, in a low context culture, “the mass of information is vested in the explicit code” (Hall, 1976). The information conveyed in the communication process should be unique, detailed and fitting. “Members of low context cultures practice explicitness and directness in their communication style.” (Spear and Bacon, 2003) Namely, in a low context society, individuals convey meanings depending on the “immediate communication situation”. (Spear and Bacon, 2003) Accordingly, people in a low context culture are “highly individualized, somewhat alienated, and fragmented”, and relatively involved less with other society members (Hall, 1976; Kim, Pan and Park, 1998).

In detail, human communication is “dependent on the context in which it occurs”. (Neuliep, 2005) High context and low context cultures have their own tendency in various aspects. For example, as mentioned above, with regard to relationships of individuals, the relationships of social members in a high context culture are tight;
while the connections between people in a low context culture are relatively flimsy. (Kim, Pan and Park, 1998) In addition, in the interpersonal communication aspect, people from high context cultures usually avoid a direct communication manner, because people in high context cultures tend to believe that direct communication is threatening to them (Ting-Toomey, 1988) and the direct communication could be seen as an impolite communication tendency. (Hunt and Weintraub, 2007) All in all, individuals in high context cultures are concerned with the environment and context more, while persons in low context cultures rely on the tangible verbal expressions to achieve information and they care less about the context. (Neuliep, 2005)

Chinese culture is a representative high context culture, which tends to rely on background and implicit hints in the communication process to convey information, rather than using many detailed words to explain everything. In view of the Chinese cultural background, as with other high context cultures, the dependence on explicit verbal information in communication is limited. In Chinese culture, individuals could find and understand their roles in the communication context (Neuliep, 2005) and this understanding could help them comprehend effective information instead of verbal messages to some extent.

In a nutshell, in high context cultures, communication cannot be conducted without an understanding of the whole environment. In the communication process, the transmitter and audience could understand each other without every detail because they share the same knowledge and assumptions. Those cultural traits are reflected in Chinese culture and the Chinese lifestyle.

The ranking of high and low context culture is another main theory used in the thesis to distinguish Chinese culture. Hall (1976) ranked multifarious cultures as three types: high, low and middle context and although this classification is not very detailed, it reflects some essential differences between diverse cultural backgrounds. Using the generalization of a high context culture, the role of initialization in Chinese culture could be explained and the speciality of interpersonal relationships in Chinese society is also well defined.

On the other hand, high context culture is a wide ranging concept and there are
lots of types of cultures which could be grouped as high context. Therefore, it is just a reference to understand Chinese culture in order to achieve more information when trying to locate Chinese culture. It is therefore necessary to gather more details.

2.3 Identity of Chinese culture

The cultural dimension theory and high/low context theory are the most widely cited in the cultural research and those theories could give references to locate and explain Chinese culture to a certain extent. However, the Chinese Culture Connection (1987) suggested that social science “in origin, practitioners, and instrumentation” were determined by the Western world. Hofstede’s survey of work-related values (1980) is one bequest of this legacy. Similarly, Hall’s high/low context ranking (1976) and other cultural ranking methods could be culturally limited. In other words, Hofstede’s and Hall’s theories were based on Western views, while the Western standards may not be sufficient to position and explain Chinese culture perfectly.

The solution to this limitation is to also consider voices from different cultural backgrounds. The issue of Chinese cultural identity and values has attracted a number of researchers who have tried to use more varied and more local visions to examine Chinese culture. These studies can better investigate China’s tradition and reality from within, and can observe Chinese culture from other perspectives.

One representative of systemic research is a survey conducted by the Chinese Culture Connection in 1987. The Chinese Culture Connection made a survey of Chinese values and the data were distributed in 22 countries around the world. In this survey, 40 values were chosen from Chinese traditional opinions and were employed to explain fundamental characteristics of Chinese culture, such as “moderation, following the middle way”, “having a sense of shame” and “contentedness with one’s position in life”. (The Chinese Culture Connection, 1987) In addition, the values were classified into several “factors”.

This Chinese Value Survey (CVS) stated that there was a “potential of instruments developed outside a Western cultural tradition for opening up new
theoretical vistas.” (the Chinese Culture Connection, 1987) In CVS, four main factors were measured. The main contents of Factor I, integration, have a broadly integrative, socially stabilizing emphasis. Factor II was labelled Confucian work dynamism, reflecting Confucian work ethics. Factor III was Human-heartedness and Factor IV was labelled Moral discipline, reflecting a moral restraint. In descriptions of every factor, several positive and some negative reflections were stated. (The Chinese Culture Connection, 1987) Most of the factors in the CVS correlate with Hofstede’s survey, but the results of this Chinese-based research are not absolutely identical with the Western instruments. One example is the MAS dimension.

According to Hofstede’s cultural dimensions theory, Chinese culture has a masculinity culture tendency. However, the result of the CVS supported the femininity aspect of Chinese culture. There were five values in Factor III in the Chinese Culture Connection’s survey, which is labelled as human-heartedness. Three of them were positive factors which “suggest a gentleness and compassion” and the two others were “negatively loaded, which mentioned a harsher, legalistic approach”. (The Chinese Culture Connection, 1987) The correlation between Hofstede’s MAS and CVS III is significant (correlation = 0.67), in other words, CVS III tests similar factors with Hofstede’s MAS dimension. Nevertheless, the contents of CVS III suggested “feminine” valuing rather than “masculine” in Chinese culture. (The Chinese Culture Connection, 1987) Furthermore, in 2000, Fan developed a further study based on the CVS which added 31 key values (in total 71 values) and the results supported the CVS: Fan’s study results indicated that Chinese culture is “more collective rather than individualistic, with high uncertainty avoidance and large power distance”. On the other hand, Fan’s study demonstrated that “Chinese culture can be said as neither masculine nor feminine but emphasises the unity of both”. (Fan, 2000) This conclusion was consistent with the CVS, but conflicts with Hofstede’s MAS score.

With different measure systems and explanation orientations, even though similar contents are measured, the results could be diverse. The CVS and other research did not explain the discrepancy, but the possible reason could be the
descriptive language and the patterns used in the CVS fit Chinese habitual thoughts better or the CVS considered more varied possibilities in Chinese society.

The CVS provided a multiple and systemic perspective, which is grounded on a competent understanding of Chinese culture, to discuss the culture’s traits. The results suggested the possible influence of diversity between Western and Eastern visions in the process of examining Chinese culture.

On the other hand, most of the other Eastern-based studies are not as systematic as the CVS. The majority of research only aims at certain aspects and there is no global data to institute a comparison of Chinese results. However, what is certain is that those studies are valuable and can reflect some Chinese cultural values.

Several cultural studies are based on the cross-cultural communication field. For example, Pan et al. (1994) compared Chinese culture and American culture, and demonstrated some major differences between them. This study summarized the main characteristics of traditional Chinese culture as follows:

1. Traditional Chinese culture emphasizes passive acceptance of fate by seeking harmony with nature;
2. Traditional Chinese culture emphasizes inner experiences of meaning and feeling;
3. Traditional Chinese culture is typified by a closed world view, prizing stability and harmony;
4. Traditional Chinese culture rests on kinship ties and tradition with a historical orientation;
5. Traditional Chinese culture places more weight on vertical interpersonal relationships;
6. Traditional Chinese culture weights heavily a person’s duties to family, clan, and state.” (Pan et al., 1994, p.24)

From these generalizations, some features of Chinese culture have been fully portrayed. However, this type of research focuses on the external features of Chinese culture and does not discuss the causes of the characteristics and the underlying cultural elements. To analyse Chinese culture in more depth, studies based on the
traditional characteristics of Chinese culture could be more effective.

2.3.1 Confucianism

According to scholars, one of the most crucial aspects of the Chinese cultural tradition is Confucianism. In the CVS, Confucianism played a significant role. Factor II in the CVS named Confucian work dynamism and it reflected Confucian work ethics. The factor of Confucianism influenced the following research, for example, the reflection and influence of Confucianism is reflected in Hofstede’s LTO dimension supplementary. Hofstede (2001) recognized that the dimension of long-term versus short-term orientation is generalized from the perspective of Confucian dynamism.

Confucianism is an ethical and philosophical system based on the thoughts of the Chinese philosopher Confucius. It is not the only far-reaching school of traditional thought in China, besides Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, and some local regional cultures also play important roles in the process of Chinese value construction. Those thoughts and schools influence each other, interacting with each other and construct the ideological basis of traditional Chinese culture altogether. Nonetheless, Confucianism plays the crucial role in the establishment of Chinese cultural traditions and it is still a basis of individual’s interpersonal behaviour system in modern times. (Pye, 1972; Fan, 2000) Confucianism is undisputedly the most influential ideology in Chinese society.

Hsu (1981) demonstrated that the centre of Chinese lifestyle is relationship and the relationship is determined by the Confucian doctrine. According to Hsu, Confucian doctrine established many social criterions, such as women’s chastity, roles of father and sons in family and reverence to authority and ancestors. Pan et al. (1994) suggested that Confucianism was the basis of Chinese traditional value system and the value system worked in diverse aspects of the society, such as rituals, rites, ceremonies and cultural artefacts.

If all the statements of Chinese culture traits above, such as high PDI score or “weights heavily a person’s duties to family, clan, and state” (Pan et al. 1994), are
analysed carefully, it is tangible that most of them are connected with and could be explained by the Confucianism ideology. In the philosophical and cultural history of East Asia, Confucianism plays a crucial role. In China’s social and political value system, Confucianism is a basis and its influence has lasted to the present day. (Yum, 1988) As with other main Chinese traditional schools of thought, Confucianism is a complicated thought system and it consists of numerous elements and detailed thoughts.

In Confucianism, there are five basic virtues, called Wu Chang in Chinese, and people base their way of living on these five virtues. The five basic virtues are “ren (benevolence), yi (integrity, uprightness), li (rite and propriety), chi (moral understanding) and shin (trust)” (Park, 2007) At the core of Confucianism value lies ren, which means benevolence, virtue and compassion. Ren insists that love and humaneness are the basis for individuals’ relationships. Meanwhile, according to Confucius, human relationships in society should be regulated by five codes of ethics, called Wu Lun in Chinese. These five basic relationships are: ruler/subject, father/son, husband/wife, older brother/younger brother and relationship between friends. (Chen and Chung, 1994) Everyone should obey his/her social role in relationships and construct an ideal social order. This could be used to explain the high PDI score in Chinese culture.

“Heaven” is one of the most significant conceptions in Confucianism and also in other traditional Chinese values. “Heaven” is the non-corporeal entity around humans, which means the whole of nature and the law of nature. I Ching (or Yi Jing), one of the oldest Chinese classic texts and one of the most influential Confucianism works, stated “the ideal human could fit the will of heaven and Earth; fit the lustre of the sun and moon; fit the order of the seasons; fit the luck or hoodoo of spirits.” (“夫大人者, 与天地合其德, 与日月合其明, 与四时合其序, 与鬼神合其吉凶。”) Confucianism (and the whole of Chinese traditional culture) stresses and advocates learning the law of nature, and being bound by it. The conception of the “coexistence of humans and nature” (see sub-chapter 1.3) is a reflection of this ideology.

Filial piety is another significant theme in Confucianism, especially in the aspect
of Confucianism ethics. Filial piety means respect for parents, other elderly relatives and ancestors. In traditional Chinese society, elderly people are respected and this veneration has been maintained as a representative characteristic of Chinese culture. (Cheng, 1994; Lin, 2001) Filial piety is connected with ren and it could be seen as the basis of ren. The idea of humanness (ren) encouraged by Confucianism is an extension of filial piety. On the other hand, filial piety influences Chinese people’s basic attitudes towards ancient traditions and cultural successions: ancestors and their spiritual heritage are the most honoured.

In Chinese folk religion, the most notable activity is to worship heaven and the ancestors. This could be seen as a reflection of the value of heaven and filial piety in Confucianism in Chinese culture. The values of Confucianism are also embodied in traditional social systems. In the past, all of Chinese society was extremely orderly: classes are obeyed; elderly people are respected; and traditions are valued and worshiped. Even though Chinese society has changed a lot with the advance of history, these basic traditional values still extensively influence Chinese people and constitute Chinese culture characteristics.

It must be noted that even though Hofstede’s long-term orientation dimension was influenced by Confucianism and China had a high score in this, the value of the behaviour characteristics of respect for tradition is an obvious manifestation of short-term orientation. This situation reflects the complexity and breadth of Chinese culture. “Confucian culture is a culture with strong inclusiveness, having tendencies toward the pursuit of harmony and modulation. The substantive characteristics determine that Chinese culture holds an attitude of exclusion of second culture location.” (Chen, 2008, original in Chinese) This judgment is not a negation of long-term orientation in Chinese culture, but evidence of the complexity of Chinese culture.

To sum up the Western culture ranking theories and the detailed Chinese perspective studies, the generally acknowledged characteristics of Chinese culture are:

1. High PDI, low IDV, low UAI, low IVR (the MAS score is questionable
according to Chinese perspective studies);

2. High context culture;

3. Being guided by Confucianism (ren, the coexistence of human and nature, filial piety, etc.), or high LTO score.

2.4 Cultural values and advertising

2.4.1 Manifestations of culture

Hofstede (1991) distinguished four manifestations of culture: symbols, rituals, heroes and values. According to Hofstede’s definitions, symbols are “words, gestures, pictures, or objects that carry a particular meaning which is only recognized by those who share a particular culture”. Heroes are “persons, past or present, real or fictitious, who possess characteristics that are highly prized in a culture”. Rituals are “collective activities, sometimes superfluous in reaching desired objectives, but are considered as socially essential, including ways of greetings, paying respect to others, religious and social ceremonies, etc”. Values are the core of this model, and in this case, values mean “broad preferences for one state of affairs over others”.

Values are mostly unconscious. Different from other manifestations of culture, values usually cannot be observed directly, neither are values specific actions. Value is defined by Rokeach (1973) as “an enduring belief that one mode of conduct or end-state of existence is preferable to an opposing mode of conduct or end-state of existence.” Moreover, Smith and Bond (1994) defined the conception of value as “universalistic statements about what we think are desirable or attractive”.

In Hofstede’s view, culture is like an onion. It is a system that can be revealed layer by layer. The four manifestations, symbols, heroes, rituals and values, are four layers of the “onion”. (Hofstede, 1991; Dahl, 2004) Symbols, heroes and rituals were included in the term of expressions and practices of culture. Rituals, heroes and symbols are visible, but the true cultural meaning is the inner layer of the “onion” and it is indirect. Only internal participants of the culture could comprehend the true meaning in the practices. (Dahl, 2004; de Mooij, 2009)
Therefore, according to Hofstede’s onion-like culture model, in the communication process, those visible expressions of culture could be easily seen but the value is indirect. To distinguish the cultural value, the prerequisite is the analysis of those external expressions. Symbols, heroes and rituals are usually reflected in advertising expressions and values are just suggestions or hints.

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) presented another model which is similar to Hofstede’s onion-like model. Their model expands the conception of a core level in the two-layered onion-like model. In their view, the core level of a culture’s construction is “basic assumptions”. (Dahl, 2004) In summary, the “basic assumptions” in their theory play a similar role with the conception of “values” in Hofstede’s model. The basic assumptions are implicit and they are the kernel of culture. However, in the Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner theory (1997), “the outer layers are the products and artefacts that symbolise the deeper, more basic values and assumptions about life.” Their interpretation of the layers is different to Hofstede’s model. Those visible and explicit outer layers are influenced by the inner layers, namely, basic assumptions.

The two models were combined by Spencer-Oatey (2000). Spencer-Oatey’s culture model is onion-like as well. In her model, Spencer-Oatey defined four layers. She combined the conceptions of basic assumptions and values, and placed them together as the inner core of culture. The core is encircled by the layer of “beliefs, attitudes and conventions”, while the layer of “beliefs, attitudes and conventions” is encircled by another layer labelled “systems and institutions”. The outer layer of culture consists of both “rituals and behaviour” and “artefacts and products”. Rituals and behaviour are related to human behaviours while artefacts and products are not. Namely, the external level of culture included both human behavioural patterns and non-behavioural items. (Spencer-Oatey, 2000)

In conclusion, even though those culture models hold different opinions about the detailed layers of culture, they share a common view on the structure of the culture model: onion-like. All of the models mentioned several layers of culture and those layers could be seen on two main levels: a visible level, such as behaviour or artefacts; and an invisible level, such as assumptions and values. The outer layers are
easily observed and the inner layers are more difficult to grasp directly.

When people wish to explore a certain culture, those manifestations of culture should be studied. In the process of observation of a culture, the traits of observable outer layers are explicit. However, the inner layers of culture, namely the core of a culture, are not directly visible. In order to discover the most significant core, the careful observation and deep analysis of the outer layers are essential.

2.4.2 Culture and advertising

As mentioned above, the core of culture cannot be observed directly. Nevertheless, the outer layers are influenced by inner cores and the outer layers are the visible external manifestations of cultural values. In other words, to explore a culture’s core values, it is necessary to approach the visible manifestations.

In this thesis, the discussion point of manifestations is selected as China’s tourism advertising. In advertising communication, the sender’s activity, which means the elements and style of the senders (advertisers) used in advertising, are approaches to express their culture external traits and also embody their potential cultural values.

Generally, culture and advertising have a close association. Advertising is “a symbolic artefact constructed from the conventions of a particular culture.” (de Mooij, 2009) Advertising text depends on diversified non-verbal elements to interpret the culture for outside observers, and in addition, to convey inner cultural values. The non-verbal elements in advertising expressions include images, colours, motions, music and so forth. (Alozie, 2010) Both the sender and receivers use their cultural knowledge to understand those non-verbal elements and the cultural signals behind them in advertisements.

Researchers and scholars have provided frameworks to reflect how cultural values influence advertising in the last few decades and the research that examines the connection between cultural factors and advertising in Eastern cultural backgrounds is also numerous.

In the 1980s, a series of cross-cultural studies compared Japanese and American
culture. Those studies indicated that Japanese culture was influenced by other cultures and changing towards a Western style, however, traditional Japanese cultural values were still deep-rooted on the whole and conveyed obviously in the advertising expressions. (E.g. Belk and Pollay, 1985; Belk and Bryce, 1986)

Moreover, in 1987, Mueller explored the cultural appeals reflected in Japanese and American magazine advertisements. The conclusion indicated that the appeals tend to differ. It demonstrated a tendency of soft-sell appeals in Japanese advertisements and a hard-sell appeal trend in American advertisements. In 1992, Mueller furthered this study and stressed the relative cultural diversity. The 1992 study mentioned that Japanese advertising was not Westernized and the facts indicated the opposite situation. “There are indicators that it may be becoming increasingly Japanese”. (Mueller 1992) The local cultural features in Japan are always marked indelibly.

Lin and Salwen continued the comparative study of Japanese and American commercials. In 1995, they constructed a study about television commercials and they came to two main conclusions. Firstly, they found that American commercials were inclined to “the completeness and perfection of either a rational or an emotional appeal in their product information strategy”, more so than Japanese commercials. (Lin and Salwen, 1995) Furthermore, there were tendencies to pursue “the sophistication of either a physical or emotional embodiment” in Japanese commercials. (Lin and Salwen, 1995)

The study results of Japanese advertisements’ characteristics are not unique. In 1997, Taylor et al. conducted an experiment in which they found that Korean commercials reflected more high context tendency and employed less information-oriented factors than American commercials. In addition, in 1999, Cho et al. developed a cross-cultural content analysis study to examine the culture elements of Korean and American advertising. The conclusions indicated that Korean commercials tended to adopt the conception of oneness-with-nature slightly more than the American commercials and American commercials prefer to use more direct approaches. In general, the findings of Korean cultural value identity are similar with
the study conclusions on the cultural distinction with regard to Japanese advertisements.

In comparison, Chinese culture in advertising has also attracted several researchers and their conclusions are consistent roughly. In 1996, Cheng and Schweitzer did a content analysis of Chinese and American television commercials, and this study identified eight cultural values to help with the analysis: family, technology, tradition, enjoyment, individualism, economy, modernity and youth. By analysing and comparing those cultural values reflected in Chinese or American television advertising, Cheng and Schweitzer summarized that there were more symbolic cultural values reflected in Chinese commercials, whereas American commercials tended to use both symbolic and utilitarian values. In addition, Lin (2001) conducted research to discuss the cultural values reflected in Chinese and American television advertising appeals. This content analysis study found a Westernization and modernization trend in Chinese advertising, but it also indicated traditional Chinese cultural values were relatively steady in Chinese commercials. The study listed the tendency of soft-sell appeals, tradition appeals and group consensus appeals in commercials as the examples of the stability.

In summary, those study results are similar with regard to cultural values reflected in advertisements in the Eastern countries. The examples of Japanese, Korean and Chinese advertisements reflected the situation that cultural values are relatively stable and unique, and in different countries, advertising expressions are influenced by their cultural values. The symbols and elements in advertising are visible manifestations which encircle the core of the culture and they could be seen as a mirror of a nation’s culture in the area of mass communication.

2.4.3 Globalization and glocalization

Alozie (2010) discussed the theories of globalization, localization and glocalization systematically in his study. Globalization and localization are two contradictory, but also inseparable, issues. One opinion indicated that there is always
a tendency of globalization in advertising and the globalization tendency may bring cultural homogenization and Westernization. (Robertson, 1992; Ritzer, 1996) On the other hand, the opposite opinion valued localization and it supported that distinct cultural characteristics exist among different societies, and therefore international campaigns should pay attention to the cultural differences (James and Hill 1991; Mueller 1996). Glocalization is different with the above two ideas, and the conception of glocalization suggested a process of the interaction and amalgamation between the global and the local factors (Robertson, 1992; Zandpour et al., 1994; Zhang, 2003). The glocalization model provides new ideas of international advertising activities. The global and local factors are not conflict, therefore, advertisers could promote their products and services without weakening or impacting the values of their international costumers (Zhang, 2003; Alozie, 2010).

It is beyond doubt that globalization is a tendency and it has materialized in the tourism advertising for overseas markets. International brands, converging habits and global heroes - these all reflect increasing numbers of global cultural factors. A so-called global culture is being formed. On the other hand, tourism advertising stresses the characteristics and unique experiences of the tour destination. Therefore, tourism advertisements tend to use unique, proprietary symbols to enhance the effectiveness of self-promotion.

Besides those external manifestations, “our values have not become global; they vary across cultures and are not likely to change during our lifetime.” (de Mooij, 2009) This stability of values is not well understood by advertising people, who tend to mistake superficial trends for changing values.

To put it briefly, tourism advertising is a representation of the glocalization status. The expressions of advertising always consider the different backgrounds of overseas audiences and choose to show something universal to be more international, whereas, tourism advertisements have to spread cultural characteristics as far as possible, thereby spreading the stable cultural values behind advertising expressions.
2.5 Summary

To distinguish the reflections of culture in advertising, this chapter provided some basic conceptions and instruments to help in the understanding. It consists of four sub-chapters.

The first sub-chapter is the most fundamental basis; the term “culture” in this thesis was clarified as the basis of the theoretical framework. In the first sub-chapter, the basic conceptions and definitions of culture were defined, and it explained the research subject in this thesis. Moreover, the main characteristics of culture were generalized through a combination of the definitions. This approach determined the scope of the study and helped the subsequent contents of the analysis of culture.

The second and third sub-chapters constituted a brief presentation of Chinese culture. The Chinese cultural traits are cultural roots of the characteristics of advertising expressions, and in this study, it is evident that all the hypotheses in this study were based on, or involved, the cultural characteristics mentioned by former scholars. In general, the characteristics of Chinese culture obtained from the previously conducted research would become the standard of the analyses in this study.

The second sub-chapter gave two possible measures to label and position different cultures: one is Hofstede’s cultural dimension theory and the other is Hall’s theory of high/low context cultures. This section mentioned those two main academic ideas to rank and locate Chinese culture, and through the locating process, some characteristics of Chinese culture were discovered.

While the third sub-chapter introduced some detailed Chinese cultural traits through the literature review. This sub-chapter gave some more details of Chinese culture based on more local and concrete visions. Confucianism was introduced as the most significant component and guide in traditional Chinese culture.

The fourth sub-chapter consists of three parts. Firstly, the conception of cultural value was defined and scholars’ opinions about the model of culture were stated. There are differences between Hofstede’s and others’ models, but it was concluded
that culture is composed of outer and inner layers. The outer layers are observed, such as symbols, behaviours; and cultural value is the inner layer which cannot be observed directly. Secondly, with reviews of the former studies in view of Eastern cultures, the connection of advertising and cultural background was represented. Advertising usually could be seen as one reflection approach of a nation’s culture. Finally, the globalization and glocalization trends were declared. Even though it is recognized that globalization tendency promotes interaction and amalgamation of different cultures, cultural values still retain unique elements. This sub-chapter indicated the effectiveness of the study: tourism advertising is a type of manifestation of culture, and it reflects the local cultural characteristics to the full extent.

In the following analysis, those theoretical frameworks will be utilized as a foundation. In other words, the manifestations, in this case, the detailed advertising expressions, will be linked to Chinese cultural characteristics, to analyse the potential cultural identity and cultural values behind the advertising, to test the relationship of advertising and Chinese culture, and to search for the stable local elements in the global world.
3. Methodology

3.1. Quantitative research: content analysis

3.1.1 Introduction of content analysis

Content analysis is defined as “a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication”. (Berelson, 1952) This definition implies that in the content analysis process, the answers to research questions can be found, at the same time, in this process the data are collected impersonally and communications are not interpreted by any subjective factors. (Carney, 1972) However, with the development of research, the “quantitative” and “manifest” restrictions have been dropped, and the definition has been extended as “any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages.” (Holsti, 1969)

Considering effectiveness and convenience, quantitative content analysis was employed in this thesis to gather general information about the official online tourism advertisements. In other words, the content analysis method was chosen because of its effectiveness in distinguishing the most common elements in China’s tourism advertising. The advertisements are expressed by descriptive and qualitative elements, and the author needed the data to examine expression tendencies in the advertisements. Therefore, it is necessary to classify and count those elements in a quantitative process. As a method that allows “a quantitative analysis of seemingly qualitative data” (Smith, et al., 1996), content analysis is the most suitable method to transfer the descriptive and qualitative data into quantitative data, and in this study, the content analysis method is employed as the classical type. This works by counting the frequency of different themes/contents.

To be specific, in order to categorize the contents of advertisements and calculate them objectively, the following steps are necessary: first, unite and code the original qualitative data of advertisements and then place them into categories. Finally, count their frequencies and do the further calculations. Those processes are included exactly in the content analysis method, which means that content analysis could be
more effective than other methods in achieving the intended research objectives. Through the process that encodes the detailed visual elements into quantitative data, the essential facts and trends in those research materials could be clarified. Quantitative content analysis is helpful in identifying the most representative elements in advertising expression and this result could also be a reference for the following discourse analysis.

Concretely speaking, quantitative content analysis in this thesis is conducted to distinguish the descriptions of manifest content in the tourism advertisements. The main target of content analysis is to answer the sub-research question “What are the most representative official expressions of Chinese elements in the Internet tourism advertisements to overseas markets?”

3.1.2. Content analysis plan and steps

Step 1. Test assumptions

The author assumed that the advertising expressions have tendencies when selecting the subjects in advertisements and some definitive categories of tourism resources were employed more frequently than other categories in advertising. The process of content analysis aimed to discover the most frequent advertising subjects.

Step 2. Sampling design

Step 2.1 The sampling range

In this study, the resources of advertising were selected from the official organizations’ websites. The author chose this entry point considering the reality in China of the significant role governmental organizations play in many fields, and the same situation exists in the field of China’s tourism.

The governmental organization responsible for tourism in China is named the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA). It is the agency in charge of tourism which is directly affiliated to the State Council. As the governmental tourism organization, it is CNTA’s responsibility to “normalize the order of the tourist market”, “organize external publicity and significant promotional activities on the overall
image of China’s tourism” and to “promote the international communication and cooperation of tourism”. (CNTA website)

The English version of the CNTA website provides a little basic information about inbound tourism, but is more or less stark, without any advertisements. However, CNTA has 18 overseas tourist offices around the world and many of them have their own websites. These CNTO websites could be seen as China’s official organizations towards overseas markets directly, and those CNTO organizations have strong influence, more manpower and comprehensive material resources than other tourism websites. Perhaps those websites are not the ones with the richest information or are the ones which are most frequently updated, but the fact is that those CNTO websites have more importance and more influence than any other tourist websites.

As a tourist destination, China’s most unique and attractive aspects were reflected with vivid multi-media technology in Internet advertising on those official CNTO websites and those advertisements are a part of China’s official self-expression in the area of tourism. In other words, the advertisement choices are more reliable and more representative on those CNTO websites and could be seen as standard and typical samples. Those CNTO websites and their choices of advertising expressions are the most formal expressions and voices from China. Therefore, specifically, the CNTO websites are the study resources, and in this study, the official tourism advertisements on those websites are chosen as the research materials.

The population of the data in the content analysis is all tourism advertisements from the CNTO websites on English language pages. The original content in some of CNTO websites, for example, CNTO in Moscow and CNTO in Madrid, are not in English and do not have any English language version or translation. Therefore, considering the convenience of the study and the researcher’s limitations, those CNTO websites are not involved in this study as research materials.

Therefore, the samplings in the analysis in this thesis are the following CNTO websites:


This CNTO website has the most abundant resources compared with other
CNTO websites and it is the easiest one to be retrieved.

As with the other overseas CNTO tourist offices, New York and Los Angeles offices are non-profit government organizations. The CNTO offices in New York and Los Angeles aim to “develop and promote all aspects of tourism to China within the United States”. “It is responsible for educating both the general public and the travel industry about China, which is achieved through travel trade shows, consumer shows, seminars, familiarization trips and other ongoing promotions”. (CNTO in New York and Los Angeles website) This description could be seen as the common function of all CNTO offices located around the world.

This website has an affiliated website (http://www.cntovideo.org/) with videos and other information and resources. The resources in the affiliated website were also included in this study.

- CNTO in Toronto: http://www.tourismchina.org/
  CNTO in Toronto deals with the whole of Canada “to develop and promote all aspects of tourism to China within Canada”. (CNTO in Toronto) The CNTO website in Toronto has an English language and a French language version - in this study the English version website is selected as a resource.
  Even though this CNTO office is located in Sydney, Australia is not the only target market it covers. The objective of the CNTO office in Sydney is “to promote China as a tourist destination to the general public and industry in the Australian and New Zealand market”. (CNTO in Sydney)
- CNTO in London: http://www.cnto.info/
  The CNTO London office covers not only the UK, but also Ireland, as well as the five Nordic countries, namely, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Norway and Iceland. This website has specific pages labelled with different countries.
- English version of CNTO in Zurich: http://www.chinatourism.ch/eg/index.php
  This Zurich office is located in Switzerland and it has three language versions: English, German and French. There is not much difference between the three versions and the author chose the English language page as the standard in this study.
The CNTO office in New Delhi is the organization located in India to promote China tourism in India and enhance China-India tourism cooperation.

Based on those websites, all the advertisements were selected as the research materials. The main advertising forms in this case are banner advertising, button advertising, flash advertising and video advertising. The illustrations of contents were not included in statistics. In this study, the illustrations were defined as the explanatory pictures which have a relationship in content with the texts posted on the same page. The advertisements with airline recommendations were not employed in this study because their content is not connected with any China tourism resources. Furthermore, because the Internet advertising contents may be changed and updated, the statistical investigation was based on the advertising contents on March, 2012.

Step 2.2 Sampling method

The advertising images could be divided into static and dynamic (video advertisements). Considering the quantity of the images in static advertising, it is acceptable to analyse all static advertising images and it is unnecessary to sample from the population. However, the quantity of images in the video advertisements was relative high, therefore, it would be too complicated to analyse all video advertisements.

There are 66 video advertisements on those CNTO websites in total. In this study, seven of them (around 10%) were employed as resources in this section of content analysis. The author sampled them by simple random sampling. The themes of the seven videos are: city guide of Shenyang, city guide of Fuzhou, guide of Anhui Province, scenery of Huang Long, introduction of Xinjiang international Bazaar, scenery and history of Mount Lu, overview of China tour.

Step 3. Processing of the content analysis materials

In this study all advertisements were grouped into advertising with static images and advertising with moving images. Banner advertising, button advertising and most flash advertising are in the first group, and those advertisements are consistent with signal or plural independent and static images; while the second group is video
advertising with moving and consecutive shots.

The basic units in content analysis are every still image from the banner advertisements and frames from the flash advertisements; and each complete advertising video. Compared with the banner and flash advertisements, the frames of video advertisements are more complicated and varied, so they are inducted independently in the content analysis section, which means the statistics and analysis of still images and moving images are conducted separately.

The classification of tourism resources follows Classification, Investigation and Evaluation of Tourism Resources (GB/T 18972—2003). (CNTA's website, original in Chinese) This is the National Institute of Standards of the People’s Republic of China, which was released on 24th, February, 2003 and implemented on 1st, May, 2003. All tourism organizations in China have to follow this standard when deciding, describing or investigating their travel routes or plans. All forms of Classification, Investigation and Evaluation of Tourism Resources will be translated and attached in the Appendix section.

There are eight main categories of tourism resources according to this standard:

A. Physiographic landscape,

Category A includes mountains and hills, valleys, special landforms, etc. Specific examples include the Guilin karst formations, the Huangshan Mountains and the Kunlun Mountains.

B. Water area landscape,

Category B includes rivers, lakes, waterfalls, springs, etc. Specific examples include the Yangtze Gorges (three Gorges), Qinghai Lake and Huangguoshu Waterfall.

C. Biology landscape,

Category C includes trees, grasslands, wildlife habitats, etc. Specific examples include forests of pines, Inner Mongolia grassland and Sichuan Wolong National Nature Reserve.

D. Sky phenomena and climate landscape,

Category D includes zones of mirage phenomenon, zones of clouds and mists,
etc. Specific examples include the mirage phenomenon in Penglai, and the sea of clouds in the Huangshan Mountains.

E. Site and relic,

Category E includes prehistoric human activity sites, military sites and ancient battlefields, etc. Specific examples include Peking Man Site at Zhoukoudian, Yin Xu (Yin Ruins) and the Ruins of E’pong Palace.

F. Architecture and establishment,

Category F includes landscape architectures, traditional and vernacular architectures, tombs, etc. Specific examples include the Classical Gardens of Suzhou, the Forbidden City, Longmen Grottoes, the Great Wall and the Terracotta Army.

G. Tourist commodity,

Category G includes agricultural products, traditional handmade products, etc. Specific examples include Chinese food, green tea products and ceramics.

H. Human activity.

Category H includes folk festivals, characteristic costumes, modern festivals, etc. Specific examples include traditional instrument performances, ethnic costumes and the Olympic Games.

Each category includes several sub-classifications and each sub-classification is composed of some main types of tourism resources.

In summary, categories A to D could be labelled as natural tourism resources while categories E to H could be labelled as cultural tourism resources. According to all the standards mentioned above, the advertising contents were described and then grouped into the eight categories according the subjects reflected in the advertising. In the whole content analysis process, the classification standard was always consistent.

Generally, most of the static advertising images only reflect specific parts of one scenic spot. In this situation, the classification standard in this study was based according to the main subjects reflected in advertising images rather than the general characteristics of the scenic spot. For example, a picture with a waterfall (category B) in Jiuzhaigou Valley scenic spot would be placed in category B, while a picture with the full views of a valley (category A) in the same scenic spot would be placed in
category A. This means that the classification process depends only on the content of advertising images, rather than audiences’ understanding level of China’s tourism resources.

The contents of video advertisements were united according to the different contents reflected by scenes. The continuous scenes or shots with the same subject were classified as one unit, whereas the total length of shots was not taken into account.

The categories of content analysis of the video advertisements were also based according to the national classification, which is the same as the classification of the static advertising scenes.

The statistics and discussions of the content analysis process were divided into three levels: firstly, the advertising images would be divided into a category of natural tourism resources (category A to D) and a category of cultural tourism resources (category E to H) briefly; and next, the detailed data of the eight categories would be displayed; finally, the most frequent category would be analysed in more depth, which means the percentage of each sub-classification of the most frequent category would be calculated to achieve more information.

Step 4. Representation of content analysis results

After the three levels of analysis, the study results of each level were demonstrated as a table or pie chart with percentages. The analysis results of static advertising and video advertising would be delivered separately.

3.2 Qualitative research: discourse analysis

3.2.1 Introduction of discourse analysis

Only using the quantitative content analysis method cannot reflect all-round the tourism advertising expressions, therefore, qualitative research is employed to help describe the situation. With the coordination of content analysis and discourse analysis, the answers to all research questions are considered.

Discourse analysis is a qualitative research method which was developed in the
20th century. There is no single “discourse analysis” and the category of discourse analysis includes many different styles of analysis. (Gill, 2000) Besides various detailed analysis approaches, the analysis object of discourse analysis is multiplex as well. “A discourse is a “dance” that exists in the abstract as a coordinated pattern of words, deeds, values, beliefs, symbols, tools, objects, times, and places”. (Gee, 2011a, p.36) The discourse analysis method regards multifarious aspects as object of analysis and the information which could be obtained from the analysis process is abundant. In the analysis of the advertising discourse in this study, the general approach is the analysis of signed language and semiotic language instead of the written or spoken language. In other words, the analysis of both the visual and audio materials is the core of the qualitative research process.

The study of discourses of advertising has been highlighted by several researchers. Some researches focused on phonology, graphology, lexis and syntax, and other lingual aspects in advertising languages (e.g., Cook, 1992; Myers, 1994), and several studies have considered advertising discourses in view of wholeness to judge the specialties in certain aspects, such as discussions on cultural differences (e.g., Schmidt et al., 1994), gender awareness (e.g., Barthel, 1988; Thornborrow, 1994) and social ideology (e.g., Thurot and Thurot, 1983; Kress, 1987). (Simpson, 2001) Namely, discourse analysis is an effective and successful research method in advertising studies.

In addition, the author selected discourse analysis instead of other research methods because “discourse” could cover all elements in the advertisements. In other words, both the overall level of advertisements and the detailed level of diverse integrants could be examined with discourse analysis method. With discourse analysis, the ways and means of advertising languages to express Chinese identities could be distinguished, and the unitary expressions could also be judged. Moreover, in discourse analysis, the main research tendency could be considered as descriptive and critical discourse analysis. The point of emphasis in this study is not the ideology or power conveyed in the advertising communication process, which is focused by critical discourse analysis. Therefore, the author abandoned the critical discourse
analysis, favouring the conception of discourse analysis in general.

In this case, discourse analysis is an appropriate tool to analyse the research data: expressions in advertising, as the qualitative research materials in this study. Whole advertisements are referred to as the form of discourses in this study, specifically, the use of photography, video and flash technologies in advertisements are viewed as visual and signed languages. Those languages are the discourses used to convey cultural characteristics, and discourse analysis is the most suitable tool to discover the conveyance of discourses. Namely, the entire Chinese cultural landscape permeates in the messages, expressions and scenes in advertising, and the discourse analysis method is applied to distinguish, present and explain them.

Firstly, image is the most attractive and significant factor in tourism advertisements, and it could convey plentiful information. “Pictures that communicate messages of destinations, programs, and activities are the key to attracting and holding potential visitors who will, it is hoped, be motivated to make further inquiries and eventually a booking.” (Dewar, Li and Davis, 2007) Auditory factors also work in advertising expressions. Music could “mirror the social world, present or historical, that produces and consume it.” (Bauer, 2000) The choice of background music and the use of voices and noises in video and flash advertisements could also reflect advertisers’ recognitions and preferences. However, in reality visual symbols are usually the most attractive factor in advertisements, while music and sounds are supplemental, and visual symbols are more colourful and diverse than audio ones.

The verbal expression in advertisements, which means advertising slogans in this case, are also employed in the analysis, but the application of those linguistic signs is quite limited in practice, therefore, the verbal expressions did not play a crucial role in the study either. Accordingly, the discourse analysis methods would be employed on the idiographic verbal and non-verbal expressions, and the point of emphasis is on analysing the usage of the visual elements in tourism advertisements.

There are different characteristics between the linguistic system and systems of still images, moving images and music and sound. Examinations of the connotation, myth and referent systems are indispensable steps in the analysis process. In the
analysis process, the necessary step in to decode the non-linguistic elements and translate them into a verbal system, but keep their essential connotations. All advertising forms on websites are considered as discourse analysis resources, but this section is more concerned with the video advertising form, because the audiovisual style could convey richer and more complete information, and imply profound cultural connotations compared with still images.

For this propose, in the discourse analysis section, some representative tourism advertisements images and other expressions from the original materials are collected as the analysis resources. The choice of particular advertisements as qualitative research materials forms the basis of the quantitative content analysis results. Namely, the advertisements with the most frequent elements are chosen as research materials in the qualitative research process. Via discourse analysis, the inherent relations of advertising expressions and the Chinese cultural values behind them are introduced and explained by the author, who is familiar with the Chinese cultural background and connotations.

Discourse analysis could be helpful to ascertain the cultural characteristics in advertising expressions and the main hypothesis in this study could only be examined through this qualitative method. The sub-research question, “How is the Chinese cultural identity reflected in the employment of Chinese elements in those tourism advertisements, especially in the visual elements?” should also be qualitative analysed. Namely, discourse analysis is the main tool to explore reflections of cultural identity in advertising expressions.

3.2.2 Discourse analysis plan and steps

Step 1. Test assumptions

The content analysis section examined the general expression tendency and the most common elements in tourism advertisements, and the onion-like cultural model indicated that the representative expressions were the external manifestations of culture and there were internal culture values under them. The discourse analysis
aimed to interpret the advertising expressions and discover the inner cultural values.

Step 2. Sampling design

Step 2.1 Sampling range

Similarly with the content analysis section, the objects of discourse analysis were all advertisements in the chosen CNTO websites. However, the contents of most static advertisements on those websites were more or less monotonous: scenes with basic editing. In comparison, the video advertisement expressions were more vivid and had more complex and abundant contents, while the contents described by single images were relatively simple. Therefore, the author focused on the video advertisements as the main resources in the discourse analysis section. The static advertisements were employed as supplementary materials.

Step 2.2 Sampling method

In this section, the author selected some cases to discuss and analyse the discourses in them. The sampling method is stratified sampling. First, the author divided all video advertisements into a group of natural tourism resources and a group of cultural tourism resources. Then the author used the simple sampling method to select a proportion of cases in the two groups separately. In addition, the author checked those selected cases and affirmed that they are clear and representative. The selected advertisement cases would be described and explained in the discourse analysis section. The ratio of selected natural tourism resources cases and cultural tourism resources would be consistent with the result in the content analysis.

As supplementary materials, some static advertising images would be employed to interpret or substantiate certain situations in the video advertisements. The selection of the static images is not random. Because the author has calculated the subjects of all static advertising images in the content analysis section, she could select the representative ones.

Step 3. Processing of the discourse analysis materials

In this study, the detailed constituent elements in advertisements, including visual, verbal and audio factors, were considered as materials for the discourse analysis. The first step in the discourse analysis processing should be description of
the analysis materials. The author would describe and list the visual and verbal elements (and audio elements if necessary) of the selected video cases in tables.

In this process, the continuous scenes will be divided into relatively independent units with the same standard used in the content analysis section and each unit will be analysed separately. In addition, with regard to verbal factors, for the purposes of analysis every word will be managed as a single unit. The application of detailed visual elements and words will be considered and discussed in the discourse analysis section. In video advertisements, the audio factor is another research object. The tendencies and characteristics in the applications of all detailed elements in China’s tourism advertising will be analysed, and the inner cultural values behind those external manifestations will be discussed through the analysis process.

Because most of the video advertisements are relatively long, not all the contents will be described and analysed in this section. Generally, when the selected advertisement was longer than 2 minutes, the author picked the previous segment of the selected case (a segment around 2 minutes) as the analysis materials. To attract audiences, the beginning sections of videos are usually more expressive and reflect the most valuable or significant tourism resources. It is for that reason that the author tended to utilize the first section of the whole advertisement as materials to analyse.

Then the analysis and discussions based on the descriptions of advertising discourses. As the sampling process, those materials were grouped into reflections of natural resources (categories A to D, according to the national classification, see sub-chapter 3.1) and cultural resources (categories E to H) according to their main contents. The cases from the two groups will be analysed separately and their analysis and discussion processes have different emphasis. A small quantity of still images and some footage of video advertisements were selected in this thesis to help the analysis. The analysis process relies on the author’s knowledge and understanding of Chinese cultural characteristics and identity.

The analysis materials include three main factors in advertisements: verbal languages, meaning the voice-over, linguistic explanations or titles and slogans in advertisements; visual languages, which means the still and moving images, and
audio languages, which means the background music and voices. These three factors were transcribed and the transcriptions were recorded and used as the basis for the analysis process. “The purpose of transcription is to generate a data set that is amenable to careful analysis and coding.” (Rose, 2000) Based on those data sets, detailed analysis was carefully employed.

Step 4. Representation of content analysis results

After the processing of the materials, the author generalized the concerned expression tendencies and provided her understanding of the underlying cultural values. The representations would be open.

3.3 Summary

In the empirical study part, both quantitative and qualitative methods are inducted as the methodology, and their combination could make this study more comprehensive. This chapter mentioned two main methods employed in this study and indicated the selecting reasons for using them and the study plan utilizing the two analysis methods. The subsequent empirical studies would follow the plans.

Firstly, the author selected content analysis to achieve the basic information of the tourism advertisements and to examine the most common subjects. The sampling method in the content analysis was simple random sampling. In China’s tourism advertisements, numerous different symbols and images are used, for example, Yangtze River, Great Wall, Beijing opera, minority customs and modern lifestyles in metropolises. In this study, those diverse symbols would be described first and then unitized according to their contents, and finally the frequencies were calculated. The main unitizing criteria in content analysis are the natural factors, including natural landscapes, plants, animals; and the human cultural factors, including architectures, relics, ethnic customs, cities and communities. The detailed classifications accorded with China’s national classification standards of tourism resources, Classification, Investigation and Evaluation of Tourism Resources. The content analysis results will be demonstrated with statistics tables and pie charts, to reflect their frequencies and/or
percentages.

On the other hand, only using the quantitative content analysis cannot reflect the tourism advertising expressions all-round, therefore, qualitative research is employed to help describe the situation. Using the coordination of content analysis and discourse analysis, the answers to all research questions are considered.

In this section, the author conducted a descriptive discourse analysis of the tourism advertisements to distinguish their traits and cultural values. The sampling method of discourse analysis is stratified sampling. All advertisements are discourses to express certain contents and convey information, and they are the resources used in this section. The emphasis of discourse analysis materials was the video advertisements and the static advertising images were the supplements, because the moving images are more colourful and could convey more information. The static images of advertisements were seen as an independent unit of discourse, while the video advertisements were more complicated and thus divided into slices to analyse according to their application of shots. The author will list the basic elements of the selected cases and then the analysis process will be employed.

In general, the content analysis was employed in the empirical study to provide an overall perspective of the advertising expression tendency and the discourse analysis was utilized to discover the inner cultural expressions and values. The examined common advertising subjects in content analysis would be paid more attention in the discourse analysis section. The content analysis was the basis and the discourse analysis provided more data and information to understand China’s tourism advertisements and Chinese culture. With the combination of the usage of the two analysis methods, the empirical studies would be more informative.
4. Content Analysis

In tourism advertisements, tourism resources were exhibited to promote tourism. According to scholars, Chinese cultural identity and values could be reflected in those tourism advertising expressions. In this section, the first and basic step of the application of the theoretical assumptions was conducted in order to confirm the overall hypothesis employed in this study.

With content analysis, the basic quantitative characteristics of China’s tourism advertising are tested. Namely, the content analysis method is used in this thesis to calculate and ascertain the most frequent elements employed in advertising.

The content analysis could not test the hypotheses to the full extent directly, but it is an essential step to explore the tendency of materials used in advertising expressions. Additionally, the most representative factors will be connected with the following qualitative research. The advertisements with most representative factors would be selected as qualitative research materials.

4.1 Content analysis results

As mentioned above, the content analysis process consists of analysis of static images and analysis of moving scenes. Firstly, the static scenes of banner advertising, button advertising and frames of flash advertising were calculated and analysed. The total number of static scenes used as study materials is 171. When the main subjects reflected in those advertisements were divided into natural (category A to D) and cultural (category E to H) tourism resources, around 75% of the main subjects were cultural resources. (See table 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Natural and cultural classification of static advertisements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid natural tourism resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cultural tourism resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: data collected by the author from CNTO websites.

In particular, category F (architecture and establishment) was the most commonly used classification as the target tourism resource in advertising expressions. Human activity was another relatively representative subject used in advertising. At the same time, the reflections of “sky phenomena and climate landscape” and “tourist commodity” were extremely rare. (See figure 1)

**Figure 1. Eight classifications of static advertisements**

Source: data collected by the author from CNTO websites.

The red section (54.97%) in the pie chart signifies the percentage of architecture and establishment. Clearly, more than half of those advertisements chose architecture.
and establishment as the main subject of scenes. The percentages of physiographic landscape (12.87%) and human activity (16.96%) are relatively high. Nevertheless, the percentages of water area landscape (6.43%), biology landscape (5.26%), site and relic (2.92%) and sky phenomena and climate landscape (0.58%) are limited. The tourist commodities content did not appear in advertising expressions at all, so this classification was not shown in the pie chart. Accordingly, the significance of the role of architecture and establishment in tourism advertising expressions is self-evident.

However, “architecture and establishment” is a wide ranging concept, therefore, in order to explore this further, it is necessary to separate and clarify the contents within this category. According the national classification standards, category F could be classified into the following seven sub-classes:

- FA. Synthetic human culture tourism site;
- FB. Single place for cultural or sports activities;
- FC. Landscape architecture and appertaining architecture;
- FD. Residence and community;
- FE. Burial place;
- FF. Transportation building;
- FG. Water conservancy project construction.

Then the author calculated and analysed the contents of category F (n=94) according to the seven sub-categories. In this case, “synthetic human culture tourism site”, “landscape architecture and appertaining architecture” and “residence and community” covered the majority of all advertising subjects. (See figure 2)
The pie chart represented high occurrence rates of landscape architecture and appertaining architecture (40.43%), residence and community (21.28%) and synthetic human culture tourism site (24.47%) in the tourism advertisements. There were also a certain number of images of burial places in the advertising (11.7%), but the rest of classifications were extremely infrequent.

In detail, some examples were shown multiple times in advertising belonging to those most frequent sub-categories, such as the Temple of Heaven (belongs to synthetic human culture tourism site), the Great Wall (belongs to landscape architecture and appertaining architecture), the Forbidden City (belongs to residence and community), and the Pudong New Area in Shanghai (belongs to residence and community). Indeed, the history of the elements was not taken into account in this classification model. The first three examples could be seen as representations of
China’s rich history in those tourism advertisements, while the last one was a reflection of modernity. However, almost without exception, subjects in advertising within the category of architecture and establishment are displays of historical civilizations.

On the other hand, considering the different forms of those advertisements with relatively static and independent images, the video advertisements were calculated separately. It was found that the situation in the video advertising is generally similar. The seven samples were divided into 143 shots by the author and the percentage of them was as shown in table 2: around 70% of the shots reflected cultural tourism resources. This percentage was slightly lower than the result of table 1, but it was still a relatively high ratio.

Table 2. Natural and cultural classification of video advertisements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid natural tourism resources</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>32.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid cultural tourism resources</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>67.8</td>
<td>67.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: data collected by the author from CNTO websites.

According to the eight classifications, the percentages of contents of the video advertisements were similar to the contents of static advertisement images. The category of architecture and establishment also played the most significant role in video advertisements and the images of physiographic landscape and human activity are also relatively frequent. (See figure 3)
Figure 3. Eight classifications of video advertisements

![Eight Classifications of video ads](image)

Source: data collected by the author from CNTO websites.

Around 40% of shots in the advertisements were grouped in the category architecture and establishment, and this is represented as the red section in the pie chart. The other most frequent visual subjects in video advertisements were still physiographic landscape (13.99%) and human activity (22.38%). Basically, there was not distinct difference between the statistics ascertained for static advertising images. On the other hand, the distribution of classifications was more dispersed, the percentage of architecture and establishment was lower and the contents of all eight classifications were reflected in the advertisements.

In those shots with the subjects of architecture and establishment (n=57), “landscape architecture and appertaining architecture”, and “residence and community” were the main chosen subjects (33.33% and 38.60%). The percentage of “synthetic human culture tourism site” was relatively lower (10.53%) than the
percentage in static advertisements (24.47%). In general, the significance of “landscape architecture and appertaining architecture”, and “residence and community” in advertising expressions was consistent. (See figure 4)

Figure 4. Classification of category F of video advertisements

![Classification of category F of video ads](image)

Source: data collected by the author from CNTO websites.

In comparison, the distribution of static advertising messages was more concentrated than video advertisements (the percentage of cultural tourism resources was 74.9% and the percentage of architecture and establishment was 55%, whereas the percentages in video advertisements were 67.8% and 39.9%), but the overall distribution trend was consistent. Architecture and establishment were the most commonly selected subjects used in those tourism advertisements, while “landscape architecture and appertaining architecture”, and “residence and community” was
especially beneficial tourism resources. Namely, those aspects were the most common and representative elements selected in China’s official tourism advertising expressions on the Internet.

4.2 Discussions

In this section the author will construct a content analysis of the different classifications of China’s tourism advertisements. From the perspective of quantity, there is a consistent tendency reflected in both the still and moving images in tourism advertising: the great importance of reflections of cultural tourism resources, especially architecture and establishment.

China is a country with a vast territory, various climatic and topographic conditions, and she owns diverse natural landscapes as tourism resources. Nevertheless, in the reflections of advertisements, the cultural landscapes were valued more and employed to represent China more frequently. With the statistical conclusions of content analysis, the selecting tendency and degree of attention paid to those symbols in the Chinese cultural background was conveyed. In other words, the cultural landscapes were adopted in tourism advertisements as the most representative symbols of the tourism destination to attract potential consumers. With the preference of cultural landscape employed, the advertisements conveyed the intention to carry forward China’s civilization.

Within the analysis result of the reflection tendency of cultural tourism resources, the role of architecture and establishment is obviously significant. Architectures and establishments were selected in tourism advertising most frequently, in other words, they were the most common elements employed in advertisements to describe and mirror China. After all, cultural tourism resources are tightly connected with China’s history, art and civilization. Accordingly, the reflection of cultural resources conveyed national and cultural identity more directly. This could be the reason that they were employed more.

Architecture and establishment are immobile symbols of the process of
development of a civilization at a certain time and compared with historical sites, architecture is better preserved and could convey more artistic and aesthetic value. Characteristic symbols of architecture and establishment could be used to describe the distinctive tendency of human life and the pursuit of traditions. In other words, architecture and establishment were selected in tourism advertising expressions as representative combinations of artistry and practicality, and obvious reflections of China’s history. Architecture and establishment have explicit functions on the aspects of reflection of aesthetic sense, description of development of culture and the adaptation level with the natural environment; furthermore, some of the architecture could be associated with certain famous historical persons or events. Architecture conveys original information about the background characteristics of the time. All these factors might be the determinants of the significant role of architecture and establishment in tourism advertising expressions.

On the other hand, within the content analysis results, there was a small difference between advertising with static images and advertising with moving images. The overall distribution of subjects in video advertising images was more dispersive than subjects of still advertisements. The possible reason for difference between still and moving images could be because the multimedia form can contain more information and more abundant expression approaches than the single image. Therefore, in the selection process of visual symbols, video advertisements have more choice to cover more information, which means the expressions of video advertisements have more diversification. However, the advertisements using single static images have to select more intuitionist visual elements. Some contents could be demonstrated better in video and maybe cannot be expressed perfectly in still images, so the role of those elements was reduced. For example, there are many distinctive folk activities or customs in China, but the complexity of human activity determined that still images could not reflect or explain these activities adequately. Consequently, those visual elements were employed in video advertisements more and still advertisements tended to centre on applications of symbols with more certainty.
4.3 Summary

This chapter explored and tested the outer layers of Chinese culture to some extent. The first section of empirical studies analysed the expressions of China’s tourism advertising from the perspective of quantitative research, to test the tendency of messages selected in advertising expressions by CNTO websites.

Those advertising expressions are the materials selected by official organizations to describe China’s attractions in advertising and the content analysis section revealed the trend of Chinese elements used in advertising expressions. Moreover, the distribution of subjects used in video advertisements was more dispersive. The static advertisements tended to employ more consistent contents, whereas video advertising expressions were more abundant and heterogeneous. In brief, the overall trend was obvious: cultural tourist resources played a more significant role than natural resources in advertising expressions and architecture and establishment were the subjects which appeared most commonly. The most prominent types of tourism resources from this category were “landscape architecture and appertaining architecture”, and “residence and community”. They are employed in advertising as the most representative elements to exhibit China’s local traits.

However, the author wished to explore more inner relationship, to discuss and explain the inner cultural values behind those outer layers. To explore in more depth, it is necessary to induct further qualitative analysis to determine and explain the potential cultural traits and values behind the advertising images. The contents with architecture and establishment in advertisements will be employed as the point of emphasis in the qualitative analysis section. However, this does not mean the advertising contents with reflections of natural tourism resources and other types of cultural tourism resources will be ignored in the following analysis process.

4.3.1 Limitations of the quantitative study

The author is aware of the presence of subjectivity in the content analysis process, especially when all advertisements are grouped into different categories. In
content analysis, uniting and classification are basic and important steps in practice and the accuracy of the whole analysis is influenced by these steps. Some detailed classification actions in this section relied on the author’s personal judgements, however, the author was born in China and is familiar with the content of the subjects in the advertising expressions. That is why the objectivity of the classification process is assumed as much as possible.

The process of content analysis was inducted in this thesis to determine the most representative elements in tourism advertising chosen by governmental organizations. However, the content analysis did not reflect the differences in the size of all advertising and the length of shots of the video advertising.

Furthermore, the study reflected only the situations of official tourism organizations on a national level. In addition to national tourism organizations, every province in China and even smaller administrative units (such as the main tourist cities) own their own tourism organization websites. Taking into account that the content on those sites is not based on the scope of the whole of China’s tourism resources, those websites were not employed in this study. If those factors were taken into account, the analysis results would be more accurate. However, the situation would be much more complicated, therefore, the author chose to focus on the current content.
5. Discourse analysis

Besides quantitative study, the author will use the qualitative research method to analyse and discuss the advertising expressions. Qualitative research has the advantage of being able to explore issues in depth and in this case, to research the cultural identity behind tourism advertising expressions.

The qualitative research method organized descriptive analysis to study the details of the advertising expressions. The objects of study, discourses used in the tourism advertisements, are external manifestations of Chinese culture. In the discourse analysis section, the author discussed those manifestations, to distinguish the internal core of the culture. As mentioned, in the content analysis results, cultural tourism resources played more significant roles in tourism advertising expressions, therefore, the analysis will be slightly biased towards them.

The discourse analysis results were tightly connected with the answer to the third sub-research question of this thesis and the hypotheses results. In other words, this section is the core part of the analysis. After examining the hypotheses and answering the sub-research questions, the core issue in this thesis is discovered.

5.1. Reflections of natural resources in advertisements

Even though the content analysis section indicated the preference of subjects employed as cultural tourism resources, the reflections of natural resources in tourism advertisements could not be overlooked. In this sub-chapter, two cases were selected to analyse. The cases focused on the natural landscapes and the author wished to discuss the manifestations and to discover the Chinese cultural identity and values behind their usage.

Case 1: Guilin Merry Land

This advertisement was picked from CNTO in USA (New York and Los Angeles) website. It is a short (1 minute 20 seconds) video which showed the Guilin scenery. Actually, Guilin Merry Land is the name of a holiday village near Guilin and the
theme of this advertisement was this holiday village. However, the main content of this video segment was landscapes of Guilin, so it could be seen as a tourism advertisement of Guilin as well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual</th>
<th>Verbal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Looking-up, mountains</td>
<td>Relax, relax quietly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A minority person is playing a traditional instrument in the mountains and a very rough and simple pavilion is behind him</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountains and waters (still shot)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain and water landscapes shot from a boat, the scene is moving with the boat trip</td>
<td>Empty, empty your thoughts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain and water landscapes shot from boat, the scene is moving with the boat trip (different scene)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The boatman on a raft in the landscape</td>
<td>Approach her, let her approach slowly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close-up and the overall picture of waterwheels</td>
<td>Guilin (in Chinese, Calligraphy fonts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A person playing in the water</td>
<td>It is a dream, a fairyland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water and plants near water</td>
<td>And merged with the waters and mountains of Guilin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterside traditional-style building and distant mountains</td>
<td>And a paradise for holiday built beside the lake</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Close-up of waterside building  
Water waves  

*This whole advertisement used consistent background music which is melodious with a slow rhythm. The audio information in this advertisement was relatively simple, therefore, it was not listed in the form above.

The first research objective was to study the copious visual elements in this advertisement. In detail, there were several shots of mountains and water landscapes. A small quantity of scenes related to human activities, including rafting scenes. At the end of this video, architectural elements were also expressed.

The main visual elements in this case were the mountain and river landscapes in Guilin. Diverse angles were selected to manifest the unique karst formations in this area, and in general, the reflections of mountains and waters in this advertisement were not complicated. The visual scenes reflect not idiographic scenery spots or the particulars of Guilin, but construct a whole picture, to give audiences an overall concept of the landscapes of Guilin.

There are both dynamic scenes and static scene used in the expression of mountains and water landscapes, and the scenes were coherent. Those shots reflected consistent contents of landscapes, used similar colour tone, and above all, they conveyed a coherent aesthetic tendency: a place to pursue peace of mind. In detail, natural landscapes were used to project a serene atmosphere. Without disturbance of industrialization, this land kept her original and halcyon character. In addition, the image of the minority person playing an instrument increased the vitality of the scene, but this also offset the quiet of the natural environment. This image expressed that individuals can enjoy one’s lifestyle leisurely in an unvarnished and tranquil environment, and this disengaged image reflected that the whole environment was serene and without any outside disturbance. The function of the image of boatman and his raft was similar.
The preference for descriptions of nature did not mean the non-existence of artificial elements in this advertisement. Distinctly, some original cultural factors were stressed in the visual expression. For example, a minority man in traditional clothing was reflected in the advertisement. In the region of Guilin there is a concentration region of national minorities and this situation was reflected in the advertisement. In addition, the advertising expressions stressed the traditional aspects of their lifestyle. In addition, the rough pavilion, the traditional raft, and the simple and traditional clothing of the rafter are all visual elements using traditional factors. All of these factors commuted the tradition lifestyle of the residents. Those native and non-industrial products were managed in the advertisement as representations.

Two images in the advertisement: original and leisurely human lifestyle, in serene natural landscapes.

According to the advertising expressions, human activities have not changed the original appearance of the natural landscapes, but they have been adapted and integrated into the natural environment. As mentioned above, in the image of a minority man with an instrument, the main theme was the sense of tranquillity in the whole natural environment. Namely, in this image, the human portrait was not reflected as a priority, but as part of the overall environment. The image of the boatman and his raft was another representative example.

The waterwheel was also a representative approach utilized to express undamaged natural resources. Namely, human activity traces and nature are inseparable, and the advertisement tried to transmit their inner coordination. Human activity is a factor within descriptions of natural landscapes. In sub-chapter 1.3, a traditional Chinese value, namely the coexistence of nature and humans, was
introduced briefly. In this case, this value emerged with the images of a harmonious relationship between humans and nature in the advertisement.

When we focus on the slogans, it is obvious that the traits of verbal elements were consistent with the visual elements. Firstly, the nouns employed in the advertisement construct a description of the environment and it took concerted action with the visual languages. Evidently, this whole advertisement hoped to construct a “dream”, a “fairyland” and a “paradise”. Those nouns described non-objective and fantastic scenes, the comprehensions of those texts varied from person to person. The phrase “beside the lake” stressed the close coordination with nature objectively. All those words can lead the audience a clear positive association, but overall the verbal descriptions focused on relatively vague conceptions. However, the information conveyed in the advertisement was defined by the visual elements. In this case, the audience could understand the connotations of the words according to the matching visual scenes. Namely, those texts were auxiliary elements to heighten the magical atmosphere and the audience should understand and feel the connotations within the non-verbal overall environment.

The verbs in the advertisement cooperated with the visual factors and the whole atmosphere by direction of behaviours. “Relax” and “empty mind” were explicit expressions of actions. However, these verbs are not clear instructions of behaviour. Compared with the words such as “run” or “eat”, those verbs had more broad and liberal meanings, and their meanings relied on the context and the audiences’ personal understanding and lifestyle. On the other hand, the two verbs implied that the audience could, or should, achieve liberty of the mind. The words did not aim to suggest or direct the audiences’ behaviour, but were intended to influence their minds.

The words “approach” and “let (her) approach” implied the idea of interaction between human and nature. This contact was not mentioned as a unilateral process and there is no difference of active or passive in the interaction of human and nature. The words “merged with” were representative expressions to deliver the coexistence of nature and human activity. Human activity is not isolated with nature, on the contrary, the view that there is wholeness of human activity with nature was
encouraged. When the verbal factors in the advertisement were considered as a whole, in terms of quantity, there were not many verbal explanations of the sceneries reflected in the advertisement. Namely, in the advertising expressions, the role of integrated information about the environment and construction of a unitary atmosphere are more influential than the verbal descriptions. This is another possible character of a high context culture.

After all, the audio factor in this case was a supplement of the visual and verbal factors. The different factors in the advertisement created a specific atmosphere altogether. The light background music influenced the audience’s mood, made the audience feel relaxed and helped to construct the advertisement as a gentle composition overall.

In this sense, it is evident that the visual, verbal and audio factors in this advertisement construct a consistent and unitary aesthetic tendency using different aspects. The author believed the most significant value in this advertisement is freedom and peace of mind, and the approach to pursue this realm is being integrated into the descriptions of nature in this advertisement.

Viewing the situation as a whole, in general, those elements in this advertisement focused on the reflection of a tranquil atmosphere. Generally, the descriptions of natural landscape could express the beauty of nature and make people feel pleasure, but in traditional Chinese culture, the descriptions of natural elements were used to express more. When natural landscapes were described in the context of traditional Chinese culture, there was a tendency to stress the aspect of a quiet and peaceful mind. This traditional aesthetic attitude in Chinese culture towards natural landscapes could be found in traditional paintings and this is rooted in Chinese ideology.

The relationship of Taoism and traditional Chinese painting is the basis of this issue. Even though in traditional Chinese society Taoism is not the leading ideology, the spirit of Taoism is still fundamental in Chinese traditional paintings and it influenced the aesthetic ideas of the Chinese people. Taoism emphasizes integration of human life and the law of the universe. Everything lives and changes following the
law of the universe; and in this process, everything fits its nature. “Nature” is the perfect situation in Taoism ideology. Based on this view, artists should in the “Tao”, keep a peaceful and clear mind, and face the world with natural attitudes. Marvellous works could therefore reflect the artist’s peace of mind. (Yu, 2010, original in Chinese)

Nowadays this aesthetic tendency is reflected in mass communications, including advertising. Even though traditional painting is not employed in the advertisement directly, when the advertising expressions were analysed carefully, potential consistency could be found. Admittedly, advertising is not equal to the artistic expression, nevertheless, the aesthetic tendency in the minds of the creators and audiences is always consistent. In summary, those expressions of natural landscapes in the advertisement reflected an aesthetic and philosophical tendency that the descriptions should focus on reflections of tranquillity and arouse audiences’ desire to pursue peace of mind. This tendency is one crucial connotation of the Taoism spirit.

Case 2: Beautiful Scenery in Guangxi

Beautiful Scenery in Guangxi is also selected from the USA CNTO website and it is a comprehensive tourism advertisement to reflect all famous tourism resources in the Guangxi Province. The whole advertisement lasted 5 minutes and 54 seconds and the main contents of the first one and a half minutes were natural landscapes. Therefore, in this case, the author selected this 1.5 minute segment as the research material in this part.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual</th>
<th>Verbal</th>
<th>Audio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mountains</td>
<td>Beautiful Scenery in Guangxi</td>
<td>Female voice of folk song</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(in Chinese and in English)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When you enter this landscape you</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>feel part of a beautiful Chinese</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>painting. - Margrethe II (Denmark)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reading of this sentence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A minority girl stands in mountains</td>
<td>Guilin, Li River (in Chinese)</td>
<td>Background music, a girl voice of folk song</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panorama of Guilin Mountains and water</td>
<td>Longji, Terraced fields (in Chinese)</td>
<td>Singing stop, background music with a slow pace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing shot of bamboo rafts on water</td>
<td>Chengyang, Fengyu Bridge (in Chinese)</td>
<td>Birdsong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shot nearer, bamboo rafts and cormorants on rafts</td>
<td>Detian, Waterfall (in Chinese)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shot farther, bamboo rafts</td>
<td>Guilin, Haiyang Town (in Chinese)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High angle shot, mountain landscape, terraced fields and buildings among mountains</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close-up of crop</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving clouds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terraced fields</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People work and walk in terraced fields</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing shot of terraced fields, shot higher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eaves of traditional style building</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fengyu Bridge (covered bridge)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River, waterwheel and Fengyu Bridge in distance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close shot of waterfall</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trees and grassland near the waterfall</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing shot of waterfall</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close-up of the minority girl’s face</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The advertising expressions could be compartmentalized according to the display of different tourism destinations. At the same time, the visual elements of this advertisement were plentiful scenes of natural landscapes and a small quantity of reflections of human activities and architecture. The factors of this case were relatively richer and more complicated than the first case. However, there were still abundant similarities with the expressions of the above case. The analysis and discussions in this section also centred on the reflections of natural elements.

In this advertisement, a saying of Margrethe II was cited to praise the landscapes as a “Chinese painting”. This phrase stressed the aesthetic perception of landscapes and it was a summary of the whole advertisement expressions at the same time. It is not just verbal rhetoric, but could also be regarded as the main theme of this segment of advertisement. The advertisement was employed to construct a unitary picture of Guangxi Province.

First, similar with case 1, this segment of advertisement focused on reflections of natural landscape and the advertising expressions tended to portray a tranquil environment. Even though this advertisement reflected diverse scenery spots, the focus of the visual languages is always on the sense of tranquillity of the landscapes. For example, in the images of the panorama of the Guilin Mountains and water, the moving clouds in the sky, the Detian Waterfall and the nearby grassland, those scenes conveyed the serene natural landscape. Moreover, birdsong could be heard in the advertisement as an audio supplement to the whole atmosphere, to express the scenes of nature.

In the construction of a peaceful atmosphere, reflections of human activity were
limited. But in those few advertising images of natural landscapes with human activity traces, the role of individuals was not emphasized and individuals did not disturb the atmosphere.

Moreover, to construct the coherent atmosphere, the hue of images in the advertisement corresponded. In the advertisement, the main hue was green. A unified visual screen is constructed in this advertisement, at the same time the tone of different green cooperated harmoniously to construct a sense of peace and luxurious colour. It is the main theme of the whole advertising expressions.

Examples of hue of green in this advertisement: a girl in the mountain landscape, Li River, Longji terraced fields and Fengyu Bridge.

On the other hand, as the saying cited in this segment, the advertising expressions aimed at constructing an effect of the landscape as a painting. As mentioned above, the aesthetic tendency of undisturbed and tranquil environment played a fundamental role in traditional Chinese paintings and this is a reflection of the Taoism ideology.

The integration of human activities and the natural environment was another significant aspect in the advertising expressions. For example, the lifestyle of the minority people is a representation of a local cultural symbol. In this advertisement, the image of a minority girl standing in the mountains is an example of combining
human lifestyle and the natural landscape. Besides, the images of farmers who work in the terraced fields, the Fengyu Bridge and a waterwheel were employed in the advertisement as local representations of human civilizations within certain natural landscapes. The terraced field is a product of human activity and it is also an embodiment of human utilization of nature and surviving in the objective natural environment. Namely, the terraced field is based on the characteristics of landform and it is a concrete manifestation of the combination of human activities and nature. People live in the specific natural environment, which means people’s behaviours were based on the natural environment and conditions, and they were adapted to the natural environment. In this advertisement, the manner in which humans accommodate to the environment was reflected. The human activity traces reflected in the advertising were the symbols of humans acclimatized to natural landscapes with minimal impact on nature.

Take the Fengyu Bridge as an example, there are several minority groups in the Guangxi Province and the Dong minority is one of them. Dong villages are mostly built beside rivers or streams, therefore, rivers and bridges are connected tightly with Dong people’s daily lives. In the images of Fengyu Bridge reflected in this advertisement, water landscape was expressed deliberately. The advertisement reflected the role of local people in the whole natural environment.

Compared with the colourful visual elements in this advertisement, the verbal elements were much simpler. Besides Margrethe II’s words, the verbal factors in this advertisement were relatively simple. They were a list of all the places reflected in those visual images. These Chinese place names had not been translated. It was an oversight in the cross-cultural communication process, but it can also be regarded as indirect evidence to prove the relative insignificance in detailed verbal communication.

In summary, the expressions of this advertisement had many similarities with the first case. Firstly, the reflections conveyed a tendency to construct a quiet and peaceful atmosphere. Additionally, Taoism ideology was also reflected in this advertisement. Furthermore, as mentioned above, human activities and natural
landscape were not considered as independent unities, which means the values of coexistence of humans and nature was reflected.

On the aspect of audio elements, the folk songs used in this case played a similar role to those visual expressions. This advertisement employed folk songs twice and the use of folk music increased the original sense of the contents of advertisements.

The tendency of the expressions was to construct a tranquil and peaceful situation, and the background music played a role in setting the whole atmosphere. Overall, the background music is lyrical, slow, and makes people feel calm. At the end of this segment, the background music began to become livelier and the sense of rhythm was stronger. This change could be seen as another supplement: after the selected segment, the contents of the advertisement moves toward human activities, buildings and other symbols of cultural tourism resources.

With the combination of the analysis results of the two cases, some general characteristics can be summarized. Those general characteristics are related to Chinese cultural identity and at the same time contain Chinese cultural values.

First, the identity of a high context culture was reflected in the advertising expressions. On one hand, the advertisements attached considerable importance to construct a unitary atmosphere; on the other hand, there was a deficiency of detailed verbal descriptions.

In addition, the advertisements demonstrated regard for harmony, especially harmony between nature and human. In detail, human activity was described as a part of the whole nature in those advertisements and the idea of the “coexistence of humans and nature” was conveyed. This is a famous traditional value in Chinese culture and both are conveyed by Confucianism and Taoism scholars and literature.

This expression tendency was reflected in moving and consecutive images more, but in the still advertising images it also existed. In the still images, similarly, portrayal of human activities in the images focused on their traditional charm and humans were described as an embellishment of the natural environment. The following advertising picture is an example in still advertisement.
In this picture, the main imageries were sky, mountains and river. All the visual elements of natural landscapes were described as clean and pure. The description of human activity was as vivid ornaments of the natural environment. The portrayal of human activities were not evaded or ignored, but they assisted in constructing a harmonious scene together with the natural landscape.

At the same time, other influences of Chinese traditional thoughts were reflected in advertisements as well. For example, the pursuit of a sense of peace is emphasized in advertising expressions and this is an embodiment of the influence of Taoism ideology. The reflections and influences of cultural factors in tourism advertisements are manifold and compositive.

5.2 Reflections of cultural tourism resources in advertisements

The results of content analysis demonstrated the essential status of reflections of cultural tourism resources in tourism advertisements. Certainly, analysis of the reflections of cultural tourism resources is emphasized in the discourse analysis section. Considering the content analysis results, the role of reflections of architecture
would be regarded as a significant respect. Three cases were inducted in this sub-chapter.

**Case 3: Beijing**

This case was selected from the CNTO in USA website. The original title of this video on YouTube website is *Oriental Capital and Great Wall*. This video lasts 5 minutes and 16 seconds, and the main content was diverse aspects of Beijing. As the whole advertisement included too much content, the author only used the segment of the first 2 minutes to describe and analyse.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual</th>
<th>Verbal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Great Wall and clouds</td>
<td>Historic City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Great Wall</td>
<td>The Great Wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese and foreign tourists walking on the Great Wall</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Forbidden City, shot outside carved window</td>
<td>the Forbidden City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Door opens, the Forbidden City</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese and foreign tourists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertical view of the panoramic of the Forbidden City</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertical view of the Summer Palace</td>
<td>the Summer Palace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Corridor in the Summer Palace</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temple of Heaven</td>
<td>Temple of Heaven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourists enter Temple of Heaven</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal details of Temple of Heaven</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tantuo Temple</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beihai Park</td>
<td>Historic Site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barge on water</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV tower, shot from boat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corner of traditional building, and a red lantern</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A guide with tourists to visit the courtyard</td>
<td>Square Courtyard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside of courtyard, a resident is cycling through the Hutong (alley)</td>
<td>Joyous People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within the courtyard, an old man feed birds and fish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents dance with fans on street</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents get haircut under the walls of the old city</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People surrounding two aged man who playing chess</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers within a tea house</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A young woman plays jianzi (a traditional game)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children play football on grass</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children play at schoolyard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two girls in crowd</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A young woman calls and drinks in an open-air market</td>
<td>Welcome to Beijing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People wave their hands cheerfully in a car</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People cycler on the street in front of Tiananmen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airplane lands</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customs in airport</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car leave airport</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel welcomes visitors and open the door of car</td>
<td>Hotels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Door girls and waitresses in restaurant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People do sports in gym and swim in swimming pool</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Door girls in minority traditional clothes</td>
<td>Chinese Cuisine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuisine and waitresses in minority traditional clothes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook of Roast Duck and Roast Duck</td>
<td>Roast Duck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign visitor taste Roast Duck</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenes of cooking Chinese food</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenes of cooking Chinese folk snacks</td>
<td>Folk Snack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folk snacks on night market on street</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People taste folk snacks on street</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Foreigners watch and taste Chinese cuisine in restaurant

*The background music of this video consisted of multiple folk music and in the selected segment, the main content of the background music is a remixed version of *Jasmine Flower* (*Mo Li Hua* in Chinese), which is a popular Chinese folk song which dates back to the 18th century. This folk song has been used during several international events, such as the closing ceremony of the 2004 Olympics, the opening ceremony of 2008 Beijing Olympics and the 2010 Shanghai Expo. The vision used in this video advertisement was vivid and cheerful.

There is much content in this advertisement. Firstly, much famous Beijing architecture is shown. Afterwards, this advertisement revealed different aspects of citizen’s daily lives and scenes of foreigners in China also appeared several times. Obviously, the emphasis of this segment of the advertisement was Chinese traditional architectures and activities, and the highlighting of traditional factors did not mean that modernity is ignored in advertising expressions.

According to the national classification, the conception of cultural tourism resources includes diverse examples. As analysed in chapter 3, architecture is the most prominent symbol used in the tourism advertisements in both the moving and still images. In this case, much of the visual elements of architecture appear at the beginning of advertisements, to attract the attention of potential consumers. With the discourse analysis of the architecture elements, it can be seen that there are differences in those reflections of architecture.

This advertisement began with the Great Wall, the Forbidden City and the Summer Palace, and those reflections could be seen as the first classification of reflections of architecture. With the verbal explanation “historic”, those architectures were direct representations of China’s long history. Admittedly, those architectures are not the most ancient in Beijing, but they have immense popularity all around the world. In this advertisement, those architectures were shown using different visual angles and the plural scenes highlighted the role of those famous cultural landscapes.
The application of world-famous landmarks is also common in still advertisements. The following two advertising images are examples: the famous architecture is the main visual element in the advertising expressions, used to represent Chinese culture.

Texts: Great Wall and Beijing Opera
Images: Peking Opera performers, the Great Wall, symbol of China tourism

In this advertisement, the imagery of the Great Wall is the background of the whole image. It is striking and easy to recognize. The mist around the Great Wall was an aesthetic expression and it increases the sense of mystery. The sense of mystery in the atmosphere could be considered as an affiliation to a sense of history.

Texts: Welcome to China
Images: the Hall of Supreme Harmony (main building in the Forbidden City), The City Hall of Stockholm

Resource from CNTO in Toronto website.

Resource from CNTO in London website.
The main subjects in the advertising image were the City Hall of Stockholm and the Hall of Supreme Harmony in Beijing. On the London CNTO website there are a series of advertising images with a combination of reflections of landmarks in European countries and China. The image had the effect of direct comparison of traditional Chinese architecture style and Western style architecture, and it stressed the important status of the Hall of Supreme Harmony.

Back to the case of Beijing, the focus of those reflections in the video advertisement is the spectacular nature of the architectures displayed. As a whole, the images mostly focus on the performance of the overall visual effect of the buildings rather than particular details. A great number of images reflected the buildings from the air, to represent the visual effect as a whole. With those images, the vast and complex nature of the buildings was displayed, and those architectures were described as grand and magnificent. In summary, those reflections were the overall visual effect of famous buildings and the expressions tend to convey a sense of the magnificence and greatness of Chinese history and culture.

One image in the advertisement: the Forbidden City.

Other classifications of elements of architectures employed in this advertisement stress the specialties traditional architectures. Compared with the previous examples,
those architectures are not well-known places, but they are still representative and have a good degree of identification. In this advertisement, the image of a corner of a building and a red lantern was a typical example.

One image in the advertisement: traditional building and red lantern.

Even though this image just reflected a segment of a whole building, in this picture many representative Chinese elements were still reflected: Chinese characters, the wooden column of the building and the red lantern. The red lantern in the image was a little shabby and it increased the historical atmosphere.

A similar expression tendency was also embodied in still advertisement. The following image is an example.

Texts: Welcome to China, China national tourist office
Images: part of classical Chinese architecture (pavilion)
Welcome to CHINA CHINA NATIONAL TOURIST OFFICE
Resource from the USA CNTO website.

The main subjects in this image were parts of classical pavilions. The image was processed to be relatively vague, but the details of the characteristics were not completely lost. The subject of the image might not be a specific or famous pavilion,
but it revealed typical characteristics of Chinese classical architecture. Namely, in this advertisement, the visual elements are reminiscent of common cultural symbols instead of the specific scenery spots.

To generalize within the two different expression tendencies in tourism advertisements some common features were discovered. In summary, the elements of architecture in advertising expressions always use obviously identifiable imagery of China. In other words, audiences could distinguish Chinese symbols from those visual reflections. Advertisements tended to employ traditional architectures, because they are the concentrated and direct expression of the long Chinese history.

Another main tourism classification reflected in advertising is human activity. Firstly, the contents of traditional activities played a similar role in this advertisement. In this case, the detailed examples included the images of people dancing with fans, playing chess or cooking traditional snacks. Those images conveyed traditional lifestyles and habits, and those behaviours are essential manifestations of Chinese culture.

The elements of architecture and human activity could be combined. In this advertisement, the image of an old man feeding birds and fish in a square courtyard is a typical example. This image is a reflection of the traditional lifestyle of Beijing citizens and those consecutive scenes combined different aspects to demonstrate it. The common connotation of the images is the “traditional” style of Beijing. The role of the image of a resident cycling through a Hutong is similar.

Calligraphy is another representative Chinese cultural symbol used in relation to human activity. This special art has a long history in China and obvious identification with Chinese culture all around the world. Calligraphy was used in several different tourism advertisements, such as the Guilin advertisement mentioned previously and the 2011 tour advertisement on the Canada CNTO website.
The examples of calligraphy elements employed in tourism advertisements.

Besides the abundant traditional and old-style cultural symbols, the advertisement employed modern elements as well to stress the development of Chinese society, and the emphasis of it is achieved by human activity through a modern lifestyle. For example, the image of a hotel welcoming visitors and people doing sports in a gym belongs in this classification.

But compared with the reflections of the traditional lifestyle, there is nothing remarkable in those elements. The modern elements just reflect that Beijing is also a modern metropolis in this era of globalization, but the specialties of China were not conveyed. Airplanes, customs, modern hotels - the images like these could exist in almost any country around the world. However, the combination of modern factors and traditional local factors are important. The shot of foreigners watching and tasting food in a restaurant are a primary visual symbol of this cultural integration. In addition, the waitresses in minority traditional clothes in a modern restaurant are a visual symbol of the combination of the traditional and modern. When the contents of traditions and modernity were combined, the expressions became more infectious.

In the context of human activities, a prominent traditional thought in Chinese culture was reflected. That is “harmony”, the most significant conception in Confucianism. In the above sub-chapter, the reflections of natural tourism resources have been analysed. In other words, the conception of harmony between human and nature was discussed briefly and in this advertisement, the reflections of cultural tourism scene spots and social activities reflect the esteem of harmony in another aspect: harmony between individuals, groups and between different cultures. For example, the images of children playing happily and foreigners with Chinese people are reflections of that. Those images reflected the pleasant atmosphere between
individuals and in addition, the inner harmony with the whole social environment.

The verbal elements in this advertisement were a brief summary of the visual contents. The names of the most famous scenery spots in the advertisement were listed, while some others were labelled as “Historic Site”. The combination of explicit names and broad generalization expressed the particularity of unique and famous cultural symbols on one hand, and on the other hand, the word “history” was accentuated advisedly. The combination was an integrated representation of the long history.

Another emphasis in the visual element was the images of human activity and the corresponding verbal factor was “joyous people”. The adjective “joyous” was used to embellish the scene of reflections of citizen’s lives and increase the sense of pleasure. It is a significant embodiment of a harmonious life. Moreover, this phrase “joyous people” demonstrated a unitary atmosphere instead of obvious descriptions of detailed human behaviours. In this case, the importance of the whole atmosphere was reflected.

The audio elements in this advertisement are traditional and folk music is also used. This is used to reflect the traditional nature of Chinese culture in another aspect - the music was lively and played on traditional folk music instruments.

To generalize the visual, verbal and audio aspects of this advertisement, the overall tendency was to convey a sense of rich history and culture. Namely, the advertisement tended to construct a historical and cultural atmosphere. The emphasis on symbols and imagery in this advertisement was mainly achieved using traditional architectures and traditional human activities. Therefore, the previous analysis focused on them also. The focus of cultural elements in tourism advertising is a reflection of the long history and they conveyed the specialty and traditional nature of Chinese culture. Traditional Confucianism thoughts were also reflected in the advertisement.

**Case 4: Luoyang**

This advertisement was chosen from the USA CNTO website. The whole
advertisement is 6 minutes and 48 seconds, and the author used the first 2 minutes and 30 seconds as research material.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual</th>
<th>Verbal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunrise</td>
<td>35 degrees north latitude, 112 degrees longitude east, deep in the center of China, ancient Yellow River and Luohe meet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving clouds among peaks</td>
<td>This is a place Ancestors of Cathay believed the “center of the earth”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rivers meet</td>
<td>It was right in Luoyang, the birthplace of Chinese nation in the prolonged history, that the splendid Cathay culture was born.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longmen Grotto</td>
<td>Here, the thought &quot;harmony of man with nature&quot; came into being in the earliest days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baima Temple</td>
<td>And the two unfathomable maps-Hetu and Luoshu now still enlightens people’s great wisdom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road to Tomb of Guangwu Emperor in Han Dynasty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longmafutu Temple</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertical view of modern city</td>
<td>Luoyang China, A thousand-year old capital of empires (in Chinese and in English)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night scene of modern city</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunshine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cite of old city in Han and Wei Dynasty</td>
<td>&quot;Luoyang was born to be the city of Emperors&quot;. That means Luoyang, the first ancient Chinese</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cite of old city
Road to Tomb of Guangwu Emperor in Han Dynasty
A person walks on stone road
Model of old city
City wall of old city, man sits near it
Traditional painting
Sancai, traditional building,
Bronze Jiuzun, content of Records of the Grand Historian,
Archaeological finds
Man stands in cite and close-up of cite
Temple of Duke Zhou Gongdan
Archaeological discoveries of Tombs of Dukes of Eastern Zhou Dynasty
Man touches the wall of cite
Man walks along the wall of cite
Man walks in the museum of Yin cite
capital, with the longest history, experienced more dynasties than any other city in China.
Luoyang went through the prolonged Cathay history.
From the dynasties Xia, Shang, Western Zhou, Eastern Zhou, Eastern Han, Cao Wei, Western Jin, Northern Wei, Sui, Tang, to Later Liang, Later Tang, and Later Jin, thirteen altogether,
Luoyang was used as the capital. On this land, the development of the history of Chinese civilization has been deeply influenced by prosperities or declines, honors or disgrace, sorrows or joys. Duke of Zhou established Zhou Dynasty and made rules here.
It is also the actual birthplace of Chinese Confucianism.
Walking on the base of the history wall, we find each step more stable.
The background music is long, drawn-out light music with a slow rhythm.

The main content in this advertisement was historical and cultural heritage in Luoyang. Luoyang is a famous city in China because Luoyang is the first capital city in Chinese history with abundant historical resources. There is no doubt that this advertisement emphasized this character to the greatest extent.

The visual elements used in the advertisement were almost all the most historical spots. Similarly to the case of Beijing, the modernity of the whole city was not ignored, but it was not emphasized. The modern city is based on the historical town, but the pride of the city is still the old memories and their marks, and the rich history is the emphasis of the reflections in this advertisement. The alternating images of the modern city and images of the site of the old city stressed the close relationship of the current modernity to her history.

The visual elements in this advertisement focused on the ancient sites, tombs and other ancient heritage. Similar to the previous example, those places are the most famous and respected scenery spots in Luoyang, and of course they have rich historical values. The images are intuitive reflections of the ancient civilizations. The contents of those visual elements may not be as famous as the Great Wall and the Forbidden City, but with the auxiliary interpretations of verbal subtitles, sufficient information can be conveyed.

There were also some abstract images in the advertisement. For example, this advertisement displayed some contents of *Records of the Grand Historian*, in the images, which is one of the most important historical works in China. To foreign audiences this background knowledge is not very important, because the expression form conveyed enough information: the Chinese characters and Chinese-style writing rules were reflected in the image. It is incontestable that those cultural symbols are notable enough to awake audiences’ associations or interests, and would not be confused with the characteristics of Western civilizations. The function of images of Sancai (a type of traditional ceramics) or Bronze Jiuzun (an ancient type of wine vessel) was similar. Those visual elements are symbols of Chinese culture and history,
and they are distinctive.

The imagery of humans was also reflected in this advertisement, but compared with the other advertisement mentioned above, the role humans played was slightly different. The relationship of humans to cultural tourism resources is more diverse than the relationship of humans to nature.

The imagery of humans in this advertisement was not used to convey any cultural characteristics or provide information of lifestyles directly, but it appeared repeatedly. In those images, a man stands in the historic site, watching it, touching it and walking along it. He was not the main subject in those images, but he appeared in the images as an observer of the historic site and an observer of the historic memory of Luoyang. The man tried to touch, taste and experience the rich history and glorious memories of the city, and of the long Chinese history and ancient culture. As an observer and participant of history, the imagery of the individual could be seen as a substitute of audience and the images were intended to stimulate the desire of audiences to experience the rich sense of history in Luoyang.

Examples of the imagery of an individual in the advertisement.

With regard to the verbal elements, there were some voiceovers in Chinese in the original advertisement. The time line of the Chinese voiceovers and English subtitles did not tally absolutely, but the contents were basically identical. Therefore, the
Chinese voiceovers will not be discussed. The analysis of verbal elements focused on the English subtitles.

Compared with other cases selected in this study, this advertisement had more detailed verbal explanations. Consequently, the verbal factor is emphasized in the analysis of this advertisement. The verbal factor in this advertisement stressed the strong connection of Luoyang city to ancient Chinese civilizations.

The first keystone reflected in the applications of words was the sense of a long history. Examples in this advertisement include the words “ancient” or “prolonged”, to depict this character of Luoyang and in the advertisement some superlative adjectives were employed, such as “earliest” and “longest”. The superlative element further accentuated the long history of Luoyang’s civilization.

Some other words and phrases conveyed similar meanings, for example, the word “birthplace” appeared twice in the text to describe the significance of Luoyang in China’s historical dynasties and Confucianism thoughts. This word had the same effect as those superlative adjectives with - to emphasize the uniqueness and significance of Luoyang in Chinese history.

Moreover, in the text the names of the thirteen dynasties which were located in Luoyang were listed. This enumeration increased the authenticity and persuasive effect of the message, and increased the audience’s impression of antiquity.

The phrase “experienced more (dynasties) than any other (city)” was another reflection of the superlative and it expressed more. The word “experienced” described Luoyang as an active subject and connected Luoyang’s history with rich experiences. The longest history is the most powerful character of Luoyang and this character means in this regard Luoyang has the advantage over any other region. A long history means a wealth of experience. In this sense, this phrase not only stressed the historical significance, but also highlighted the positive value of the long history.

In this sentence another conception, “emperor”, was connected tightly with the ancient history and rich experiences. “Emperor” is the symbol of absolute power and authority in the long ancient history. The advertisement employed this word to describe the status of Luoyang and stressed the sense of authority. It is common that
in traditional values of the Chinese people, there is a close relationship between the concepts of age, experience and authority.

Another priority was the rich and profound nature of ancient civilizations. The representative examples are “splendid (Cathay culture)” and “unfathomable (maps)”. In this advertisement, those adjectives were employed to highlight the cultural value and enhance the image of Luoyang city. Those words were commendatory terms, to express the meaning and status of cultural value and to praise Luoyang’s significance.

The reflections of those emphases were not independent, for example, the texts used the word “Cathay” instead of “China” several times. “Cathay” is a literary or archaic statement, spread due to Marco Polo using this word in his book of travels. It usually refers to the area north of the Yangtze River. The word “Cathay” guides the audience to think of the classical literary works. With this word, the association with both history and civilization was constructed.

In brief, the long and rich history was the main feature of Luoyang and with the verbal emphasis of this long and rich history in this advertisement, the overall image of Luoyang was portrayed.

The verbal factor in this advertisement is a forceful commentary and complementary to the visual languages. Even though Luoyang is a meaningful cultural city in China, for most foreign visitors, Luoyang is an unknown name. Therefore, the tourism advertisement has to show the character and charm of Luoyang as effectively as possible to the audience.

Admittedly, the visual communication could express the historic features to a certain degree, but one cannot demonstrate the historic significance completely using only the visual language. Therefore, this advertisement has to use more spoken or written language. For example, the conception of “first ancient Chinese capital” or “birthplace of Chinese Confucianism” cannot be expressed by visual language, but relies on the use of verbal communication.

In summary, the verbal factors in this advertisement did not centre on demonstrations of the detailed scenery spots in Luoyang, but tended to highlight a sense of history. Compared with the detailed introduction, the words employed in the
advertisements tended to evoke a relatively vague conception of history in the minds of audience. Namely, the sense of history was reflected as a unitary atmosphere.

For example, the advertisement stressed the long history of Luoyang, but it did not mention any detailed time. The words used to describe time are vague, such as “birthplace” and “thousand-year old”. In order to express the long history and fundamental historical status, the advertisement counted thirteen names of ancient dynasties. The long list gave audiences the feeling of centuries-old history and detailed time was unnecessary in this expression tendency.

Compared with the visual and verbal factors, the audio element in the advertisement was relatively simple. The basic function of the background music in this case was to render the atmosphere of calm, which cooperated with the sense of rich history in the whole advertisement.

In general, the contents of the advertisement focused on a heavy sense of the history of Luoyang and the fundamental status and cultural values associated with the long history. All the factors of this advertisement stressed this. In the advertisement, human activities were not displayed in the contents, but the imagery of a man exists. Besides the reflections of objective cultural products (including architecture, artefacts, human activity sites), the imagery of a man is a symbol, an observer and taster of history, and the historical city.

**Case 5: China Forever**

This advertisement was selected from the Zurich CNTO website and it has a longer version on the USA and Toronto CNTO websites. This advertisement was only 30 seconds, but it collected a large amount of representative visual elements of China. It combined reflections of both natural and cultural elements, but obviously the reflection of cultural tourism resources played a more essential role in advertising expressions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual</th>
<th>Verbal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Door opens and the Hall of Supreme Harmony (main)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

88
building in the Forbidden City) appears
The Great Wall
Old city wall in desert
Grassland and distant Potala Palace
Mountains and river, clouds moving fast on the sky
Travertine landscape in Huanglong
Panda eats bamboo leaf
Yungang Grottoes
Terracotta Army
Ming Dynasty Tombs
Tian’anmen
Dragon dance
Traditional dance with bass drum
Sword dance
Peking opera
Usher of a modern hotel opens door
Interior of hotel
Chinese cuisines
Modern cities
People celebrate
A Chinese boy and an African girl smile and wave hands
Pupils smile and wave hands
People of different ethnic groups
Temple of Heaven
Embossment of Chinese dragon

Welcome to China – 2008 Beijing

*The background music used the melody of *Love song of Kangding*, which is a traditional folk song of Kangding (in Sichuan Province), and popular in China.
As mentioned at the end of the advertisement, this video advertisement was a promotional video for the 2008 Beijing Olympics and now it is being used as a China tour commercial. It lasted only 30 seconds and in such a succinct advertisement, verbal information was not used significantly, but it still contained rich contents. The visual elements in the advertisement include diverse classifications of tourism resources. In the advertisement, the visual elements were also selected as the most representative ones.

Visibly the cultural tourism resources played a more significant role. In the advertisement there were only three shots of natural elements: mountains and river, Huanglong landscape and panda. Most of the images demonstrated cultural tourism resources and a large number of those scenes are reflections of ancient architecture.

Firstly, the action of the door opening is a symbol with implications. A similar image appeared in case 3 as well and the connotation of this action is constant. The significance of the door is to conceal the internal things and the implication of the action of the door opening is to reveal the hidden information to the outside world. When the door opens, the potential meaning is the emotion of welcome and active self-expression. This beginning set the tone for of the whole advertisement: the display of the appearance and content of Chinese civilization.

The main symbolic elements in the advertisement were the famous ancient architecture and establishment, including the Forbidden City, The Great Wall, Terracotta Army and Tian’anmen. Similar to the other cases, the commonness among those visual elements is the sense of history. The traditional building patterns and craft products were selected to represent Chinese culture to the world, because they have abundant particularities.

On the aspect of reflections of human activities in this advertisement, with the images of traditional dance with a bass drum, sword dance and Peking opera, the traditional aspect of Chinese folk custom and folk art were reflected. Those images were selected to describe ancient China and the different cultural traditions, and the reason for choosing them is similar.

In addition, the images of a hotel and panorama of the city are the reflections of
modernity in advertising expressions. Since the advertisement wished to display a comprehensive image of China, the modern elements are indispensable. Compared with the traditional elements which are employed in the advertisement, the reflections of modern elements were not very distinctive. This situation was similar with case 4.

The last image of the advertisement, which is the ultimate stand of the advertising expression, is still a traditional symbol of Chinese civilization. This symbol is an abstract sign. There were not many abstract symbols employed in the advertisement, but as the final freeze frame, this image still played a significant role. The Chinese dragon is an overall symbol of China. In ancient times, the dragon was a symbol of imperial power and the term “Descendants of the Dragon” is a significant sign of Chinese people’s ethnic identity.

The function of the imagery of humans in the advertising expressions is more or less similar to case 3, to express a joyous atmosphere. In addition, in the applications of these elements, the visual language pays more attention to reflecting the harmony of the different groups of people. For instance, there are images of children with different skin colours getting along with each other happily and reflections of multiple ethnic groups. The advertising expressions of multicultural intercourse could convey tolerance and inclusiveness of a culture, and this is an important advantage to attract visitors. In traditional Chinese culture, the pursuit of this value was labelled as harmony. As an advertisement produced at the time of the Beijing Olympics, the emphasis on harmony was maximized.

Interpersonal harmony is a common theme in tourism advertisements. The similar examples are the images in advertisements of happy scenes of people from certain organizations, different ethnic groups or different countries. For example, in the following case, one main subject in the advertising image is the scene of different ethnic people dressed in their respective folk costumes hand in hand. This scene expressed the complexity and diversity of Chinese culture, and in addition, it reflected the atmosphere of harmony.

Texts: China Happy & Healthy Tour 2012  Travel, Happy, Health
Images: People of different ethnic minorities, the Hall of Supreme Harmony (main building in the Forbidden City), Chinese guardian lions, symbol of China tourism

Resource from CNTO in Toronto website.

This advertising image combined different symbols of China and the imagery of people from different ethnic minorities is the main subject. In the image, different ethnic costumes were displayed specifically to express the cultural diversities in China, and all the people were smiling and waving hands happily to accentuate the harmonious atmosphere.

Furthermore, the verbal factor of the advertisement *China Forever* was extremely succinct. The visual factor of advertisement conveyed almost all information, therefore, the verbal factor only highlighted the core once at the end of the advertisement. The word “welcome” was an echo of the first image, the scene of door opening at the beginning.

On the other hand, the audio factor employed in this advertisement was also folk music. Folk music was common in China’s tourism advertising as a main element of the background music. It is a representation of Chinese folk art and it stressed the tradition style of the Chinese cultural identity. In brief, the verbal and audio factors are supplements of visual factors, and the diverse factors conveyed China’s cultural symbols together.

To combine those three cases in this sub-chapter, there were some important common features of the elements employed in their expressions.

First, similarly with the cases of natural tourism resources, the construction of a
whole atmosphere is still an important factor in advertising expressions. However, the emphasis of an atmosphere is combined with the sense of a rich history. All the advertisements tried used diverse elements to demonstrate the long history of China and the rich and specific cultural heritages.

Moreover, verbal explanations in advertisements were relative rare. Admittedly, considering different detailed situations, the situation could be different. In case 4 the main subjects in advertising expressions were not very famous and their historical value needed to be explained by obvious verbal factors. After all, in the advertisements, verbal factors are a supplement of the visual languages.

Another emphasis in the advertising expressions is the conception of harmony. In the advertisements reflecting natural elements, harmony means a relationship between human and nature; while in this case, it means harmony between people. Traditionally, Chinese people have had regard for the concept of collectivism. Consequently, harmonious interpersonal relationships are valued in Chinese culture.

5.3 Discussions

In the analysis of the five cases mentioned above, the author generalized several cultural features reflected in the advertising expressions respectively. Obviously, there were some common features that appeared in the cases and the author believed these to be the most significant cultural elements conveyed by the tourism advertisements.

All the analyses employed in this study are based on the approach to distinguish Chinese cultural identity and inner values reflected in the tourism advertisements. In sub-chapter 2.4, the author introduced the onion-like culture model and relationship of cultural external manifestations and inner values. In the tourism advertisements, abundant visual, verbal and audio elements described China’s particular scenery spots, particular resources and Chinese people’s traditional lifestyles. According to the onion-like culture model, those elements in advertisements were external manifestations of Chinese culture, while the internal cultural values are invisible and hidden behind the outer “layers”. In this case, with analysis of the commonness and
tendencies in the external manifestations, the internal cultural values were discovered.

The first notable expression tendency is the emphasis of the construction of a whole atmosphere instead of detailed verbal descriptions. In advertising expressions, atmosphere means the different aspects of advertisements cooperate with each other to reflect one certain theme and audiences have obvious and consistent associations after contact with the advertisement. This tendency was reflected in the video advertisements: the advertisements using natural tourism resources conveyed the atmosphere of peace of mind and the advertisements with cultural resources conveyed the atmosphere of a rich history. For example, in the first case mentioned above, the advertisement employed diverse narrations to indicate a consistent leisurely and arty emotion. This tendency was reflected in the vision of subjects in imageries, colour tones, background music and verbal descriptions, namely, the distinct elements in the advertisements construct a coherent atmosphere altogether.

Furthermore, another common feature reflected in the advertising expressions is the lack of verbal factors. Most of the verbal factors in the advertising expressions are extremely brief generalizations corresponding to visual elements (such as the name of the scenery spots reflected in the corresponding visual elements). With a visible atmosphere, the role of details is limited. Furthermore, the main value of the verbal factor in advertising is to cooperate with the visual factor to highlight a whole sense or help to construct an atmosphere.

This characteristic is a direct embodiment of the high context culture. As the author mentioned in sub-chapter 2.2, Chinese culture has obvious traits of being a high-context culture. In Chinese culture, people often describe the subtlety of some things as “can be felt, but not explained in words”. This saying is a reflection of Chinese traditional attitudes. Compared with words, situations and experiences are more valued. Chinese culture advocates that one integrates into the situation in order to gain your own experience and as mentioned in chapter 2, detailed language descriptions on Chinese cultural values are unnecessary, or even useless. If one wants to understand something totally, the best approach is to become involved in the situation. On this level, it is quite easy to understand the reason that
advertisements apply themselves to construct a whole atmosphere in advertising expressions and the relative absence of detailed explanations. This feature was reflected in the advertising expressions of both advertising with natural tourism resources and cultural resources.

In this thesis, the author categorized the main content of tourism advertising into natural landscapes and cultural landscapes. In the reflections of the natural tourism resources, there were some specialties of advertising expressions. The most prominent feature is the relationship between descriptions of natural landscape and traditional thoughts in Taoism and Confucianism.

The hints of ideas of those traditional ideologies could be found in those advertising expressions and the tendency of traditional ideologies in advertising is manifold and compositive. Firstly, even though Taoism is not the most influential philosophy in history overall, it still played a significant role in Chinese traditional art. As the author mentioned in discussions of case 1 (see sub-chapter 4.2), Taoism influenced aesthetic trends and artistic expression of Chinese folk art, and correspondingly, Taoism philosophy could be drawn from the advertisements.

Another important aspect in those reflections of harmony was the descriptions of relationship between humans and nature in the advertisements. The natural landscapes reflected in advertising images were without the interference of industrialization and the original features of the natural environment were not much influenced by human activities.

This tendency is connected with the traditional value, the “coexistence of humans and nature”. The “coexistence of humans and nature” is another significant conception in traditional Chinese culture reflected in the advertising. Both Confucians and Taoists hold this ideology and have particular interpretations. In detail, in the advertising expressions of natural tourism resources, the imageries of residences and local human activities usually exist. In the visual language expressions, natural landscape was the background of human activity and human activity was as an embellishment of the natural landscape, which made natural scenery more vivid. This expression tendency accentuated the inner connection of humans and nature, and the
ideal scene that human activity corresponds with the natural environment. In other words, in the advertising expressions, human activities are naturally integrated into the entire landscape or environment. This expression reflected a perfect relationship between humans and nature in traditional Chinese culture.

On the other hand, the tendency of the “coexistence of humans and nature” expressions could be generalized as a pursuit of harmony. The harmonious relationship between humans and nature is a crucial point reflected in the advertisements, while in the reflections of cultural tourism resources, there was a similar conception of harmony described, which stressed the relationship between individuals. Similarly, harmony in human relationships is a fundamental issue in Chinese culture. The pursuit of harmony, especially interpersonal harmony, is an embodiment of ren in Confucianism. Ren is the kernel of Confucianism, which indicates being amicable and benevolent. Obviously the emphasis of harmony in Chinese culture is connected with the concept of ren.

Moreover, in chapter 2, the author mentioned Hofstede’s (1984) model of individualism and collectivism, and China’s cultural tendency of collectivism. The images of a harmonious relationship are not direct and sufficient support of collectivism, but they are more or less connected.

The concept of harmony in interpersonal relationships is one basic tenet of collectivism. In a collectivistic culture, “we” is at the heart of society instead of “I” as in an individualistic culture. Therefore, collectivistic cultures attach importance to coordination in a group and harmonious relationships between individuals. On this condition, good interpersonal relationships are the basis for collectivism. Therefore, the author believes the collectivism tendency in Chinese culture was element clearly reflected in some tourism advertisements to a certain degree.

In the advertisements focused on reflection of cultural elements, there was another prominent characteristic. Overall, the most prominent feature in the reflections of cultural tourism resources is the emphasis of historical values. The famous ancient architecture and other cultural achievements were reflected in advertising images time after time, and in addition, sometimes the images did not
express certain famous images, but those images could still transmit traditional cultural characteristics.

Compared with them, the reflections of modernity in advertisements were insufficient and they usually could not reflect China’s traits adequately. In the ratio of contents, neither are they emphasized in the advertisements. However, when the advertising images combined elements of tradition and modernity, the modernity elements in advertising conveyed more obvious association with Chinese identity and there were interesting communication effects.

Combining the different aspects of the advertisements into consideration, it is obvious that the advertising expressions overall are relatively reserved and not very direct. This tendency implied another Confucianism idea: “The Doctrine of the Mean”. This concept mirrors the trait of high context in Chinese culture to a certain extent. “The Doctrine of the Mean” advocates being restrained, reserved and veiled. Naturally, when this concept is embodies in language communication, it could be noticed as relatively meagre use words and avoidance of direct language.

Under this situation, China’s tourism advertisements usually do not convey obvious interest appeal. People go travelling for different reasons. Generally, the motivation for travel might be to relax, to have fun, to achieve different experiences, to taste special food or any other personal motivation. However, the Chinese tourism advertisements do not point out any detailed possibility to satisfy those motivations. On the contrary, those advertisements express the beautiful landscapes or rich history in China, rather than any obvious interest appeal. They attract audiences by emotional constructions to raise the audience’s positive responses. Namely, those advertisements do not offer explicit promises or guarantees to the audiences. The audiences can only read vague suggestions of possible interest from the advertisements. Those expression tendencies in tourism advertisements are tangible representation of soft-sell.

Hard-sell and soft-sell are two different tendencies in advertisements or advertising campaigns. The hard-sell approach is more direct and the selling or promotion measures are more aggressive towards potential customers; while the soft-sell approach is more indirect and suggestive, and the selling or promotion
measures are more subtly persuasive towards potential customers. Obviously soft-sell was adopted more in the discussed tourism advertisements.

From the analyses and discussions, it is obvious that abundant Chinese culture traits were conveyed by the tourism advertising, however, tourism advertising is just a particular branch of commercials, and admittedly, their contents is usually consistent with promotions of certain tourism destinations. Therefore, the reflection of Chinese cultural identity in tourism advertising could not be full-scale. For example, in sub-chapter 2.2, the traits of higher power distance index and lower uncertainty avoidance index according to Hofstede’s cultural dimensions in Chinese culture were mentioned. However, in the analysis approaches of this study, it can be seen that those traits were not reflected clearly in the advertising expressions. Most of the tourism advertisements did not involve those aspects.

Even though tourism advertising could not reflect all aspects of Chinese culture directly, there was still plentiful information which could be gathered through their analysis. Specifically, all the discussions in the analysis section focused on China’s tourism advertising expression tendency and Chinese culture, and this study did not involve a comparison with tourism advertising of other countries. The cultural features reflected in the advertisement cases might appear in other cultural backgrounds or other situations. For example, there are many high context cultures. Therefore, the advertising expression tendency related to a high context background is not unique to China’s tourism advertising. The situation of other expression tendencies is similar, the expressions adopted may be the same in different tourism advertisements from many countries. Namely, those characteristics in advertising expressions discussed above are reflections of Chinese culture, but they are not symbols to distinguish Chinese culture. Without comparison with other cultures, it is impossible to judge the differences of those advertisements with advertising from other cultural backgrounds. This study only centred on the existence of specialties in China’s tourism advertising.
5.4 Summary

This chapter will give a qualitative analysis of the cultural traits and values reflected in some selected advertisement cases. The discourse analysis section was a continuation of the empirical studies from the perspective of quantitative research.

The research materials in this chapter were the advertisements on CNTO websites and they were classified as a reflection of natural tourism resources and cultural resources according to their contents. The cases of the two classifications were discussed and analysed respectively.

Those connotations had diverse manifestations in different classifications of advertisements. The advertisements with reflections of natural tourism resources focus on the atmosphere of a peaceful mind. This is an aesthetic tendency and personal pursuit influenced by Taoism thoughts. In addition, harmony between nature and human activity is another point of emphasis in the advertising expressions, which is connected with the traditional concept of the “coexistence of humans and nature”.

In addition, the advertisements with reflections of cultural tourism resources focus on the status of ancient Chinese civilizations and the construction of an atmosphere of a sense of rich history. Furthermore, the harmony between individuals and different social groups is another emphasis in the advertising expressions.

In summary, the main cultural connotations reflected in the advertisements included in the construction were a unitary atmosphere, deficiency of detailed verbal descriptions or explanations, and regard to the concept of harmony and other traditional thoughts. The unitary atmosphere and deficiency of detailed verbal factors significantly embody China’s high context culture tendency, and “harmony” is a crucial spiritual connotation of Confucianism.

To combine those analysis results and discussions, some potential Chinese cultural identity and values in the tourism advertising expressions were revealed. Therefore, the answer to the third sub-research question in this study could be discovered, and the core of the main research question has been discussed in principle. All the hypotheses of this study focused on cultural characteristics reflected in
advertising expressions and analysis in this chapter centred on those characteristics. The analysis of the results of the advertisement cases could test the hypotheses of the study. In brief, the five hypotheses are proved by and large. The detailed conclusions will be explained in chapter 5.

5.4.1 Limitations of the qualitative study

There were some limitations in the discourse analysis section which are similar to the limitations with the content analysis. For instance, the selected field of research materials was limited to the national level and subjectivity existed in the process of selection and analysis of materials. In general, the limitation of subjectivity in the discourse analysis process was more noticeable than in the content analysis process.

As a qualitative study, the subjective factors appear more in the discourse analysis. The author selected certain advertisement cases in the research and constructed a case study to discuss the features of the advertisements. Firstly, the process of case selecting involved the author’s personal judgments. The author tried to select cases with appropriate information, but subjective factors always exist. It is also incontestable that the analysis results would be influenced to a greater or lesser extent if different cases were selected in this section. Furthermore, the analysis was centred on the descriptions and explanations of the selected cases, therefore, the analysis results of cases could not be extended to broader fields.

In addition, discourse analysis is a qualitative research method and lots of personal understanding and background are inescapably involved in this analysis approach. In this study, the analysis process relied on the author’s personal understanding of Chinese culture. The author hopes her understanding of Chinese culture could decrease the influences of the misapprehensions of Chinese culture, which is one of the subjective factors. However, it still will definitely make the analysis to a certain degree subjective.
6. Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to discover Chinese cultural characteristics and identity in tourism advertising expressions. Using both quantitative and qualitative research methods, an overall perspective on the relationship between Chinese culture and advertising expressions was introduced.

The process to discover this relationship was composed of several aspects. In detail, the three sub-research questions answered one part of the whole theme separately, at the same time the main structure of the analyses and discussions in this thesis was settled with the order of the research questions. Therefore, following the logic of those sub-research questions, the final conclusion could be drawn.

The first sub-research question in this thesis was: What is the identity of Chinese culture in general? This sub-research question was discussed in chapter 2. The author tried to combine several culture locating theories and some detailed studies about Chinese culture characteristics. The salient features of Chinese culture include differences between people are accepted and be seen as normal (High PDI); clear collective tendencies in individual activities (low IDV); ambiguity and uncertainty in society was minimized (low UAI); the society has strict social norms (low IVR); and atmosphere and environment were valued more than detailed language expressions (high context culture). Moreover, Confucian ideology has affected many aspects of Chinese culture and society (high LTO and some other cross-cultural research).

As the onion-like culture model mentioned, culture has both external and internal characteristics, and those generalizations of Chinese culture from the studies cover both aspects. For instance, the small amount of detailed descriptions in communication is an external manifestation of Chinese culture, while respect of Confucianism is a cultural value. In the subsequent parts, those generalizations of Chinese culture traits were involved with the detailed advertising expressions of the selected cases. Namely, the author analysed the tourism advertising expressions and discovered which cultural identities were reflected in advertising and how those identities were expressed by detailed elements.
Subsequently, the author tried to answer the second sub-research question: *What are the most representative official expressions of Chinese elements in the Internet tourism advertisements to overseas markets?* In fact, this sub-research question aimed to search the common elements in advertising. The author discovered the most frequent elements in the tourism advertisements by using the content analysis method in chapter 3. Compared with the static image advertisements, the tourism advertising with moving images showed more diversity and complexity in the elements employed. However, the overall tendency was consistent. In China’s tourism advertising, the significance of the role of cultural tourism resources was represented expressly. Those visual elements could express more specificity of Chinese culture and society in tourism advertising. In detail, the images of architecture and establishment were selected in tourism advertising expressions most frequently as representations of China’s local characteristics. To put it in another way, China’s tourism advertising tends to employ visual elements of architecture to represent China’s tourism resources and to attract potential consumers. Considering that architecture is a combination of artistry, practicality and historicity, it is intelligible that architecture was employed so frequently. The most frequent types of architecture category expressed in tourism advertising, “landscape architecture and appertaining architecture” and “residence and community”, followed the same logic.

In addition to the conception of “what” from the content analysis results, the author discovered “how” as the next step with discourse analysis. In other words, the author followed the statistical conclusions to discover those external manifestations in tourism advertising using the qualitative approach and to analyse the connection of internal cultural values and the manifestations. This approach is the most significant level in the analysis and the author concluded this analysis process as a discussion centred on the third sub-research question: *How is the Chinese Culture identity reflected in the employment of Chinese elements in those tourism advertisements, especially in the visual elements?*

In chapter 4, the cultural characteristics and the cultural values behind the advertisements were described and analysed using the discourse analysis method. In
other words, the author analysed and explained the approach that the tourist advertising adopted, looking at the diverse elements to reflect China’s cultural identity.

Firstly, the tourism advertising employed diverse visual elements to construct and express a unitary atmosphere, and the auditory elements, for example, the background music, were used to increase the overall performance effects, namely, to convey the atmosphere better. In advertising expressions, atmosphere and overall effects were regarded, and the role of detailed verbal descriptions or explanations was not used to any serious extent. This is a representation of a high context culture, which is a characteristic of Chinese culture.

In addition, harmony is a significant theme in China’s tourism advertising. In the reflections of natural tourism resources, regard for harmony between nature and human activity is a point of emphasis in the advertising expressions, while in the reflections of cultural tourism resources the harmonious relationship between individuals and different social groups is another emphasis. Harmony is a fundamental concept and pursuit in Confucianism, and this could be explained by the core concept of ren in Confucianism. On the other hand, the regard of a harmonious relationship of individuals is a reflection of the collective tendency in Chinese culture.

In addition, the tourism advertising reflects other Confucianism and Taoism ideology in advertising expressions. For example, the regard of harmony of nature and humans in advertising expressions could be connected with the traditional conception of the “coexistence of humans and nature” in both Confucianism and Taoism. Moreover, the reflections of natural tourism resources tend to construct the atmosphere of a peaceful mind. This tendency was influenced by Taoism thoughts. Furthermore, the tourism advertisements reflected plentiful information about historical elements and conveyed the status of rich Chinese ancient civilizations. This expression tendency was obviously represented in reflections of cultural tourism resources and it is a reflection of the extension of filial piety in Confucianism, which is an expressed value of the ancestors and their behaviours and heritage.

Combining the conclusions of the three sub-research questions, the basic result
of relationship of Chinese culture and China’s tourism advertising was discovered. Furthermore, the hypotheses raised in this thesis also followed the same logic. In other words, the main research question has been related to the five hypotheses.

**Hypothesis 1:** China’s tourism advertisements are inclined to construct an entire atmosphere.

This hypothesis is connected with both reflections of natural tourism resources and cultural resources in tourism advertising. As mentioned in the discourse analysis section, the reflections of natural resources tend to construct an atmosphere of a peaceful, natural environment and awaken the audiences’ inner peace, at the same time, the reflections of cultural resources hold the tendency of an atmosphere rich in history. This tendency was conveyed in the advertisements as expressions of consistent contents and emotions, and lingual explanations or descriptions of particulars appeared infrequently.

**Hypothesis 2: Those advertisements reflect pursuance of harmony and oneness with nature.**

This hypothesis regarded the analysis of reflections of natural tourism resources. In those advertising expressions, human activities were integrated in the descriptions of nature. In the advertising expressions, emphasis is placed upon the serene atmosphere of nature and the imagery of humans and human activities not impacting upon this atmosphere. Namely, the natural landscape was the main subject in the imagery, while the traces of human activities were a harmonious integral part of the image.

**Hypothesis 3: The traditional Chinese cultural values are not only reflected in the display of man-made cultural elements, but also in the expressions of natural elements to a certain extent in those advertisements.**

This hypothesis paid attention to the reflections of natural tourism resources in tourism advertisements, and focused on a relationship of external manifestations and
internal cultural values. As mentioned in the analyses of the cases and discussions in sub-chapter 4.4, in the elements of natural landscapes in advertising expressions, influences of Confucianism and Taoism ideology were represented.

**Hypothesis 4: The traditional and non-industrial appeals are common and historical elements are stressed.**

This hypothesis conveyed a tendency expressed in both reflections of natural tourism resources and cultural resources, but especially in the reflections of the cultural resources. Obviously, in the advertising expressions, the original natural form is the keystone in the expressions of natural tourism resources. Moreover, the ancient artificialities and traditional folk customs and lifestyles were stressed. That emphasis upon traditional and historical aspects, and those tendencies could be observed from the data in the discourse analysis sections.

**Hypothesis 5: There are abundant emotional appeals or soft-sell in those advertisements.**

The hypothesis is an overall generalization of tourism advertising expressions and it could be represented in both reflections of natural tourism resources and cultural resources. In general, those tourism advertisements convey sweeping descriptions of the general tourism environment and obvious interest appeals never appear in those advertisements. The characteristics of implicit and indirect advertising expressions determine the tendency of advertising appeals.

With the data and analysis of the cases in the discourse analysis section, it can be seen that all the hypotheses could be proved directly or indirectly. The five hypotheses described several characteristics of China’s tourism advertisements and the phenomena in the hypotheses could be explained by Chinese cultural identity. On the whole, the hypotheses reflected influences of Chinese culture in tourism advertising in diverse particulars.

As the author mentioned in chapter 3, the content analysis result was the basis
for the discourse analysis sampling and analysis results. Therefore, in order to achieve comprehensive information on the cultural influences in tourism advertisements, the author needed to combine the results of the content analysis and discourse analysis. The content analysis results expressed the role of China’s civilization in advertising expressions and the emphasis laid upon them, and the discourse analysis provided more in depth and clearer interpretations.

Taking all those things into account, the answer of the main research question of the thesis could be answered. The main research question in this thesis was: In China’s official online tourism advertisements to overseas markets, what is the role of Chinese culture identity? There is no doubt that Chinese cultural characteristics were reflected in tourism advertisements from different perspectives and the main research question laid emphasis upon a comprehensive perspective.

Generally speaking, the relationship of Chinese culture and expression tendency in tourism advertising is evident. Tourism advertising is a mass communication approach to convey a tour destination’s local attractions and characteristics, and abundant external features of culture were employed in advertising expressions to achieve this goal. In this case, plentiful Chinese cultural external traits were conveyed and they could be connected with detailed Chinese tourism advertising expressions, and in addition, the inner cultural value was also reflected. The most prominent cultural characteristic reflected in tourism advertising is a feature of a high context culture, which makes the advertising expression tend to attract the audience through focusing on the construction of an overall atmosphere and emotional rendering, instead of detailed verbal descriptions and direct marketing. Another feature of tourism advertising expressions is the emphasis laid upon China’s traditional civilization, especially the influences of the traditional ideologies. The far-reaching traditional ideologies in Chinese society, such as Confucianism and Taoism, influenced tourism advertising expressions both in external performances and spiritual connotations. The most powerful features, for example, oneness of man and nature, the importance of harmonious interpersonal relationships, and regard to history, are expressions and reflections of those traditional ideologies in tourism advertising.
6.1 Discussions

This study discovered the relationship of China’s culture characteristics and advertising communication, and the author chose Internet advertising on official tourism websites as the breakthrough point. As the research material, online advertising has its particularities and limitations.

In a globalized world, mass communication is a significant and convenient approach to convey and transfer information around the world. Under such circumstances, people could understand the culture of other countries through media, furthermore, different cultural exchanges and interactions with each other takes place in this process. In China, the value of both tradition and modernization were reflected in advertising. (Zhang and Harwood, 2004) In general, the traditional values are rooted in China’s own history, while the modern values are influenced by the Western world and developed with time. However, the local characteristics are still influential. In this case, with the analyses and discussions of the tourism advertisements, the role of the local and the specificity of Chinese culture in advertising communication is obvious.

In general, the study conclusions indicate the strong influences of traditional elements and unchanged cultural characteristics in China’s tourism advertisements. As sub-chapter 2.4 mentioned, advertising is rooted in certain cultural backgrounds, therefore the author believes the cultural identity and advertising expressions are connected.

Chinese culture is a representative high context culture and the tourism advertisements reflected obvious high context features. The role of high context cultural characteristics is indirect in people’s cultural lives, but the advertising expressions reflected its influences in mass communications. Furthermore, the key role of traditional elements was proved by the abundant detailed ancient civilization products, traditional human activities and implications of traditional ideologies.

In sub-chapter 2.4, the author described the conception of glocalization and those main expression tendencies of tourism advertisements are symbols of glocalization
nowadays. The selected tourism advertisements were employed to communicate China’s national images to the world, and in this process, the traditional and local elements were conveyed. Even though now China accepts a large amount of foreign and international conceptions and lifestyles, the essential cultural basis and characteristics were still employed to express the local identity of China. As sub-chapter 2.1 described, the traditional and historical elements are the essential elements of a culture. Those traditional cultural characteristics were valued as the most local elements because they are unique and they reflect the lasting and distinctive cultural core.

Meanwhile, besides the main traditional cultural characteristics employed in the selected advertising cases, there are other possibilities and details used to represent China and Chinese culture. China has a long history, vast territory and diverse ethnic groups, and the different cultural elements always blend with each other. Moreover, the culture is advancing with time. Thus, it is difficult to generalize about the Chinese cultural identity, however, in order to facilitate later analysis and discussion, some generic conclusions must be drawn. In this thesis, all the analyses were based on those simple generalizations of complex cultural characteristics and this could be a limitation of the whole study. Without doubt, the generalizations of Chinese culture employed in this thesis were based on facts, but some details of cultural characteristics were ignored unavoidably. Accordingly, in the subsequent analyses, the connected cultural expressions in advertising were neglected. Considering this situation, it is noted that the analyses and discussions of the embodiments of Chinese culture in tourism advertising were primary, and if the author desired to discover the issue in more depth, the cultural details should be sought more attentively. The generalizations of a complicated culture could not be perfect, therefore, the analyses according to the generalizations could not cover the cultural traits perfectly.

On the other hand, as mentioned in sub-chapter 4.4, tourism advertising is a specific advertising category. The contents and aesthetic tendency in tourism advertisements are similar, and only focus on some certain aspects of the natural and social environment. Under such circumstances, the reflections of cultural
characteristics in tourism advertising are imperfect.

Consequently, cultural characteristics and cultural expressions in advertising communication, especially in a certain category of advertising communication, are not coincident completely. Therefore, it is deficient to emphasize the relationship of advertising expressions and cultural studies too much. Since it is a globalized world, cross-cultural communications are convenient. To recognize and respect cultural specialty and differences, broader platforms are necessary.

Furthermore, online advertising is a related new advertising communication approach. As a platform, the Internet has unique characteristics, including “the ability to inexpensively store vast amounts of information” and “interactivity and ability to provide information on demand”. (Peterson, Balasubramanian and Bronnenberg, 1997) Those characteristics could influence advertising communication on the Internet and improve the communication effects.

Considering those advantages, the author selected Internet advertisements as the study materials. However, those advantages were not expressed in the tourism advertisements on official websites adequately. Even though official websites have superiority, such as higher dependability and authority over other websites, they still contain several limitations.

Compared with most commercial tourism websites, such as travel agencies, the quantity and update rate of tourism advertisements on the official websites are not perfect. Firstly, the official websites focused on communication of basic information of Chinese tourism, while the commercial tourism websites would pay more attention to attracting customers with rich language and colourful expressions. Furthermore, as governmental organizations, the update rate of official websites was deficient. This may be a reflection of the bureaucracy. The commercial travel agencies face the market and customers directly, and they have to pay more attention to attract consumers. However, those official organizations do not have such direct pressure from the markets. Therefore, the official tourism websites did not attach great importance to tourism advertising.

Under these circumstances, tourism advertisements from unofficial websites
have their own superiority. If more websites were considered in studies, the research materials would be more diversified and richer data could make the study results more informative and more reliable. In other words, if the object of the study was not limited to governmental tourism websites, but considered more commercial tourism websites, the study materials could be richer and subsequently the study could be improved.

Therefore, the author admits that even though this study achieved some effective conclusions about cultural elements reflected in advertising, what must be emphasized here is that it could not be perfect. The conclusions are limited and have their particular application occasions. With further studies based on more comprehensive data sources and other ameliorations, the conclusions could have better compatibility.

In addition, there were some limitations and even errors in the advertisements on official tourism websites. For example, in case 2 mentioned in chapter 4.2, English translations of key information are lacking in this advertisement. Omissions of information would influence the communication effects. The mistakes that could be avoided in advertising expressions would even mislead audiences. For instance, on the Toronto CNTO website, there were some mistakes of verbal explanations of images in advertisements. Two verbal explanations of advertising images showed “Yin Ruins Museum, Lhasa” and “The Forbidden City, Anyang”. Actually, the information on site locations was incorrect. Even though official tourism websites have higher authority, those errors would probably engender adverse effects. Those defects were not related to cultural issues in advertising expressions, however, they have proved that the official tourism websites do not pay enough attention to advertisements. In other words, there are still several possible improvements to be made by the official tourism advertisements. In the future, if tourism advertising could gain more attention from official organizations, the overall situation might change.

6.2 Outlooks

This study focused on China’s tourism advertising expressions and Chinese
Based on the analyses of the official online advertisements, the main academic value of this study is to discover the relationship of culture and tourism advertising, and the role of local culture in the globalization tendency. The previous studies of China’s cultural expressions in commercials were prolific and they covered diverse commercial types and study approaches. However, the expressions in China’s tourism advertisements did not attract enough attention from the previous scholars and researchers, even though tourism advertisements could convey abundant information about cultural values to the world. This study selected this neglected issue and filled the gap, and this is the main contribution of this study. In addition, the research ideas and results could be diffused to other countries, to provide a reference for similar studies in other countries. On the other hand, in the practical aspect, the study examined China’s self-expression in the globalized world, and it could provide a theoretical basis for further improvements of the official tourism advertisements.

However, in subsequent studies on this topic, there are several directions that the author suggests are followed. The concept of a nation’s cultural identity is complicated and comprehensive, but the representations of cultural identity in Internet tourism advertisements were limited. Moreover, the author limited the research materials to the official websites and this decreased the universality of the study. However, the field of cultural and advertising communication study is broad. Therefore, to increase the applicability of the explanatory effect of the culture and communication relationship, more data sources could be taken into account to complement this study.

Besides the analyses in this thesis, more studies are needed to discover the embodiment of cultural elements in advertising communication. As mentioned in the above, a wider range of information sources could help. Furthermore, the identity of culture could be better represented when compared when other situations were inducted. In other words, contrast could bring out the particularity of specific cultural expression. In this case, in order to organize for in depth analysis, it is possible to employ some comparisons of tourism advertising from different cultural backgrounds in further research.
In addition, the analyses in this thesis were located on the advertising materials. However, this is not the only method to determine cultural expressions in tourism advertising. For instance, interviews with the advertising producers and managers of the tourism websites could provide more information about this issue. Interviews could obtain information about the process of producing and selecting tourism advertisements, and what symbols or elements were usually valued by the advertisers and managers. In addition, audience research is another possible approach to measure cultural factors in advertising. Richer research methods could enhance the study effect of this issue.
### 7. Appendix

**Classification, Investigation and Evaluation of Tourism Resources**  
 *(GB/T 18972—2003)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main classification</th>
<th>Sub classification</th>
<th>Main types</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A Physiographic landscape</strong></td>
<td>AA synthetic natural tourism area</td>
<td>AAA mountain typical tourism area</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AAB valley typical tourism area</td>
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<td>AAC gravel typical tourism area</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AAD bottomland typical tourism area</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AAE fantastic natural phenomenon</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>AAF natural symbol place</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AAG vertical belt</td>
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<td></td>
<td>AB sedimentary strata and tectonite</td>
<td>ABA fault landscape</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ABB fold landscape</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ABC jointed rocks landscape</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ABD stratigraphic section</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ABE calcareous sinter and other sinter</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ABF vein and ore accumulation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ABG biologic fossil occurrence</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AC trace of geological and physiognomic process</td>
<td>ACA protruding mountain</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ACC clustered mountain</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ADC fancy and shapely rock</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ADD crack</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ADE gorge</td>
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<td></td>
<td>AD remains of natural changes</td>
<td>ADA gravitative deposit</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ADB accumulation of debris flow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AE Islands</td>
<td>AEA island area</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>B Water area landscape</strong></td>
<td>RA Rivers</td>
<td>BAA river segment for sightseeing and recreation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>BAB reach of underground river</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>BAC ancient channel section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BB natural lakes, ponds and swamps</td>
<td>BBA lake district for sightseeing and recreation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BC Waterfall</td>
<td>BCA waterfall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BD Spring</td>
<td>BDA cold spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BE estuary and sea</td>
<td>BEA sea district for sightseeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BF Ice/Snow area</td>
<td>BFA glacier sightseeing site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C Biology landscape</strong></td>
<td>CA Trees</td>
<td>CAA woodland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CB Grassland</td>
<td>CBA grassland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CC Flowers</td>
<td>CCA flower area in grassland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Sky phenomena and climate landscape</td>
<td>CD habitat for wild animal</td>
<td>CDA habitat for aquatic animal CDB habitat for terrestrial animal CDC habitat for bird CDE habitat for butterfly</td>
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<tr>
<td>DA light phenomenon</td>
<td>BAA observation site for heaven BAB observation site for aura phenomenon BAC sites of mirage phenomenon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DB weather and climate phenomena</td>
<td>BBA place appearing cloud and fog frequently BBB summer resort BBC winter resort BBD place with uttermost and special climate BBE phonological landscape</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Site and relic</td>
<td>EA prehistoric human activity spaces</td>
<td>EAA human activity site EAB cultural layer EAC cultural relic EAD primal settlement site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EB social, economic and cultural activities ruins</td>
<td>EBA site of historic event EBB military relic and ancient battlefield EBC abandoned temple EBD abandoned productive place EBE traffic relic EBF abandoned city and settlement relic EBG sites of Great Wall EBH beacon tower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Architecture and establishment</td>
<td>FA Synthetic human culture tourism site</td>
<td>FAA location for education, research or experiment FAB health and recreation resort FAC religion and sacrificial place FAD garden-style recreation area FAE cultural activity place FAF construction project and producing area FAG place of social, commercial and trade activities FAH exhibited place of animal and plant FAI military sightseeing place FAJ border ports FAK scenery enjoy spot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FB Single place for cultural or sports activities</td>
<td>FBA gathering hall (room) FBB sacral place FBC demo room FBD sports gym and field FBE singing and dancing club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FC Landscape architecture and appertaining architecture</td>
<td>FCA pagoda FCB pagoda-shape building FCC pavilion FCD grotto FCE section of the Great Wall FCF city and castle FCG calligraphy and painting in cliff FCH steles forest FCI plaza and square FCJ artificial cave FCK accessory building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FD Residence and community</td>
<td>FDA traditional and vernacular architecture FDB peculiar street FDC peculiar community FDD celebrity residence and historic commemorative building FDE ancient academies FDF assembly hall FDG peculiar shop FDH peculiar market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FE Burial place</td>
<td>FEA cemetery FEB tomb(s) FEC suspending coffin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FF Transportation building</td>
<td>FFA bridge FFB station FCC haven, ferry and dock FFD airport FFE trestle road along cliff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FG Water conservancy project</td>
<td>FGA sightseeing section of reservoir FGB well FGC canal and section of channel FGD section of dyke FGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G Tourist Commodity</td>
<td>construction</td>
<td>irrigation district FGF water pumping facilities</td>
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<td>---------------------</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G local tourism commodities</td>
<td>GAA dish and beverage GAB agriculture, forestry and livestock product GAC aquatic product GAD Chinese herb and medicine product GAE traditional handmade product and craft GAF industrial goods for daily use GAG other commodity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H Human activity</th>
<th>HA personnel records</th>
<th>HAA personage HAB event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HB art</td>
<td>HBA artistic groups HBB literary and artistic works</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| HC Folk custom | HCA local custom and folk comity HCB folk festival HCC folk performing arts HCD folk exercises and games HCE religion activity HCF temple fair and folk assembly HCG dietary custom HGH peculiar costume |

| HD Modern festival | HDA travel festival HDB culture festival HDC commerce and husbandry festival HDD sport festival |
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