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The Chinese Gaze: Imaging Europe in Travel Magazines

旅游凝视——中国旅游杂志中的欧洲意象

JULIO ARAMBERRI
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Growing attention has been paid in the general tourism literature to destination imaging and branding. Usually the literature refers to images of developing destinations among international travelers from developed countries and ignores the increasing number of tourists from developing countries and their images of destinations abroad. This article takes a different tack in analyzing how three Chinese travel magazines present Europe to their audiences. Reverse analysis suggests that these consumer media pattern Europe in a way similar to that in which most Western media portray exotic destinations. Additionally it examines how such a benchmark is adapted to the idiosyncratic expectations of the local audience.

KEYWORDS. Destination imaging, China, Europe, travel magazines

近年来，在旅游研究文献中关于旅游目的地意象化和品牌化的研究越来越受到重视。但是现有文献多数是关于来自发达国家的国际游客对于发展中国家旅游目的地所形成的意向，而忽略了日益增长的发展国家的旅游者以及他们对国外旅游目的地意向。本文采取不同的研究路径，分析了中国三种主流旅游杂志是如何向其受众展现欧洲的。研究结果表明这些宣传媒体中所描绘的欧洲与西方媒体中的描绘基本相似——即“异国情调”。此外，本文还检验了在中国本土受众的期望特质下该意象是如何具体体现的。

关键词： 目的地意象化，中国，欧洲，旅游杂志

Introduction

Modern mass tourism is a recent occurrence in China. After the initiation of the Open Door policy in 1978, tourism grew exponentially (Sofield & Li, 1998; H. Zhang, Chong, & Ap, 1999). Inbound tourism, by both Chinese living outside the Mainland and foreigners, replaced the formerly tiny groups of politically motivated travelers (Richter, 1983; W. Zhang, 1997). Simultaneously, domestic and outbound tourism grew by leaps and bounds in lockstep with economic growth.

In 2010, China's estimated gross domestic product (GDP) at purchasing power parity reached US\$10.1 trillion and its GDP per capita went up to US\$7,600 (Central

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Intelligence Agency [CIA], 2011). Between 1979 and 2010 the GDP increased approximately 20 times (CIA, 2011).

Economic growth has induced deep and rapid social changes. Above all, a tidal wave of migration from the countryside has flooded the cities. Consumption standards have risen, whereas not so long ago basic subsistence was a major concern for many citizens. Urbanization and new consumption patterns usually go hand in hand with an expansion of the middle classes. A local study (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences [CASS], 2003) defined them in terms of resources, including all people that in 2001 had assets ranging between CNY150,000 (US\$18,137) and CNY300,000 (US\$36,275). They were estimated at 19% of the population—around 250 million people. The study also forecast that in 2020 the middle classes would comprise 40% of the Chinese population; that is, somewhere around 400 million people (CASS). Other sources cited by Hsiao (2010) reached different conclusions: In 2004, the French bank Paribas reported that about 50 million households belonged to this group. In 2006, Merrill Lynch estimated that this number would reach about 350 million by 2016, and McKinsey estimated this number as 100 million households by 2009 and over 520 million individuals by 2025. According to such estimates, which were obtained through different methods and open to discussion, the country would have the largest middle class in the world by 2025 (Li, 2010)

Even though much travel is subsidized as incentive travel, increasing numbers of Chinese have sufficient disposable income to pay for travel expenses out of their own pockets. This is especially true for urbanites, whose disposable income has increased 7.4% annually (He, 2003). According to official statistics, in 2010 it reached 18% of total income for urban households (National Statistics Bureau of China [NSBC], 2011). In 2003 household tourism expenditures had risen to 14% of disposable income in urban areas (Gu & Liu, 2004).

As a consequence, large numbers of Chinese can engage in tourist activities. Most travel occurs within the Mainland. In 2006, domestic tourism reached around 1.4 billion travelers (NSBC, 2008). In 2010, it increased to 2.1 billion residents (NSBC, 2011). Revenue generated by domestic tourism shot up 23.5% to CNY1.26 trillion.

The number of outbound Chinese travelers has also risen quickly—they nearly trebled between 2001 and 2006 (from 12.1 to 34.5 million), due in part to a growing liberalization of travel abroad by the Chinese government (G. Zhang, 2006). The number of China's outbound visitors in 2010 totaled 57.39 million, up 20.4%. Of this total, 51 million were on private visits, a year-on-year increase of 22.0%, or 89.8% of all outgoing visitors (NSBC, 2011).

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2009) forecast that outgoing Chinese market will reach 100 million in 2020, thus becoming the main generating market in the world. Other sources estimate that the target will be reached earlier. For CLSA Asia-Pacific Markets (2005), in 2020 there will be 115 million outgoing Chinese travelers. The German weekly *Der Spiegel*, possibly due to a typo, announced that the 100-million threshold would be reached by 2010 (Wagner, 2007). The basic figures of this development can be seen in Table 1.

Outgoing tourism expenditures have also increased at a quick pace (Table 2) although their index lags considerably behind that of departures abroad.

One should stress that this centrifugal movement does not travel equally far and in all directions. In 2007, 85% of outgoing Chinese tourism traveled to nearby destinations (the top five, Hong Kong, Macau, Vietnam, South Korea, and Japan), leaving around 8 million trips for the rest of the world (CLSA Asia-Pacific Markets, 2005). However, this may change, because China's outgoing tourism is still in a burgeoning stage. The

Table 1. Outbound Chinese Tourism Departures.

Year	# (000)	Index
2000	10,472	100
2001	12,000	115
2002	16,600	159
2003	20,220	193
2004	28,850	275
2005	31,000	296
2006	34,523	330

Note. Data from “China’s Outbound Tourism: An Overview,” by G. Zhang, 2006, retrieved from <http://www.som.surrey.ac.uk/WTM/GuangruiWTMChinaOutboundTourism2006text.pdf>

Table 2. Outbound Chinese Tourism Expenditure.

Year	US\$ (billion)	Index
2000	13,114	100
2001	13,909	106
2002	15,398	117
2003	15,187	116
2004	19,149	146
2005	21,795	166

Note. Data from “China’s Outbound Tourism: An Overview,” by G. Zhang, 2006, retrieved from <http://www.som.surrey.ac.uk/WTM/GuangruiWTMChinaOutboundTourism2006text.pdf>

number of all outbound tourists remains below 3% of the total population. The equivalent figure is 15% for Japan, 35% for Taiwan, and 25% for the United States (CLSA Asia-Pacific Markets). Therefore, it has ample room to grow. Indeed, the top five destinations will still have the largest share for the next few years. Quite possibly, though, Chinese tourists will also start to spill over to other Asian destinations. Thailand expected that China would be its main market by 2011 (Tourist Authority of Thailand [TAT], 2008), which was close to the mark; in 2011 Chinese tourists to Thailand were the second market after Malaysia. If, despite the uncertainties derived from the financial crisis of 2008, China’s economy keeps growing, there will be plenty of opportunities for other destinations.

In addition to the general economic background, other favorable factors for outgoing tourism have to be reckoned. By 2011, those in the 20–34 age group were expected to have the highest average income in the country, for a total of 30% of all revenue (Euromonitor, 2007). Members of this age group are young and therefore more adventurous; they have more formal education than their parents; and their heavy use of the Internet will make them more conversant with international problems, current affairs, culture and history; and they will want to expand their horizons (Euromonitor). This market will require special attention and new tools will have to be sharpened to reach it. However, only recently have institutions such as China’s Outbound Tourism Research Institute (COTRI) started to fill the gap (Arlt, 2010).

Academic attention to the trend is growing, though at a slow pace. In addition to case studies (Wen & Carr, 2004), Arlt (2006) published an interesting general study of Chinese outbound tourism in which he reasonably acknowledged that “[w]ith a quarter of all international travelers already originating from cultures not based on occidental values, the simple picture of ‘white’ guests or ‘brown’ or indeed ‘yellow’ hosts is becoming blurred” (p. 8). Others have started to research the behavior of Chinese tourists on package tours (Wong & Lau, 2001) or the thorny relations between some Chinese tourists and the locals at their destination (Chan, 2006). With a scope limited to Germany, the issue of how to relate to the incoming Chinese guests has led to a reevaluation of the importance of Chinese culture and a quest to understand Chinese tourist behavior (Ehrhardt & Klossek, 2003; Wohlfahrt, 2007). This burgeoning interest shows the urgent need for the tourism industry to gain a better knowledge of this market. One of the first introductions to the values and expectations of Chinese tourists was sponsored by the German Chambers of Commerce (Lott, 2007).

Still, much about how the Chinese perceive their European destinations remains unknown. It is known that when they travel to Europe they usually do it in a way that recalls Japanese behavior 20 years ago. Chinese tourists arrive in groups at an airport in central Europe and begin a bus tour that takes them to 10 countries in 14 days. *If it is Tuesday, this is Belgium*. There is not much time for reflection or deep knowledge of local cultures; just quick visits to well-known landmarks and back to the bus for the next one. Some think that this rush has its roots in the travel behavior of the premodern Chinese gentry and their canon of must-see attractions (Nyíri, 2005), but this seems far-fetched. In fact, being so hard pressed for time and with so many pictures of themselves in front of well-known Western spots to be taken, it is a wonder that they may still have time for their other main pastime—shopping around for the best European brands, definitely something without precedent in premodern Chinese gentry mores.

How and where does the rookie Chinese tourist obtain relevant information for a trip? One can point to many sources, including word of mouth (today in great measure WOW or Word of Web), literature from destination management organizations, and tips from their guides. This article, however, stresses the role of what might be called *educational media*; that is, those that contribute to creating the images of destinations conveyed by parts of the media industry, such as guidebooks or travel magazines.

The Chinese Gaze

Methodology and Goals

Consumer education as well as tourism education is the outcome of interactions between audiences and message senders. Their interaction is furthermore colored by the social context in which communication takes place. Audiences react to similar economic and cultural factors in different ways. In what follows, tourism education in China will be followed through the study of a group of travel communicators (three glossy travel magazines published in China) and their audiences, mostly made of groups of affluent Chinese consumers.

When it comes to travel, above all, Chinese consumers want reliable information on where and how to spend their disposable income (World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC], 2006); that is where travel magazines come into the picture. Although not the sole source of information, they play a role among those consumers who are ready to engage in tourist activities. They offer information on a wide range of destinations, both

domestic and international, and in so doing they contribute to the travel education of increasing numbers of Chinese.

This article analyzes the images of some of the main European destinations that appeared in the issues of three travel magazines between 2003 and 2005—a total of 1,835 icons and 219 articles. The time span corresponds to a still burgeoning period of outgoing Chinese tourism, but it is also the point at which images of foreign countries began to crystallize. Once they do, changes in the stereotypes will not appear quickly. The European destinations selected were the 13 that appeared among the top 25 destinations in the world by number of arrivals according to the UNWTO (2005), in alphabetical order: Austria, Croatia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the Ukraine.

The three Chinese publications used to create this universe (*National Geographic Traveler* [NGT], *Traveler*, and *National Parks* [NP]) were selected due to their perceived leading position in upscale markets, which are the most likely to engage in European visits.

What are the main features of their audiences? Information is limited. The most extensive comes from *Traveler*, which boasted a monthly circulation of 338,000 copies and a total audience of over three million—nine readers per copy—in 2007 (*Traveler Magazine*, 2007). It was also *Traveler* that offered the most complete picture of its followers. Its median reader was either a man (52%) or a woman (48%) living in Beijing, Shanghai, or Guangzhou; between 25 and 44 years old; well educated (98% had a college degree or higher); high-level managers and officials; making between CNY40,000 (US\$5,000) and CNY120,000 (US\$15,000) per year at median 2007 exchange rates. Within the expanding base of the Chinese middle classes, *Traveler* aimed for the top. Not many other people could afford its cover price of CNY18. Given their contents and their cover price (CNY15 and CNY20 respectively for NP and NGT), one could say that the readers of the other two magazines are not too different. After target selection, Dann's method of iconic analysis (Dann, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c, 2005) was used. It progresses in two stages. The first consists of a quantitative appraisal of the pictures in the brochures examined and their classification into categories according to whether images include people or not. Where people are represented, pictures are subsequently categorized into tourists only, locals only, and locals and tourists together. Based on a combination of those factors and the accompanying literature, qualitative analysis is the following step.

Scenes with large numbers of people—for instance at festivals—were labeled as a mix of locals and tourists in the understanding that at least some of the attendees might come from beyond the boundaries of the locality portrayed. Others with fewer people wearing ethnic attire and/or working in pre-industrial settings were classified as locals. Finally, we counted persons or groups of people in urban clothing and/or engaged in what are usually seen as tourist activities—visiting heritage sites, enjoying treatment at spas, trekking and mountaineering, sightseeing tourist attractions, etc.—as tourists.

Europe

The 13 European destinations resulted in 1,835 icons. NP had the lowest number of European pictures of all three magazines (226 or 12% of the total), whereas NGT (782 pictures and 43%) and *Traveler* (827 and 45%) had a similarly balanced offer. This was not surprising, because although all three magazines are interested in travel, NP predominantly devotes its attention to Chinese themes, above all the many national

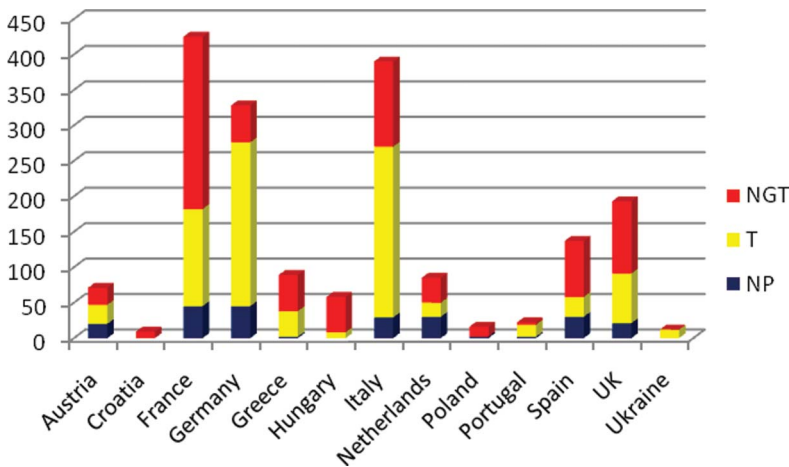


Figure 1. Distribution of icons: Countries (color figure available online).

parks to be found in the country. Despite its many natural attractions, Europe is no rival to China for *NP*'s attention on this level. On their side, *NGT* and *Traveler* cast a much wider net.

Although 13 European countries were initially selected, clearly the three publications did not consider them equally important. Figure 1 shows that there is a chasm between the three top destinations highlighted (France, Germany, and Italy) and the remaining destinations, with Spain and the UK in intermediate positions.

Among the three top destinations, the iconic total reached 1,143 pictures; that is, 62% of the total. With the addition of Spain and the United Kingdom, all five top 80% of the icons. Some countries do not register, such as Croatia, Poland, Portugal, and Ukraine. Croatia only gets 9 pictures in one *NGT* issue and none in the other two magazines; Poland does not show in *Traveler*; Ukraine only registers there.

Far from representing idiosyncratic Chinese tastes stemming from old gentry mores, this ranking coincides with the choices of people traveling from the United States (Office of Travel and Tourism Industries [OTTI], 2008), Canada (German National Tourism Board [GNTB], 2008), and Japan (GNTB) to Europe. With little variation, Brazilians, South Koreans, and Australians share in the same distribution (GNTB). These five countries have played central roles in the modern history of Europe and include some of its best-known cultural attractions. Therefore, one might expect that the Chinese travel magazines analyzed would reinforce the widely shared image of Europe as a continent of culture and heritage.

This would be a mistake. In fact, Chinese travel magazines have their own peculiar focus. What is there to see in Europe? One main point was offered by the interest in the two main categories: no people/people icons. Let us start with the first. For the Chinese travel magazines, Europe is interesting above all because of its people and their represented behavior. Only 765 icons or 40% of the total archive portray areas with no people. If one takes a sharper view separating icons that only deal with nature (8%) and those devoted to man-made structures, the latter win by far. Despite its usual interest in nature, even *NP* allocates a paltry 10% of its 167 no people pictures to nature. For *Traveler* it is less than 2%.

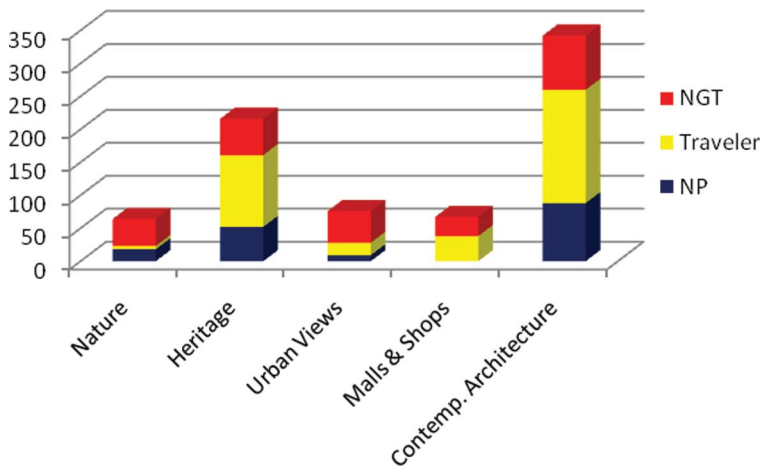


Figure 2. Distribution of icons: No people (color figure available online).

Urban man-made structures are the places where most people spend their lives. They are usually divided between heritage places and everyday life areas. One should expect that, because the European continent has a long history, the Chinese travel magazines would give preferential attention to heritage; however, this is not the case. Heritage comes up to about 30% of all no people icons in *NP* and *Traveler* and only 20% in *NGT*. So, if Europe as seen through Chinese eyes (that is, the way Chinese readers are invited by the travel magazines to see Europe) is not configured by nature and monuments, how do they help construct the collective gaze? Attention is overwhelmingly focused on daily life as represented by cityscapes; that is, areas such as neighborhoods, contemporary buildings, or shops and malls where urban Europeans spend most of their daily lives (Figure 2). In total, nearly two thirds of the visual space offered by the three magazines in the no people category represents such venues.

Even *NP* focuses on contemporary architecture more than in heritage, although it does not inform its audience that one can find things such as malls in Europe. The other two magazines also direct their readers to contemporary architecture, but they are well aware that shopping is a favorite travel activity of their readers and they pay close attention to it. *NGT* and *Traveler* devote over 10% of their no people icons to malls and other shopping venues. The no people category, accordingly, presents Europe as a place of contemporary culture and urban life, treating nature and heritage as two residual categories.

What about people? Sixty percent of the visual space is devoted to them. The focus of attention is the local population, which occupies two thirds of it in the people category. Tourists follow with an additional quarter, and icons depicting common activities between locals and tourists reach less than a tenth. It is the locals, therefore, that provide the main show for the Chinese reader. A show indeed it is, because locals provide visual information on what Chinese tourists may expect when they reach the destination and offer them an anticipation of the activities in which they may share. Their travel magazines aim at providing general information and mutual identification above and beyond reciprocal understanding between tourists and locals (see Figure 3).

How are the locals represented? What do they do? Above all, the Chinese magazines have very little interest in anything premodern (used here in the sense of

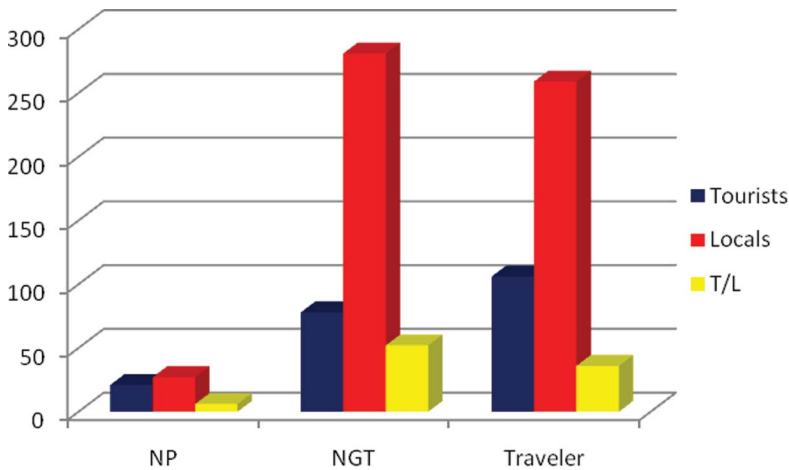


Figure 3. Distribution of icons: People (color figure available online).

pre-industrial, agrarian, or rural). Even though at times they depict people in premodern types of jobs or involved in handicraft making, they do not highlight them. Altogether only 38 pictures out of 566 in the locals' category depict people using premodern tools or techniques. The rest are devoted to different aspects of modern life. When they are seen working, locals mostly act as vendors, servants, or entertainers (VSE). In discharging those roles, some may don old-time or traditional clothing (as in Bavarian beer gardens with servers wearing *lederhosen* and waitresses clad in *dirndl*), but it is clear that they do so tongue-in-cheek, playing on a themed or typical subtext. The rest of the people at work are bank tellers, shop attendants, clerks, and occasionally fashion models. In a nutshell, nostalgia for the past does not seem to be a popular commodity for Chinese tourists. The overwhelming majority of Europeans appear while at leisure in their daily lives—walking, taking care of pets, having dinner or drinks, and shopping. This aspect will be examined in more detail in the next section.

At any rate, Europe as a place of history and heritage does not register high in the image offered to Chinese readers of the selected magazines (Figure 4).

The Big Three: Setting the Score

This is a broad conclusion that refers to the continent as a whole. There are, however, important differences in the way particular European destinations are presented, especially the three countries that are the main magnets for Chinese tourists (France, Italy, and Germany; the Big Three). As stated, they occupy nearly two thirds of all the visual space devoted to our 13 European destinations.

All three magazines share a common interest in the Big Three, but it is up to *NGT* and *Traveler* to provide the main aspects of their images. *NP*'s total contribution to this feature is quite limited given the small size of its related iconic archive. In total, it carries 119 pictures of all three, less than 10% of the total icons. With such a limited interest, it is difficult to draw conclusions about its views on the destinations.

NGT and *Traveler* show an interesting slant. *NGT* devotes more than half of its total Big Three icons to France, leaving Germany (slightly over 10%) out of the frame.

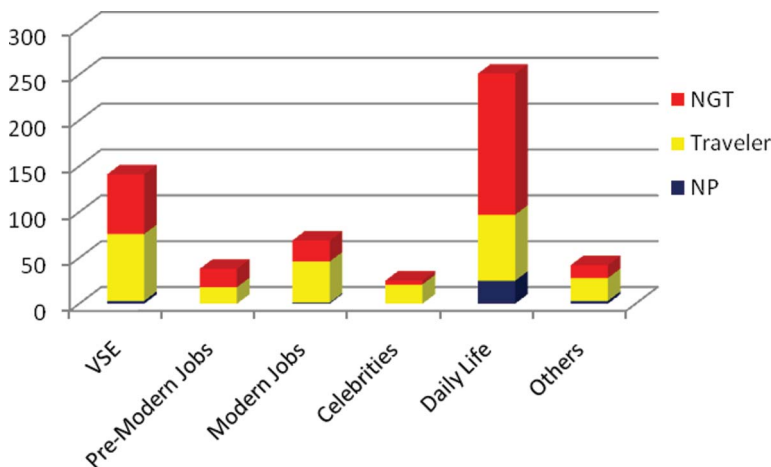


Figure 4. Distribution of icons: People activities (color figure available online).

Even though it shows more balance, *Traveler* downgrades France in comparison to the other two destinations. This may be due to the limited timespan considered (years 2003–2005) and may have not been the case in previous or later years. At any rate, it is worth noting.

What is the comparative image of the three countries that *NGT* and *Traveler* offer to their readers? A portrait may be obtained by measuring visual intensity along six main parameters: heritage, contemporary architecture and arts, urban views, shops and malls, the presence of vendors/servants/entertainers, and daily life depictions (mostly of local people at leisure). Nature as a subject was not included because all three magazines do not include nature in their depictions of Europe.

NGT has a rather well-rounded view of France (see Figure 5). Most of its dimensions seem to have a similar value. Only urban views had a slightly higher ranking than others, but this was compensated for by the relatively lower ranking of daily life scenes. Heritage is also well represented in relation to other dimensions. This is not the case for *Traveler*. Shops (with a prominent presence of wine and food) and malls are well balanced with the rest.

All of this contrasts with the images of Italy and Germany, which are less balanced. This should not lead to quick conclusions in the case of Germany, which receives only fleeting attention in *NGT* (52 icons in total). In both Germany and Italy the image is clearly anchored by the attractions of daily life. Portrayals of a laidback urban life dominate the panorama for Italy, passing over contemporary arts, food and wine, and even heritage as the main attraction. The least intensively communicated value is the presence of VSE, even though the latter include participants and revelers in local parades and events.

Traveler conveys a markedly different view (Figure 6). First, the number of icons for Italy (241) and Germany (231) compensates for their relative inattention in *NGT*. Additionally, despite its lesser intensity, France still receives considerable notice (137 icons). This allows for somewhat more solid conclusions in all three cases.

Traveler's readers receive a similar view of France and Germany. Both countries practically overlap in the shape of their attractions, adopting a butterfly-like contour where those dimensions with medium to lower importance are heritage and malls and



Figure 5. Comparative images of the Big Three in *NGT* (color figure available online).

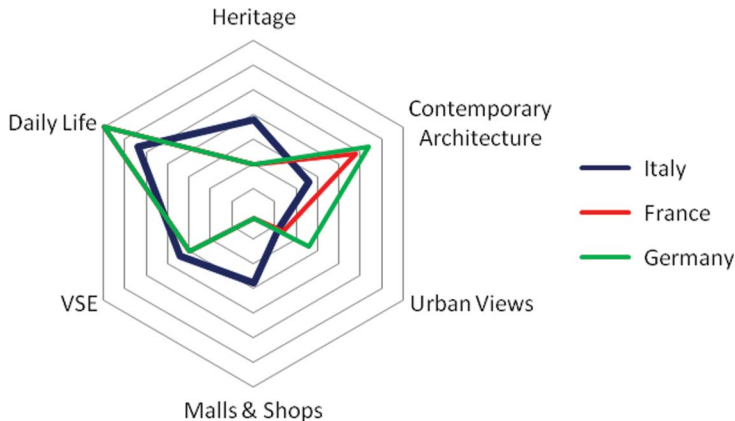


Figure 6. Comparative images of the Big Three in *Traveler* (color figure available online).

shops. This does not mean that these attractions are considered unimportant but that they are usually portrayed more as part of daily life than as still-life icons. For *NGT* French wines or Napoleonic shrines are products to be highly revered; *Traveler* presents them as objects of desire—to be experienced rather than worshipped. For instance, in Germany, beer cannot stray from the leisure patterns of real human beings; it is not the final product of a complex alchemy that is alien to the reader. It is difficult to escape here Barthes' (1972) reflection on the ornamental cookery of French magazines. Though *Elle* portrayed its dishes as a symbol of reverence that should somehow be left untouched, *L'Express* showed its well-heeled readership dishes similar to those they experienced in the restaurants they frequented in their daily lives. Daily life at leisure, together with the neighborhoods where it is conducted, similarly tops *Traveler's* list of European attractions that its readers can afford.

Italy is only a slightly different story. All of its dimensions pivot around the center and have similar importance. In this way, the views of the country run closer to the mainstream notion of a living museum where even the expensive shops that are portrayed (all of the well-known global Italian brands) become unique pieces for the connoisseur.

However, in what seems to be *Traveler's* trademark, it is finally the *dolce vita* that comes upmost in its image of the country. Art and the good life graciously stem from people who know how to enjoy the pleasures of life. Therefore, in all three countries, the axis that runs between a pleasant daily life including well-built surroundings and the work of VSEs (who usually are the most frequently depicted category of the three in each country) practically overlap.

The Big Three: Getting to Know You

Crunching numbers is half of the story. It helps to figure that the Chinese gaze on Europe has its own features. For the Chinese, Europe is an old continent full of historical places and both ancient and modern art. However, this does not seem to have much traction with present-day Chinese consumers. Their own culture antedates that of medieval and modern Europe. Their knowledge of European history may also be quite limited. Perhaps the still limited social groups that can engage in long-haul travel see it more as a status symbol to be confirmed by the acquisition of costly European goods rather than an occasion for cross-cultural exchanges.

Regardless, Europe is epitomized in the Big Three destinations singled out by the Chinese travel magazines as a topmost space for consumption and leisure that contrasts with life at home. This narrative is mainly conveyed to the Chinese through three main conduits—the contrast between Chinese modernity and European life, the role of successful events and personalities in Chinese mass culture, and the formation of a number of local stereotypes to pin down the expected basic features of the European identities as seen through Chinese eyes. To some extent, this concurs with Craik's (1997) hypothesis that expectations, fantasies, and mythologies about destinations that are generated in the visitors' culture have a greater weight on their experiences than local attractions.

New China takes great pride in its own modernity and shuns the postmodern mindset of Europe. Long deprived of the comfortable Western way of life portrayed in print media, on television, and on the Internet, Chinese consumers revel in their own view of modernity's accouterments. In their newly attained prosperity and self-assurance, they also want to show that they are even more modern than their Western peers and as skilled at modern technology as anybody else. They especially pride themselves in their urban planning skills. They feel that their cities can rival and even surpass any other Asian and U.S. cities (Tokyo, Singapore, Taipei, Hong Kong, Los Angeles, Chicago, New York) in the creation of successful (whatever this may mean) urban structures. Modern architecture and its technological exploits has thus become their measuring rod for modernity.

Nyíri (2002, 2007) has stressed its importance in the expectations of Chinese tourists visiting European destinations. Although he did not offer much substantive evidence for his views, he surmised that Europe does not stand up to their challenge on this score. One of his informers, a Chinese guide in Berlin, noted that many of her customers criticized the lack of high-rises and broad avenues in the town. They compared them unfavorably with urban landscapes in Shanghai and Hangzhou,

implying that Berlin looked backward by comparison (Nyíri, 2005). The way in which Chinese travel magazines cover contemporary architecture with preference to heritage sites treads on the same footsteps.

The new cohorts of Chinese tourists on long-haul travel to Europe have interests other than history. Where do they originate? One possible answer is mass culture. Chinese consumers want to identify with the personalities and follow the trends that, in their view, have shaped or are shaping our world as conveyed in print media, on television, and on the Internet.

The special issues devoted by *Traveler* to the Top Three destinations (Issue No. 110 for France, No. 114 for Germany, and No. 120 for Italy) require some attention at this juncture. The ways in which France and Italy are depicted have many similarities. In a nutshell, one can say that they are great shopping malls for conspicuous consumption over a background of art and history made by grand personalities or associated with mass culture. How to get to know Paris best? Follow the *Da Vinci Code* steps. It will take you to the Tuileries gardens, to the new glass pyramid in the Louvre, and to Saint Sulpice. The 2003 bestseller is presented as a better approach to the city than any guidebook. Before being banned by the government in June 2006, the movie version had drawn millions of moviegoers (British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC], 2006). What about Montmartre? That's where Amélie Poulain of the eponymous movie (*The Fabulous Destiny of Amélie Poulain* in English) lived. The film made a great impression in China. If you follow the places seen there, it is surmised, you may see the hill under a better light than the Impressionists could ever capture. Is there anything other than Paris to be seen in France? Yes, it is. However, travel routes may be better organized by following the places where Napoleon (another mass culture figure in China) spent his life: From Corsica to Toulon to Paris (see the Louvre whose collections he enriched), from La Malmaison in Rueil (where he lived with Josephine Beauharnais) to Grasse, one of the places where some of the best French perfumes originate from. The reader is reminded that Napoleon himself was one of their greatest promoters.

Then forget about the rest and go shopping. With a nod to rural tourism through the eyes of a Chinese student engaged in the grape harvest, readers are informed that wine making and wine drinking are two of the grand pleasures the French enjoy. But wine is only one—and not the most important—of the many items that tempt the Chinese consumers. A series of articles in the special issue show them the best places to spend their money, a lesson apparently quickly learned by its readers. According to *Traveler*, the expenditure of Chinese tourists in France ranked second only to that of the Japanese and was double the daily expenditure of U.S. tourists. A study by ACNielsen (cited in Xie & Li, 2008) reported that the mean expenditure of Chinese travelers in Europe in 2007 was US\$1,408, making them the top spenders on the continent.

The mix was similar for Italy. A long section in the special issue was devoted to Italian art, but the whole revolved around the contribution of Leonardo—of *Da Vinci Code* fame. This was followed by the great Italian cities of Rome, Florence, and Venice, where Marco Polo lived. Once again, there was a nod to food and wines and, indeed, to Chinese culture. Italians love pasta, pizza, and other specialties similar to others found in Chinese cuisine. Once again, though, food is in the background. The real action is in the great shopping streets in Rome and Milan, which are amply portrayed by the magazine with detailed explanations of where to find the best apparel, cosmetics, and fashion brands. Original Italian items can be found in Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou as well, but they do not have the same glitter as those bought in Europe

when shown to friends and relatives. They are also cheaper there than at home, because the Chinese fiscal authorities charge considerable duty on luxury imports.

Germany is no exception to the rule, but leisure and consumption are shown in a different light. The special issue starts with a glimpse at recent German history and Nazi rule, one of the few periods of foreign history that impacts Chinese mass culture. After reporting some of the atrocities of the period, the article notes that Germans have shown great courage in facing their terrible history and have completely disowned it, thus regaining the respect of the world. This view might make some people frown, but the magazine offers it as a definite moral to the story. Then the reader is propelled to the great personalities in German history, including Konrad Adenauer, Martin Luther, Karl Marx, Albert Einstein, Johann W. Goethe, and Sophie Scholl, with a recommendation to visit the places where they lived.

Shopping for high fashion and top-quality nondurables is accompanied by another object of desire in mass culture, especially in modern Chinese mass culture—the car. There, one is told, cars are one of the main components of collective identity. The descriptions of the machines (Mercedes and BMW topmost) are quite detailed and the tourist routes recommended are those that have found favor with the car crowd: the *Romantische Strasse* (Würzburg-Rothenburg-Dinkelsbühl-Augsburg-Freiburg-Füssen), the *Märchenstrasse* (Hanau-Kassel-Hameln-Bremen), and the German *Alpenstrasse* (Berchtesgaden-Prien-Kirchen-Lindau). Note that most other German attractions (with the exception of some passing mention of the Rhine cruises) are not mentioned.

The third element in imaging Europe through Chinese eyes is exoticism; that is, the way in which Chinese magazines represent their view of European identities. Exoticism has had a consistently bad press among mainstream academic thought. Following Said (1979, 1993), it is usually seen as the way in which Western culture portrays different ethnic groups (the Other) as subject to infantile beliefs, awkward mores, or inferior lifestyles. This notion has been criticized (Aramberri, 2010) as circular, scarcely attentive to facts, and reifying so-called Western culture—a discussion, however, that will not be dealt with within the mainly descriptive framework of this article.

Exoticism, as surmised by the Said school of thought, usually finds expression in the use of a number of stereotypes that justify in shorthand the alleged superiority of Western moral and intellectual standards and traditions. This notion, however, ignores at its own risk the fact that stereotypes are also a basic tool of communication. The world has an infinite diversity. We never find “trees” or “animals” or “doctors” but individual members of the *Quercus* or *Salix* or other specific genera, likewise for the *Panthera leo* or the *Drosophila melanogaster*, or for this obstetrician or this dentist. Motley individuals make each one of those species and we could not grasp them without concepts or stereotypes that allow communicating meaning with great economy of means. Concepts or stereotypes can indeed be wrong, but trying to exorcize them from language is futile. Additionally, the Saidian notion cannot bloom without a normative prejudice about which are good stereotypes and which are not. Because there is nothing in their own nature to justify one single type of selection, accepting or objecting to them rather seems to be in the eye of the beholder.

Nevertheless, the Chinese gaze seems to hold its own. It has already been noted that, through Chinese eyes, Europe does not measure up to modernity in a full way and is above all a space for consumption and leisure. Europeans are usually portrayed having a good time in parks, cafes, restaurants, or festivals. Hard work and scientific and technological advances do not register in this view of Europe. For example, Munich is depicted as a huge open-air restaurant where people happily enjoy beer

and diverse pork products; this stereotype, however, may help place Munich in the set of eventual destinations evoked by potential Chinese consumers.

More specific features follow this general characterization. The copy in the analyzed travel magazines uses a number of qualifiers to define some regularities that in the copy of their writers characterize social life in those European countries. France is gorgeous, Italy delicate, Germany efficient, Spain a dreamland, Greece extremely colorful. In Britain, aristocracy is the defining quality. Even people not born to privilege, the reader is told, behave in a noble way. Accordingly, one should not be surprised that the most recommended British attractions for Chinese tourists are the castles and the churches that epitomize its aristocratic traditions, the educational institutions (Eton, Oxbridge) that contributed to forming the ruling class, and gentlemen's sports (polo, cricket, golf, horse riding). In a notable departure from their relative lack of interest in the main cities of Europe, the Chinese magazines describe London in more detail, reminding readers of the many places where the British aristocratic identity has forged a unique atmosphere.

Exoticism does not end after showing the optimal features of the Other; it also highlights those that are extremely different from our own and may surprise, shock, or titillate the reader. Germany scores highest in this respect. *Traveler's* special issue discusses at length what their authors consider a highly sexualized social environment. The publication informs its readership that, together with The Netherlands, Germany has no legal ban on the sex industry; that many people prefer to live together instead of getting married; that sexual freedom in the country is higher than anywhere else; and that the sex industry is quite prosperous. Berlin takes the title of Europe's Sex Capital on behalf of its Love Parades and its openness toward homosexuality. Germany is also presented as the birthplace of the *Freikörperkultur* (FKK) or Free Body Culture; therefore, it is not uncommon to see nude sunbathing in many public areas like the *Englischer Garten* in Munich. Not a small distance from the usual restraint shown by Chinese denizens in their public behavior, it may confirm the exoticism of the place to the Chinese reader planning to visit Germany.

Conclusion

As increasing numbers of Chinese have paid vacations and higher disposable income, they have begun to travel in great numbers. The overwhelming majority of trips are taken within the country, but many travel abroad as well—a pattern that will grow considerably in the near future. Both categories of tourists look for information about eventual destinations, and this information is provided by many sources, including independent travel magazines. Their impact has not been widely studied, even though they seem to be a key factor in building destination images, which will require detailed attention from European marketers and destination management agencies.

This article analyzed the contribution of three travel magazines published in Chinese to the image of Europe. To this effect, it selected a number of icons and articles referring to some of the main European destinations that appeared between 2003 and 2005—a total of 1,835 icons and 219 articles. In agreement with Dann's methodology (1996a, 1996b, 1996c), the first part of the study provides a quantitative analysis of the ways in which the visual icons were used. In the second part, a more qualitative approach is described to define the main aspects of Europe's image as a tourist destination. The overall analysis offers a picture of the main features of the continent when seen through Chinese eyes.

The quantitative analysis revealed a number of thought structures. Above all, an image of Europe as such does not exist for the travel magazines analyzed. Although 13 European destinations were selected, just three (France, Italy, and Germany) attracted more than 60% of the material. If one adds icons depicting Spain and the United Kingdom, the total reaches over 80%. These five countries have played central roles in the modern history of Europe and include some of its best known cultural attractions. One might think that the Chinese travel magazines reinforce the widely shared image of Europe as a continent of culture, but this is not so. In fact, the Chinese travel magazines have their own peculiar line of attack. A majority of icons depict human subjects rather than areas with no people. The first conclusion is that Chinese magazines think that their readers are mostly attracted by European life in general. This first conclusion is reinforced when one bears in mind that the majority of pictures with no human component portray man-made structures over nature's views. Additionally, despite the expected image of Europe as a historical and heritage destination, the man-made structures depicted are overwhelmingly of contemporary architecture and urban landscapes; that is, the places where most Europeans go about their daily business.

Local people appear foremost in the iconic representation of Europe. What do they do? The Chinese magazines show very little interest in any type of premodern or nonurban life. Except for a few icons, the majority are devoted to different aspects of modern life. When they are seen working, locals mostly act as VSEs; the remainder are bank tellers, shop attendants, clerks, and occasionally fashion models. The overwhelming majority of Europeans, however, appear while at leisure in their daily lives, above all wining, dining, and shopping. In a nutshell, nostalgia for the past does not seem to be a popular commodity among present Chinese tourists, and Europe as a place of history and heritage does not register high. This broad conclusion refers to the continent as a whole. There are, however, important differences in the way particular European destinations are presented, especially the three countries that are the main magnets for Chinese tourists (France, Italy, and Germany).

What is the comparative image of the three countries that Chinese travel magazines offer to their readers? France and Germany practically overlap in the shape of their attractions, adopting a butterfly-like contour where the dimensions with medium to lower importance are heritage and malls and shops (Figure 6). Italy tells a slightly different story. All of its dimensions pivot around the center and have similar importance, so one could say that the views of the country run closer to the mainstream notion of a living museum. However, it is finally the *dolce vita* that comes upmost in the image of the country. People who know how to enjoy the pleasures of life graciously combine art and the good life. Therefore, in all three countries, the axes mainly run around a pleasant daily life including well-built surroundings.

Qualitative analysis of the texts adds to the idea that through Chinese eyes Europe is above all a space for consumption and leisure that contrasts with life at home. This descriptive approach runs along three main dimensions—the contrast between Chinese modernity and European life, the role of successful European events and personalities recognized by Chinese mass culture, and the formation of a number of local stereotypes to pin down the basic features of the European identities as seen through Chinese eyes. The first deals with the definition of *modernity*. For present-day Chinese, modernity means above all the capacity to master the challenges of social life by means of modern technology. In this way, China, especially when it comes to urban planning and architecture, is seen as superior to old Europe in building modern environments. This

may be one of the reasons why Chinese magazines do not pay much attention to heritage.

The second thread is mass culture. Chinese tourists want to identify with the personalities and to follow the trends that, in their view, have shaped or are shaping our world as conveyed in print media, on television, or on the Internet. The best way to capture Europe is by consuming European products, whether high-quality nondurables in France or Italy or technological marvels such as German cars.

The third thread in imaging Europe through Chinese eyes is exoticism; that is, the way in which Chinese magazines construct European identities. Exoticism, however, does not end after showing the surprising or distinct features of the Other; it also highlights those that are extremely different from our own and may surprise, shock, or titillate the reader. German attitudes toward sex offer a way for Chinese magazines to compare them with their own behavior.

Such a mind-set or gaze has long been lamented by a well-established academic tradition (Dann, 1996b; MacCannell, 1999; Wang, 2000). The issue, however, lies elsewhere—how to explain that Chinese tourists, at least those who have the money to visit Europe, for all their differences, gaze at the continent through mechanisms that closely resemble those of Western mass tourists in faraway destinations. After all, that well-meaning academic tradition imagined that it should be the exclusive purview of the new Golden Hordes coming from the West or the North. It still remains to be explained why the experience remains so similar when the world (Europe in this case) is looked at through Chinese eyes. This is, however, a discussion that would go beyond the mostly descriptive analysis this article has adopted.

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